



NRLA OPERATIONAL RULES

1. DEFINITIONS

- “Appeals Committee”** means the panel consisting of a chairperson with appropriate experience in sports administration or legal qualifications and two side members with experience in the Game;
- “Board”** means the NRLA Board of Directors;
- “Case”** means any allegation that a person subject to the Operational Rules or a Member has been guilty of any act or omission which, if proved, may result in the imposition of a fine, penalty or other sanction under these Operational Rules;
- “Championship”** means the Nigeria Rugby League Association (NRLA) Championship, Collegiate Rugby League (CRL) Championship, Scholastic Rugby League (SRL) Championship or Women’s Rugby League (WRL) Championship;
- “Coach”** means a suitably qualified person acting in a coaching capacity;
- “Company”** Means NIGERIA RUGBY LEAGUE ASSOCIATION LTD (NRLA) 1 Mortimer Street, Birkenhead, CH41 5EU, Company number 11997815;
- “Competition”** means any competition recognized by the NRLA;
- “Competition Rules”** means the rules that govern the respective Competitions;
- “Constitution”** means the constitution adopted by the NRLA, amended from time to time;

“Disciplinary Case”	means a complaint by any person that a person subject to the Operational Rules or Member has been guilty of any act or omission which, if proved may result in the imposition of a fine, penalty or other sanction under these Operational Rules;
“Disciplinary Committee”	means the relevant disciplinary committee, in line with the Judiciary;
“Executive”	means the NRLA General Manager, any NRLA regional officer or an NRLA appointed Tournament Director;
“Judiciary”	means the framework and regulation detailed in the NRLA “Judiciary: sentencing guidelines & procedures”;
“Game”	means the game of rugby league;
“I.D. Cards”	means the official photo identification cards produced from the Registration Forms;
“Institution”	Means any school, university or college affiliated to NRLA and participating in a Competition;
“International”	means a match between the full representative squads of Members in accordance with the NRLA Match Sanctioning Protocols;
“Laws of the Game”	means the Laws of the Game as prescribed by the RLIF from time to time;
“NRLA”	means the Nigeria Rugby League Association, the governing body of the sport;
“Match”	means a match in a Competition; or any other rugby league match approved by the NRLA/RLIF/RLEF and played between teams associated with Members or Institutions subject to these Operational Rules;
"Match Officials"	means any of the following: (a) referee;

- (b) touch judge;
- (c) in-goal judge;
- (d) fourth official/reserve referee;
- (e) match commissioner;

“Match Official Director”	means the head Match Official for the NRLA, responsible for the development and performance of Match Officials and appointments in line with Competition Rules;
“Member”	means an association formally recognised as a Member in accordance with the Membership Policy;
“Membership Policy”	means the regulations governing the acquisition and retention of membership in the governing body as defined by the NRLA;
“Misconduct”	means misconduct as described in section 8 of these Operational Rules;
“Misconduct Panel”	means a panel consist of a chairperson with appropriate experience in sports administration or legal qualifications and two side members with experience in the Game. a panel convened by the NRLA comprising of three independent individuals appointed by the NRLA, or another suitable committee appointed by the NRLA;
“Nation”	means a nation affiliated to a Competition which is subject to RLIF Operational Rules;
“Offence”	means an act or omission in a Match which is a breach of the Laws of the Game, or any breach of these Operational Rules whether related to a match or not which is sufficient to give rise to a notice of charge against a Player or Person;
“Official”	a person who is elected or appointed to serve with either a Member, Institution, or Competition;
"Operational Rules"	means these Operational Rules as amended from time to time;

“Person Subject to the Operational Rules” (“Person”)	means any Member and / or Institution, or any Player, Official, Coach or other Volunteer serving in any capacity with a Member or Institution;
“Player”	means a person who has been registered as such with a Member or Institution or who has indicated that he/she wishes to be registered as such, including professional and amateur players;
“Professional Player”	A Tier one or two Player who is contracted to the NRLA;
“Registration Form”	means the official registration form produced by a Member or Institution for the registration of Players;
“Representative Match”	means a representative match as determined by the NRLA;
“RLEF”	means the Rugby League European Federation;
“RLIF”	means the Rugby League International Federation;
“Tournament Director”	means an individual or body responsible for the operation of any Competition or Match, appointed by the Executive, in most cases the General Manager unless delegated;
“Unacceptable Behaviour”	means any comments, threats, chanting, discrimination of member (direct or indirect), harassment, bullying, victimisation, or incitement to hatred or abuse or any other action which targets individuals or groups on the grounds of: age, colour, ethnic origin, disability (including physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual, mental illness or some chronic disease), gender identity, marital or civil partner status, political persuasion, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio economic background;
“Working Towards”	means a Coach has been accepted on the relevant course. A Coach may be considered as working towards a qualification for a period not exceeding two years;
“Volunteer”	means a person who carries out duties on a voluntary basis;

