

# 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 –

- Ground Criteria
- Sporting and Medical criteria
- Legal and Administration Criteria
- Finance Criteria
- Codes of Practice Criteria

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.

Licensing aims to ensure that clubs meet and maintain certain standards and that these standards are continuously improved upon over a period of time.

The overall objective of licensing is to raise standards within Scottish football, including but not limited to, safety, infrastructure, youth and coaching, medical, corporate governance and general ethical standards.

## 1.3 The Management of the System

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

The system will consist 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 provide certain information specified directly to the SFA and 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. The information required is detailed in each criteria section of this Manual. This is summarised in the checklist provided in Section 13. 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.

## 1.6 Application

This version of the Manual, V.02, which includes page references in the footer to either Issue One 2007 or Issue Two 2008, will apply during domestic season 2008/9 and will apply for participation in UEFA Club Competitions from the 2009/10 season.

## 1.7 UEFA Accreditation

This Manual is the subject of an accreditation process via UEFA. UEFA accredits sections 1-4 and sections 8, 11 and 12 and Appendix IV. Sections 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14 and 15 are not subject to the UEFA accreditation process.

UEFA accreditation for this version of the Manual was granted in September 2008.