

GROUND-GRADING GUIDANCE FOR: FA NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM – MEN'S (STEPS 1-6)



2022/23 SEASON





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ACRONYMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT:

NLS: National League System

RFL: Regional Feeder League(s)

FF: Football Foundation

PLSF: Premier League Stadium Fund

EFL: English Football League

SGSA: Sports Ground Safety Authority

AGP: Artificial Grass Pitch

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The FA's Ground-Grading Guidance and Criteria document. It aims to provide a complete overview of ground grading and facility development for grounds in – or aspiring to operate at – Steps 1 to 6 of the Men's National League System and Regional NLS Feeder Leagues.

This replaces the various individual grading documents published in previous seasons, providing a one-stop-shop for clubs. As well as the previous criteria (which is largely unchanged) there is now practical guidance for new builds as well as advisory guidance to enhance the matchday and user experiences at your grounds.

As this is a new and evolving document, which we intend to update annually, we would welcome any feedback at:

NLS@TheFA.com

We would welcome any photographs of good practice or solutions within a ground to enhance this document in the future. Please also send these to **NLS@TheFA.com**.

This document does not purport to contain legal or regulatory advice (including but not limited to health and safety matters and/or building regulations) and the award of a grade does not purport to confirm or certify legal or regulatory compliance which remains, in all cases, the responsibility of the club.

The FA's Ground-Grading Sub-Committee



1 FA NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM (NLS): GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA BY LEVEL, STEP AND LEAGUE/DIVISION

The FA Ground-Grading criteria is broken down as follows:

NLS		
Level of Football	Grade	Leagues/Divisions
Step 1	Grade 1	National League (1 Division)
Step 2	Grade 2	National League North and South (2 Divisions)
Step 3	Grade 3	Premier Divisions of the Southern, Isthmian and Northern Premier Leagues (4 Divisions)
Step 4	Grade 4	Division 1's of the Southern, Isthmian and Northern Premier Leagues (8 Divisions)
Step 5	Grade 5	Step 5 Leagues (16 Divisions)
Step 6	Grade 6	Step 6 Leagues (17 Divisions)
Promotion to Step 6	Grade 7	RFL Clubs require this grade by 31 March in the season before the Club is applying for promotion to Step 6
Promotion to Step 7	Grade 8	Previously known as 'Step 7' - County Leagues or equivalent (50 Divisions). This level of grading is required for entry to RFL level

2 GROUND-GRADING PROCESS: ROLES

There are many roles that varying bodies have within the Ground-Grading Process. Below is a matrix of the key stakeholder roles:

	Administration	Point of Contact	Criteria	Inspections	Award of Grades
The FA Executive	The FA Executive will be the conduit between the FF and the FA Committees.	The FA Executive will be the conduit between the FF and the FA Committees. Contact can be made at GroundGrading@TheFA.com or if the query is a technical query around the design of facilities then contact Technical@FootballFoundation.org.uk	The FA Executive will prepare and circulate (via Leagues) the criteria each season. This will also include any suggestions from the FF based on previous inspections.		
The FA Committees – Men’s (Step 1-4 – the Alliance Committee, Steps 5&6 – the Leagues’ Committee, with specialist Ground- Grading Sub-Committee reporting into the Alliance Committee)			The Committees are responsible for the setting of the Ground Grading Criteria from season to season.	The relevant Committee may ask the FF to visit a given Club if feedback received suggests that there is an issue with a given ground.	The FA’s Alliance Committee has sole responsibility for the awarding of grades for Clubs at Steps 1 to 4, with the Leagues Committee solely responsible for Steps 5 & 6.
The Leagues		The League will act as a local point of contact and their grading officers/ directors can provide practical guidance in respect of ground improvements.	The Leagues can propose any amendments to the criteria for the FA Committees to consider.	A League’s grading officer may attend an inspection led by an FF Grading Inspector to support the Club achieve the grade.	
Premier League Stadium Fund (PLSF)/The Football Foundation (FF)		For more information on how the PLSF/FF can assist with ground improvements, please visit www.premierleaguestadiumfund.co.uk	The PLSF/FF can propose any amendments to the criteria for the Committees to consider.		
The Clubs	Clubs will need to complete or update an electronic grading questionnaire, as requested from time to time.	The points of contact we will use will either be the Club Secretary or any dedicated Club Officer as per any applications made to the FSIF.		Clubs will be expected to make their grounds available for inspection (within a reasonable timeframe) with a member of the Club or facility present at the inspection. Inspections are carried out every three years or upon promotion.	

3 OVERVIEW OF GROUND-GRADING REQUIREMENTS OF EXISTING GROUNDS

Please note: the following information is relevant to existing grounds only. New stadiums/grounds are subject to updated criteria which is referenced later in this document.

The table below is an overview of the key facilities required at each Grade. The full grading criteria is documented later in this document:

Grade	Capacity	Dugouts	Public Address System	Entrances Turnstiles	Hardstanding	Covered stand(s)		Press Seating	Existing Floodlights
<i>Previous Grade in ()</i>	(Min.)	Min. No. of people		(Min.)	Number of sides	Seated	Standing		Lux **
1 (A)	4,000	11	Yes	8	4 ^	500	0	12	250
2 (B)	3,000	11	Yes	6	4 ^	250	250	6	180
3 (C)	1,950	8	Yes	3	4 ^	250	250	4	120
4 (D)	1,300	8	Yes	2	4 ^	150	150	2	120
5 (F)	-	8	Yes	1	3	100	100	-	120
6 (G)	-	8	No	1	2	50	50	-	120
7 (H)	-	8	No	1	2	-	50	-	N / A / 120 *
8 (RFL)	-	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	N / A / 120 *

* Floodlights for promotion to Step 6 are not required until promotion is confirmed (i.e. installed by 30 September after promotion) but where floodlights already exist, these must meet 120 Lux.

** New floodlighting installations will be installed to a minimum of 200 Lux from Grade 2 and below.

^ Note: grounds may be declared as three-sided grounds.

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OVERVIEW OF GROUND – GRADING REQUIREMENTS OF EXISTING GROUNDS (continued)

Grade <i>Previous Grade in brackets</i>	Spectator Ground Toilets		Players' Changing Rooms				Officials' Changing Rooms			Medical Room	
	Male	Female	Area/sqm	Showers	WC	Urinals	Area/sqm	Showers	WC	Players	Spectators
1 (A)	Four urinals – two WCs in two areas of the ground	Two WCs in two areas of the ground	18	4	1	2	6	1	1	Yes	Yes
2 (B)	Four urinals – Two WCs	Two WCs	18	4	1	1	6	1	1	Yes	Yes
3 (C)	Four urinals – Two WCs	Two WCs	18	4	1	-	6	1	1	Yes	Share
4 (D)	Four urinals – Two WCs	Two WCs	18	4	1	-	6	1	1	Yes	Share
5 (F)	Two urinals – One WC	Two WCs	12 *	4	1	-	4 **	1	1	Stretcher only	
6 (G)	Two urinals – One WC	Two WCs	12	4	1	-	4	1	1	Stretcher only	
7 (H)	Two urinals – One WC	Two WCs	12	4	1	-	4	1	1	Stretcher only	
8 (RFL)	Adequate toilet facilities		12	3	Adequate toilet facilities		4	1	Adequate toilet facilities	-	

* ideally 18sq/m

** ideally 6sq/m

Note: (i) Where urinals are specified in spectator toilets or changing rooms, these can be replaced with WCs – e.g. at Grade 5 a Club could have 3 WCs in the male spectator toilets. This is strongly encouraged for new builds to promote inclusivity of facilities.

(ii) Clubs need to consider how they meet the requirements of the Equality Act in relation to accessible clubhouse and/or ground toilets

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DEVELOPING YOUR FACILITIES

Clubs considering any developments of their ground should focus on complying with the requirements of the current grade for the Step or Tier they play at. In planning future works, it's recommended that clubs bear in mind the grading criteria for the Step they would be promoted into. It's important when planning improvements that potential future works are considered. For example, allowing space for additional seating or terracing accommodation to be added next to existing accommodation.

It is also recommended that clubs discuss proposed improvements with the **relevant League Officer and Football Foundation Technical Project Managers** (the latter if seeking funding from the PLSF) to ensure developments are appropriate to the grading criteria and there is scope for future expansion if required.

Inclusive facilities

In planning for any improvement to grounds, a Club should ensure that its facilities are as inclusive as possible and that any reasonable adjustments that can be made are carried out when developing a ground. Clubs may find it useful to consult the following organisations and documents to ensure that they understand all the requirements before embarking on a project:

- Premier League Stadium Fund:
www.premierleaguestadiumfund.co.uk/
- Sports Ground Safety Authority:
www.sgsa.org.uk/
- Guide to the Safety at Sports Ground (Green Guide):
www.sgsa.org.uk/greenguide/
- Local Authority Building Control:
www.labc.co.uk/
- Level Playing Field:
www.levelplayingfield.org.uk/

Please note the above list is not exhaustive. It is recognised that Clubs will consult with local stakeholders specific to them, e.g. Supporters' Trusts etc.

