

22 March 2021

Promotions and Reclassifications Season 2020/21



On 17 March, the FA Referees' Committee discussed the position for Season 2020/21 in respect of match official promotion and reclassification within the men's (Step 2 and below) and women's (Tier 3 and below) refereeing pathways. The Committee considered the cancellation of most football during Season 2020/21 (with some areas being more severely affected than others), the difficulty in holding fitness tests and the need to adapt the usual promotion and reclassification arrangements in a fair and equitable manner.

The Committee was keen to ensure that, although the vast majority of referees have not been able to fulfil all the necessary criteria for promotion, the matches they have completed should not be 'lost'. The Committee's views on promotion, based on the recommendations from the FA Referees' Department, are outlined below. In terms of being re-classified (demoted) it was agreed that no one should be reclassified at the end of Season 2020/21.

Referee and Assistant Referee Promotions and Reclassifications - Step 2-6 & Tiers 3-4 (Level 2B, Level 3, Level 4, Level 3W)

The early curtailment of the National League System (Step 2 – Step 6) and Women's Pyramid (Tiers 3-6) has resulted in less than half of all scheduled fixtures taking place. This has impacted on the opportunity for match officials to officiate on a suitable number of fixtures and receive the required number of observations to make appropriate decisions regarding promotion and reclassification for referees and assistant referees operating at Step 2, Step 3/Step 4, Step 5/Step 6, and 3W referee promotion candidates. Fewer than 2% of active officials across Level 2B-Level 4 received the required minimum number of games and/or observations.

With insufficient data to justifiably make decisions regarding promotion and reclassification and given the fact that most referees have not officiated for many months, the FA Referees' Committee believes that promotion and reclassification should not be implemented at the end of season 2020/21 across these levels.

However, the Committee strongly believe that the information from performances completed on constituent competitions should not be discounted. It was, therefore, agreed that decisions regarding promotion and reclassification at the end of 2021/22 will be based on merit tables from 1 August 2020 – End of Playing season 2021/22 (e.g. 30 April 2022).

In addition, the Committee confirmed that "mid-season promotions" (i.e. formal promotion to a new level outside the traditional annual process) will be considered based on performances from the start of 2020/21 season up to and including a mid-season cut off point, which will be determined in due course. This process will ensure there are opportunities for officials to progress up the refereeing pyramid at a point earlier than the summer of 2022.



Level 5-4 Promotion Scheme

For officials in the Level 5-4 promotion scheme, the inconsistent availability of football across the grassroots game depending on geographic location during season 2020/21 and the inability for many CFAs to conduct nomination fitness tests during the pandemic means that many of the candidates will not meet the minimum requirements for promotion this season.

In addition, with the lists from Level 2B to Level 4 remaining consistent for season 2021/22 no space has been created for promoted officials.

The Committee, therefore, decided that promotions from Level 5-4 at the end of season 2020/21 will not take place. However, the Committee strongly believe that the information from performances completed on constituent competitions should not be discounted. It was, therefore, agreed that decisions regarding promotion and reclassification at the end of 2021/22 will be based on data from 1 August 2020 – End of Playing season 2021/22 (e.g. 30 April 2022).

In addition, the Committee confirmed that “mid-season promotions” (i.e. formal promotion to a new level outside the traditional annual process) will be considered based on performances from the start of 2020/21 season up to and including a mid-season cut off point, which will be determined in due course. This process will ensure there are opportunities for officials to progress up the refereeing pyramid at a point earlier than the summer of 2022.

Level 6-5, Level 7-6 and Level 4W-3W Promotions

Unlike promotions from Level 5 to Level 4, there is not a limit on the number of officials who can operate at Level 5 or Level 6. Consequently, the Committee agreed to promotion guideline principles for 2020/21 for County FAs that reflect the reduced opportunity to referee caused by the pandemic but demonstrate a commitment shown by promotion candidates.

The following amendments were, therefore, approved into the current criteria:

- Reduction from refereeing 20 to 15 games in a promotion season
- Reduction from 3 to 2 observations within the marking season (achieving above standard grades in both observations or above standard and standard expected grades)
- Removal of the requirement to operate as assistant referee in at least 5 matches. The lack of Step 5/6 football has prevented access to assistant referee appointments during the season (Level 6-5 promotion only)

Officials who meet these requirements at the end of the season should be considered for promotion by their respective County as per the standard process.

The impact on those officials applying for double promotion is also being reviewed and further guidance for implementation in 2021/22 will follow in due course.



1st Year Immunity

For those match officials operating in the merit table-based process (Level 2B-Level 4) we can confirm that 1st Year immunity from reclassification will be applied for all officials promoted in the summer of 2020 with this immunity lasting until the end of Season 2021/22.

Specialisation Routes

Any match official at Level 3 or Level 4 who would usually be permitted (end of 3rd season as Level 3/reached the end of their 5th season as Level 4 or above) or expected (end of 4th season as a Level 3) to make a specialisation decision will be permitted to delay that decision until the end of season 2021/22.

Match officials who have the option to choose a specific route can do so this summer or can delay this decision until the end of season 2021/22.

Further details regarding this process will be communicated in the coming weeks.

Fitness Tests

For Level 3 and 4 match officials it remains the intention for pre-season fitness tests to be implemented prior to the start of season 2021/22. This includes all officials who were classified as a Step 2 Assistant Referee, Step 3/Step 4 referee or assistant referee or Step 5/Step 6 referee.

For clarity, please note Level 3 match officials will be required to complete “Interval run” fitness test whilst Level 4 match officials will be required to complete the “Cooper Test”.

Details of dates and exact requirements will be communicated in due course.

Step 5/Step 6 & County Cup Competitions – (29 March – End of playing season 2020/21)

We are aware a number of cup competitions organised locally to provide competitive football at the end of the season. Some of these will have been organised by Leagues within the National League System.

For the avoidance of doubt, for officials operating at Level 4 and above in the men’s pyramid, marks awarded on these competitions are not to be included in any respective merit table. Only competitions communicated at the beginning of season 2020/21 should be included in merit table calculations.

Observers should not be appointed to these fixtures, however these matches may be used for trainee observers as part of the accreditation process.

However, we would urge CFAs, leagues and referee pools to take the opportunity to coach referees in these fixtures should personnel be available.