“Zero Tolerance” means the NRLA policy of not tolerating Unacceptable Behaviour of any type and imposing severe penalties with no exceptions.

2. MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP OBLIGATIONS

2.1 PURPOSE

2.1.1 The purpose of these rules shall be:

To ensure the moral and physical welfare and proper treatment of Players, and all participants within the appropriate boundaries of applicable laws;

To ensure the integrity and fairness of Competitions;

To promote the aims of the NRLA as set out in Article 2 of the NRLA Constitution.

2.1.2 These rules are to be interpreted and applied by reference to and in a manner that advances their purpose, as set out above, and when an issue arises that is not expressly provided for in these Operational Rules, the interpretation and application shall be consistent with the purpose of these rules.

A1:1 2.2 MEMBERS & INSTITUTIONS – ACCEPTANCE OF OPERATIONAL RULES

A1:2 2.2.1 All Members and Institutions governed by these Operational Rules are deemed, by their participation in a Competition, to be bound by these Operational Rules, the terms of any agreement entered into by the Tournament Director for a Competition with the NRLA, and the Laws of the Game, and accept the jurisdiction of the NRLA Executive, Tournament Director and any Judiciary.

A1:3 2.2.2 A copy of the Laws of the Game and the Operational Rules applicable to the Competition shall be sent to each of the intended participating Members by the relevant Tournament Director prior to that member's entry in such Competition being accepted.

2.2.3 Each Member, by becoming and remaining a Member, agrees to observe the RLIF's and Lebanon government Anti-Doping Rules, RLIF/RLEF Safeguarding Policy, Diversity and Equity Policy, Respect Policy and any other rules and policies that may from time to time be adopted by the NRLA through the Board and shall ensure that each of their members, employees, Officials, Volunteers, Players, Coaches and similar shall observe such rules and policies and shall make it a condition of employment or engagement or of participation in any rugby league competition that each such members, employees, Officials, Volunteers, Players, Coaches or similar shall observe such rules and policies.

2.3 APPLICABLE LAWS

A1:4 2.3.1 All Members and Institution which participate in any Relevant Competition or any Game under the jurisdiction of the NRLA, as organised by a Tournament Director or Executive, are required to act in accordance with all applicable laws. Each Member and Institution agrees that the NRLA Tournament Director or Executive shall be entitled to take any action and/or make such orders as it considers appropriate. To do otherwise would knowingly allow a Member and Institution to breach any applicable laws, even where such behaviour is not prohibited through a strict interpretation of these Operational Rules.

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2.4 PLAYERS, SPECTATORS AND OFFICIALS TO OBSERVE OPERATIONAL RULES

A1:6 2.4.1 Each Member and Institution agrees that all Players, Officials, Volunteers, Coaches and spectators are only allowed to take part in or attend Matches or be involved in the business of or the conduct of playing matters at any Member and Institution on condition that they are bound and observe the Operational Rules. Each Member and Institution agrees to ensure that these Operational Rules are enforced and observed by Players, Officials, Volunteers and spectators.

2.5 DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES TO TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR

2.5.1 The day to day running of the Competitions will be delegated to the relevant Tournament Directors. The Tournament Director will have the power to make decisions consistent with these Operational Rules. In the event of an incident falling outside of these rules the decision will be referred to the Executive.

2.5.2 At all times the NRLA will retain ultimate jurisdiction over the running of any relevant Competition and shall maintain the right to impose sanction upon any Member and Institution or Person at its own discretion.

2.6 AMENDMENTS

A1:7 2.6.1 Any amendments to these Operational Rules shall be proposed and discussed by the NRLA. The Executive will have the overall control to approve any changes before being presented to the Board.

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2.7 MINIMUM STANDARDS - GROUNDS/GROUND SAFETY

2.7.1 Each Member and Institution shall ensure that at all times its ground complies with any minimum requirements or entry criteria specified to play in a relevant Competition and in accordance with the Laws of the Game.

