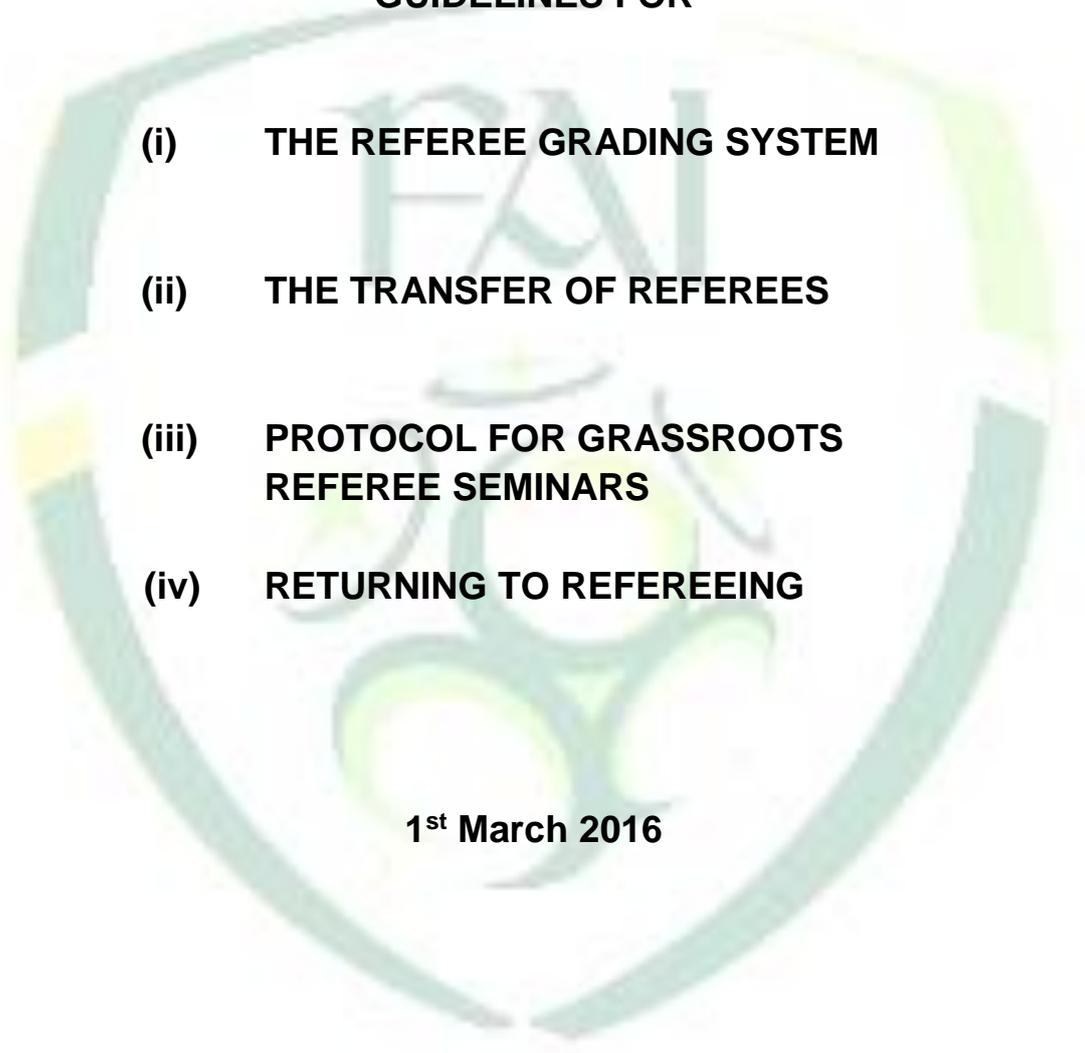


# **THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND**

## **GUIDELINES FOR**

- 
- (i) THE REFEREE GRADING SYSTEM**
  - (ii) THE TRANSFER OF REFEREES**
  - (iii) PROTOCOL FOR GRASSROOTS REFEREE SEMINARS**
  - (iv) RETURNING TO REFEREEING**

**1<sup>st</sup> March 2016**

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# **GRASSROOTS REFEREE GRADING SYSTEM**

## **Introduction:**

These guidelines are intended to inform and advise Referees, Referee Observers, Referee Specialists, Allocation Officers / personnel and League Administrators regarding the grading structure and how it should be applied, in accordance with the FAI Referee Regulations. The FAI National Referees Committee may amend these guidelines from time to time as they see fit. Any issue not addressed within the guidelines will be decided on by the FAI Referees Committee, whose decision on such matters shall be final.