Building a new ground/stadium

When building a new ground/stadium, or where significant redevelopment is taking place, the following recommendations are made:

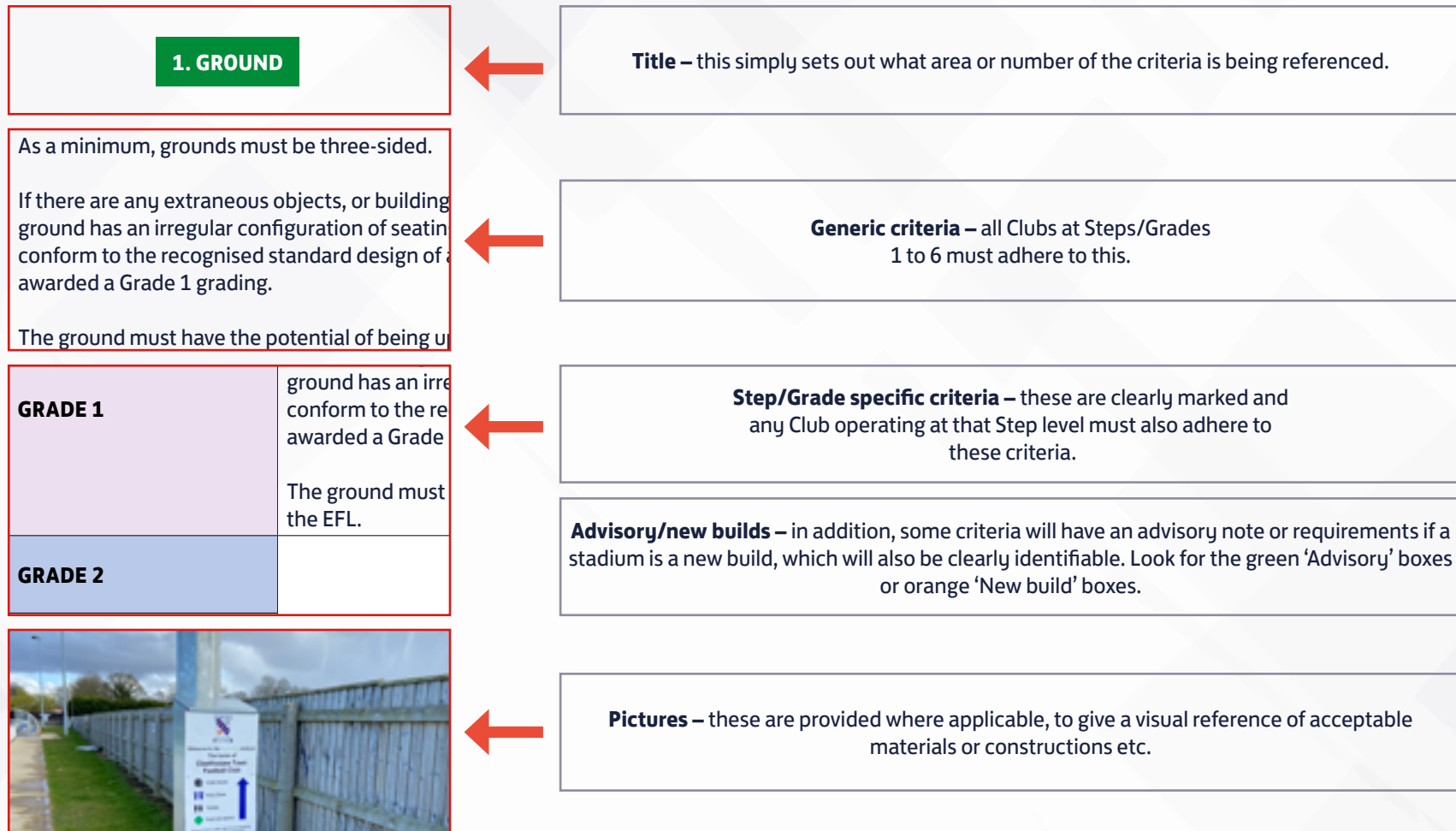
- Establish a team within the club to progress the project.
- Appoint suitably-qualified individuals/professionals to advise you, who have experience of developing similar projects.
- Make early contact with your **relevant League Officer and Football Foundation Technical Project Manager**.
- Visit a number of clubs in or above your Step level who have recently either relocated or significantly developed their facilities.
- Ensure any design/plans drawn up are agreed by your **relevant League Officer and Football Foundation Technical Project Manager** to ensure they meet the Ground- Grading criteria set out in this document.

Throughout this document there are Advisory and New-Build sections which relate to new build requirements. These sections outline considerations when planning brand-new stadia.

5 UNDERSTANDING THE NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

The Ground-Grading Criteria has traditionally been spread out over numerous documents. It has been decided these will be merged so Clubs can visualise how to progress from Regional NLS Feeder League Level to Step 1.

To clarify, the criteria is made up of the following components:



6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND

1.1 General

The ground must give an overall appearance and impression of being a football ground suitable for the level of the National League System at which it is operating. In the case of those seeking placement at Step 6, the ground must be suitable for the level of the National League System at which they are seeking to operate.

It must be possible for spectators to view the match, either standing or seated, for the full length of the number of sides of the playing area as listed in the chart below, provided that the capacity requirements detailed under 1.3 are met. If relevant, where any side is designated as spectator-free, measures must be in place to ensure there is no unauthorised access.

The location of the ground, in so far as its relation to the conurbation whose name the club bears, or is traditionally associated with, must meet with the approval of both the relevant FA Committee and the Board of Directors or Management Committee of the league of which it is a member.

The club must disclose plans and details of any proposed future move to a new stadium or of any significant alteration to the existing ground to both the league of which it is a member and to The FA.

	GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
GRADE 1	As a minimum, grounds must be three-sided. If there are any extraneous objects, or buildings within the boundary of the ground or the ground has an irregular configuration of seating, standing and covered areas that do not conform to the recognised standard design of a football stadium, the club may not be awarded a Grade 1 grading. The ground must have the potential of being upgraded to meet the criteria for membership of the EFL.
GRADE 2	
GRADE 3	As a minimum, grounds must be three-sided.
GRADE 4	
GRADE 5	
GRADE 6	As a minimum, grounds must be two-sided.
GRADE 7	As a minimum, grounds must be two-sided.
GRADE 8	N/A
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	Consideration must be given to the location of any new ground, its accessibility and sustainability with regards to users, spectators and neighbours.

6

NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.2 Capacity

The stadium must have a minimum capacity of spectators in line with the chart below, inclusive of any seated spectators, as certified by the local authority or calculated by a competent person, in accordance with the current edition of the 'Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds' (Green Guide) at the time of inspection.

The FA and/or the relevant League reserve the right to appoint a suitably-qualified person to review and, if found necessary, amend the capacity figure. Such intervention may be at the cost of the Club.

	GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
GRADE 1	A capacity of 4,000 is required, with the (demonstrable) potential to increase this to 5,000 in the future. The club must have the ability to segregate home and visiting supporters. Any segregated area must have exclusive entrances, exits, accessible, female and male toilet facilities and catering facilities. The latter may be of the mobile type. All Step 1 fixtures are subject to the Football Spectators Act 1989 (which amongst other things contains provisions relating to football banning orders) and the Football (Offences) Act 1991 (which amongst other things creates offences that are specific to football matches).
GRADE 2	A capacity of 3,000 is required, with the (demonstrable) potential to increase this to 4,000 in the future.
GRADE 3	A capacity of 1,950 is required, with the (demonstrable) potential to increase this to 3,000 in the future.
GRADE 4	A capacity of 1,300 is required, with the (demonstrable) potential to increase this to 1,950 in the future.
GRADE 5	
GRADE 6	There is no minimum capacity at this level, but a club should be mindful that the minimum requirement for Grade 4 is 1,300.
GRADE 7	
GRADE 8	There is no minimum capacity at this level.
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	Consideration must be given to the desired capacity which the club is aiming for and the facilities it wants to provide. It is important that clubs have the space within their stadiums to allow where possible for cost-effective expansion of stands and terraces to take place in order to meet the capacities outlined above.

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NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.3 Boundary of the Ground

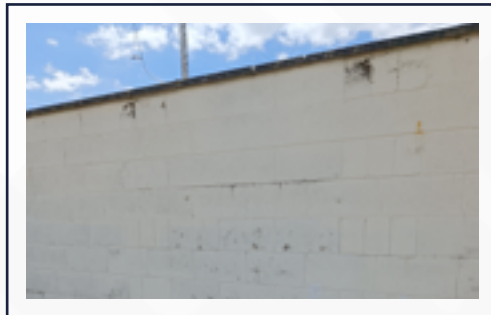
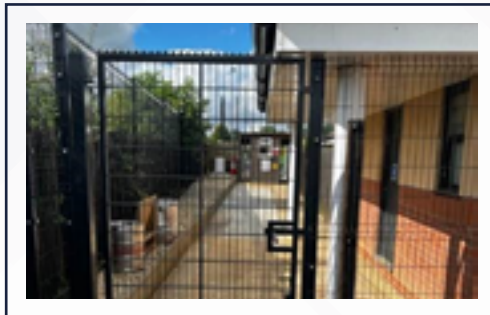
All grounds at Grades 1 to 6 must be enclosed by a permanent boundary. However, to be promoted from Regional Feeder League level, such boundaries do not have to be permanent.

