



Procedural Rules Governing the AFC Entry Control Body

Edition 2024





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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Article	Contents	Page
DEFINITIONS		6
CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL PROVISIONS		8
1	OBJECTIVE	8
2	SCOPE	8
3	APPLICABLE MATERIAL LAW	8
CHAPTER TWO: ORGANISATION		9
SECTION 1: JURISDICTION		
4	AFC ENTRY CONTROL BODY	9
5	APPEAL	9
SECTION 2: ORGANISATIONAL RULES		
6	COMPOSITION	10
7	MEETINGS	10
8	CHAIR	11
9	WITHDRAWAL AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST	11
10	CONFIDENTIALITY	11
11	EXEMPTION FROM LIABILITY	12
CHAPTER THREE: PROCEDURE		13
SECTION 1: TIME LIMITS		
12	CALCULATION OF TIME LIMITS	13
13	COMPLIANCE WITH TIME LIMITS	13
14	PAUSE OF TIME LIMITS	14
15	EXTENSION OF TIME LIMITS	14
SECTION 2: RIGHT TO BE HEARD		
16	RIGHT TO BE HEARD	14
17	RESTRICTIONS	14

Article	Contents	Page
SECTION 3: EVIDENCE		
18	TYPES OF EVIDENCE	15
19	ANONYMOUS WITNESSES	15
20	IDENTIFICATION OF ANONYMOUS WITNESSES	16
21	STANDARD OF PROOF	16
22	BURDEN OF PROOF	16
23	COLLABORATION	16
SECTION 4: ORAL HEARINGS, DELIBERATIONS AND DECISIONS		
24	ORAL HEARINGS	17
25	PROCEDURE FOR ORAL HEARING	17
26	DELIBERATIONS	17
27	DECISIONS	18
SECTION 5: MISCELLANEOUS		
28	REPRESENTATION	18
29	LANGUAGE	18
30	COSTS AND EXPENSES	18
SECTION 6: PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE BODY		
31	PROCEEDINGS	19
32	NOTIFICATION OF DECISIONS	20
33	PUBLICATION OF DECISIONS	20
CHAPTER FOUR: ADMINISTRATION		21
34	DECISIONS	21
35	AMENDMENTS	21
36	MATTERS NOT PROVIDED FOR	21
37	AFC STATUTES	21
38	IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS	21
39	ENFORCEMENT	22

DEFINITIONS

In these Rules, capitalised terms shall have the following meanings, unless the context specifically indicates otherwise:

AFC	Asian Football Confederation
Body	The AFC Entry Control Body
Club	A professional club or an amateur club which participates in a league or competition under the auspices of a Football Association.
Competition	The AFC Champions League Elite, the AFC Champions League 2 or the AFC Challenge League.
Competition Regulations	The rules and regulations of the AFC applicable to each Competition (as updated or amended from time to time).
Entry Regulations	The AFC Club Competitions – Entry Regulations (as updated or amended from time to time).
Licensing Regulations	The AFC Club Licensing Regulations (as updated or amended from time to time).
Football Association	The controlling body for football within a country or territory recognised by the AFC.
Match	A football match in its entirety (including a replayed and/or deferred football match, extra time and penalty kicks) which takes place as part of a Competition in accordance with the match schedule. For the avoidance of doubt, a Match formally commences when the stadium is officially opened to spectators and formally concludes when the stadium is officially closed to spectators.

Member Association

A Football Association which is a member of the AFC.

Rules

These Procedural Rules Governing the AFC Entry Control Body.

For the purposes of these Rules, and provided the context so permits:

- (a) the singular shall include the plural and vice-versa;
- (b) the masculine gender shall include the feminine and vice-versa;
- (c) references to natural persons shall include any legal person or corporation; and
- (d) references to the AFC shall include its successors and permitted assigns.

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. OBJECTIVE

- 1.1. These Rules set out the rules and procedures for matters to be decided by the Body.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. The procedures of the Body shall be conducted in accordance with these Rules.
- 2.2. The final decisions made by the Body are of an administrative nature. They pertain solely to the eligibility of a Club to enter and participate in a Competition.

