

Irish Rugby Football Union

Referee Evaluation Guidelines

Evaluation Objectives

The referee being evaluated will typically be a Level 2 referee with development potential, or a Level 3 or 4 referee. With that in mind the objectives of referee evaluation are;

- To support the referee.
- To judge and quantify the performance of the referee.
- To assist and participate in the education and development of the referee.
- To facilitate selection and grading.

Evaluator Requirements

The Evaluator should be competent in the following four areas:

Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Strong law knowledge.▪ Up to date on current law applications and rulings.▪ Up to date on IRFU referee coaching philosophy.▪ Clear understanding of the concept of materiality.▪ Ability to utilise the IRFU educational platform, Gainline.
Tactical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Strong understanding of the game and what players are trying to achieve.
Observational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ability to form a valued judgement on the performance of the referee in each key area of the game.
Developmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ability to assist and advise the referee on solutions to areas that need improvement.

Evaluation Form

The evaluation form is intended to be user-friendly and time efficient to complete. It is designed to strike a balance between subjective and objective observations. Each evaluation to be completed on Gainline.

Scoring

The scoring component is very important as it:

1. Shows the positive areas of the referee's performance.
2. Highlights the areas that may need improvement.
3. Guides the Evaluator as to the areas which require development inputs.
4. Assists in the grading of the referee.

The evaluation form covers almost all aspects of the game and allows for a score to be provided in each section.

Individual Game Areas

The Evaluator will consider each of the individual game areas and reach a judgment based on these guidelines:

Evaluator Judgment	Guidelines Per Game Area
Excellent	Highly competent performance ensuring excellent outcomes and significant change in player behaviour.
Very Good	Competent performance ensuring very good outcomes and some change in player behaviour.
Good	Facilitated as required with some room for improvement.
Fair	Below average performance. Improvement required.
Poor	Poor performance with a negative impact identified. Significant improvement required.

IMPORTANT - The Evaluator should factor in the level of difficulty/challenge of the match when deciding how the referee performed in a particular area. This is of particular relevance in the contact areas of tackle/ruck, scrum, maul and lineout.

Scoring – Overall

There are eight areas of the game to be evaluated. The score is reached in an individual game area based on an average of marks achieved within the components of that area. The overall match score is calculated by adding the marks achieved in each area.

Some areas have been given a stronger weighting, reflecting the importance of that area to the overall management of the match. The weightings are as follows:

Tackle/Ruck – 20%		Scrum - 15%		Control – 15%	
Maul – 10%	Touch/Lineout – 10%	Advantage – 10%	Communication – 10%	General Play – 10%	

Evaluators should consider ‘good’ as the default mark in each individual game area, working from there based on observations of the refereeing performance. Where the referee is challenged in an area and makes an outstanding or strong contribution, the mark should increase to very good or excellent accordingly. Where the referee made a satisfactory contribution, the mark should remain at good, and where the referee did not reach the required standard a mark of fair or poor should be awarded.

In each area of the game the Evaluator will have the option of briefly explaining why the referee was given a particular score in that area. This can be entered in the feedback section in that area. It is not necessary to enter comments in every section, especially when the mark remains at good. Where an Evaluator decides to give a mark of excellent, fair or poor, a comment should be entered to explain the reasons for this.

Irish Rugby Football Union

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

www.irishrugby.com



Statistics & Timings

The evaluator is encouraged to separately record key statistics (scrums, penalty count etc.) and timings of significant events. These can be noted in the relevant feedback section where appropriate.

General Feedback

It is essential that the General Feedback section includes the required detail in the format prescribed below. This must be entered before any further comments on referee performance or development points.

First Line: Level – Competition – Team A (Score) v Team B (Score)

Example: Senior – AIL Division 1A – Lansdowne (18) v Garryowen (18)

Second Line: Venue and Date

Example: Aviva Stadium, 1/9/2020

Third Line: Evaluator Name

Example: John Evaluator

Fourth Line: Level of Challenge

Example: Challenge – Medium

Fifth Line: Referee Fitness

Example: Fitness – Very Good

Sixth Line: Touch Judges (when appointed by Assoc./Soc.)

