

# NERL Entry Tournament Rules and Regulations 2018-2019

## 1. Overview

The purpose of the North East Regional League (NERL) is to provide a competition that aims to determine the best team in the region whilst encouraging participation and development in netball through an open, fair, progressive and transparent league structure.

The NERL Entry Tournament is a competition organised by Netball North East that determines the movement of clubs between County league netball and NERL division 2 and takes place once the NERL has concluded (***the Competition***).

The regulations set out below outline the rules and regulations (***the Regulations***) through which the NERL Entry Tournament (only) shall be governed. For the avoidance of doubt, the separate regulations which pertain to the NERL competition shall have force within that competition.

These Regulations must be followed by all teams, players, officials, spectators and administrators involved in the management, administration and operation of the NERL Entry Tournament.

## 2. Competition Structure

2.1 Entry into the NERL will be through the following methods:

**2.1.1 Entry to NERL shall be through an open entry tournament. Teams must be situated within the boundaries of the North East Regional Netball Association. Clubs/teams and players must pay the North East Regional fee on their affiliation.**

**2.1.2** The teams which finish in seventh and eighth position in NERL division 2 will contest a play-off together with teams who enter through the open entry system. Each team will play the others once. The two teams with the best results will qualify to participate in NERL division 2 in the following season; the remaining two teams will return to their County leagues.

## 3. Competition Organisation

3.1 The Competition and all rights and properties associated with it shall be owned, controlled and managed by Netball North East.

3.2 Netball North East is responsible for the organisation and management of the NERL Entry Tournament as well as the NERL. County leagues that feed into the NERL Entry Tournament are the responsibility of the County Netball Associations, as autonomous organisations independent from Netball North East. These competitions may have different regulations to those set out in this document.

3.3 Prior to the start of NERL Entry Tournament, Netball North East shall announce the following:

3.3.1 the Competition Referees; and

3.3.2 the person appointed to receive appeals of the decisions of the Competition Referee, as outlined in Section 8.

## 4. Competition Referees

4.1 Competition Referee(s) will be appointed by Netball North East for the NERL Entry Tournament. The Competition Referee(s) will have the authority and jurisdiction to make decisions on all matters arising throughout the Competition including, but not limited to:

4.1.1 Altering or amending the playing schedule as necessary;

4.1.2 Determining if there has been a breach of the Regulations and imposing an appropriate sanction including but not limited to, the disqualification of any individual Team or Player

4.1.3 Adjudicating instances of unsportsmanlike behaviour or behaviour that brings the sport into disrepute, including but not limited to, instances of teams predetermining, or attempting to predetermine, the outcome of a Match and/or the Competition;

4.1.4 Determining the result and score should any Match not be concluded due to any unforeseen circumstance;

4.1.5 Enforcing the decision by any medical advisor, including but not limited to, England Netball's appointed Competition Medic or Competition Physiotherapist, regarding the participation of a player and whether they are able to:

a) Start the match

or b) Continue to play;

4.1.6 Determining any matter not covered specifically within the Regulations.

4.2 The Competition Referee(s) may call upon, or delegate to, additional persons to assist with the Competition or consult with other persons prior to making any decision. However, the final decision and accountability for the decision will rest with the Competition Referee(s).

4.3 If a Player is suspended from a Match, or ordered to leave the court and take no further part in the Match, that Player and a Team Official (normally the Coach) may be required to attend a hearing before the Competition Referee(s) immediately after the end of the Match. After the hearing, the Competition Referee(s) will decide what action should be taken.

4.4 For all **incidents** on or off the court at the selected venue, an England Netball Accident Report Form must be completed by the Competition Referee(s) and a copy sent to the NE Regional Office which will be stored for insurance purposes using standard issued forms.

4.5 The Competition Referee(s) will maintain and be responsible for a confidential Competition Referee Log Book where appropriate.

## **5. Pre Competition Management and Administration**

### **5.1 Team Entry and Eligibility**

5.1.1 Entry to the NERL Entry Tournament shall be through an open entry tournament. This is detailed in clause 2.1.

5.1.2 All clubs/teams participating in the Competition must be affiliated to England Netball, and have paid a full affiliation in this respect.

5.1.3 Netball North East is entitled to charge an entry fee to compete in the NERL Entry Tournament and this must be paid in full within the permitted timescales in order for a team to participate. This charge will include the costs associated with appointing Umpires.