Only Licensed referees who are listed on the current "FAI Referees Register" are eligible for match appointments with the FAI and its affiliates. Only referees on the register will be assigned a Grade.

## **Grades:**

All referees on the register will be assigned a Grade in accordance with the FAI Referee Regulations. The current grading structure is as follows: -

### ***Grassroots Football: -***

Associate Referee; Grade 5 Referee; Grade 4 Referee; Grade 3 Referee; Grade 2 Referee; Grade 1 Referee; Senior Grade 1 Referee / Grade 1 'Senior' in grassroots football and

### ***Professional Football: -***

'Elite Referee'.

Referees with an FAI Referee Licence and registered with the FAI shall only officiate at games between clubs of affiliates of the association that have been sanctioned. These include games that are part of league and cup or other approved competitions. Non competitive, friendly or exhibition games that have formal approval or sanction by the appropriate authority may also be officiated at.

## **Unsanctioned Games:**

Registered referees must act in accordance with Article 6.2 of the Referee Regulations which states: -

*"Registered Referees should only officiate in leagues affiliated to the FAI and in competitions and games sanctioned by the Association or one of its affiliates. It is the responsibility of Referees to ensure that they only accept such appointments".*

## 1.0 Referee Categories ( Grades ) :

In accordance with the FAI Referee Regulations referees shall be classified according to one of the following grades: -

**Associate Referee** An Associate Referee may referee the small sided game and schoolboy football up to and including 'under 14 years of age'. They may only be allocated games when all available Referees within their league have been allocated to games.

**Grade 5** Referees assigned to this grade entitles them to Referee the small sided games, schoolboy football up to and including 'under 14 years of age'.

**Grade 4** All newly recruited Referees will be assigned to this grade and will be eligible to Referee "small sided games, schoolboy football up to and including under 16 years and games at the lower divisions level of the league they are assigned to (this excludes over 35 leagues).

**Grade 3** Referees assigned this grade are eligible to Referee the small sided games, lower divisions level of schoolboy football up to and including under 18 years and games at the lower divisions level of junior football of the league they are assigned to.

**Grade 2** Referees assigned this grade are eligible to Referee the small sided games, schoolboy football up to and including under 18 years and games below the top division in Junior football in the League to which they are assigned to.

**Grade 1** Referees assigned this grade are eligible to Referee at all levels of Grassroots Football, including 'small sided'; schoolboy; junior and occasionally top division / intermediate games.

**Senior Grade 1** Referees assigned this grade are eligible to Referee at all levels of Grassroots Football, including 'small sided'; schoolboy; junior and intermediate games at every level.

In each affiliate / league the number of referees' assigned Senior Grade 1 status will be limited. The factors determining the complement of Senior Grade 1 referees and how they achieve the grade will include: -

- a) The number of Senior Grade 1 referees within any one affiliate league may not be more than 20 per cent of the complement of referees in that league.

- b) The Lead or primary Observer in a league must propose referees for promotion to this grade to their Regional Referees Committee. The RRC will determine whether a referee should be promoted. They must base their decision on match reports; successful completion of the seminar requirements for the grade and if required an independent assessment. Loss of the grade for a referee must follow a similar process.

## **2.0 Referee Pathway:**

Re-grading of referees in grassroots football is at the discretion of the Lead Observer. Nominations for re-grading upwards must be advised to the Regional Referees Committee 2 weeks prior to the start of the Grassroots Referee Seminar programme each year. The RRC will approve/reject the application for upgrading and the actual upgrading can only proceed at the beginning of the following season and only after the candidate has successfully completed the standard set for the higher grade, at the seminar.

## **2.1 Grassroots Referees:**

Grassroots referees must progress through the outlined grading system as outlined in 2.0 above i.e.

- a) Associate Referees - if they cease being registered as a player - may be considered to become a Grade 4 referee if so nominated by the Lead Observer.
- b) Similarly Grade 5, Grade 4, Grade 3, and Grade 2 and referees can progress to the next highest grade via this process.
- c) It is possible in exceptional circumstances for a referee to be upgraded two levels but this cannot exceed the level of Grade 2. Further upgrading must only be considered when a referee has completed a full year refereeing at this and subsequent grades.
- d) Nomination for consideration for upgrading to Senior Grade 1 may only be considered when the conditions attached to this grade are met (see 1a and 1b above).