	Prevent viewing from outside ground?	Type/permitted materials	Height	Other comments
GRADE 1	Must prevent individuals from viewing the game from outside the ground.	Of sound construction, such as pre- cast concrete, brick, breeze block or metal cladding with steel or concrete posts.	Minimum of 1.83 metres as measured from outside the ground.	Where any side of the ground is bounded by private land/property, the fixed boundary of that private land / property may be acceptable as the boundary of the ground.
GRADE 2		Lapped timber, latch panel wood fences and wire mesh fences with wooden posts may be acceptable. Hedges, shrubs and/or trees will not normally be accepted.		Where a side or an end of the ground is designated spectator free because of an adjoining sports field or amenity there must be a fence along the entire length or width of the ground to separate the two facilities. The fence, which may be demountable, must be a minimum height of 1.83 metres and it must not be possible to view the match from outside.
GRADE 3				
GRADE 4				
GRADE 5	It is not a requirement to prevent external viewing at this level.	No materials specified. It is recommended, where possible, to future-proof the ground by constructing using the above materials.	As a general rule, the minimum height, when measured from outside the ground, must be 1.83 metres.	
GRADE 6				
GRADE 7				Boundary does not have to be of a permanent nature.
GRADE 8	There is no requirement for a ground to be enclosed in any way.			
NEW BUILD AND CONVERSIONS	Consideration must be given to the suitability of the boundary of the ground and the materials used to screen and secure the ground should be suitable for the location of the ground.			

6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

EXAMPLES OF GROUND BOUNDARIES



6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.4 Clubhouse

There must be a clubhouse facility either on or adjacent to the ground, which must be open on matchdays to provide refreshments and toilet facilities for spectators. These should include male, female and accessible toilet facilities. Please note the ground toilet requirements at criterion 2.4.

GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	
GRADE 1	The Clubhouse must also provide refreshments to visiting Players, Officials and Match Officials, unless provided for elsewhere in the ground.
GRADE 2	
GRADE 3	
GRADE 4	
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	Clubhouse facilities should be welcoming to all spectators and users. High-quality facilities may increase revenues for clubs through the sale of food and refreshments. Consideration needs to be given to the number of male, female and accessible toilets as well as making provision for baby-changing facilities.

6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

EXAMPLES OF CLUBHOUSES



6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.5 Parking Facilities

At Grades 1 and 2: There must be adequate car parking facilities at or adjacent to the ground. Car parking within the boundary of the ground on matchdays may not be acceptable if the control or admission of spectators is not deemed suitable or the safety of spectators is compromised.

At Grades 3 to 6, and RFL Promotion: There should be adequate car parking facilities on or adjacent to the ground. Car parking within the boundary of the ground on match days may not be acceptable if the control or admission of spectators is not deemed suitable or the safety of spectators is compromised.

GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	
GRADE 1	<p>Parking facilities must be provided for directors, with a minimum number of four places for visiting directors.</p> <p>There must be safe parking arrangements for the visiting team’s coach.</p> <p>Unmarked parking facilities must also be provided for the match officials.</p>
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	<p>Parking should be in line with any guidance produced by the Local Authority from whom the club is seeking planning permission.</p>

6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

EXAMPLES OF PARKING FACILITIES



6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.6 Pitch Perimeter Barrier

Subject to the provisions detailed below, there must be a permanent fixed barrier ideally 1.1 metres high as measured from the spectator side, of sound construction (e.g. concrete and steel) and free from all sharp edges, surrounding the pitch on all sides that may be occupied by spectators. Existing barriers/rails of less than 1.1 metres in height may be acceptable, provided they meet the requirements set out in the advisory section below. There must be no gap between the edge of the hardstanding and the pitch perimeter barrier.

There must be a minimum of 1.83 metres (*for Grade 1 – see the table below) between the touchline, goal line and the pitch perimeter barrier.

Immediately in front of seated accommodation, the boundary of the playing area may be indicated by means other than a permanent fixed barrier, provided that the Club is able to provide assurances that no spectator will be allowed to stand in this area to watch the match.

Where there is a walkway in front of a standing terrace that itself is fronted by a crush barrier that has been subject to an annual risk assessment and, if necessary, tested, an alternative to a fixed barrier (e.g. A-frames) may be used, provided no spectators are allowed to stand in this area to watch the match. The Club must implement a safety management system to ensure this, which also protects the integrity of the playing area.

Where A-frames are utilised instead of a fixed barrier, they must be continuous.

	GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
GRADE 1	The barrier, if other than solid wall type of construction, must be infilled so that the ball cannot pass through or under it. Plastic multi-purpose hi-vis fencing is not considered suitable for infill. * There must be no less than 2.25 metres (and ideally there should be 2.75 metres) between the touchline, goal line and the pitch perimeter barrier.
GRADE 2	The barrier, if other than solid wall type of construction, must be infilled so that the ball cannot pass through or under it. Plastic multi-purpose hi-vis fencing is not considered suitable for infill.
GRADE 3	
GRADE 4	
ADVISORY	It is important to distinguish between a pitch perimeter barrier/rail which exists to separate spectators from the playing area and a crush barrier which has been constructed and tested in accordance with the requirements of the Green Guide. Where the structure cannot be designated as a crush barrier, e.g. its height exceeds 1.1 metres, the maximum depth of standing behind it is limited to 1.5 metres. This must be borne in mind in any capacity calculations. It is recognised that the above may not be an issue for normal attendances but, when a larger crowd is anticipated, the Club should be mindful of the associated management issues and, if necessary, take professional advice. Whatever system is employed, a club should be mindful of its responsibility to ensure spectator safety and minimise the possibility of unauthorised incursions on the playing area.
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	Any barriers installed at new grounds should be purposed-designed, with integrated infill panels as required. They should be made from UPVC or coated metal. Fixing of panels and sponsors' signs should be done in a safe way to avoid injury to players sliding into the barrier. Clubs should carry out their own regular risk assessments. Where obstacles such as buildings or floodlight columns are in place in lieu of a barrier, a risk assessment must be carried out. Where identified, measures to protect players should be put in place. In the case of a new stadium, the minimum run-off between the pitch and the pitch perimeter barrier should ideally be four metres and must be a minimum of three metres. The run-off must be free of any fixed object such as goals (that are not part of the field of play), dugouts and floodlight columns. Note: replacing a grass pitch with an Artificial Turf Pitch does not constitute a 'New build' and therefore is not bound by the three-metre run-off above.

6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

EXAMPLES OF PITCH PERIMETER BARRIERS



6

NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.7 Pitch Standards

The playing surface must be grass, unless otherwise authorised by the Competition’s Board of Directors, and must be of the highest possible standard. It must be level and free from surface depressions and excessive undulations and must be maintained to the highest possible standard at all times. If the Competition is concerned with the standard of the playing surface they may, at the Competition’s discretion, take any reasonable action against the Club.

Clubs are advised to use the Football Foundation’s PitchPower digital tool (www.footballfoundation.org.uk/pitchpower). PitchPower is operated by the Football Foundation and records and measures grass pitch quality. It also provides advice and guidance directly to Groundskeepers and clubs on how to improve the quality of the playing surface, through expert advice provided by the Grounds Management Association. By using PitchPower during set windows of the season, clubs will be able to record the quality of their playing surface and if needed, adapt their maintenance procedures to ensure that the playing surface is of the highest quality.

The Competition’s Board of Directors or Management Committee may require a club at any time to undertake a PitchPower performance test if it felt that a pitch is not of the highest-possible standard (e.g. if the fulfilment of fixtures appears to be impacted by grass pitch quality).

The maximum slope allowable shall not exceed an even gradient of vertical to horizontal 1:41 in any direction. When a new pitch is being developed or significant improvements are being made to a pitch, a gradient of 1:41 will not be acceptable and the pitch must be constructed with reference to the FA Grass Pitch Performance Quality Standard.

Artificial Grass Pitches (AGP)

Artificial (3G) football turf may only be used provided conditions (i) to (vii) below have been met (the “Performance Standard”):

Grades 1 to 2: The pitch must be surfaced with 3G football turf that has laboratory type approval according to the FIFA Quality Concept for Football Turf (2012 & 2015 editions) – FIFA Quality Pro Performance (notwithstanding 1.8(v) below).

Grades 3 and below: The pitch must be surfaced with 3G football turf that has laboratory type approval according to the FIFA Quality Concept for Football Turf (2012 & 2015 editions) – **FIFA Quality Performance**.

(i) The 3G football turf pitch must be listed on both The Football Association’s register of 3G football turf pitches and FIFA’s 3G football turf pitches register by no later than 31 May and tested **annually** at the Club’s expense.

(ii) Where a 3G football turf pitch is not yet listed on The Football Association’s register (for example if it is a newly-installed pitch), a Club must obtain a Laboratory Performance Test Report and submit it to The Association by no later than 31 July at the Club’s expense.

(iii) The Football Association reserves the right to instruct a Club to have its pitch tested at any time to ensure that it meets the relevant Performance Standard. All such tests shall be at the Club’s expense.

(iv) The 3G football turf, including run-offs, shall be one continuous playing surface and shall be green in colour at least one metre from the outer edge of the touchline and goal line. All line markings shall be in accordance with the

(v) From season 2016/17, only Clubs with FIFA Quality Pro Performance pitches will be eligible to take part in matches under the auspices of National League (i.e. NLS Steps 1 and 2), save that a Club which has a ground with the recommended FIFA Quality Performance standard can be promoted to Step 2 of the National League System, provided that it undertakes, upon renewal of the pitch, to install a pitch that meets the FIFA Quality Pro Performance standard and is certified.

6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.7 Pitch Standards (continued)

- (vi) A Club wishing to be promoted to NLS Step 2 with a 3G football turf pitch must test the pitch by 31 March to the FIFA Quality Pro Performance criteria to ensure it meets the standard required. Any remedial work to meet the FIFA Quality Pro standard must be completed by 31 May and be at the Club’s expense.
- (vii) The pitch must be a consistent green colour (i.e. no stripes/patterns) including at least the first one metre of run-off.