5.1.4 By entering a team in NERL Entry Tournament, clubs/teams agree that:

- a) They are able and willing to fulfil the costs and commitments of participation in the NERL Entry Tournament;
- b) They will fulfil their obligations and responsibilities as set out in these Regulations;
- c) They are bound by the Competition Regulations; and
- d) They are bound by all of the rules, policies, regulations and by-laws of England Netball, including the England Netball Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Regulations, as may from time to time be in force.

5.1.5 Where a Club already has two teams under the same England Netball affiliation in NERL they will not be able to participate in the NERL Entry Tournament, as only two (2) teams per club can participate in NERL.

### **5.2 Player/Team Official Eligibility**

5.2.1 In order to qualify to participate in the NERL Entry Tournament, Players and Team Officials (as defined in 6.6 below) must be in membership of England Netball as an affiliated Registered Participant (in the current season) having paid the full affiliation fee due and received confirmation of their affiliation in advance of submitting the Squad Registration Sheet for the NERL Entry Tournament. Players are not required to be first claim affiliated for the team they represent within the NERL Entry Tournament, but once they are registered on a team's nomination form, they cannot play for another club/team within the Competition.

5.2.2 To be eligible for the NERL Entry Tournament all NERL Players and Team Officials must affiliate to England Netball within the timeframe set out in the NERL Competition Regulations. For County teams the appropriate Affiliation Fee must be received by England Netball Head Office Membership Services no less than four (4) days before taking to the court, either as a Player, or involved as a Team Official.

5.2.3 All players must be over 16 years old as of 11.59pm on 31st August immediately prior to the commencement of the playing season in which the NERL Entry Tournament takes place. No player under 14 years old as of 11:59pm on 31st August immediately prior to the commencement of the playing season can play in the NERL entry tournament. Teams wishing to register players under 16 may do so only with age banding consent which must be submitted with the squad registration sheet. The responsibility of the players' welfare must be appropriately managed by the Team Coach and Safeguarding Officer and this will be monitored by the Competition Referee(s). Responsibility for ensuring that the age banding consent form is completed before a Player takes the court rests wholly with the relevant Club.

5.2.4 Netball NE recommends that any individual (players, coach, umpire) if pregnant, should only participate with approval from their doctor and in accordance with guidelines issued by England Netball. Please refer to the

England Netball Full Domestic Rules Guidance for further information which can found at the following link:  
<https://www.EnglandNetball.co.uk/make-the-game/officiating/rules-updates/>

- 5.2.5 Players who have taken to the court in Premier League or NSL in the current season are not permitted to play in the NERL Entry Tournament. Premier team sheets should be provided to the competition referee prior to the entry tournament if required.

### **5.3 Registration of Squads**

- 5.3.1 Participating teams must complete a Squad Registration Sheet fully listing each Player and their affiliation numbers. This needs to be lodged with Netball North East's Competition referee one week prior to the commencement of the NERL Entry Tournament. No additions can be made once the one week deadline has passed.
- 5.3.2 Teams may only use those Players whose names appear on their Squad Registration Sheet held by Netball North East. There is a limit of 25 players who can be listed on the Squad Registration Sheet.
- 5.3.3 Squad Registration Sheets will be made available on the first Competition Day for the Team Manager to sign and return to the Competition Referee during the Registration Period.
- 5.3.4 Once a player has been registered on a Squad Registration Sheet and has played for that team at any time in the Competition, she cannot transfer to another team participating in the NERL Entry Tournament during the course of the current Competition.
- 5.3.5 In respect of NERL teams, only players who have taken to the court (played in at least one (1) quarter) in all rounds/stages of the NERL competition during the course of the season will be eligible to compete for their registered team within the NERL Entry Tournament for that season.
- 5.3.6 If a NERL club/team has a player that has taken to the court for their NERL first team during that season (all rounds/stages), they will not be eligible to play for the second team during the NERL Entry Tournament.

### **5.4 Competition Venues**

- 5.4.1 Matches will be played wherever possible on a court with adequate surrounds and playing surface and with ancillary facilities for participants including changing and showering facilities for Teams and Officials, unless otherwise agreed by the Competitions Technical Support Group (TSG) and Netball North East Regional Management Board (RMB). Where any such facilities are not available, this will be communicated to all Team Officials and Umpires before the day of competition.
- 5.4.2 Netball North East will hire the venue from a third party and conduct a full risk assessment, and take all appropriate measures to mitigate any identified risk.

