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Step 5 & 6 Match-Based Suspension Guide



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FOREWORD



For a number of seasons many discussions have taken place in relation to the differences between the match-based disciplinary procedures dealt with by The Football Association and the term-based disciplinary process administered by the County Football Associations.

To the majority of people involved in the administration of the game it has been difficult to understand how a player dismissed for an offence at local level was dealt with differently than those at the higher level of the game.

The reasons for this are well documented and we are now delighted, thanks to the hard work undertaken by County Football Associations, to be in a position to address these differences.

With effect from the 2006/7 season all teams participating at Steps 5 and 6 of the National League System will be subject to match based suspension procedures similar to those at the Step 4 and above. These procedures will continue to be administered by County Football Associations.

The Football Association will then evaluate the success of the system and consider the possibilities of extending the pilot further to encompass other levels of the game.

As Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee I am mindful of the importance of being fair and impartial to all levels of the game. I feel this development is a tremendous step forward towards our ultimate aim of having just one disciplinary system throughout our game.

In order to make this system a success it is important for all clubs, not only those with teams at Step 5 and 6, to be aware of the implications and their obligations to the administration of a sound disciplinary process. The contents of this booklet will give you the necessary guidance but if you have any questions please contact your local County Football Association.

In closing I would like to wish you a successful 2006/7 season.

Barry W. Bright
Chairman Disciplinary Committee

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been agreed to introduce match-based suspensions for offences committed by players playing at Steps 5 and 6 of the National League System with effect from 1st July 2006.

The purpose of this document is to explain to all concerned the implications of this system. It is important that all clubs are aware of the implications irrespective of the level in which they play as they could have players playing at Step 5 and 6 for other teams and are therefore affected by the regulations.

This document is split into 2 sections. The first explains in easy terms the effects of certain situations. The second section contains the new procedures for Step 5 and 6 discipline.

Any club unsure of any of these rules or procedures should contact their County Football Association for clarification.

2. RULES GOVERNING SUSPENSIONS AND SUSPENSION MAINTENANCE

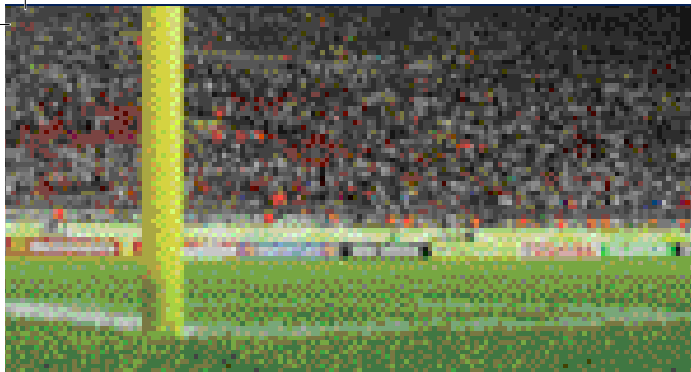
Where a case has been reported to the County Football Association, the County must check against the player's record for existing suspensions and must resolve conflicts according to the rules below.

Where a suspension is referred to it means suspension from playing ALL football. If the player is sent off or suspended as a result of playing for his Step 5 or 6 Team the ONLY matches that will clear the player of his suspension are those of his Step 5 or 6 Team. During this period the player will be suspended from playing for any other domestic team.

All suspensions resulting from on-field offences under the jurisdiction of the referee will automatically commence 21 days from the date of the offence. However, depending if another suspension is in force, the matches the player misses to complete the suspension may not always be the first match or matches on or after that 21st day. A number of possible scenarios are outlined below. The list is not intended to be exhaustive and other scenarios may arise during the course of the season. Where there is uncertainty clubs should contact their County FA for advice.

NB – Please refer to the "Procedures for Steps 5 and 6 Teams" in the Handbook for details of the Competitions that can be used as the club's first team matches. If it is not listed in the Handbook then the match cannot be used towards the completion of the suspension.

It should be noted that a player who gets sent off playing for a Step 5 or 6 team that plays in any competition other than those listed as qualifying matches within the Procedures who gets sent off in that match may be dealt with under the time based system.



(a) No other suspensions

If no other suspension or outstanding cases are detected the matches used to complete the suspension will be those immediately on or following the 21st day from the date of the offence.

For example – a player is sent off for violent conduct (3 match suspension) on 1st February, he has no other suspension or misconduct case pending. A 3 match suspension will automatically be imposed 21 days from the date of the offence (22nd February). The matches the player will miss will be the next three first team matches on or following that 21st day.

(b) Existing confirmed suspension

- (i) If any existing confirmed suspensions are due to finish prior to the 21 days from the date of the offence then the matches the player will miss to complete his second suspension will be those on or after the 21st day from the date of the offence as per the above.

For example - it is simple - the next suspension is unaffected because it finishes before the 21st day.

- (ii) If any existing confirmed suspensions are due to finish on or after the 21st day from the date of the offence then the automatic suspension will still commence 21 days following the offence but the actual matches the player misses will be those following immediately on from the matches used to complete the first suspension. Suspensions do not run concurrently.

For example – a player is sent off for foul and abusive language to a match official (2 match suspension). 14 days previous the player is sent off for violent conduct. The 3 match suspension for violent conduct will start 7 days after the second sending off for foul and abusive language. If the 2nd suspension starts before the first suspension has ended, the 2 matches used to complete the suspension for foul and abusive language will be the next 2 games following the 3 match suspension for the offence of violent conduct.

(c) Existing unconfirmed suspension

If any existing unconfirmed suspension is due to finish prior to the 21 days from the date of the offence for the automatic suspension then matches to clear the player of suspension will be the first match or matches on or after the 21st day from the date of the offence. If the existing unconfirmed suspension is due to finish after the 21st day from the automatic suspension then the match or matches used to complete that suspension will be those immediately following the end of the first suspension.

For example - a player is sent off for denying a goal scoring opportunity (1 match suspension) playing for his Step 5/6 Team. Prior to that sending off he was also dismissed playing for his Sunday side for kicking or striking another player (35 day suspension). The player accepts the offer of 35 days for kicking or striking and the start date is prior to the start of the suspension for denying a goal scoring opportunity. In this instance the 1 match suspension for the goal scoring opportunity will commence on the 21st day but the match used will be the first match after the end of the 35 days. However if the player denies kicking or striking another player either by requesting a personal hearing or in writing the likelihood is that the Step 5/6 1 match suspension will automatically commence first.



If a player is due to start a time based suspension during a match based suspension, the matches the player will miss will need to be changed.

For example - player A has a match based suspension for violent conduct, spitting (3 matches) due to start on 15th March. He was also sent off playing for his Sunday team, the suspension for which is due to start on 20th March up to and including 2nd April. Player A is only able to serve 1 match of the 3 match suspension before 20th March. The final two matches be the next two that his Step 5/6 Team play on or after 3rd April.