<p>NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS</p>	<p>New Build 3G FTP or Conversion of grass to 3G FTP It is recommended that clubs considering the above projects do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make contact with your relevant League Officer and, where seeking funding from the Premier League Stadium Fund, Football Foundation Technical Project Manager before embarking on any type of feasibility study. • Ensure that any design/plans that are drawn up are agreed by your relevant League Officer and, where seeking funding from the Premier League Stadium Fund, Football Foundation Technical Project Manager to ensure your proposals will meet the relevant FIFA Performance Standard and Ground-Grading Guidance. • The onus is on the club to ensure that they seek expert help and advice to meet the ground-grading criteria. • The playing area of a new 3G pitch must be a minimum of 100 metres x 64 metres and must conform to the requirements of the Laws of the Game. The run-off around the pitch should be a minimum of three or four metres between the touchline, goal line and the pitch perimeter barrier. • Where clubs are installing a 3G in lieu of a grass pitch they must ensure that the pitch is a minimum of 100 metres x 64 metres and must conform to the requirements of the Laws of the Game. • Make contact with your relevant County FA Facility Lead <p>Where a three or four-metre run-off cannot be met because of existing stadia, the following must be achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 1: Ideally there should be 2.75 metres, but no less than 2.25 metres between the touchline, goal line and the pitch perimeter barrier. • Grades 2 to 6: There must be a minimum of 1.83 metres between the touchline, goal line and the pitch perimeter barrier. <p>Clubs who might be involved in FIFA or UEFA competitions must consult specific guidance as the standard size recommendations are greater than the requirements set out above.</p>
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6

NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.8 Playing Area

The playing area must be a minimum of 100 metres x 64 metres and must conform to the requirements of the Laws of the Game.

Goalposts and goal net supports must be of professional manufacture and conform to the relevant safety requirements and the requirements of the Laws of the Game.

	GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
GRADE 1	The Club must be responsible for the upkeep of the playing area. If a club employs an external third party to maintain the playing surface, the details of that third party must be disclosed to The FA and the National League Board of Directors.
GRADE 7	The playing area must be a minimum of 100 metres x 64 metres and must conform to the requirements of the Laws of the Game
GRADE 8	The playing area is to be in accordance with the requirements of the Laws of the Game. Law 1 states that the length of the touchline must be greater thanr than the length of the goal line. Clubs who have held membership at Feeder League level since 2022/23 may have pitches with the following dimensions: Length: Minimum 90 m (100 yds); maximum 120 m (130 yds). Width: Minimum 45 m (50 yds); maximum 90 m (100 yds). Clubs who enter Feeder League level from the 2023/24 season must have minimum pitch size of 100 metres x 64 metres.
ADVISORY	Clubs should ensure that their goalposts meet the standards set out in guidance provided by The FA. it should be noted that the use of metal cup hooks is prohibited. Clubs should refer to 'The FA Guide to Pitch Design, Management and Goalpost Safety'.
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	New pitches should be a minimum of 100 metres x 64 metres and must conform to the requirements of the Laws of the Game. The run-off around the pitch should ideally be four metres or a minimum of three metres. Clubs who might be involved in FIFA or UEFA competitions must consult specific guidance as the standard size recommendations are greater than the requirements above.

6

NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.9 Technical Area

Two covered dugouts, clearly marked 'Home' and another with 'Away' or 'Visitors', must be provided unless adequate provision is made in a seated stand. They must be on the same side of the pitch, ideally either side of the halfway line, ideally both equidistant from it and ideally a minimum of three metres apart. They should provide an unobstructed view of the playing area.

Portable dugouts are permitted but must be securely fixed while in use.

A technical area must be marked out, in accordance with the guidance contained in the ['Laws of the Game'](#) booklet.

GRADE 1	Each of the seating areas must be able to accommodate a minimum of 11 adults on fixed seats or benches . Where bench seating is provided, a minimum of 0.5 metres must be allowed for each person. (i.e. 11 persons require a minimum of 5.5 metres)
GRADE 2	
GRADE 3	Each box must be able to accommodate a minimum of 8 persons under cover on fixed seats or benches. Where bench seating is provided, a minimum 0.5 metres must be allowed for each person (i.e. 8 persons require a minimum of 4 metres.). It should be noted that for Grade 2 there must be seating for 11 persons (as detailed further above) – it is recommended that any Club promoted to Step 2 meets the Grade 2 requirement before commencing the season.
GRADE 4	Each box must be able to accommodate a minimum of 8 persons under cover on fixed seats or benches. Where bench seating is provided, a minimum of 0.5 metres must be allowed for each person (i.e. 8 persons require a minimum of four metres.).
GRADE 5	
GRADE 6	
GRADE 7	
GRADE 8	Portable dugouts are permitted and must be securely fixed when in use. It is desirable for a Technical Area to be marked out in accordance with the guidance contained in the 'Laws of the Game' booklet.
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	When new boxes are being constructed or installed, they must be on each side of the halfway line, equidistant from it and a minimum of three metres apart. The seating part of the dugout or any physical structure should not encroach into the run-off.

6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

EXAMPLES OF TECHNICAL AREAS



6

NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.10 Safe Walkway

There must be a safe, unimpeded passage for players and match officials between the dressing rooms and the pitch.

The design of the safe walkway will inevitably differ from ground to ground and it will rarely guarantee the safe passage of players and match officials unless supplemented by stewards. A club should implement procedures appropriate to the particular structure and be ready to respond to on-field situations which might affect spectator behaviour.

	GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
GRADE 1	
GRADE 2	
GRADE 3	The use of protection designed products such as permanent structures or retractable tunnels to separate players and spectators is recommended.
GRADE 4	
GRADE 5	
GRADE 7	There must be a safe, unimpeded passage for players and match officials between their dressing rooms and the pitch. The design of the safe walkway may differ according to the circumstances of each different ground. It is recommended that stewards are used to assist the safe passage of players and match officials. A club should implement procedures appropriate to the particular structure and be ready to respond to on-field situations which might affect spectator behaviour.
GRADE 8	A secure walkway is not a requirement.
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	Consideration should be given to the entrance and exit of the field of play and the distance involved to ensure the safety of players and officials and minimum contact if afforded to spectators.

6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

EXAMPLES OF SAFE WALKWAY



6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.11 Floodlighting

Floodlights must be provided to an average lux in accordance with the requirements in the table below. Readings shall be on a grid of 88 markings (8 across, 11 down) evenly spaced with the outside readings taken 2.5 metres inside from the touchline. The average of all the readings is taken to be the average illumination level in lux of the floodlighting installation.

The lux values must be tested every two years in accordance with current guidelines by an approved independent contractor. Floodlights must be retested after any significant alterations. Existing certification will be accepted provided that the test was carried out within the last two years unless work has been carried out at the ground which may have affected previous readings.

It is also recommended that, at the same time as testing the lights, clubs also test the electrical supply within the ground to ensure that the system complies with current electrical standards and also request a visual inspection of the columns for signs of corrosion, fatigue and overloading.

An example of an 'approved' contractor is one who possesses the NICEIC (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting) Approved Contractors Award or ISO 9000/BS 5750 (International Standards/British Standards), or who is a member of the Electrical Contractors' Association. Alternatively, it can be a contractor deemed acceptable by the league.

The contractor must, when detailing the lux values, give confirmation in writing of the date when the illumination test equipment used was last calibrated.

GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	
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GRADE 1	Floodlights must be provided to an average lux reading of at least 250. No single reading can be less than 100 lux and no single reading can be less than one quarter of the highest reading, to ensure an even spread of light. When applying for a higher grading, the certificate should have been issued no more than six months prior to application.
GRADE 2	Floodlights must be provided to an average lux reading of at least 180. No single reading can be less than 100 lux and no single reading can be less than one quarter of the highest reading, to ensure an even spread of light. When new or improved installations are being planned, the lighting procured must meet BS 12193 Class 2 and have an average lux reading of at least 200 with the capability of increasing to 250 if promoted to Step 1. When applying for a higher grading, the certificate should have been issued no more than six months prior to application.
GRADE 3	Floodlights must be provided to an average lux reading of at least 120. No single reading can be less than one quarter of the highest reading, to ensure an even spread of light.
GRADE 4	
GRADE 5	
GRADE 6	
GRADE 7	When new or improved installations are being planned, the lighting procured must meet BS 12193 Class 2 and have an average lux reading of at least 200.
GRADE 8	Floodlighting is not compulsory at this Grade, however, where provided floodlights should be provided to an average lux reading of at least 120. No single reading can be less than one quarter of the highest reading, to ensure an even spread of light.
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	Before installing new floodlights or upgrading existing floodlights, clubs are advised to consult with their Local Authority planning department. All new installations and upgrades must be LED floodlights.

6

NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.12 Public Address System

At Grades 1 to 5, a public address system must be provided which is clearly audible in all areas of the ground which can be occupied by spectators.

1.13 Entrances

The table below denotes the number of operational spectator entrances that are required for each Grade to control the ingress of spectators.

Electronic turnstiles with bar code readers are also acceptable but an emergency procedure must be in place in the event of a power failure and be detailed within a Club's Emergency Action Plan.

Adequate protection and security must be incorporated for the turnstile operator or, where tickets are sold from a box office, the cashier. This must include a grille (or similar) and a lock on the inside of the turnstile (or paybox at Step 5 and below).

It must be possible to gain access to the spectator viewing areas from the turnstiles via a bound surface minimum width of 0.9 metre (ideally 1.2m).

All entrances should be placed in appropriate positions around the boundary of the ground and take into account the requirements of segregation of spectators of both teams.

	GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
GRADE 1	8 spectator entrances that must be controlled by fully operational turnstiles of the revolving type and must be suitably housed and lit.
GRADE 2	6 spectator entrances that must be controlled by fully operational turnstiles of the revolving type and must be suitably housed and lit.
GRADE 3	3 spectator entrances that must be controlled by fully operational turnstiles of the revolving type and must be suitably housed and lit.
GRADE 4	2 spectator entrances that must be controlled by fully operational turnstiles of the revolving type and must be suitably housed and lit.
GRADE 5	1 spectator entrance is required for these Grades. This should be controlled by a fully operational turnstile of the revolving type, however, a pay box (which is not accepted at Grades 1 to 4) where a charge for entry can be taken is acceptable (please note: a table will not be deemed acceptable as a pay box as it offers the cashier no protection).
GRADE 6	
GRADE 7	
GRADE 8	There is no requirement for fixed entry points.
ADVISORY	Part of a ground capacity calculation is calculated using entrances and exits, clubs should refer to the guidance set out in the Sports Ground Safety Authority – Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds .
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	Consideration should be given to the location of entrances, the ground capacity and the ability to offer segregation to home and away spectators. It must be possible to gain access to the spectator viewing areas from the turnstiles via a bound surface minimum width of 1.2 metres.

6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.14 Exits

All exits must be clearly signed, ideally with ‘running man’ signs, and are to be kept clear and free from obstructions. For further information, reference should be made to the [Sports Ground Safety Authority – Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds](#).

There must be access via a bound surface to all exits from the nearest spectator viewing areas.

ADVISORY	Part of a ground capacity calculation is calculated using entrances and exits, clubs should refer to the guidance set out in the Sports Ground Safety Authority – Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds.
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	Consideration should be given to the location of exits depending upon the size of the facilities and capacity.



6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

1. GROUND (continued)

1.15 Lighting

Clubs have a responsibility to ensure the safety of spectators entering, leaving and moving about the ground and, if a ground is used in non-daylight hours, adequate artificial lighting should be provided.

	GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
GRADE 1	There must be an emergency lighting system for all spectator areas and concourses as required by the local Safety Authority or approved by a competent person.
ADVISORY	<p>Consideration must be given by a club to its safety procedures in the event of a power failure and be detailed within a Club's Emergency Action Plan. Clubs must ensure that key matchday personnel are familiar with the safety procedures and the Emergency Action Plan.</p> <p>Grades 2 and below While their installation is strongly recommended, neither working nor emergency lighting is a grading requirement. However, clubs are reminded that they have a responsibility to ensure the safety of spectators entering, leaving and moving about the ground and, if a ground is used in non-daylight hours, adequate artificial lighting should be provided.</p>

1.16 TV Gantry/Camera platform

Currently, only Grade 1 has requirements for a TV Gantry and Camera platform:

	GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
GRADE 1	A permanent TV gantry or camera platform that meets the following minimum criteria: Clubs are to provide a suitable position in the stadium from which to film single-camera footage of matches. This should be exactly on the halfway line, facing away from the sun and protected from the weather, at least four metres above pitch level, and have a nearby 13A power socket. Whilst not a requirement, the ideal angle is 12-14 degrees to the centre line and 22-24 degrees from the near-side. If there is no existing gantry, a scaffold should be built, insured and properly maintained to Health & Safety Executive standards

1.17 Adjoining Pitches

Where deemed that they are likely to interfere with the playing of a match, ball games must not be played on adjoining pitches whilst a match is in progress. In any case, adjoining pitches must be fenced off to a height of 1.83 metres to create an enclosed ground.

1.18 Emergency Access

Access must be provided for the emergency services and maintained free from obstruction.

Such access must be detailed within a Club's Emergency Action Plan and be communicated to key matchday personnel.

6

NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES

2.1 Spectator Accommodation

Covered accommodation, which should preferably be on two sides of the ground, must be of sound construction of timber/steel/brick/concrete or any combination of these materials. Requirements regarding spectator numbers for such covered accommodation are set-out in the table below. Existing timber stands are only acceptable subject to a fire risk assessment conducted by a competent person.

While individual seating is preferred, existing bench seating may be permitted provided it is in good repair and that individual spaces (each space a minimum of 500mm in width) are clearly marked. **Note: at Grades 1 & 2 bench seating will not** be included in any calculation for the required minimum covered seating accommodation.

All seating must afford a good view of the pitch and be clean, functional and in good condition.

Segregation

When segregation is in operation, there must be adequate toilet facilities and refreshment facilities in each segregated area in addition to the appropriate means of entry and exit.

Standing spectators are not allowed in or near a seated spectator stand where they can obstruct views. Areas where spectators are not permitted to stand must be clearly marked with yellow hatched markings. Alternatively, appropriate signage may be acceptable.

6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES (continued)

2.1 Spectator Accommodation (continued)

Below are the requirements Grade-by-Grade requirements. The minimum covered accommodation calculation is inclusive of Directors/Committee and/or Press seating:

	Min. covered accommodation	Other	Directors' seats	Segregation	Hard standing
GRADE 1	For 500 (all seated) in no more than 2 stands. At least 250 seats in one stand, with no stand less than 100 seats.	A minimum of four rows is required to the dimensions recommended in 'The Guide to the Safety at Sports Grounds' (Green Guide). In order to meet the sight line requirements, it is recommended that the first line of seating is located above pitch level. There must be an unobstructed view from the lowest level of the seated area. Seats should ideally be of the tip-up type with back rests. Alternatively, other than in the Directors' Box, the seats may be of the plastic moulded type complete with back rests or other types of seats, provided that they have back rests. Temporary structures will not be accepted.	Home – min. of 24 seats Away – min. of 16 seats These seats must be clearly marked "Home" and "Away Directors" and should enjoy a prime position in the main stand.	Clubs must be able to demonstrate that visiting supporters can be segregated when necessary.	Hard standing to a minimum width of 0.9 metre, measured from the spectator side of the pitch perimeter barrier, must be provided on all four sides of the ground, unless a different configuration exists (as set out in section 1). The surface must be tarmac, concrete, concrete paving or other approved materials which create a bound material. Any level surfaces within the ground must be hard standing. i.e. tarmac, concrete, concrete paving or other approved materials.
GRADE 2	For 500 of which 250* ^ are seats in one stand.		Home – min. of 12 seats Away – min. of 12 seats These seats must be clearly marked "Home" and "Away Directors" and should enjoy a prime position in the main stand.		Hard standing to a minimum width of 0.9 metre, measured from the spectator side of the pitch perimeter barrier, must be provided on all four sides of the ground, unless a different configuration exists (as set out in section 1). The surface must be tarmac, concrete, concrete paving or other approved materials which create a bound material.
GRADE 3	For 500, of which 250 are seats in no more than two stands. With no stand less than 50 seats.	Additional seating may be provided in other areas of the ground. However, these seats are not to be classed as being 'in lieu' of the number shown to the left.	Home – min. of 12 seats Away – min. of 12 seats These seats must be clearly marked 'Home' and 'Away Directors' and should enjoy a prime position in the main stand.	Clubs must be able to demonstrate that visiting supporters can be segregated when necessary.	Hard standing to a minimum width of 0.9 metre, measured from the spectator side of the pitch perimeter barrier, must be provided on all four sides of the ground, unless a different configuration exists (as set out in section 1). The surface must be tarmac, concrete, concrete paving or other approved materials which create a bound material.
GRADE 4	For 300, of which 150 are seats in no more than two stands. With no stand less than 50 seats.		No segregation requirement		

6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES (continued)

2.1 Spectator Accommodation (continued)

	Min. covered accommodation	Other	Directors' seats	Segregation	Hard standing
GRADE 5	For 100, of which 50 are seats in no more than one stand.	Additional seating may be provided in other areas of the ground. However, these seats are not to be classed as being “in lieu” of the number shown to the left. Where a club shares its ground with a cricket club which limits the amount of permanent hard standing which can be installed, a maximum of one side or end of temporary flooring made of a polypropylene material or such like may be acceptable. Precise details of the specification must be supplied to the league and The FA before its installation. Spectators must not be permitted to access any end/side without hard standing. NB: Where the facility is shared with cricket, hard standing on a minimum of two-and-a-half sides may be acceptable.	Home – min. of 8 seats Away – min. of 8 seats These seats must be clearly marked “Home” and “Away Directors” and should enjoy a prime position in the main stand.	No segregation requirement	Hard standing to a minimum width of 0.9 metre, measured from the spectator side of the pitch perimeter barrier, must be provided on three sides of the ground. Existing athletics stadia may be exempt from this requirement and each case will be considered by the Ground-Grading Sub-Committee on its own merits. The surface must be tarmac, concrete, concrete paving or other approved materials which create a bound material.
GRADE 6		Where a club shares its ground with a cricket club which limits the amount of permanent hard standing which can be installed, a maximum of one side or end of temporary flooring made of a polypropylene material or such like may be acceptable. Precise details of the specification must be supplied to the league and The FA before its installation.	Separate seating for Directors/Committee and guests is not compulsory for this grade.		Hard standing to a minimum width of 0.9 metre, measured from the spectator side of the pitch perimeter barrier, must be provided on a minimum of two adjacent end/sides of the ground with direct access from the entrance. The surface must be tarmac, concrete, concrete paving or other approved materials which create a bound material.
GRADE 7	The minimum covered accommodation must be 50 (seated or standing)	Spectators must not be permitted to access any end/side without hard standing. Existing athletics stadia may be exempt from this requirement and each case will be considered by the Ground-Grading Sub-Committee on its own merits.			
GRADE 8	No requirements at Regional Feeder League Level				

* **Note:** By 31 March in the third consecutive season of membership at Step 2 clubs must have at least 500 covered seats, with 250 of these seats being located in one stand. If a third consecutive season is not reached (i.e. a club is relegated to Step 3 during this period) the club would have a further three years to achieve 500 covered seats upon promotion back to Step 2.

