



1. Adult contact teams – p2
2. University contact teams – p8
3. Junior contact teams – p8
4. Youth contact teams – p8
5. Women's contact teams – p8



Introduction

To enter a contact team into BAFA National Leagues competition requires the completion of an associate process. This involves the submission of detailed information about your club and 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 Teams Manager, Richard Colin.

Only once a team has met all the requirements at a satisfactory level – both on and off the field - will admission be granted to the BAFA National Leagues.

The associate process is designed to make sure that teams entering the BAFA National Leagues are well-run and sustainable. It's an annual process and teams who do not meet all the requirements within the outlined timescales must re-submit an application for consideration the following year.

The steps below are for adult contact teams. University, junior, youth and women's contact team variations on this process are noted at the end of the document. All teams will be required to follow Step 1.

Associate steps – Adult Contact Teams

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 proposed team name, location, structure, planned team uniform colours for approval and finances. Your team name and uniform colours must be approved by the BAFA Associate Teams Manager before moving on through the process.

The following basic documents must also be submitted in support after the above have been approved. **These must be submitted before the first weekend in May at the latest in order to proceed through the process.**

- 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 (an up to date roster must be submitted regularly throughout the associate process or at the BAFA Associate Teams Managers request)
- Mock-up of your league approved kit / uniforms
- Risk Assessments for practice, venues etc. and emergency procedure documentation
- Coaching structure – a summary of who's on your coaching staff, listing their qualifications and experience



Associate process guide for contact teams

- Management structure – a summary of the roles, post-holders and responsibilities of your backroom staff

All of these documents must be in place before the first weekend in May of the calendar year for associate team entry to be considered and for teams to be allowed to plan and schedule fixtures that will count towards their required minimum number. Further documents will be required after step 3 is completed. 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 Associate Teams 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.

Once you have submitted your paperwork and your participation as an associate team has been agreed with the BAFA Associate Teams Manager, your team will be added onto the system by the BAFA registrations team.

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 currently as follows:

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

Youth and junior affiliate teams will be set at the development category until league entry is granted. Fees are currently as follows:

- Development youth / junior team fee - £0
- Development player fee - £10
- Coach or player / coach - £58
- Sideline assistants and staff members (i.e., 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



Associate process guide for contact teams

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.

Teams must have registered personnel in place before the first weekend in May of the calendar year to proceed to step 4 of the associate process.

Step 3 – Registration of players, coaches and staff

Before you will be sanctioned to 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 35-45, of which 25-35 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 (Player coaches DO NOT count towards this minimum requirement).

Staff – a minimum of 1 dedicated gameday manager.

Steps 1-3 Must be completed by the first weekend in May of the calendar year in order to continue with the process – this includes organising the required associate games. If these steps are met prior to this deadline, with the BAFA Associate Teams Manager's agreement, teams may then progress to step 4 and beyond.

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.**

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

Officials for games should be organised via the BAFA Associate Manager. Associate teams must not contact BAFRA Operations directly for cover for games. Assessors will also be selected and allocated by the BAFA Associate Teams Manager, if available. Please do not organise or nominate your own assessor.

Associate teams WILL be expected to play on Saturdays, due to the shortage of officials and availability and assessor availability, especially during the BAFA regular season. Sunday games will be permitted between the end of the BAFA regular season and start of the BUCS season, if both assessor and BAFRA availability allows. The BAFA Associate Teams Manger will need to know AT LEAST one month in advance of potential game dates to find/organise officials/assessors in good time.

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



Associate process guide for contact teams

you need to be doing – think of it as a mock exam! 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 BAFA Associate Teams Manager to suggest potential opponents if you are unsure.

Games must be competed at least the weekend prior to the associate process deadline. The deadline is the first Saturday in November of the year preceding desired entry.

Completed rosters signed by both teams AND the assessor on the day must be submitted to the National Leagues Associate Teams Manger **no later than the Tuesday after each game**. Failure to do so will result in non-compliance with the process.

If the minimum numbers of players, non- kitted coaches and non-kitted sideline staff are not met at the first game, the team will be issued with a non-compliance notice as a warning. If a second non-compliance occurs with regards to minimum numbers, or failure to submit signed off rosters, then that associate team will not be allowed to continue with the process for that calendar year. No further assessed games will be sanctioned. Teams will be permitted to continue to train and play games, but none will count towards the minimum number required for league membership.

Step 5 – Further documentation and feedback

Following successful completion of the previous steps (1-3) and during Step 4, where and when possible the BAFA Associate Teams Manager will provide feedback and constructive criticism regarding your games and submitted paperwork.