(d) Postponed matches (See also (k))

If a player is suspended and the match or one or more of the matches to complete that suspension are postponed, abandoned etc, it is the responsibility of the club Secretary to notify the County of the postponement and to provide details of the new match or matches the player will miss. (A photocopyable form for this purpose is included at the back of this booklet)

Any of the above situations may be affected by postponed matches.

For example - under 2 (i) above postponements may take the match the player must miss for the 5th caution past the start date of the suspension for the sending off. If this happens the 1 match the player will miss will move back until the first suspension is completed. Although the match the player misses moves the start date will remain the same. Thus:

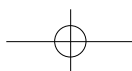
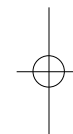
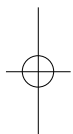
Player receives his 5th caution on 4th November. The 1 match suspension for this commences on 25th November. On the 11th November the player is sent off for receiving 2 cautions in the same match. This suspension commences on 1st December. The team were due to play on 28th November but this match is postponed. Their next match is played on 1st December. This match will complete the player's suspension for receiving his 5th caution in a season. The team's next match on 4th December will complete the player's suspension for his sending off.

(e) Player transfers pre/mid suspension

If a player transfers or registers for another club (at any time) after he has been suspended for a club at Step 5/6 the suspension will remain with that club. The suspension will always remain with the club for whom the player was playing when he was sent off or reached the relevant caution threshold.

For example - player X is sent from the field of play for serious foul play (3 match suspension) on 1st March playing for club A. The automatic suspension will start 21 days later on 22nd March. On the 5th March the player moves to club B. Player X is free to play up to and including 21st March. From 22nd March player X will miss club A's next 3 matches (if this is not affected by any other suspension/postponements).

The onus is on the player, club B and any other club for whom player X plays, to ensure those 3 matches have been completed (and none of the 3 matches have been postponed) before he plays again. If club A are aware of player X's new club they should copy any correspondence in relation to the suspension to the new club as well as the County.





All club's should, prior to playing a new player, contact their County FA to enquire whether he is under suspension or due to serve a suspension.

(f) Split Suspensions – what do they mean to the player and his Club(s)?

If a player has a suspension from his Step 5/6 club that needs to be carried over to the next season the following will apply:

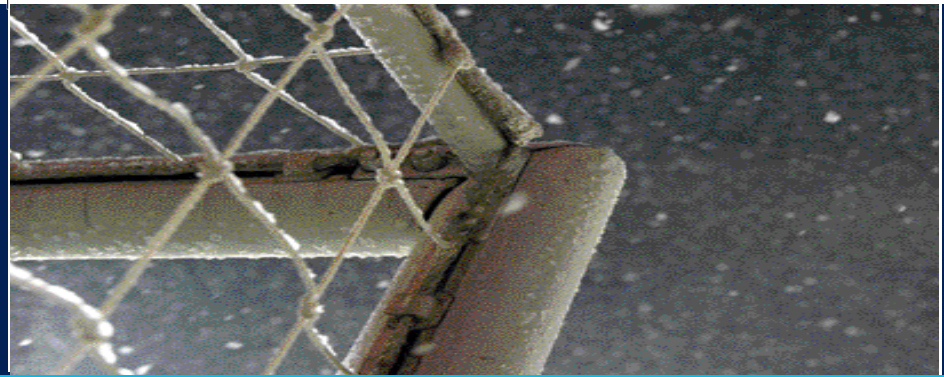
- (i) Once the club he received his suspension playing for has completed their season the player is free to play again until the start of that club's next League season. The player would miss the relevant number of matches at the start of the next season. This means that the player may be free to play for his Sunday team if they have not completed their fixtures and in pre-season friendlies etc.

For example – player X has a 3 match suspension commencing 21st April. His club with whom he was sent off have only one match left after that date to complete their season on 25th April. Therefore, he will have 2 matches carried over to the next season. Player X also plays for a Sunday side, club B, who have two matches left after 25th April. Player X can play in those matches and can also play in any pre-season friendly matches and tournaments. club A's League commences on 26th August the following season. Player X would miss their first 2 matches on or after 26th August. If club B's season starts prior to 26th, for example on 20th August, player X would be eligible to play in that match but would be suspended from playing for club B (and any other club for whom he is registered) from 26th August until club A have completed 2 matches.

- (ii) If the player transfers to another club during the closed season a similar situation to that above will apply. The suspension remains with the club for whom he was playing for when sent off.

Player X is sent off for foul and abusive language on 31st March playing for club A. His 2 match suspension commences on 21st April with club A. Club A play their last match of the season on 23rd April which means player X has to carry 1 match over to next season. Player X transfers clubs during the close season and cannot play again between the start of club A's League season until the first match has been completed. If club B's season starts prior to the start of club's League season player X may play for club B until the opening day of club A's season at which point player X is then suspended until club A have completed that 1 match. If club B's season starts one week later, as long as club A have played their first match, player X would be free to play for club B.

- (iii) If the player transfers to a club outside of the Pyramid system the carried over suspension will remain as a Match Based suspension. It will not be converted into days.
- (iv) If a player transfers from a Step 7 club to a Step 5 or 6 team or his Step 7 team are promoted to Step 6 and he has a time based suspension that will start or continue at the start of the next season, this will remain as a time based suspension, it will not be converted to a match based suspension.



(g) Caution Thresholds

(i) 5 Cautions

If a player receives 5 cautions playing for a Step 5/6 team between the first day of the season and the last day of February he will be suspended for a period of 1 match commencing 21 days from the date of the 5th caution.

ii) 10 Cautions

If a player receives his 10th caution playing for a Step 5/6 team between the first day of the season and the second Sunday in April he will be suspended for a period of 2 matches commencing 21 days from the date of the 10th caution.

iii) 15 Cautions

If a player receives his 15th caution playing for a Step 5/6 team between the first day of the season and the last day of the season he will be suspended for a period of 3 matches commencing 21 days from the date of the 15th caution.

iv) 20+ Cautions

If a player is cautioned 20 times between the opening and closing day's of the season he will be charged with continuing misconduct. For every 5 cautions he receives thereafter he will also be charged with continuing misconduct.

NB If a player receives 5 cautions playing for a club outside of Steps 5 and 6 he will be dealt with according to the "Memorandum of Procedures" relating to that level. If a player receives 4 cautions playing for a Step 5/6 team and 4 cautions playing for a Sunday side he will not receive any suspension. A suspension will be imposed only when he reaches the appropriate caution threshold for that particular level of football.

(h) Non-Receipt of Suspension Notification

If a player is dismissed from the field of play or receives a caution in a match this is a matter of fact. Non-notification by the County to the club will not nullify that dismissal or caution. Therefore any suspension arising out of either is automatic. A club playing a player because they have not been notified will be charged with playing a player whilst under suspension and the player charged for playing whilst under suspension. All clubs must contact the County within 14 days if they have not received notification of a suspension/caution. This includes notifying the County where a player's 1st, 2nd and so on cautions are not received.

