



**Associate Process for
Contact Teams**

Introduction

To enter a new contact team into the BAFA National Leagues competition requires the completion of an associate process. This involves the submission of detailed information about your club, team, and a thorough assessment of your performance both on and off the field. You will be supported throughout the process by the relevant BAFA Contact staff.

Only once a team has met all the requirements at a satisfactory level – both on and off the field - will admission be granted to the BAFA National Leagues.

The associate process is designed to make sure that new teams entering the BAFA National Leagues are well-run and sustainable. It is an annual process and teams who do not meet all the requirements within the outlined timescales must re-submit an application for consideration the following year.

Things to think about BEFORE you submit an application...

- BAFRA officials are already under pressure to cover existing league and BUCS games. This means you may need to plan to hold your games on Saturdays and avoid key dates such as National Leagues or BUCS finals events and the annual BAFCA coaching convention. BAFA can provide more information on these;
- Be creative with your team colours – these need to be approved by BAFA, and to avoid future clashes, the primary jersey colour of your uniform should not be black due to the high number of teams who already play in this colour. Also consider the colours of current teams in your area to avoid future clashes. The BAFA Contact team can provide more information on these if needed, and give you feedback on planned colours. Budgeting for a change of jersey is also recommended. **Do not order your uniform before your team colours are approved by the BAFA Contact team.**
- How many other teams are already in your area? BAFA will be reviewing the number of teams at all levels in geographical areas in due course and the number of other National League teams in the immediate vicinity of your planned team will be taken into consideration when reviewing your application. Where we feel you would be better joining forces with another local team to provide a single, more sustainable option we will advise when reviewing your application. Consider what you would offer, that another team in the area next door doesn't already. Teams in more isolated areas away from other teams, or who have already started growing their club by establishing with U16 or U19 programmes first are preferred.
- **Due to the existing number of teams and shortage of BAFRA officials, we will currently decline brand new adult contact applications from the following areas - Scotland, the North East, London and Greater London, Kent and the South West. Note - this does not apply to teams already entered into the associate process.**

- When putting your coaching team together, please give careful consideration to the experience, coaching qualifications and existing commitments that the personnel have. Your application may be delayed or deferred if you intend to 'share' the coaching personnel with other teams in the Club (e.g. U16 and U19 using the same coaching team).
- Clubs planning to enter an adult contact team into the league as part of the associate process must also ensure any other teams in their organisation are registered and insured with BAFA and comply with BAFA age guidelines and meet other requirements such as PVG/DBS checks for coaches working with young people and/or vulnerable adults. These teams do not need to take part in National Leagues activity but should also be registered on BAFA's JustGo membership system as associate teams to ensure these requirements are met.
- Registration year and transfers – please note that the BAFA registration year runs from October – October annually, member registration is closed annually between the end of the regular season and 1 October. Please factor this into your planning. Similarly, the transfer window runs from 1 October until the first Tuesday in June annually. No transfers will be approved outside of this time.
- Think carefully when choosing your team name. It must be unique and reflect the location you operate in. Names should be made up of a geographical area followed by a team moniker. The geographical area could be a town, for example, Manchester Titans. Or it could be a county or regional area. For example, Cornwall Monarchs. If you choose to use a county or regional name, you must be located within the said county or region. Where you choose to add a regional area to the name, you should also have the county, city or town name also present. Avoid names that imply you are a national representative team – so don't reference Scotland, England or Wales. Lions is also the reserved moniker of our national programme and may not be used. You should also look to avoid any names that are currently used by more than one team (e.g. Renegades). **BAFA Reserves the right to veto any element of your team name, colour scheme, location or branding if it is deemed as not suitable for the National Leagues. We will however aim to support you with your application process where possible.**
- Communication – ensure that you keep the BAFA Contact staff up to date on your plans throughout the process by email in a timely and professional way.

The steps below are for all new contact teams, irrespective of age range.

