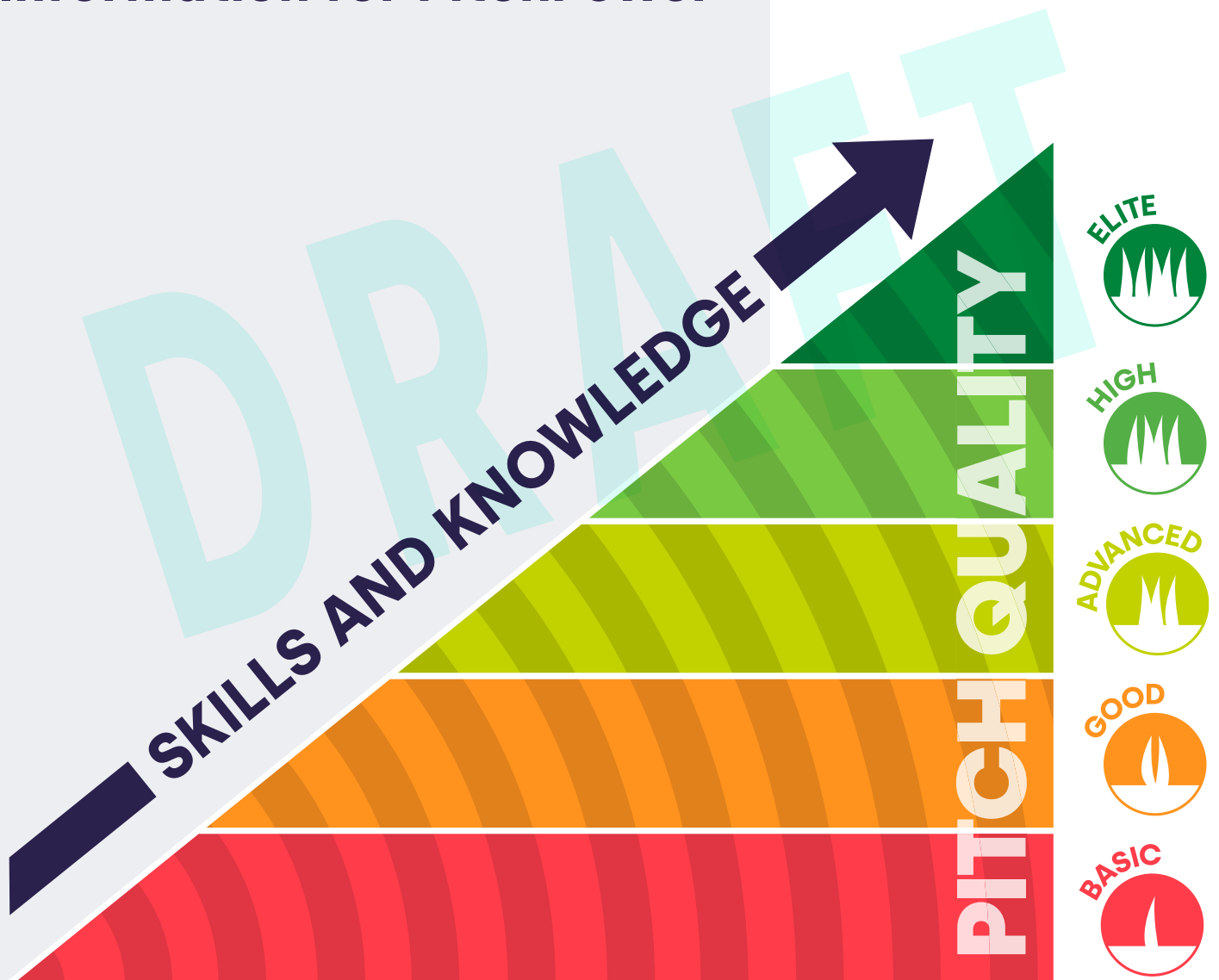


PILOT OF PITCH GRADING FRAMEWORK (PGF)

Information for PitchPower



Aim of Pitch Grading Framework

To create a national framework for natural turf sport surfaces, so that those responsible for pitches are aware of the pitch characteristics, resources, skills and knowledge required for their needs.

Why it is important

We know that natural turf pitches managed on a regular basis can improve player experience, lead to a reduction in cancellations, and potentially increase year-round participation.

Striving for better quality playing surfaces (whether pitches, courts and or greens) that are maintained by qualified grounds staff and volunteers, will ensure that more sport can be played on higher quality and safer grounds.

What is the Pitch Grading Framework

A system that measures the quality of pitches, and the skills required to achieve optimum outputs, using a national, established framework developed by the Grounds Management Association.

PGF uses a highly tested and developed set of parameters to benchmark the quality of each surface, across all levels of sports – from community, to professional sport at iconic venues.