## **2.2 Elite Panel Referees:**

Eligibility for nomination to national league of Ireland Elite Referees Panel (ERP) will be determined by the Elite Referees Committee on an annual basis.

- 2.2.1 The normal process for progression to the ERP will be, though not exclusively, through the 'School of Excellence'. Other referees from 'Grassroots Football' may be nominated for consideration for selection to attend a League of Ireland Seminar (Elite Referees Seminar), subject to: -

- a) The ERC determining the need for additional suitable referees. to meet the needs of the 'professional game'. In these circumstances the ERC will invite nominations from Regional Referees Committees.
- b) Nominated referees must be officiating as a Grade 1 / Senior Grade 1 referee for a minimum of one full season at the time of their nomination. (No other grade of referee is eligible for nomination to Elite Level)
- c) Eligible Grade 1 / Senior Grade 1 referees, at the time of being nominated, may be officiating in a Schoolboy, Junior or Intermediate League.

### **2.3 Other National Associations:**

Referees transferring from other associations will receive an initial temporary assignment at a grade appropriate to the grade named in their letter of recommendation from their home association. This will be determined by the FAI Referee Programme Co-ordinator on behalf of the Referees Committee.

Following observation they will be formally be assigned a referee grade and will complete the seminar at this grade for the next registration period.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

The appointment of referees to games should be made employing the guidance of the outlined grading system. The following sections provide guidance to 'Allocations Officers' regarding the appointment of referees to games across a range of league and cup competitions at local, regional and national level.

Some leagues use Elite Referee in their leagues. They must only be used in league games and in circumstances where all available referees at the grade appropriate level have been already been assigned. Under no circumstances should Elite Referees be assigned to cup semi-finals or finals.

### **1.0 League Matches:**

Allocation officers within leagues, under the jurisdiction of the FAI, should ideally assign their most competent Grade 1 / Senior Grade 1 referees to officiate the most difficult matches in the top division games in their league. Occasionally, however, they may appoint Grade 2 referees to such games – under guidance from the Lead Observer – and having regard to: -

- a) The need to test 'developing' Grade 2 referees
- b) Absence of Grade 1/ Senior Grade 1 referees due to sickness, work etc.,
- c) Absence of Grade 1 / Senior Grade 1 referees due to National competition appointments e.g. Oscar Traynor Trophy; FAI Junior Cup; Intermediate Cup.
- d) Loss of form of Grade 1 / Senior Grade 1 referees

e) Occasions where a Grade 1 / Senior Grade 1 referee experiences difficulty with a particular club.

1.1 The principle for appointing the Grade of referee to a level of football outlined in 3.1 applies to the appointment of all Grades of referees. Thus eligibility to referee at a particular level or in particular leagues as per the grading structure carries no entitlement to officiate in the top division or the most prestigious games.

1.2 All grades of referees should be given opportunities to demonstrate their ability to progress within the grading system. This means that periodically they may be assigned a game above the level of their grade in order to assess their competence and suitability to referee at a different level.

## **2.0 Cup Matches within Leagues:**

a) All referees are eligible to be considered to referee in cup matches relevant to their grade, ability and experience within their allocated league.

b) Divisional cups and play offs should therefore be refereed by officials of appropriate grading to the level of the competition.

- For example, the most prestigious Cup Final in a specified higher level league should, as a matter of definition, be refereed by a Grade 1 / Senior Grade 1 official.
- Equally lower divisional cup competitions should be refereed by the appropriate Grade 2; 3 or 4 match official.

c) Assistant Referees, where appointed, may be of any grade subject to them having the demonstrated competence for the task.

## **3.0 Provincial Cup Competitions:**

### **Leinster, Munster and Ulster Senior Cup**

a) Where match Officials from the National Senior League are not appointed to these games, the game must be refereed by Senior Grade 1 or Grade 1 Officials.

b) Any grade of referee may officiate as an Assistant Referee in any round up to and including the final match, providing that he is deemed competent for this role by the Lead Observer in his league.

## **4.0 National Cup Competitions:**

### **FAI Youths Cup:**

a) All grades of referee are eligible to officiate in this competition

up to and including the 5<sup>th</sup> round. From the 6<sup>th</sup> round and beyond games must only be refereed by Grade 1 / Senior Grade 1 Referees.

- b) Any grade of referee may officiate as an 'assistant referee' in any round up to and including the final match, subject to them having demonstrated the competence for the task.

