



AUSTRALIA



FFA National Curriculum



AUSTRALIA





CONTENTS

Foreword from Ben Buckley	2
Purpose and Objectives	3
Research	6
Identified Gaps	8
Analysis	10
FFA Curriculum Rationale	11
FFA Curriculum Framework	14
Implementation	30
Message from the Technical Director	39

Foreword from Ben Buckley



The National Curriculum was one of the key initiatives put forward in the FFA's National Football Development Plan, released in November 2007. Since that time, a substantial amount of work has been undertaken in order to create a curriculum that will provide national guidance and an integrated and consistent approach to the development of players and coaches throughout the country.

On behalf of the Board and management of FFA, I am delighted to present the FFA National Curriculum to the entire football community. This document, and its associated pathways, programs and resources which will be developed over the coming months and years, is an Australian model which seeks to maximise the strengths of our existing football culture.

The National Curriculum reflects the unique challenges of our country and draws on research on the major football countries,

in particular their respective approaches to player and coach development.

Underpinning the implementation of the National Curriculum will be the adoption of a consistent structural approach within each State and Territory which will include the appointment of a Technical Director responsible for rolling out the Curriculum in their particular geographical region.

This Curriculum is of critical importance if we are to achieve our objectives and realise a major improvement in the quality and performance of Australia's best players, coaches and teams, as well as fostering a lifelong support of the game amongst its participants.

The challenge now is to bring this plan to life which will rely on the cooperation and contribution at every level of the game. As a valued member of our football family we look forward to your support of this Curriculum.



Ben Buckley
CEO, Football Federation Australia

Purpose and Objectives



Purpose

The Curriculum provides for a soundly based, consistent, coordinated *national* Talent Development and Identification Program for football in Australia that aims to achieve a major improvement in the quality and performance of Australia's top players, coaches and teams.

Objectives

- To produce the best players (gauged in terms of international competitiveness) primarily for:
 - the Qantas Socceroos
 - the Hyundai A-League
 - the Westfield Matildas
 - the Westfield W-League.
 - To produce a team that is consistently ranked in the top 20 in the men's FIFA ranking system by 2015 (and strive for a position in the top 10 by 2020), and a top 10 team in women's football by 2012.
 - To create a Talent Development and Identification Program that achieves success for generations to come.
 - To create a coach development system in Australia that produces quality coaches that are able to bring the content of the Curriculum to life to realise the targets.
 - To create a youth development system in Australia that is fully operational nationwide by 2015 and renowned as one of the world's best.
 - To organise the 2018 or 2022 men's FIFA World Cup and compete at the highest level, striving to win the tournament.
 - To be a medal winner at the 2019 women's FIFA World Cup and the 2020 Olympic Games.
- To achieve what the FFA has determined:
- a set of principles that will guide action
 - a national football philosophy and a detailed Curriculum with specific content.

Curriculum Development

The key gaps in Australia's current development of players and coaches have been identified. The Curriculum has been developed to make a big impact on closing the gaps.

The development has involved learning from what is done elsewhere, and the results. The Curriculum is factually and analytically based (not a compilation of opinions!)

The FFA has consulted widely to ensure all relevant ideas and thinking are considered.

The resulting Curriculum is an Australian solution.

A fundamental transformation of Australian football is needed to achieve the objectives!

Current Status

A structured pathway is in place for the identification and development of Australia's elite players in the 14 to 19 years age group (men's and women's). (Refer to Achievements and Proposed Initiatives no. 5: Talented Player Pathway).

A uniform nationwide structure is to be put in place for the 8 to 14 years age group.

The structure and *technical content* of this Talented Player Development Program is provided by *the National Curriculum*.

Implementation must be nationwide.

The *Member Federation Charter* (and through this Charter the appointment of the *State Technical Directors*) is vital for bringing the Curriculum to life.

Purpose and Objectives

National Talented Player Pathway

Men's

AGE GROUP	DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY	COMPETITION PATHWAY	REPRESENTATION PATHWAY
21	Hyundai A-League Clubs Overseas Clubs	Asian Champions League Hyundai A-League Overseas Leagues National Futsal Championships	Qantas Socceroos Qantas Olyroos (U/23) Futsalroos
18–20	Hyundai A-League Youth → Hyundai A-League State League Clubs Overseas Clubs	Hyundai A-League National Youth League State League (Senior) National Futsal Championships	Qantas Olyroos (U/23) Qantas Young Socceroos (U/20)
16–17	AIS or Hyundai A-League Youth State League Clubs	National Youth League State League (Senior) National Futsal Championships	Qantas Young Socceroos (U/20) AIS
14–15	State Institutes (Hyundai A-League Link) AIS	State Youth League Institute Challenges National Youth Championships National Futsal Championships	Joeys (U/17) State Institutes State Teams
12–14	FFA Accredited Clubs, Schools and Academies	State Competition National Youth Championships National Futsal Championships	State Teams National U/13-U/14 Team
10–12	FFA Accredited Clubs, Schools and Academies	Club or State Competition National Futsal Championships	
6–10	FFA Accredited Clubs, Schools and Academies	Optus Small Sided Football Including Futsal	

Purpose and Objectives

National Talented Player Pathway

Women's

AGE GROUP	DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY	COMPETITION PATHWAY	REPRESENTATION PATHWAY
21	AIS Overseas Clubs / Universities State League Clubs	Westfield W-League Overseas Leagues National Futsal Championships	Westfield Matildas Westfield W-League (Futsal National Team)
19–20	AIS / State Institutes State League Clubs Overseas Clubs / Universities	Westfield W-League Institute Challenge State League (Senior) National Futsal Championships	Westfield Matildas Westfield Young Matildas (U/20) State Institutes Westfield W-League
17–18	AIS State Institutes State League Clubs	Westfield W-League Institute Challenge State League (Senior) National Championships National Futsal Championships	Westfield Young Matildas (U/20) State Institutes Westfield W-League
15–16	State Institutes State League Clubs	Westfield W-League State Competition National Championships National Futsal Championships	National U/17 Team State Institutes State Teams
12–14	FFA Accredited Clubs, Schools and Academies	State Competition National Championships National Futsal Championships	State Teams National U/13-U/14 Team
10–12	FFA Accredited Clubs, Schools and Academies	Club or State Competition National Futsal Championships	
6–10	FFA Accredited Clubs, Schools and Academies	Optus Small Sided Football Including Futsal	



Conduct of Research

- Review team with diverse expertise
- Review of scientific research
- Research on Australian data
- Visits to a selection of other football federations
- Consultation with other Australian sports bodies
- Submissions from interested parties
- Consultation with local football experts and representatives
- Extensive discussion within review team
- Input by the Technical Director.

Research Foundation

- Very extensive body of scientific research about talent development and identification:
 - for sport in general
 - for football in particular
 - much of it validated multinationally
- Distinction between giftedness (natural ability) and talent (developed ability)
- Limitations on talent prediction:
 - implications for early identification of future talented players
- Age-related development stages
- Time and effort to develop football mastery:
 - the importance of long-term dedication.
- Squandering the talent pool – Relative Age Effect & financial barrier
- Geographic differences in generating athletes
- Generally gender neutral.

Implications of Research

- To become an outstanding adult footballer it generally takes at least 10 years of sustained, deliberate practice from a young age:
 - the vast majority of development occurs in training / practice – not in competition
 - typically, the bulk of training occurs during personal practice, without professional supervision. This is where 'touch' is developed
- This requires not just good coaching and training opportunities but exceptional, enduring personal commitment.
- In general, recognising giftedness is easy; it is much more difficult to identify players that may become top players with the appropriate training environment.

Research



Implications of Research (cont.)