(i) Matches that clear the player of Suspension

It should be noted that while only certain matches will count towards a player's suspension, he cannot play in any other matches while the suspension is in operation. The player is suspended from playing ALL FOOTBALL. In the procedures the following matches are listed which will clear the player's suspension:



All domestic League, League Cup, FA Challenge Cup, FA Vase matches and the club's Parent County Senior Cup Competition. Any other matches that are not listed in the procedures will not count towards the suspension but the player will not be able to play in any other match as the suspension is from all football.

For example - player X is sent off for Violent Conduct (3 matches) playing for club A on 5th November. It is his second sending off in the season (1 additional match). The suspension for this offence will therefore be 4 matches (1 extra match for his second sending off in the season). The suspension automatically starts on 26th November. On the 26th the club have a League match which will count towards the player's suspension. Three days later the club are playing in their nominated County Senior Cup. This match also counts towards the player's suspension. The 3rd match is a League fixture. Before the 4th match the club are playing in another County Cup competition (which is not their Parent County Cup competition). This match will not count towards the player's suspension but the player cannot play in it

(j) Playing whilst under Suspension

If a player is found to have played while under suspension either for his Step 5 or 6 club or a Sunday side, the player and/or the club will be charged by the County. The punishment will be at the discretion of a Disciplinary Commission. If he is found to have played whilst under suspension for his Step 5/6 club it would be a match based suspension and/or fine. If playing for his Sunday club while suspended he will receive a time based suspension and/or fine.

(k) Abandoned Matches (See also (d))

A match that is abandoned will not count towards a suspension even if the League, under its own rules, decides the result of the match will stand. If a match is abandoned that has been notified to the County as counting towards a suspension, the player's club must inform both the County and the player of the change in fixture dates to complete the suspension. (Photocopyable form included at the end of this booklet)

3. PLAYER RESPONSIBILITY

The ultimate responsibility to ensure that a player does not play whilst under suspension rests with the player himself. The individual concerned knows when he has been sent off and should keep account of how many cautions he has received. Therefore the player must do the following:

- (a) If sent off playing for his Step 5 or 6 team the player must be aware that he is suspended from playing all football 21 days from the date of the offence for the appropriate number of matches. The player must inform any other club to which he is registered. If the player leaves his Step 5 or 6 club prior to or during the suspension he must inform any new club that he signs for. If the player leaves his Step 5 or 6 team for which he was playing when dismissed or reached the appropriate caution threshold he must, prior to playing again, check to make sure that the suspension has been completed.
- (b) If the player who plays for a Step 5 or 6 team is sent off playing for his Sunday team he must inform all clubs with which he is registered of his dismissal. He will be suspended from playing all football for the duration of the suspension.
- (c) Every time a player transfers to a new club or registers for an additional club he must inform that new club of his disciplinary record for the season and any outstanding suspensions.
- (d) When completing the suspension form the player must ensure he provides the County with all the details requested on the form, including the names of any other clubs to which he is registered.

4. CLUB RESPONSIBILITY

(a) Clubs with teams at Steps 5 or 6.

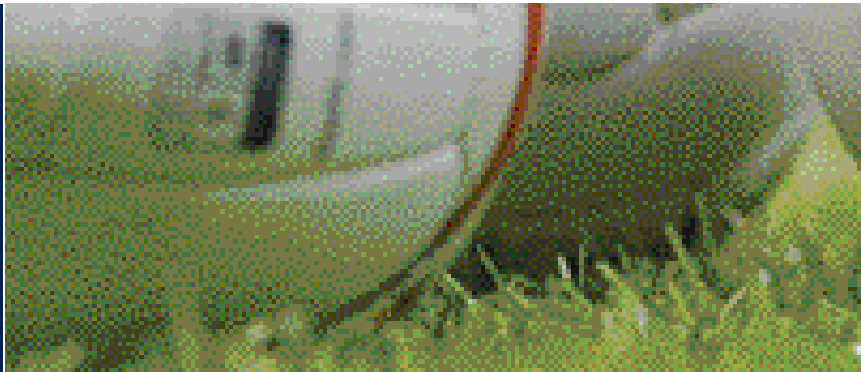
If one of their players is reported to the County as having been dismissed or having reached the appropriate caution threshold the club must complete and return all the appropriate forms and suspension details. If any of the matches that the club have informed the County, in writing, will complete a players suspension change they must inform the County as soon as possible again in writing. Changes to suspension details could be as a result of Cup replays, postponements, abandoned matches or legitimate re-arranged fixtures.

When asking a player to complete the relevant parts of the suspension form the club should ensure that it is completed correctly.

If a player with an incomplete suspension leaves and registers/transfers to a new club they should provide that club with the suspension details and matches that he will miss. If any of those matches are postponed or changed for any reason the club should still inform the County and if possible the players new club.

If within 14 days of a player being sent off or having reached the appropriate caution threshold the club have not been notified of the details of the suspension they must contact the County to inform them of this. The County will then contact the referee for the report or re-send any suspension forms that may have been lost in the post. [Non-receipt of a suspension notice from the County does not nullify the suspension.](#)

The club must ensure they notify the County of the Step 5 or 6 team's nominated County Senior Cup Competition.



5. GENERAL

When registering any new player the club should do all it can to ensure that the player does not have any uncompleted a suspension. The club should ask the player first and also check his disciplinary record with the County.

(b) Clubs outside of Steps 5 and 6 – How does this affect you?

Clubs that have players registered who also play at Steps 5 and/or 6 must ensure that any suspensions of that player have been completed before they play him again. A player may be due to serve his last match on a Saturday and play for a Sunday team the next day thinking that suspension is complete. If the match on the Saturday does not take place he will still be suspended. Therefore if he plays on the Sunday he will have played whilst under suspension. This may mean a phone call to the Step 5 or 6 team club secretary to find out if the match was completed or not.

(a) Assaults on Match Officials

If a player is guilty of assaulting a Match Official he will be dealt with under the County Procedures in relation to Assaults on Match Officials.