#### **FAI Junior Cup:**

- a) All grades of referee may officiate in this competition up to and including the 4<sup>th</sup> round. However, 5<sup>th</sup> round matches and beyond must only be refereed by Grade 1 / Senior Grade 1 Referees.
- b) Any grade of referee may officiate as an 'assistant referee' in any round up to and including the final match, subject to them having demonstrated the competence for the task.

#### **FAI Intermediate Cup:**

- a) Games in this competition should be refereed by Grade 1 / Senior Grade 1 Referees in every round.
- b) Any grade of referee may officiate as an 'assistant referee' in any round up to and including the final match, subject to them having demonstrated the competence for the task.

### **5.0 Representative Competitions/Matches:**

#### **Oscar Traynor Cup Matches:**

- a) Games in this competition should be refereed by Grade 1 / Senior Grade 1 Referees in every round
- b) Any grade of referee may officiate as an 'assistant referee' in any round up to and including the final match, subject to them having demonstrated the competence for the task.

5.1 Representative Matches between affiliate leagues should be refereed by the highest grade referee appropriate to the level of the game – this will usually be a grade 1 or senior grade 1 referee. Normally these appointments will be made via the office of the FAI National Referee Programme Co-ordinator.

5.2 Representative matches between National Associations at Grassroots level may be refereed by Grade 1 or Senior Grade 1 referees. These appointments will be made via the office of the FAI National Referee Programme Co-ordinator.

**NB: Appointments to matches in competitions named in sections 3.4 and 3.5 inclusive shall take precedence over all other (local) league and cup competitions.**

## **6.0 FAI National Leagues and Cup Competitions:**

Appointments for competitions that fall under the jurisdiction of the FAI National League e.g. League of Ireland; National Women's League; National Youth and Underage Leagues and related Cup competitions will ordinarily be made from the Elite Referees Panel.

Where expedient the appointment of suitable grassroots referees may be to these games. The guiding principle for such appointments will be that it forms part of the referees development and possible progression. These appointments will be under the jurisdiction of the Elite Referees Committee.

### **THE TRANSFER OF REFEREES**

- 1.0 Requests by referees to transfer leagues, Grassroots Referees may apply to transfer to another league.
- 1.1 Requests must be made in writing to the relevant Regional Referees Committee (RRC) on or before 30<sup>th</sup> April in the year of application (or one month prior to the end of a summer soccer season). Only in exceptional circumstances will a transfer be considered outside of these timeframes.
- 1.2 Notification of intent to seek transfer by the graded referee must also be made in writing to his/her own (primary) League's Lead / Head Observer (not the Observer of the League to which he /she is transferring) before 30<sup>th</sup> April.
- 1.3 When considering the application, the Regional Committee must take the following factors into account: -
  - the suitability of the official
  - the needs of their current league
  - the needs of their requested league
  - geographical/regional factors and
  - any other factors the RRC deems relevant.

Request for transfers will be facilitated where possible. However it may be deemed necessary / appropriate for an official to forfeit their grade and be re-classified to a grade lower for the transfer to proceed. The decision to grant / refuse the transfer falls within the remit of the relevant RRC.

# **FAI GRASSROOTS REFEREE SEMINARS**

## **Introduction:**

It is a condition of holding a Referee Licence that a Referee must successfully achieve the requisite standard appropriate to his grade to be eligible to register with the FAI on an annual basis. Currently criteria for registration include attendance at two designated development modules; successful completion of a grade appropriate physical test and successful completion of a grade appropriate written test. Registration is also dependant on Garda Vetting; participation in approved 'Children's First' training and suitability for the role.

Referees Seminars are held annually to assess referees in the aforementioned physical fitness and knowledge of the 'Laws of the Game' domains. A development module is also an integral part of the annual seminar and must be attended.

