



MOUNT ELIZA JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB

Grading and Team Formation  
Policy and Guidelines

SEASON 2024

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## Grading Policy

### 1.1 Introduction

At the beginning of each new football season, junior players may be graded into teams in different divisions based on a variety of categories and factors. The grading process gives all players the opportunity to demonstrate their talents to a variety of unbiased selectors thus giving all players (irrespective of the team they played with in the previous season) a chance to play in the highest and / or the most appropriate level in the new season. The club holds this as important in providing equal opportunity to all players.

Young player's abilities can change dramatically during a 12-month period. A player who is graded into an "A" team in one season is not guaranteed a position in the "A" team the following season. This is the best format to maintain equality of opportunity.

Careful consideration will be taken to cater for those who have average ability but still love the game. It adds to their enjoyment if they are playing with and against players of similar or equal ability. This gives each child the chance to fully participate, enjoy the experience and develop to his/her full potential as a player.

Past experience has shown that it is frustrating for any individual to play in a team which is clearly above or below their level of ability. Grading must help all players of all abilities. The committee has the care and, to some extent, control of the club and its members/players. It is the club (rather than individuals) that enter teams into various competitions.

### 1.2 Objective

The grading policy is designed to address a number of player and club needs, some of which invariably conflict. The fundamentals of the grading policy are designed to ensure:

- That a clear process for the grading of new and existing players is provided each year.
- The possibility of bias is minimised by using an appointed grading coordinator to be the arbiter of the grading process.
- All players have the maximum opportunity to play in a competitive environment, appropriate to their skill, ability and attitude.
- Players learn from their peers and develop an appreciation and love of the game.
- The club can field competitive or 1st teams in each age group.
- There is a clear pathway for players to progress within the club from under 8's to Senior club.
- Support of a club culture that takes priority over individual team culture.
- Players, coaches and parents alike, have FUN, enjoy the season, and return to the club year after year.

## Playing Philosophy

### 2.1 Small-Sided Games

At the U8's to U10's level the emphasis is clearly in favour of fun, participation, social interaction, and learning. Since small children do not regard winning with quite the same fervour as older children, this age level match results are never recorded.

It is expected that team officials and parents will not let their own ambitions spoil the enjoyment that the children gain from playing the game of football. Although these principles dominate our approach to sub-junior sport, the club also recognises that this is the best time for football players of the future to learn the basic skills.

For this reason, the club encourages coaches to attend recognised internal and external coaching courses

### 2.2 Junior Teams (Graded Teams)

As players progress through their teenage years, the game becomes more competitive and winning assumes a higher priority (relative to younger players).

To accommodate these changing attitudes, all junior graded teams are progressively allowed greater flexibility in the areas of team composition and playing time, although this does not mean that winning should be at the expense of the club's values.

## Conduct, Participations and Performance

The club believes U13's and up junior graded teams should be competitive and we therefore endeavour to appoint only experienced, qualified coaches.

However, the primary objectives are to encourage and educate players and teams rather than placing emphasis on winning individual games and producing league champions.

Although it is recognised that a player's ability may begin to partially determine playing time, all registered and financial players who regularly attend training sessions must be given "ample and fair" playing time. "Ample and fair" playing time is defined as approximately one half of a match. With the continuation of the interchange player rule, there is no reason why players should not have ample playing time in all matches.

## Grading Selection Panel

### 3.1 Grading Committee

Shall be determined by the MEJFC Vice President Football Operations. The grading co-ordinator may invite present or past coaches and external peoples or parties to assist

### 3.2 Grading Co-Ordinator

Responsible for coordination of the grading process

### 3.3 Age Graders

Assist the Football operation team in assessing players' skills. The footy ops team will have a good knowledge of the game and the skills required to differentiate player skill levels and other relevant grading criteria.

## Coaching

### 4.1 Coach's – Game Day, Assistant, Training, Squad

Coaches and Managers interested in volunteering for the following year are able to nominate from the completion of the current season.

Coaches and managers are welcome to coach any division, but as grading could take numerous weeks, they will not know which team their child will be selected in.

Therefore, a final allocation of coaches and managers will occur once grading has been confirmed.

