



MOUNT ELIZA JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB INC.

MEJFC Team Formation and Grading Policy

August 2026

Policy Control

Policy Owner	MEJFC Team Formation and Grading Committee
Reviewer	MEJFC Committee
Policy Approval Authority	MEJFC Committee
Policy Effective Date	25 th August 2026

Policy Revision History

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Amendments
v.2310.1	MEJFC Committee	Season 2025	Original Grading and Team Formation Policy and Guidelines.
250826	MEJFC Committee	25 th August 2026	New document format. Consolidation and simplification. Team Formation and Grading Committee governance. Existing Player definition. Minimum recommended team numbers. Jumper numbers removed. Clearer final decision making authority and appeal process.

Related Policies and Procedures

- MEJFC Child Safeguarding and Wellbeing Policy
- MEJFC Codes of Conduct (Coaches; Players, Parents and Supporters; Administrators)
- MEJFC Purpose and Values, Codes of Conduct and Policy Statements
- MEJFC Registration Policy
- AFL South East (AFLSE) Bylaws and Regulations

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1. Preface

This document:

- Constitutes the Mt Eliza Junior Football Club (Club) team formation process used by the Committee (or its nominee) when forming new teams, allocating new players to teams or reallocating existing players between teams.
- Is not considered complete and absolute, but shall be reviewed on an on-going basis to continually improve or as new circumstances arise.
- Is secondary to any league by-law or regulation and will follow league rules should a policy clash occur.
- Is to be interpreted as a whole document, to ensure the intent of the document is preserved and no single rule is viewed in isolation.
- Applies to both boys' and girls' teams unless specified otherwise.

2. Performance and Participation

The Club endeavours to support all junior teams in providing a balanced and enjoyable level of competition for the players, in their respective divisions. However, the primary objectives are to encourage and educate players and teams rather than placing emphasis on winning individual games and producing premierships.

To support this objective, the Club endeavours to appoint only experienced and qualified coaches.

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.

3. Playing Philosophy

3.1 U8 to U12 Ages

At the U8 to U12 level, the emphasis is in favour of fun, participation, social interaction and learning. Consistent with league by-laws, once a team is formed, players will remain in that team from season to season and will not move based upon ability.

3.2 U13+ Ages

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 (grading) or continue to play on teams formed on the same principles as the younger age groups.

4. Team Formation – All Teams

4.1 Who has Responsibility for Team Formation

Each season a 'Team Formation and Grading Committee' (sub-committee) will be formed. To ensure effective governance, the Team Formation and Grading Committee will comprise:

- President
- Secretary
- Registrar
- Vice President Football Operations
- Invited past or present coaches and external personnel to assist

Responsibility and final decision-making for team structure lies with the Team Formation and Grading Committee.

Members will recuse themselves from decision-making in relation to their own child.

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

4.2 Team Names

Where multiple teams exist in an age group, team names will follow the sequence Red (the graded team for ages U13+), Blue, Mounties, Demons, Fuchsias, Redlegs — noting that, aside from the Red team, no other grading is considered (i.e. all other teams are viewed as equal).

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

4.3 'Existing' vs 'New' Player

An Existing player is defined as a player who was registered at the Club in the previous season. Existing players will be given priority for team allocation, provided they are fully registered by the priority cut-off date determined by the MEJFC Registrar.

A New player is defined as a player who was not registered at the Club in the previous season.

4.4 Players per Team

The following table outlines the maximum recommended players per team, unless otherwise determined by the Team Formation and Grading Committee in consultation with the coach. Typically, no further registrations will be taken once teams reach the maximum recommended players per team.

The minimum recommended players per team are used as a guideline only, to determine when a new team needs to be formed or teams need to be combined.

Age Group	Maximum Recommended Players per Team	Minimum Recommended Players per Team
U8	16	15
U9	20	18
U10 & U10G	20	18
U11–U14	24	21
U15–U17	26	23
U12G, U14G, U16G, U18G	22	20

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

4.5 Players Playing up an Age Division

A player will only be permitted to play up an age division following discussions with the player's family and the Team Formation and Grading Committee.

Players who are playing up:

1. May only play up one age division, for example;
 - a. U11 Boys/Mixed to U12 Boys/Mixed is permitted, U11 Boys/Mixed to U13 Boys/Mixed is not.

- b. U10 Girls to U12 Girls is permitted, as this is the next available age group.
2. Cannot take the place of a player in their rightful age group.
3. Must typically play in an ungraded team in the age group (U13+), so as not to take the spot of a top-age Red team player. In exceptional circumstances, the Team Formation and Grading Committee may allow a player to play on the Red team where skill, ability and team numbers favour such.

