

Summary of Changes to the 2026–27 Area League Regulations

The 2026–27 regulations contain a number of revisions, which are covered in the following tables. A short summary:

- **Player eligibility** sees a notable addition: **Non-UK Passport Holders section** (Regulation 7.5), who must comply with the Visa Eligibility Grid referenced in Appendix 2 under “EH Participation in Hockey for non-UK Passport Holders”. This is a UK Government (HMRC) requirement. The old **No Objection Certificate (NOC) regime has been removed entirely** and replaced by this framework – the NOC definition has also been deleted from the Glossary.
- **Dual Registration** is expanded and tightened. Players must nominate a Primary Club and a Secondary Club, with the Primary Club retaining selection priority. Dual Registration is now not permitted in a team's final 4 matches, a transfer is required to change Primary Club, and ALMC approval does not persist beyond the end of the season.
- **Regulation 8 Player Eligibility – Team Selection** has a number of changes:
 - The Doubling Up definition has shifted from "same match day" to "**same Matchweek**" – broadening the window over which eligibility is assessed.
 - 8.3 Movement Of Players has been revised – e.g., 8.3.4 "When a Higher-Ranked Team has no Fixture or Does Not Play its Scheduled Fixture", plus a clarification that prior-season data may be used in Week 1.
 - 8.4 Doubling Up has been tightened, with a number of modifications. For example, the doubling-up squad cap is reduced from 13 to 12 players. Note the checklist for circumstances that permit doubling up.
 - Regulation 8.4.1 revised: When considering eligibility of a player to double up the player is considered to have been selected to play for the **higher** team and is doubling up to play for the **lower** team.
 - 8.5 Player Eligibility For Doubling Up includes a revised table (8.5.4 Doubling Up Summary)
- Regulation 9: match-sheet confirmation now explicitly covers **goals and cards** (not just the score), and hospital-treatment injuries must be reported by the match-sheet deadline.
- 12.2 Yellow/Red Cards introduces a **new team-level yellow-card penalty regime** (Regulation 12.2.1(b)).
- Regulation 14 (Failure to Honour) is restructured with a grade-by-grade penalty matrix, including a cascade penalty for clubs whose lower teams also forfeit.
- **Half-time is fixed at 5 minutes** across Grades 2–5, and the playing quarters format becomes the default for Premier Divisions unless the home team advises otherwise (i.e., the notification direction has been inverted compared with 2025–26).
- **Appeal deadlines tightened:** Promotion/relegation appeal window reduced from 7 to 5 days (4.5.10(b)); Further-Appeal Request window reduced from 14 to 5 days (Appendix 6, 6.1.2).

Main Changes – Regulations

Reg #	Regulation	Comment / Nature of Change
Glossary	Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – NEW terms added: "ALCC" (Area League Competitions Committee), "Dual Registration", "Primary Club", "Secondary Club" – REMOVED: "NOC (No Objection Certificate)" (consistent with deletion of old 7.5) – REVISED: "Doubling Up" redefined from "same match day" to "same Matchweek" – REVISED: "Ineligible Player" broadened ("due to these Regulations or the EH Disciplinary Regulations") – Existing definitions updated for consistency with the ALCC/ALMC governance structure
1	Introduction	– No substantive changes
2	Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – REVISED qualifier at 2.9: umpires may adjudicate on Regulations "as required to make match day decisions, e.g. under Regulation 13.2" – REVISED 2.11: Grade 5 now limited to "the Division(s) at the lowest Steps"; ALMC discretion to designate "any other Divisions" as Grade 5 has been removed
3	Entry into the League	– Clarification only – no change to obligations
4	The Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Any changes to an Area League pyramid will be agreed by the AMC – Any significant changes to Area League pyramids or the Grades of Divisions will be reviewed and agreed by the ALWG – REVISED 4.1.2(c): authority to decide parallel divisions moved from ALMC → AMC – REVISED 4.5.8: vacancy-filling priority reordered: Promotion now ranks ABOVE Reprieve (was below previously) – REVISED 4.5.10(b): promotion/relegation appeal window reduced from 7 to 5 calendar days
5	Fixtures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – REVISED 5.1.4: only University Clubs may request reschedules for fixtures outside term time (was "Clubs"); weekends immediately before/after term now explicitly count as part of term – REVISED 5.2.2: opposition must be informed before GMS is changed (was "as soon as GMS is changed") – NEW 5.2.3 trigger: agreement required to change details after the ALDS has locked the fixture (in addition to the 21-day window) – REVISED 5.2.4(c) / Appendix 3 Rule 5.1: Premier Division matches now played as four quarters unless the home team advises otherwise (direction reversed from 2025-26) – Minor wording updates elsewhere
6	Matchday Administration	– NEW 6.3.4: Clubs must supply "appropriate illumination certification" on request to use the floodlight late-start allowance
7	Player Eligibility – Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – NEW section 7.5 "Non-UK Passport Holders" must comply with the Visa Eligibility Grid referenced in Appendix 2 as EH Participation in Hockey for non-UK Passport Holders. This is a UK Government (HMRC) requirement – REMOVED: Old 7.5 "No Objection Certificate (NOC)" section has been deleted entirely – NOC regime no longer exists – REVISED 7.1(a): "New Player" test changed from "has not played for another club in a League match in England" to "has not previously registered on GMS" – NEW 7.2.3: explicit one-club-at-a-time rule for Adult League; players whose last game was outside England & Wales must satisfy both transfer and registration requirements – 7.2.4 Multiple Registrations: Expanded dual registration rules: player must nominate a Primary Club and a Secondary Club; Primary Club retains selection priority. Additional tightening: not permitted in a team's final 4 matches; a transfer is required to change Primary Club; ALMC approval does not last beyond end of season – NEW 7.4 fallback: a player who becomes ineligible for the female category mid-season may move to the Open/Men's category