3. APPLICABLE MATERIAL LAW

- 3.1. In its application and adjudication of the law, the Body shall apply the AFC Statutes and AFC regulations.
- 3.2. The laws of Malaysia shall apply in a subsidiary manner.

CHAPTER TWO: ORGANISATION

Section 1: Jurisdiction

4. AFC ENTRY CONTROL BODY

- 4.1. The Body has jurisdiction to determine the eligibility of a Club to participate in a Competition to the extent and in the situations provided for in the Entry Regulations, Licensing Regulations, Competition Regulations, the AFC Statutes and any other AFC regulations, directives, guidelines, rules codes and circulars.
- 4.2. The chairperson or his replacement has jurisdiction to decide on the following matters alone:
 - 4.2.1. to decide whether the Body has jurisdiction to hear a matter; and
 - 4.2.2. to settle disputes arising from objections to members of the Body (cf. Article 9 of these Rules).

5. APPEAL

- 5.1. Those decisions of the Body that are appealable may be exclusively appealed before the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) within ten (10) days of notification of the decision.
- 5.2. Appeals shall be subject to the following limitations:
 - 5.2.1. the appeal shall automatically be subject to an expedited procedure and be completed (if relevant) prior to any Competition draw;
 - 5.2.2. the appeal shall be heard by three (3) arbitrators;
 - 5.2.3. the appeal shall be conducted in English; and
 - 5.2.4. any hearing, if required, shall be at the CAS Alternate Hearing Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Section 2: Organisational rules

6. COMPOSITION

- 6.1. The Body is independent of all other bodies of the AFC and makes its decisions independently.
 - 6.1.1. Its members shall not belong to the AFC Executive Committee, AFC General Secretariat, any AFC Standing Committee, or any other AFC judicial body.
 - 6.1.2. The chairperson shall have legal qualifications. The remaining members shall have legal qualifications and/or related experience.
- 6.2. The Body is composed of five (5) members made up of:
 - 6.2.1. one (1) chairperson; and
 - 6.2.2. four (4) deputy chairpersons (designated as first, second, third and fourth).
- 6.3. The members shall be elected by the AFC Congress upon the proposal of the AFC Executive Committee for a term of four (4) years.
- 6.4. The term commences from the day of appointment or election.

7. MEETINGS

- 7.1. The Body meets when convened by its chairperson or his replacement (as appropriate).
- 7.2. Subject to Article 4.2 of these Rules, meetings are deemed valid if at least three (3) members are present.
- 7.3. The Body's administrative organisation and support are conducted by the AFC General Secretariat. The AFC General Secretariat shall provide the Body with a secretariat and the necessary support, infrastructure and staff.
- 7.4. The AFC General Secretary appoints the secretary and deputy secretaries who shall be legally trained.
- 7.5. The secretariat takes charge of the administrative work and writes the minutes and decisions of the meetings.

- 7.6. The secretariat manages the case files. The decisions passed and the relevant files shall be kept for at least ten (10) years.

8. CHAIR

- 8.1. The chairperson or his replacement leads the meetings.
- 8.2. The chairperson or his replacement may make certain decisions acting alone as provided by these Rules.
- 8.3. If the chairperson is unavailable, the first deputy chairperson shall lead a meeting or make the required decision alone. This process shall continue with the remaining deputy chairpersons in descending order until a quorum is not achieved for those decisions requiring a quorum.

9. WITHDRAWAL AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 9.1. The members must recuse themselves from matters where there are serious grounds for questioning their impartiality.
- 9.2. This applies, without limitation, in the following cases:
- 9.2.1. if any conflict of interest exists or is perceived to exist;
 - 9.2.2. if the member is associated with any of the parties;
 - 9.2.3. if the member has the same nationality as a party implicated or any party central to the matter; or
 - 9.2.4. if the member has already dealt with the case under different circumstances.
- 9.3. Members who recuse themselves shall notify the chairperson in writing immediately.
- 9.4. A party may raise an objection to any member they believe to be conflicted. The chairperson or his replacement shall decide on such objections.

10. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 10.1. Unless otherwise expressly stated in these Rules, the members and parties shall ensure that all information and documentation disclosed to them during the course of any proceedings are treated as confidential (including the facts of the cases, the contents of any deliberations and all decisions taken).

