## MCF LEAGUE and MATCH RULES

1. **ENTRIES**

Applications for entry must reach the General Secretary and Fixtures Secretary by 1 August prior to the commencement of the season and must include the following:-

* Names and addresses of secretary and captains
* Address of clubroom
* Detailed travelling directions
* Evening of the week for home fixtures
* Special circumstances which may affect the club’s ability to fulfil fixtures
* Clubs should specify which teams they wish to enter (and into which divisions); clubs must specify which teams they wish to enter into the Trophy (Knockout) competitions (*there is no “default” entry; teams must be positively entered into the chosen Trophy competition* ***in addition to*** *being entered into the League)*
* A registration list of players
* One subscription per team
* The normal playing session of the club
* The number of digital clocks available to be used for their home matches
* Whether your home venue is accessible for disabled players
* Clubs are required to provide **at least** one email address for use by the MCF

*These email addresses will be used to provide clubs with details of fixtures, to raise queries about results and other matters and to notify clubs of AGMs, EGMs and any relevant correspondence from MCF Council*.

The email addresses will be included on the MCF website as part of the club contact details and the MCF will provide the email to any individual expressing an interest in membership of that club (*if a club has supplied more than 1 email address, the club can specify only one email address to go on the MCF website)*. MCF officers will not make use of any email addresses so provided, except to fulfil the functions of their office, and the MCF will not forward the email addresses to any third party, except as discussed above, without the express permission of the addressees.

**2. SUBSCRIPTIONS**

The annual subscription is £10 per team and shall be remitted with the applications for membership to the AGM. During the season the Treasurer will invoice each club for its share of any game fees payable to the English Chess Federation.

**3. REGISTRATION LISTS**

**a)** All Clubs shall send a copy of their registration list, numbered in order of strength, to the Records & Registrations Secretary by 31st August of the new season.

**b)** No player may be on the registration list of more than one club at the same time. Transferring of players is allowed provided the acquiring club first tells the secretary of the player’s current club and then the Records and Registration Secretary.

**c)** A club shall register its players in approximate grading order; leeway of up to 10 ECF grading points is allowed. The last full ECF grading list published before the start of the season shall normally apply throughout the season. However, a club may apply to revise its list in early February by moving a player up or down, if there is a major discrepancy between the player’s July and January grades.

A major discrepancy is defined as a difference of more than 20 ECF points, based on more than 10 long-play games played in the grading period following the publication of the July list.

Exceptionally a club may request permission to register a player out of grading order by more than 10 ECF grading points; in such a case the club must include a note in justification.

The following may be considered justification under this rule:

* A player who is a driver, particularly for a Junior team
* A team captain elected immediately before the new grading list who met the criteria under the then current list.

Ungraded players shall be registered appropriately to their playing strength. Note the Memorandum on Estimated Grades for Ungraded Players.

**d)** The Records and Registration Secretary may reject justification offered under c) above and ask the club to revise its list. Should the club disagree, then MCF Council shall arbitrate on the matter.

**e)** Clubs shall have the right to send in a revised registration list to the Records and Registration Secretary at any point up to November 15th. Rules **b)**, **c)** and **d)** apply.

**f)** Players may be added to the list at any time. Such additions must be bracketed *with the player of nearest strength* and reach the Records and Registration Secretary before playing in a match. After January 31st the addition of a new player is not a defence against a breach of Rule **4.e)**.

* + - * 1. **SEEDED PLAYERS**

*{Advice to clubs: when drawing up your registration list, if a player’s availability is doubtful, she/he should be bracketed rather than seeded}*

**a)** If a club enters more than one team in the league, certain players known as “seeded players” are restricted as to which team(s) they can play for. A player may play only for the team to which he is seeded and for any of the club’s teams higher than the one to which he is seeded.

* A club's first team has 5 seeds in a 7-player division, or 3 seeds in a 5-player division.
* A club’s lower teams have either: 6 seeds in a 7-player division, or 4 seeds in a 5-player division.

With these exceptions:

* For any club with more than one team, its lowest-numbered team does not require seeding.
* For any club with more than one team and with its lowest-numbered team in the grade-restricted bottom division, its penultimate team does not require seeding*as long as it is in a higher division.*

**b)** Bracketing of players is allowed (i.e. two or more players may be put on the same number).

**c) i.** A team’s players do not have to play in strict grading order, but where there is a difference of more than 20 ECF points between two players, the lower-graded player must play on a lower board than the higher-graded player, except when coming in as a reserve after clocks have been started; in which case an explanatory note shall be included when reporting the result. The latest ECF Grading list available at the start of the season shall be used throughout the season.

