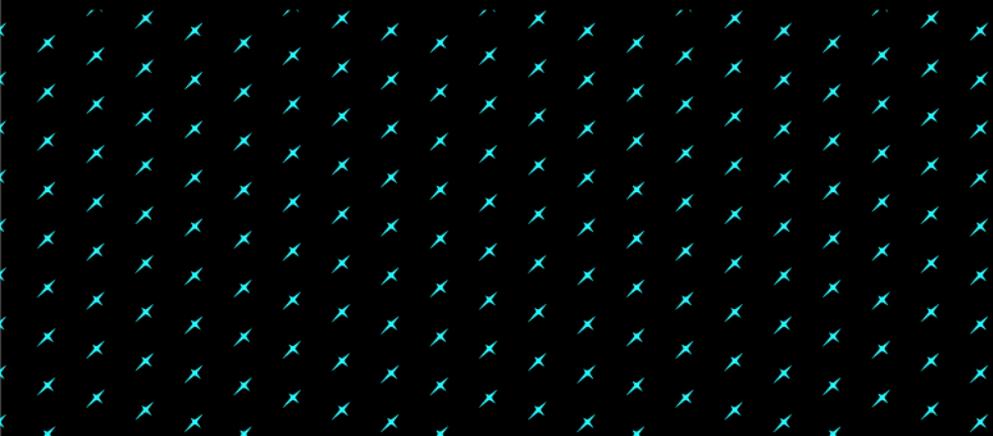




MLS NEXT Academy Division Technical Standards 2025-26





General

Category	Standard
Ages	U13, U14, U15, U16, U17, U19
MLS NEXT Cup Ages	U15, U16, U17, U19
High School Participation	All MLS NEXT Academy Division Players are permitted to participate in High School Soccer
College Player Participation	Players who have participated or are participating in any college program at any level (Division I, Junior College, etc.) are not permitted to participate in the MLS NEXT Academy Division.
Professional Player Participation	Players who have participated or are participating professionally at any level are not permitted to participate in MLS NEXT Academy Division.
Outside Competition - Events	Teams may only participate in approved outside tournaments, showcases, or events. Please complete the Outside Competition Form to ensure that the event has been approved.
Outside Competition - Leagues	All MLS NEXT Academy Division players are permitted to participate in outside Leagues with their current MLS NEXT club.
Outside Talent Identification	Players are eligible to participate in approved outside talent identification events with U.S. Soccer, Canadian Soccer, and all FIFA recognized international federations, along with other Talent Identification events.



Rosters

Category	Standard
Roster Minimum	Minimum of 14 Players per MLS NEXT Academy Division Team
Roster Maximum	Maximum of 28 Players per MLS NEXT Academy Division team
Matchday Roster	Maximum of 20 Players per MLS NEXT Academy Division team
Overage Players	Maximum of 3 overage Players (i.e., birth year of 2006) on the U19 roster are permitted Players cannot be registered as Late Developers
Start Percentage	All Ages: Recommend that all Players start in 25% of official matches U13: Each player on the matchday roster MUST play at least one (1) period uninterrupted. U14 & U15: Recommend that all players participate in 40% of minutes per week
Playing Time	Players are eligible to play in an older age group while being rostered in their younger birth year age group, so long as they meet competition standards and play only 90 minutes per day across a maximum of 2 matches within all competitions.



Rosters

Category	Standard
Roster Adds	MLS NEXT Academy Division teams can add an unlimited number of Players during the MLS NEXT Academy Division season
Roster Freeze	There is no roster freeze within MLS NEXT Academy Division
Regional Event & Cup Eligibility	Players participating in the regional event and/or MLS NEXT Cup must have participated in 50% of Academy Division matches to be eligible
Player Movement	<p>During the season, Player Movement will not be permitted between clubs within the Academy Division. During the season, Player Movement will not be permitted between clubs within the Homegrown Division and the Academy Division.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Players can only be registered for one club within MLS NEXT at a time• Consideration may permit movement in certain situations• Clubs cannot communicate with an opposing club's players• Trial requests are not permitted• If a Player is released from their current MLS NEXT club, that Player can join a different MLS NEXT club during the season. Players can return to an MLS NEXT club after leaving, up to one time.• Clubs can only be reduced by a maximum five (5) players of the same birthyear during the off-season. Unless there are exceptional circumstances or both clubs approve any additional moves



Designations

Category	Standard
Player Designations	There will not be any player designations other than Late Developers, Overage Players and Trapped Players
Overage Players (O)	Maximum of 3 overage players (i.e., birth year of 2006) on the U19 roster are permitted Players cannot be registered as Late Developers
Trapped Players (T)	At the U14 age group, and unlimited amount of U15 8th grade players are eligible to be rostered on the U14 team during that club's High School season A maximum of 3 Trapped Players are eligible to be selected on any U14 Matchday Roster These players DO NOT count towards the total roster amount for the U14 team Trapped Players must participate with the U15 team during MLS NEXT Cup or the Regional Event
Late Developers (L)	Three (3) Late Developers can be approved per age group All age groups are eligible Must complete Late Developer forms and receive approval from their Designated Operator