- As a consequence, many players with real potential are excluded from development opportunities and drop out of the talent pool. It is also crucial to recognise differences in ability and not simply maturation differences.
- This is exacerbated when prevailing practices for young players emphasise winning competitions rather than skill development.
- There are particular age-related stages in the natural development of children when acquisition of certain types of ability is relatively easy. This affects the ideal ages for developing particular football skills and the type of training experiences appropriate at different ages.
- There is a particular style of play and playing system best suited to the overall development of players.
- The emphasis on coach education is extremely strong in the most established and powerful football nations.
- Large cities are much less effective, per capita, at generating talented athletes than are regional localities.
- There is likely to be multiple pathways for talent to emerge (late developers), not just a single, prescribed pathway.

Research and Overseas Practices

While similar development considerations apply around the world, the most practical development arrangements vary as a consequence of differences in factors such as population, population concentration, climate, affluence, attitudes to sport, overall sporting environment, and government involvement in sport, history, tradition and football culture.

So, in examining practices of other federations, we saw the combined effect of general youth development dynamics and the specific national conditions. In learning from those other federations, we have disentangled the components and then identified which practices are likely to be most effective in Australia, given its particular national conditions.

The optimum practices and approach for Australia turn out to be a combination of what was observed in more than one country.

Identified Gaps

- A. Technical skills are deficient in players in elite programs / competitions.
- B. Deficient game skills and game hardness evident in mid-teens and later (particularly 15–18 age years group).
- C. Loss of potential talent due to Relative Age Effect.
- D. Loss of potential talent due to the financial barrier.
- E. Omission of a lot of potential talent from regional Australia.
- F. Abilities of coaches for talented young players and for senior teams.

Gap A: Deficient Technical Skills

Technical skills:

- > all skills required when in contact with the ball
- > the ability to treat the ball as a coordinated extension of self.

Australia's top players are seen as very competitive and physically effective footballers but are not praised for their technical excellence (FIFA technical reports). Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), National Training Centre (NTC) and national coaches find the players they receive are weak on technical skills. The world's best players start developing technical skills at a young age.

Strong technical skills are needed before developing strong game skills.

Australia cannot produce a significant number of world-class footballers until it is world class in developing technical skills, that persist under pressure, in its young players (while preserving their current strengths).

Gap B: Deficient Game Skills

Game skills / game hardness:

- > neuro-physiological adaptation to playing high intensity football at a high standard with the commitment and ability to get results
- > beyond technical skills although needed as the foundation
- > comes from extensive, regular, meaningful, high-level competition.

In the most successful football countries, by age 17 or 18, the best young players are competing in professional senior environments (with adult professionals). A typical league season in major football countries covers 10 to 11 months.

Talented young players who develop game skills and are game hardened earliest, get the highest level club competition opportunities before others of the same age – further extending their game skills / hardness and continuously increasing their competitive lead.

For our best young players to mature, in a football sense in line with top overseas counterparts, they require a high-level coordinated year-round training and competition environment.

Gap C: Loss of Potential Talent due to Relative Age Effect (RAE)

Individuals born earliest within certain age groups tend to have size, speed, coordination, mental and emotional advantages over those born later in the same age group, even when they have the same innate potential. This is particularly the case in the U/14, U/15 and U/16 age groups because of the **growth spurt**.

This period of the player's development coincides with the selection processes for the respective State and age-group national teams as well as the NTC and AIS programs.

In a competitive environment, those born later within this age cohort tend to be selected out. As a result in later stages of youth development, and entry into professional ranks, the remaining talent pool is heavily dominated by players born early in the grouping year(s).

Extensive research provides evidence of this effect for football and other sports in Australia and throughout the world (particularly for men).

With the age group selection of the U/17 and U/20 national teams, individuals born in the 'wrong' years get reduced development opportunities. For this reason, commencing in 2009 the AIS program intake now comprises 2 age groups. Similar measures are required to be undertaken around the country.

It is the expertise of the coach to be able to notice and rule out the negative influence of RAE and to identify the real talented player. In some cases it could also be advisable to leave a talented but physically slow developer for a certain period of time with a younger age group (regulations may need to be modified).

A nationwide education program is the key to ensuring that those entrusted with selecting the players for our development programs are in fact making decisions based on the long-term interests of Australian football (player development) and not short-term results.

Identified Gaps

Gap D: Loss of Potential Talent due to Financial Barrier

Across the world, football is very easy accessible for every child, rich or poor. This is one of the main reasons why it has become the world's game; you only need a ball, even if it is one made of rags. Traditionally the talented children have often come from a lower socioeconomic environment.

In Australia however, football is becoming an expensive sport and therefore not affordable for some families. When a child is identified as being talented and selected for participation in State and National Championships the threshold becomes even higher because of the 'user pays' system. Sometimes this is exacerbated by distance from the main football centres.

Therefore, the assumption is justifiable that this situation causes a substantial loss of potential talent.

It is the (moral) responsibility of the football community to level this barrier and make football accessible for every child.

Gap E: Omission of Talent from Regional Australia

For most Australian sports rural locations are much better (per capita) than big cities at generating athletes. Unlike other football codes in Australia, football has been predominantly a city game (75% of Australian A-League players develop in large cities).

This is consistent with football (soccer) in Australia having been fostered by 20th-century European immigrants and their children, who tended to cluster in the capital and industrial cities. The historical immigration dynamic that has underpinned football in Australia appears to be weakening. This poses a major threat to Australia's future talent pool unless offset by a much greater share of young athletes from rural areas.

Since players need to be inducted into the game at an early age, this would require initiatives that make football much more accessible in rural Australia and at the same time, would also draw many more Indigenous Australians into the game.

Gap F: Ability of Elite Coaches

On average, Australian coaches available for elite youth development and for State and national competition teams have less relevant experience and consequently less expertise than their counterparts in top football countries. Australia has some good coaches but it can boast few world-class coaches comparable to those commonly found in the best football nations.

There is a 'chicken and egg' dynamic at work:

- top players and top teams need top coaches
- but top coaches emerge over time from extensive experience with top players, top teams and top competitions
- since Australia has lacked top competitions, there has been limited development of its coaches, despite their potential.

This constraint has been partially offset by the very high standards of coaching generally at the AIS combined with the infusion of some high quality coaches from overseas either as migrants or short-term appointments.

Nonetheless, Australia's capacity to be an internationally competitive football nation will continue to be severely constrained until it can self-generate a substantial body of world-class development and competition coaches.



An analysis of Australian football provides an insight into what technical aspects need to be addressed and improved in order to realise the National Curriculum objectives.

Analysis—Strengths

- Australian football players are physically strong and competitive.
- Australian players have a well developed winner's mentality.
- Australian players are in general mature at a young age and have a strong determination to succeed.
- The Australian football preference is for an attacking, 'open' game which is the characteristic style of the A-League and W-League.

Analysis—Weaknesses

- **Overall technical GAME skills, in particular:**
 - individual attacking qualities (creativity)
 - first touch under pressure
 - short passing game
 - handling speed in tight areas.
- **Ball possession/positioning play, in particular:**
 - playing out from the back
 - controlling / changing the speed of the game
 - successful attacking combinations.
- **Tactical maturity, in particular:**
 - tactical awareness; 'reading' the game
 - leadership; decision-making on the pitch
 - game 'cleverness'; being 'street smart'.

Analysis—Cause and Effect

Both strengths and weaknesses are caused by the strong emphasis in Australia on results and winning at too young an age.

Winning is the purpose of football but the manner and importance differs!

If we want to take our football to the world's top level, youth development will need to focus more on:

- development instead of results
- the skilful instead of the powerful
- mistakes being learning moments instead of mistakes being punished
- encouraging individual play instead of forbidding individual play
- encouraging taking initiatives / risks instead of forbidding taking initiatives / risks
- playing out purposefully instead of the long ball etc.

In other words it is the choice between: short-term losing, long-term winning or short-term winning, long-term losing.

FFA Curriculum Rationale



The following principles guide this Curriculum:

1. Using the experience of the world's best football nations.
2. Adjusting their visions to the specific Australian circumstances.
3. Using the strengths of the Australian sport and football culture.
4. Taking evidence based rational facts into consideration.
5. Using a practical 'total football' approach with:
 - age-related development goals
 - game-related approach as the major focus of training
 - a proactive style of play
 - a uniform system of play (formation)
 - an emphasis on technique before tactics and conditioning
 - a 'guided discovery' approach in player and coach development .