All coaching and managing appointments are at the discretion of the Football Operations team when required

## Grading Process and Timetable

### 5.1 Grading Process

Grading is compulsory for all players U13 and Older age groups where there are more than 16 players in an age group. The grading process may recommence as soon as the Committee has completed registrations and the likely number of teams in each age group has been determined. Training dates and times may be notified during the registration process if possible. This is determined by both council and the cricket club.

If a new player does not attend grading, they will automatically be graded into the lowest division and if possible, provided an opportunity to re-grade prior to the season commencement if it's determined that their skill and ability is of a higher standard than the lowest division.

All players must be graded and play in the age group in which they are registered. The only exceptions are:

- If the age group has a surplus number of players beyond the Maximum team sheet numbers and the age group above can accommodate those players; or
- If in the previous season, a player was granted permission to play up an age group, that player may elect to do the same the following season as long as;
  - That player is not taking the spot of a top age player.
  - The player plays in the lowest division in the age group, as to not take the spot of a top ager.

Exceptions are at the discretion of the Vice President Football Operations / grading committee and in consultation with the players and their parents.

Each player being graded is to be individually assessed in accordance with the Bylaw Criteria. The assessment not only takes into account skill, but also attitude, ability, potential, and involvement within representative teams.

At the conclusion of the grading process, the grading committee may meet to review and discuss the formation and allocation of individual players to each team.

Where practicable, any members of the grading committee shall not undertake an active role in the grading of their own child. External assistance should be sought, in such cases.

At no stage will MEJFC provide a guarantee to any individual player or parent to place children in a team that they believe would be best for their own personal gain or based on their belief of what may be best. The club philosophy is to grade players through the club system via an experienced team. The panel will ensure all players receive fair and equal opportunity. Should players or parents be unhappy with grading decisions, they can go through the MEJFC dispute resolution process where a review will occur to investigate any player or parent dissatisfaction.

No player will be guaranteed placement in a particular team. Player and parent expectations may differ with selectors and MEJFC will not allow players or parents to discuss an individual player's ability or preferences with individual selectors. Upon confirmation of teams from our selection panel players or parents have 24hrs notice to lodge a complaint should there be any disputes. A written letter addressed to the Football Operations committee is required, which will be reviewed and responded to within 7 working days.

Players will be placed into teams, according to the likely best fit between the player's skill and abilities, personality/attitude, and the requirements of the team that was determined throughout the grading assessment.

It is not compulsory to play in a particular team if a player wishes to play in a lower grade with friends. This must be communicated to the grading co-ordinator prior to team formation or as soon as practical after teams are announced

Where multiple teams exist, it is at the grading committee's discretion to create a smoothing of the grading process providing developmental opportunities for players

## Season End

### 6.1 Season End Process

The grading process begins before the completion of each season. All coaches will be required to complete a confidential team / player analysis to evaluate the individual skills and abilities of all players within their team. Coaches have the advantage of seeing how players develop throughout the season, so they are able to assess 14 weeks of play rather than a few end-of-season games or trials. Coaches also provide the best assessment of a player's reliability, work ethic and attitude.

Key elements of the assessment are:

- Assess the player's attitude and performance throughout the year, against a range of pre-defined criteria
- Identify whether the grade of the player is currently participating in is appropriate for his or her level of skill and ability, or if they would benefit from playing in a different grade.
- Team structure changes

Confidentiality is to be maintained at all times. The assessment of any individual player should not be discussed with anyone else (except that player and/or their parents/caregivers).

All completed assessments are to be forwarded to the grading coordinator for use in the grading process the following year. A central database is to be compiled of the completed assessments for each age group. This is to be used to commence the grading process at the start of the following year.

In summary, all players may be graded to ensure that they are placed in a team consistent with their demonstrated level of skill and ability. This ensures we maximise the fun and enjoyment of playing the game of football for every player.

## General

### 7.1 Training

Once assigned to a team, players will train with their respective coaches.

Ideally, all teams in an age group will train at the same time to allow interaction between teams as the coaches see fit. However, this is not always possible as training times are dependent on the schedules of each individual coach.

