

Guidance for Member Associations: Eligibility for Representative Football

ESFA regulations

1. Players must be in full time education at a DfE registered institution to be eligible to represent their District, County or Country.
2. A player shall be eligible for selection for the County Schools' FA in which they attend school.
3. A player shall be eligible for selection for the District Schools' FA in which they attend school.

To support members to determine eligibility for selection post-16, where the education sector is more complex, has been prepared and can be found in the section titled **U18 GUIDANCE**.

ESFA policy guidance:

4. Those who play for an Academy or RTC shall be eligible for selection nationally. Member County and District Associations have the discretion to determine whether such players are eligible for County or District selection.
5. For those receiving attending a Pupil Referral Unit, eligibility to play for a District or County shall be determined by the location of the school/unit in which they are primarily registered, unless the pupil has been prohibited from playing football as part of the terms of his/her exclusion, in which case such pupils would not be eligible for selection. PRU-educated pupils able to play for their District/County Association are eligible for national selection.
6. Those who are home educated shall be eligible to play for the District/County in which they reside, unless they are registered with a school for exams, in which case the school's locality shall define eligibility. Players eligible to play for their County are eligible for national selection.

Members are reminded that eligibility to play international football is governed by FIFA and as such, eligibility is defined by the calendar year of the player's birth: those eligible should be U15/U18 on 1st January in the **calendar year** in which the competitive fixtures take place.

UNDER 18 GUIDANCE

The ESFA recognises that the post-16 market is a complex and changing one, with presumption 6th forms, academisation, further education mergers, sixth form closures and the emergence of "private providers" operating either with government support (e.g. for apprenticeships) or on a purely commercial basis, making the market a tricky one to support.

This guidance is therefore provided to aid Associations to aid their determination of eligibility of individual organisations and players to participate in ESFA activities. Some of this guidance is a clarification of existing practice, and some is newly defined in the face of the changing sector. Please read these carefully when planning for next season and build in the following checks before entering players/institutions into ESFA activities.

Overarching Eligibility Criteria

These definitions apply to the ESFA's national cup competitions and to U18 representative football: they do **not** apply to the ESFA' new U18s Super League – watch this space for details!

What is full time education?	At least 15 hours per week, on average, for the full academic year
What is an eligible institution?	An institution with a Department for Education number
What is an eligible player?	On a full time, programme in an eligible institution

Eligibility for National Competitions

In all but the new U18 Super League, entrants into national competitions must comply with the overarching eligibility criteria. Please also remember that individual national competitions have additional eligibility criteria laid down in the Association's Handbook.

Eligibility for Representative Football

The eligibility for representative football at national level is as per the definition laid out above. However, it is recognised that geographic boundaries apply for district and county representative football, and that mergers in the post-16 sector make this difficult to track. For clarity, the following guidance shall apply:

