



JOINT GROUND CRITERIA

Version 1.15
November 2019



JOINT GROUND CRITERIA



Premiership Criteria

PITCH AND PLAYING SURFACE

The field of play must be rectangular and the length of the touch line must be greater than the length of the goal line. The minimum length is 95m and the minimum width is 60m.

The pitch must be level and have a good playing surface.

SYNTHETIC PITCH MARKINGS

Only football markings in white are permitted on synthetic grass pitches.

No other sports markings are permitted.

GROUND ENVIRONS

A permanent fixed wall/fence with a minimum height of 2 metres (measured from the exterior of the perimeter) must be in place to prevent access except through the recognised entrances.

Where a deterrent (glass, barbed wire, spikes etc) is placed on the top of the perimeter, it must be a minimum height of 2.4 metres.

It is recommended that pitch perimeter fences, where utilised, should conform with the recommendations as laid down in the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) 6th Edition Green Guide.



Championship/PIL Criteria

PITCH AND PLAYING SURFACE

The field of play must be rectangular and the length of the touch line must be greater than the length of the goal line.

For clubs seeking intermediate status, from 1 April 2015.
The minimum length is 90m and the minimum width is 55m. All existing intermediate clubs that do not meet this criteria must comply by season 2025/ 26.

The pitch must be level and have a good playing surface.

SYNTHETIC PITCH MARKINGS

Only football markings in white are permitted on synthetic grass pitches.

No other sports markings are permitted.

GROUND ENVIRONS

A permanent fixed fence or wall with a minimum height of 2 metres (measured from the exterior of the perimeter) must be in place to prevent access except through the recognised entrances.

Where a deterrent (glass, barbed wire, spikes etc) is placed on the top of the perimeter, it must be a minimum height of 2.4 metres.

Pitch perimeter fences should be put in place in order to enclose the playing surface. Such fences are not required in front of spectator seating areas and must be between 0.8 and 1.2m in height. An appropriate number of access gates (opening onto the playing area) must be in place at regular intervals in the pitch perimeter fence.



Intermediate Football Criteria

PITCH AND PLAYING SURFACE

The field of play must be rectangular and the length of the touch line must be greater than the length of the goal line.

For clubs seeking intermediate status, from 1 April 2015.
The minimum length is 90m and the minimum width is 55m. All existing intermediate clubs that do not meet this criteria must comply by season 2025/ 26.

The pitch must be level and have a good playing surface.

SYNTHETIC PITCH MARKINGS

Only football markings in white are permitted on synthetic grass pitches. Small sided games markings for football are acceptable to play across the pitch. Small sided games markings must be in a different colour and clearly distinguishable from the lines used for full sided football.

No other sports markings are permitted.

GROUND ENVIRONS

A permanent fixed fence, wall or natural boundary must be in place to prevent access except through the recognised entrances.

Where a deterrent (glass, barbed wire, spikes etc) is placed on the top of the perimeter, it must be a minimum height of 2.4 metres.

Pitch perimeter fences should be put in place in order to enclose the playing surface. Such fences are not required in front of spectator seating areas and must be between 0.8 and 1.2m in height. An appropriate number of access gates (opening onto the playing area) must be in place at regular intervals in the pitch perimeter fence.



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Premiership Criteria

RUN OFF AREAS AND DUGOUTS

It is recommended that a minimum distance of 2.25m, of natural grass or artificial grass, must be in place between the field of play touchlines to any fixed point (e.g. pitch perimeter fence/wall or dugout). The run off areas must be level and free from surface depressions, excessive undulations or any obstructions (e.g. raised manholes or raised sprinklers/hydrants).

A covered dugout for each team must be provided to accommodate a minimum of eight persons. Where bench seating is utilised, each person should be allocated 50cm of linear space. A technical area must be clearly marked.

