



### **Guidance Notes – International Clearance**

International clearance is required for any player over the age of 10 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. **If the player is under the age of 18, they are subject to the provisions of FIFA Article 19 – please see footnote.** International clearance is applicable at all levels of the game.

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.

A player cannot themselves obtain international clearance; the club with which they intend to register in England must submit a completed international clearance request form to The FA, along with a copy of the player's passport (photo page) or national identity card. This assists the other Association in identifying the player in their records. Forms should be emailed to [registrations@thefa.com](mailto:registrations@thefa.com).

Once a request is submitted to us, we will send a formal request to the relevant National Association for the player's International Transfer Certificate (ITC). The 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 30 days in which to issue the ITC. If The FA receives no response after 30 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.

#### **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>.



### **International clearance for players under the age of 18**

FIFA Regulations state that international transfers are only permitted if the player is over the age of 18. The only exceptions to this rule available to amateur clubs are:

- (i) Where the player is moving to this country with his parents for reasons not linked to football, or
- (ii) Where both the player's residence and his new club are within 50km of a national border (applicable to players moving from Wales/Scotland only).

The same principle applies to any player who is not a national of England and who wishes to register for a club in England for the first time (i.e. he has not previously played football).

FIFA Article 19 states that FIFA's approval is required for all such requests, however this authority is delegated to The FA where the request involves an amateur player registering with a purely amateur club. In this case, The FA is responsible for ensuring that the regulations are being observed and therefore we require, as a minimum, the following information alongside submission by the registering club of an international clearance request form:

- The date on which the player moved to England
- Who the player is currently residing with in England (e.g. their parents)
- The reasons behind the move to England (e.g. to attend boarding school; due to parents' employment, etc)

Based on this information, if the player's circumstances comply with one of the exceptions listed under FIFA Regulations, we will then advise you of the further documentation that we require in order to process the application. This will usually include the following documents, depending on the exact circumstances of the player:

- Proof of employment [in England] of the player's parents
- Copy of the player's passport (photo page) and birth certificate
- Copies of the parents' passports (photo page)
- Current proof of residency, i.e. the player's address in England

If the player's circumstances do not comply with one of these exceptions (for example he is attending boarding school, participating in a student exchange programme or is otherwise in this country without his parents), then we are unable to process the player's clearance. We are able to request special dispensation from FIFA to enable the player to be registered here, although it should be noted that in our experience, such requests may be unsuccessful. To be able to submit a case to FIFA for a decision, we will require further documentation and this will be advised to the requesting club on receipt of an enquiry or application.

Due to the number of requests we receive and the amount of documentation we require from the registering club (including additional information which may be requested by FIFA following an application for special dispensation), clubs should be aware that this process can take time.

FIFA Article 19 is published on The FA website.