



CAMDEN FALCONS FOOTBALL CLUB

Grading Policy

Version 3.0 – August 2026

1. Our Philosophy – ‘Playing to Develop’ versus ‘Playing to Win’

At Camden Falcons Football Club, we encourage all players to participate in a sporting environment that fosters enjoyment, skill development, camaraderie, discipline and both physical and mental wellbeing. The process of individual player and team growth and the enjoyment of the ‘beautiful game’ will always be the focus of the Club.

2. Why We Grade

Camden Falcons has a reputation as a friendly, welcoming club but we also aim to compete strongly on the field. The key to achieving both is ensuring every player is placed in the environment best suited to their ability and that our teams are entered into competitions where they are able to compete.

Research commissioned by the game’s governing body (then Football Federation Australia, now Football Australia) found:

- 25% of players are dissatisfied with the grading process at their club
- The number one reason for dissatisfaction with grading is that players feel there is no real process in place
- 33% of teenage males who are likely to stop playing football identify ‘uneven grading of me as an individual’ as a major reason

These findings continue to underpin why the Club maintains a clear, documented and consistently applied grading process across every relevant age group.

3. Our Grading Principle

“A team for everyone, and everyone in the appropriate team.”

The Club believes grading is essential to maintaining player enjoyment. Players competing at a level well above or below their ability are less likely to enjoy the game and this can also reduce enjoyment for their teammates. Where possible, teams should not contain players of significantly different ability as this can isolate players at both ends of the range and restrict development. Grading applies from U13 (Macarthur Youth League) through to Senior football as opposition clubs affiliated with the Macarthur Football Association (MFA) and Football NSW grade in preparation for these competitions.

4. Where Grading Applies – Our Competition Pathway

Camden Falcons fields teams across the full player pathway, from MiniRoos through to Senior football under the auspices of the Macarthur Football Association and Football NSW.

The table below sets out where grading applies at each stage reflecting the Club’s current competition structure.

Age Group	Competition	Grading Approach
U6–U9	MiniRoos / Come & Try	Not graded. Teams formed by school, friendship group and geography for a fun, participation-focused introduction to football.
U11–U12	Ungraded individual players in teams plus a new optional Advanced Team	Standard teams remain balanced by the Club but are not formally graded. Families may separately opt in to trial for a single Advanced Team per age group – see Section 7.
U13–U18	Macarthur Youth League (MYL)	Full grading applies. Players trial and are placed into divisions to be competitive within the MYL structure – see Section 8.
M-League	M-League Colts, Reserve Grade, First Grade	Trial-based squad selection bridging junior and senior football, into First Grade, Reserve Grade and other divisions as offered – see Section 9.
Seniors	All Age Men, All Age Women, Over 35 Men, Over 30 Women	No club organised grading.

This policy is reviewed each season to remain consistent with Football NSW’s Competition Regulations, the Junior Development League and Youth League Club Information Documents and the Club Standards & Benchmarking Framework, as these are updated by Football NSW and the Macarthur Football Association from time to time.

5. Grading Committee, Graders & Safeguarding

Grading sessions are overseen by a nominated Club Grading Committee which takes overall responsibility for team selection at each age level, based on player ability and the number of players registered. Teams are not selected on the basis of friendship groups or by ‘having a word with the coach’.

Appointed graders (who may include members of the Grading Committee) will hold suitable coaching credentials and will be excluded from grading where a conflict of interest exists – for example, grading their own child’s age group. Assessments are averaged across multiple graders to reduce individual bias.

In line with Football NSW’s Child Safe Standards and the NSW Working with Children Check (WWCC) scheme, every Grading Committee member, appointed grader and coach involved in trials or grading sessions must hold a current, Club-verified WWCC number before participating. Any photography or filming of players during trials or grading sessions will follow Football NSW’s guidelines for images of children in sport. Any safeguarding concern arising during grading should be raised with the Club’s Member Protection Information Officer (MPIO) or a Committee member in the first instance.

6. General Grading Process

Prior to the start of each season, the Club will hold grading sessions for each applicable age group. Session dates will be advertised in advance. Places in each team are limited and priority is given to players who register and attend on time; the Club will make reasonable efforts to accommodate players who register late but this cannot be guaranteed.

The aim of grading is to match players of similar ability and place each team into the correct division, so that players compete alongside ‘like-minded’ teammates who share similar goals for the season. Grading and training information is communicated to all players within two weeks of the final grading session for that age group.

Players should expect that as players join and leave the Club each year, they may play alongside different teammates from season to season. This is positive from a social perspective, helping new friendships form and avoiding the creation of ‘clubs within the club’, which can be detrimental to the wider playing group.