ACCESS TO GROUND

Clubs must provide a minimum of four appropriately positioned turnstiles to afford for the segregation of spectators where necessary. These should be clearly identifiable and ideally be numbered.

It is stressed that entry capacity is one of the factors that determines the safe capacity of a ground or section of a ground (e.g. a stand). The entry capacity is general the number of people who can pass through all the entry points (e.g. turnstiles) for part of, or whole of the ground, within a period of one hour. For the purpose of calculating entry capacity, an upper limit of 660 is set. Therefore, the effect on entry capacity must be carefully considered, before opting for a minimum of four turnstiles, particularly at larger capacity venues.

Access/egress for players and officials must be provided.

An admission gate for disabled persons, with a minimum width of 1.2m, be provided with ramps and a smooth, appropriate gradient where required.



Championship/PIL Criteria

RUN OFF AREAS AND DUGOUTS

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A covered dugout for each team must be provided to accommodate a minimum of eight persons. Where bench seating is utilised, each person should be allocated 50cm of linear space. A technical area must be clearly marked.

ACCESS TO GROUND

Clubs must provide a minimum of two appropriately positioned turnstiles to afford for the segregation of spectators where necessary. These should be clearly identifiable and ideally be numbered.

It is stressed that entry capacity is one of the factors that determines the safe capacity of a ground or section of a ground (e.g. a stand). The entry capacity is general the number of people who can pass through all the entry points (e.g. turnstiles) for part of, or whole of the ground, within a period of one hour. For the purpose of calculating entry capacity, an upper limit of 660 is set. Therefore, the effect on entry capacity must be carefully considered, before opting for a minimum of two turnstiles, particularly at larger capacity venues.

Access/egress for players and officials must be provided to ensure there is no interference whilst entering/inside/exiting the ground.

An admission gate for disabled persons, with a minimum width of 1.2m, be provided with ramps, with a smooth, appropriate gradient, where required.

The club must provide written confirmation (via a Local Authority, if relevant) that it has sole control of the ground and its environs on match-days and that only a referee's inspection can be used to declare the pitch unplayable. The club must further demonstrate that it has access to the ground at all required times during the playing season.



Intermediate Football Criteria

RUN OFF AREAS AND DUGOUTS

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A covered dugout for each team must be provided to accommodate a minimum of eight persons. Where bench seating is utilised, each person should be allocated 50cm of linear space. A technical area must be clearly marked.

ACCESS TO GROUND

Clubs must provide a recognised entrance(s) and demonstrate their ability to collect gate receipts.

The club must provide written confirmation (via a Local Authority, if relevant) that it has sole control of the ground and its environs on match days and that only a referee's inspection can be used to declare the pitch unplayable.

All facilities (including playing facilities and changing rooms) must be available to both competing clubs and referees on match days at least 60 minutes prior to kick off and 30 minutes following the completion of the match.

For a complex that has more than one pitch located within the permanent defined ground perimeter, it is mandatory on the occasion of an intermediate match that the teams and officials shall have exclusive use of the facility. No other match can take place whilst an intermediate match is being played. This will preclude the hosting of any other matches during the three hour time period identified above. All such complexes must be approved by the Intermediate Committee.

For the avoidance of doubt, this stipulation does not apply to a ground situated within a complex with its own ground perimeter.



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Premiership Criteria

EXITING GROUND

In line with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) 6th Edition Green Guide, exit routes should provide for spectators a smooth, unimpeded passage through an exit system until they reach the boundary of the ground, or in emergency situations, a place of safety.

In order to achieve this, management should ensure that: a) there are sufficient numbers of exits in suitable locations; b) all parts of exit routes are of adequate width and height; c) people do not have to travel excessive distances in order to exit from the ground; d) provision is made for the control of spectators entering an exit system; e) all exits are identifiable in both normal and emergency conditions; f) exit times should be monitored and recorded by the management on an annual basis.