The Curriculum is divided into two streams:

1. Talented Player and Coach Development Program

There are a very small number of super talented ('the gifted') players who will almost always succeed.

There is a larger group of talented players who do not attract attention at first glance. They can reach top-level if identified early and provided with quality training and coaching in a stimulating and challenging environment.

The Talented Player and Coach Development Program focuses on these two groups. This program provides clear guidelines on how to train Australia's talented players from age 8 to 19, as well as the development of coaches in order for the players and coaches to appropriately and effectively compete at the world's top level.

The starting point is a particularly *practical* approach. As a result the terms that are used are mostly in football-acting language instead of clichés and semi-scientific language without the football context.

The Curriculum works with 2-year age group blocks where there are specific development objectives related to the mental and physical development phase.

There are competence profiles and assessment forms per position that outline the basic tasks and skills.

Theoretical and scientific foundation underpinning the Curriculum can be found in various publications. These, alongside a variety of books, DVDs and referenced articles will be linked to the Curriculum.

2. Community Player and Coach Development Program

There is no 'magic trick' and there are no magicians who can make a superstar from an untalented child. The vast majority of children do not have the talent to reach the top but they are still very important. They are entitled to a stimulating and entertaining environment where they can reach their personal potential.

The Community Player and Coach Development Program focuses on this group. This program provides clear guidelines on how to train Australia's community players and guide coaches to teach, play and learn football in a stimulating and entertaining environment. The ultimate aim is to enable them to reach their personal potential and stay committed to the game for life.

The Curriculum's philosophy is that the most appropriate way for teaching and learning football is to:

Leave the total football structure as much as possible intact so its relationship to the game is always recognisable for players in all training situations and exercises.

The game is complex and unpredictable (not one situation or action is the same).

Every football action in the game is defined by various factors such as the ball, the rules, opponents and teammates, space, time, direction, the score etc.

By isolating parts from this total context they lose their significance, in other words, the ***football structure*** is lost.

This is the essence of 'unorganised' street / park football where the foundations of every top player can be found.

As a result the essence of teaching (training) is to always think of the actual game situation as the starting point and then simplify / modify the game situation for training. This is achieved by reducing the game-specific resistances until the training aim can be realised by the players.

Therefore a coach must be able to:

- > analyse football
- > define the 'football problems' of the team and / or the individual players in ***football-acting*** language
- > design and implement exercises to realise the training aims.

FFA Curriculum Rationale



In every youth training session the following questions should be answered with YES:

- 1) Is **football** being played?
- 2) Is **football** being learned and therefore taught?
- 3) Is **football** being experienced and enjoyed?
- 4) Do the players understand the **football** purpose of the exercise?
- 5) Do the players recognise the **game-related** intention?
- 6) Are the players **challenged** to improve both individually and as a team?

For the vast majority of children this game-related approach is the most enjoyable, logical and scientifically proven child-sport way of learning to play football, enabling them to reach their personal potential and stay committed to the game for life.

For the talented players a modification is being made temporarily to this approach in the 8 to 12 years age group in order to perfect and accelerate the development of basic skills. This age group is universally acknowledged to be the optimal mental and physical phase in which children are able to learn motor skills.

It is however, vital to focus on functional game skills and not confuse these with non-game related 'tricks'. Also a permanent and immediate skills transfer into positioning and small sided games is an absolute requirement (whole – part – whole).

The passing exercises are an essential and very specific part of the functional game skills and will therefore be maintained permanently throughout all age groups.

This choice for a temporary modification is strictly limited to functional **ball skills**. Although **versatile moving** (general, non-football specific coordination) is also important and can be developed quickly at this age, the focus must be on **skill development**.

In Australia the development of general physical attributes is already strongly emphasised outside of the football environment (school, outdoor life etc.)

The credo therefore is:

“No waste of precious FOOTBALL training time!”

FFA Curriculum Framework

The total **STRUCTURE OF FOOTBALL** is always the starting point.

The **Main Moments** of the game are:

1. **Ball possession (BP)**: Building up, attacking and scoring (team tasks).
2. **Transition**: BP to BPO (team tasks).
3. **Ball possession opponent (BPO)**: Disturbing and defending (team tasks).
4. **Transition**: BPO to BP (team tasks).

A game of football is a constant repetition of these 4 main moments, each with its characteristic **team tasks**.

At the individual player level the team tasks lead to individual skills and competencies that are position specific and partly depend on the style of play / formation. These are always defined by **Technique, Insight and Communication**.

• The ball (first touch)
• Rules (playing out) → **T**echnique (technical ability, skills)
• Direction (creativity)

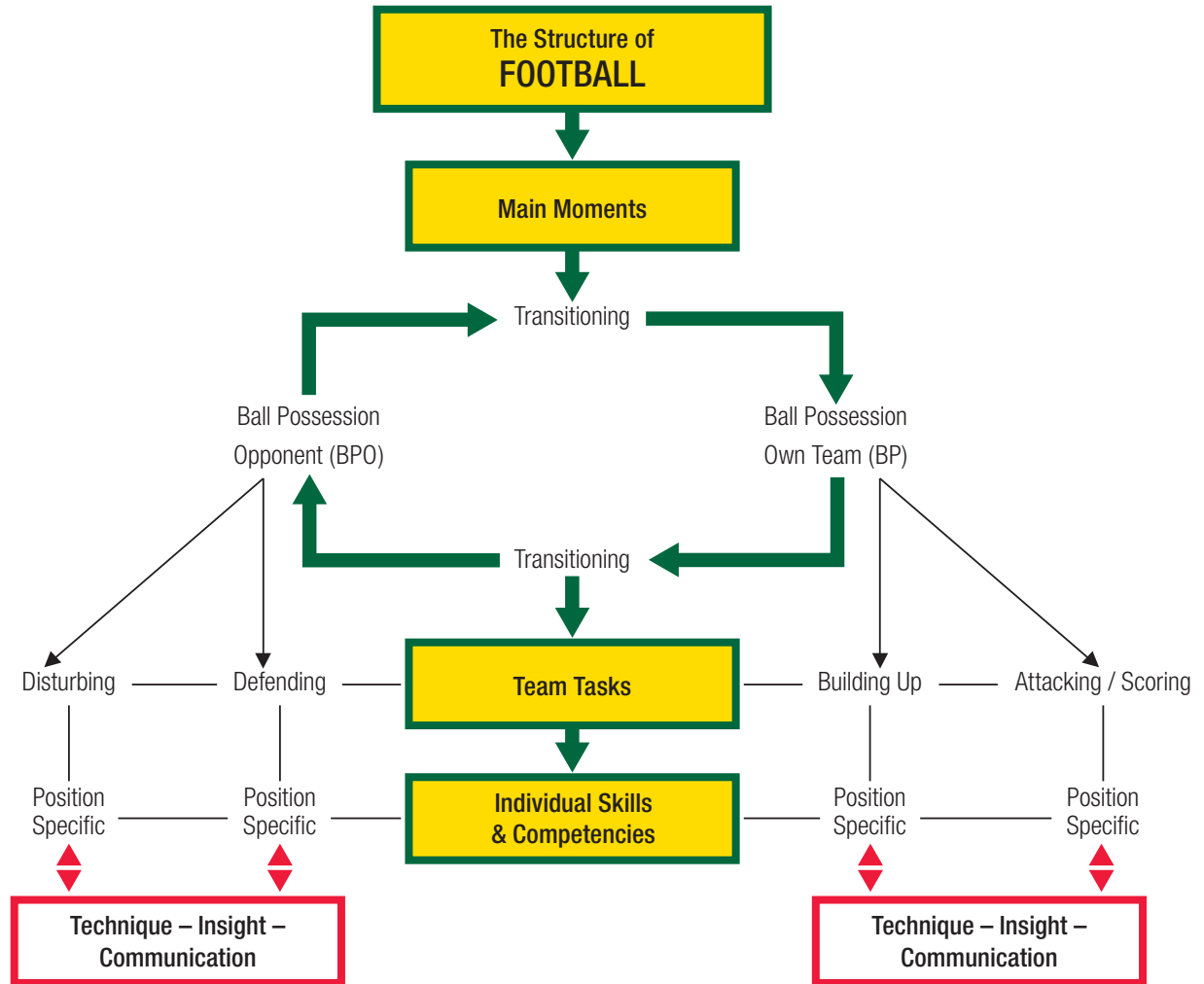
• Opponents (decision-making)
• Space (handling speed) → **I**nsight (awareness, vision)
• Time (game reading)

• Teammates (tempo change)
• Score (game cleverness) → **C**ommunication
• Pressure (leadership)

Technique, Insight and Communication are distinguishable but in football (training) not separable.