A1:9 2.7.2 Notwithstanding the provisions set out above, the NRLA shall have the power to make, any additional rules and regulations relating to the standard of grounds or any other matter whatsoever which can vary according to the Tier of competition of the Member and Institution at a particular time.

A1:10 2.7.3 Each Member and Institution is responsible for the behaviour of its own supporters, and for all persons purporting to be its supporters.

A1:11 2.7.4 Without prejudice to any other provision of these Operational Rules, the Member and Institution shall ensure that its ground and facilities comply with all regulations, statutes or any other rules which have the force of law in the country in which the Member and Institution plays its home Matches.

A1:12 2.7.5 Each Member and Institution shall comply with all relevant health & safety legislation and discharge any duty of care including but not limited to complying with and implementing any guidance notes and resources provided by the NRLA.

2.7.6 Every Member and Institution shall meet any other standards specified under the terms of their Competition.

2.8 FINANCIAL MATTERS

2.8.1 Members and Institution will be liable for any competition fees due to the NRLA or payable under the terms of their entry or participation criteria.

2.8.2 It is mandatory for all Members and Institution to ensure they have the relevant public liability and personal accident insurance in place. This provides cover for the Member and Institution, Players, Volunteers, Officials, Coaches and supports.

2.8.3 As per The Membership Policy and/or NRLA participation agreement, Members shall provide upon request, accounts or suitable financial records to the NRLA in the format specified from time to time.

2.9 RIGHTS, BROADCASTING & SPONSORSHIP

2.9.1 The Members agree that the NRLA shall have the right and power to enter into all forms of sponsorship, advertising, broadcasting and other commercial contracts relating directly to any

Competition. The Members and Institution agree to grant the NRLA and its partners reasonable access to their facilities in order to exercise such rights.

3. COMPETITION

3.1 ADMINISTRATION

- 3.1.1 The Tournament Directors shall be governed by the NRLA under the terms of these Operational Rules, and Competition rules and regulations.
- 3.1.2 The Tournament Directors will fix dates upon which Matches are to be played and deal with all matters connected with or arising out of the Matches.

3.2 START AND END OF COMPETITIONS

- 3.2.1 The NRLA will determine the date of commencement of the Competition and the date on which it shall cease.
- 3.2.2 The Tournament Directors will have responsibility for determining the programme of fixtures.

3.3 MATCHES

- 3.3.1 All Matches will be played under the Laws of the Game.
- 3.3.2 Matches will be played for the following durations:
 - Adult – 80 minutes played in two equal halves with an interval of ten minutes.
 - Under 18 - 70 minutes played in two equal halves with an interval of ten minutes.
 - Under 16 - 60 minutes played in two equal halves with an interval of ten minutes.
 - Under 14 - 50 minutes played in two equal halves with an interval of ten minutes.
 - Under 12 - 40 minutes played in two equal halves with an interval of ten minutes.
- 3.3.3 The Tournament Directors shall liaise with the NRLA Match Officials Director in order to appoint Match Officials.
- 3.3.4 Any Member or Institution failing to fulfil a Match on the scheduled date, for any reason which a Tournament Director or Executive considers unsatisfactory, shall be guilty of Misconduct.
- 3.3.5 In the event of the scores being level at the end of regular time, the Match shall be deemed a draw, unless otherwise specified in the Competition rules & regulations.

3.4 DISPUTES

- 3.4.1 All disputes relating to the venue, time and date of any Match or any other disputes relating to a Match shall be determined by a Tournament Director or Executive in its absolute discretion, unless otherwise provided for in these Operational Rules or Competition rules.

3.5 OBJECTIONS TO RESULTS

- 3.5.1 Where not covered by specific Competition rules a Member or Institution wishing to object to the result of a Match shall send an email to the Tournament Director or Executive and to the opposing Member within 48 hours of the end of the Match stating the full grounds on which the objection is made. Any finding that the opposing Member or Institution has been found guilty of Misconduct in relation to the Match shall not necessarily mean that any objection to the result shall be successful.
- 3.5.2 The Board or Judiciary will hear the objection and may decline to consider any matter not stated in respect of the above. For the avoidance of doubt, a Member or Institution shall not be entitled to object to a result on the grounds of a Match Official's decision(s).