## **6. Playing and Competition**

### **6.1 Time of Arrival and Registration**

- 6.1.1 All Team Managers must collect their team packs prior to their first game, from the Competition Referee's area.
- 6.1.2 All teams will be held responsible for the behaviour, demeanour and actions of their Players, Team Officials and supporters.
- 6.1.3 Each Team may declare up to twelve (12) Players prior to the start of each Match by completing a NERL Results Card and submitting it to the official's bench. These Players must be listed on the Squad Registration Sheet and must be done so prior to the published start time for the Match.

### **6.2 Competition Scheduling**

- 6.2.1 All Matches must be played as per the fixture schedule published by Netball North East, unless otherwise agreed by the Competition Referee.
- 6.2.2 Netball North East will only postpone or cancel the NERL Entry Tournament due to extreme and unforeseen circumstances. Examples of unforeseen circumstances include but are not limited to: inclement weather such as flooding, heavy rainfall, snowfall, storm; or other conditions which would make participation dangerous. Injuries or delays incurred by Teams do not qualify as unforeseen circumstances. Netball North East will not be responsible for any costs incurred by Teams as a result of a postponement or cancellation of the NERL Entry Tournament due to extreme and unforeseen circumstances.
- In instances of the above, the Competition Referee will contact all teams either by phone or email at the earliest opportunity using the contact details provided on the Squad Registration Sheet.

- 6.2.3 If the NERL Entry Tournament is postponed or cancelled, Netball North East will ensure that Teams and Umpires are informed immediately.
- 6.2.4 No Team may play a Match with less than 5 Players. Any Team with less than 5 Players on court during a Match will automatically concede the game.
- 6.2.5 In the event of a Match being conceded:
- a) The non-offending team will be awarded five (5) league points, and the team who conceded will have five (5) league points deducted from their total;
  - b) The team who conceded may be liable to pay any costs which the non-offending team has incurred, subject to the determination by the Competition Referee(s).
- 6.2.6 In the event that a Match is abandoned for any reason, (e.g., because of serious injury), the result of that Match will be determined by the Competition Referee, having regarded the score at the time at which play was suspended.

### **6.3 Match rules and format**

- 6.3.1 All Matches shall be played in accordance with the *International Netball Federation Rules of the Game* currently in force at the time, except where specifically stated in these Regulations.

### **6.4 Match Officials**

- 6.4.1 Umpires who hold a current Netball Europe B Award or above, or its equivalent, and who have been identified by the Officiating TSG, will be allocated to each fixture.

### **6.5 Technical Officials**

- 6.5.1 The Technical Officials are, collectively, the Umpires, Scorers and Timekeepers. The Scorer and the Timekeeper shall constitute the Officials' Bench.
- 6.5.1.1 Each team must provide a competent Scorer, either an umpire or a qualified Competition Technical Official (CTO) or a person who has either attended a Technical Officials Course or has a working knowledge of scoring. Scorers will be required for all fixtures. CTO's may not coach or comment during the match. The CTO's should agree between themselves who acts as scorer and timekeeper. They should ensure they are equipped with the relevant equipment to fulfil their duties, i.e.: stop watches, pencils, etc., as the only equipment provided at the venue is a flip-over scoreboard. Failure to provide a CTO for any portion of a match will incur a penalty. In addition the process below should be followed in the event of a team failing to provide a CTO for their match.
- 6.5.1.2 In the event that only one team provides a CTO then that team's CTO will take the lead in officiating the match. The offending team will be required to find someone who can work alongside the CTO to officiate the match. If there is no one available to fill this gap, then the offending team will be required to fill this gap with one of the Players from their match squad, who must remain in this role for the full duration of the match.
- 6.5.1.3 In the event that neither team provides a CTO, both teams will be required to drop a player from their squad for the duration of the match. These players will be paired with CTO's from other matches taking place at the same time. As above these players will remain in this role for the full duration of the match.