Associate steps – New Contact Teams

Step 1 - Team application and documentation

Firstly, you must submit an associate process entry form, which can be found [here](#). This has been designed to capture as much information about your planned team as possible, including your proposed name, location, structure, financial status and planned uniform colours for approval. Your team's name and uniform colours **must** be approved by BAFA before moving on through the process. Following application, you will be contacted by a member of BAFA, and if your application is initially



accepted your team will be added to our JustGo membership system and you will be given a named contact to support you through the associate process.

The following documents must also be submitted in support of your application after the above has been approved. **These must be submitted before the first weekend in February at the latest to proceed through the process.**

- Your governing document – usually in the form of a constitution or articles of association,
- Player signup sheet – blank copy of the documentation you require your team/club members to sign up to when joining,
- Bank statements – copies of your two most recent statements and / or proof of an active bank account in the name of the club or team going through the associate process,
- A club safeguarding policy and safeguarding commitment statement – this is vital if you plan to work with under 18s and/or vulnerable adults. Example templates are available on the safeguarding section of the BAFA website,
- A club anti-bullying statement – an example template is available on the safeguarding section BAFA website,
- Budget – a detailed budget plan highlighting income and expenditure for two years (associate year and year one) must be presented,
- Letter/s of support - at least one letter of support from a third party must be provided. This must be focused upon strategic support and be from a local authority, County Sports Partnership, or similar organisation,
- Roster – a basic breakdown of who's on your roster currently as you enter the process (an up-to-date roster must be submitted regularly throughout the associate process or at the BAFA Contact team's request);
- Attendance records – showing a breakdown of the attendance for your registered players throughout the associate process (for steps 2-3 only),
- Mock-up of your league approved kit / uniforms,
- Risk Assessments for practice, venues etc. and emergency procedure documentation including any Covid-19 protocols as necessary,
- Coaching structure – a summary of who is on your coaching staff, listing their qualifications and experience. Proof of the qualifications will also be required / need to be verified by BAFCA,
- Management structure – a summary of the roles, post-holders and responsibilities of your backroom staff,
- Game day information – a draft version of the document you plan to send out to visiting teams.

All these documents must be in place before the first weekend in February of the calendar year for an associate team entry to be considered and for teams to be allowed to plan and schedule fixtures that will count towards their required minimum number. Further documents will be required after step 3 is completed. You can find templates and other useful information to help you develop your club documentation on the [Buddle](#) (the new name for Club Matters) website.



Step 2 - Registering on the BAFA National Leagues registration system

Team and individual membership for BAFA is managed on an online system called 'JustGo'.

Once your participation as a new associate team has been agreed, your BAFA contact will ask the BAFA registrations team to add your organisation onto 'JustGo' as a club, as well as any agreed team/s. This will allow you to upload club documentation. If your new associate team is part of an existing club, the new team will be added.

Registration on 'JustGo' provides club management, players, coaches, and staff with the required insurance to practice and play as well as allowing you to download and print the gameday photo rosters required for competition. Membership is mandatory for participation at all levels within the National Leagues.

There are different levels of membership, including a special category for associate teams. Please note, you will start at this level, and if entry is granted, your team membership and that of your players will require upgrading to full membership. Membership runs from October – October annually.

Current associate fees for teams and players for all formats are available on the BAFA website in the fees section.

You will be notified once your team has been added onto 'JustGo'. At this point members of your club and team management can register and nominated individuals can be granted administration rights – this means they can view and update your club and team information, manage member information, see and print who is on your roster and approve or reject transfer requests.

You can then start registering players, coaches, and staff. Easy step-by-step guides to registering are available on the BAFA website on the membership and registration section.

Teams must have registered personnel in place before the first weekend in April of the calendar year to proceed to step 4 of the associate process.

Step 3 – Registration of players, coaches, and staff

Before you will be sanctioned to organise and hold any games, scrimmages, or joint practices with any other team you must make sure you have an adequate number of players, coaches and staff registered on 'JustGo'. The current requirements are:

ADULT Teams

Players – a minimum of 35-45, of which 25 should be brand new to the sport and not transferred from or previously registered for 3 years with another National Leagues team.