Coaches shall meet regularly and are encouraged to discuss their team's and player's capabilities.

During the season where possible, players and coaches are to train once a week as a team, and once a week as a squad. Squad sessions should be based around fundamental skills, and promote a 1 club culture

The coaches in any age group should act for the benefit of all players in that age group and not just for the members of their team.

In the best interest of the players and the club, the MEJFC committee may act outside of this policy in the forming of teams. This may occur in special circumstances and will be at the discretion of the MEJFC committee.

## Questions, Appeals & Suggestions

Should you have any questions or queries regarding the grading process, policy or results please forward your information request via email to the Football Operation or Secretary of Mt Eliza Junior Football club.



## Team Formation and Player Allocation / Movement Guidelines

### 8.1 Preface

These guidelines;

- constitute the Mt Eliza Junior Football Club Team Formation Policy used by the Committee (or it's nominee) when forming new teams, allocating new players to teams or reallocating existing players between teams.
- are not considered complete and absolute, but are reviewed at least annually or as new circumstances arise.
- are secondary to any league regulation and will follow league regulations should a policy clash occur.
- are to be interpreted as a whole document to ensure the intent of the document is preserved and one rule not viewed in isolation.
- Guidelines apply to both Boys and Girls unless specified

## All Teams

### 9.1 Who has responsibility for team formation

Responsibility and final decision-making for team structure lies with the committee and its appointed representatives, at *arms-length* to the outcome.

The Coaches of teams being formed are not directly responsible for allocation decisions but can be consulted.

A player applies to register with the club, and following acceptance of that registration, all reasonable steps, subject to these guidelines, will be taken to accommodate requests for player allocation. Such requests must be made in writing/e-mail, addressed to the Registrar.

Any formation decisions that lie outside the guidelines must be referred to the Committee Exec for approval.

### 9.2 What are team names.

Where multiple teams exist in an age group the team names will follow a sequence of Red, Blue, Mounties, Redleg's, Demons, Fuchsias.

Graded teams will follow the same colour sequence,

Red – Team 1, Blue – Team 2, Mounties – Team 3, Redleg's – Team 4, Demons - Team 5, Fuchsias – Team 6

A reduction in the number of teams will follow the reverse pattern.

### 9.3 Do teams remain together each season?

Subject to other items in these guidelines such as total team numbers and competitiveness, teams will usually remain together until their team numbers become impractical or they reach competitive grading.

## 9.4 What is a 'New' player?

A new player is defined as a player who was not registered at the club in the previous 2 seasons. Existing players will be given priority for team allocation (if they are registered by the late registration cut-off date).

## 9.5 Team Numbers.

As a guide, no team shall have more than 3 players above other teams in the same age group unless all teams have at least 20 players.

U8 & U10G – maximum 16 players per team.

U9 – maximum 20 players per team.

U10 - maximum 20 players per team

U11 - U17 - maximum 26 players per team. (Exceptions for Top Age can be made by the Vice President Football Operations due to the nature of the age groups around Schooling, Injury etc)

U12G, U14G, U16G, U18G, U19G – maximum 24 players per team.

## 9.6 Movement of Players U8 – U12

Once a team is formed players will remain in that team from season to season. Players can apply from 1st February for the coming season to the League to move from one team to another where the following exists.

- Players are not returning to the team and therefore team numbers are low
- Special family circumstances

## 9.7 Combining teams

The Committee will consider combining teams only after the completion of registration days and if team numbers fall below a number deemed by the Committee and affected coaches to appropriate for that age group / division.

### 9.7 Two teams into one

Player allocation will follow:

- Team name as per item (9.2).
- The team of smallest numbers following the registration process for existing players, will be reallocated to balance team numbers in the other team
- No more registrations will be taken after registration days if a team squad has reached 26 players for male teams and 24 for female teams. Registrations may be accepted after registration days until team size = 24 (female) or 26 (male).

If for unforeseen reasons registration numbers exceed 26, priority may be given to re-registering players over new players, underage players playing up will be asked to move to their rightful age group followed by in order of registration application being received.

