

Guidance Notes on an International Clearance request for a player under the age of 18 – Minor Application



International clearance is required for any player from the age of 10 and upwards who is seeking to register for a Club in England and has previously been registered for a Club abroad (including the other Home Associations), or who is a foreign national seeking to register for the first time in this country.

It is the registering Club's responsibility to verify a player's registration history in order to ascertain whether international clearance may be required. Clubs and competitions operating near the borders between England and Wales/Scotland need to be particularly cautious - a player can only play football in one country (subject to international clearance) and cannot play football in two countries on different days, under any circumstances.

Applications for players under the age of 18 must be applied for in accordance with FIFA Article 19, which states that the international movement of players is only permitted if the player is over the age of 18. Under this Regulation there are four exceptions – three of which are available for Clubs at amateur level – whereby Clubs can apply for international clearance.

The following exceptions apply either where the player has previously played for a Club abroad (international transfer), or where the player has not previously played abroad (first registration):

Article 19.2a) Player's parents moving to England for non-footballing reasons

Article 19.2c) Player's residence is within 50km of national border of Club with which they wish to register and Club is within 50km of national border of country where player resides

The following exception applies only where the player has not previously played abroad:

Article 19 par. 3 and 4

"5 Year Rule" Player is registering for the first time and has lived in England continuously for the last five years prior to the request

For applications where the player is a refugee or asylum seeker, or the player has moved to England to enrol at boarding school, or as an exchange student, please see the relevant section below.

A player cannot themselves obtain international clearance; the Club with which they intend to register in England must submit a completed Minor Application form to The FA, with all the relevant documents. The relevant documents will depend on the exception under which you are applying, and these are detailed below:

All applications will require copies of the following documents:

- Birth certificate of the player
- Passport of the player

The following documents will also be required depending on the exception the application falls under:

Article 19.2a)

- Father's passport
- Mother's passport
- Proof of residence (recent utility bill)
- Employment contract of parent(s) **OR** letter from employer confirming start date and currently employed
- Work permit for parents (if outside EU)

Article 19.2c)

- Proof of player's home address and the applicant Club's ground (distances will be checked via Google Maps)
- Proof of residence of player

Article 19 par. 3 and 4)

“5 Year Rule”

- Proof of residence of player:
 - *Official letter from school(s) confirming player has been in continuous education for five or more years*
OR *evidence of proof of residence on arrival into England and evidence of proof of residence at present time*

Once the relevant documentation has been received at our office, a decision will be made on whether The FA can approve the minor application or if the case will need to be referred to FIFA for special dispensation.

If approved by The FA, in the case of a first registration, once The FA has received confirmation from the relevant National Association that the player has never been registered previously, The FA will provide approval in writing once the relevant documentation has been received at our office.

If approved by The FA, and the application is in respect of an international transfer, we will send a formal request to the relevant National Association for the player's International Transfer Certificate (ITC). That Association will conduct checks in relation to the player, including checking with his former Club (if he was previously registered in that country) whether he is free to register for a Club in England, has fulfilled all outstanding obligations and has any outstanding suspensions.

In accordance with FIFA Regulations, National Associations have up to a maximum of 7 days in which to issue the ITC. If The FA receives no response after 7 days from the date of our request, we are able to issue a provisional clearance which enables the player to register and play for the Club. All requests made by Clubs will be acknowledged by the Player Status department. As soon as any correspondence is received from the other Association in relation to the player, or the ITC is issued, we will contact the requesting Club immediately, and therefore Clubs are asked not to call to follow up on their requests. Until international clearance has been confirmed by the Player Status department, the player cannot register and play for a Club. Once clearance is received, a player is able to register and play for any Club in England.

Players may train or play in 'behind closed doors' friendly matches without international clearance. However, in these circumstances, the Club should have the permission of the player's former Club and confirmation that the player is not under suspension.

For players who are registering as a professional player, this process does not apply and the ITC request must be made through the FIFA TMS system. If this is the case, please contact the Player Status department who will advise you.

FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players are published on The FA website.

Asylum Seekers / Refugees

FIFA has provided clarification regarding individuals under the age of 18 arriving into the UK as an asylum seeker or refugee and wishing to register for a football Club in England.

This is covered separately on TheFA.com website, as separate dispensation will need to be sought from FIFA.

<http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/more/player-registration/international-clearance>

Exchange students

FIFA has provided clarification regarding individuals under the age of 18 arriving into the UK as a student – WITHOUT PARENTS – and wishing to register for a football club in England, while studying.

The application itself will need to be submitted to FIFA for their consideration before the student will be allowed to register and play football in England.

Our website gives the full required list of documents which FIFA request. To expedite the application, we have given a full list of examples against each requirement.

Please visit <http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/more/player-registration/international-clearance> where the necessary form, guidance and criteria are available for download.

Non-EU players

All Clubs are advised to satisfy themselves that all non-EU/EEA players have the necessary credentials to take up offers of employment in England as part of normal procedural/personnel checks. We are advised by the Home Office that any player who is in England on a Tier 4 (Student) visa is not able to play in a professional or semi-professional environment under the terms of that visa. The FA considers this to extend to Clubs at Steps 1 – 4 of the National League System. Any Club found to have fielded such players may be liable to a fine of £10,000 per player by the Home Office.

Please seek advice from the Home Office if you would like to clarify your eligibility as a Club to register non EU/EEA players on this basis. Contact details can be found at this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration>