NLS REGIONAL FEEDER LEAGUE **PROMOTION** CRITERIA

2026-2027

The Process

Set out below is the process to be followed by clubs seeking to be promoted from Regional NLS Feeder League Level to Step 6 for season 2027-2028 (i.e. on completion of the 2026/27 season).

Process

- The Football Association will manage the promotion process for **all** clubs seeking promotion from Regional NLS Feeder League level to Step 6 of the National League System. **Clubs are reminded that there will be no automatic internal promotions**.

- There will be a **non-refundable** promotion application fee of £120 (inc VAT). A club will be eligible for one free Stadium Accreditation inspection (should one be required) which will be arranged by the Football Foundation Stadium Accreditation team. Additional visits requested by the club will be charged £120 (inc VAT). **It should be noted that the initial £120 (inc VAT) fee is a promotion application fee and not an inspection fee**.

- Payment of the application fee will be by BACS directly to The Football Association, with details available in the 'Payment Guidance' document.

- To be considered eligible for promotion clubs must complete thoroughly the **online** application form. Application forms must be accompanied by the relevant documents listed in section five of the application:

LINK TO ONLINE APPLICATION FORM

  - Copy of Ground Share agreement or freehold documents or licence agreement or tenancy agreement (as applicable)
  - Latest set of approved audited or certified annual accounts which cover the period between 1 September 2025 and 31 August 2026 (or as close as accounting dates permit)
  - Copy of latest floodlight certificate (where applicable)
  - Copy of latest artificial pitch Performance Test Certificate (where applicable)
  - Evidence of any planning and/or funding applications if works are required to achieve the Grade.
  - ***'NEW'*:** Evidence of at least 1 Star in the FA Club Accreditation Scheme

- If you need to email any evidence additional to those submitted with the online form these should be sent to **Promotions@TheFA.com**.

- Clubs are advised that any applications received after 31 December **WILL NOT** be accepted and are reminded of the need to complete their applications prior to the holiday period and via email if necessary.

In addition to completing the application form and providing the necessary supporting Documentation Clubs are asked to note the following:

- To be considered for promotion a club must finish in 1st position in their Feeder League competition at the conclusion of the current season. If a club finishing in 1st position does not wish to be considered for promotion, or fails the entry criteria, then a club finishing in 2nd position may be considered. If the club in 2nd does not seek promotion, or fails to meet the entry criteria, then clubs down to 5th position may be considered for promotion provided that they meet the appropriate entry criteria. Clubs finishing below 5th position **MAY NOT** be considered for promotion and, ordinarily, only **ONE** club will be promoted from each Feeder League competition. **There will not be any more promotions from any Feeder League.**

- In order to be considered for promotion a club **MUST** comply fully with the requirements of Grade 7 as at 31st March 2027 (see the 2026-27 season criteria HERE)

- Clubs may be considered for promotion without having floodlights in place, however, those clubs without floodlights must comply with the following requirements as at 31 March 2027:
    - Planning permission for the provision of floodlights MUST have been approved by
    - the Local Authority. A Planning Reference number and the relevant Planning Authority will be required.
    - In addition, the floodlight conditions must be such that the hours of operation meet
    - The requirements of 3pm Saturday kick-offs and 7:45pm midweek kick-offs.
    - Evidence provided that funding applications have been submitted
    - Evidence provided that the balance of any funding required is in place
    - Evidence provided that quotations have been obtained from appropriate contractors (three quotes)
    - Provide a copy of an appropriate development/installation plan

- Floodlights **MUST** be installed and in working order by 30th September 2027. Step 6 competitions would be at liberty to impose a penalty on any Club that failed to comply with this requirement. Clubs that fail to provide floodlights by 31 March 2028 **WILL BE** classified as a relegated club regardless of their finishing position at the conclusion of Season 2027-2028.

  Note: the extension to 30th September does not apply for entry to The FA Vase. Clubs must fully comply with the Grade 7 criteria **before the commencement** of the 2027-2028 season in order to be eligible for entry into The FA Vase.

- Clubs promoted to Step 6 **MUST** comply fully with the requirements of Grade 6 by 31st March 2028. Clubs that fail to achieve this Grade **WILL BE** classified as a relegated club regardless of their finishing position at the conclusion of Season 2027-2028.

- Please ensure that your club meets the appropriate Stadium Accreditation requirements. Too many applications are submitted when grounds clearly **DO NOT** meet the required status.

- Ground sharing or moving to another ground which the Club does not own the freehold or leasehold, ***is not permitted in order to gain promotion***. Clubs in these arrangements **MUST** be using the ground shown in the application throughout the whole of the current playing season (from the start of the 2026-27 Season and that this can be confirmed by your current League). Please note that a maximum of two Teams playing in the NLS are permitted in a ground share arrangement at the same ground.

- Upon receipt of applications, the Football Foundation will arrange for grounds to be inspected and graded. The co-operation of Clubs in ensuring that inspections can take place at the specified time and date will be appreciated. The inspections will be carried out by the Football Foundation Stadium Accreditation team.

- Whilst existing ground share arrangements are acceptable, Clubs are reminded that new ground share arrangements are not permitted in order to gain promotion. A copy of any existing ground share agreements must accompany the application.

PLEASE NOTE THAT TOO MANY CLUBS APPLY FOR PROMOTION WHEN THEY KNOW THAT THEY DO NOT/WILL NOT MEET THE GRADING REQUIREMENTS. PLEASE DO NOT APPLY IF YOU WILL NOT MEET THE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

PART APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. ALL REQUIRED INFORMATION MUST BE SUBMITTED AT THE TIME OF APPLICATION INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS MAY BE REJECTED