Championship/PIL Criteria

EXITING GROUND

In line with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) 6th Edition Green Guide, exit routes should provide for spectators a smooth, unimpeded passage through an exit system until they reach the boundary of the ground, or in emergency situations, a place of safety.

In order to achieve this, management should ensure that: a) there are sufficient numbers of exits in suitable locations; b) all parts of exit routes are of adequate width and height; c) people do not have to travel excessive distances in order to exit from the ground; d) provision is made for the control of spectators entering an exit system; e) all exits are identifiable in both normal and emergency conditions; f) exit times should be monitored and recorded by the management on an annual basis.



Intermediate Football Criteria

EXITING GROUND

For existing constructions, the minimum exit route width is 1.1m. For new constructions, the recommended minimum exit route width is 1.2m.

In the event of an incident which renders the usual exit route unusable, spectators should be able to use an alternative exit route or routes.



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Premiership Criteria

SPECTATOR FACILITIES

Separate toilet facilities for home and away supporters, each with a minimum of one male WC, 4 male urinals and one female WC must be provided solely for the use of spectators. **Clubs will have until 31 March in the season they are promoted to meet this criterion.**

A disabled toilet must also be provided and may also be utilised as a male/female spectator toilet, provided it is suitably equipped and identified.

It is recommended that particularly for larger capacity venues that toilet provision conforms to the Event Safety Guide (Purple Guide).

All spectator passageways (including gangways and stairways within viewing accommodation) should be suitably located, be of adequate width and height (i.e. based on technical guidance such as British Standards or determined by Technical Booklets issue by Building Control) and avoid 'bottle necking' situations; be readily available, clearly identified and signposted, with step nosing's highlighted; and be well lit (naturally or artificially or both).

Where gates are installed within the pitch perimeter barrier, affording forward access onto the pitch, they should open away from spectators, be clearly marked and painted in a contrasting colour to distinguish from the rest of the barrier.

Stairways should have clearly marked nosings and edgings.

Other exit gates (or doors) should be clearly marked on both faces, with an identifying number. All exit gates (or doors) should always be capable of opening outwards so that crowds can escape in an emergency, without obstruction. If this is unachievable, then reconsider repositioning, to facilitate outward opening.



Championship/PIL Criteria

SPECTATOR FACILITIES

A minimum of one male WC, 4 male urinals and one female WC must be provided solely for the use of spectators.

A disabled toilet must also be provided and may also be utilised as a male/female spectator toilet, provided it is suitably equipped and identified.

It is recommended that particularly for larger capacity venues that toilet provision conforms to the Event Safety Guide (Purple Guide).



Intermediate Football Criteria



JOINT GROUND CRITERIA



Premiership Criteria

ACCESS TO PITCH FOR PLAYERS AND OFFICIALS

A protected area/tunnel must be in place to safeguard the access from the changing facility to playing area of players and officials.

DRESSING ROOM ACCOMMODATION

The changing facilities for players and officials must be within the perimeter of the ground.

There must be separate changing rooms for both teams with a minimum surface area of 15sqm. Showering facilities must be integral to the changing room, must be a minimum of 4sqm and must have a minimum of 6 showerheads. (Showering/WC areas will not be considered for the purposes of calculating changing room surface area). Each changing room must also contain a WC with wash-hand basin.

The referee must have a separate changing room with a minimum surface area of 9sqm. There must be a shower and a WC within the room. (Showering/WC areas will not be considered for the purposes of calculating changing room surface area).

Changing rooms for players and officials must have adequate heating, be ventilated, be capable of being secured and be clean and tidy. Furthermore all floor surfaces should be non-slip and showers should be fitted with an appropriate thermostat to ensure that water temperature does not exceed 38 degrees Celsius.

Clubs will have until 31 March in the season they are promoted to meet the above dressing room criteria.



Championship/PIL Criteria

ACCESS TO PITCH FOR PLAYERS AND OFFICIALS

A barrier with a minimum height of 1.2m be in place to safeguard the access from changing facility to playing area of players and officials.