- 10.2. Only the contents of those decisions already notified to the addressees may be made public (cf. Article 34 of these Rules).
- 10.3. Any person who is required to participate in or is subject to any investigation or proceedings must keep such information confidential at all times, unless the chairperson or his replacement explicitly stipulates otherwise in writing. Any breach of such duty may be referred to the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee.

11. EXEMPTION FROM LIABILITY

- 11.1. Neither the members nor the secretariat may be held liable for any action or omission relating to any procedure conducted pursuant to these Rules.

CHAPTER THREE: PROCEDURE

Section 1: Time limits

12. CALCULATION OF TIME LIMITS

- 12.1. As a general rule, decisions and other documents shall be directly sent to the party concerned (with the party's affiliated Member Association in copy). The starting time for a time limit for a party that has directly received a document shall commence the day after receipt of the relevant document.
- 12.2. If it is not possible to send decisions and other documents directly to the party concerned, they will be sent to the party's affiliated Member Association on condition that it immediately forwards them to the parties concerned. In such instances, the starting date for a time limit shall commence one (1) day after receipt of the relevant document by the affiliated Member Association.
- 12.3. If the last day of a time limit coincides with an official public holiday in the place of domicile of the party required to comply, the time limit will expire on the next day that is not an official public holiday. The relevant party shall notify the secretariat of any relevant official public holiday with proof.

13. COMPLIANCE WITH TIME LIMITS

- 13.1. Compliance occurs if the action required has been carried out before expiry of the time limit.
- 13.2. If the action required is the submission of a document, such document must be submitted or mailed no later than 23:59 hours on the last day of the time limit.
- 13.3. Parties shall submit documents by electronic mail.
- 13.4. Unless otherwise stated, any reference to a time and/or date in these Rules or in any communication or document issued by the secretariat or the Body in connection with these Rules shall be considered to be a reference to the time and/or date in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

14. PAUSE OF TIME LIMITS

- 14.1. Time limits are paused during the periods when AFC House is officially closed. The exact dates of the closure will be announced to the Member Associations via circular.

15. EXTENSION OF TIME LIMITS

- 15.1. The time limits fixed in these Rules shall not be extended.
- 15.2. Time limits that have been set by the secretariat may be extended, upon request.
- 15.3. A time limit set by the secretariat shall not be extended more than twice and, for the second time, only in exceptional circumstances.
- 15.4. The decision to extend a time limit or not is made by the secretariat. Such decisions are final and binding and not appealable.

Section 2: Right to be heard

16. RIGHT TO BE HEARD

- 16.1. A party shall be given the opportunity to be heard before any decision is made.
- 16.2. A party may, without limitation:
- 16.2.1. refer to the AFC file;
 - 16.2.2. present their argument in fact and in law;
 - 16.2.3. request production of proof;
 - 16.2.4. be involved in the production of proof; and
 - 16.2.5. obtain a reasoned decision.

17. RESTRICTIONS

- 17.1. The right to be heard may be restricted in exceptional circumstances. Such decisions shall be taken by the chairperson or his replacement.

- 17.2. Such decisions are final and binding and not appealable.

Section 3: Evidence

18. TYPES OF EVIDENCE

- 18.1. Any type of evidence may be produced. Evidence in a language other than English must be accompanied by a certified translation. The Body will have absolute discretion regarding the admissibility of any evidence and its evaluation.

19. ANONYMOUS WITNESSES

- 19.1. When an individual's testimony could endanger his life or put him or his family or close friends in physical danger, the chairperson or his replacement may order on request that:
- 19.1.1. the witness not be identified in the presence of a party;
 - 19.1.2. the witness not appear at the hearing; and
 - 19.1.3. all or some of the information that could be used to identify the witness be included only in a separate, confidential case file.
- 19.2. In view of all the circumstances and in particular if no other evidence is available to corroborate that of the anonymous witness and if it is technically possible, the chairperson or his replacement may exceptionally order on request, that:
- 19.2.1. the voice of the witness be distorted;
 - 19.2.2. the face of the witness be masked;
 - 19.2.3. the witness be questioned outside the hearing room; and
 - 19.2.4. the witness be questioned in writing through the chairperson or his replacement.
- 19.3. Anyone who reveals the identity of an anonymous witness or any information that could be used to identify an anonymous witness may have committed an offence under the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code and the matter shall be referred to the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee.