3.6 PLAYING STRIP

- 3.6.1 All Members and Institution shall submit to the Tournament Director the colours of their playing strip and their alternative playing strip for the forthcoming Competition, by the date stated in the Competition rules.
- 3.6.2 In the event of a clash of colours the away team must wear an alternative strip, although both Members and Institution should seek mutual agreement prior to the Match.

3.7 BALLS

- 3.7.1 The balls to be used in Matches shall be submitted to and approved by the Match Official before the commencement of the Match and must be of the type specified by and comply with the requirements of the Competition and the Laws of the Game from time to time.

3.8 MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

- 3.8.1 Each Member and Institution shall endeavour to ensure that a registered and practicing qualified first aider, (holding such qualifications as the NRLA may direct from time to time), shall be present at every Match.
- 3.8.2 Such first aider shall make themselves known to the Match Official before the start of any Match and shall remain for a minimum of 15 minutes after the end of the Game and shall speak directly with a designated Official from both Members and Institution, to ensure that the correct reporting paperwork is completed.
- 3.8.3 For International Competition matches a doctor and ambulance must be present.

3.8.4 In the event of any injuries or accidents on the field of play, it is the Members' and Institutions' responsibility to complete and return any accident/injury report form to the NRLA within seven days of the said incident.

3.8.5 Each Member and Institution must record the names of the medical officials who attend each Match in such format as the NRLA/ Tournament Director shall require from time to time.

3.9 SUBMISSION OF FORMS

3.9.1 Each Member and Institution must submit information in such format as the Tournament Director or Executive shall reasonably direct from time to time.

3.9.2 It shall be the duty of the 4th official to complete and forward to the Tournament Director the score sheet, team sheet, dismissal reports and reports of any incidents that occur on the match day, (on or off the pitch), by such means as the NRLA shall direct from time to time by no later than 9.00 am on the first working day following the Match.

3.10 KIT & EQUIPMENT INSPECTIONS

3.10.1 Each Member and Institution shall make all of its Players available for kit and equipment checks before the Match and at any other time on match day as reasonably required by an appointed Match Official.

3.10.2 No Player shall wear any protective equipment, footwear or other garment in any Match, unless it has been approved in advance by the Match Officials.

3.11 LATE START

3.11.1 Where not covered by specific Competition rules each Member and Institution shall ensure that its team is ready to take to the field before the designated kick off time as and when directed by the Match Officials. The Member and Institution at fault for the late start of any Match may be guilty of Misconduct and may be punished by way of a fine or otherwise.

3.12 POST-MATCH REPORTS TO BE SENT TO THE NRLA

3.12.1 In addition to any reports due pursuant to other provisions of these Operational Rules, each Match Official shall ensure that they provide immediately to the Tournament Director a full and comprehensive report of any incident which occurs before, during or after any Match including, (but not by way of limitation):

- a) a breach of any of the Operational Rules;
- b) crowd misbehaviour;
- c) misbehaviour of a Person Subject to the Operational Rules;

3.12.2 Any other matter which may bring the Game into disrepute and / or which may be prejudicial to the interests of the Game.

3.13 COMPLIANCE WITH MEMBERSHIP POLICY

3.13.1 In accordance with the NRLA Membership Policy and/or participation agreement, all Matches must be properly recorded and stored by Members in an archive for three years. For the avoidance of doubt this includes all domestic competition matches.

3.13.2 Each Match should be recorded on an individual match protocol, which must include the names of the teams, the name / level of the competition, the date of the Match, the names (and shirt numbers) of registered players of both teams, the names of the respective coaches, the names of the match officials, the half-time score, result, all scorers (and missed attempts at goal), times of scorers and any disciplinary actions taken during the Match.

3.13.3 The match protocol should be signed by all match referees / 4th Official at the end of the Match and stored as a PDF document in the Member's and Institution archive.

3.13.4 A Match report, containing all the information in 3.13.2, as well as an optional commentary on the Match and photograph, should be uploaded in a designated section of a Member's, NRLA and Institution website and other social media and stored on those platforms in perpetuity.

4 INTERNATIONAL / REPRESENTATIVE PROTOCOLS

4.1 THE MEMBERS & INSTITUTION AGREE THAT:

4.1.1 All trans-national Matches between Nations which have been sanctioned in accordance with the RLIF Match Sanctioning Protocols, must be approved by the NRLA.