FFA Curriculum Framework



DEVELOPMENT GOALS	AGE GROUP	TIC
Learning to master the ball	U/6–U/7	Getting a 'TIC' for football
Learning to act with the ball purposefully	U/8–U/9	T IC
Learning to play together purposefully	U/10–U/11	T I c
Learning the positions and basic tasks in 11 v 11	U/12–U/13	TIC
Learning how the basic tasks link together	U/14–U/15	TIC
Learning how to play as a team	U/16–U/17	TIC
Performing / winning as a team	U/18–U/19	TIC



The size and colour of the 3 characters **TIC** indicate which of the 3 aspects, Technique, Insight and Communication is being emphasised (*not isolated!*) in training during that particular development phase.

FFA Curriculum Framework

In order to define the individual tasks / skills in detail and thus provide a concise and structured development pathway, the Curriculum provides clarity on:

- > a *style of play*
- > a game organisation (*formation*) suitable to train the style of play from the moment the 11 v 11 game is being played.

To tackle the identified shortcomings in Australian football and also opt for a style of play that corresponds with the 'Aussie' mentality / preference, a *proactive* style of play using the **1-4-3-3 formation** will be introduced.

This style will therefore be mandated for all FFA-controlled development teams.

In the **1-4-3-3 formation** there are 3 lines with a balanced spread of players over the pitch ('triangles' of players) which is an important condition for:

- > 'manicured' positioning play, playing out, combination football
- > creative and varied attacking play, using the width of the field
- > early disturbing /pressing after losing possession.

For youth players the positions and accompanying basic tasks are logical and recognisable and therefore *playing as a team* is easier to develop.

The 1-4-3-3 formation has several shapes and variations, making it a flexible up-to-date formation.

The Optus Small Sided Football (OSSF) formats 7 v 7 (1-3-3) and 9 v 9 (1-3-2-3) lead up to the 1-4-3-3 formation in a logical and methodical manner.



As a consequence of the philosophy, *physical fitness* is also an inseparable (*conditional*) component of football's structure which leads to the proposition:

- > *conditioning is football training*
- > *football training is conditioning.*

Analysis of football conditioning shows:

- Football is becoming more and more compact: less space on the pitch / time on the ball.
- Because of this the number of *explosive football actions* ('football' sprints / duels etc.) in professional football has increased by 40% over the last 8 to 10 years.

As a result of this, 'Football Conditioning' is all about:

- > increase of explosive power in football actions
- > increase of explosive power stamina (explosive capacity)
- > decrease of recovery time between two explosive actions
- > increase of recovery stamina (recovery capacity).

The Football Conditioning Method:

- The 4 key indicators are trained in 6-week cycles.
- Overload principle: increasing time / series, decreasing rest / intervals per 6 weeks.
- **Only game related football exercises.**
- No condition testing that gives non relevant information for *football* condition.
- **Dynamic stretching** instead of static stretching (no scientific evidence for its significance!).
- Football conditioning continues the *whole season*.

So: No 'waste' of precious football training time.



Increase of explosive power in football-actions

Decrease of recovery time between two explosive actions

Football Condition

Increase of explosive power stamina (explosive capacity)

Increase of recovery stamina (recovery capacity)

FFA Curriculum Framework



The consequence of this for the actual technical content of the Curriculum:

- Skill / technique training is the foundation (8 to 12 years)
 - Positioning games and passing exercises are essential daily drills (12 to 19 years)
 - In every training session / exercise the relationship with the game must be recognisable (12 to 19 years)
 - Football training = Conditioning; Conditioning = Football training (15 to 19 years)
 - The development of:
 - tactical insight, 'reading the game' (12 to 19 years)
 - independent problem-solving (12 to 19 years)
 - creative individual play (8 to 19 years)
- ... which are vital elements.

FFA Curriculum Framework

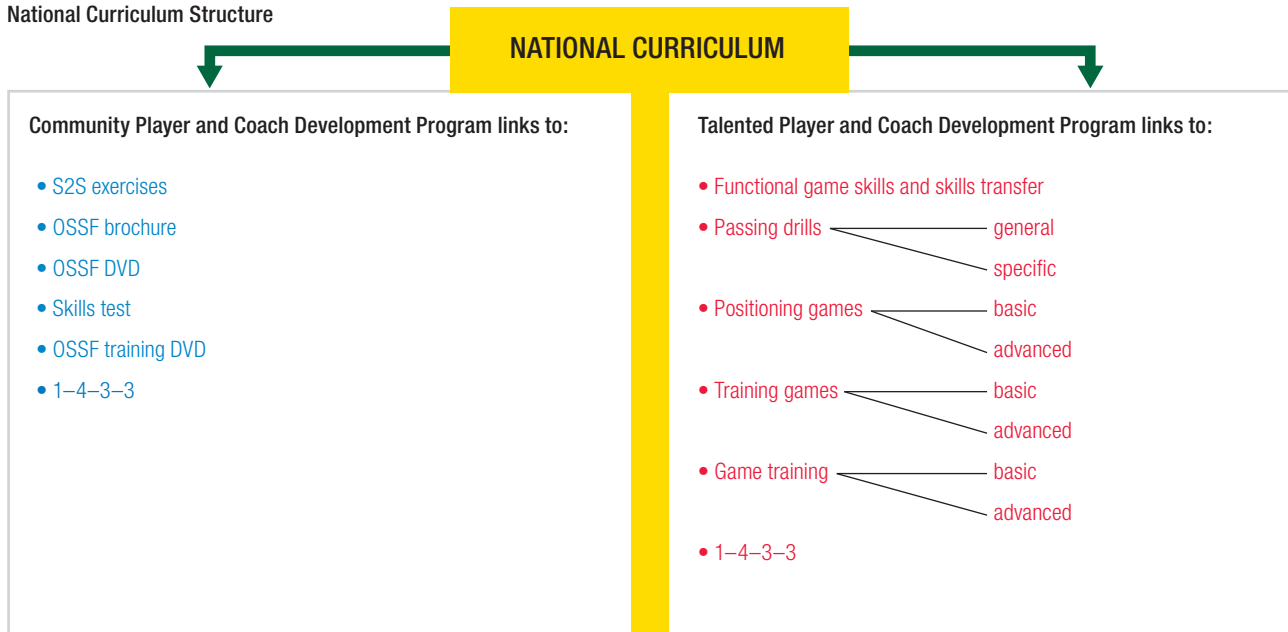
The Curriculum structure diagram below details the associated web-based links that form the practical component of the two development streams.