Further paperwork regarding an individual team's situation may also be required, especially if a team is in close proximity to an existing league team or is in a remote area. This may relate to the long-term sustainability of the team or how the new team would not impact significantly on an existing team in the area.

Any documents that a team thinks could enhance its application should also be provided and could include the following examples:

- Game day information for opposition teams – plans maps, who to contact on the day etc
- Team history or background information
- Club sustainability – a breakdown of how the team will be sustainable over the long term – for example a 5 year plan or plans for a youth / junior team etc
- Roster breakdown including information on player transfers (which team did they come from), player history (Were they from youth/junior/university teams?), experience etc



Associate process guide for contact teams

- Player attendance records - to show how numbers have increased or varied throughout the team's history
- Sponsorship information;
- Coaching, management or player mentoring and development schemes
- Local community work or partnership information.

The deadline for providing final documentation is the first Saturday in November of the year preceding desired entry.

Step 6 – Review and final assessment

Following successful completion of the previous steps and final submission of additional documentation before **the deadline date of the first Saturday in November of the year preceding desired entry**, the BAFA Associate Teams 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 Teams 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 November of the year preceding desired entry.

Frequently asked questions

When do I have to complete the process by?

For league admission, the assessment process must be satisfactorily completed by the first Saturday in November 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.

What happens if a team is successful?

If all requirements are met by this point, the team will be contacted by the BAFA Associate Teams Manager and the team will be granted league entry for the following season. Every new team will be placed on a 2-year probationary period. Within this period, if a team fails to complete a full schedule of games / forfeits one game, numbers/requirements fall below the minimum standards (as per associate process) or fails to adhere to the rules and regulations in any way, then the team could be removed from league competition and placed back to associate status.

Things to think about

- BAFA officials are already under pressure to cover existing league and university games. This means you will need to plan to hold your games on Saturdays, and avoid key dates such as National Leagues or university football finals events and the annual BAFCA coaching convention. The BAFA Associate Teams Manager can provide more information on these.



Associate process guide for contact teams

- 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 BAFA Associate Teams 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. Do not order your uniform before your team colours are approved by the BAFA Associate Teams Manager.
- 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.
- Clubs planning to enter an adult contact team into the league as part of the associate process must also ensure any other teams in their organisation are registered and insured with BAFA and comply with BAFA age guidelines and meet other requirements such as PVG/DBS checks for coaches working with young people. These teams do not need to take part in National Leagues activity but should also be registered on the National Leagues registration system to ensure these requirements are met.
- Communication – ensure that you keep the BAFA Associate Teams 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.



Associate process for university contact teams

- Step 1 must be followed. The deadline for university teams to complete the process is 1 July every calendar year. University teams do not have to provide bank statements, however, they will have to provide a letter from their Athletic Union showing they will be financially supported by them for this full season. The BAFA Associate Teams Manager will advise which documents will be required out of the list.
- Step 2 – A university specific registration process applies for teams and team members will be advised by competition management on application.
- Step 3 – Universities must have a minimum of 3 non- kitted coaches, 20-30 players and 1 team manger registered in order to organise games.
- Step 4 – University team associate games must take place between an associate and an established /BUCS qualified/sanctioned university team ONLY. As per minimum standards for lower division university teams, the games may be refereed by BAFCA Level 1 qualified coaches if BAFRA officials are unavailable to officiate the game. Two games are required to be assessed, one of these games should be at home and one game should be played away from home.

Associate process for junior affiliate contact teams

- Steps 1-2 must be followed. The deadline for junior teams to complete the process is the same as adult teams.
Step 3 – Junior teams must have a minimum of 2 non- kitted coaches, 16 players and 1 team manger plus a welfare officer to play games. All coaches and staff must have valid DBS/PVG certification.
- Step 4 – Once minimum numbers /requirements are met, the junior team will be allowed to participate in friendly games at the discretion of competition management.

Associate Process for youth affiliate contact teams

- Steps 1-2 must be followed. The deadline for youth teams to complete the process is the same as adult teams.
- Step 3 – Youth teams must have a minimum of 1 non- kitted coach, 7 players and 1 team manger plus a welfare officer to play games. All coaches and staff must have valid DBS/PVG certification.
- Step 4 – Once minimum numbers /requirements are met, the youth team will be allowed to participate in friendlies /tournaments at the discretion of competition management.

Associate Process for women's affiliate contact teams

- Entry requires approval of competition management for women's contact football – please contact sapphire.series@britishamericanfootball.org for more information.



More information

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