PGF identifies what is required to achieve each level in terms of the standard of surface, as well as the level of grounds management and expertise required. We have also developed a skills and knowledge matrix that recommends the core skills and competencies that each individual, volunteer, and professional should demonstrate. We've also identified potential resource requirements as part of the framework, such as budgets and time commitments.

Is the Pitch Grading Framework about the facility or about people?

The answer is both! Integral to this will be an education framework which will help those responsible to continually improve standards and the effectiveness of available resources. The introduction of a multi-layer grading system begins at grassroots community sport and extends to elite level.

Who is it intended for?

The framework can assist everyone involved in managing and maintaining sports grounds including Grounds staff, Grounds Managers, Club Committees and Senior Management. Adopting the principles of PGF will provide benefits across the organisation including players, coaches and spectators.

How to understand where you currently are on the pyramid

Undertake an objective assessment of your pitch to assess the quality of the pitch against the pyramid. This can be undertaken by any volunteer utilising the Football Foundation PitchPower App.

BASIC



What does this mean?

A pitch/surface that is safe for recreational sport and meets the minimum playing needs and expectations of community players nationwide.

Sport	Appropriate surface for:
Football	Grassroots Women's regional leagues

The Playing Surface

The pitch is of a quality that provides a safe environment for players. The player experience will be limited as the quality of the surface may restrict the range of skills possible. It is likely to perform reasonably well during good weather however the pitch would deteriorate during extended periods of high intensity usage or inclement weather.

Benefits

- Provide a safe playing surface for users
- Low maintenance costs and time commitments

Limitations

- Player experience could be poor
- Pitch could deteriorate quickly during periods of adverse weather conditions
- Likely to have a relatively high number of cancellations
- Only able to sustain a limited amount of play before surface becomes poor
- May impact on player retention and recruitment due to relatively poor player experience

The Grounds Manager

Grounds Manager, staff or volunteer should demonstrate the knowledge to safely prepare a pitch and undertake basic maintenance operations. They would have the ability to undertake a basic visual assessment and repairs to the pitch.

The Grounds Manager, staff or volunteer would have a clear understanding of the role and career pathway and an awareness of different sources of support available, this would be supported by formal training.

The Machinery

Having appropriate equipment and machinery that is well serviced and fit for purpose is essential to maintaining quality pitches. The machinery list would be relatively small to maintain a pitch to Basic standard and would also include a lot of hand tools.

For the infrequent operations it is often more cost effective to use contractors rather than cover the cost of purchasing and servicing machinery that is rarely used. Contractors can often provide expertise and experience that also provides added value compared to undertaking the works in house.

BASIC



Management support

Support from the organisation responsible for the ground is essential. This support should cover the following areas:

- Prioritise the pitch as an asset that has an impact on players, spectators, coaches and income.
- Work with the Grounds Manager, coaches and players to prevent damage from overuse and poor weather conditions.
- Work with and invest in your Grounds Manager by supporting them to upskill and acquire more knowledge.
- Provide a ring-fenced budget for grounds maintenance.
- Invest in your ground to ensure that appropriate materials and tools are made available to maintain a safe pitch.
- Promote and thank your Grounds Manager for the job that they do, as often they are hugely underappreciated.

Advice on how to progress to the next PGF level

- Understand your pitch and what areas need to be improved to progress to the next level.
- Obtain a pitch report from a qualified assessor to identify the areas of improvement.
- Invest in your grounds people to develop their knowledge and skills as this alone will have a significant impact on the quality of the pitches.
- Invest in the right materials to allow your Grounds Manager to undertake appropriate repairs to your pitch.
- Support your Grounds Manager to understand what they need in terms of support and resources to prepare a pitch to meet your ambitions.
- Prioritise the pitch as an asset that has an impact on players, spectators, coaches and income.



What does this mean

A pitch/surface that is good quality and safe for recreational sport. It meets the playing needs and expectations of community players nationwide.

Sport	Appropriate surface for:
Football	Step 7 and below Women's regional leagues

The Playing Surface

The pitch is of a quality that provides a good experience for recreational players providing a surface that is reliable and consistent. The pitch should be able to sustain a reasonably high level of activity without significant deterioration of the surface. It would have some resilience during periods of adverse weather however this capacity will still be limited so usage during these periods will need to be managed carefully.

For more details about the pitch standards please refer to the technical data.

Benefits

- Good player experience
- Provide a safe playing surface for users
- Relatively low maintenance costs and time commitments
- Reduced cancellation of matches compared to a basic level pitch
- Improved player retention and recruitment
- Increased carrying capacity of the pitch

Limitations

- Pitch could deteriorate during sustained periods of adverse weather
- Still likely to have cancellations during a season
- Needs careful management of usage to ensure surface quality doesn't deteriorate

The Grounds Manager

Grounds manager, staff or volunteer should demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of pitch preparation techniques and maintenance operations. They would undertake repairs during and after the season to ensure the quality of the pitch is retained but are likely to rely on external support for any specialist services.