### **6.6 Team Officials**

- 6.6.1 The Team Officials are: Coach, Manager and up to three (3) other personnel, at least one (1) of whom must be a primary care person who is qualified to diagnose and treat injury and/or illness for example doctor or physiotherapist.
- 6.6.2 The Team Officials and up to five (5) players, not on court shall constitute the Team Bench.
- 6.6.3 Team Bench may coach while play is in progress provided that they remain seated or stand at their Team Bench. Coaching is also allowed during intervals and during stoppages. The Team Bench may not indulge in inappropriate comments or behaviour. (Ref INF Rules 2.1, 2.2, 7, 20, 20.1.2).

### **6.7 Match Timings**

- 6.7.1 All Matches shall be of 47 minutes duration (i.e., four (4) quarters of ten (10) minutes) with intervals of three (3) minutes for half time and two (2) minutes at quarter and three-quarter time. Central timing will be used throughout the matches. \* Please note these timings may change depending on the number of teams entering!

6.7.2 Umpires must ensure that:

- a) Before the start of each Match, the Captains have tossed for the centre pass;
- b) Both Teams are on court, in position and ready to play, at the scheduled time in accordance with the playing schedule and the central timer;
- c) No Team starts a Match with less than five (5) Players.

6.7.3 Any Team not on court as detailed in accordance with 6.7.3 above will concede the Match. Zero (0) points will be awarded to the Team conceding the Match, and full match points for a win (5) will be awarded to the Team on court, in position and ready to play at the correct time.

## 6.8 Kit and Equipment

6.8.1 Teams must carry an alternative set of bibs for use where a clash of colours occurs. It is the Team's responsibility to identify any potential clash. Where a clash of colours is identified, Captains shall arrange to toss a coin to decide who shall wear their alternative bibs.

6.8.2 Each Team is responsible for providing a suitable match ball prior at the start of each match.

## 6.9 Scoring

6.9.1 For all Round Robin matches, teams will be awarded league points as follows:

- a) Five (5) points for a win;
- b) Three (3) points for a draw (except as provided for in 6.7.3 above);
- c) Two (2) points for a loss within 5 goals of the winners' score – e.g., 50-46 = 2 points, 50-45 = 1 point;
- d) One (1) point for a loss with more than 50 per cent of the winners' score;
- e) Zero (0) points for a loss.

6.9.2 NERL Entry Tournament league tables will be compiled on the basis of the points awarded to each team. Where teams are level on points:

- a) Goal Average shall be used to determine their relative positions, i.e., the team with the higher average score over the course of the Competition shall take precedence
- b) In the event that Goal Average does not differentiate between the teams, then Goal Difference shall be applied, i.e., precedence shall be given to the team with the greater difference between goals scored and goals conceded
- c) In the event that Goal Difference does not differentiate between the teams, then the team with the greatest number of goals scored shall take precedence
- d) In the event that neither Goal Average nor Goal Difference nor goals scored can differentiate between the teams, the score in the match played between the teams shall determine the standings, with the winning team taking precedence.

In the event that none of the above differentiates between the teams, the Competition Referee shall determine the means of differentiation.

**Note - Where one of the teams has its Goal Average, Goal Difference or total number of goals scored affected by conceded fixtures, then all goals scored by and against conceding team(s) in all fixtures shall be omitted from the calculations of both teams level on points. Except where one of the teams level on points is the conceding team, at which point they assume a Goal Average of 0 and will be the lowest ranked team of those level on points.**

## 6.10 Registration of results

6.10.1 Following the completion of each Match, the scorers from the two competing teams must complete the NERL Results Card and ensure that this is signed by both Captains, in addition to the Scorers. Once the official results card has been signed by the Captain, no dispute can be logged. The Results Card must then be returned straight after each match to the Competition Referee(s).

6.10.2 Results for all matches will be displayed throughout the Competition in a suitable area.

## 6.11 Health and Safety

- 6.11.1 Play may be stopped if the Umpire deems it necessary due to the injury or illness of a player. There will be no injury time, however team changes are allowed to take place for both teams in the event an injury does occur as long as they are completed within a timely manner.
- 6.11.2 Team Officials are required to take great care in moving an injured player or ill player from the court.
- 6.11.3 Should the Primary Care person feel that an injury is critical (e.g., head, neck or back) and that the injured Player should not be moved without the assistance of Medical staff, then the Match Officials should note the time lost during treatment and report to the Competition Referee(s) who will adjudicate.
- 6.11.4 For all accidents or injuries on or off the court at the Competition, where any Player, Team Official, Umpire, Bench Official, Spectator, Volunteer, Staff Member or any other individual connected to the Competition is injured, the Competition Referee(s) must complete an England Netball Accident Report Form and return it to the Netball North East Regional Office. This procedure should be followed for all injuries and accidents, regardless of whether or not medical treatment is given.