20. IDENTIFICATION OF ANONYMOUS WITNESSES

- 20.1. To ensure their safety, anonymous witnesses shall be identified behind closed doors in the absence of a party.
- 20.2. This witness identification shall be conducted by the chairperson or his replacement alone or by all members together and shall be recorded in minutes containing the witness's personal details.
- 20.3. These minutes shall not be communicated to any party.
- 20.4. The party shall receive a brief notice which:
 - 20.4.1. confirms that the anonymous witness has been formally identified; and
 - 20.4.2. contains no details that could be used to identify the anonymous witness.

21. STANDARD OF PROOF

- 21.1. The Body will have absolute discretion regarding proof.
- 21.2. The standard of proof shall be to the comfortable satisfaction of the members.

22. BURDEN OF PROOF

- 22.1. Any party that asserts a fact has the burden of proving it.

23. COLLABORATION

- 23.1. Anyone subject to these Rules is obliged to collaborate to establish facts if requested by the secretariat or the chairperson or his replacement. In particular, they shall comply with requests for information.
- 23.2. Anyone subject to these Rules that fails to collaborate may have committed an offence under the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code and the matter shall be referred to the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee.

Section 4: Oral hearings, deliberations and decisions

24. ORAL HEARINGS

- 24.1. As a general rule, there are no oral hearings and meetings of the Body are conducted in private (i.e., without the presence of the parties), with the Body deciding on the basis of the file.
- 24.2. The chairperson or his replacement may decide that a matter is suitable for oral hearing and request the party to attend an oral hearing. If the party declines or fails to respond to this invitation, the Body will reach a decision on the case using the file in their possession.
- 24.3. A party may request for an oral hearing. The chairperson or his replacement shall decide on any such request. This decision is final and binding and not appealable.
- 24.4. For the avoidance of doubt, no meeting, oral hearing and/or deliberations of the Body shall be held in public.

25. PROCEDURE FOR ORAL HEARING

- 25.1. The chairperson or his replacement decides on the procedure of any oral hearing.
- 25.2. Once the hearing of evidence has ended, the chairperson or his replacement allows the party against whom proceedings are being conducted a final opportunity to speak.
- 25.3. The oral hearing terminates with this closing statement.

26. DELIBERATIONS

- 26.1. The Body deliberates behind closed doors. The secretariat may arrange the deliberations and decision-making (and, where necessary, oral hearings) to be conducted via in-person meeting, telephone conference, video conference or any other method.
- 26.2. If an oral hearing has occurred, it will immediately be followed by deliberations.
- 26.3. Deliberations shall be conducted without interruption, unless there are exceptional circumstances as determined by the chairperson or his replacement at his discretion.

- 26.4. The chairperson or his replacement leads and decides the manner of deliberations.
- 26.5. The secretariat has consultative powers only.

27. DECISIONS

- 27.1. Decisions are passed by a simple majority of the members present and eligible to vote.
- 27.2. Every member present shall vote.
- 27.3. If votes are equal, the chairperson or his replacement has the casting vote.

Section 5: Miscellaneous

28. REPRESENTATION

- 28.1. A party may be legally represented.
- 28.2. A party is free to choose their own representation.
- 28.3. A party must provide written authorisation to be represented.

29. LANGUAGE

- 29.1. The language used in all proceedings shall be English.
- 29.2. A party may use the services of an interpreter. The costs of interpretation shall be borne by the party requiring the interpreter.

30. COSTS AND EXPENSES

- 30.1. Costs and expenses related to proceedings may be imposed on the unsuccessful party or split among several parties.
- 30.2. If there is no unsuccessful party, the costs and expenses shall be borne by the AFC.
- 30.3. The Body shall determine the amount (if any) for costs and expenses.