## 9.8 Three (or more) teams into two (or more) Teams

Player allocation will follow:

- Team naming order per item (9.2).
- The team of smallest numbers following the registration process for existing players, will be reallocated first to balance team numbers in other teams to a minimum of 22. If the numbers per team are less than 22 the target will decline one number per team until numbers are balanced. Where more than one team has similarly low numbers a similar split of numbers to other teams will occur, considering other school, friendship groups, underage players etc.
- New-to-club Registrations will be allocated a team based on team numbers remaining balanced and consideration of written requests, but priority is given to existing players. See note to Coaches.
- Allocation to new teams will follow guidelines to maintain a reasonable standard of competitiveness for the nominated division. Creation of “Super-teams” will not be permitted at the expense of competitiveness of other club teams.

To ensure ongoing team competitiveness and numbers balance, team structure may be reviewed during the season or prior to the next season, as per item (9.9).

## 9.9 Competitiveness of Teams

Where teams have previously been formed, but due to either attrition and/or turnover of team numbers, differences in natural development over the years or other reasons, that there becomes a vast differential in ability of teams as compared to other teams in the competition/division, the committee will order a review by the Football Operations group of the team structure and, as required, escalate through the following stages:

- i. Consult with coaches to identify known opportunities to remedy
- ii. Consult with League Executive as appropriate
- iii. Advise parents and players of situation
- iv. Division review for team to descend to a lower division.
- v. Select players using previous movements between teams and/or nominate players to transfer
  - a. Other options as considered appropriate at the time

## 9.10 Jumper Number Policy

Where there is a clash of numbers within a team, the following guidelines apply:

- The player who has a sibling at the club in a different age group using the same jumper number has precedence over the number.
- The player who has played the most amounts of games for the Club with that number has precedence over the number.
- Where there are 2 players on equal number of games for Club in that jumper number, then the coach or team manager will toss a coin with both junior players and parents present.

### 9.11 Joining after grading period

Players joining after the grading period will be placed in the lowest team. The Football operations group will then have the option to move a player into the division above.

### 9.12 Players Playing up or Down (On Permit)

Players playing up or down (Down Permit Only) may not be selected into the top team in the age group that they are playing up or down in. Individual circumstances can be discussed with the Vice President Football operations.

### 9.13 Team Formation / Grading Right of Appeal

Any disputes regarding team allocations must be sent in writing to the Vice President – Football Operations. If necessary, discussions will be had with the President, Vice President Football Operations and Coaches and their decision will be final.

## Female Teams

### 10.1 Girls Team Formation

#### 10.1.1 Under 10 / Under 12 Girls

Where multiple teams exist in an age group, the teams will be formed having an upper age group and lower age group team.

Team name 'Red' will be allocated to the older age team, and that team depending on their ability will be placed in Division 1.

The lower aged group will have the team's name 'Blue' and be placed in Division accordingly.

Players born between 01-Jan and 30-Apr have the ability to play with the older age group if they are in the same year level at school.

Younger players who have a demonstrated ability to play in the higher age group, will be considered for same. (Numbers Permitting)

## Mixed Teams (up to U14)

### 11.1 Under 8 / Under 9

#### 11.1.1 How are Under 8 / 9 Teams Formed

The initial formation of Under 8 /9 teams is made considering the school attended and year level of the player. It then refers to the friendship group of the player, age of the player and balancing of team numbers.

**It is important to note that friendship groups are taken into consideration but not guaranteed as it is not always possible to fulfill all or any friendship requests.**

Teams will have a maximum of 50% of players from the one school.  
Football skills, such as Auskick level attained, may also be a criteria.  
If the AFLSE forms Upper/Lower age divisions, teams may also be sorted accordingly.

#### 11.1.2 How are previously registered U9 players allocated to teams for another U9 season?

Players eligible to remain in under 9's will remain with their team and if that team has moved to under 10's, the player will be reallocated to a new under 9 team as above.

### 12.2 Under 10

#### 12.2.1 Allocation of new Players

If, following the Registration process, numbers suggest that a new team needs to be formed, all new players will be allocated to the new team until that team reaches the average number of the other team(s).