If an Existing Player is eligible to remain in the same age group for a second season, they will be considered 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.

4.6 Competitiveness of Teams

Where teams have previously been formed, but due to attrition and/or turnover of team numbers, differences in natural development over the years, or other reasons, a vast differential in ability arises between teams as compared to other teams in the competition/division, the Team Formation and Grading Committee will undertake a review and escalate as necessary through the following stages:

- Consult with coaches to identify known opportunities to remedy.
- Consult with the league as appropriate.
- Advise parents and players of the situation.
- Seek a league review of the division that the team is placed in to descend/ascend to a lower/higher division.
- Nominate players to transfer, or other options as considered appropriate at the time.

5. Team Formation – U8 to U12 Ages

5.1 Initial Team Formation

The initial formation of teams (typically at U8 or U10G level) considers 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. Friendship groups are taken into consideration but not guaranteed, as it is not always possible to fulfil all or any friendship requests.

Teams will have a maximum of 50% of players from any one school.

Football skills, such as Auskick level attained, may also be a criterion.

5.2 Allocation of Existing Players

Once a team is formed, existing players will remain in that team from season to season in accordance with league by-laws. The only exceptions are where the following conditions exist:

- Players are not returning to the team and therefore team numbers are low.
- Special family circumstances.
- Total team size is growing due to a change in age bracket.

5.3 Allocation of New Players

The primary objective of the Team Formation and Grading Committee is to ensure that player numbers are balanced across the different teams in each age group. Therefore, new players will be allocated to a team accordingly, with consideration given to;

- School,
- Friendship groups,
- Underage players, and
- Guidelines to support a balanced and enjoyable level of competition.

Any new player to the Club will be able to apply to be allocated to their team of preference (submitted via the Club provided mechanism). However, this is an application and not a guarantee.

Following the priority registration period for existing players, if numbers suggest that a new team needs to be formed, all new players will be allocated to the new team until it reaches the average number of the other team(s).

5.4 Combining Teams

The Team Formation and Grading Committee will consider combining teams only after the completion of the priority registration period for existing players and if team numbers fall below a number deemed appropriate for that age group.

The following process will be followed should teams need to be combined:

1. The team with the smallest number of players following the priority registration period for existing players will be reallocated to balance team numbers in the other team(s).
2. Should registration numbers still be deemed insufficient to meet the minimum recommended players per team then this process will be repeated for a second team with the next lowest number of players.
3. Once the window is open for new player registrations, they will be allocated a team based on team numbers remaining balanced and consideration of any application for their team preference (submitted via the Club provided mechanism).
4. Allocation of both existing and new players to their new teams will consider;
 - a. School,
 - b. Friendship groups,
 - c. Underage players, and
 - d. Guidelines to support a balanced and enjoyable level of competition.

If, for unforeseen reasons, registration numbers exceed the maximum recommended numbers per team, priority may be given in accordance with the following process:

1. Existing players over new players,
2. Players playing in their rightful age group, and
3. Order of registration time.

6. Team Formation – U13+ Ages

In the U13 to U18.5G age groups, the league permits clubs to be able to move players from one team to another without restriction during preseason. This ensures the league can offer competitive competitions and also enables clubs to allocate players to a team best suited to their skills and ability. All movements must be made prior to round 1.

6.1 Grading Background

Where numbers permit multiple teams in an age group, the Club will undertake a grading process to determine which players are selected into the highest graded team in the age group, hereinafter referred to as the Red team.

During the registration process, players may elect to be graded or ungraded. The grading process gives those players who have elected to do so a chance to play in the Red team in the new season, consistent with their demonstrated level of skill, ability and desire. For players who have opted not to be involved in the grading process, they will be placed onto a team where the emphasis is on friendship, fitness and participation. This approach ensures that the Club maximises the fun and enjoyment of playing football for every player by providing equal opportunity to all players to be able to play at an appropriate level and to their own values.

Where multiple ungraded teams exist in an age group, teams will be formed in line with the team formation process outlined for younger age groups. This will consider a number of factors such as school attended, friendship groups, team numbers and, where considered appropriate, player skill and abilities to form equally competitive sides.

Young players' abilities can change dramatically during a 12-month period. Therefore, a player who is graded into 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, and ensures that any player can be selected into the highest graded team irrespective of the team they played with in the previous season.

Careful consideration will be taken to cater for players who elect to be graded, have average ability, but still love the game and have high training standards and character. This adds to player enjoyment, as players fully participate, enjoy the experience and develop to their full potential when playing with and against players of similar or equal ability.