Individuals can undertake a basic pitch quality assessment, identify commonly occurring issues and have a good understanding of the Health and Safety Legislation.

The Grounds Manager should be competent and familiar with basic management skills and able to supervise others on a one to one basis, this would be supported by formal training.



The Machinery

Having appropriate equipment and machinery that is well serviced and fit for purpose is essential to maintaining pitches to the desired standard. The machinery list would be relatively small to maintain a pitch to Good standard and would also include a lot of hand tools.

For the infrequent operations it is often more cost effective to use contractors rather than cover the cost of purchasing and servicing machinery that is rarely used. Contractors can often provide expertise and experience that also provides added value compared to undertaking the works in house.

Management support

Support from the organisation responsible for the ground is essential. This support should cover the following areas:

- Prioritise the pitch as an asset that has an impact on players, spectators, coaches and income.
- Work with the Grounds Manager, coaches and players to prevent damage from overuse and poor weather conditions.
- Work with and invest in your Grounds Manager by supporting them to upskill and acquire more knowledge.
- Provide a ring-fenced budget for grounds maintenance.
- Invest in your ground to ensure that appropriate materials and tools are made available to maintain a safe pitch.
- Promote and thank your Grounds Manager for the job that they do, as often they are hugely underappreciated.

Advice on how to progress to the next PGF level

- Understand your pitch and what areas need to be improved to progress to the next level.
- Obtain a pitch report from a qualified assessor to identify the technical areas of improvement.
- Invest in your Grounds Manager to develop their knowledge and skills as this alone will have a significant impact on the quality of the pitches.
- Invest in the right materials and tools to allow your Grounds Manager to undertake appropriate repairs and improvements to your pitch.
- Consider regular external contractor support to undertake specialist annual operations such as decompaction and end of season renovation.
- Support your Grounds Manager to understand what they need in terms of support and resources to prepare a pitch to meet your ambitions.
- Understand budget requirements to maintain a pitch at the Advanced level.



What does this mean

A pitch/surface that is high quality and meets the needs of top-level recreational sport. It meets the playing needs and expectations of both community and semi-professional players nationwide.

Sport	Appropriate surface for:
Football	Step 3 to 6 Women's Super League, Championship and National League

The Playing Surface

The pitch provides a high quality experience for all users and can host significant levels of activity. The playing quality of the pitch would be very good and provide a consistent and reliable surface for users to demonstrate their skills.

It is likely that the pitch would have a good functioning drainage and irrigation system which would make it resilient during periods of adverse weather. It should also be able to sustain periods of high intensity usage without significant deterioration of the surface.

Benefits

- Player experience is very good
- Good player retention and recruitment
- Sustain high levels of activity
- Reduced cancellation of matches compared to a good level pitch.
- Pitch is resilient to adverse weather conditions
- Support usage of more than one team such as women and reserves

Limitations

- Costs and time commitments are high
- Requires a highly skilled and experience Grounds Manager to manage the ground

The Grounds Manager

Grounds Manager, staff or volunteer should demonstrate a well-developed, rounded knowledge of grounds management and be highly skilled in all common pitch preparation operations and techniques. This would be supported by formal training and/or qualifications that demonstrate both practical and theoretical knowledge of agronomy.

Individuals can produce and implement a full turf management programme, have detailed knowledge of Performance Quality Standards, understand how to use contractors effectively and be able to oversee health and safety management of the ground. Also, the Grounds Manager can supervise a team and undertake key management functions.

Although the Grounds Manager may not have the experience to undertake all remedial action they would know where to go for further advice.



The Machinery

Having appropriate equipment and machinery that is well serviced and fit for purpose is essential to maintaining pitches to the desired standard. The machinery and tool requirements to maintaining a pitch to the Advanced standard would be quite considerable to reflect the range of operations undertaken by the Grounds Manager.

Careful consideration would be required to understand whether purchasing or leasing a new piece of equipment is more cost effective than either hiring or using a contractor. For any infrequent operations it is often more cost effective to use contractors rather than cover the cost of purchasing and servicing machinery that is rarely used. Contractors can often provide expertise and experience that also provides added value compared to undertaking the works in house.

Management support

Support from the organisation responsible for the ground is essential. This support should cover the following areas:

- Prioritise the pitch as an asset that has an impact on players, spectators, coaches and income.
- The Grounds Manager should be considered a management role that has direct input into the running of the club.
- The club would support the learning and education of the Grounds Manager to ensure up to date knowledge is retained.
- Have a clear strategy for use of subcontractors, machinery servicing and replacement.
- Develop a long-term vision for the ground so plans can be created to achieve desired outcomes.
- There is a clear and protected budget for pitch maintenance which is the responsibility of the Grounds Manager.
- The Grounds Manager's role should be praised and appreciated for the essential and hard work that is put in place.
- Understand the limitations of the ground and be clear of the balance between pitch quality and player/club expectations.