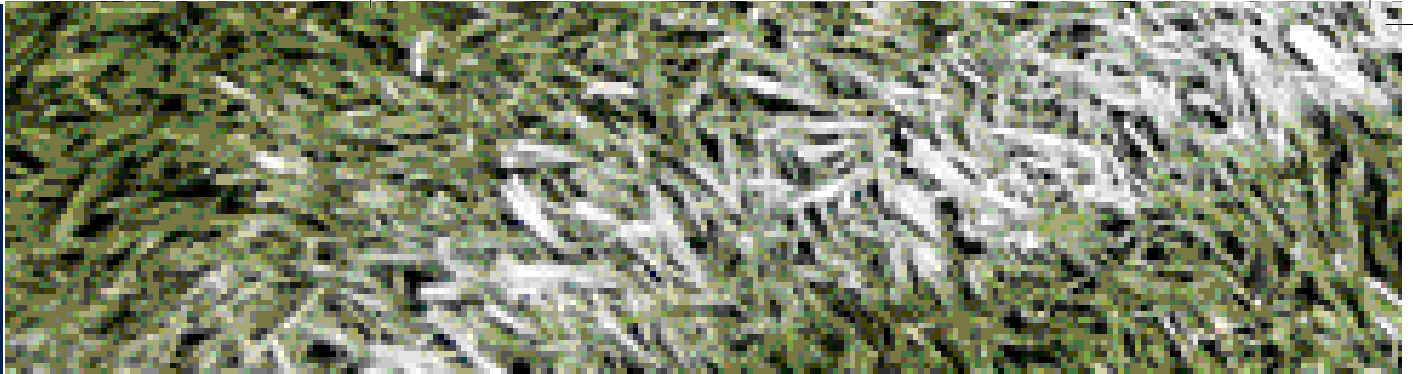
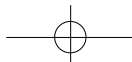
(b) Claims of Wrongful Dismissal

A dismissal from the field of play under Referee's Report Form S6 (uses offensive or *(dare we blaze a trail here)* insulting or abusive language and/or gestures) and Referee's Report Form S7 (receives a second caution in the same match) is not within the criteria for a "claim of wrongful dismissal". No correspondence will be entered into relating to these two offences, together with individual cautions or punishments resulting from cautions. Clubs must not approach a Match Official with a request to consider such issues.

Any claims must be made through the County Association and only if the Claim conforms to the criteria laid out in the Procedures will it be considered further. Any club reported by a Match Official for a breach of these regulations, (i.e. in that they contacted the Match Official re the dismissal) will be charged with a breach of FA Rule E3, in that it has acted improperly.

A video recording showing the incident MUST be submitted with any claim of wrongful dismissal together with the reasons from the player and club, along with the Appeal fee of £100 which must be included.

Clubs should note that the video must prove that the decision of the Referee to send the player off was wrong.



If a claim is successful the appeal fee will be returned and the suspension and fine will be removed from the player's record. However, the dismissal will remain on the player's record.

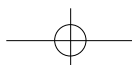
The Disciplinary Commission that considers a claim of wrongful dismissal is concerned with only the question of whether any sanction of a suspension from play is one which should be imposed in view of the facts of the case. Their role is not to usurp the role of the Referee and the dismissal from the Field of play will remain on the record of the club and the player. Also will remain the subject of the administration fee and will accrue the appropriate number of penalty points for the sending off.

The time limits contained with the procedures are strict. Any claim received late will not be considered by the Association.

(c) Claims of Mistaken Identity

If a claim of mistaken identity is successful (see procedures for how to claim) the record of the offence will be transferred to the appropriate offender, who will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of current procedures.

For example - player A is mistakenly cautioned during the match. Player B to whom the caution should have been issued picks up a yellow card during the match for a different offence. Player A puts forward a successful claim for Mistaken Identity. The yellow card is transferred to player B. That means that player B has now picked up 2 yellow cards in the match. They will now become 1 red card and player B will serve a 1 match suspension 21 days from the date of the offence.



MEMORANDUM OF PROCEDURES

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES CONCERNING FIELD OFFENCES

As set out in the Schedule hereto for players associated with the First Team* of a club competing at Steps 5 and 6.

These comprise clubs competing in the Northern League Division 1 & 2, Northern Counties East Division 1 & 2, North West Counties League Division 1 & 2, Midland Football Alliance, United Counties League Premier & Division 1, Hellenic League Premier Division, Division 1 and Division 1 West, Eastern Counties League Premier & Division 1, Western League Premier & Division 1, Wessex League Division 1 & 2, Spartan South Midlands League Premier & Division 1, Combined Counties League Premier Division, Kent League, Essex Senior League, Sussex County League Division 1 & 2, West Midlands Regional League and the Midland Combination.

*These procedures also apply where a Team competing at Steps 5 or 6 are the Reserve Team of a club whose First Team compete at Step 4 or above.

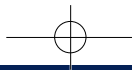
This Memorandum cites procedures as they apply exclusively to Participants who are acting as players when reported.

Save for serious or repeated proved misconduct, Participants offending in a capacity other than as players in a match (at all levels) should not be suspended but be subject to any of a reprimand, a warning as to future conduct, a written undertaking not to repeat, a touch-line ban for a period of time, and a Fine (active or suspended for a given period), together with costs in proved guilty cases.

For the purposes of these Procedures any reference to a players club means the club for which the player was playing when he was cautioned, dismissed or reported for misconduct.

1. Definitions

- 1.1 In this Memorandum the words "the Association" refer to the appropriate County or other Affiliated Association, and the words "the Association secretary" mean and include any person nominated to discharge a part of the disciplinary administration of the Association as well as its actual secretary.
- 1.2 Wherever gender is referred to in this Memorandum, either shall be inferred, as relevant.
- 1.3 All written communications from a player to the Association secretary must be sent by the secretary of the player's club unless the player is no longer registered with that club.
- 1.4 Every Association must set out in its rules or regulations a copy of these procedures, which are to be followed after a player has been cautioned or dismissed from the Field of Play while playing in a match for a club or a particular team of a club not dealt with by The Football Association.
- 1.5 (a) A "child" means a person who at the date of the relevant match was under the statutory school-leaving age and throughout these regulations full-time education refers to a child who is of compulsory school age or who is over the school-leaving age but is under the age of 18 and is for the time being attending a school or in full-time education in an establishment of further education.
- (b) Financial penalties for misconduct must not be imposed on a child (Sections 5.2, 6.3 & 7.2 and 13.3). Where a Automatic Punishment or Commission decision includes any financial element then the player's club is liable for the sum imposed.



- 1.6 Wherever "written" or "letter" is referred to in this Memorandum this is deemed to include communication by fax or e-mail. Where an Association chooses to communicate by fax or e-mail it must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the address or fax number used is current.
- 1.7 This Memorandum effective from 1st July 2006 until further notice.
- 1.8 The term "suspension" in this Memorandum means the suspension is from playing football ONLY and any other sanction required for the period of suspension must be specified in the decision letter.
- 1.9 Any reference to cautions in this Memorandum refers only to those received playing at Steps 5 and 6. Cautions received playing for a club outside of Steps 5 and 6 will be separate and not added to the total received under this Memorandum (See also paragraph 11.3).
- 1.10 Permanent Suspension means no review to be considered under a period of 10 years.