In the Community Player and Coach Development section there are links that will be accessible during 2009. These will include:

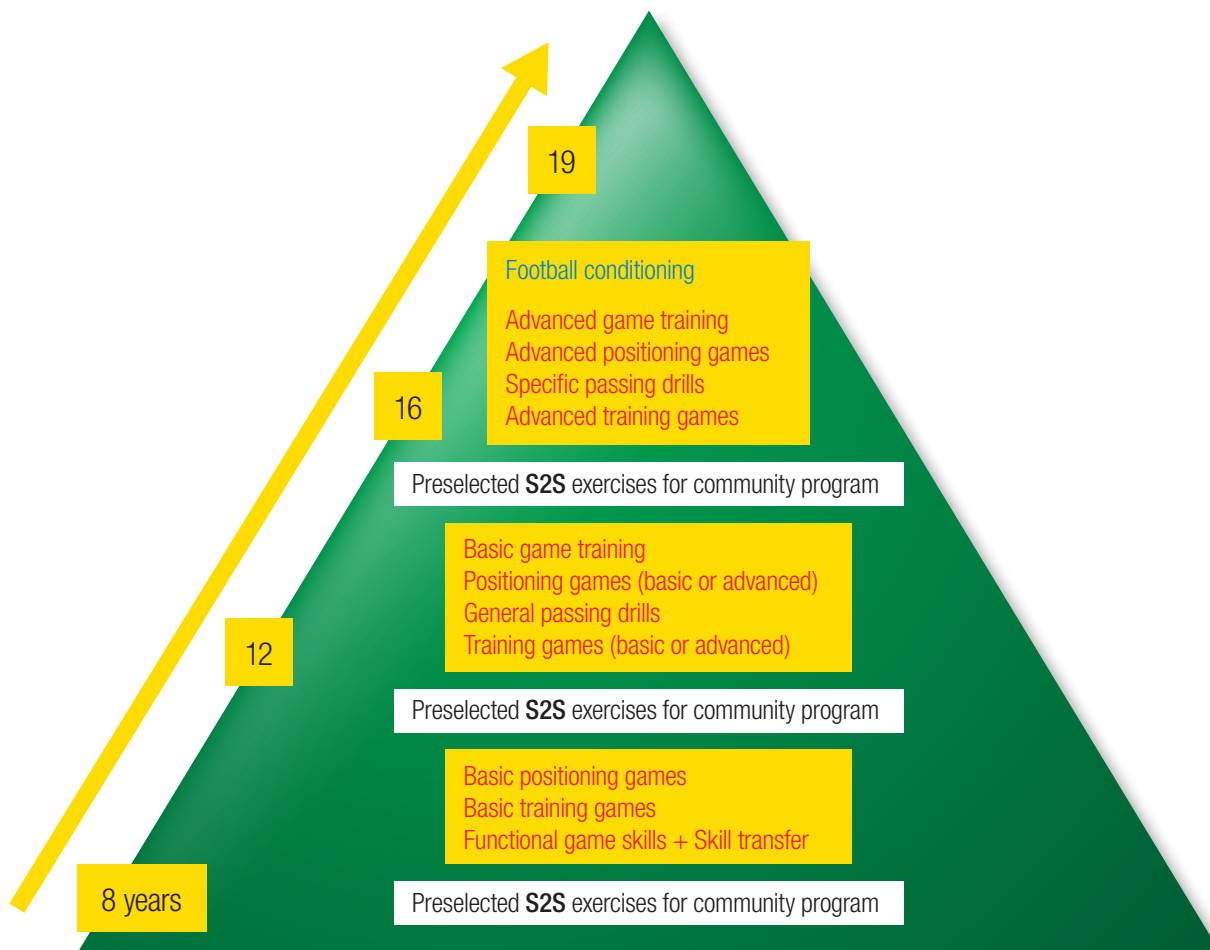
- S2S: A web-based tool with access to more than 1,600 training exercises. From this platform there will be preselected exercises conveniently organised for the specific age group characteristics
- OSSF: Brochures, information and training DVDs relevant to Optus Small Sided Football
- 1–4–3–3 formation: Information on the 1–4–3–3 system for community coaches
- Skills test: Introduction of skill tests to reinforce attention to skill development.

The Talented Player and Coach Development section will have a sequential program specifically designed by the FFA Technical Department that provides in-depth information and practices for the talented player and coach. This section will only be accessible to an identified number of coaches that are responsible for the development of players in the talented player pathway.

National Curriculum Structure



FFA Curriculum Framework



The pyramid above represents the age group focus of the Community and Talented Player Pathway programs. As the players progress up the pyramid the online links provide specific examples of practices that are relative to their development stage.

FFA Curriculum Framework

The following diagrams represent the total structure of the National Curriculum. The two year age group blocks detail the specific development objectives related to the mental and physical development phases.

Learning to master the ball	U/6–U/7 4 x 4	No formation / tactics consist of only very general instructions	Getting a 'TIC' for football
Learning to act with the ball purposefully	U/8–U/9 7 x 7	1–3–3 formation / basic tactical instructions / everyone plays <i>all</i> positions	TIC
Learning to play together purposefully	U/10–U/11 9 x 9	1–3–2–3 formation / limited tactical instructions / talent for specific positions more clear (but still flexible)	TIC
Learning the positions and basic tasks in 11 v 11	U/12–U/13 11 x 11	1–4–3–3 formation: Extending tactical instruction explaining the positions and basic tasks	TIC
Learning how the basic tasks link together	U/14–U/15 11 x 11	1–4–3–3 formation: Choice / specialising for a position + corresponding tactical instruction	TIC
Learning how to play as a team	U/16–U/17 11 x 11	1–4–3–3 formation: Extending development on one position related to the team's output	TIC Football Conditioning
Performing / winning as a team	U/18–U/19 11 x 11	1–4–3–3 formation: Perfection per position and as a team: result-oriented team-work	TIC Football Conditioning

FFA Curriculum Framework

Learning to master the ball

U/6–U/7
4 x 4

No formation / tactics consist of only very general instructions

Getting a 'TIC' for football

General Description

- Very short concentration span
- Quickly distracted (they notice a 'little of a lot')
- They all want to have the ball (even take the ball from a teammate)
- No ability yet for team play
- Not able to pass / make combinations (do not try to change this!)
- Able to understand **very simple rules**
- Able to understand very basic coaching like 'stay inside the field' 'do not use your hands' 'go with the ball to the goal' etc.
- Learning through trial and error
- **The biggest challenge is discovering how to control that rolling and bouncing 'round thing' with your feet.**

Relevant Training Content

- All sorts of FUN games involving ball mastering / running with the ball (if possible, each child with a ball)
- All sorts of small sided games, 1 v 1, 2 v 2, 3 v 3 and 4 v 4
- The various games should last no longer than 10 minutes and appeal to the children's fantasy
- No 'queue' exercises
- **No stretching**
- Number of sessions per week: 2 (+ 1 game).
- Maximum duration per training session = 45 minutes–1hour

Remarks

Links to:

- > [S2S](#)
- > [OSSF training DVD](#)
- > [Skills test.](#)

Learning to act with the ball purposefully

U/8–U/9
7 x 7

1–3–3 formation / basic tactical instructions / everyone plays *all* positions

TIC

General Description

- The players now understand that the game's purpose is winning by scoring more goals than their opponent
- **Still a lot of individual play but the players start to understand that acting with the ball purposefully is necessary in order to be successful**
- Now playing 7 v 7 on a pitch, 'feeling' for team play, direction and opponent is developing
- Preference and talent for a specific position starts to show (but encourage everyone to still play in every position regularly!)
- Bigger goals with goalkeepers automatically appeals to aiming and shooting

Relevant Training Content

- Ball mastery (during the warm up).
- Running with the ball, 1 v 1, shooting, passing and receiving, first touch in various short FUN games.
- Variations of 4 v 4 and 7 v 7.
- No 'queue' exercises.
- **No stretching**
- Number of sessions per week: 2–3 (+ 1 game)
- Maximum duration per training session = 1 hour

Remarks

Links to:

- > [S2S](#)
- > [OSSF training DVD](#)
- > [Skills test](#)

FFA Curriculum Framework

Learning to play together purposefully

U/10–U/11
9 x 9

1–3–2–3 formation / limited tactical instructions / talent for specific positions more clear (but still flexible)

TIc

General Description

- More and more understanding and feeling for teamwork
- Understanding of individual role in relation to teamwork is developing
- Understanding for acting without the ball (running to or off the ball) develops
- With 8 outfield players a tighter and more strict task allocation is required
- Preference / ability for specific positions becomes clearer and clearer
- Perfect mental and physical ability for developing motor skills.