Coaches – a minimum of 3 non-kitted coaches, all with a minimum of the BAFA L1 coaching qualification and 1 with Level 2 (Player coaches DO NOT count towards this minimum requirement).

Staff – a minimum of 1 dedicated gameday manager who is NOT a coach or player.

NWFL (Women) and U19 Teams



Players – a minimum of 18.

Coaches – a minimum of 3 non-kitted coaches, all with a minimum of the BAFCA L1 coaching qualification (NWFL teams should have 1 Level 2 coach) (Player coaches DO NOT count towards this minimum requirement).

Staff – a minimum of 1 dedicated gameday manager who is NOT a coach or player.

U16 Teams

Players – a minimum of 14.

Coaches – a minimum of 2 non-kitted coaches, all with a minimum of the BAFCA L1 coaching qualification.

Staff – a minimum of 1 dedicated gameday manager who is NOT a coach or player.

Steps 1-3 must be completed by the first weekend in April of the calendar year to continue with the process – this includes organising the required associate games. If these steps are met prior to this deadline, with BAFA Contact's agreement, teams may then progress to step 4 and beyond before the deadline.

Step 4 – Playing associate fixtures

You will be required to organise, play and complete a number fixtures during your associate year, as follows;

11v11

Adult – 3 Home and 2 Away (at least 2 of which must be played over consecutive weekends) (Opponents may include other associate teams, existing National Leagues teams or registered BUCS teams if their institution sanctions their participation).

All matches / tournaments should be officiated by BAFRA officials and attended by a BAFA assessor. This lets us assess your ability to deliver the logistics for both home and away games.

Small sided formats

NWFL (7v7) 1 Home and 1 Away game

U19 – (7v7) A minimum of 1 Home tournament (or two separate games of which 1 game must be at home)

U16 – A minimum of 1 Home tournament (or two separate games of which 1 game must be at home)

All matches / tournaments should be officiated by BAFRA officials where possible. Where this is not possible, BAFA self-officiating guidance must be followed. All associate games must be attended by a BAFA assessor. For small sided formats, depending on availability this may be an agreed representative from your opposition or a volunteer official independent of your club if your game was self-officiated.

Scheduling

Associate teams will most likely be expected to play on **Saturdays**, due to the shortage of officials and availability and assessor availability, especially during the BAFA regular season. Sunday games will only be permitted between the end of the



BAFA regular season and start of the BUCS season, if both BAFA assessor and BAFRA availability allows. Your BAFA Contact will need to know AT LEAST one month in advance of potential game dates to find/organise officials/assessors in good time.

At least two days prior to the fixture taking place, an updated roster of players, coaches and staff MUST be shared with your BAFA Contact. This should reflect the personnel registered on 'JustGo'.

The assessor will give you advice and answer any questions at your first home game. Their role for this fixture is to support and help you along on the day, offering hints and tips, if needed, on what you need to be doing – think of it as a mock exam! At your remaining games, the assessor will not provide any support or input – they will stand back, observe, and assess you.

Assessors will review a number of things on the day covering both management and coaching – including how well the gameday is organised, your facilities generally and changing rooms specifically, your field and lining, the number of players and coaches in attendance, your pre-game warm ups, your roster checks and on field and coaching performance and practices.

Games can be organised against other associate teams, teams who have already gained league entry and registered BUCS teams. You can reach out directly to other associate, league or university teams to organise these fixtures, or ask the BAFA Contact team to suggest potential opponents if you are unsure.

Teams are actively encouraged to film their game/s for further assessment by BAFA assessors after the completion. The assessor will be looking at the quality and safety of the play as well as team discipline.

Games must be completed at least the weekend prior to the associate process deadline. The deadline is the first of December of the year preceding desired entry.

Completed rosters signed by both teams AND the assessor on the day must be submitted to BAFA Contact staff no later than the Tuesday after each game. Failure to do so will result in non-compliance with the process.