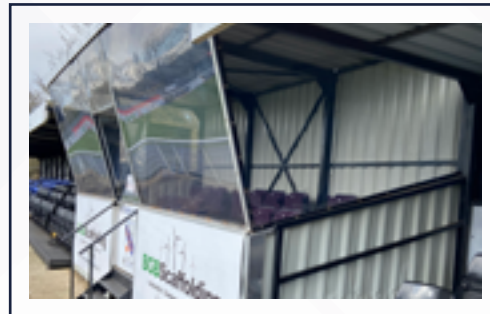
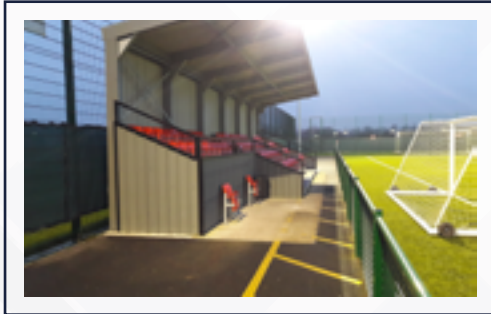
^ **Note:** Promotion and promotion play-offs: To qualify for promotion to the National League by winning the respective North/South Championship and for the club to participate in the promotion play off matches, the ground must achieve a Grade 2 Grading together with 500 seats under cover by 31st March in the season where promotion or participation in the Play-Offs is achieved. These seats may be in two stands, with no stand having less than 100 seats.

ADVISORY	Covered accommodation for wheelchair/powerchair users and their companions Clubs are reminded of the need to accommodate disabled users of facilities. Consideration therefore needs to be given as to how the Club will meet or exceed its obligations concerning suitable covered accommodation.
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	Careful consideration should be given to the location of new seating and standing accommodation to ensure that it is accessible to all spectators and affords a good view of the game. Clubs should carefully research the different types of options available. Any hard standing should be constructed to a minimum width of 1.2m in-line with the Sports Ground Safety Authority – Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds.

6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES (continued)

EXAMPLES OF SPECTATOR ACCOMMODATION



6

NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES (continued)

2.2 Press Seating

All press seating must be provided with lighting and writing facilities for use by the press and other media. The press seating must have a clear view of the field of play. All press seating will ideally have an appropriate power socket for the charging of phones, laptops etc. per press seat.

	GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
GRADE 1	A minimum of 12 seats for the press must be provided
GRADE 2	A minimum of 6 seats for the press must be provided
GRADE 3	A minimum of 4 seats for the press must be provided
GRADE 4	A minimum of 2 seats for the press must be provided
GRADE 5	There is no requirement for dedicated press seating.
GRADE 6	
GRADE 7	
GRADE 8	

EXAMPLES OF PRESS SEATING



6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES (continued)

2.3 Terracing

All terracing must be in sound condition and must comply with the requirements of the [Sports Ground Safety Authority – Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds](#). Terracing that is crumbling, has grass/weeds growing through it or has broken or loose concrete will not be accepted.

Segregation

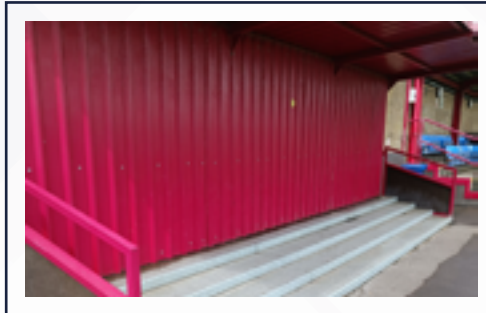
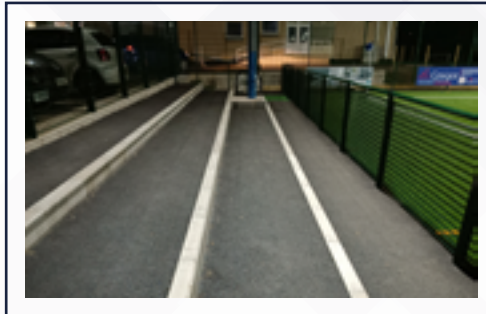
When segregation is in operation, there must be adequate toilet facilities and refreshment facilities in each segregated area in addition to the appropriate means of entry and exit.

	GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
GRADE 1	Any level surfaces within the ground must be hard standing, i.e. tarmac, concrete, concrete paving or other approved materials. Spectator standing areas behind the goals must be terraced unless the overall ground capacity is achieved with the exclusion of one or both of these areas. The number of terrace steps to be commensurate in achieving the overall ground capacity. Grass banking may not be acceptable within the ground. Grass banking within the ground must not be accessible for spectators to view the match. The installation of permanent barriers of a suitable height but not less than 1.1 metres will be required. The use of demountable or semi-permanent type fencing is not acceptable. All visible grassed areas must be well maintained.
GRADE 2	Any level surface within the ground should ideally be hard standing, such as tarmac, concrete, concrete paving or other approved materials which create a bound surface. However, flat and well-maintained grassed areas may be accepted, provided the width between the hard standing (when measured from the edge farther away from the perimeter barrier) and the boundary fence does not exceed 20 metres. Grass banking may not be acceptable within the ground. Grass banking within the ground must not be accessible for spectators to view the match. The installation of permanent barriers of a suitable height but not less than 1.1 metres will be required. The use of demountable or semi-permanent type fencing is not acceptable. All visible grassed areas must be well maintained. Note: For Grade 1 stepped terracing is required behind both goals unless the overall ground capacity is achieved with the exclusion of one or both of these areas.
GRADE 3	Any level surface within the ground should ideally be hard standing, such as tarmac, concrete, concrete paving or other approved materials which create a bound surface.
GRADE 4	However, flat and well-maintained grassed areas may be accepted, provided the width between the hard standing (when measured from the edge farther away from the perimeter barrier) and the boundary fence does not exceed 20 metres. Spectators must be denied access to any grass banking so that it cannot be used for viewing the match.
GRADE 5	Any level surface within the ground should ideally be hard standing, such as tarmac, concrete, concrete paving or other approved materials which create a bound surface. However, flat and well-maintained grassed areas may be accepted.
GRADE 6	
GRADE 7	
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	Careful consideration should be given to the location of covered terracing accommodation to ensure that it is accessible to all spectators and affords a good view of the game. Clubs should carefully research the different types of options available.

6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES (continued)

EXAMPLES OF TERRACING



6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES (continued)

2.4 Toilets

There must be adequate toilet facilities for men and women in each area of the ground commensurate with the capacity of that area in accordance with the [Sports Ground Safety Authority – Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds](#). The minimum requirements are detailed in the table below.

Please note: where urinals are referenced below, these can be replaced with WCs but not vice-versa (e.g. four urinals and two WCs could be replaced by six WCs).

Accessible toilets

Clubs are reminded that it is a legal requirement to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled users of facilities. If facilities for disabled users exist in the club’s clubhouse, they should ideally be clearly signposted.

Family facilities

Clubs are encouraged to consider the needs of all spectators and the facilities that they might require such as baby-changing facilities, facilities for young children and women’s toiletry provision.

Segregation

When segregation is in operation, there must be adequate toilet facilities and refreshment facilities in each segregated area in addition to the appropriate means of entry and exit. Individual toilet units, often known as ‘porta-loos’, are permissible on a temporary basis but may not be included in the minimum toilet requirements.

GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	
GRADE 1	<p>A minimum of two units of toilet facilities must be provided located in two separate areas within the ground, excluding those located in the clubhouse, or accessible only from within the main stand. Each unit must contain the minimum of:</p> <p>Male: Four urinals or equivalent and two WCs</p> <p>Female: Two WCs</p> <p>In addition, there must be hand wash basins with hot and cold running water, warm-air hand driers and/or paper towel dispenser and wastepaper bins in each toilet area. While replaceable linen roller towels in a cabinet are acceptable, individual hand towels are not permitted.</p> <p>All toilet areas must be in working order, with a roof and operational lighting, supplied with toilet paper and maintained to the highest level of cleanliness.</p> <p>These facilities may be of a temporary or mobile kind but must be connected to the mains supply (i.e. water and power) and main drainage or an acceptable alternative drainage system. Individual toilet units, often known as ‘porta-loos’, are permissible on a temporary basis but may not be included in the minimum toilet requirements.</p> <p>They must be fully accessible with permanent access.</p> <p>The location of all toilet facilities must be indicated with appropriate signage.</p>

6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES (continued)