Staff

Category	Standard
Staff Requirements	<p>Academy Director must have USSF Academy Director Course, EFCL Certificate or USSF/CSA B license or equivalent</p> <p>Academy Head Coach must have C License or equivalent (exceptions must be approved by MLS NEXT Technical Director)</p> <p>Recommended best practice: Head Coaches should have additional Assistant Coaches, especially if coaching more than one team</p> <p>Recommended best practice: A coach shouldn't be Head coach of more than one team, but can be a Head coach on one team and an assistant on other teams</p>
Matchday Staff	<p>Maximum of 5 coaching staff members permitted in technical area and must be listed on the Digital Match Roster within Kitman Labs. (Not including Qualified Medical Professional or ATC)</p> <p>There must be a minimum of one (1) registered staff member in the technical area for each match</p> <p>Any Staff members that will be working with MLS NEXT Academy Division Players or will be in the technical area during MLS NEXT Academy Division matches will be required to complete the entire registration process via LeagueApps</p>



Competition

Category	Standard
Match Timeframe	Players can only play in 90 minutes per day across a maximum of 2 matches in any competition, including Outside Competition Players should not appear in more than 2 consecutive matchdays during the regular season
Match Ball	Size 5 Official MLS NEXT Adidas match ball must be used for all U14 – U19 MLS NEXT Academy Division matches Size 4 Official MLS NEXT Adidas match ball must be used for all U13 MLS NEXT Academy Division matches
Hydration	Home club must provide adequate hydration for both teams
Technical Area	Home club must provide adequate seating (benches) for both teams
Athletic Trainer	Home club must provide a Qualified Medical Professional, QMP (ATC) for all matches. This individual must be available to both home and away Players If both teams arrive at the field and the Home team does not provide a QMP, the match will not be played, and the home team will receive a forfeit and fine
Match Video	Home Club must record all matches. The camera must be to the level that it records with sound
Spectators	Home club must ensure there are no spectators/parents in the technical area or that sideline Each club is responsible for the behavior of their spectators



Competition

Category	Standard
Match Length	U13 = 3x25 minute periods, 2x5 minute intermissions U14 = 2x40 minute halves, 15-minute HT U15, U16, U17, U19 = 2x45 minute halves, 15-minute HT
Warm-Up Periods	Teams must be provided with an appropriate warm-up area 30 minutes prior to kick-off
Age Group Order	Recommended that older age groups play first to accommodate younger Players "playing up"
Kick Off Times	No earlier than 9:00 AM without permission from the Designated Operator
Time between Matches	Minimum of 18 hours between matches if playing on consecutive days, unless approved by the Designated Operator
Matchday Roster	Maximum of 20 Players and minimum of 14 Players on matchday rosters
Substitutions	U13 = 2 moments per period. Unrestricted substitutions. Intermissions do NOT count as a moment. U14 = 3 moments per half. Unrestricted substitutions. Halftime does NOT count as a moment. U15 and Up = 3 moments per half. No re-entry allowed in the half. Halftime does NOT count as a moment. <u>Exceptions in accordance with the MLS NEXT Concussion Protocol</u>
Match Changes	The Designated Operator must approve any request for schedule changes Any requests for substantial changes in time or location received within two weeks of the match may result in a fine



Discipline

Category	Standard
Red Cards	<p>Red Card accumulation will follow a player and staff member across all age groups and must be served in the player/staff member's primary age group.</p> <p>Red Card accumulation for staff: 1st offense = 2 match suspension 2nd offense = Subject to additional discipline 3rd offense = Subject to additional discipline and potential long-term suspension Red Cards received in friendly matches will only result in suspension if deemed egregious</p>
Yellow Cards	<p>Yellow Card accumulation will follow a player and staff member across all age groups and must be served in the player/staff member's primary age group. In the event a player or staff member receives 2 yellow cards in the same match resulting in a red card, only the first yellow card counts towards yellow card accumulation.</p> <p>Yellow Card Accumulation for players: 5 Yellow Cards (YC) = 1 match; 10 YC = 2 additional matches; 15 YC = 3 additional matches Yellow Card Accumulation for staff: 3 Yellow Cards (YC) = 1 match; 5 YC = 2 additional matches; 7 YC = 3 additional matches</p>
Discipline within Fixture	<p>If a player receives a Yellow Card in two different matches within the same fixture, both cards will count towards their Yellow Card accumulation.</p> <p>If a player receives a Red Card in the first match of a split fixture, then they will not be able to appear in the rest of the matches in the fixture.</p>
Fixture	<p>When two clubs play against each other across multiple age groups over one weekend, then all matches between the two clubs are considered part of the fixture.</p>



Facilities & Training

Category	Standard
Field Standards for Matches	<p>Expectations for MLS NEXT Academy Division clubs to provide appropriate, high-quality fields to host MLS NEXT Academy Division matches</p> <p>Minimum Field Sizes: U13 = Minimum of 65x84 U14 = Minimum of 65x96 U15-U19 = Minimum of 70x105</p> <p>Any fields outside of these standards, must be approved by the Designated Operator before the season starts</p>
Match Locations	<p>Clubs can use multiple locations for MLS NEXT Academy Division Regular Season matches, subject to Designated Operator approval</p> <p>MLS NEXT Academy Division encourages neutral sites to prevent overnight stays when applicable</p>
Training	<p>Three (3) training days per week during the regular season</p>
Rest Day	<p>Individual players must be given at least one day off per week</p>



MLS NEXT Academy Division Technical Standards 2025-26