4.1.2 A Player will give priority to such Representative Matches over any other Match, including, but not by way of limitation, cup ties and league matches in their domestic league.

4.1.3 The RLIF's international eligibility rules govern all Matches between Nations' teams (of any type) and Competitions.

4.2 ELIGIBILITY

4.2.1 Only Members and Institutions' teams that have verified their relevant squads' eligibility and are representing a Member or Institution of the NRLA can participate in a Match.

4.2.2 Players eligibility must be verified prior to each Match. Any Player who has not yet established his or her eligibility is not permitted to play in a Match.

5. PLAYERS

5.1 BOUND BY OPERATIONAL RULES

5.1.1 A Player shall be bound by the Operational Rules upon being named by his Nation, Member or Institution in a squad at any level for any Match or Competition.

5.2 ADULT PLAYERS

5.2.1 A Player is eligible to play Open Age Rugby League on attaining the age of 16.

5.2.2 Any Player under the age of 18 requires a parent/guardian signature when playing in an Open Age match.

5.3 JUNIOR PLAYERS

5.3.1 Age groups are determined by a Player remaining within the relevant age bracket on 1 January of the year of the Competition. For the avoidance of doubt, and by example, to play in an U16 Competition in 2015, the earliest the Player's birthday can be is 1st January 1999.

5.3.2 Official age brackets will be determined by the NRLA.

5.3.3 Players must validate their age, provide proof - e.g. copy of birth certificate accompanied by a photo ID, or recognised passport. The proof of ID must be certified by the Coach and Tournament Director.

6 OFFICIALS

6.1 QUALIFICATIONS

6.1.1 Members and Institution shall only register relevant staff that have the appropriate qualifications as required by the NRLA from time to time.

6.1.2 It is the responsibility of the Member and Institution to ensure that staff have the appropriate qualifications and that those qualifications are up to date with NRLA.

6.1.3 Coaches of a member or Institution team at any level are required to have completed the NRLA Level 1 coaching qualification, or equivalent, or be Working Towards the NRLA Level 2 coaching qualification or registered to the RLEF CATO Portal.

6.2 OFFICIAL REGISTER

6.2.1 The NRLA shall maintain a register of Officials and will be entitled to impose a sanction if it reasonably believes that any Person subject to the Operational Rules has or would:

- a) Bring the Game into disrepute or adversely affect the integrity of any Competition;
- b) Allow a person to participate who is under a relevant suspension or ban imposed by the NRLA/Competition or another governing body of sport in any part of the world;

- c) Allow a person to work in a role without the appropriate qualifications or other requirements for that role as set out by the NRLA/Competition from time to time;
- d) Allow a person to work in a role where they may pose a danger to children and/or vulnerable adults.

6.2.2 Prior to reaching its decision, the NRLA will allow the person concerned to make written representations as to why their registration should be accepted and such representations will be considered in reaching the decision. The person concerned shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Executive to the Board in line with the Judiciary.

6.3 MATCH OFFICIALS BOUND BY THE NRLA OPERATIONAL RULES

6.3.1 Prior to the commencement of each Competition, the Match Official Director shall compile a list of Match Officials who are qualified to officiate in each of the Competitions according to the tier of the competition.

6.3.2 All Match Officials and anyone registered on the list shall be bound by the Operational Rules and agree to officiate at Matches in accordance with the Laws of the Game.

6.3.3 In any event, all Match Officials shall be examined as to their suitability and fitness to officiate in accordance with such standards as the NRLA may set out from time to time.

6.3.4 The NRLA will have the ultimate discretion to decide whether a Match Official is able to officiate in any match.

6.4 SPONSORSHIP/KIT

6.4.1 The NRLA shall have the exclusive right and power to enter into all forms of sponsorship, advertising and other commercial contracts relating to Match Officials, (in particular, those relating to their kit, flags and other equipment).

6.5 REPORTS & FORMS

6.5.1 A Match Official wishing to report a Player or other Person Subject to the Operational Rules for Misconduct shall do so in the format laid down by the Competition Rules from time to time. Such reports shall contain the full name and address, (if provided), of the Player or Person Subject to the Operational Rules and full details of the incident.

6.5.2 The Referee shall ensure that after each Match, all relevant forms and completed reports are made and sent to the Executive and relevant Tournament Director.

6.6 MATCH OFFICIALS' INTERESTS

- 6.6.1 A Match Official shall inform the Executive or Match Official Director in writing of any personal and/or commercial interest or connection he/she has or obtains with any Member or Institution. No Official shall have a right of appeal if his/her name has been removed from the said list.

