

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 National Club Licensing

National Club Licensing sets out quality standards and procedures by which clubs will be assessed as a basis for continuous improvement of many aspects of football. It is a modern form of regulation.

The system has been approved by the Scottish Football Association's (SFA) full membership and the SFA Board has agreed the criteria following upon a consultation exercise with a variety of bodies.

Licensing requires that those clubs in membership of the Scottish Premier League (SPL) and Scottish Football League (SFL) meet specific standards. The standards are presented in the form of criteria under five headings –

- Infrastructure
- Sporting: Youth & Coaching
- Legal and Administration
- Financial
- Codes of Practice

The criteria are transparent, graded by league where appropriate and consistent with UEFA standards where necessary. A great deal of care and attention has been given to the drafting of criteria. The focus has been on establishing a set of quality standards for Scottish Football.

Licensing will have all the characteristics of a quality management system. The SFA's own management of the system conforms to ISO 9001:2000 and all Scottish FA activities with regard to licensing are subject to third party scrutiny in order to guarantee the transparency and integrity of the system.

## 1.2 Benefits of National Club Licensing

The governing body sets standards for licensing. By meeting these standards, football as a whole is acknowledging its responsibility to the community at large.

Licensing is a transparent process that enables clubs in particular to demonstrate to all their stakeholders that they meet quality standards.

Licensing will help to establish benchmarking information. Clubs will be able to use this information to establish their position and to plan future quality improvement.

SFA resource will be focused on assisting clubs to meet their standards.

Football will benefit from the adoption of quality management practices by the Scottish FA.

### 1.3 The Management of the System

The Scottish FA will manage National Club Licensing for its members.

The system will comprise of self-certification on the part of the club together with an audit conducted by the SFA.

In order to demonstrate that it meets the criteria, a club will make available a series of club reports and supporting documents at the audit that will be conducted at a pre-agreed time with the club at its ground. A checklist is provided in Section Ten of this manual that outlines what a club may expect at the audit and how the club should prepare for it.

Those clubs that meet the standards will be issued with a Licence.

### 1.4 Criteria

In the interests of quality, the criteria should be regarded as minimum standards, illustrative and not exhaustive. Clubs are encouraged to report on their own higher quality standards.

Clubs will be given reasonable timescales at the discretion of the General Purposes Committee (GPC) to meet criteria that is graded by league. Promotion from one division to another will not be affected by the criteria detailed in this manual (SPL and SFL criteria permitting), as clubs will be given timescales to address any variances. Where lengthy time periods to meet criteria for clubs in one particular division are detailed, newly promoted clubs will be given similar timescales. UEFA minimum mandatory requirements remain applicable for entry to the UEFA club competitions

### 1.5 Development

Licensing is a progressive system designed to deliver continuous improvement. Improvements will be introduced as the system develops. Scottish FA committees have the authority to review criteria and these will be referred to the Board for approval following upon a consultation process with various bodies including the Scottish Premier League and Scottish Football League.

The development process will incorporate reasonable timescales.