**ii.** For every contravention of rule **4 (c) i.**, the higher-graded player shall be considered ineligible.

**d)** Subject to the approval of the Records and Registrations Secretary, a club may amend its registration list at any time by moving a player up the list and bracketing that player with a seeded player.  All players below the moved player shall move up the list accordingly.

*Note: in particular this should be done as soon as it is known to the club that a seeded player will be unable to play the minimum two matches required [but see Rule* ***4 f) ii)*** *below].*

**e)** Seeded players must play at least two games for the club during the season. Where two or more players are bracketed together, two games from amongst those bracketed together will count, provided the two games were not played in the same match. If this does not happen, then the teams lower than the group for which the player was seeded will have two match points deducted. Rule 5 shall not apply.

Paragraph 2 of the Memorandum for the Composition of Divisions shall be applied only at the discretion of the MCF Fixtures Committee in respect of any team benefiting from a breach of seeding rules.

**f)** The Club may appeal to the Council for a lesser or zero penalty to be imposed. Grounds for appeal include:

1. Where the club is able to show that it did not benefit at all after November 15th (see Rule **3 e)** from the presence of the ghost player in the list. This requires the club to demonstrate that the player could have been bracketed with another (or others) on the registration list, in such a way that none of rules **3 c)**, **4 a)** and **4 e)** would have been breached.
2. That the club revised its registration list immediately it realised the player was not going to play. Note the further the season has progressed the less acceptable this defence is, *and after January 31st this defence is invalid.*

**g)** The Records & Registrations Secretary shall check each club list after December 31st and warn clubs with potential ghosts. However, lack of a warning will not excuse a club from being penalised for seeding ghost players.

**5. INELIGIBILITY**

The games of all players who are ineligible under these rules shall be submitted for grading but for all MCF purposesshall be scored to their opponents.

**6. FIXTURES**

**a)** Before 5th October each year the fixtures secretary shall arrange the fixtures as far as possible in accordance with the memorandum for fixtures arrangements. Each club secretary shall be sent copies not less than two weeks before the first match (*which may be in September*).

**b)** A club may request the postponement of a fixture by giving at least ten days notice to the Fixtures Secretary and providing justification. If the Fixtures Secretary allows the postponement, the Fixtures Secretary shall arrange the date and venue of the match, in consultation with the two clubs involved. (Note that consultation does not necessarily mean agreement.) The new date shall be binding on both clubs and no further postponement of the same fixture shall be permitted. No fixture shall be postponed at less than ten days notice except in an emergency.

**c)** All fixtures shall be played before 31st May unless the Council sanctions a later date.

**d)** The record of any team playing only half of its matches or fewer shall be expunged.

**7. PLAYING CONDITIONS FOR MATCHES**

The home team shall provide reasonable playing conditions and set up the venue, equipment, etc., before the starting time. There should be sufficient sets, boards and clocks of appropriate design. Tables and chairs should be spaced to allow easy access. The venue should be reasonably quiet, clean, well lit and ventilated.

Mobile phones are allowed in the playing area. *However they must be switched off for the duration of play*. Match captains must remind players of this requirement immediately before the commencement of play.

If a player's phone rings audibly during his game then he automatically forfeits the game. If the opponent cannot win the game by any series of legal moves, it will be declared drawn.

*{Advice to clubs: in the hopefully rare case of a genuine need to use a mobile phone occurring while a match is still in progress, the two team captains should be jointly consulted and their prior agreement obtained. Otherwise, in the event of a dispute arising, the MCF is likely to take the view that FIDE Rule 12.8 has been breached. FIDE Rule 12.8 - “*Unless authorised by the arbiter, it is forbidden for anybody to use a mobile phone or any kind of communication device in the playing venue or any contiguous area designated by the arbiter.*”*

*MCF requests that clubs remind their players that FIDE rules apply in the Manchester League (unless specifically altered by MCF Rules) - players found cheating will face sanctions (e.g. a 3 year ban). Important points to raise include:*

* *‘other’ electronic devices are prohibited (if they are capable of generating or analysing a chess move, which include smart watches)*
* *any such devices much be completely switched off for the duration of the match (not just the player’s own game)}*

**8. CLOCKS AND RATE OF PLAY**

An incremental time control will be used for all matches. Matches typically will be played under a time control of all moves in 1 hour 20 minutes with a 15 second increment per move starting at move 1 (G80' + 15”).

