

BAFA National Leagues



Associate process – an overview

Introduction

To enter an adult contact team into the BAFA national leagues requires the completion of an associate process. This involves the submission of detailed information about your team and a thorough assessment of your performance both on and off the field. You will be supported throughout the process by the BAFA Associate Manager, Richard Colin.

Only once a team has met all the requirements at a satisfactory level, will admission be granted to Division Two of the BAFA National Leagues.

The associate process is designed to make sure that teams entering the BAFA National Leagues are well-run and sustainable.

Associate steps

Step 1 - Team application and documentation

Firstly, you must submit an associate process entry form, which can be found on the [Establishing a Club](#) page of the BAFA website. This is designed to capture as much information about your planned team as possible, including your team name, location, structure, planned team colours and finances.

The following documents must also be submitted in support.

- Your governing document – usually in the form of a constitution or articles of association.
- Bank statements – copies of your two most recent statements
- A club welfare policy – this is vital if you plan to work with under 18s
- Budget – a detailed budget plan highlighting income and expenditure for two years (associate year and year one) must be presented
- Letter of support - at least one letter of support from a third party must be provided. This must be focused upon strategic support and be from a local authority, County Sports Partnership, or similar organisation.
- Roster – a basic breakdown of who's on your roster currently as you enter the process
- Coaching structure – a summary of who's on your coaching staff, listing their qualifications and experience
- Management structure – a summary of the roles, post-holders and responsibilities of your backroom staff

All of these documents must be in place before entry will be considered. You can find templates and other useful information to help you develop your club documentation on the [ClubMark](#) website.

You should send all this information with a covering email stating your intent to enter a team to the BAFA National Leagues Associate Manager Richard Colin at nlassociate.manager@britishamericanfootball.org

Step 2 - Registering on the BAFA National Leagues registration system

Team and individual membership for BAFA is managed on an [online registration system](#) provided by Go!Membership.

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Once you have submitted your paperwork and your participation as an associate team has been agreed with the Associate Manager, you may request that your team is added onto the system by the BAFA registrations team. You can contact them by email at registrations@britishamericanfootball.org

Registration on the online system provides team management, players, coaches and staff with the required insurance to practice and play as well as allowing you to download and print the gameday photo rosters required for competition. Membership is mandatory for participation at all levels within National Leagues.

There are different levels of membership, including a special category for associate teams. Please note, you will start at this level, and if entry is granted, your team membership and that of your players will require upgrading to full membership. Membership runs from 1 October – 30 September annually.

Annual associate fees are as follows:

- Associate team fee - £30
- Associate player fee - £25
- Coach or player / coach - £58
- Sideline assistants and staff members (ie, physio, gameday manager, photographer) - £5

You will be notified once your team has been added onto the system. At this point members of your team management can register against the team and nominated individuals can be granted administration rights – this means they can view and update your team information, manage member information, see and print who's on your roster and approve or reject transfer requests.

At this point you can then start registering players, coaches and staff. Easy step-by-step guides to registration are available on the BAFA website on the [Rules and Regulations](#) page.

Step 3 – Registration of players, coaches and staff

Before you can organise and hold any games, you must make sure you have an adequate number of player, coaches and staff registered on the BAFA national leagues membership system. The current requirements are:

Players – a minimum of 40, of which 30 should be brand new to the sport and not transferred from other National Leagues teams

Coaches – a minimum of 3 non-kitted coaches, all with a minimum of the BAFCA L1 coaching qualification

Staff – a minimum of 1 dedicated gameday manager

Step 4 – Playing associate fixtures

You will be required to organise, play and complete a minimum of five fixtures during your associate year. A minimum of three of these fixtures should be home games, and two should be away. These five games MUST be officiated by BAFA officials and assessed by a BAFA approved assessor.

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This lets us assess your ability to deliver the logistics for both home and away games.

You can find out how to request officials on the [BAFRA website](#) in the 'team pack' section of the menu. Assessors will be selected and allocated by the BAFA Associate Manager, if available. Please do not organise or nominate your own assessor.

The assessor will give you advice and answer any questions at your first home game. Their role for this fixture is to support and help you along on the day, offering hints and tips, if needed, on what you need to be doing – think of it as a mock test! At your second and third assessed home game, and your away game, the assessor will not provide any support or input – they will stand back, observe and assess you.

Assessors will review a number of things on the day covering both management and coaching – including how well the gameday is organised, your facilities generally and changing rooms specifically, your field and lining, the number of players and coaches in attendance, your pre-game warm ups, your roster checks and on field and coaching performance and practices.

Games can be organised against other associate teams, teams who have already gained league entry and registered BUCS university teams. You can reach out directly to other associate, league or university teams to organise these fixtures, or ask the Associate Manager to suggest potential opponents.

Step 5 – Review and final assessment

Following successful completion of the previous steps, the BAFA Associate Manager and Director of Competitions will review your application and decide whether you have proved you are suitable to gain entry to the league.

This decision will be based on the information you have submitted, the findings of the assessors who attended your games, and other factors including how well you have communicated with the Associate Manager, your level of recruitment, the number of other teams in your immediate area and your plans for youth and junior football. You will be notified of the decision by the end of December of the year preceding desired entry.

When do I have to complete the process by?

For league admission, the assessment process must be satisfactorily completed by the first Sunday in December of the year preceding desired entry.

What happens if I can't complete all the requirements in time?

If all requirements are not met by this point, then entry will be declined, and the team concerned will need to reapply and restart the process for the following year.

Things to consider

- BAFA officials are already under pressure to cover existing league and university games. The more notice you can give them, the better. Consider holding your games on Saturdays, which may be more likely to get cover and avoid key dates such as National Leagues or

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university football finals events and the annual BAFA coaching convention. The Associate Manager can provide more information on these.

- Be creative with your team colours – these need to be approved by BAFA, and to avoid future clashes, the primary jersey colour of your uniform should not be black due to the high number of teams who already play in this colour. Also consider the colours of the current division two conference in your area to avoid future clashes. The Associate Manager can provide more information on these if needed, and give you feedback on planned colours. Budgeting for a change of jersey is also recommended.
- How many other teams are in your area? The number of other adult National Leagues teams in the immediate vicinity of your planned team will be taken into consideration when reviewing your application. Would you be better joining forces with another local team to provide a single, more sustainable option? What do you offer that another team in the town next door doesn't? Teams in more isolated areas away from other teams, or who have already started growing their club by establishing with youth or junior programmes first are preferred.
- Communication – ensure that you keep the Associate Manager up to date on your plans throughout the process by email in a timely and professional way.
- Registration year and transfers – please note that the BAFA registration year runs from 1 October – 30 September, and the registration is closed annually between the end of the regular season and 1 October. Please factor this into your planning. Similarly, the transfer window runs from 1 October until the first Tuesday in July annually. No transfers will be approved outside of this time.
- You should try and organise as many competitive fixtures as possible during your associate year. This helps demonstrate your suitability and sustainability to complete a league regular season of ten games, and gives us as many opportunities as possible to assess you.
- Think carefully when choosing your team name. It should be a unique and reflect the location you operate in. Names should be made up of a geographical area followed by a team moniker. The geographical area could be a town, for example, Manchester Titans. Or it could be a county or regional area. For example, Cornish Sharks. If you choose to use a county or regional name, you must be located within the said county or region. Avoid names that imply you are a national representative team – so don't reference Scotland, England or Wales. Lions is also the reserved moniker of our national programme and may not be used.

More information

For more detailed information on any aspect of entering the league and the steps you need to complete, please contact BAFA Associate Manager Richard Colin at nassociate.manager@britishamericanfootball.org