

AUSTRALIAN RUGBY UNION POLICY

Policy Title (Reference)	Age Grade Two-Year Window (COM009)
ARU Functional Area	Community Rugby
Policy, Application, Objective and Exception	<p><i>Policy:</i> A player shall not participate in an age grade competition more than two years above his or her age on 1 January in the year which the competition is run. This two year period is known as the two-year window.</p> <p>Example: A player participating in an Under 12 competition must be turning 11 or 12 years of age during the year in which the competition is run.</p> <p>This Policy must be followed unless the exception below is applicable.</p> <p><i>Application:</i> The policy applies to all junior/school age grade competitions/ matches (up to and including U19's) played in Australia.</p> <p><i>Objective:</i> This policy aims to protect the safety and welfare of age grade rugby players by trying to ensure that participants with broadly compatible physical development and skill levels play with and against each other.</p> <p><i>Exception:</i> In exceptional cases, a player's physical development, skill level and experience may be such that he or she may be allowed to participate in an age grade competition that is <u>more than two years and no greater than three years</u> above his or her age.</p> <p>Players are only be permitted to participate above the two-year window in a junior/school age grade competition in the following circumstances:</p> <p>(a) where the player will not play age grade rugby in the front row (prop or hooker) – he or she must comply with the procedure described in <u>Schedule A - Exception to the Two-Year Window Policy</u>, including completion of the <u>Consent Form</u>; or</p> <p>(b) where the player will play age grade rugby in the front row (prop or hooker) – he or she must comply with the procedure described in <u>Schedule A - Exception to the Two-Year Window Policy</u>, including completion of the <u>Consent Form</u>;</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>and</i></p> <p>– he or she must also apply to ARU for approval play in the front row (prop or hooker), as outlined in <u>Schedule B - Exception for Front Row</u>. ARU approval must be received before the player participates in age grade rugby.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Such consent will be given on a case by case basis.</p>
Related Policies	ARU Insurance Scheme Policy
Approved By	ARU Board [27 February 2009].

**Schedule A -
Exception to the Two-Year Window Policy**

Before a player wishes to participate in an age grade competition more than two years above his or her age on 1 January in the relevant year, the information in this Schedule should be carefully considered and the attached Consent Form must be properly completed and sent to the Competition Manager.

PLEASE NOTE: Players wishing to participate above the two-year age grade window and play in the Front Row (prop or hooker) must also apply for approval from the ARU prior to participation, as outlined in Schedule B - Exception for Front Row. The player may not play in the Front Row above the two-year age grade window until ARU approval has been received.

Risks:	<p>It is important that all people involved in a decision to permit a player to participate in an age group above the two-year window understand that rugby is a contact sport and, like all contact sports, players are exposed to the risk of injury.</p> <p>This risk may be heightened where a player participates in a competition above the two-year window in circumstances where the player's physical development, skill level and experience are inferior to that of the players he or she will play against.</p>
Considerations:	<p>In assessing the suitability of a player to participate in a competition above the two-year window, the coach assessing the player and the player's parent or guardian should consider the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What is the player's level of physical development (e.g. height, weight, build etc) when measured against potential playing colleagues? Is the player physically equipped to compete on an equal basis with players in the proposed age grade competition? ➤ Does the player have a high skill level; both specific to their playing position and in relation to the games fundamentals (e.g. tackle, pass, ruck, maul, scrum etc)? Will the player's skill level place the player on an equal basis with players in the proposed age grade competition? ➤ What is the player's level of experience? Is the player reasonably experienced and has the player gained that experience in a comparable standard of competition? ➤ What is the standard of competition in the proposed competition? Is it at a level in which the player can compete safely?
More information:	<p>More information on player safety can be found at www.rugby.com.au/communityrugby</p>
Role of the Coach - Player Assessment:	<p>The suitability of a player to participate above the two-year age grade window must be assessed and the potential risks explained to the player and his/her parent or guardian. The coach undertaking the player's assessment must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hold both a minimum current level 2 coach accreditation and SmartRugby qualification, and be registered on ARU's MyRugby; ➤ Consider the player's suitability to play above the two-year window against the considerations described above; and ➤ Talk to the player and his/her parent or guardian to ensure that they understand that the player will be competing against older players and this may involve an increased level of injury risk.
Role of the Parent or Guardian:	<p>A parent or guardian of a child under the age of 18 must consent to the child playing above the two-year window. That consent must be evidenced by completing the attached Consent Form.</p>
Role of the Competition Manager:	<p>The Competition Manager must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that a copy of this Policy (complete with Schedules A & B and the Consent Form) is included in the competition rules; ➤ Do their best to ensure that the Policy is observed by all teams participating in the competition; and ➤ Keep records of completed Consent Forms.

AGE GRADE TWO-YEAR WINDOW - CONSENT FORM

COMPLETED FORM TO BE SUBMITTED TO YOUR COMPETITION MANAGER

PLAYER (please print clearly)

Name:	MyRugby No.
Club/School:	Competition/State:
Date of Birth:	Actual Age Grade: _____ (ie. U12's, U16's)
Playing Position:	Requested Age Grade: _____ (ie. U14's, 1 st XV)

ASSESSING COACH

Name:	MyRugby No.
Coaching Qualification: Level [2] [3] please circle Expiry _____	SmartRugby Qualification: Expiry _____

Coach to assess the player against the following considerations. If the answer is NO to any of these considerations, then the player shall NOT be considered capable of competing safely with players in the proposed competition.