DRESSING ROOM ACCOMMODATION

The changing facilities for players and officials must be within the perimeter of the ground.

There must be separate changing rooms for both teams with a minimum surface area of 15sqm. Showering facilities must be integral to the changing room must be a minimum of 2sqm and must have a minimum of 4 showerheads. (Showering/WC areas will not be considered for the purposes of calculating changing room surface area). Each changing room must also contain a WC.

The referee must have a separate changing room with a minimum surface area of 3sqm. There must be a shower and a WC within the room.

Changing rooms for players and officials must have adequate heating, be ventilated to outside air, be capable of being secured and be clean and tidy. Furthermore all floor surfaces must be non-slip and showers should be fitted with an appropriate thermostat to ensure that water temperature does not exceed 38 degrees Celsius.



Intermediate Football Criteria

ACCESS TO PITCH FOR PLAYERS AND OFFICIALS

A barrier with a minimum height of 1.0m be in place to safeguard the access from changing facility to playing area of players and officials.

DRESSING ROOM ACCOMMODATION

The changing facilities for players and officials must be within the perimeter of the ground.

There must be separate changing rooms for both teams. Showering facilities must be integral to the changing room and must have a minimum of 4 showerheads for each team.

There must be adequate toilet facilities in the changing room complex.

The referee must have a separate changing room with a minimum surface area of 3sqm. There must be a shower within the room. The room must be used solely as a referee changing room.

Changing rooms for players and officials must have adequate heating, be ventilated to outside air, be capable of being secured and be clean and tidy.



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Premiership Criteria

FIRST AID

A first aid room which is clearly signposted throughout the stadium must be available and must have a minimum surface area of 10sqm.

A first aid kit and stretcher must be available at all times.

FLOODLIGHTING

All clubs must have an appropriate floodlighting system in place. Where new floodlighting installations are to be put in place these should be 500 LUX Maintained Average Horizontal illumination. Clubs should seek advice in this respect from the Club Licensing and Facilities Unit.

BOARDROOM/RECEPTION ROOM

Clubs must have boardroom facilities available.



Championship/PIL Criteria

FIRST AID

A first aid kit and stretcher must be available at all times.

FLOODLIGHTING/RECEPTION ROOM

Whilst floodlighting or reception facilities are not essential, any teams who aspire to gain promotion to the Premiership must be in a position to install both at short notice.



Intermediate Football Criteria

FIRST AID

A first aid kit and stretcher must be available at all times.



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Premiership Criteria

CONTROL ROOM/ SECURITY POINT – DESIGNATED GROUNDS

A permanent control point (i.e. a control room) must be provided, affording a clear and unrestricted view of the playing surface and as much of the viewing accommodation as possible.

It should be adequately equipped with a telephone, power points, CCTV (where available, though this is strongly recommended); other safety equipment as necessary and all necessary documentation, including amongst other items, ground layout plans and contingency plans.

Access should be restricted to authorised personnel only.

It is recommended that the public address (PA) announcer is not stationed within the control room itself (but perhaps in an adjacent room or nearby); however, an effective communication system between both parties is advisable (e.g. via telephone). In the event of an emergency, it should also be made possible for safety personnel stationed in the control room to be able to override the PA system in order to communicate with spectators inside the stadium. If available, an electronic scoreboard can also be utilised for safety communication purposes.



Championship/PIL Criteria



Intermediate Football Criteria



JOINT GROUND CRITERIA



Premiership Criteria

CONTROL ROOM/ SECURITY POINT – GROUNDS WITH REGULATED STANDS OR NON-CERTIFICATED GROUNDS

Regardless of venue size – certificated or otherwise – a suitable control point in some capacity should be provided at all grounds.