6.7 ILLEGAL PAYMENTS

- 6.7.1 It shall be the duty of each Match Official to ensure that he/she does not receive any form of illegal payment, gift or any other form of inducement in relation to officiating at any match. All Match Officials must declare any offer of illegal payments, gift or other form of inducement to the Executive.

7. ON FIELD COMPLIANCE PROCEDURES

7.1 JURISDICTION

- 7.1.1 Any potential disciplinary offence by a Player (hereafter, or other Person subject to the Operational Rules) in a match involving NRLA, Members and Institutions which is not governed by specific Competition rules will be dealt with using the procedure below.

7.2 BURDEN AND STANDARD OF PROOF

- 7.2.1 The NRLA shall have the burden of establishing that Misconduct has occurred.
- 7.2.2 The standard of proof shall be whether the NRLA has established that Misconduct has occurred to the reasonable satisfaction of the hearing body bearing in mind the seriousness of the allegation which is being made. This standard of proof in all cases is greater than a mere balance of probability but less than proof beyond a reasonable doubt.
- 7.2.3 Where a Person Subject to the Operational Rules wishes to rebut an allegation or charge of Misconduct or establish specified facts or circumstances, the standard of proof shall be by a balance of probability

7.3 DISMISSALS & CITING

- 7.3.1 All players sent off from the field of play (red card) will be automatically, and ordinarily not longer than seven days from the day of the dismissal, referred to the NRLA Judiciary for review accompanied by all Match Officials reports and any accompanying evidence.
- 7.3.2 If a Member and Institution wishes to cite a Player or Person Subject to these Operational Rules, this must be indicated to the Executive or Tournament Director (or nominated representative) within 48-hours of the conclusion of the Match. The Executive or Tournament Director will then inform the Judiciary of the citation.

7.4 COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

- 7.4.1 The disciplinary committee shall be composed in line with the Judiciary.

7.4.2 The appeals panel shall in composed in line with the Judiciary.

7.5 COMMITTEE PRINCIPLES

7.5.1 The members of the NRLA Disciplinary Committees must:

- a) act in good faith;
- b) deal with cases consistently and fairly in accordance with standard procedures;
- c) deal with each case equitably compared with other cases;
- d) make the decision on evidence relevant to the issue;
- e) use standards which are reasonable and appropriate to the specific case;
- f) not allow extraneous considerations to affect the decision.

The Committees and panel will make any decision based on the Sentencing Guidelines in operation at the time and bearing in mind the principles of natural justice.

7.6 ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

7.6.1 The same order of proceedings shall apply to all Judiciary hearings unless stipulated by the chairperson.

7.6.2 The chairperson will determine the order of proceedings; however usually:

- a) The chairperson will read the charge aloud;
- b) The Person concerned or his representative will:
 - admit the Offence; or
 - deny the Offence
- c) The prosecuting party will present the case;
- d) The Person charged or their representative will be given the opportunity to respond to those submissions;
- e) The Person charged or their representative will present their case;
- f) The prosecuting party will be given the opportunity to respond to those submissions;
- g) The Person charged or their representative will be given the final word;
- h) If the Person charged denies the Offence the tribunal will consider whether the Offence was committed and only if the Committee find that the Person has committed an Offence will it then go on to consider the appropriate sanction. The Committee will consider all evidence available to them before making a decision;
- i) If the Person admits the Offence or if the Committee decides that an Offence was committed then the Person will have the opportunity to make submissions to the Committee in relation to the appropriate sanction. The Committee will then determine the appropriate sanction as set out in 7.8 Sanctions, above.

7.7 EVIDENCE

7.7.1 The Committees will consider all available evidence to them. This will usually include a Match Official's written report, which the Match Official must ensure is completed and forwarded to the NRLA within 48-hrs of the end of the match, and any evidence supplied by the Person facing a charge. Recordings of other incidents in the match or other matches will not be admitted as evidence.

7.7.2 The committees will consider DVD evidence where possible and may open and adjourn a case if DVD evidence is not available at the time. The Disciplinary Committees will not usually hear verbal evidence from witnesses, but the Appeals Panel may.

7.8 ADJUDICATIONS

7.8.1 The chairperson of the Disciplinary Committee will usually deliver the sentence in writing to the Person and their parent organisation within 24-hours of the Committee reaching its verdict.