A new team will be formed following registration day(s) if an existing under 10 and/or upcoming under 9 team(s) has a minimum of 18 players.  
Once all teams have an average of 18 players, a 'new' player may apply in writing to the Committee to be reallocated to their team of choice.

The Committee will make a decision based on the team formation guidelines described for under 9's and in consultation with the affected coaches.

As a guide, no u10 team shall have more than 3 players above other teams in the same age group unless all teams have at least 20 players.

#### 12.2.2 Allocation of existing Players

If a previously registered player is eligible to remain in the under 10's for a second season, he/she will be considered to be a new player for the purposes of team allocation but, once team minimum numbers have been achieved, will be given priority when seeking to move to a team of their choice over new-to-club registrations.

## 12.3 Under 11 / Under 12

### 12.3.1 Allocation of new and existing players

Refer team allocation guidelines for Under 10's.

No team shall have more than 3 players above other teams in the same age group unless all teams have at least 21 players.

Any 'new' player to the club will be able to apply to be allocated to their team of preference only once the registration cut-off period is complete, and all teams in that age group have a minimum of 20 players.

Note this is an application and not a guarantee, allocation will be finalised by Vice President Football operations.

### 12.3.2 Players playing up an age division

A player will only be permitted to play up an age division if they are in the same school year level as the players in that team, and if team numbers in the lower age group permit.

Players may only play up one age division eg u11 to u12 is OK, u11 to u13 is not (where space is available).

Players playing up cannot take the place of a player in the rightful age group.

Players playing up an age group will not be eligible for Interleague nomination for their correct age group, except by league invitation.

## Teams U13 & Above (Graded Age Groups)

### 13.1 Movement of players

For these age groups and to ensure that the League can offer competitive competitions clubs are able to move players out of season from one team to another without restriction to ensure that players are allocated to a team that best suits their skills and ability and that they are involved in the decision- making process.

### 13.2 New teams (Graded age Group)

If player numbers exceed the one-team maximum, and new players joining the club enable formation of a second team, teams shall be formed with one team in each league division.

If players previously in lower division have received recognised awards for ability and scope for further development, they will be promoted as a priority to the higher division team.

Consideration may be given to

- players' best and fairest votes in previous year.
- perception of the player's abilities based on the Division team is playing in
- potential of the player
- physical development
- players attitude
- players commitment
- player's adherence to AFL/AFLSE/MEJFC Codes of Conduct
- player's adherence to team rules
- player's attendance at training

## Teams U13 & Above Grading Guidelines

### 14.1 Top Division Team

- Priority MAY be given to players in Development, State or Stingrays Squads.
- Priority MAY be given to players who played in Division 2 or 3 teams in the previous year.
- Consideration given to league, then club best and fairest votes in previous year.
- Other considerations include;
  - perception of the player's abilities based on the Division team is playing in
  - potential of the player
  - physical development
  - players attitude
  - players commitment
  - player's adherence to AFL/AFLSE/MEJFC Codes of Conduct
  - player's adherence to team rules
  - player's attendance at training

### 14.1 Following Division/s

- Where more than two sides are formed the football operations team formation committee MAY with the help of coach's form equally competitive sides for team two and below.
- Consideration around players position or willingness to commit to a particular position for maximised game time in and around their preferred position
- Consideration MAY be given to players in Development, State or Stingray Squads.
- Consideration MAY given to league, then club best and fairest votes in previous year.
- Other considerations include;
  - perception of the player's abilities based on the Division team is playing in
  - potential of the player
  - physical development
  - players attitude
  - players commitment
  - player's adherence to AFL/AFLSE/MEJFC Codes of Conduct
  - player's adherence to team rules
  - player's attendance at training

### 14.1 Two Sides – Same Division

Where two sides are formed in the same age group and in the same division, it is the position of the Club that the two sides will be picked by the Vice President Football Operations and the Coaches to form two "equally competitive" teams for that division. Depending on player/team numbers, this may mean little change from previous years or substantial changes to teams of previous years.

If a player is selected to a team in a higher division, but they wish to play in a lower division team, then that player will be placed in the lower division team.

Note the club will avoid this scenario if possible