## **Seminar Rules:**

- 1.0 All referees must successfully complete all elements of the seminar to be eligible to register for the following registration period. Referees who fail an element of the seminar are entitled to repeat that element. Repeat tests will be held on a regional basis.
- 1.1 Referees must attend their league specific seminar
- 1.2 Referees who are unable to attend their 'league specific' seminar (due to holidays, personal difficulties, work etc.) must apply in writing (email is acceptable) to the Regional Referees Committee for permission to attend an alternative seminar. The RRC must notify the 'Technical Team' Leader which seminar the referee will now attend.
- 1.3 A list of participants for each seminar must be supplied by the Lead Observer(s) to the Technical Team leader supervising the seminar and the Regional Referees Committee (RRC) at least one week in advance of the seminar. The following details must be supplied: -
  - a) The number of referees from his/her League who will attend
  - b) The names of the referees participating
  - c) The grade of each referee
  - d) The names of referees being considered for upgrading
  - e) The names of referees being downgraded or opting to drop a grade
- 1.4 Referees who fail to successfully complete an element of the seminar must be notified in writing (email acceptable) of their right to repeat that element and of the consequences of them failing the repeat.
- 1.5 Referees who fail the repeat seminar cannot referee until they successfully complete the failed element.
  - (a) A further (third) test at a lower grade may be organised on a

local basis at the referees expense. This must be supervised by a member of the Regional Referees Committee.

- (b) Referees who fail their first test may choose to retake the test at a lower grade and if successful will be assigned this grade.

1.6 Referees who choose to take a test for a grade below their assigned grade, if successful, must remain at this lower grade for a full season before they can be considered for re-grading to a higher grade. Their appointments must reflect the lower grade ranking.

1.7 Referees who are unable to participate in the physical test due to injury or other reasons of ill health must supply a medical certificate to this effect. Such referees must comply with the requirement of the written test and the development programme.

Once medically fit these referees can apply to undertake a physical test. This may be organised on a regional basis.

Where a referee cannot meet the seminar requirements due to injury or medical reasons (certified) and is unable to take the test within the registration period s/he may participate in the seminar for the next registration period at the same grade.

**NB:** Referees who are unable to meet seminar requirements due to serious physical injury or serious medical conditions must, once available to return to refereeing, produce medical certification that they are medically fit to undertake the physical test and to return to refereeing. This requirement applies to all referees who experience serious physical injury or serious medical conditions regardless of whether they miss a seminar or not.

1.8 In exceptional circumstances the Referees Committee may review individual situations that do not fall into the aforementioned classifications. Historically these typically included referees who are abroad for work purposes and therefore cannot complete a seminar e.g. National Defence Force duty abroad or other occupational postings abroad.

In these circumstances the referee can apply to their Regional Referees Committee to attend the seminar for the next registration period and take the test for the grade they were last registered at.

1.9 Referees who cease refereeing and subsequently wish to return within specified timelines must comply with the following seminar requirements in order to register as a referee: -

- (a) Returning within 2 years of the expiry of their last registration they must: -  
*Complete a grassroots seminar and resume at a grade below that of their last registration.*
- (b) Returning after a lapse of time in excess of 2 years and less than five years of the expiry of their last registration they must:  
*Complete a grassroots seminar and resume at grade four.*
- (c) Returning after a lapse of time in excess of 5 years of the expiry of their

last registration they must:

*Complete a 'beginner's course' and resume at grade four.*

- 1.1.0 Established League of Ireland referees who fail their National League of Ireland seminar must attend a Junior Seminar prior to being registered to officiate at the level of grassroots football. They are considered eligible to take the Senior Grade 1 tests. They must however successfully complete a seminar to be eligible to be registered as a grassroots referee.
- 1.1.1 Established League of Ireland referees who are not invited to a National League of Ireland seminar must attend and successfully complete a junior seminar to be eligible to be registered as a grassroots referee.

## **2.0 Seminar Outcome Data:**

The office of the FAI National Programme Co-ordinator will maintain a database of referees who participated in each of the annual seminars. The results for each referee from all grassroots seminars will be entered on the database annually. Summarised data for each league and for each region will be made available to the Referees Committee and the Regional Referees Committees.

- 2.1 Each Technical Team Leader / Lead observer in charge of each seminar must return the results of his/her seminar to the Head of the Technical Team and the FAI National Programme Co-ordinator within one month of the seminar on the official results form.
- 2.2 Completed examination papers are to be retained securely for one year by the senior observer in charge of the seminar.

*Any queries in relation to any aspect of a seminar must in the first instance be directed to the **FAI Referees Programme Office, FAI Headquarters, National Sports Campus, Abbotstown, Dublin 15.***

# **RETURNING TO REFEREEING**

## ***“Policy Statement”***

### **Context:**

Historically when a referee resigned or retired from refereeing and then wished to return refereeing a “two year rule applied i.e. if he returned within two years of his resignation he could resume refereeing without any need to undertake a ‘beginners course’. If he wished to return outside of this timeframe then he had to start afresh, undertake a ‘beginner’s course’ and re-commence at the lowest grade.