PLEASE NOTE: Players who participate above the two-year age grade window and play in the Front Row (prop or hooker) must also apply for approval from the ARU prior to participation in rugby, as outlined in Schedule B - Exception for Front Row.

Physical Development:	Does the player's level of physical development allow the player to compete with players in the proposed age grade competition?	yes	no
Skill Level:	Is the player's skill level comparable with other players in the proposed age grade competition?	yes	no
Level of Experience:	Does the player have the experience to compete with other players at a comparable standard of competition?	yes	no
Standard of Competition:	Is the standard of competition in the proposed age grade competition suitable to allow the player to compete safely?	yes	no

In my opinion, the player's physical development, skill level and experience is sufficiently high that the player is capable of competing safely with players in the proposed age grade.

I have explained to the player and his/her parent or guardian that the player will be competing against older players and this may involve an increased level of injury risk.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Print Name: _____

PARENT / LEGAL GUARDIAN

I confirm that:

- a) I am a parent or legal guardian of the abovementioned player;
- b) I have been provided with a copy of the ARU's Two-Year Window Policy including Schedules A & B of that Policy;
- c) The coach has explained to me that, in his/her opinion, the player's physical development, skill level and experience is sufficiently high that he/she is capable of competing safely with players in the proposed age grade;
- d) It has been explained to me that the risk of injury may be increased by the player playing in the proposed age grade competition; and
- e) I understand that rugby is a contact sport and, like all contact sports, players are exposed to risk of injury. I also understand that the level of risk may be heightened where a player participates in a competition above the two-year window in circumstances where the player's physical development, skill level and experience are inferior to that of the players he or she will play against. In addition to understanding these risks, I also agree, to the extent permitted by law, to waive all claims for liability against any participant (including players, coaches, volunteers and administrators) and release every such participant from all liability that may be incurred in connection with the player's participation in the proposed age grade.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Print Name: _____

COMPETITION MANAGER

I confirm that:

- a) A copy of this Policy (complete with Schedules A & B and the Consent Form) is included in the competition rules; &
- b) Records of completed Consent Forms are kept.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Print Name: _____

**Schedule B -
Exception for Front Row (prop or hooker)**

A player wishing to participate above the two-year age grade window and play in the Front Row (prop or hooker) must also apply for approval from the ARU prior to participation in rugby, as outlined in this Schedule. The player may not play in the Front Row until ARU approval has been received.

The Player should consider the information provided in:

- Schedule A - Exception to the Two-Year Window Policy; and complete the Consent Form [Competition Manager approval is not required until ARU approval to play in the Front Row is granted], and
- Schedule B - Exception for Front Row and provide a written submission as outlined below in order to gain relevant approval by the ARU.

PLEASE NOTE: Both the completed Consent Form and written submission as outlined in Schedule B - Exception for Front Row must be submitted to the ARU for consideration of this exception.

Risks:	<p>It is important that all people involved in a decision to permit a player to participate in an age group above the two-year window understand that rugby is a contact sport and, like all contact sports, players are exposed to the risk of injury.</p> <p>This risk may be heightened where a player participates in a competition above the two-year window in circumstances where the player's physical development, skill level and experience are inferior to that of the players he or she will play against.</p> <p>Medical studies support that players in the Front Row (prop or hooker) are exposed to a higher level of serious injury than players in other positions.</p>
Considerations:	<p>In assessing the suitability of a player to participate in the position of Front Row (prop or hooker) above the two-year age grade window, the player must provide a written submission addressing the following considerations.</p> <p>(i) skill level and experience and the level of coaching received –</p> <p><i>Player experience in the Front Row (prop or hooker)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of years experience playing in front row ➤ Did you play in the front row last year? ➤ If you missed a game through injury last year please identify the injured area (eg R. Shoulder, L. Knee or neck etc) <p><i>Level of coaching received</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What Level coaching qualifications does your current coach have? ➤ Have you received any specialist front row coaching in the last 2 years? If Yes, please outline coaching received, identify the coach who provided this coaching, and outline their coaching qualifications and experience? <p>(ii) strength –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do you undertake a regular strength program? If Yes, how many times a week do you complete strength training, identify who provided the program, and provide the strength program that you have completed over the past 4 weeks. ➤ How long have you been doing regular strength training? (ie months/years) <p>In addition to the above information, an objective assessment of body structure may also be required if deemed appropriate.</p> <p>(iii) body structure –</p> <p>If your experience and strength levels outlined above have been considered adequate, the ARU may request additional information in the form of CT scans or MRI scans, prior to approving an exception for Front Row.</p> <p>A referral for these investigations will be posted to you if appropriate. The costs of these investigations must be borne by the athlete.</p>
Submissions can be made to:	<p>Australian Rugby Union c/o ARU General Manager, High Performance Unit 29-57 Christie Street, St Leonards NSW 2065 PO Box 115, St Leonards NSW 1590 Fax: (02) 8005 5681</p>
Approvals	<p>Approvals will be granted on a case by case basis.</p>