However, given the limited nature of smaller grounds and/ or limited resources available to certain clubs/ ground operators, if a permanent control point (as detailed within designated grounds section above) is not provided, it is important that there is an identifiable and signed focal point available. As a minimum, this focal point must constitute a dedicated room used solely for this purpose of a control point, with a responsible person in attendance whilst the venue is occupied by spectators.

A public address system should be in place.

GROUND RULES

Each stadium must issue stadium ground rules and affix them to the stadium in that spectators can read them.

These rules should provide: admission rights; abandonment or postponement of events; description of prohibitions or penalties such as entering the field of play, throwing objects, use of foul or abusive language, racist behaviour etc; restrictions with regard to alcohol, fireworks, banners etc; seating rules and causes for ejection from the ground.



Championship/PIL Criteria

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Intermediate Football Criteria



JOINT GROUND CRITERIA



Premiership Criteria

GROUND CAPACITY AND SPECTATOR ACCOMMODATION

The ground must have a minimum approved capacity of 2000 persons.

A minimum of 200 covered seats must be available. Only individual seats with backrest will be accepted. An additional 800 covered seats/terraced places must be available. Any balance up to 2000 (as per Council Safety Certificate for designated grounds) must be accommodated by hard-standing such as tarmac, concrete or concrete paving.

Hard-standing accommodation will be calculated as 8 persons per linear metre (2 persons per linear metre multiplied by 4 persons to a depth of 1.5 metres).

Grass banking is not acceptable for use as spectator areas and must not be accessible to spectators.

At existing grounds, a minimum of 5 wheelchair spaces for wheelchair spectators and their companions must be provided.

All spectator accommodation (covered seating/ covered terracing/ uncovered terracing/ covered hard standing/ uncovered hard standing) must be of sound construction of timber/ steel/ brick/ concrete/ tarmac or any combination of these materials. All spectator accommodation must be clean, functional and in good condition and should at all times afford a clear view of the pitch.

Physical alterations to existing spectator accommodation should, where possible, follow the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) 6th Edition Green Guide.



Championship/PIL Criteria

GROUND CAPACITY AND SPECTATOR ACCOMMODATION

The ground must have a minimum approved capacity of 500 persons.

A minimum of 100 covered seats must be available. Only individual seats with backrest will be accepted. An additional 100 covered seats/ terraced places must be available.

At existing grounds, a minimum of 5 wheelchair spaces for wheelchair spectators and their companions must be provided.

All spectator accommodation (covered seating/ covered terracing/ uncovered terracing/ covered hard standing/ uncovered hard standing) must be of sound construction of timber/ steel/ brick/ concrete/ tarmac or any combination of these materials. All spectator accommodation must be clean, functional and in good condition and should at all times afford a clear view of the pitch.

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Intermediate Football Criteria

GROUND CAPACITY AND SPECTATOR ACCOMMODATION

All spectator accommodation (covered seating/ covered terracing/ uncovered terracing/ covered hard standing/ uncovered hard standing) must be of sound construction of timber/ steel/ brick/ concrete/ tarmac or any combination of these materials. All spectator accommodation must be clean, functional and in good condition and should at all times afford a clear view of the pitch.

Physical alterations to existing spectator accommodation should, where possible, follow the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) 6th Edition Green Guide.



JOINT GROUND CRITERIA



Premiership Criteria

NEW SPECTATOR ACCOMMODATION – AT ALL GROUNDS, CERTIFICATED OR OTHERWISE

Any NEW spectator accommodations (i.e. seated stands or standing terrace stands, permanent or otherwise) should be constructed in line with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) 6th Edition Green Guide. Whilst this guidance has no statutory force, it ensures best practice.

Such accommodation must at all times hold the necessary planning permission, building control approval and satisfy any other relevant legislation.

The number of wheelchair spaces at a newly constructed ground, or any completely new section of an existing ground (i.e. seated stand or standing terrace stand) should be in line with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) 6th Edition Green Guide.