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 7.3 Age Requirements: Players must be aged 13 or above on the day of the fixture unless ALMC has approved players aged 12 in Development Team matches only [wording tidied; substantive rule carried forward from 2025-26] – Registration deadline moved from 1st February to 23:59 on 31st January (7.6.2) – NEW 7.7.1: explicit ALMC arbitration role for transfer refusals (in addition to the existing appeal route)
8	Player Eligibility – Team Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – NEW 8.2.2(c): "Clubs are expected to pull players up from lower teams before requesting a double up" – NEW 8.3.2(d): second teams of clubs whose first teams play in the EHL Premier Division may play SXP-approved players in line with EHL Regulation 8.3.5 – NEW 8.3.4(c): data from the prior season may be used to determine eligibility in the first week of the season – REVISED section 8.4.1: When considering eligibility of a player to double up the player is considered to have been selected to play for the HIGHER team and is doubling up to play for the LOWER team – REVISED 8.4.2(b) reference point: "no more than two teams apart in the Club's hierarchy" is now "no more than two teams below the player's Regular Team" – REVISED Doubling-up conditions; note the checklist conditions – NEW 8.4.3(c): Regulation 8.3.6 (final-four 50% appearances rule) now applies to both teams in a doubling-up scenario – Maximum squad size when doubling up is reduced from 13 to 12 players (8.4.2(c)) – REVISED 8.5.1(a): "previous match day" changed to "previous Matchweek" – wider restriction on higher-team players doubling up for a lower team – NEW 8.5.1(c): regular outfield players explicitly allowed to play once as GK and once as outfield on the same match day (previously only stated for regular GKs). – Refer to the detailed Doubling Up Summary table (8.5.4)
9	Team Sheets, Scores & Match Sheets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – NEW: Match-sheet completion deadline is 20:00 on the day of the match for all grades – NEW: Team officials listed on the match sheet must be aged 16 or over (9.3.2) – REVISED 9.4.3: the 20:00 confirmation now covers goals AND cards, not just the score – NEW 9.4.5: injuries requiring hospital treatment must be reported by the match-sheet deadline
10	Dress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No substantive changes – A reminder that shirt numbers are mandatory
11	Umpires & Match Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – NEW: EHO (England Hockey Officiating) membership suspensions now explicitly recognised; a suspended EHO umpire may not officiate at any grade (11.4.2) – NEW 11.5.3: on EHO notification, the ALMC may temporarily or permanently suspend an umpire from League competition – REVISED 11.8.2: EHO added as a valid channel for umpire-conduct issues – REVISED 11.8.3: umpire report deadline moved from Wednesday to Monday after the match (and two days after a non-Saturday fixture) – Minimum accreditation requirements unchanged from 2025–26
12	Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – NEW: Team penalty for accumulating yellow cards (12.2.1(b)); penalties are listed in Appendix 5 – Player suspensions: Clubs must inform ALDS of pending suspensions and their duration (12.2.6) – 12.2.3 Red Cards: Note proper recording of a Minor Offences red card (i.e., two yellows plus one red to be recorded in GMS)

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13	Postponement or Abandonment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – REVISED 13.1: "Venue" added as a permissible reason for postponement – NEW default at 13.3.1(a): Postponed/abandoned matches must be played on the next League Reserve date unless a team already has a fixture then (stronger default than the previous "agreed within 10 days using a Reserve date if possible") – Rearrangement deadlines and other procedures largely unchanged
14	Failure to Honour a Fixture or Forfeiture of a Match	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – NEW: Failure to honour a fixture in the last four scheduled fixtures of the season: all deducted penalty points are doubled (Appendix 5) – Note the grade-by-grade penalty matrix in Appendix 5 (Grade 2, 3–4, 5) – NEW: Forfeiting team to notify ALDS, at the time of the forfeiture decision and no later than the scheduled time of the match (14.3) – NEW 14.2.3: "A team cannot elect not to continue the match" – REVISED: Forfeiting team to notify ALDS, at the time of the forfeiture decision and no later than the scheduled time of the match (14.3)
15	Breach of Regulations & Penalties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Penalty tariffs revised in Appendix 5 (see Appendix 5 entry below)
16	Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Grounds for appeal reorganised: 16.1.3 lists three grounds (error of fact, procedural error, unreasonable sanction) – NEW: Separate clause for new evidence (16.1.4): evidence that could not reasonably have been obtained earlier and may have caused a materially different decision – REVISED 16.3.2: Further-Appeal grounds changed from two grounds + "reasonable prospect of success" test to three standalone grounds (error of fact, procedural irregularity, manifestly unreasonable); the "reasonable prospect of success" filter has been dropped – Detailed procedures and timelines remain in Appendix 6 (note new 5-day Further-Appeal window – see Appendix 6) – Appeal deposit remains at £100