2. Timing

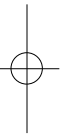
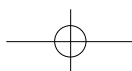
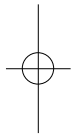
Disciplinary procedures shall commence no later than 90 days, and the outcome determined no later than 180 days from receipt of the report of alleged misconduct, or otherwise be void. If deemed reasonable, any period of delay requested or caused by the Participant will not count towards the 90/180 days. The Association must use due diligence to charge and/or finalise cases within that period of time and must conform with the requirements set out in this Memorandum, subject to the effects of the adoption by the Association of any of the alternative and optional powers set out in paragraph 20.

3. Administrative Procedures – Match Official Reports

An Association may reserve the right not to process a caution if the report is deemed to be invalid for any reason.

4. General

- 4.1 Without prejudice to the foregoing provisions of this Memorandum, an Association shall have the power to delegate to The Football Association or to another Affiliated Association its powers and duties to investigate and/or adjudicate in cases where it may be advantageous so to do.
- 4.2 If a referee omits to show the appropriate card when taking action against a player, this does not nullify the caution or sending-off offence. However, the attention of the referee should be drawn to the correct procedure.
- 4.3 A Participant consents to abide by the Laws of the Game, the Rules and Regulations of The Football Association or an affiliated Association and to reasonable proportionate disciplinary action when playing the game. The issue of a caution is a decision based on a question of fact on the Field of Play upon which the Referee's decision is final. The recording of the caution and the consequences that follow are both reasonable and proportionate. Cautions, not being the subject of appeal do not breach the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 4.4 When a player is dealt with by a Disciplinary Commission cases must be dealt with on their merits and a punishment awarded consistent with the overall nature and effect of the offence(s); also the player's record of misconduct over the current and previous five seasons.





- 4.5 Associations will impose split suspension periods where matches have to be carried over to the following season. The last day of the first suspension period shall be the player's team's last competitive match of the season. The suspension will re-commence with that same team's start of the following season. Competitive matches are defined in paragraph 11.3.

5. Reporting Offences By Match Officials

- (a) **Caution Offences**
Referees must submit to the relevant Association within two days of the match (Sundays not included) a Report stating the offence.
- (b) **Sending Off Offences**
Referees and Assistant Referees must submit to the relevant Association within two days of the match (Sundays not included) a Report stating the offence(s) and giving a description of the incident(s).
- (c) If a Referee omits to show the appropriate card when taking action against a player this does not nullify the caution or the sending off offence. However, the attention of the Referee should be drawn to the correct procedure.

6. Caution Offences

A player who has been cautioned in a match, will be notified through his club by the Association of the offence reported by the Referee. At the same time will be advised of the total number of cautions recorded during the current season and any punishment resulting from their accumulation. An administration fee of £8.00 will be charged for the processing of each report. For each caution received a player will be subject to one penalty point.

7. Sending Off Offences

A player who has been sent off in a match under the provisions of Law 12 will be notified through his club by the Association of the offence reported by the Referee, and at the same time advised that he will be subject to the agreed automatic punishment (see paragraph 11). An administration fee of £8.00 will be charged for the processing of each report.

8. Claims of Mistaken Identity

In the case of a claim of alleged mistaken identity concerning a player cautioned or sent off in a match, the PLAYERS concerned and the CLUB must within three working days of the match submit in writing to the Association particulars upon which the claim is founded, including the right to claim Wrongful Dismissal. If the Chief Executive of the Association, or his nominees, are satisfied that the claim warrants further investigation, a Disciplinary Commission shall be convened and will meet within the 21 days before any automatic penalty is due to take effect. If the Members of the appointed Commission are satisfied that mistaken identity has been proved in a case, the record of the offence will be transferred to the appropriate offender, who will be subject to



disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of the current Procedures.

The relevant fee which MUST be included with the evidence is £100 which may be retained if the claim is deemed to be unfounded and be used in full or in part to cover any costs incurred by a Disciplinary Commission. In the event of the fee not covering the amount of costs charged, an additional amount may be charged by the Commission.

9. Claims of Wrongful Dismissal

In the case of a claim of wrongful dismissal for offences with a penalty imposed under the Laws of the Game of an immediate dismissal (excluding Referee's Report Form S6, the use of offensive or insulting or abusive language/gestures), evidence upon which the claim is founded, which must include a video cassette recording/DVD showing the incident, must be submitted by the player concerned and his club, together with the relevant fee and MUST be received by The Association by the close of business of the third working day following the match (as below*). An indication by fax or e-mail (discipline@[insert name of county]fa.com e.g discipline@essexfa.com) on the first working day following the game is required to alert the Disciplinary Departments of the Association that a claim is to be submitted.

*Saturday or Sunday game by Wednesday
Monday/Thursday
Tuesday/Friday
Wednesday/Monday
Thursday/Tuesday
Friday/Wednesday

(If Bank Holidays fall within the period, the appropriate number of extra days will be made available)

Once the claim is lodged with the Association and it is confirmed that the video shows the incident as reported by the Referee/ Assistant Referee and the claim has conformed with the criteria, the club will then be advised whether the claim has been accepted or not.

An accepted claim will be placed before a Disciplinary Commission within the 21 days before an automatic penalty is due to take effect. The club, the player and Match Officials will NOT be invited to attend. The Commission will be dealing with the level of punishment only. The dismissal from the Field of Play will always remain on the record of the club and the player and be the subject of the administration fee and the appropriate number of penalty points for a sending off.

The only decisions available to the Members of the Disciplinary Commission are:-

- (i) The punishment will remain with the fee being retained
- (ii) The punishment will be withdrawn, the fee returned and that paragraph 11.5 (e) of the procedure will not be invoked if the player is sent off again following the offence.

The relevant fee is £100 and will be retained if the case is deemed to be unfounded and returned if any alterations are made to the offence or punishment.



10. Non-First Team Matches

A player who has been sent off or is to be the subject of a charge under the provisions of FA Rule E3 will be dealt with by the Association to which the club is affiliated in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedures insert page number relating to clubs dealt with by the Associations. A player will have the right of Appeal against the decision reached by the Association, in accordance with the provisions of the Regulations for Football Association Appeals.

11. Punishments

- 11.1 Any period of suspension automatically imposed for a dismissal from the field of play will commence 21 days from the date of the offence. The suspension will be complete once the player's team has completed the appropriate number of matches, in approved competitions, according to the suspension as defined below under 11.3.
- 11.2 Any period of suspension automatically imposed as a result of the recording of cautions under 11.4 will commence 21 days from the date of the last offence. The suspension will be complete once the player's team has completed the appropriate number of matches, in approved competitions, according to the suspension as defined below under 11.3.
- 11.3 The first team matches that can be used to clear a player of suspension are those to be played in a domestic competition organised by the Football Association (including the FA Challenge Cup and the FA Vase), the League in which the team play (including their League Cup(s)) and the Team's nominated County Senior Cup Competition. During the whole period of

suspension the player is suspended from playing all football (including friendly matches and other Cup Competitions). Where a player has to serve more than one suspension at the same time the following criteria will apply:

- (i) Any suspensions awarded under the provisions of these procedures and due to commence on the same date will result in the total number of matches involved running consecutively.
- (ii) Any suspensions that overlap, in that the next one starts before the previous one ends, will also run consecutively as above.
- (iii) Matches cannot be used more than once to cover two or more suspensions.
- (iv) Any suspension imposed under the provisions of these procedures that is or will be affected by a period based suspension will automatically commence 21 days from the date of the offence. The matches to be used in relation to this suspension may be before and/or after the period based suspension. The two suspensions cannot run concurrently.