REGULATED STANDS

Non designated venues constructing NEW spectator accommodations with an individual stand capacity in excess of 500 persons must be mindful of any applicable legislative requirements existing, or upcoming, in this respect.



Championship/PIL Criteria

NEW SPECTATOR ACCOMMODATION – AT ALL GROUNDS, CERTIFICATED OR OTHERWISE

Any NEW spectator accommodations (i.e. seated stands or standing terrace stands, permanent or otherwise) should be constructed in line with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) 6th Edition Green Guide. Whilst this guidance has no statutory force, it ensures best practice.

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Such accommodation must at all times hold the necessary planning permission, building control approval and satisfy any other relevant legislation.



JOINT GROUND CRITERIA



Premiership Criteria

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS/ EXCEPTION REQUEST

The above are the minimum requirements and are subject to change in line with UEFA and Premiership licensing infrastructure requirements. Clubs should consult the Irish Football Association and the Northern Ireland Football League when undertaking ground improvements and modifications to any facilities located within the ground.

Where a venue's existing physical infrastructure may temporarily not meet all of the criteria detailed above due to ground improvements, modifications or any other reason outside the control of the venue owner/ user, an application may be made in writing for an exception request. This application from the venue owner/ user should be directed to the Chief Executive of the Irish Football Association and should detail the following;

1. The reason for the exception request
2. The duration which the deviation is required (must be no longer than 6 months)
3. The alternative arrangements to be proposed
4. All other relevant information.

For the avoidance of doubt an exception request will not be considered to facilitate promotion.



Championship/PIL Criteria

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS/ EXCEPTION REQUEST

The above are the minimum requirements and are subject to change in line with UEFA, Premiership and Championship licensing infrastructure requirements. Clubs should consult the Irish Football Association and the Northern Ireland Football League when undertaking ground improvements and modifications to any facilities located within the ground.

Where a venue's existing physical infrastructure may temporarily not meet all of the criteria detailed above due to ground improvements, modifications or any other reason outside the control of the venue owner/ user, an application may be made in writing for an exception request. This application from the venue owner/ user should be directed to the Chief Executive of the Irish Football Association and should detail the following;

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Intermediate Football Criteria

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS/ EXCEPTION REQUEST

The above are the minimum requirements and are subject to change in line with intermediate football infrastructure requirements. Clubs should consult the Irish Football Association and the IFA Intermediate Cup Committee when undertaking ground improvements and modifications to any facilities located within the ground.

Where a venue's existing physical infrastructure may temporarily not meet all of the criteria detailed above due to ground improvements, modifications or any other reason outside the control of the venue owner/ user, an application may be made in writing for an exception request. This application from the venue owner/ user should be directed to the Chief Executive of the Irish Football Association and should detail the following;

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JOINT GROUND CRITERIA



Premiership Criteria

DISCLAIMER/ EXCLUSION OF IFA LIABILITY

For the avoidance of doubt, the scope of the Joint Ground Criteria is restricted to detailing the physical infrastructure and technical specification required, from a football perspective, to be in place at the respective levels of football identified. It remains entirely the full and sole responsibility of the club and/or venue owner to ensure that their facilities meet all relevant statutory, regulatory and/or common law standards of health and safety and that appropriate safety confirmations are in place at all times for all facilities in use on a match day. It is further recommended that clubs/venue owners arrange regular safety reviews conducted by independent persons with the appropriate expertise.

Clubs/venue owners should note that the Joint Ground Criteria should not in any circumstances be construed as overriding or replacing clubs/venue owners legal, regulatory and/or other obligations, as set out in, inter alia, the Safety at Sports Grounds (NI) Order 2006, the stadium General Safety Certificate or the club's contingency plans. Except in cases where by law liability cannot be excluded or limited, the Irish Football Association excludes all liability in respect of the contents of the Joint Ground Criteria, and the use of same, howsoever arising and whether in contract, tort, or otherwise.



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