Example: Touch Judges – Mary Mac and Joe Bloggs

How this will look when the evaluation is complete and published:

Senior – AIL Division 1A – Lansdowne (18) v Garryowen (18)

Aviva Stadium, 1/9/2020

Evaluator (John Evaluator)

Challenge – Medium

Fitness – Very Good

Touch Judges – Mary Mac and Joe Bloggs

Challenge/Difficulty

- The options to choose from are Low, Medium or High. The evaluator can also opt for mid-range descriptor e.g. Low to Medium.
- High - Represents an extremely challenging and intense encounter that is very difficult to referee.
- Medium – Represents a match which was intermittently challenging to referee.
- Low - Represents an extremely relaxed and laid-back game that did not provide any significant challenge to the referee.

Irish Rugby Football Union

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

www.irishrugby.com



Fitness

To be included in the General Feedback section. The options here are; Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor. Excellence in this area comprises;

- Keeping up with play at all times.
- Being fast to breakdown.
- Demonstrating good speed off the mark.
- High work-rate when required.
- Mentally alert throughout.

Other Information to be included in the General Feedback section.

Brief Description of Game – 80 Words or Less

The description of the game can include competitive nature, intensity, crowd pressure, skill levels, conditions, scoring patterns and other relevant happenings in the game.

Brief Description of Referee Performance – 80 Words or Less

Note the strengths and weaknesses of the referee performance in the context of how challenging the game was to referee.

Development Points – 120 Words or Less

Having reviewed the scoring section, the Evaluator will identify areas to provide development advice. The messages should be positive and aimed at future improvement rather than over-emphasising failings in the game.

- Points noted should be discussed with the referee in the post-match debrief.
- Written points should be brief and concise.
- Three main points are usually enough to highlight areas to work on for the referee.
- Some relevant secondary points may be noted.
- Important relevant points that are not covered in the scoring section can also be noted.

Positioning

A referee may end up out of position from time to time due to the unstructured nature of the game and unorthodox decision making of players. Therefore, if a positioning miscalculation occurs but is isolated with no impact on play the evaluator should avoid referencing.

Comments on positioning should only be noted if:

- There is an obvious, and consistent problematic trend throughout the game.
- There is a significant error caused by the referee being poorly positioned.

Comments and solutions given must fall within the IRFU Referee Positioning Guidelines.

Irish Rugby Football Union

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

www.irishrugby.com



Key Concept – Materiality

Evaluators will be continually making judgements throughout their observation regarding the materiality of offences. Infringements which have an impact on the referee's ability to control the match, deny a fair contest for possession, illegally slow down play or illegally deny a team the space to which they are entitled must be sanctioned. Materiality is not relevant where foul play is concerned.

What We Want to Achieve as Referees

CONTROL

COMMUNICATION

CONTEST FOR POSSESSION

QUICK BALL

SPACE

Irish Rugby Football Union

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

www.irishrugby.com



Key Areas of the Game

Tackle Ruck

The referee should facilitate speed of play and space for the attack, while ensuring the defending team can fairly contest should they choose to.

To be effective the referee must:

- Have a clear understanding of the player requirements in each key area of the breakdown.
- Only look to sanction material offences.

Key Area	Key Requirements
Tackler	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Release tackled player and/or ball.▪ Move/roll away without slowing ball presentation or obstructing arriving players.▪ Must get up before playing the ball and then can only play from his/her side of the tackle.
Tackler Assist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Releases ball carrier and/or ball immediately on completion of tackle.▪ Must enter through gate to contest for the ball.
Arriving Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Must enter on feet – cannot dive on players already on the ground.▪ “Jackler” – must be on feet and cannot put hands or arms on the ground to support their weight, gaining an advantage in the contest for possession.▪ “Jackler” must be making a genuine attempt to gain possession of the ball, not just preventing release.▪ Must enter through the gate.▪ Must not intentionally prevent the tackler from rolling away.▪ Cannot tackle or obstruct non-participants.▪ Cannot tackle player in scrum half position unless that player is in possession of the ball.
Tackled Player (Ball Carrier)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Make the ball available for play.▪ Cannot get back up without releasing the ball.▪ May make one dynamic movement post-tackle.▪ Must not crawl or roll, nor trap the ball under their body, to prevent a fair contest for possession.
Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Non – participants must retire to and remain in an onside position until the tackle or ruck ends.