If the minimum numbers of players, non-kitted coaches and non-kitted side-line staff are not met at the first game, the team will be issued with a non-compliance notice as a warning. If a second non-compliance occurs with regards to minimum numbers, or failure to submit signed off rosters, then that associate team will not be allowed to continue with the process for that calendar year. No further assessed games will be sanctioned. Teams will be permitted to continue to train and may be allowed to carry out joint training sessions, scrimmages and play games at BAFA Contact staff's discretion if a request is made, but none of the games will count towards the minimum number required for league membership.

Failure to complete an arranged fixture, forfeiting an assessed fixture, or if an associate team pulls out of a pre-arranged fixture within 7-days before a fixture is due to take place, the team will be issued with a non-compliance notice as noted above. The team may also incur costs that the opposition may have incurred as a result.

Step 5 – Further documentation and feedback



Following successful completion of the previous steps (1-3) and during Step 4, where and when possible your BAFA Contact will provide feedback and constructive criticism regarding your games and submitted paperwork.

Further paperwork regarding an individual team's situation may also be required, especially if a team is near an existing league team or is in a remote area. This may relate to the long- term sustainability of the team or how the new team would not impact significantly on an existing team in the area.

Any additional documents that a team thinks could enhance its application should also be provided and could include the following examples:

- Game day information for opposition teams – maps, who to contact on the day etc
- Team history or background information
- Club sustainability – a breakdown of how the team will be sustainable over the long term – for example a five-year plan or plans for a U16/U19 contact team
- Roster breakdown including information on player transfers (which team did they come from), player history (Were they from U16/U19 /university teams?), experience etc
- Player attendance records - to show how numbers have increased or varied throughout the team's history
- Sponsorship information
- Coaching, management or player mentoring and development schemes
- Local community work or partnership information.

The deadline for providing final documentation is December 1st of the year preceding desired entry.

Step 6 – Review and final assessment

Following successful completion of the previous steps and final submission of additional documentation before **the deadline date of December 1st of the year preceding desired entry**, BAFA Contact staff will review your application and decide whether you have proved you are suitable to gain entry to the league.

This decision will be based on the information you have submitted, the findings of the assessors who attended your games, and other factors including how well you have communicated with BAFA Contact staff, your level of recruitment, the number of other teams in your immediate area and any plans for further expansion. You will be notified of the decision by the end of December of the year preceding desired entry.

Frequently asked questions

When do I have to complete the process by?

For league admission, the assessment process must be satisfactorily completed by the 1st December of the year preceding desired entry.

What happens if I can't complete all the requirements in time?

If all requirements are not met by this point, then entry will be declined, and the



team concerned will need to reapply and restart the process for the following year.

What if we wanted to apply for 9v9 entry for U19 / NWFL rather than 7v7?

The preferred pathway through the associate process and to league status is as outlined above and should be followed except by agreed exception. We do recognise that in some areas due to geographical challenges (ie Scotland / South West) and depending on current conference structures it may be more pragmatic for teams to enter at 9v9 if they have appropriate numbers. This may be agreed at the outset of the process with your BAFA contact and must be approved by BAFA's Operations Manager. Minimum numbers appropriate to 9v9 must be met for registered players and coaches, a minimum of one home and one away fixture must be satisfactorily completed and a returnable commitment bond may be imposed for entry to the next appropriate league season.

What happens if a team is successful?

If all requirements are met by this point, the team will be contacted by BAFA Contact staff and the team will be granted league entry for the following season. Every new team will be placed on a two-year probationary period. Within this period, if a team fails to complete a full schedule of games / forfeits one game, numbers/requirements fall below the minimum standards (as per associate process) or fails to adhere to the rules and regulations in any way, BAFA reserves the right to remove the team from league competition and place it back to associate status.

Adult Contact teams will enter the leagues at Division 2, NWFL teams at Regional 7v7, U19 teams at Division 2 (7v7) and U16 as directed by League Management.