8. Player Eligibility – Team Selection

Element	2026–27 Position	Change Type & Impact
Aims (8.1)	Aims substantively unchanged; emphasis on avoiding "unselectable" players retained	Clarification only
Pull-up Expectation (8.2.2(c))	NEW: clubs expected to pull players up from lower teams before requesting a double up	New expectation on club selection practice
EHL Premier 2nd teams (8.3.2(d))	NEW: second teams of EHL Premier clubs may play SXP-approved players per EHL Reg 8.3.5	Clarification
Prior-Season Data (8.3.4(c))	NEW: prior-season data may be used to determine eligibility in Week 1	Resolves ambiguity at the start of a new season
Doubling-up Conditions (8.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Max squad size when doubling up reduced from 13 to 12 players (8.4.2(c)) – Per-player limit of two games per match-day – Reference point shifts to "two teams below player's Regular Team" (8.4.2(b)) – Final-four 50% rule now applies to BOTH teams (8.4.3(c)) – Conditions now presented as checklist items 8.4.3(a)–(d) 	Tighter squad cap; broader eligibility scope

Appendices

Appx #	Title	What changed & why it matters
1	League Titles & Divisions	(Unchanged)
2	England Hockey Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – NEW: Non-UK Visa Eligibility added "EH Participation in Hockey for non-UK Passport Holders", cross-referenced from Regulation 7.5 – Existing EH policy list updated for current framework
3	Variations to FIH Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Half-time interval of 5 minutes – Quarters format is the default for Premier Division unless varied by the home team (was optional in 2025–26). Four quarters of 17½ minutes – NEW Rule 8.2: "Time is not to be stopped after a goal is awarded"; this is a distinct new rule variance – No time stoppage for penalty corners – Suspension-timing clauses unchanged from 2025–26
4	Player Selection Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – REVISED: "General Principles" section added – Doubling-up conditions, GK rules and SXP triggers for each grade – Practical scenario examples expanded from the previous narrative-style guidance notes
5	Standard Penalties & Fines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Penalty tables revised – NEW: Team yellow-card penalties added (12.2.1(b)) – NEW 6.1.5: "Unauthorised personnel in the team's designated bench area" (warning → T1 fine → T1 + 1 point) – REVISED 7 (fielding ineligible player at Grade 5): now split into "administrative error" vs "negligent" with different tariffs – REVISED 7.7 (Transfer/registration breach): suspension now capped at max 3 games (or until registration corrected, whichever is longer) – REVISED 11 (Failure to supply umpire): now split into two offences – "failure to supply umpire or match official" and "failure to supply properly qualified umpire or competent & equipped match official"; Grade 3-4 penalties now include 1-point deductions at Stage 2 – NEW 12.2.6(b): "Failure to inform ALDS of length of player's suspension" (T1/T2/T3 escalator) – REVISED 14 (Failure to Honour cascade): result stands but same point deduction +1 additional point applied to the lower team – NEW 14.2.2: "Failure to complete a fixture" added as a distinct offence separate from Failure to Honour – Regulation 13 penalties: 13.2.2 (not informing ALDS by deadline) and 13.3.1 rearrangement penalties now included

Appx #	Title	What changed & why it matters
6	Appeal Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – REVISED 1.1.2 / 1.1.3: Appeal Notice now addressed to the ALC (Area League Chair), not the ALMC – REVISED 1.2.3: Deposit refund extended to AAP discretion – NEW 2.2.4: Respondent duty to attend oral hearings – REVISED 4.1.1: AAP outcomes restructured from 4 to 5, splitting "dismiss for failing eligibility criteria" from "dismiss and uphold" – REVISED 6.1.2: Further-Appeal Request window reduced from 14 days to 5 days – REVISED 6.2: Document bundle to EHCD can now be hard copy OR electronic (2025-26 required both) – REVISED 6.3.3: Further-Appeal deposit refund now includes EHAP Chair discretion – NEW 6.4.1(d): on granting permission, the EHAP Chair may stay all or part of the sanction pending the appeal – REVISED 6.6.1: EHAP outcomes restructured from 3 to 5 (mirrors 4.1.1) – NEW section 6.7 "Sanctions on Further Appeal": explicit power to impose, increase or decrease sanctions, and to order costs
7	Duties of Appointed Match Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Restructured with new sub-headings: 1 Appointment, 2.1 Before The Match, 2.2 During The Match, 2.3 After The Match – Updated cross-reference to Regulations 12.2.3 and 12.2.5 (permanent suspension rules)