



Policy Name	Grading of Players
Policy Number	6
Policy Owner	LAFC Governance – Sub Committee
Date created	13 November 2023
Last update / review date	Completed and approved December 2023

Guiding Principle:

This process is about the PLAYER and NOT the COACH or PARENT.

Note:

The term ‘Group Coordinator’ refers to the coach who has been appointed leader for that particular age group in the Academy.

The term ‘Academy Manager’ refers to the person who oversees the entire Academy.

Overview

A requirement to grade teams into different levels is a feature of underage soccer in Cork, where teams are placed in groups or divisions based on their level of ability.

This puts a responsibility on Lakewood Athletic to grade our players so the club can field teams that are competitive across those levels.

All squads will be graded as they enter the Under 10 leagues.

Clubs see Under 10 and Under 11 as preparation for the Under 12 leagues where results and league tables are published and promotion and relegation are a feature.

The position for age groups Under 7s to Under 9 is rather more fluid. Experience has shown that some clubs will have graded and others will not. Lakewood will not grade at these age groups. We will enter mixed ability squads but cannot be sure that other clubs have done the same. In advance of matches being played, the Manager of each team in these age groups should confer with their opposing team to see what approach they have taken and reconfigure the matchday squads if required.

Grading Process and Criteria

The Grading process should be completed at the end of the Under 9s season, ideally in May of that year, but no later than the end of August. The process is to be led by the Group Coordinator, who will choose up to 5 other coaches to contribute. These coaches are to be chosen based on their knowledge of the game, coaching expertise and qualifications, and their familiarity with the players. The Academy Manager or a delegate will be available to assist in this process as required.

All players are assessed by using the Lakewood Grading Tool with reference to the following criteria:



- Ability, including Technical and Athletic
- Attitude, including Discipline
- Commitment, including Attendance and Participation

Players are scored in respect of each category. The final scores are combined and are used to determine the final placings. In the event of any tie, the Group Coordinator will make the determination on final team placement. In the event of any dispute, the Academy Manager will have ultimate decision-making power.

No coach will grade their own child in this process.

Depending on the number of players, the group is then split into 2 or 3 teams. The club will then assist in appointing a manager and a coaching group for each of these teams.

Communication

It is important that the Group Coordinator makes parents aware of the grading process before it happens, and the reasons behind it. It can be an emotive topic and the club needs to act fairly, transparently and openly throughout. If a parent wishes to raise an issue with the process, they should do so with the Group Coordinator. If they wish to take the issue further, they are to be directed to the Academy Manager.

It is accepted that there is no foolproof method of grading particularly at these younger age groups and children mature and develop at different rates.

It is, therefore, vitally important that the pipeline remains open between squads so that players can move based on their progression. The managers appointed to manage these graded teams need to meet before Christmas and at the end of the season to ensure players are moving between teams in accordance with their development.

This is easier at Under 10 and Under 11, where players aren't tied to squads. This changes at Under 12, so the managers of teams from Under 12 and older must maintain a good working relationship, ensuring players are given the opportunity to develop and play at the right level. Any movement of players in these age groups needs to be done in accordance with the CSL / CWSL Transfer Windows.

Records:

All grading records will be kept on file by Lakewood Athletic FC for a period of 2 years.