Section 6: Proceedings before the Body

31. PROCEEDINGS

- 31.1. Where the AFC opens proceedings, the secretariat shall notify the chairperson or his replacement and the directly affected Club(s) in writing and provide a full copy of the AFC case file.
- 31.2. A Club may request the opening of proceedings by making a written petition to the secretariat. The request shall contain the following particulars:
 - 31.2.1. the name and address(es) for service of the Club;
 - 31.2.2. the name and address(es) for service of its representative, if applicable, and the power of attorney;
 - 31.2.3. the identity of any Club(s) directly affected by its request to open proceedings;
 - 31.2.4. its full written argument with reference to the relevant AFC regulations;
 - 31.2.5. its full body of evidence;
 - 31.2.6. its requests for relief; and
 - 31.2.7. the date and a valid signature.
- 31.3. The secretariat shall assess whether the requirements listed above are complied with, and:
 - 31.3.1. If the request is compliant, the secretariat shall as soon as practicable after receipt, notify the chairperson or his replacement and the directly affected Club(s).
 - 31.3.2. If the request is not compliant, the secretariat shall inform the Club and request immediate rectification.
 - 31.3.3. Failure to provide a compliant request shall result in the matter not being decided upon by the Body.
- 31.4. The directly affected Club(s) shall have five (5) days to provide their written response to the petition filed by the AFC or a Club.

- 31.4.1. In cases of urgency, the chairperson or his replacement may shorten this time limit.
- 31.4.2. Such decisions are final and binding and not appealable.
- 31.5. The parties are not permitted to supplement or amend their arguments or requests for relief or to produce new evidence following their submissions. The secretariat may at any time request additional statements and/or documents which shall form part of the case file.
- 31.6. The chairperson or his replacement or secretariat may invite any party that it considers to be affected but which was not named in a petition to provide written submissions or participate in an oral hearing.
- 31.7. Where the jurisdiction of the Body to hear a matter is contested, the chairperson or his replacement may make a preliminary decision on jurisdiction.

32. NOTIFICATION OF DECISIONS

- 32.1. Any decision by the Body shall be immediately notified to the parties.
- 32.2. The parties shall only be notified of the terms of decision.
- 32.3. A party has ten (10) days from receipt to request in writing the grounds of the decision. Failure to comply shall result in the decision becoming final and binding and not appealable.
- 32.4. If a party requests the grounds of a decision, such grounds will be communicated in full, written form. The time limit to lodge an appeal begins upon receipt of the grounds of a decision.
- 32.5. Decisions shall be communicated by facsimile, email, or registered letter to be legally binding. Decisions enter into force as soon as they are notified.

33. PUBLICATION OF DECISIONS

- 33.1. The terms of decisions shall be published on the AFC website following notification.
- 33.2. The secretariat may redact information contained within the terms and/or grounds of a decision at its sole discretion.

CHAPTER FOUR: ADMINISTRATION

34. DECISIONS

- 34.1. The Body acts as a final-instance decision-making body.
- 34.2. All decisions made in accordance with these Rules, except where expressly identified otherwise, are final and binding and not appealable in accordance with the AFC Statutes.
- 34.3. As part of its deliberations, the Body may take into account extraordinary events or circumstances beyond the control of the relevant party which are considered to be cases of force majeure.

35. AMENDMENTS

- 35.1. The AFC reserves the right to make amendments to any part of these Rules for any reason whatsoever. Such amendments shall be duly communicated.

36. MATTERS NOT PROVIDED FOR

- 36.1. The Body shall have the final decision on any matters not provided for in these Rules. Such decisions are final and binding and not appealable.

37. AFC STATUTES

- 37.1. To the extent that these Rules are inconsistent with the AFC Statutes, the AFC Statutes shall prevail to the extent of the inconsistency.
- 37.2. To the extent that these Rules are inconsistent with any AFC regulations, these Rules shall prevail to the extent of the inconsistency.

38. IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS

- 38.1. The AFC General Secretariat is entrusted with the operational management of the Competitions and is therefore entitled to make decisions and adopt the detailed provisions necessary for implementing these Rules.

39. ENFORCEMENT

- 39.1. These Rules were ratified by the AFC Executive Committee on 28 February 2024 and came into force immediately.

For the AFC Executive Committee

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