



MOUNT ELIZA JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB

Grading and Team Formation
Policy and Guidelines

SEASON 2025

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Grading Policy

1.1 Introduction

At the beginning of each new football season, junior players may elect to be graded, or ungraded. Players opting in to grading will trial at a series of tryouts to be selected into a team deemed the highest graded team in the age group, hereinafter referred to as the “Red” team.

The grading process gives those players who have elected to do so, the opportunity to demonstrate their talents to a variety of unbiased selectors thus giving those players (irrespective of the team they played with in the previous season) a chance to play in the Red team in the new season.

For players who have opted **not** to be involved in the grading process, they will be placed onto teams in line with the MEJFC Team Formation policy for non-competitive age teams based on a number of factors such as school attended, friendship groups, team numbers and where considered appropriate player skill and abilities to aid team competitiveness for their respective division/s.

The club holds this model as important in providing equal opportunity to all players to be able to not only play at an appropriate level, but to be able to play to their own values.

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

Careful consideration will be taken to cater for players who elect to trial, who have average ability but still love the game and have high training standards and character will be given due consideration during the tryout period. It adds to player 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.

Experience has shown that it can be frustrating for any individual to play in a team which is clearly below their level of ability. 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

For players who have elected to grade, the grading policy is designed to address a number of players 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 independent grading coordinator to be the arbiter of the grading process.
- These 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 will field one graded (Red team) in each age group.
- There is a pathway for players to progress within the club from under 8 to Senior

Club.

- inclusive of individual values in relation to participation in football.
- 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 to U12 level the emphasis is clearly in favour of fun, participation, social interaction, and learning.

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 (Grading)

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, from U13 onwards players may elect to trial for the Red team or continue to play on teams formed on the same principles as the noncompetitive age groups.

Conduct, Participations and Performance

The club believes all junior teams should be competitive in their respective divisions, 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 premierships.

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 and Team Formation Selection Panel

3.1 Grading and Team Formation Committee

Each season a 'Grading and Team Formation Committee' will be formed and a 'Grading and Team Formation Coordinator' appointed as determined by the Vice President Football Operations. The Grading and Team Formation Coordinator may invite present or past coaches and external people or

parties to assist.

3.2 Grading and Team Formation Coordinator

Responsible for coordination of the grading and team formation process.

3.3 Age Graders

Assist the Grading and Team Formation Committee in assessing player's skills. The Grading and Team Formation Committee will have a good knowledge of the game, and the skills required to differentiate player skill levels and other relevant grading and team formation criteria.

Coaching

4.1 Coaching

Coaches interested in volunteering for the following year can nominate from the completion of the current season.

Coaches are welcome to coach any division, but as grading and team formation may take numerous weeks, they will not know which team their child will be selected in until that process is complete.

Therefore, a final allocation of coaches will occur once grading and team formation has been confirmed. All coaching appointments are at the discretion of the Football Operations team.

Coaches will be expected to assist in running year level squad training from the start of each pre-season.

Grading Process and Timetable

5.1 Grading Process

Grading is optional for all players U13 and above, where there is more than one team in that age group. The grading and team formation 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 a number of factors, including ground access which involves both Mornington Peninsula Shire and Mount Eliza Cricket Club.

If a new player who elected to trial for the Red team, and does not attend grading, they will automatically be placed into an ungraded team and if possible, provided an opportunity to move prior to the season commencement if it is determined that their skill and ability is appropriate and team numbers allow. Consideration may also be given to players who did trial for the Red team, and ensuring fairness in respect to those players.

All players must 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 an ungraded team in the age group, to not take the spot of a top age player (unless skill, ability and team numbers favour a place on the Red team).

Exceptions are at the discretion of the Vice President Football Operations in conjunction with the Grading and Team Formation Committee. Additionally, consultation with the player 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 and team formation process, the Grading and Team Formation Committee will meet to review and discuss the formation and allocation of individual players to each team.