Rules regarding joint training sessions and non-officiated / non-game situation scrimmages for contact associate teams

Before you will be sanctioned to organise and hold any joint practices and non-officiated / non-game situation scrimmages with any other team, you must make sure you have the minimum number of players, coaches and staff registered on 'JustGo' as per the requirements noted in Step 3 of the process. Steps 1-2 must also have been met. Proof of this MUST be provided to BAFA Contact staff prior to arranging anything.

The associate team who requests to undertake a joint training session and non-officiated / non- game situation scrimmage must ensure that the opposition also contacts BAFA Contact staff. Permission will ONLY be granted if both sides make contact.

Joint practices and non-officiated / non-game situation scrimmages are permitted, however there MUST be at least 1-3, non-kitted, level 1 coaches present for both sides, and only registered players, coaches and staff should be involved. The participation of unregistered participants from either team will invalidate both teams' insurance cover and will result in a non-compliance notice for the associate team(s) in question if they are found to be in breach of this. If the session extends into a scrimmage / game situation that the teams have not been cleared to participate in or is reported as such, a non-compliance notice will be issued and the associate team(s) in question may be removed from the process.

Once permission is granted, the teams in question HAVE to provide an up to date

'JustGo' roster for both teams and both teams HAVE to provide a listed GDPR compliant roster no later than two days beforehand the event taking place, to BAFA Contact staff. Failure to do so will result in the fixture/event being not being authorised and continuation of it will result in a non-compliance notice for the associate team(s) in question.

Associate Teams who have failed to meet the minimum requirements by the May deadline may be permitted at a later date to undertake joint practices and non-officiated / non-game situation scrimmages, but only once minimum requirements are met, proof is provided to BAFA Contact staff, and it will be at their discretion. The process will be the same as above if the team is allowed to undertake a fixture.

Any team that undertakes the above without permission or if the teams have not been cleared to do so and/or is reported as such, will be issued with a non-compliance notice and the associate team(s) in question may be removed from the process in future years.

Associate Process contact B teams

- Steps 1-2 must be followed. The larger team / club's documentation should be provided, along with B-team specific information.
- The B team will be treated as a separate entity and as standalone to the existing contact team and as such MUST follow the associate team rules and process. The new team MUST have a completely separate management and coaching structure but is obviously expected to sit within a club's larger organisational framework. Documentation showing this should be provided in the initial stages of the application.
- The B and existing teams of a club must have the capacity to play games at two different venues at the same time with the required minimum player, coaching and staff numbers required, hence the requirement for separate structures and staff. They will NOT be placed in the same Division at any level.
- Step 3 – Current members of the A or existing team do NOT count towards the minimum number requirements for the new B team UNLESS they have <1 year playing experience. Graduating players from U19 teams can count towards the minimum numbers.
- Step 4 – Players moving from the main team to the 'B' Team, or vice versa, will have to request movement from one team to another from the registrations team, as per the existing process and rules in place. BAFA Contact staff must also be informed. All movement must be concluded before the start of the regular season.
Movement from the main team to the associate team will then not be allowed until the end of the associate process period. Players must then remain registered within that team unless the movement is approved by Registrations Management and BAFA Contact staff. Any breach in this ruling will result in the 'B' team being issued with a non-compliance as per the associate rules noted in Step 3. Action may also be taken against the club / main team.
- Step 5 – The B team's associate games CANNOT be against the club's existing contact team without prior agreement with the BAFA Contact and will be by exception. The associate rules regarding joint training and scrimmaging against the existing team DO apply and the team cannot take part in this activity unless



approved to do so by BAFA Contact staff. Teams are allowed to play at the same venue.

More information

If you have any questions or wish to discuss any aspect of entering a new contact team and the steps you need to complete, please contact the following;

Adult – joe.walker@britishamericanfootball.org

Women – nwfl@britishamericanfootball.org

U19 – u19-contact@britishamericanfootball.org

U16 – u16-contact@britishamericanfootball.org