Relevant Training Content

- Functional game skills in possession of the ball: Passing and receiving, running with the ball, 1 v 1, first touch
- Defensive game skills: 1 v 1; block tackle; sliding tackle
- Skills transfer: Executing the game skills in corresponding game-related situations (1 v 1, 4 v 4, basic positioning games)
- Training games: Various small sided games to develop ball possession objectives.

Transitioning:

- Learning the general principles in training games.

Dynamic stretching in warming up:

- Number of sessions per week: 3 (+ 1 game)
- Maximum duration per training session = 75 minutes.

Remarks

Links to:

- > [S2S](#)
- > [OSSF training DVD](#)
- > [Skills test](#)
- > [Functional game skills and skills transfer](#)
- > [Basic positioning games](#)
- > [Basic training games](#)

Learning the positions and basic tasks in 11 v 11

U/12–U/13
11 x 11

1–4–3–3 formation: Extending tactical instruction explaining the positions and basic tasks

TIC

General Description

- Ideal mental and physical conditions in this age group
- First high point in the learning of motor skills, well built/ideal proportions, good coordination
- Socially aware, critical of own performance and that of others
- Likes to compete and compare
- Imitates idols
- The start of playing 11 v 11 on the whole pitch with 'real' game rules demands a big reorientation on almost all aspects that were learned in earlier phases
- Focus on learning the positions and basic tasks in playing 11 v 11 in a 1–4–3–3 formation

Relevant Training Content

- Functional game skills and skills transfer (special attention for passing drills and heading)
- Positioning games: the primal forms (basic)
- Training games
- 1–4–3–3 game training (basic formation)
- Functional game skills and skills transfer in possession of the ball
- Defensive functional game skills and skills transfer.

Transitioning:

- Learning the general principles in training games and 1–4–3–3 game training.

Dynamic stretching in warming up:

- Number of sessions per week: 3–4 (+ 1 game)
- Maximum duration per training session = 75 minutes.

Remarks

Links to:

- > [S2S](#)
- > [1–4–3–3 formation](#)
- > [Basic game training](#)
- > [Basic positioning games](#)
- > [Basic training games](#)
- > [General passing drills.](#)

FFA Curriculum Framework

Learning how the basic tasks link together

U/14–U/15
11 x 11

1–4–3–3 formation: Choice / specialising for a position + corresponding tactical instruction

TIC

General Description

- Pre-adolescence: Obstinate, rebels against authority and provokes conflicts
- Self-overestimating and self-absorbed
- Development of other interests and hobbies, reassesses the place of football in his / her life and sometimes puts it into another perspective
- Sudden big increase in height limits physical capacity (injury prone)
- Stagnation or regression of coordination (clumsy)
- **In this phase the intellectual learning ability is bigger than the physical learning ability**

Relevant Training Content

- Functional game skills and passing drills (basic)
 - Positioning games (basic)
 - Training games (basic)
 - 1–4–3–3 game training (basic).
- Transitioning:**
- In training games, positioning games and 1–4–3–3 game training.
- Others:**
- Dynamic stretching and core stability exercises
 - Number of sessions per week: 4 (+ 1 game)
 - Maximum duration per training session = 75–90 minutes.

Remarks

Links to:

- > [S2S](#)
- > [1–4–3–3 formation](#)
- > [Basic game training](#)
- > [Basic game training](#)
- > [Positioning games \(basic or advanced\)](#)
- > [Training games \(basic or advanced\)](#)
- > [General passing drills.](#)

Learning how to play as a team

U/16–U/17
11 x 11

1–4–3–3 formation: Extending development on one position related to the team's output

TIC
Football Conditioning

General Description

- Post-adolescence, pre-maturity
- More balanced, more sense of reality, less emotional / aggressive
- **Critical of own performance, able to share responsibilities and to make sacrifices for the team**
- Return of good coordination and technique
- For boys: Production of testosterone has begun, conditioning is now possible.

Relevant Training Content

- Positioning games (specific / advanced)
 - Passing drills (specific / advanced)
 - 1–4–3–3 game training (advanced)
 - Training games.
- Transitioning:**
- In training games, positioning games and 1–4–3–3 game training.
- Others:**
- Dynamic stretching and core stability exercises.
- Football Conditioning:**
- Number of sessions per week: 4–6 (+ 1 game)
 - Maximum duration per training session = 90 minutes.

Remarks

Links to:

- > [S2S](#)
- > [1–4–3–3 formation](#)
- > [Basic game training](#)
- > [Advanced game training](#)
- > [Advanced positioning games](#)
- > [Advanced training games](#)
- > [Specific passing drills.](#)

FFA Curriculum Framework

Performing / winning as a team

U/18–U/19
11 x 11

1–4–3–3 formation: Perfection per position and as a team: result-oriented team-work

TIC
Football Conditioning

General Description

- Period of mental stabilisation (with exception of incidental fields of tension especially with regards to the balance between group and individual)
- Second high point in the learning of motor skills
- Optimal conditions for systematic training
- **Contributing to a team achievement (and being recognised for it) is important**

Relevant Training Content

- Positioning games (specific)
- Passing drills (specific)
- 1–4–3–3 game training (advanced)
- Individual training
- Training games.

Transitioning:

- In training games, positioning games and 1–4–3–3 game training.

Others:

- Dynamic stretching and core stability exercises.

Football Conditioning:

- Number of sessions per week: 4–6 (+ minimum 1 game)
- Maximum duration per training session = 90 minutes.

Remarks

Links to:

- > [S2S](#)
- > [1–4–3–3 formation](#)
- > [Basic game training](#)
- > [Advanced game training](#)
- > [Advanced positioning games](#)
- > [Advanced training games](#)
- > [Specific passing drills.](#)



Broad Principles to Apply

FFA and the Member Federations will:

- Employ an age-related development approach starting at U/6 that:
 - initially emphasises fun, building a love of the game and acquisition of individual technique
 - progresses in the early to mid-teens to greatly extend technique, with skill development during this period taking primacy over winning matches
 - introduces talented mid-teens into pro-level environments that can hone their competitive and team skills.
- Achieve a situation where, by age 15, the technique of our best players (say top 30 in age group) places Australia in top 20 countries for men, top 10 for women.
- Gradually (at appropriate age) instill in developing players a team-oriented attitude and sense of responsibility to the game.
- Implement the identified measures to greatly reduce the loss of talented players due to RAE, financial barrier and other effects.
- Provide openness for talented players to be recognised and appropriately developed whatever their age or entry age and whatever the path they have followed.
- Install a best practice coaching framework that fits the age grade principles.
- Develop true international excellence among the coaches who have intensive involvement with the development of talented young players while establishing a system that allows other coaches / supervisors generally to achieve outstanding results in the specific coaching roles they fill.
- Strive towards a **year-round** seamless and appropriate competition environment for identified talented players throughout the pathway with due regard for the needs of the wider football community.
- Ensure talented young players are identified and drawn into the preferred development pathways for talented players from the age of 8.
- Create an accreditation system which harnesses the elements of self-interest among players, parents, coaches, clubs and others in order to meet the Curriculum priority objectives.
- Apply these principles nationally at all levels. Execution may need to take account of local circumstances.
- Instill an approach of continuous improvement.

Implementation



Achievements & Proposed Initiatives

In recent years a number of important achievements for the development of football have been put in place such as:

- 1: **The Hyundai A-League**
- 2: **The National Youth League**
- 3: **The Westfield W-League**
- 4: **Optus Small Sided Football**
- 5: **Talented Player Pathway (boys & girls)**
- 6: **Talented Coach Pathways**

This Curriculum is the next important step in this process.

All these initiatives need to be constantly evaluated and reviewed and new ones implemented in order to catch up with the rest of the world. This approach will ensure that progress in the development of football in Australia will occur more rapidly.