Members of the Grading and Team Formation Committee, or other members assisting, shall not undertake any role in the grading or team formation of their own child other than providing coaches feedback on the previous season. External assistance should be sought, in such cases, for example a coach from another age group could assist. Replacements will be at the discretion of the Grading and Team Formation Committee.

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 and/or place players through the club system via an experienced committee. The committee will ensure all players receive fair and equal opportunity. Should players or parents be unhappy with grading and team formation 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 coordinators 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 Grading and Team Formation Committee, players or parents have 24 hours to lodge a complaint should there be any disputes. Complaints are to be made in writing addressed to the Vice President Football Operations, 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 players skill and abilities, personality and attitude, and the requirements of the team that was determined throughout the grading and team formation 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 coordinator 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 and team formation 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 the player is currently participating in is appropriate for his/her level of skill and ability, or if they would benefit from playing in a different grade.
- Team structure changes.
- If the player has indicated they would like to opt in or out of grading for the following season.

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 and Team Formation Coordinator for use in the grading and team formation 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 and team formation process at the start of the following year.

In summary, players may opt to be graded to ensure they have the opportunity to trial and to be placed in the Red team if it is consistent with their demonstrated level of skill, ability and desire. Likewise, players have the option to elect not to grade, and to be placed on teams where the emphasis is on friendship, fitness and participation. 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 and team formation process, policy or results please forward your information request via email to the Vice President Football Operations 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 its 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. Committee members will recuse themselves from decision making in relation to any age group in which they have a child.

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

Where 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 the requests for player allocation. Such requests must be made in writing and addressed to the Registrar.

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

9.2 Team Names

Where multiple teams exist in an age group, the team names will follow a sequence of Red (graded team in age group where grading is optional), Blue, Mounties, Redlegs, Demons, Fuchsias, noting aside from the Red team no other grading is considered (i.e. all teams are viewed as equal).

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, best endeavours by the Club will ensure that teams will broadly remain together wherever possible until their team numbers become impractical, or players elect to take part in the optional competitive grading process. Where a player elects to participate in the grading process and is unsuccessful, the club will also endeavour to place that player back into his/her previous team pending considerations regarding team competitiveness.

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 as determined by the MEJFC Registrar).

9.5 Players per Team

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.
- U11-14 – maximum 24 players per team.
- 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 or as determined between the coach and VP Football Operations should it be required.

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

These are the rules set by AFLSE Bylaws and will govern all decisions MEJFC Committee make in relation to this.

9.7 Combining teams

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

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.

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).

9.8 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 request a review by the Football Operations group of each team structure, and as required, escalate through the following stages:

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

9.9 Jumper Number Policy

All new players to MEJFC will be allocated a number upon confirmation by the Registrar they have been allocated to a team. This number allocation is final and no requests will be made unless the following circumstances apply:

- A new player may request a number if they have a sibling also registered to the club in a different age group using the same number:
- Where two players request the same number, the sibling who has played in the jumper for the most number of games for MEJFC will receive the number.

For existing players:

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 number of games for the MEJFC 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.

9.10 Joining after grading and team formation period

Players joining after the grading period will be placed in the lowest team. The Football Operations Committee will then have the option to move a player into another team if it is deemed suitable for both the player and the team.

9.11 Players Playing up or Down (On Permit)

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

9.12 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. A mixed age group will also be considered if required.

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 middle and lower aged group will be named as outlined at 9.2.

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.

11.1.2 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 period 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 following discussions with the players family and the Vice President Football Operations.

Players may only play up one age division e.g. 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.

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.

This will only apply if team numbers allow, and coaches and the Vice President Football Operations agree it is in the best interest not only of the player but the wider age group.

Teams U13 & Above Grading Guidelines

14.1 Red Team

- Priority MAY be given to players in Development, State or Stingrays Squads.
- 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 Team Formation of Ungraded Teams

- Where more than two sides are formed the football operations team formation committee MAY with the help of coaches form equally competitive sides.
- Consideration around factors outlined in the non-competitive age group, and players position or willingness to commit to a particular position for maximised game time in and around their preferred position
- 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: Fielding two sides in the same division will be avoided where possible.