11.4 Cautions Administered On The Field Of Play

- (i) If a player accumulates five recorded cautions in any Competition, but receives the 5th caution between the opening day of the Playing season and the last day in February in the same season, he will be suspended automatically for a period covering:

One First Team Match plus a fine of £15



- (ii) If a player accumulates five recorded cautions in any Competition between the opening day of the Playing season and the last day of the same season, he will be Warned as to his Future Conduct.
- (iii) A player who has already been subject to disciplinary action as a result of five recorded cautions and then goes on to record a further five cautions during the same season, will be subject to the following punishments: -
- (iv) If a player accumulates ten recorded cautions in any Competition between the opening day of the Playing season and the second Sunday of April in the same season, he will be suspended automatically for a period covering Two First Team matches plus a fine of £15
- (v) If a player accumulates ten recorded cautions in any Competition between the opening day of the Playing season and the last day of the same season, he will be Severely Censured and Warned as to his future Conduct.
- (vi) If a player accumulates fifteen recorded cautions in any Competition between the opening date of the Playing season and the last day of the same season, he will be suspended automatically for a period covering Three First Team matches plus a fine of £15.
- (vii) A player who has already been subject to disciplinary action as a result of recording five, ten and fifteen cautions, and who goes on to record 20 cautions in the same season, shall be required to attend a meeting of a Disciplinary Commission, within 21 days of the date of the last caution. The Members of a Commission shall have the power to deal

with the player in such manner as they deem fit. The same procedure will apply for every further five cautions recorded against a player.

- (viii) Any period of suspension or part that remains outstanding at the end of a season must be served at the commencement of the following season.

11.5 (a) **Players sent off under Law 12 (7)**

A player who is dismissed from the Field of Play for receiving a second caution in the same match will be suspended automatically commencing on the 21st day following the match in which he was sent off, until such time as his club's First Team has completed one match in an approved competition, as per 11.3, fined the sum of £20 and be subject to 2 penalty points.

(b) **Players sent off under Law 12 (4) and (5)**

A player who is dismissed from the Field of Play for denying a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by physical means or by handling the ball, will be suspended automatically commencing on the 21st day following the match in which he was sent off, until such time as his club's First Team has completed one match in an approved competition, as per 11.3, fined the sum of £20 and be subject to 2 penalty points.



(c) **Players sent off under Law 12 (6)**

A player who is dismissed from the Field of Play for using offensive or insulting or abusive language/gestures whether he has previously been cautioned in the match or not, will be suspended automatically commencing on the 21st day following the match in which he was sent off, until such time as his club's First Team has completed two matches in an approved competition, as per 11.3, fined the sum of £30, and be subject to 2 penalty points.

(d) **Players sent off under Law 12 (1), (2) and (3)**

A player who is dismissed from the Field of Play for Violent Conduct, Serious Foul Play or spitting at an opponent or any other person whether he has previously been cautioned in the match or not, will be suspended automatically commencing on the 21st day following the match in which he was sent off, until such time as his club's First Team has completed three matches in an approved competition, as per 11.3, fined the sum of £40 and be subject to 4 penalty points.

(e) **Additional sendings off**

Players dismissed from the Field of Play for a second time in the same season, in addition to the automatic suspension applicable to the offence, will be suspended for one extra match. A player dismissed for a third time in the same season will be suspended for an extra two matches, and so on. A Disciplinary Commission, when dealing with a Claim of Wrongful Dismissal (paragraph 9) has the power not to invoke a further one match suspension if it so desires.

(f) **Outstanding suspensions**

Any suspension or part thereof which remains outstanding at the end of a season, must be served at the commencement of the following season.

(g) **FA Rule E3**

A charge of misconduct pursuant to FA Rule E3 may be brought against a player in relation to an incident, notwithstanding that the same incident has been dealt with pursuant to this Memorandum. A Commission considering a charge under FA Rule E3 in such circumstances, shall have regard to any punishment imposed under this Memorandum when considering any punishment under paragraph 18 of the Disciplinary Procedures to be used at Personal Hearings before Commissions requested by Participants of clubs and Clubs dealt with by the Associations.

(h) **Payment to players under suspension**

Clubs must not pay a player more than his basic wage during the period of a suspension.

(i) **Re-Arranged matches**

A Commission shall have discretionary power to rule that a match shall not count towards the completion of a suspension if it is satisfied that the game has been arranged by the club with a view to enabling a player to complete his suspension and thus qualify him to play in a specific match.



12. Aggregate Misconduct (Clubs)

- 12.1 Associations may, at their option, use a penalty points based system to punish clubs whose misconduct is deemed excessive. If the Association chooses to punish clubs for Aggregate Misconduct they must use a system that conforms to these regulations.
- 12.2 Penalty points for cautions and dismissals from the Field of Play are listed against the relevant offences in these Regulations.
- 12.3 These points are effective once the offence:
- is reported for cautions or dismissals
 - has had a hearing for cases having hearings (unless an appeal is requested).
 - has had an appeal for cases going to appeal.
- Penalty points must not be awarded to charges found not proved.
- 12.4 Penalty points work on a seasonal basis, with points being included in clubs' totals for offences committed between the first and last days of the season, on an inclusive basis. Points must not be carried forward from one season to the next.
- 12.5 Misconduct dealt with by the Football Association must not be included in the penalty points totals.
- 12.6 Sanctions should be imposed at three stages, each incurring an Administration Charge, currently set at £10.

- 12.7 The number of points allowed for each stage (the Threshold), must be related to the number of teams that each club possesses.
- 12.8 Associations may make allowances in the number of teams that a club is deemed to have for Aggregate Misconduct, to reflect clubs whose disciplinary cases are handled by The Football Association. This is to prevent such clubs gaining an unfair advantage.
- 12.9 Recommended Points Allowances per club per season

No of teams	1	2	3	4	5	Each Additional team
Stage I	25	48	69	88	105	20
Stage II	50	96	138	176	210	40
Stage III	75	144	207	264	315	60

12.10 Recommended Fines for Exceeding a Threshold:

- For exceeding Stage I £25 plus an Administration Fee
- For exceeding Stage II £50 plus an Administration Fee
- For exceeding Stage III £100 plus an Administration Fee

Associations may vary Fines and Thresholds at their Discretion

- 12.11 Clubs that significantly exceed Stage III should be subject to further disciplinary action.