7.8.2 The chairperson of the Appeals Panel will usually read the tribunal's adjudication at the conclusion of the meeting and a written version will be available within 5 days.

7.8.3 In the case of both Disciplinary Committee and Appeals Panel hearings, the adjudication will:

- a) Include all aggravating and/or mitigating factors taken into consideration;
- b) Explain any deviation from the Sentencing Guidelines;
- c) Give clear and full reasons for the decision.

7.8.4 The Player charged has no right of access to the deliberations of the Disciplinary Committee or Appeals Panel.

8 MISCONDUCT

8.1 BEHAVIOUR CONSIDERED MISCONDUCT

8.1.1 All players, coaches and officials acknowledge that their behaviour shall at all times be of the highest standard. All Members and Institutions shall ensure that their Players, Coaches, Volunteers and Officials are bound by the provisions of these Operational Rules or any relevant Competition Rules relating to Misconduct.

8.1.2 A Person Subject to the Operational Rules may be guilty of Misconduct if he/she:

- (a) commits a serious or persistent breach of these Operational Rules;
- (b) without limiting para (a) above, commits a breach of any of the rules listed at 8.6 below;
- (c) engages in conduct which is prejudicial to the interests of the NRLA or the Game or the RLIF. (This includes negatives comments in the media);
- (d) is convicted of a criminal offence by any court of competent jurisdiction;
- (e) fails, to comply with any reasonable decision of the Tournament Director, Disciplinary Committee, or Appeals Panel or Misconduct Panel.

8.2 PROCEEDINGS FOR BREACH

- 8.2.1 In any case where a Member and/or Institution, Player or Official has failed to comply with a provision of these Operational Rules, proceedings may be taken against that team, player or official for that failure, and a penalty imposed.
- 8.2.2 If any person reasonably believes that any player or official is guilty of Misconduct he or she must immediately inform the Executive in writing setting out all relevant details of the alleged misconduct.
- 8.2.3 Upon becoming aware of a potential act of Misconduct the NRLA may investigate or appoint someone to investigate any allegation of any breach. The NRLA will investigate or have the power to appoint investigators to investigate all allegations of Misconduct and decide whether there is a case to answer. If the Executive believes there is a case to answer the case will be referred to a Misconduct Panel.

8.3 BURDEN AND STANDARD OF PROOF

- 8.3.1 The NRLA shall have the burden of establishing that Misconduct has occurred.
- 8.3.2 The standard of proof shall be whether the NRLA has established that Misconduct has occurred to the reasonable satisfaction of the hearing body bearing in mind the seriousness of the allegation which is being made. This standard of proof in all cases is greater than a mere balance of probability but less than proof beyond a reasonable doubt.
- 8.3.3 Where a Person Subject to the Operational Rules wishes to rebut an allegation or charge of Misconduct or establish specified facts or circumstances, the standard of proof shall be by a balance of probability.

8.4 MISCONDUCT PANEL

- 8.4.1 The Misconduct Panel will be appointed by the NRLA and will consist of a chairperson with appropriate experience in sports administration or legal qualifications and two side members with experience in the Game.
- 8.4.2 The NRLA shall be entitled to appoint a representative to present the case on its behalf. In every case, the NRLA (or its appointed representative) bears the onus of proof on the balance of probabilities.
- 8.4.3 In every case, it shall be the Misconduct Panel's task to decide every question of law, evidence and / or procedure. The chairperson shall in his/her absolute discretion give such instructions or directions as he/she thinks fit to the Misconduct Panel as to matters of law, evidence and /

or procedure. The chairperson may give whatever directions and make all such orders as he/she in his/her absolute discretion deems fit for the conduct, expedition and resolution of matters heard by the Misconduct Panel.

8.5 HEARING

8.5.1 The hearing shall take place in accordance with such procedures that the chairperson shall think fit but can replicate the order of proceedings described in section 7.6.2. However, any person appearing before the Panel may be accompanied by a solicitor or by such other person as he/she may require.

8.5.2 The Misconduct Panel shall decide whether the case is proven and if so may impose a penalty which may involve a caution and/or fine and/or costs of a Player, Official and/or team or the suspension or expulsion of a Player, Official or Member and Institution.

8.5.3 Where the penalty imposed on a Player or Official includes a fine and/or costs these shall be paid by the Member and Institution of that Player or Official.