2.4 Toilets (continued)

GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	
GRADE 2	<p>Toilets must be located within the ground and must be accessible both to male and to female spectators. Such toilets need not be in a dedicated toilet block, but must be in addition to those used by people using the clubhouse.</p> <p>The following minimum toilet facilities must be provided in total, excluding those located in any clubhouse:</p> <p>Male: Four urinals or equivalent and two WCs</p>
GRADE 3	<p>Female: Two WCs</p> <p>In addition, wash hand basins with hot and cold running water, warm-air hand driers and/or paper towel dispenser with towels and wastepaper bins must be provided in each toilet area. While replaceable linen roller towels in a cabinet are acceptable, individual hand towels are not permitted.</p> <p>All toilet areas must be in working order, with a roof and operational lighting, supplied with toilet paper and maintained to a high level of cleanliness.</p>
GRADE 4	<p>These facilities may be of a temporary or mobile kind but must be connected to the mains supply (i.e. water and power) and main drainage or an acceptable alternative drainage system. They must be fully accessible with permanent access.</p> <p>Individual toilet units often known as 'portaloos' are permissible on a temporary basis but may not be included in the minimum toilet requirements.</p> <p>The location of all toilet facilities must be indicated with appropriate signage.</p>
GRADE 5	<p>Toilets must be located within the ground and must be accessible both to male and to female spectators. NB: Where it is necessary to exit the ground to gain access to toilets located in an adjacent clubhouse, these may be deemed acceptable, provided no great distance is involved.</p> <p>The following minimum toilet facilities must be provided:</p> <p>Male: Two urinals or equivalent and one WC</p> <p>Female: Two WCs</p> <p>In addition, wash hand basins, with hot and cold running water, warm air hand driers and/or paper towels, together with a supply of toilet paper, must be provided in each toilet area. Whilst replaceable linen roller towels in a cabinet are acceptable, individual hand towels are not permitted.</p> <p>The provision of toilet facilities within a clubhouse will be acceptable if these are accessible and available at all times on match days.</p>
GRADE 6	<p>All toilet areas must be in working order, with a roof and operational lighting, supplied with toilet paper and maintained to a high level of cleanliness.</p> <p>These facilities may be of a temporary or mobile kind but must be connected to the mains supply (ie water and power) and main drainage or an acceptable alternative drainage system. They must be fully accessible with permanent access.</p> <p>Individual toilet units, often known as 'portaloos', are permissible on a temporary basis but may not be included in the minimum toilet requirements. The location of all toilet facilities must be indicated with appropriate signage</p>

6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES (continued)

2.4 Toilets (continued)

	GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
GRADE 7	<p>Toilets must be located within the ground and must be accessible both to male and to female spectators.</p> <p>Where it is necessary to exit the ground to gain access to toilets located in an adjacent clubhouse, these may be deemed acceptable, provided no great distance is involved.</p> <p>A minimum of two WCs must be provided.</p> <p>In addition, wash hand basins, with hot and cold running water, warm-air hand driers and/or paper towels, together with a supply of toilet paper, must be provided in each toilet area.</p> <p>All toilet areas must be in working order, with a roof and operational lighting, and maintained to a high level of cleanliness.</p> <p>These facilities may be of a temporary or mobile kind but must be connected to the mains supply (i.e. water and power) and main drainage or an acceptable alternative drainage system.</p> <p>They must be fully accessible with permanent access.</p> <p>Individual toilet units, often known as ‘portaloos’, are permissible on a temporary basis but may not be included in the minimum toilet requirements.</p> <p>The location of all toilet facilities must be indicated with appropriate signage.</p>
GRADE 8	<p>Provision should be made for adequate toilet facilities.</p>
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	<p>Careful consideration should be given to the location of toilet provision in the ground and in the clubhouse for all users and spectators. Consideration should be given to the location of services if there is a need to bring in additional toilet facilities.</p> <p>Club should consult their Local Authority Building Control Team for advice to ensure that any improvements meet applicable building regulations.</p>

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NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA 2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES (continued)

EXAMPLES OF TOILETS



6

NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA 2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES (continued)

2.5 Refreshment Facilities

2.5.1 Directors/Committee/Guests

The following provisions must be made in relation to Refreshment Facilities for Directors/Committee Members/Guests:

	GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
GRADE 1	A separate Directors' room, ideally near to or adjacent to the Directors' seating, must be made available in which refreshments for Directors and guests can be served. The room must be able to accommodate a minimum of 24 persons, with nearby toilet facilities.
GRADE 2	
GRADE 3	A separate room must be made available in which refreshments for Directors/Committee and guests can be served. These areas must be able to accommodate a minimum of 24 persons, with nearby toilet facilities.
GRADE 4	Retractable partitions or free-standing screens may be acceptable, provided they are of a height and position to afford complete privacy.
GRADE 5	A separate room or reserved area must be made available in which refreshments for Directors/Committee and guests can be served.
GRADE 6	Refreshments must be made available for visiting officials and guests.
GRADE 7	
GRADE 8	There is no requirement for Directors/Committee/Guest refreshments at this level.

2.5.2 Ground Refreshment Facilities

Refreshment facilities, which may be of the mobile type, must be available to spectators in:

	GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
GRADE 1	Each separate area of the ground.
GRADE 2	
GRADE 3	
GRADE 4	
GRADE 5	The ground or in an adjacent clubhouse.
GRADE 6	
GRADE 7	
GRADE 8	Refreshment facilities for spectators are not compulsory.
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	Careful consideration should be given to size and location of refreshment facilities both inside the ground and in the clubhouse for ease of access and revenue generation.

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NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES (continued)

2.5 Refreshment Facilities

EXAMPLES OF REFRESHMENT FACILITIES



6

NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA 2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES (continued)

2.6 Equal Provision for All

A club must take account of the needs of all spectators and be mindful of its obligations under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 any other relevant legislation.

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Clubs are required to ensure that there is adequate provision in place for spectators who have specific requirements covered by the Equality Act. It is recommended that provision is made to accommodate spectators in all areas of the ground, but specific attention should be paid to the following:

- Entrances and Exits
- Access around the ground
- Covered viewing area
- Spectator toilet provision

ADVISORY

Clubs improving their facilities should make reference to the relevant publications/data sheets issued by The FA, the Football Foundation and Sport England.

Clubs should also consult their Local Authority Building Control Team for advice to ensure that any improvements meet Part M of the [2010 Building Regulations](#).



6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

3. DRESSING ROOM FACILITIES

3.1 Players

Separate dressing rooms must be provided for both teams within the enclosed area of the ground. The dressing rooms must be of sound construction and be of a permanent nature.

Dressing room size calculations must exclude any corridors leading to the open changing area, as well as the shower and toilets areas.

All shower heads and hand wash basins listed below must have hot and cold running water. Hand wash basins must be located outside the shower area.

WCs must be in cubicles. WCs can replace urinals, but not vice-versa.

There must be a treatment table which is clean and in good condition in each dressing room.

The following is required for each Grade:

	Dressing Room Size	No. of Shower Heads	No. of Hand Wash Basins	No. of Urinals	No. of WCs
GRADE 1	18 square metres	4	1	2	1
GRADE 2				None	
GRADE 3					
GRADE 4					
GRADE 5	12 square metres *	3. (If not located in the dressing room then they must be located adjacent to it).	1	Each dressing room should have adequate toilet facilities exclusively for the use of players - if not located in the dressing room then they must be located adjacent to it and must not be accessible to the general public.	
GRADE 6					
GRADE 7					
GRADE 8					

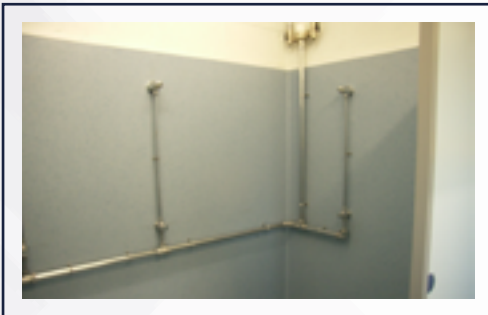
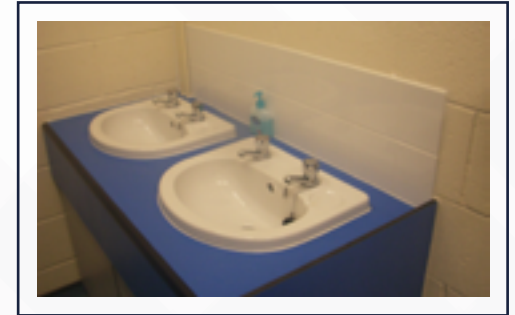
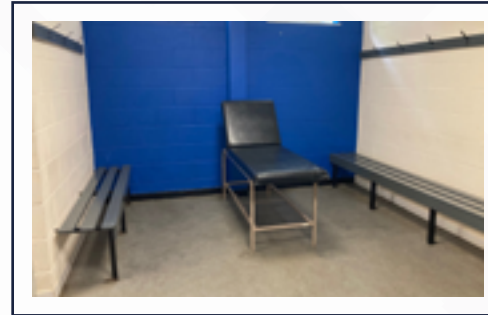
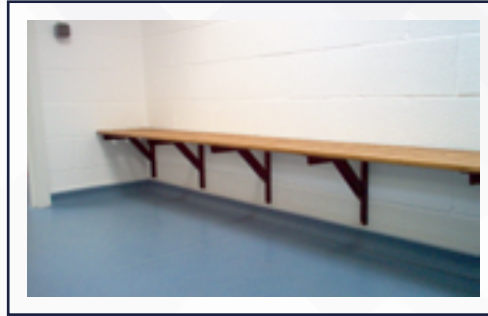
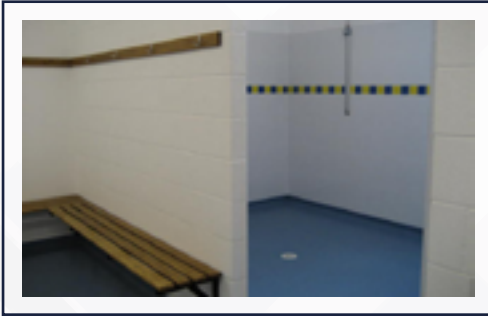
* These will ideally be 18 square metres.

NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	Where clubs are planning to build new changing rooms, these must be of a minimum size of 18 square metres, excluding shower and toilet areas.
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6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

3. DRESSING ROOM FACILITIES (continued)

EXAMPLES OF PLAYERS' DRESSING ROOMS



6

NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

3. DRESSING ROOM FACILITIES (continued)

3.2 Match Officials

All dressing room areas must be maintained to a high standard of cleanliness and be heated, well-ventilated and secure on matchdays.

GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	
GRADE 1	<p>The size of the match officials' dressing room must be a minimum of six square metres excluding the toilet and shower areas.</p> <p>The match officials' dressing room must have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one shower, one wash basin (both with hot and cold running water) • At least one WC in a cubicle <p>Note: On promotion to EFL an additional shower will be required.</p> <p>Provision should be made for separate dressing rooms for male and female match officials. Where new dressing rooms are being constructed or existing ones are being re-designed, separate purpose-built facilities for male and female match officials must be provided.</p> <p>There must be an audible electronic warning device (bell or buzzer) in working order located in the match officials' dressing room linked to both players' dressing rooms.</p>
GRADE 2	<p>The size of the match officials' dressing room must be a minimum of six square metres, excluding shower and toilet areas.</p> <p>Each match officials' dressing room must have the following:</p>
GRADE 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one shower and one wash basin (both with hot and cold running water) • At least one WC in a cubicle
GRADE 4	<p>Provision should be made for separate dressing rooms for male and female match officials. Where new dressing rooms are being constructed or existing ones are being re-designed, separate purpose-built facilities for male and female match officials must be provided</p> <p>There must be an audible electronic warning device (bell or buzzer) in working order located in the match officials' dressing room and linked to the players' dressing rooms.</p>

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NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

3. DRESSING ROOM FACILITIES (continued)

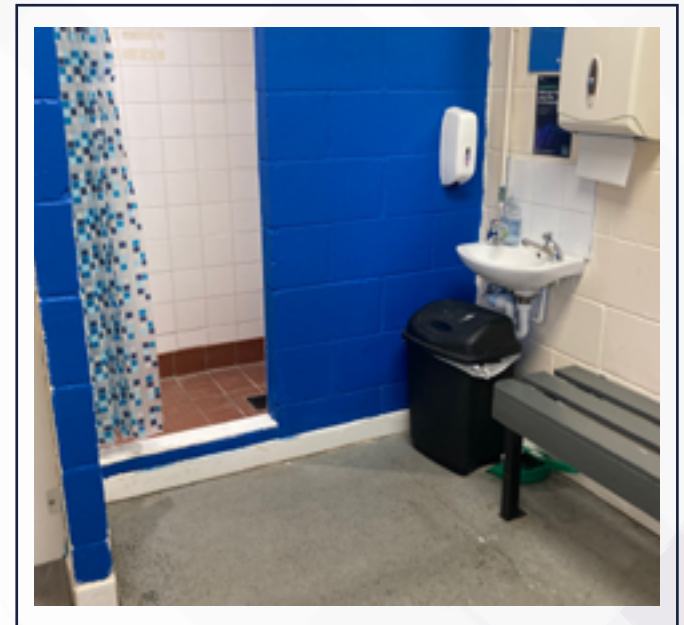
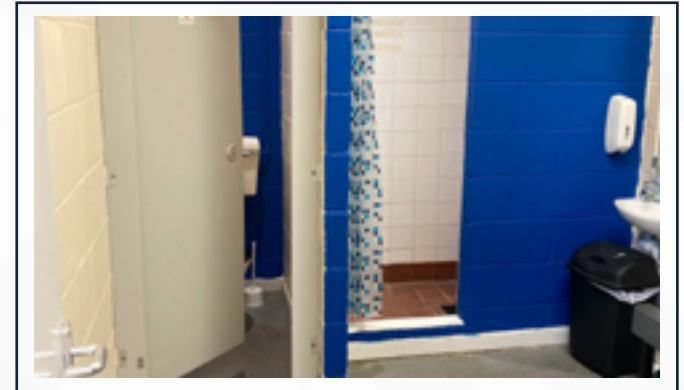
3.2 Match Officials (continued)

GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	
GRADE 5	The size of the match official’s dressing room must be a minimum of four square metres (ideally six square metres), excluding shower and toilet areas. Each match officials’ dressing room must have the following:
GRADE 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one shower and one wash basin (both with hot and cold running water) • At least one WC in a cubicle
GRADE 7	Provision should be made for separate dressing rooms for both male and female match officials. Where new dressing rooms are being constructed or existing are being re-designed, separate purpose-built facilities for both male and female match officials must be provided. There must be an audible electronic warning device (bell or buzzer) in working order located in the match officials’ dressing room, and which is linked to the players’ dressing rooms.
GRADE 8	Separate dressing rooms must be provided for match officials, the minimum size of which shall be 3 square metres excluding shower and toilet areas. Each match official’s dressing room should have the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one working shower (with hot and cold running water) • Adequate toilet facilities, exclusively for the use of match officials, which must be separate from those provided for the players. These do not necessarily need to be situated in the dressing room but must not be accessible to the general public. Provision should be made for changing accommodation for both male and female match officials. When new changing rooms are being planned or existing changing rooms refurbished, a minimum area of six square metres shall be provided. Separate purpose-built facilities for male and female match officials must be provided. In order to comply with RFL Promotion requirements, clubs must provide en-suite shower and toilet facilities for the match officials.
NEW BUILDS AND CONVERSIONS	When new dressing rooms are being constructed the match officials’ room should be a minimum of six square metres in size, excluding shower and toilet areas. Where new dressing rooms are being constructed or existing are being re-designed, separate purpose-built facilities for both male and female match officials must be provided.

6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

3. DRESSING ROOM FACILITIES (continued)

EXAMPLES OF MATCH OFFICIALS' DRESSING ROOMS



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NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

4. MEDICAL

At Steps 1 to 4, a working defibrillator must be located within the ground in accordance with the Standardised Rules. Please note: from the 2023/24 season, defibrillators will also be required at Steps 5 & 6.

Clubs should make themselves aware of the checklist issued by the Sports Ground Safety Authority – Medical Room Checklist.

GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	
GRADE 1	<p>There must be a suitably-equipped medical treatment room for players located in the vicinity of the players' dressing rooms. Access to this room must not be via the home or away dressing rooms.</p> <p>At least one stretcher for the removal of injured players from the field of play must be provided.</p> <p>There must be a suitably equipped and designated First Aid/Medical Room for spectators within the boundary of the ground.</p> <p>The designated room must contain a bed or comfortable seating, with cold and, ideally, hot water, together with paper towels. Reusable individual towels are not permitted.</p> <p>The first-aid room and the location of the room must be suitably signposted.</p>
GRADE 2	<p>There must be a suitably-equipped medical treatment room for players located in the vicinity of the players' dressing rooms. Access to this room must not be via the home or away dressing rooms.</p> <p>At least one stretcher for the removal of injured players from the field of play must be provided.</p> <p>Clubs must designate on matchdays a suitable room for the treatment of spectators within the boundary of the ground. The designated room must contain a bed or comfortable seating, with cold and, ideally, hot water, together with paper towels. Reusable individual towels are not permitted.</p> <p>The location of the room must be suitably signposted.</p>
GRADE 3	<p>There must be a suitably-equipped medical treatment room located in the vicinity of the players' dressing rooms for the use of both players and spectators. Access to this room must not be via the home or away dressing rooms.</p>
GRADE 4	<p>The designated room must contain a bed and/or comfortable seating, with cold and, ideally, hot water, together with paper towels. Reusable individual towels are not permitted.</p> <p>At least one stretcher for the removal of injured players from the field of play must be provided.</p>
GRADE 5	<p>All clubs must provide first-aid equipment, including a stretcher, for the use of players and spectators. Its location in the ground, if other than in a dedicated treatment room, should be clearly marked by notices placed in the dressing rooms for teams and match officials.</p>
GRADE 6	
GRADE 7	<p>Clubs should ideally have a working defibrillator located within the ground.</p> <p>A stretcher must be provided for the removal of injured players from the pitch.</p>

6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

4. MEDICAL (continued)

GRADE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	
GRADE 8	<p>There must be a suitable qualified person (minimum Emergency First Aid in Football (EFAiF)) in attendance.</p> <p>Clubs should ideally have a working defibrillator located within the ground.</p> <p>All clubs must provide first aid equipment at their ground.</p> <p>All Clubs are required to have a Medical Emergency Action Plan (MEAP), or equivalent, in place. A copy of the MEAP must be submitted to the League Secretary on the standard form provided by no later than 1st August in each year. It should also be displayed in a prominent public area in the clubhouse and/or dressing rooms.</p>
ADVISORY	<p>There must be a nominated and suitably-qualified person in attendance to assist with spectator problems unless the St. John Ambulance Brigade, Red Cross Society or other capable agency are in attendance. The requirements of the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds are for one first-aider per 1,000 anticipated spectators, with a minimum of two.</p> <p>If a crowd of less than 2,000 is anticipated, known and practised arrangements should be in place to summon either a doctor or NHS ambulance alternative. For crowds of over 2,000, an experienced crowd doctor should be in attendance.</p> <p>NB: The above in no way purports to be a comprehensive list of Health and Safety issues which it is the responsibility of a club to address. Clubs are recommended to arrange regular safety audits conducted by persons with the appropriate expertise.</p>

6 NATIONAL GROUND-GRADING CRITERIA

4. MEDICAL (continued)

EXAMPLES OF MEDICAL PROVISIONS



6 NATIONAL GROUND – GRADING CRITERIA

5. APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE EFL

FORMAL APPLICATION TO THE EFL

It is the responsibility of each Club seeking promotion from Step 1 to the EFL to source the relevant information, issued from time to time by the EFL, in order to enter an 'Application for Membership'.





FOR ALL

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