



## CIRCULAR

### 07/2026 SAP Open Competition Structure 2027

|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Attention</b>        | Club Presidents                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Date of Circular</b> | Monday 12 October 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Emailed to</b>       | Club Presidents & Club Administrators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>CF Contact</b>       | SAP Competition Coordinator, <a href="mailto:SAP@capitalfootball.com.au">SAP@capitalfootball.com.au</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Action Required</b>  | <p>Circulate this Circular to relevant club personnel, including Technical Directors, SAP Coordinators and coaches. All clubs intending to participate in the 2027 SAP competitions must complete the online Team Nomination Form.</p> <p>Clubs seeking a second SAP Open team must submit an Expression of Interest by Wednesday 28 October 2026, with formal applications due by Wednesday 11 November 2026.</p> |
| <b>Summary</b>          | <p>Confirms the 2027 SAP Open competition structure for U11, U12 and U13, including the standard allocation of one team per club per age group, club entry priorities and the process for seeking approval of a second team.</p> <p>The 2027 SAP Girls competition structure will be confirmed separately but will follow the same club entry and assessment framework.</p>                                        |

## OVERVIEW

Capital Football has confirmed the competition structure and club entry framework for the U11, U12 and U13 Skill Acquisition Program (SAP) Open competitions for 2027.

The framework establishes one team per club per age group as the standard allocation, with clubs able to apply for approval to enter a second team where the relevant development, technical and operational criteria are met.

The competitions will target 18–20 teams per age group, with a preferred maximum of 20 teams.

This approach is intended to maintain strong player development pathways into NPL football, manage available facilities and competition capacity, and protect the sustainability of community football.

## BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Capital Football NPL Review identified the need to strengthen the junior development pathway through the staged expansion of SAP, including the introduction of U11 SAP in 2027.

SAP is a selective development program designed to support the technical development of talented young players and prepare them for progression into NPL Youth competitions. It is intended to complement, rather than replace, MiniRoos and Junior League competitions.

As outlined in Capital Football Circular 06/2026 – Provisional Declaration of Leagues, the introduction of U11 SAP in 2027 was accompanied by consideration of limits on team numbers to manage field availability, broaden development opportunities across clubs and protect community football.

Following feedback from clubs, Capital Football has adopted a more flexible approach that allows clubs to seek approval for a second SAP Open team, subject to established assessment criteria and available competition capacity.

The introduction of U11 SAP creates additional demand for floodlit fields, with up to 10 additional midweek games per fortnight. This must be managed alongside existing club training and community football commitments.

## 2027 COMPETITION STRUCTURE

The following arrangements will apply across U11, U12 and U13 SAP Open:

- A target of 18 – 20 teams per age group, with a preferred maximum of 20 teams.
- One team per club per age group as the standard allocation.
- Clubs may apply for approval to enter a second team per age group.
- All additional-team applications will be subject to assessment and available competition and facility capacity.
- Approval of a second team will apply to the 2027 season only and will not create an ongoing entitlement.

Capital Football may determine a different competition size where justified by development needs, competition quality and available facilities.

### SAP Girls

The 2027 SAP Girls competition structure, including team numbers and age-group arrangements, will be confirmed separately. However, the same principles of club entry prioritisation, assessment of additional teams and consideration of competition and facility capacity will apply.

## CLUB ENTRY PRIORITIES

Where applications exceed available competition capacity, entry will be prioritised in the following order:

1. **NPL Senior clubs** – Clubs required to field SAP teams under their NPL licensing and pathway obligations.
2. **NPL Youth clubs** – Clubs operating SAP as a development pathway into their NPL Youth teams.
3. **NPL clubs seeking a second team** – Clubs demonstrating a development need for an additional team to support progression into NPL Youth competitions.
4. **Community League clubs actively pursuing NPL status** – Clubs demonstrating a genuine commitment to establishing an NPL pathway including participation in the club licensing process.
5. **Other Community League clubs seeking SAP entry** – Clubs seeking participation consistent with SAP development objectives and available competition capacity.

Participation in SAP does not guarantee future admission to NPL competitions.

Meeting the relevant entry criteria or falling within a priority category does not guarantee approval. All applications remain subject to the applicable technical, operational and competition requirements.

## SECOND-TEAM ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Clubs seeking approval for a second SAP Open team must demonstrate:

- Sufficient player depth at the appropriate SAP development standard.
- Suitably qualified coaches and appropriate technical support.
- Capacity to provide a quality development environment for both teams.
- Access to suitable training and match facilities.

- A demonstrated contribution to player development and progression into NPL pathways.
- Consideration of the impact on community football competitions.

Capital Football will consider the overall size, quality, competitive balance and capacity of the relevant SAP Open competition.

### **Clubs that operated two teams in 2026**

Clubs that operated two teams in U12 or U13 SAP Open during 2026 must apply for approval to continue with a second team in 2027.

Previous participation will be recognised as relevant evidence of an established development program and operational capability but will not provide automatic approval or priority over other applications within the same entry category.

## **APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS**

Clubs seeking approval for a second SAP Open team will be required to submit an application demonstrating sufficient player depth and outlining their coaching and technical arrangements, development program, facility access and alignment with their NPL development pathway.

Applications will be assessed by Capital Football, with final approval determined by Management in accordance with the established club entry priorities, assessment criteria and available competition capacity.

Approval of a second team will apply to the 2027 season only and does not create an automatic entitlement to additional field allocations.

### **Second-Team Applications and Trials**

Formal applications for a second SAP Open team will close Wednesday 11 November 2026, with Capital Football expecting to communicate outcomes by the first week of December 2026. Detailed application requirements and confirmed submission deadlines will be provided to clubs.

With the 2027 trial period commencing on 13 October 2026, clubs may conduct trials for their proposed team numbers, including a potential second team, to assess player depth and suitability against SAP development standards.

However, clubs must clearly communicate to players and parents that any second team remains subject to Capital Football's assessment and approval process. Participation in trials or selection for a proposed second team does not guarantee that the team will be approved to compete in 2027.

Clubs should ensure that any offers made in relation to a proposed second team clearly identify this condition and do not create an expectation of guaranteed participation.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The online nomination form for all 2027 SAP competitions has been released and is [available here](#).

All clubs intending to participate in either the Open or Girls U11, U12 or U13 SAP in 2027, including NPL Senior, NPL Youth and Community League clubs, must complete the online nomination form.

For NPL Senior clubs, this confirms participation in accordance with their mandatory SAP pathway obligations. NPL Youth clubs are expected to nominate teams as part of their established development pathways.

Community League club nominations will be assessed in accordance with the entry priorities, eligibility requirements and competition capacity outlined in this Circular.

Submission of a nomination does not guarantee entry. Final team entries will be confirmed by Capital Football in writing.

### **Second-Team Expressions of Interest**

Clubs wishing to enter a second SAP Open team in any age group must notify Capital Football by emailing [SAP@capitalfootball.com.au](mailto:SAP@capitalfootball.com.au) by Wednesday 28 October 2026.

The email must identify the club and the age group or groups for which a second team is sought.

Following receipt of this Expression of Interest, Capital Football will provide the club with the formal application requirements, including details of the supporting documentation required.

**Completed applications must be submitted by Wednesday 11 November 2026**, with Capital Football expecting to communicate decisions by the first week of December 2026.

Submission of an Expression of Interest or formal application does not constitute approval of an additional team.

### **SAP Girls**

The 2027 SAP Girls competition structure will be communicated separately and will follow the same club entry and assessment framework.