8.6 APPEALS

8.6.1 Any Person, Member and/or Institution (or affiliated team) who is found guilty by the Misconduct Panel shall have the right of appeal. Such appeal is to be made in writing and lodged with the Executive within 48 hours of the decision of the Panel. The filing of an appeal shall not operate to stay the original decision of the original Misconduct Panel and should include the grounds for appeal:

- a) finding of guilt,
- b) severity of sanction;
- c) both.

8.6.2 Notice of appeal should be accompanied by a deposit of fifty Naira (\$50). This deposit will ordinarily be forfeited if the appeal is dismissed, however at its discretion the Appeals Panel may return the deposit even if the appeal is dismissed.

8.6.3 An Appeals Committee hearing is not a de novo hearing and shall hear and determine appeals by way of a review and will admit only new evidence or witnesses which were not available at the time of the first hearing.

8.7 ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS AND COMPOSITION

8.7.1 The Appeals Panel will be appointed by the NRLA and will consist of a chairperson with appropriate experience in sports administration or legal qualifications and two side members with experience in the Game.

8.7.2 No individual who sat on the Misconduct Panel that initially considered the Case shall be entitled to sit on the Appeals Panel.

8.7.3 On the hearing of an appeal, the Appeals Panel may:

- a) affirm the determination of the Misconduct Panel;
- b) set aside the determination of the Misconduct Panel;
- c) vary the determination of the Misconduct Panel.

8.7.4 Any decision of the Appeals Panel shall be final and conclusive.

8.8 MISCONDUCT OFFENCES

8.8.1 Offences considered Misconduct include but are not limited to:

(a) **Inducements**

It shall be an offence for any Person subject to the Operational Rules to offer or receive a bonus or any form of inducement to or from any person whether directly or indirectly and by whatever means to win, lose or draw a match or alter or influence their decision in a match.

(b) **Betting**

All Persons subject to the Operational Rules must comply with the Betting and Related Activity Code of Conduct. This includes, but is not limited to placing, accepting or laying bets or providing or misusing privileged information, or do any other act or thing which is calculated to or does assist any other person involved in any of the foregoing.

(c) **Criticism of Match Officials**

It shall be an offence for any Person subject to the Operational Rules to publish or cause publish (or give any interview to the media by whatsoever medium) which contains criticism of the manner in which a Match Official or Tournament Director has controlled a Match or Competition.

(d) **Unacceptable Behaviour**

It shall be an offence for any Person subject to the Operational Rules to engage in discrimination on the grounds of age, ethnic origin, gender, special needs, including learning and physical disabilities, class or social Background, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, colour or political persuasion (Unacceptable Behaviour). Each Member and Institution shall use its best endeavours to procure that its Players, Coaches, Officials, Volunteers and Supporters do not engage in Unacceptable Behaviour.

(e) Gestures to Spectators

It shall be an offence for any Person subject to the Operational Rules to make any gesture to the crowd that may be considered obscene or alternatively may be considered likely to incite the crowd to disorder.

(f) Foul Language

It shall be an offence for any Person subject to the Operational Rules to subject any official of the NRLA or another Member and/or Institution, spectator, member of the public, staff at hotel, ground, etc to foul and/or abusive language.

(g) Unruly Behaviour

It shall be an offence for any Person subject to the Operational Rules to behave in an unruly manner in any public place which for the avoidance of doubt shall include bars, hotels, airports, flights to and from the Tournament, team coaches, tunnel and dressing room areas.

(h) Conduct Prejudicial to the Interest of the NRLA or the Game

It shall be an offence for any Person Subject to the Operational Rules to behave in a manner which is prejudicial to the interests of the NRLA or the Game.

(i) Safety

It shall be an offence for any Person Subject to the Operational Rules to fail to comply with any instruction of the ground safety officer, Police Commander or their lawful representative at any venue.

(j) Spectators

Each Member and Institution shall be responsible for using its best endeavours to ensure that all its supporters attending any match or any official event organised as part of or in relation to the Tournament adhere to these Operational Rules including at matches and post-match events, in or around the place of residence of participating Members or Institution, and on any transport organised by the Tournament Officials. This includes using best endeavours to ensure that spectators do not use foul and abusive language or threatening gestures towards players or members of team management, match officials, tournament officials and other supporters.

8.8.2 It shall be an offence for any Member to fail to comply with the above.