1: The Hyundai A-League

The Hyundai A-League is moving into its 5th season and expanding to 10 teams in 2009/2010. The games are generally attacking, open and entertaining but the overall technical and tactical quality needs improvement to be on par with international top-level standards.

Future coach education initiatives include instruction and development opportunities (overseas scholarships) alongside the obligation for Hyundai A-League coaches to have Pro-Licence level accreditation (refer to Initiative 3: Coach Accreditation Timeline)

Promoting the use of young players in the Hyundai A-League is to be encouraged.

2: The National Youth League

The National Youth League (NYL) was introduced in season 2008/2009 for players age 17–21 that in general:

- are under contract with State league clubs
- during winter compete in their respective State Premier League competitions
- during summer are associated with Hyundai A-League clubs and compete in that framework during the Hyundai A-League season.

The age group eligibility will become 16–20 commencing season 2009/2010 with an allowance for 2 players age 21.

The Hyundai A-League clubs are encouraged to use the NYL teams as their development squad. The reason is to not only assist in the development of our elite younger players but to avoid the costs of having to sign expensive replacements for injured players.

The participation of the AIS in the National Youth League in season 2009/2010 is a big step forward for both the AIS program and the NYL.



3: The Westfield W-League

The Westfield W-League was introduced in season 2008/2009 with 8 teams and complements the respective State League competitions and NTC / Institute programs.

Points of interest:

- Similar development requirements for females as males.
- Up to about mid-teens most proposed initiatives (including the technical content of the National Curriculum) contribute equally to both boys and girls.
- At higher levels from early teens, the opportunities diverge because of strong commercial differences outside FFA control.
- For the National Championships an U/13 team will be added to the existing U/15 and U/17 competitions.

4: Optus Small Sided Football

OSSF is in the process of being introduced as the standard football format for children under 12 throughout Australia. The age-related development structure and team sizes are linked to progressively changing capabilities and skill levels of children.

Continuous emphasis on the purpose of OSSF (skill development through fun) is necessary. The OSSF formats are being actively promoted to produce 100% compliance by 2012.

Futsal is a form of small sided football. This form of the game will be more tightly incorporated into the FFA structure and its development potential maximised.

In every major football country every child, talented or not, starts with playing small sided football, either organised (club) or unorganised (street / park). In countries like Brazil and Spain, small sided football, in the form of futsal, is underpinning the youth development programs.

In order to bring the format of OSSF in Australia in line with the age-related development goals used in the Curriculum, some adjustments of the present format are necessary commencing season 2010.

OSSF structures will develop logical progression towards playing 11 v 11 in a 1–4–3–3 formation.

Implementation



5: Talented Player Pathway

The talented player pathway is in place for the identification and development of Australia's elite players in the 14 to 19 years age group (men's and women's). This is achieved through the:

- respective State Institute / NTC programs;
- AIS Program (residential for U/15 & U/16 boy's - camp-based for women's)
- age group national teams
- National Youth League (men's)
- W-League.

A uniform nationwide structure will be implemented for the 8 to 14 years age group. This is a crucial period to address one of the major identified player development gaps.

6: Talented Coach Pathway

The Elite Coach Development Scholarship Program has been established and:

- targets individuals and provides with 3-year scholarships
- intended for roles working with talented players in the fields of:
 - player development
 - coaching of high performance teams in competition
 - specialty coaching.

Selected coaches are being individually case managed, with intensive investment to provide experience and training that is as good as top overseas coaches. Arrangements have been made for a substantial amount of experience in overseas coaching assignments.

FFA will:

- actively promote and take action to increase the number of full-time coach positions in Australia
- require minimum licence levels for the main coaching positions in Australia.

Implementation Initiatives

The Curriculum will be mandated for all programs which are part of the National Pathway – national teams, AIS, NTCs etc. Furthermore:

- 1) All States will appoint a Technical Director who will work under the direction of the National Technical Director to assist in the implementation of the Curriculum
- 2) Skill Acquisition Trainers will be appointed in each State and Territory to identify and train talented players for specialised skill development programs
- 3) Coaches for the main coaching positions will be required, progressively, to have a specific coaching licence
- 4) There will be adjustments to the Community and Advanced Pathway Courses
- 5) Clubs, schools and academies will be accredited by FFA and Member Federations if in compliance with the Curriculum
- 6) Comprehensive national skills testing program will be introduced within the Community Development Pathway to emphasise the development of skills from ages 8 to 12.

Additional material will be progressively added to the Curriculum to make it the complete tool for all coaches and clubs.

Initiative 1: State Technical Directors

FFA and Member Federations will appoint a Technical Director in each State and Territory who will work under the direction of the National Technical Director to assist in the implementation of the Curriculum.

This newly created position will play a vital role in bringing the Curriculum to life with a major focus of ensuring that the Skill Acquisition Trainers, NTC and State and Territory team coaches work in line with the guidelines of the Curriculum.

The position of State Technical Director therefore requires a high level football technician (minimum A licence).

Initiative 2: Skill Acquisition Trainers

FFA and Member Federations will appoint one (or more) **skill acquisition trainer(s)** in every State / Territory to perfect and accelerate the skill development of identified talented players at the critical ages of 8 to 12 by:

- organising *trials on location (zones)* in order to identify talented players starting at age 8.
- organising and conducting *training sessions on location (zones)* for the selected players.
- educating other trainers and coaches.

Features of the program are:

- The trials and training sessions will be **free of charge** for the participants.
- The locations are to be within a reasonable travelling distance for participants.
- A Skill Acquisition Trainers course to be organised by FFA (**minimum requirement: B Licence**).
- A new group of 8 year olds to commence the program annually.
- This 5-year technical development program to lead players into their respective Territory and State representative teams.
- Identified players then progress into the respective national U/13–U14 teams.
- The players then progress to NTC / Institute programs **technically well equipped**.

Players selected for this program, and their club and / or school will be required to abide by the FFA National Accreditation and Rating Policy guidelines (refer to Initiative 5: Accreditation and Rating). This program supersedes all other programs and the guidelines will ensure that the player's development is undertaken in conjunction with his / her club in a controlled manner.

Implementation

Initiative 3: Coach Accreditation Timeline

- *All future coaching appointments must have the following minimum accreditation.*
- *Incumbents to have obtained the appropriate licence by the timeline below.*

Coaching Position	Coaching Licence	Incumbents timeline
National Team Coaches (from Joeys up)	Pro Diploma	2010
Assistant National Coaches*	A Licence	2011
A-League Head Coach	A Licence	2011
A-League Assistant Coach	A Licence	2012
Youth League Head Coach	B Licence	2010
W-League Head Coach	A Licence	2012
W-League Assistant Coach	B Licence	2012
AIS Head Coach	Pro Diploma	2010
AIS Senior Assistant Coach	A Licence	2010
AIS Assistant Coach	B Licence	2010
State Technical Directors	A Licence	2012
NTC Head Coach	A Licence	2012
NTC Assistant Coach	B Licence	2010
Junior State Team Coach	B Licence	2010
Skills Acquisition Trainer	B Licence + Skills Acquisition Trainer Licence	

* Socceroos Assistant Coaches: Pro Diploma

- By the start of season 2015/2016 all A-League coaches to have Pro Diploma accreditation.
- By the start of season 2012/2013 all Youth League head coaches to have A Licence accreditation.
- Goalkeeper coach accreditation is currently being reviewed in line with the restructured FFA Accreditation and Coaching Courses.



