

RUGBY UNION SAG MEETING 3 MINUTES

Date 28/04/2026
Time 13:00-15:00
Location Microsoft Teams

ATTENDEES

Chris Campbell
Dan Roberts
Becca Stone
Nick Burley
Hannah Underhill
Katy Young
Molly Steward
Jen Fairfield
Claire Cruikshank
Joe Byrnes
Katie Storie

ORGANISATION

SAG Chair
BUCS
BUCS
BUCS
BUCS
RFU
University of Nottingham
St Mary's
Edinburgh
7s Reps
SRFU

Item	Action*
<p>1. Apologies/Welcomes</p> <p>Chris Campbell opened the meeting and it was confirmed that Becca Stone would take on the minutes going forward.</p>	
<p>2. Minutes & Matters Arising</p> <p>Actions from Meeting 2 were completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BSR calendar to be discussed later in the meeting - BUCS provided feedback to Strathclyde around pitchside medical support - External eligibility regulations to be discussed in Rules and Regulations section. - WBSR expansion criteria was discussed and a decision made at the Extraordinary Meeting in March, meaning the consultation with the teams around the playoff date was not required. 	

3. Rules and Regulations 26/27

Dan Roberts provided an update on proposed changes to the Rules and Regulations for the 2026/27 season.

Men's National Champ Eligibility:

The proposal would allow players representing university-affiliated external teams e.g. competing in non-BUCS competitions, to count appearances towards National Championship eligibility requirements.

Feedback gathered from all Men's BSR teams for the 2026/27 season (Brunel, not Swansea):

- 7 institutions in support
- 3 institutions not in support
 - Concerns that the principle should apply consistently across all levels
 - Concerns regarding players moving 'down' from higher external competitions
 - Belief that BUCS eligibility should only come from BUCS competitions.

There is an LMC meeting in a few weeks where this will be discussed further, but this will still be submitted to the Competitions Group.

Key discussion points included:

- Whether external teams are genuinely 'student teams' or mixed community teams.
- Whether a percentage threshold of student players should be required
- Recognition that monitoring and administrating percentage thresholds would be extremely difficult and time consuming
- Clarification that institutions would need to demonstrate that the external team is recognised by the relevant NGB as part of the same university playing entity.
- Some student players currently miss eligibility opportunities despite representing their institution throughout the season in external competitions.
- Consideration of whether this proposal could set precedent for other sports?

Nick Burley confirmed that Competitions Group have previously agreed to sports exploring sport-specific approaches where necessary, therefore this would not need to be applied to other National League sports.

Following discussion, a vote was taken amongst non-BUCS members, with a unanimous decision in support for the proposal.

Action: BUCS to consult with Prem 1 teams.

DR/BS

Action: Proposal to proceed to Competitions Group.

BUCS

Regionalisation and League Structure Flexibility:

Dan Roberts provided an update on a meeting BUCS and RFU had about trying to improve the completion percentage in the lower tiers of BUCS rugby.

The proposal would be to extend flexibility to create more than two leagues per conference in the women's structure, and potentially extend regionalisation flexibility to Tier 3 in the men's game. This would provide BUCS with greater flexibility to structure leagues appropriately, noted optional flexibility rather than mandatory restructuring.

Katy Young provided the rationale to this proposed change, that feedback from students at regional forums highlighted the desire for more consistent fixture programmes, travel considerations and improved player experience.

Discussions included:

- Acknowledgement that additional leagues would create additional BUCS points available.
- Recognition that regionalisation could improve competition balance, as it is BUCS policy that leagues with up to six teams play each other twice, compared to seven or more teams only playing once.

No objections were raised by the group.

Action: BUCS staff to put proposal to Competitions Group

BUCS

Men's Tier 4 Front Row Flexibility

Proposal to introduce a Tier 4-specific caveat to allow matches to be played under agreed adaptations when front row numbers are limited, for example uncontested scrums or flexible squad size arrangements with written agreement between institutions. This proposal would try to ensure more matches happen at this level.

The current rules mean Tier 5 and below operate under 'Game On' principles, whereas Tier 4 requires teams to field a complete front row or concede.

Discussion points included:

- Whether opposing teams would agree to this when the alternative is a walkover win
- Potentially preventing promotion for teams repeatedly unable to field front row teams, therefore:
- Maintaining incentives for front row development and recruitment

Action: BUCS to confirm the wording of this new regulation before sending to Competitions Group

BUCS

Match Official Standards

Nick Burley introduced discussions regarding referee level recommendations within regulations.

The current regulations require a minimum RFU Level 2 referee, and recommended higher level referees for high competition levels.