Irish Rugby Football Union

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

www.irishrugby.com



Maul

The referee needs to be aware that there are generally two types of maul:

1. Mauls set up by the team in possession usually at a lineout or when receiving a restart.
2. Mauls set up by the defending team where they endeavor to hold up the ball carrier to form a maul with the aim of winning a turnover

Key Area	Key Requirements
Formation/Obstruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Team in possession do not obstruct access to the ball carrier.▪ The referee verbally identifies when a maul is formed.
Player Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Team in possession must join at the back of the maul.▪ Defending team join the maul in a legal manner.▪ Players can only come through the middle of the maul.
Collapses and Turnovers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Defending team must not collapse the maul.▪ Ball carrier may go to ground to make the ball available.▪ Scrum should be correctly awarded at unplayable situations.
Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Non – participants must retire to and remain in an onside position until the maul ends.

Touch and Lineout

Key Area	Key Requirements
Awards & Quick Throw	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Referee is alert to the possibility of a quick throw.▪ Facilitates quick throws when appropriate.▪ Quick throw correctly judged and managed.▪ Lineout awarded to the correct team.
Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Gap established and maintained.▪ All required participants are present and in the correct place.▪ Ball is thrown in without delay.▪ Crooked throws are detected and sanctioned.
Post-Throw Offences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Non-material technical offences to be managed.▪ Material offences to be sanctioned.▪ Foul play is of highest priority.

Irish Rugby Football Union

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

www.irishrugby.com



Space

- All players (participants and non-participants) to remain onside as per Laws of the Game.

Scrum

The referee should have a clear plan to achieve a square and steady scrum pre-feed and ensure post-feed player actions are within the laws of the game.

The referee needs to be aware of the following to be successful:

- Whose put in? (Non-putting in team more likely to cause problems).
- Context and position of scrum.
- Outcomes and problems in previous scrums.
- Appropriate sanction and escalation is required to achieve a change in player behaviour.

Key Area	Key Requirements
Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Gap is ear to ear – no pre-engage and not too far apart.▪ Front rows stable and balanced throughout.▪ Correct binds.▪ Front row players are straight.▪ Number 8 bound into scrum.▪ Timing of Crouch-Bind-Set is appropriate.▪ Must ensure stability at all times..
Throw-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Credible legal feed.▪ No delay in put in.▪ Hooker of putting-in team must strike for the ball.
Post Throw-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Straight Push.▪ Players maintain a legal bind.▪ No downward pressure.▪ No driving upwards .▪ Correctly applies Under 19 variations.
Space	Players must remain onside for the duration of the scrum <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Scrum Halves▪ Back Rows▪ Non-participants

Irish Rugby Football Union

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

www.irishrugby.com



IRFU

Advantage

Advantage is an area where the referee can demonstrate a keen understanding of the context of the game and what players and teams are trying to achieve.

Key Area	Key Requirements
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Appropriately played (scrum v penalty).▪ Recognise when it is not appropriate to explore advantage.▪ Aware of the context and position of play.▪ Non-offending team not put under pressure.▪ Only played if safe to do so (not at a serious injury or collapsed/ disintegrated scrum).▪ Not at foul play unless clear opportunity to gain a significant advantage.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Signals & Verbal – clear and consistent

General Play

Knock Ons & Forward Passes

If referees struggle to make accurate judgements in this area it is often a sign that they have poor running lines and/or concentration levels, or fitness is not of the required standard.