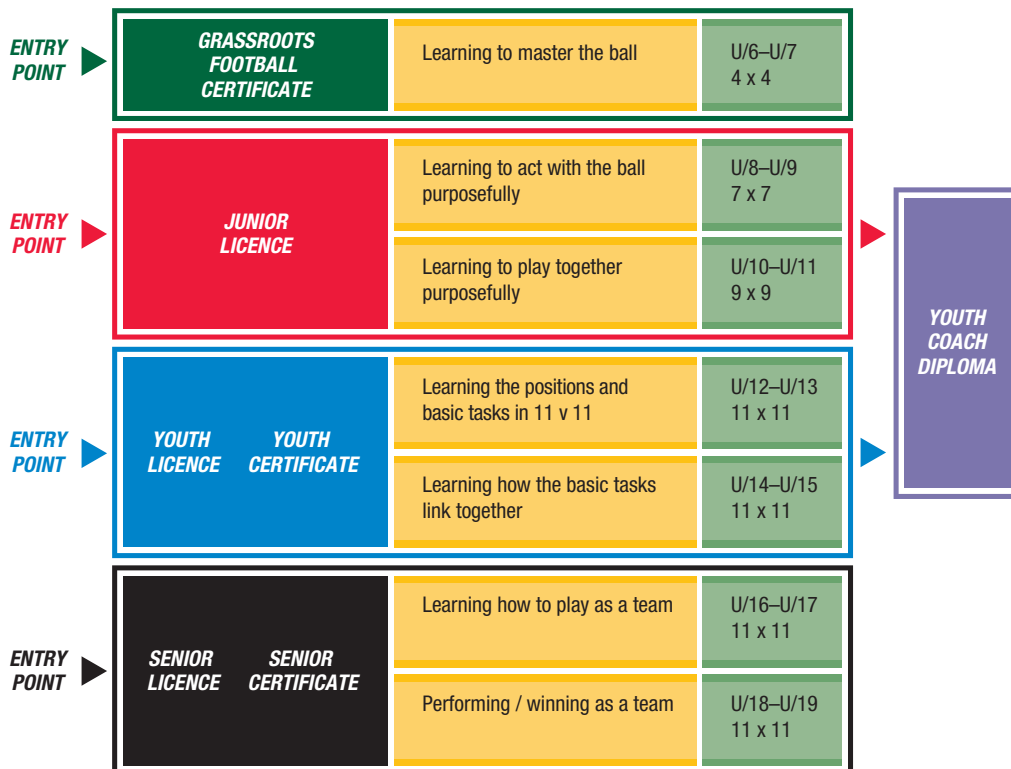
Initiative 4: Restructure of Coaching Courses

The Curriculum presupposes a network of talented coaches who understand and accept the principles and philosophy of the Curriculum and have the ability to implement the program for the benefit of the players.

FFA will organise / restructure coaching courses in order to develop highly qualified trainers and coaches and work together with the Member Federations to create more employment opportunities for specialised advanced level trainers and coaches.



RESTRUCTURE OF COMMUNITY PATHWAY COACHING COURSES

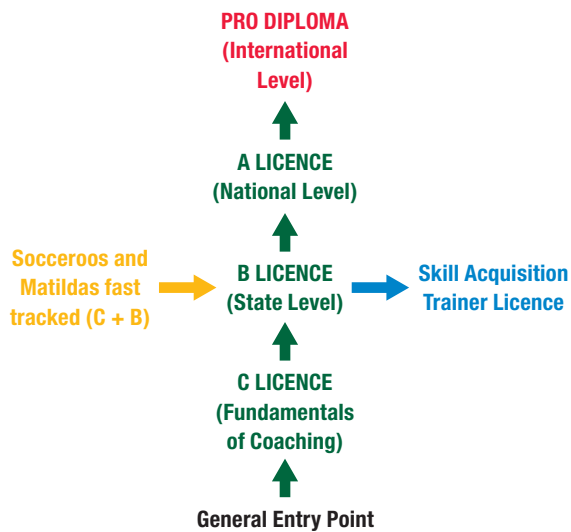


Implementation

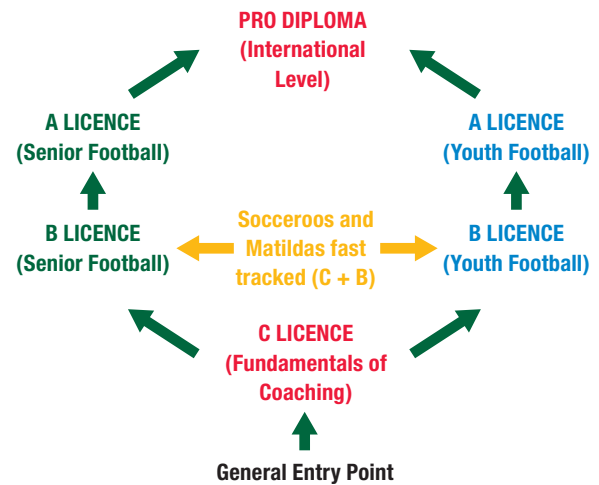


Restructure of Advanced Pathway Coaching Courses

Phase 1:



Phase 2:



Initiative 5: Accreditation and Rating

Multiple entities (e.g. clubs, associations, schools, and private academies) are involved in the development of talented players and we expect that to continue. These entities can differ dramatically in the contribution they make to talent development – but currently the differences are often not readily apparent in advance to potentially talented young players and their parents.

FFA will:

Introduce mechanisms that will make the relative contribution visible, based on objective criteria. The indicators will take two forms:

- **Accreditation** – based primarily on inputs (e.g. employment of accredited coaches; adherence to FFA curriculum)
- **Rating** – based primarily on outputs (e.g. improvement in player skills; young players selected for representative teams).

Entities for which talent development is a serious part of their role will want accreditation and rating – and the mechanisms proposed will provide them and their patrons with objective indicators of their suitability and success.

FFA and Member Federations will publicise and actively promote those entities that attain FFA Accreditation and Rating.

Initiative 6: Comprehensive Skills Testing

In the Community Pathway, FFA and Member Federations will:

Introduce and promote a framework for skills testing for boys and girls from age 8 to 12, its purpose being to:

- widely promote awareness of importance of skill development
- focus attention on relevant skills and standards for various age groups
- provide feedback to individuals and coaches, to aid learning
- provide visibility about development performance for players, coaches, clubs
- ensure maximum accessibility and supportiveness for all players especially in regional Australia.



Message from the Technical Director



Dear player, coach, parent and football fan, Football in Australia has seen significant progress in recent years culminating in the recent successes of the Qantas Socceroos and Westfield Matildas respective FIFA World Cups. Not only did both national teams perform with distinction but the general public suddenly became aware of the fact that our game is the biggest sport in the world.

Reaching the knockout stages of the FIFA World Cup is a great achievement, however for a country like Australia with such a proud sporting culture and very impressive list of sporting successes, is this enough? Having been in the country for only a relatively short time I can answer that with a resounding NO. Everyone I talk to dreams of going that step further ... to become a 'world leader in the world's game' like Australia already is in many other sports.

This is a huge challenge considering the true global nature of the sport and the fact that the traditional big football nations around the world are still ahead of us in many aspects.

Qualification for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa will provide football with another

massive boost and the Australian winner's mentality and desire will again be on show for the world to see.

This winner's mentality, however is simply not enough, strangely enough; it's actually one of the nation's 'problems' in relation to the development of the game. At too young an age there is too much emphasis on winning. As a result the focus on tactics and conditioning instead of skill development and creativity takes precedence.

Don't get me wrong: winning is important, just as it is everywhere in the world, so that will never change, nor should it. What needs to change is the way we go about developing our players and coaches to win. There is a difference!

At the world's top level all players are very fit and tactically well equipped but it's the skillful and creative ones such as Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Harry Kewell, that make the difference.

This National Football Curriculum is a culmination of extensive research and provides the guidelines for the changes in approach that football in Australia will have to take in order to

keep progressing towards realising the nation's lofty goal of becoming one of the world's best.

The only way to succeed is to bring this Curriculum to life in a uniform manner nationwide.

Football in Australia is on the threshold of an exciting period and these developments in football will continue to rapidly gain momentum.

Therefore I invite every lover of our wonderful game to join forces in making Australia a world leader in the world's game, an exciting challenge indeed!



Han Berger
FFA Technical Director



AUSTRALIA







AUSTRALIA