12.12 The Disciplinary Commission shall have the power to impose, or recommend as appropriate, any one or more of the following penalties on the Offending club:

- (a) a reprimand and/or final warning as to future conduct;
- (b) a further fine;
- (c) suspension from all or any specified football activity from a date that the Commission shall order, permanently or for a stated period or number of matches;
- (d) expulsion from a competition of the Association;
- (e) expulsion from a membership of the Association;
- (f) such further or other penalty or order as the Commission considers appropriate.

13. Disciplinary Action On Clubs For Misconduct By Their Players

Any club who has six or more individual players cautioned or Dismissed from the Field of Play in the same match will be automatically fined the sum of £150 for the first occasion during the season. For a second/third/fourth etc. occasion in the same season, the fine on the club will be £300/£450/£600 etc.

14. Assaults On Match Officials

The following Regulations shall apply at all levels of the game (excluding the 6 designated Leagues):

14.1 In addition to assisting a match official who has reported an assault against him, The Football Association or appropriate Association shall without delay investigate the match official's report and if, after such investigation, the chairman and secretary of the Association or their nominees are satisfied that a *prima facie* case can be made out against the alleged offender they shall take such steps as are necessary to ensure that a charge is preferred and that a Disciplinary Commission meets to consider the charge within 28 days of the date of the charge letter. The alleged offender shall not participate in any football activity from the date when he is notified of the charge, until a Disciplinary Commission has heard and adjudicated on the matter.

14.2 There shall be three categories of assaults:

- (a) Common assault
- (b) Assault causing bodily harm
- (c) Assaulting causing serious bodily harm



14.3 All assaults on match officials in the above three categories must be reported to The Football Association within 14 days of the completion of a case that has been proved, giving the decision of the Commission together with any reason for variation of the recommended punishments set out in 4 below. (If a match official who has reported a participant for an assault upon his person makes a written request for the decision and punishment awarded such must be made available to him at the earliest opportunity).

14.4 Recommended punishments for a person found guilty of an assault upon a match official are as follows (and cover football at all levels of the game):

(a) (i) Common Assault	182 days suspension plus a £150 fine
(ii) Common Assault by way of spitting at or on a Match Official	1 year suspension plus £150 fine
(b) Assault causing or attempting to cause bodily harm	Sine die suspension with no review to be considered under a period of 5 years plus 250 fine
(c) Assault causing serious bodily harm	Permanent suspension – no review to be considered under a period of 10 years.

15. Assaults By Participants On Other Participants

15.1 When a referee's report indicates that a Participant has perpetrated an assault on another Participant causing serious bodily harm before, during or after a match, The Football Association or appropriate Affiliated Association may, as in cases of assaults on match officials, without delay investigate the official's report. If after such investigation, the chairman and secretary of the Association, or their nominees, are satisfied that a prima facie case can be made out against the alleged offender, such steps shall be taken as are necessary to ensure that a charge is preferred and that a Disciplinary Commission meets to consider the charge within 28 days of the date of the charge letter. The alleged offender shall not participate in any football activity from the date when he is notified of the charge until a Disciplinary Commission has heard and adjudicated on the matter.

15.2 The recommended punishments for such offences are set out below:-

OFFENDER	
(a) Player	A suspension for a minimum of 140 days plus £150 fine for a first offence but, depending on severity, sine die with no review for five years.
(b) Club official	As for (a) above but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) If on a player or other official but not a match official; suspension from all football and football activities (ii) If on a Match Official - paragraph 14 above will apply.
(c) Match official	As for Match Officials assaulted by a player. But a recommendation will be made to the relevant Referees' Committee that the registration be removed and no request for reinstatement will be allowed until the suspension has been completed or removed.



16. Failure To Comply

- 16.1 When the provisions above are not complied with, the player's right to a Personal Hearing or to make a plea for leniency is forfeited and the Commission may deal with the reported misconduct on such evidence as is available.
- 16.2 Failure on the part of the player or his club secretary to discharge any of the requirements set out in this Memorandum may constitute misconduct, which may result in a further charge against the player, his club, or both. (In any case, a late fine, currently £20, will be levied in addition to the original charge and a further seven days given to respond to the charge. Failure to respond within the seven days will result in a further Late Fine of £20 and the club and player being suspended after a further seven days until the provisions above have been complied with). Any punishment imposed for failure to comply will be limited to a financial penalty if the fault of the club, but may include suspension of the player where it is the player's fault).
- 16.3 When dealing with compliance issues the Association must consider the following:-
- (a) Whether the player has responded to his club.
 - (b) Whether the club has failed to pass on his reply.
 - (c) Whether the club has informed the Association that the player has failed to respond.
 - (d) Whether the player has left the club.

17. Suspension Pending Misconduct Hearing

- 17.1 The appropriate Affiliated Association shall have the power, in consultation with The Football Association's Compliance/ Disciplinary departments, to order that an Official of a club affiliated to or a player registered with that Association, and not one associated with the 6 designated Leagues, shall be suspended from all or any specific activity for such period and on such terms and conditions as agreed by The Football Association and the Association considers appropriate (an "Interim Suspension Order")
- 17.2 The Interim Suspension Order shall apply when the club Official or player has been charged by the Affiliated Association in relation to an alleged act of serious misconduct, or with a criminal offence, or by a League sanctioned by the Affiliated Association or the Football Association in connection with disciplinary action pursuant to relevant regulations of the League.
- 17.3 As soon as reasonably practicable notification of an Interim Suspension Order shall be advised to the player and/or the club and will be lifted when the charge of misconduct is dealt with by a Commission or the criminal charges are withdrawn or found not to have been proved.



18. Personal Hearing

(See also: General Provisions relating to Inquiries, Commissions of Inquiry, Disciplinary Commissions and Appeal Boards; and Disciplinary Procedures to be used at Personal Hearings before Commissions requested by Participants of clubs and clubs dealt with by County and Other Affiliated Associations).