Recently some a former referee who had been active as Observers decided to return to refereeing. This was approved by the referees committee on the basis that he undertake a written test and if successful he could resume at a grade (FAI grade) one below the grade he had finished up at. The Referees Committee agreed to draw up a policy on the matter.

### **Considerations:**

Returning to refereeing after an absence of time:

- Within 2 years of the expiry of your last registration you must: -
  - *Complete a grassroots seminar and resume at a grade below that at which you exited.*
- In excess of 2 years and less than five years of the expiry of your last registration you must: -
  - *Complete a grassroots seminar and resume at grade four.*
- In excess of 5 years of the expiry of your last registration you must: -
  - *Complete a ‘beginner’s course’ and resume at grade four.*
- If you have been immediately active as a Referee Observer after resigning from refereeing and subsequently wish to resume refereeing the following will apply: -
  - Within 2 years of the expiry of your last registration you must: -
    - *Complete a grassroots seminar and resume at the grade you exited or grade 1 if you finished at the Elite level.*
  - In excess of 2 years and less than five years of the expiry of your last registration you must: -
    - *Complete a grassroots seminar and resume at a grade below that at which you exited or grade 2 if you finished at the Elite level*
  - In excess of 5 years of the expiry of your last registration you must: -
    - *Complete a ‘beginners course’ and resume at grade four.*

The committee recognise that all Observers have a refereeing background or have entered Observing directly after retiring as referees.

When a new Observer has been appointed it is acceptable that she/he may find after a period of time that Observing is not for them.

In light of the above the National Referees Committee in conjunction with the Regional referees committee may grant a temporary referee licence subject to the completion of the next available seminar.

Situations outside of these guidelines shall be considered by the Referees Committee. The Referees Committee will be the final Arbiter in all cases relating to this policy.

**There are different scenarios that need clarification:**

1. An Observer applies to leave his Observer Post and return to Refereeing within 12 calendar months of his/ her appointment.  
**Decision:** *(The Observer is allowed to return to refereeing at the grade he/she was when last he/she held a licence and should complete the next available Seminar.*
2. An Observer applies to leave his post and return to refereeing between 12 and 24 Calendar months of his/her appointment.  
**Decision:** *(The Observer will be allowed to return to refereeing at one grade lower than the last grade held and should be afforded the opportunity to complete the next available seminar at the grade he held on his retirement)*
3. An Observer applies to leave his post and return to refereeing more than 24 months and less than 48 months after his/her appointment as an Observer  
**Decision:** *He / She will be exempt from completing a beginner's course providing that he/she is a qualified active tutor. He /She will be awarded a grade not greater than grade 2 and will complete the next available seminar.*
4. An Observer applies to leave his/her post and return to refereeing more than 24 months after his/her appointment who is not a qualified tutor.  
**Decision::** *He /She will complete a Referees Beginners Course.*
5. An Observer who entered refereeing directly from the National League panel of referees and requests a return to the National panel.  
**Decision:** *He/she will not under any circumstances be allowed to return to the National panel of referees. However he/she will be allowed the same outcomes as stated in 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the policy depending on which aspect of the policy applies to his / her situation.*

We believe that the policy is fair and recognises the work of Observers and in particular of those who add to their skills by becoming tutors.

FAI Referees Committee  
29<sup>th</sup> May 2012

## APPENDIX 1

### Physical Test Standard by Referee Grade

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>12' Run</b>	<b>Sprints</b>	<b>Sprint Times</b>	<b>Sprint Recovery</b>
<b>Associate Referee</b>	<b>1200m</b>	<b>4 x 40</b>	<b>10 sec</b>	<b>2'</b>
<b>Grade 5</b>	<b>1200m</b>	<b>4 x 30</b>	<b>10 sec</b>	<b>2'</b>
<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>1600m</b>	<b>4 x 40</b>	<b>8 sec</b>	<b>2'</b>
<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>1600m</b>	<b>4 x 40</b>	<b>8 sec</b>	<b>2'</b>
<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>2100m</b>	<b>4 x 40</b>	<b>8 sec</b>	<b>1'</b>
<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>2200m</b>	<b>4 x 40</b>	<b>8 sec</b>	<b>1'</b>
<b>Senior Grade1</b>	<b>2400m</b>	<b>4 x 40</b>	<b>8 sec</b>	<b>1'</b>

The current physical test is based on the Cooper Test. Times and distances will be determined by the FAI Referees Committee annually.