Feedback received requesting stronger recommendations/regulations for higher-standard officials in Men's North/South 1 and 2 competitions.

Discussion points:

- Challenges of referee availability on Wednesdays anyway and additional criteria could result in games not going ahead
- Risks of creating unrealistic expectations for institutions
- Importance of maintaining positive relationships with local referee societies
- Opportunities to improve engagement and recognition of officials

Katy Young highlighted opportunities for:

- Better education around competition standards and equivalent level to appoint appropriate level
- Improved communication with referee societies
- Greater promotion of positive feedback towards officials

The group did not support mandating referee standards and for the regulation to remain as it is.

Action: BUCS to continue improving engagement with referee societies and positive recognition initiative

BS

Extra Time in Knockout Competitions

Nick Burley presented a proposal from an institution suggesting removal of extra time from knockout fixtures, and instead if there is a draw, determining winners via tries scored and then kicking competitions rather.

The rationale for this is due to financial and time pressures of booking facilities to include potential additional time.

The group strongly opposed the proposal:

- Concerns around reducing the sporting integrity of knockout rugby
- Recognition that kicking competitions could potentially take as long as extra time
- Rugby's scoring system is significantly different from other sports, and the points gained from tries are not more important than other points e.g. from penalties

Numbered Shirts Regulation

Currently, the BUCS rugby regulations do not specifically require numbered shirts.

The group discussed:

- The importance of shirt numbers for referees and match admin
- Practical challenges such as blood replacements and damaged shirts
- The need for flexibility in exceptional circumstances
- RFU wording regarding player identification being needed
- Requirement of starting players to begin matches wearing numbered shirts
- Numbers do not necessarily need to be in line with position, but more for player identification

The group supported introducing a regulation regarding player identification and numbered shirts, with flexibility

Action: Draft proposed wording aligned with RFU regulations

NB

4. Collision Sport Application

Hannah Underhill provided an update on the current ongoing Collision Sport Application from Reading Men, who have applied to re-enter at Tier 1, where they previously were before disbanding this season.

The group were meant to be reviewing their application however the initial BUCS panel decided not enough evidence had been presented to proceed with the application, so have extended the deadline to the end of the week.

Initial concerns from the group, without seeing the application, but based on previous knowledge about Reading's disciplinary case, is whether they have made the correct steps as an institution to ensure that type of behaviour doesn't happen again.

Action: BUCS to update group once Reading have submitted further evidence

BS

5. LMC Update

Dan Roberts provided an update from the latest LMC meetings.

Key points included:

- WBSR expansion to 8 teams
- WBSR calendar changes
 - Women's final will be separate to the men's due to the u21 Six Nations meaning it needs to be earlier in the year
 - Therefore, due to less fixture weeks for the league, a new format has been agreed where teams play each other once, then 3 additional fixtures based on finishing position after initial 7 rounds.
 - Top 7 teams progress through to National Championships, 8th place will take part in the play-off at a double header with the final.
 - BUCS have worked closely with RFU, PWR and u23 review group to avoid clashes as much as possible with PWR cup, Six Nations windows and Celtic Challenge, while still offering an exceptional player experience.
- WBSR LMC new chair Olivia Jenkins, currently working for the RFU and background in WRU.
- MBSR External eligibility discussed previously
- BSR Referees – new 2 year model with fees worked out based on number of teams and number of fixtures that take place, compared to previous fixed fee.
- BSR Commercialisation meeting held at the Finals with WBSR and MBSR members, plus members who have a first team in Prem North and South. Main purpose was to understand the appetite of members to commercialise BSR and make changes that would better enable BUCS to gain commercial investment.
 - BUCS SLT are conducting a survey of BSR teams as to what resource currently goes into their programmes, what commercial investment they have and current commercial ties.
 - Some reg changes would be necessary, such as mandating KO times for livestreams
 - Men's and Women's are being treated as one entity from a product perspective, but separately from a competition perspective

Action: Calendar to be sent out with minutes

DR/BS

6. RFU Regionalisation Update

This was covered in the Rules and Regs update.

<p>7. Group Membership</p> <p>Chris Campbell raised that there are several open positions on the group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of response from the Women's Student Rep therefore will open back up to recruitment. • Recruitment for Men's Student Rep. • Molly Steward is leaving her university role therefore recruitment will open again for Women's Performance Rep <p>Action: Hannah and Chris to review unsuccessful applications from previous recruitment window</p> <p>Action: BUCS to post role adverts</p>	<p>HU/CC</p> <p>BS</p>
<p>8. AOB</p> <p>No AOB.</p>	