- 18.1 The notification indicating a misconduct charge must inform the player of the right to request a Personal Hearing in respect of the alleged offence and must also indicate that in the event of the charge being proved there will be a liability to be ordered to pay all or part of the costs of the Personal Hearing, which costs may include a part of the overhead expenses of the Association attributable to the hearing. Similarly, in cases where the rules or regulations of the Association require the deposit of a fee for a Personal Hearing, (as determined by the Council - currently £100), at the time of such request the player must be informed that the fee is liable to be forfeited in full or in part if the charge is proved, in addition to any fine which may be imposed. In an unproved case neither a fee may be retained, nor may Commission costs be levied, either for a Personal Hearing or for any other "non-Personal Hearing" case. (Commission costs cannot be levied in cases where a player has been instructed to appear before a disciplinary commission).
- 18.2 Upon receiving a request for a Personal Hearing in respect of an alleged offence, the Association will appoint a Commission of not less than three nor more than five members to hear and adjudicate upon the charge. In the case of a player under the age of 18 years of age on the date fixed for the hearing, it shall take place either in the presence of a parent or guardian of the player or another appropriate adult.
- 18.3 Fines must not be imposed on children [Section 1.5(b)]. Any fine and administration charges arising out of misconduct by a child must be levied on the club.
- 18.4 The player, through his club secretary, must be given the date, time and venue fixed for the Personal Hearing and arrangements made for the attendance before the Commission of any witnesses in support of the charge, in particular the Match Official(s) on whose report the charge has been brought. At a Personal Hearing of a charge a Commission may adopt such procedures as it considers appropriate and expedient for the just determination of the charge brought before it. A Commission shall not be bound by any enactment or rule of law relating to the admissibility of evidence in proceedings before a court of law.
- 18.5 The person charged and the Match Official(s) concerned should be given a minimum 14 days' notice of details of the Personal Hearing. Any written request to the Commission for a postponement of the hearing should be given consideration. If the reason submitted is considered valid, then a postponement should be granted, and in such circumstances costs may be charged. A request for a second postponement by the same party should not be granted.



- 18.6 If the charge is found not proved, any record of it will be expunged. If the charge is found proved the Commission will decide what punishment, if any, is to be imposed. In so doing, members of the Commission must consider the overall nature and effect of the offence(s) and the player's previous record and any plea for leniency. If charging costs the Personal Hearing fee must be taken into account.
- 18.7 Except when an Appeal has been lodged, any fines or costs that are ordered must be paid before the expiry of 14 days from the date of the order. Failure to pay within such period is deemed to be misconduct punishable by censure, a further late fine and/or suspension as determined by a Commission. This second Commission shall have the power to consider the matter on 48 hours notice and the power to suspend for continuing non-payment. (In any case, a late fine, currently £20, will be levied in addition to the original charge and a further seven days given to respond to the charge. Failure to respond within the seven days will result in a further late fine of £20 and, after a further seven days, the club and player being suspended until the provisions above have been complied with) The player and his club are jointly and severally responsible for payment of the fine and costs. The club shall take such action as may be necessary to recover any sum paid on the player's behalf. The rules or regulations of an Association must provide for disciplinary action to be taken against a player who fails to reimburse his club in accordance with the Football Debt Recovery (Section 14) regulations approved by Council.
- 18.8 A Disciplinary Commission shall comprise members appointed by the Association. The appointed members of such Commissions shall have no previous personal knowledge of the events or any involvement with any of the participants concerned.
- 18.9 The decisions of Commissions are final and binding on all parties subject only to a right of appeal to The Football Association under the provisions of Football Association Rules. The player and/or the club for which the player was playing at the time may appeal within 14 days of the sending of the decision notification.
- 18.10 The decision of the Association will be sent by first-class post or by e-mail to the secretaries of all clubs for whom the player is known to be currently playing and to the player's home address if known. Each of these secretaries is responsible for informing the player of the decision.
- 18.11 The commencement date of any suspension imposed on a player is at the discretion of the adjudicating Commission, subject to the suspension starting on a Monday. Such date must allow for the 14- day period permitted for an appeal.



19. Football Debt Recovery

- 19.1 Associations are required to operate a system to collect football debts on behalf of Affiliated clubs, Affiliated Leagues and Other Associations.
- 19.2 Football debts are defined as those costs arising directly from football activity, and as such would include disciplinary costs (e.g. fines), match costs (e.g. Match Fees), and playing expenses (e.g. pitch hire). Incidental costs (e.g. fund raising activities, club Subscriptions) do not fall within the scope of Football Debt Recovery.
- 19.3 Associations may take action against individuals or groups of individuals. Individuals may be pursued where they are refusing to reimburse an individual club for a qualifying debt. Where a club has folded its qualifying debts may be apportioned against its registered members and officers, and action taken against them individually to recover the club's debt.
- 19.4 Where a club's debts are apportioned to individuals they must then be treated as individuals, and any disciplinary action must not be linked to the recovery of the total debt.
- 19.5 It is incumbent on the creditor to take reasonable steps to recover the debt before asking their parent Association to take action. This would normally include approaching the debtor personally as well as contacting them in writing to seek payment.
- 19.6 The Parent Association should be approached as soon as it is clear there is a problem. In all cases this should be within 28 days of formal payment being requested, and 56 days of the debt being incurred.
- 19.7 Upon receipt the Association must immediately take steps to verify whether the debt is valid and notify the creditor and debtor of its decision.
- 19.8 Upon being satisfied that a qualifying debt exists the Association must apportion the debt on a pro-rata basis and notify the individual or individuals concerned. The Association may add an Administration Fee (not exceeding £8) to each individual's pro-rata debt.
- 19.9 Upon being notified, an individual must pay the debt within 21 days of the issue of the notification letter or appeal in accordance with the appeal procedures. If payment or appeal is not received the individual will be suspended *sine die* until the debt is paid and he is notified that the suspension has been lifted. This suspension will commence from (and include) the 22nd day after the date the notification was issued.



20. Further Disciplinary Action

An Affiliated Association in formulating its Rules and Regulations for misconduct may adopt and include some or all of the following powers: -

- 20.1 To make an order that a club whose players are persistently found guilty of misconduct
- (a) Be censured and/or fined in accordance with the approved penalty point process
 - (b) May have its affiliation suspended or cancelled
- 20.2 (a) Any other power approved in writing by The Football Association.
- (b) Any optional or alternative power granted to an Affiliated Association in accordance with Section 2(a) shall continue from year to year until such time as the approval is withdrawn. Such approval may be withdrawn by notice in writing from The Football Association given before 30th April, in any year.

Form D56

Renotification of matches to be served under a match-based suspension

This form must be photocopied and then completed and signed by the club Secretary.
Please keep this original in a safe place for future use.

Any change to the team's fixtures which affect a match-based suspension (e.g. original matches postponed, abandoned or rescheduled, or cup replays) must be notified in writing to the County FA as soon as possible. Failure to notify the County FA of any alterations to the suspension may result in disciplinary action being taken against the club.

Club name
Player name
Case number
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Please give details of the fixture(s) that the player will miss in order to fulfil the suspension, including the date, opponents and competition in which the fixture(s) take place. Please indicate why the suspension has changed (e.g. original matches postponed, abandoned or rescheduled, or cup replay)</p> </div>
Club Secretary name
Address (inc. postcode)
Daytime contact number
Signed _____ Club Secretary

Please send or fax this form to your club's parent County. Address details can be found on the header of correspondence from your County, in the County handbook or on www.thefa.com