## 7. Competition Complaints Procedure

- 7.1 On the Competition Day, all queries and complaints (**a Complaint**) should be directed to the Competition Referee in the first instance, which will be dealt with as follows:
  - 7.1.1 Where the Complaint relates to the Competition format or management, including but not limited to; the schedule, the opposing Team, playing surface or other playing arrangements, a protest must be made prior to the start of the Match (or as soon as possible after the issue becomes apparent during the Match) to the Competition Referee(s). The Complaint must then be acknowledged by the Competition Referee who will decide what action should be taken; or
  - 7.1.2 Where the Complaint relates to the playing of a Match, the scoring and/or its result, the relevant team member or Team Official must:
    - a) Inform their opponents and the Umpires of the Complaint;
    - b) Mark the Results Card with the words **Under Protest**;
    - c) Take the Results Card marked **Under Protest** to the Competition Referee, immediately after the Match;
    - d) Explain the issue in full to the Competition Referee; and the Competition Referee will decide what action should be taken.
  - 7.1.3 The Competition Referee's decision in relation to decisions taken under clauses 7.1.1 or 7.1.2 is binding apart from where parties to the complaint have the right to appeal the decision under Section 8 below.
- 7.2 Where a Complaint relates to the governance or administration of the Competition by the Competition Referee(s), such complaints will be dealt with under the Complaints Procedure of England Netball.
- 7.3 Where the Complaint relates to the behaviour of an individual Player or Team participating, volunteering or an individual attending a Match which could be considered as a Disciplinary Offence under England Netball's Disciplinary Regulations, such complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the processes set out in *England Netball's Disciplinary Regulations* and should be referred to the Disciplinary Secretary of Netball North East.

## 8. Appeal of Competition Referee's Decision

- 8.1 The decision of the Competition Referee(s) in relation to a complaint submitted in accordance with section 7.1 shall be final and binding on all parties save that a party has a right to appeal in the following circumstances:
  - 8.1.1 If the decision has a potential impact on a Match result, a league table, or the outcome of the Competition; AND
  - 8.1.2 If there has been a failure by the Competition Referee(s) to follow or act in accordance with these Regulations and/or the Competition Referee(s) reached a decision on the basis of an error of fact.

These are the only grounds of appeal and any appeal must be submitted in accordance with the appeals process set out below:

- 8.2 An appeal should be forwarded in writing from a Club Official of the appealing Team to the North East Region Disciplinary Secretary within seventy two (72) hours of the receiving the decision.
- 8.3 The appeal shall be accompanied by a cheque for £100 (made payable to North East Netball Association) which shall be returned if the appeal is upheld or if there are any other extenuating circumstances. The Competition Appeals Committee (CAC) will decide whether the extenuating circumstance warrant the cheque being returned.
- 8.4 The North East Region Disciplinary Secretary will establish a CAC which will consist of individuals that are independent of and not connected to the Competition. One of those individuals will be appointed as the Chair.
- 8.5 The Chair of the CAC will send the appeal to the opposing Team and any other Team the CAC believe could be affected by the outcome of the appeal. These Teams will be permitted seventy two (72) hours, from the date the appeal notice is sent from the CAC, to submit any evidence or submission that they wish the CAC to consider.
- 8.6 All submissions and evidence must be submitted in writing. The Chair of CAC will have the discretion to determine the process, procedure and direction of the appeal.
- 8.7 The CAC shall meet and reach a determination within seventy two (72) hours of receiving all the evidence and submissions.
- 8.8 The CAC will notify all the parties that made submissions and presented evidence of its decision and any penalties and sanctions imposed within twenty four (24) hours of it reaching its determination. The CAC shall have the discretion to publish the decision through whatever means it considers appropriate.
- 8.9 The CAC shall have the delegated power of Netball North East's RMB to make all decisions and impose and enforce any penalties and sanctions (including but not limited to: reprimands, the deduction of points, fines, suspensions and expulsions from the Competition), relating to the appeal.
- 8.10 The procedures set out in this section 8 shall be governed by the Arbitration Act 1996 (the Act) and amount to a binding arbitration agreement for the purposes of Section 6 of the Act.
- 8.11 The parties also waive irrevocably their right to any form of appeal, review or recourse to any court or other judicial authority, or under England Netball's Disciplinary Procedures Manual or otherwise, insofar as such waiver may be validly made.
- 8.12 The seat of arbitration shall be England, the language used shall be English and the governing law of the regulations and these proceedings under Section 8 shall be English Law.
- 8.13 If the circumstances require a decision to be taken sooner than provided for by this section 8, and all parties to the appeal consent; the timetable within which an appeal is raised, submissions made and the decision taken can be shorter than seventy two (72) hours stated in this Section 8. In such cases the CAC shall issue a revised directions timetable which shall be binding on all parties.
- 8.14 In order to adhere to the timescales set out in Section 8, all communication will take place via electronic mail to the contact named in the NERL Handbook for the Competition. It is the participating Teams' responsibility to ensure that these contact details are kept up-to-date.