Quick Taps

The referee must remain alert to facilitate quick taps. They should only be stopped:

- If taken incorrectly.
- When issuing a card.
- For safety reasons.
- At a collapsed scrum (domestic ruling in Ireland).

Kicks in Open Play

For kicks in open play the referee should perform an inside scan to assist in judging offside.

Key Area	Key requirements
Knock On & Forward Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Clear and obvious only.▪ No marginal decisions.
Restarts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 22m drop-outs and half-way line kick-offs correctly taken
Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Players in front of the kicker appropriately managed and/or

Irish Rugby Football Union

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

www.irishrugby.com



	<p>sanctioned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪
Quick Taps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Referee must be alert to facilitate. ▪ Correctly taken on or behind the mark. ▪ Cannot be taken at a collapsed scrum or if an injury near play appears serious.

Control

Key Area	Key Requirements
Foul Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Referee alert to flashpoints. ▪ Foul play detected. ▪ Foul play correctly sanctioned in line with IRFU guidelines. ▪ Foul play situations managed and handled calmly and correctly. ▪ Flag input from Touch Judge handled correctly. ▪ Match official abuse by players and management correctly sanctioned.
Warnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Warnings issued when required. ▪ The delivery is calm, concise and clear.
Escalation and Cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yellow and Red cards issued appropriately (post-warnings) or when individual offences merit that level of sanction. ▪ Delivered calmly and clearly.
Safety & Concussion Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Referee should stop play if he/she is aware of an injury close to play. ▪ Concussion protocols and guidelines are correctly followed. ▪ Referee blows whistle immediately at collapsed scrum. ▪ General awareness that player safety and welfare is the referee's number one priority.

Communication

Key Area	Key Requirements
Primary Signals & Whistle Tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whistle tone reflects the offence and situation. ▪ Primary signals are immediate, clear and decisive.
Secondary Signals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivered accurately, clearly and calmly for every offence (unless quick tap). ▪ Should be accompanied with a concise verbal explanation.
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective use of downtime. ▪ Polite and respectful when dealing with players. ▪ Strong and firm when required. ▪ Effective use of voice in live play when

Irish Rugby Football Union

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

www.irishrugby.com



	possible/appropriate.
Player Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Polite and respectful when dealing with players. ▪ Strong and firm when required. ▪ Identifies the key players and develops appropriate rapport with them.

Match Day

Pre-Match

- Aim to arrive in enough time to introduce yourself to the referee and get comfortably set up.
- You must focus only on this game. Avoid discussing previous performances of the referee or any of the teams involved. Do not pre-empt or speculate on anything that you think may occur in the game.
- Discussion around what the referee's main objectives for this match is permitted, but this should be on the instigation of the referee, not the evaluator.

During the Game

- Avoid distractions.
- Avoid discussing the referee's performance with spectators and coaches.
- Avoid speaking to the referee at half time
- If the referee approaches you at half time avoid giving advice or feedback.

Post-Match

- Agree (if not already done) where the debrief should take place. It should be in an area that is discrete and away from distractions.
- The discussion must be constructive with the aim of helping the referee to develop.
- The debrief should take no longer than 15 minutes.
- Touch Judges may be included in the debrief when necessary.
- The evaluator may also provide separate feedback to the touch judges if required.
- Occasionally a referee may be unwilling to participate in constructive dialogue. The evaluator should not prolong the discussion in these circumstances.

Touch Judges – Domestic Rugby

The IRFU, either directly or indirectly through referee associations/society, will appoint touch

Irish Rugby Football Union

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

www.irishrugby.com



judges (not assistant referees) to domestic rugby matches in Ireland. The primary duties of the touch judges are foul play, touch (incl. touch in goal) and kicks at goal. They may assist in some secondary duties such as clear and obvious forward passes where the referee was unsighted or the grounding in in-goal. The referee must not seek, nor act, on any marginal information given by a touch judge such as marginal forward passes or knock-ons. You should note any examples of poor practice in this regard in the general feedback section.

Irish Rugby Football Union

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | **F** +353 01 6473801

www.irishrugby.com   

