

SMJFL Grading Guidelines & Processes for Member Clubs

Updated 21st November 2023

1. Introduction

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide Member Clubs with information regarding the SMJFL Grading Procedures and guidance to Member Clubs to determine the best way to select teams at each age group.

2. SMJFL Grading Objectives

- i. To provide fair and equitable competitions – with Teams fielded in competitions that are as evenly matched as possible
- ii. Players are provided with the best opportunity to develop and display their skills

3. General Principles

- a. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, all competitions will have no less than six (6) and no more than eight (8) teams.
- b. Byes will be avoided whenever possible. However, in UII+ competitions (non-modified), priority will be given to having teams in the most competitive competitions.
- c. Note, late team withdrawals/entries can have a significant impact on the size of competitions.

Ideally, Member Clubs will not have more than one team in a single competition. The SMJFL will consider Member Club grading requests, an extensive analysis of the previous season's results will be the primary tools used to determine grading outcomes.

Extenuating circumstances - the SMJFL will not re-grade teams after Round 4. Any re-grade requests after Round 4 will be passed on to the FPT Committee for their consideration and will only be done if deemed absolutely necessary to ensure the Grading Objectives are met.

4. Glossary of Terms

See Statement of Purpose & Rules and SMJFL By-laws.

5. Club Team Selection Guidelines

The following is relevant where a Member Club has multiple teams in a single age group.

U8-U10

The SMJFL recommends that in these age groups, Member Clubs consider selecting teams which allow players to play with their own friendship and/or school groups. Member Clubs may choose to mix the groups while moving through the Modified Rules to ensure players and parents are prepared for the older age groups when they will be placed in teams based on ability (hard graded).

U8-U10 Modified Rules Pre-Season Grading

Member Clubs will be asked to nominate teams into Beginner or Experienced groupings.

NOTE:

Suggested consideration points for Member Clubs (based on the majority of players in the team):

U8

Beginner:

- First year playing AFL
- Second year of AFL but struggled to be competitive in previous season.

Experienced:

- Second year playing AFL and/or above average ability.

U9 & U10

Beginner:

- New players to AFL, or
- Struggled to be competitive in previous season/s.

Experienced:

- Have played one or more seasons of AFL.

- Whilst scores are published, Member Clubs are still required to submit results in the competition match system to ensure teams are in competitive grades.
- Post four (4) Rounds, the SMJFL may move teams into different competitions based on results and Member Club feedback.

U11 Non-Modified Football

The SMJFL recommends that Member Clubs start 'soft grading' teams at this age group.

Soft grading may involve keeping most of a team together from the U10s but moving higher/lower skilled players up/down.

To assist with the Grading Process, Member Clubs may be asked to advise the SMJFL of their Player Placement Policy and/or Team Selection Policy.

U12

The SMJFL recommends that Member Clubs adopt 'hard grading' at this age group.

This means teams are picked purely based on playing ability. The intention being that this will allow for Player enjoyment and ensure that the majority of Players in each team are allocated to a team that meets their own ability, while encouraging social connection and participation.

U13+

The SMJFL requires all Member Clubs to 'hard grade' from this age group based on playing ability.

6. Pre-Season Grading

The SMJFL has established a Grading Committee which includes a representative from each of the Member Clubs. This Committee is supported by the FPT Committee and is active throughout the season, and will be convened consistent with the Grading Committee Charter.

U11+ Mixed/Boys/Girls

The SMJFL will determine initial gradings based on results from the previous season and other analysis.

As per SMJFL Bylaws, the grand final winner and the team that finishes on top of the ladder (at the end of the home and away season) may be promoted. In the case of the top team and the grand final winner being the same team, the second placed team (at the end of the home and away season) may also be promoted.

The two teams that finish on the bottom of the ladder may be relegated. Final Gradings will be published once team numbers have been confirmed and Member Clubs have been given the opportunity to provide feedback on the Initial Gradings.

All competitions will be reviewed by the Grading Committee at the completion of Round 4 and Teams may be re-graded based on their results and any additional supporting data.

7. Re-Grading Process

Member Clubs will be asked to provide re-grading requests prior to Round 4 via an online form.

The SMJFL may manipulate some fixtures for Rounds 3 and 4 to assist in the re-grading process. For example, to ensure two (2) teams play each other before any movement of teams is considered.

Timeline

Note: the below is taken from the Sunday of Round 4 as per SMJFL Football Administration Calendar.

Re-grading requests due	5pm Sunday (post Round 4)
Grading Committee reviews submissions	Monday Evening (post Round 4)
SMJFL provides planned changes to Member Clubs	5pm Tuesday
Member Club feedback due	5pm Wednesday
Updated Gradings released to Member Clubs	Wednesday Evening
Round 5 - 9 fixtures released	Thursday 12pm

8. Re-Grading Considerations

The SMJFL, together with the Grading Committee, may take the following into account when determining any additional changes to Grading.

- Information from the Club Football Operations Meetings held pre-season
- Results of matches from the first four (4) Rounds
- Win/loss % from the previous two seasons
- Balance of all competitions
- Impact on other teams
- Byes that will be created (particularly in lower age groups)

- Any other items the SMJFL deems relevant

END