In exceptional circumstances, if the home team anticipates that it will not have enough digital clocks for all boards, then it must give a minimum of 10 days' notice to the visiting team, in which case the visiting team will have the option to bring their own digital clocks to make up the shortfall. If they do not take up this option then the home team may use analogue clocks to make up the shortfall. On boards where analogue clocks are used the rate of play shall typically be 30 moves in 75 minutes each, then a 20 minutes quick-play finish, and FIDE Guidelines III (Games without increment including Quickplay Finishes) shall apply. Home teams who do not give the required notice may, at the Fixtures Secretary's discretion, be penalised by the loss of each game for which a digital clock is not available.

A shorter session may be played by prior agreement between the captains, as long as the rate is sufficient for ECF standard-play grading. [As things stand in 2019, the minimum for standard-play grading is either G/60’ or an incremental time limit such that a game of 60 moves will last at least 60 minutes]

**{Advice to players: Under the laws of chess a player does not need to keep score once they have less than 5 minutes left   When playing with an increment the MCF recommends that you keep score at all times.  If you do not keep score you cannot claim a draw under the 50 move rule, or by repetition etc and the game may last an excessive time.}**

**9. STARTING PROCEDURE**

Before the starting time the captains shall (if a team captain is not present, team members present must nominate an acting captain):

**a)** Exchange team lists of seven (or a lower number if applicable to that Division) players and pair them accordingly. If a team knows it is going to default, it shall do so from the bottom board upward**.**

**b)** Agree the rate of play.

**c)** Toss for colour with the winner taking white on either the odd or even boards.

**10. STARTING AND FINISHING**

*The official starting time shall be 7.30 pm.* Matches shall start at 7.30 pm but may start *earlier* by agreement. Clubs must state their finishing time, which must be after 9.50 pm, in the club information supplied for publication at the MCF website.

Matches or individual games may finish at a different time from that stated in these rules, if agreed during the starting procedure, provided they finish after 9.50 pm.

At the starting time:

**a)** If a captain or acting captain is not present, the other side shall have choice of colour. If neither side has a captain or acting captain present, the first one to appear shall have this choice.

**b)** The captains or acting captains present shall start the clocks. Any delay in starting shall be added to the clocks of the team responsible for the delay.

**11. RESERVES AND DEFAULTS**

A player who does not arrive within one hour of the starting time defaults the game. A reserve may be substituted for an absent player up to one hour after the starting time. The clock shall not be reset.

Any team which defaults an MCF League match shall render its club liable to a fine of £10. MCF Council will not automatically impose the fine, but will use its discretion and common sense.

**12. NOTIFICATION**

Both teams shall report the board by board result of each match within three days of the match by completing the results form at the MCF website. If the website is inoperative, the result must be sent to the Records & Registrations Secretary, and in respect of cup matches, also to the Fixtures Secretary**.**

**13. LAWS OF CHESS**

Games shall be played in accordance with the FIDE Laws of Chess unless modified by these MCF League rules. Team captains are joint arbiters and have all the duties and responsibilities of arbiters under the Laws unless those duties and responsibilities clash with their role as team captain. For example they must call flag falls but they cannot, except by mutual agreement, declare a position drawn in a quick-play finish.

The Laws of Chess can be found on the FIDE website <https://www.fide.com/fide/handbook.html>

**14. DISPUTES**

*The procedure is set out in the Memorandum on Resolution of MCF Disputes*.

The disputes committee shall consist of 3 people (plus 2 in reserve) and at least 1 of the 3 must be a National Chess Arbiter. The members of this committee are to be elected by the AGM and must come from different clubs (i.e. 5 clubs in total).

**15. INTERPRETATION**

MCF Council is the sole authority for the interpretation of these rules and its decision shall be final.

# 16. CHANGES TO THE LEAGUE AND MATCH RULES

Changes to the League and Match rules can only be made at a General Meeting and must be proposed in accordance with the constitution and the league and match rules. Such changes require a two-thirds majority of those present and entitled to vote.

*Revised 18 July 2019*