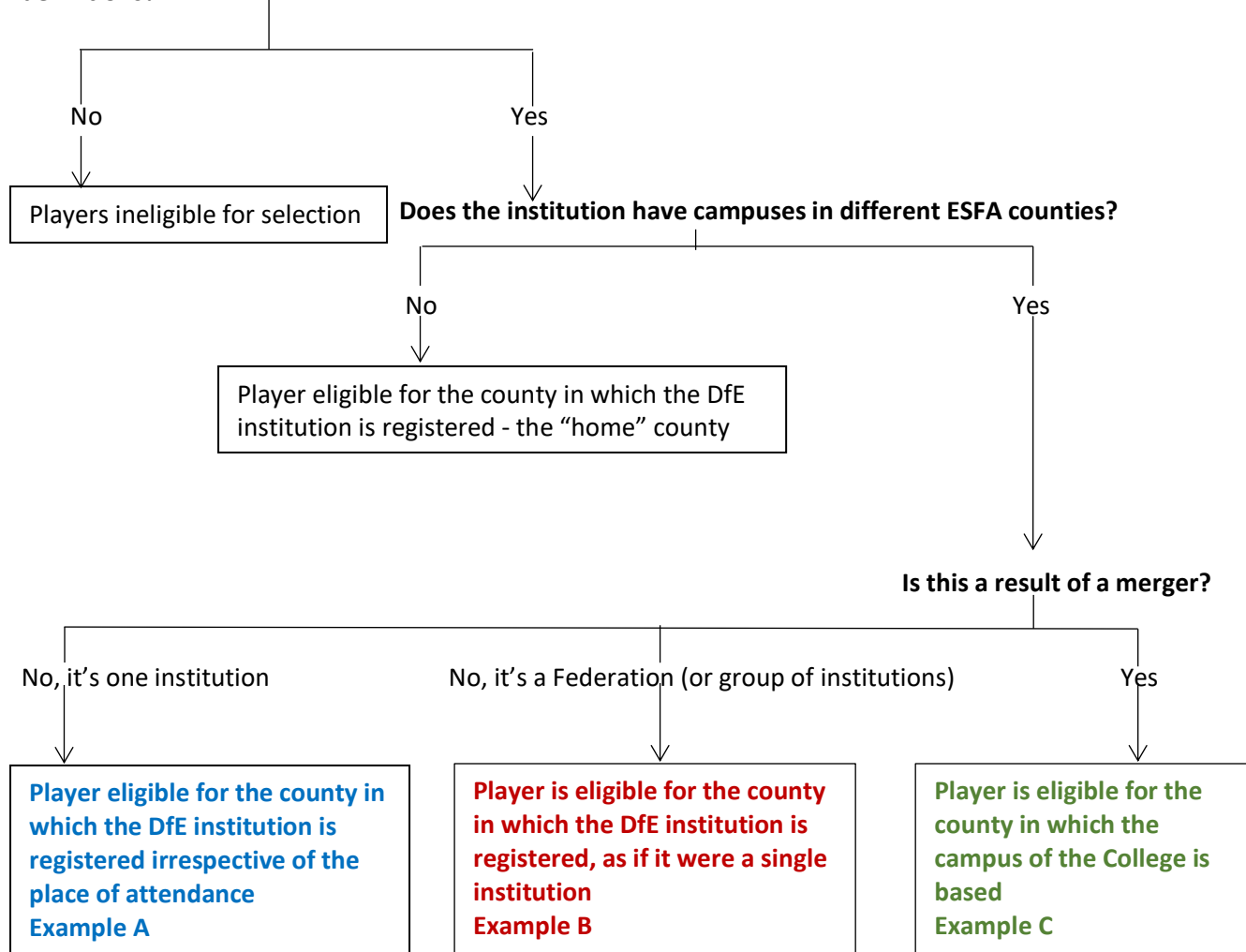
- Where a college crosses a boundary (e.g. with more than one campus) but is not the result of merger, then the location of the DfE registered campus shall determine eligibility for representative football
- Where a college crosses a boundary as a result of a merger, then eligibility to play shall be determined by geographic location of the campus attended

See below for the checking process and for worked examples plus FAQs.

Members are reminded that eligibility to play international football is governed by FIFA and as such, eligibility is defined by the calendar year of the player's birth: those eligible should be U15/U18 on 1st January in the **calendar year** in which the competitive fixtures take place. The overarching eligibility criteria outlined above continue to apply to the international teams.

Eligibility for Representative Football

Does the institution have a DfE number and does the trialist follow a full-time programme, as per overarching definitions?



EXAMPLE A

College A (Essex) is not a merged College. It has a single DfE number but due to space constraints, use an off-site football facility to its full-time sport programme. This off-site venue is in a different county (Inner London) to the main campus where the college has its registered address. Students at this College would be eligible to play for Essex, not Inner London

EXAMPLE B

City College Group is a large Federation (group of individual institutions) which includes private training providers and Colleges, some at a significant distance from the originating College. Each organisation within the group retains its own DfE number.

Those in full time education would be eligible to represent the county in which their DfE institution is registered. Those following apprenticeship programmes at any one of the group's members would not be eligible, as apprenticeships are by definition employment, and do not constitute full time education.

EXAMPLE C

123 College is a merged college which crosses county boundaries: it has a single DfE number but one campus in Staffordshire and one in Derbyshire. Students' affinity will be to their campus, not to their college title. Students at this College would be eligible to play for either Staffs, or for Derbyshire, depending on the location of the campus where they are educated.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: REPRESENTATIVE FOOTBALL AT POST-16

Where do I find an institution's DfE number?

- <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/Establishments/>

How do I know if an institution is merged?

- You'll probably know from simply being in the area. However, the link above will also take you to the history of the institution and you'll be able to see mergers there.

There's a private football provider in my area which says it has full time students on roll, as it provides football for the local FE college. Are those students eligible?

- If this is true, then yes. Many FE colleges "subcontract" their sports provision to take advantage of facilities and professional skills which they may not otherwise be able to access. These private providers may not have a DfE number but do constitute legitimate provision if they are subcontracted and if pupils are following a full-time programme, as per the overarching definitions. Check with your local college or call the ESFA HQ, where we aim to collate this verified data through the year.

If a college has two campuses, in two counties (like in example C above) can they enter two teams into ESFA national competitions?

- Yes, in the U18 Super League, which does not have the same restrictions as the schools' cups or our representative game

One of my trialists has been sent by the local college because he is in college for 6 weeks to do what is described as "block release" training for his apprenticeship. Is he eligible?

- No, apprenticeships are by definition employment, not full-time education, and so the overarching definition here would not be met.