7. Ages 11–12 – Advanced Team Opt-In Policy

From the 2027 season, the Club is introducing an optional Advanced Team in the U11–U12 age brackets. This addresses feedback that some players in this age group are ready for a higher-intensity development environment, while ensuring that grading is not imposed on any player who prefers to continue in a non-graded team.

- Participation is entirely opt-in. All other teams in U11–U12 remain non-graded and no player is required to trial for or accept a place in the Advanced Team.
- Coaches interested in leading an Advanced Team apply to the Grading Committee in November, ahead of the following season.
- Players wishing to be considered lodge an expression of interest and attend an advertised trial, run by the Grading Committee with input from the applicant coach. This is intended to prevent players being selected, or not selected, for reasons other than ability.
- A successful coaching application does not guarantee the coach's own child a place in the Advanced Team; final squad selection is made by the Grading Committee, not the coach.
- Coach appointments are confirmed once the squad is finalised. Appointed coaches are asked to run pre-season training to support the group before the season begins.
- One or two positions may be held vacant to allow late trials for new or returning players and the Club will re-advertise if the Advanced Team is not filled from the initial trial.
- Trials are mandatory to be considered for selection unless a reasonable excuse is provided in advance; a late trial may still be offered if a position remains available.
- Players selected into the Advanced Team are exempt from the ungraded team allocation process for that season but may return to an ungraded team in a future season simply by notifying the Club before registration closes.
- Advanced Team coaches must hold, or be actively working towards, a Football Australia coaching accreditation appropriate to the age group and a current, Club-verified Working with Children Check.

8. Ages 13–18 – Macarthur Youth League (MYL) Grading

Players aged U13 to U18 are graded for placement into the Macarthur Youth League, the Macarthur Football Association's premier club junior competition. Grading follows the general process set out in Section 6, with selection based on the outcome of trials, prior season performance where relevant and squad numbers.

Players seeking to play in an age group other than their own ('playing up' or, in exceptional circumstances, playing down) must be assessed through Football NSW's age exception process; the Club cannot approve an out-of-age placement on its own authority. Families should raise any such request with the Grading Committee before trials so it can be lodged with Football NSW in time for the relevant grading session.

Players identified through MYL trials as suited to representative pathways may be invited into the Macarthur Football Association's Talent Development Program (TDP), which runs alongside club football. Players who progress further into NPL or League One/Two representative squads, will separately become subject to Football NSW's Player Points System and Player Roster Principles at that level; these do not apply to Club grading itself but families should be aware they exist further along the pathway.

9. Colts and Senior Grading (M-League)

Colts (U21) and Senior squads are formed through a trial-based process for the Wests Group Macarthur M-League. The Club will advertise an expression-of-interest process and trial dates each year, typically in November/December, consistent with common practice across Macarthur Football Association M-League clubs.

Squad placement into First Grade, Reserve Grade or other divisions offered is based on ability and the need to maintain competitive balance across the Club's senior teams. Where appropriate, returning teams may be kept together season to

season however all placements remain subject to review by the Grading Committee to ensure teams remain competitive within their division.

M-League Colts serves as the bridge between junior football and senior grades, and Colts trials are run with the same standards of transparency and conflict-of-interest management set out in Section 5.

10. Questions, Feedback and Complaints

Questions or feedback about grading should be directed to the Grading Committee at grading@camdenfalcons.com.au. Constructive feedback is welcomed and will be collated and reviewed by the Committee before the following season.

If there are exceptional circumstances affecting a player's participation in grading, please contact the Grading Committee before the relevant grading session so the situation can be discussed. Each case is reviewed on its merits and, where required, escalated to the Executive Committee.

If a grading concern cannot be resolved with the Grading Committee, a complaint may be lodged in writing to the Club President at president@camdenfalcons.com.au. All complaints will be investigated and considered by the Executive Committee.

11. Policy Governance

This policy is reviewed by the Executive Committee ahead of each season to ensure it remains consistent with current Football NSW and Macarthur Football Association competition rules, safeguarding requirements and player pathway frameworks.

Version	Date	Summary of Change
1.0	December 2018	Original Camden Falcons Football Club Grading Policy issued.
2.0	October 2019	Division One Teams Addendum added (U12–U18 opt-in squad).
3.0	August 2026	Full rewrite: aligned to current Football NSW and Macarthur Football Association structures (MYL, M-League, Club Standards & Benchmarking Framework); introduced U10–U12 Advanced Team opt-in policy (replacing the 2019 addendum); added Colts–Senior grading process; added Working with Children Check / Child Safe Standards and Member Protection requirements for graders; updated complaints and review process.

Approved by the Camden Falcons Football Club Executive Committee.