6.2 Grading Process

The grading process is designed to ensure that:

- Players have the opportunity to play in a competitive environment, appropriate to their level of skill, ability and attitude.
- Players learn from their peers and develop an appreciation and love of the game.
- There is a pathway for players to progress within the Club from Under 8s to the Seniors.
- Individual values are included in relation to participation in football.
- Players, coaches and parents alike have fun, enjoy the game and return to the Club year after year.
- A clear process exists for the grading of new and existing players each year.
- The possibility of bias is minimised by ensuring a level of independence.
- There is sufficient governance in place to ensure that the process is adhered to.

6.2.1 Season End

The grading and team formation process begins before the completion of each season. All coaches from U12 age groups and above will be required to complete a confidential player assessment 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 trials. Coaches also provide the best assessment of a player's reliability, work ethic and attitude.

Coaches will be asked to rate players based upon a number of football specific skill categories, game sense/football IQ, coachability, effort and attitude. They will also be asked to provide feedback on preferred position(s), strengths and development areas.

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.

Assessments will be accessible only by members of the Team Formation and Grading Committee to use in the following year's final team formation process.

6.2.2 Trials

The grading trial process provides players who have elected to be graded the opportunity to demonstrate their skills to a number of unbiased graders whilst undertaking the likes of drills and match simulations.

Training dates and times will ideally be notified at the start of the registration process. However, they are determined by a number of factors, such as ground availability.

The graders will be asked to rate players based upon a number of similar football specific skill categories as the coaches were asked at the end of the previous 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.

Assessments will be accessible only by members of the Team Formation and Grading Committee to use in the following year's final team formation process.

6.3 Team Formation

At the conclusion of the trials, the Team Formation and Grading Committee will meet to review and discuss the formation and allocation of individual players to each team. Consideration will be given to a range of factors that include (but are not limited to):

- Feedback received from the coaches (as outlined in 6.2.1 Season End).
- Feedback received from the graders (6.2.2 Trials).
- Players involvement in development or representative squads.
- Club and league awards.
- Division that player has previously played in.
- Team balance.
- Adherence to AFL/AFLSE/MEJFC Codes of Conduct.

At no stage will the Club provide a guarantee to any individual player or parent to place children in a team believed to be best for personal gain or individual experience. Player and parent expectations may differ from those of the Team Formation and Grading Committee, and the Club will not allow players or parents to discuss an individual player's ability or preferences with a member of the sub-committee. The Club's philosophy is to grade and/or place players via an experienced Team Formation and Grading Committee, which will ensure all players receive fair and equal opportunity.

Where a player elects to participate in the grading process and is unsuccessful, the Club will endeavour to place that player back into their previous team, pending considerations regarding team competitiveness.

It is not compulsory to play in the graded Red team if selected. If a player wishes to play in a lower grade and/or with friends then this should be communicated with a member of the Team Formation and Grading Committee as soon as practical after teams are announced. They will then be moved prior to the start of the season.

6.4 Joining After Team Formation

Players joining after the trials and team formation period will automatically be placed into an ungraded team (if there are multiple teams). However, the Team Formation and Grading Committee does reserve the option to move any player into another team, prior to the start of the season, if deemed suitable for both the player and the team, where team numbers allow.

6.5 Coaching

Coaches who have applied to coach a particular age group are welcome to coach any team (graded or ungraded). However, as they will not know which team their child will be selected on until the trials and team formation process are complete, a final allocation of coaches will only occur thereafter. All coaching appointments are at the discretion of the Vice President – Football Operations.

Coaches are expected to assist in running year-level squad training from the start of each pre-season to assist with the development of a one-club mentality.

7. Team Formation - Girls

Due to the structure of the girls competition and where multiple teams exist in an age group, teams may be formed having an upper age group team and lower age group team. The team name 'Red' will be allocated to the older age team. Subsequent teams will be named as outlined in 4.2.

Younger players who have demonstrated ability to play in the higher age group will be considered for this, numbers permitting.

8. General

In the best interest of 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 must be referred to the Executive Committee for approval.

9. Questions & Appeals

Should you have any questions or queries regarding the grading and team formation process or any aspect of this Policy, please forward your request via email to a member of the Team Formation and Grading Committee.

9.1 Right of Appeal

Any disputes regarding team allocations must be sent in writing within 24 hours, setting out the nature of the dispute and the proposed resolution to;

- President@mtelizajfc.com.au, and
- Secretary@mtelizajfc.com.au.

If deemed necessary, the matter will be reviewed by the Team Formation and Grading Committee, and responded to within 7 working days. Any decisions will be final.