## **9. Miscellaneous**

- 9.1 Netball North East RMB will not be liable to any person, whether in contract, tort (including negligence) or otherwise for any direct or indirect loss or injury of any nature, howsoever caused and howsoever arising from the matters covered by these Regulations, provided that nothing in these Regulations excludes or restricts the RMB liability for any personal loss or injury caused by RMB's own negligence, the negligence of its employees, or for fraud.
- 9.2 If any of these Regulations are held by any competent authority to be invalid or unenforceable, the remainder of the Regulations shall not be affected thereby.
- 9.3 These Regulations shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with English law.
- 9.4 Any questions regarding these Regulations should be addressed to the Competition Referee.
- 9.5 The RMB will be entitled to amend these Regulations each year in advance of the Competition and such amendments will take effect from the first date of the publication of the completed amended procedure on the North East Netball website.
- 9.6 The Competition Referee, CTSG and RMB will adjudicate on all matters not covered by the regulations.

## Definitions

The following terms shall have the meanings set out below:

**Competition Appeals Committee (CAC)** means a body of up to three (3) individuals who are independent of and not connected to the Competition that will hear one, or a group of, appeal(s) on the Competition Referee's decision as set out in section 8.

**Competition Referee** means the individual appointed by Netball North East with all necessary authority and jurisdiction to make decisions on any matters arising during the Competition Day as set out in Section 4.

**Competition Referee Log Book** means a record of any incidents, disciplinary matters, changes to schedule or complaints that arise on the Competition Day and are passed onto the LOC, templates for these documents are available at <http://www.englandnetball.co.uk/competitions>

**England Netball Accident Report Form** means a form that is accessible from <http://www.englandnetball.co.uk/competitions> that must be used to detail any accidents that occur during a competition

**Goal Average** means goals for divided by goals against

**Goal Difference** means the difference between the goals scored and the goals conceded

**NERL Results Card** means the official card issued by North East Netball, used for each Match, by each team, to record the players on court, quarters played and quarter and final scores, and signed by captains, umpires and scorers. See Appendix 2.

**NERL Entry Tournament** means the tournament to determine promotion and relegation into the NERL division 2.

**Match** means an individual game of Netball played, in accordance with Section 6, forming part of the North East Regional League.

**(Players) Not on court** means the players listed on the NERL Results Card that are not, at that present time playing in the Match

**Premier League (1, 2 or 3)** means Divisions 1, 2 or 3 of the England Netball Premier League.

**Squad** means the 12 Players listed on the NERL Results Card from which a Team may be selected on a match day.

**Squad Registration Sheet** means the list of players submitted by a team at the start of the season (this can be added to throughout the season) that they can be selected to play in a fixture, providing they meet all eligibility criteria and are named on the NERL Results Card for that fixture. A maximum of twenty five (25) players may be named in total throughout the season.

**Teams** means up to seven (7) Players actively participating in a Match at a given moment.

**Team Officials** mean the individuals that are listed on the Squad Registration Sheet and include the Coach, Team Manager and up to three (3) other personnel, at least one (1) of whom must be a primary care person and one (1) must hold an appropriate first aid qualification.