



# AFC Club Competitions – Entry Regulations

Edition 2023

# **AFC CLUB COMPETITIONS - ENTRY REGULATIONS**

(EDITION 2023)

# CONTENTS

<b>PREAMBLE</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>DEFINITIONS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>SECTION 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS</b>	<b>7</b>
1. Scope of Application	7
2. AFC Club Competitions Ranking	7
<b>SECTION 2: Slot Allocation</b>	<b>8</b>
3. Slot Allocation	8
<b>SECTION 3: Member Association Eligibility Criteria</b>	<b>14</b>
4. Member Association Eligibility Criteria	14
<b>SECTION 4: ELIGIBILITY OF CLUBS</b>	<b>17</b>
5. Eligibility of Clubs	17
6. Club Licensing Criteria	17
7. Sporting Criteria	18
8. Integrity of AFC Club Competitions	19
9. Appeal	22
<b>SECTION 5: CLOSING PROVISIONS</b>	<b>23</b>
10. Draw Mechanism	23
11. Disciplinary Measures	23
12. Decisions	23
13. Amendments	23
14. Matters Not Provided For	23
15. Implementing Provisions	23
16. Enforcement	24
<b>Appendix 1: AFC Club Competitions Ranking Principles</b>	<b>25</b>

## PREAMBLE

These Entry Regulations set out the principles for allocating slots to Member Associations and their eligible clubs to participate in the AFC Club Competitions from the 2024/25 Sporting Season onwards.

These Entry Regulations shall be read in conjunction with the relevant competition regulations and circulars. These Entry Regulations form an integral part of any such competition regulations and/or circulars.

## DEFINITIONS

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

ACGL	The AFC Challenge League.
ACL Elite	The AFC Champions League Elite.
ACL Two	The AFC Champions League Two.
AFC Club Competitions	The AFC Champions League Elite, the AFC Champions League Two and the AFC Challenge League.
AFC Club Competitions Ranking	A ranking of the Member Associations based on the results of all their clubs in the AFC Club Competitions (and where applicable, the AFC Champions League™ and AFC Cup™) determined in accordance with Appendix 1 to these Entry Regulations.
East Ranking	The ranking for the East Region determined by the AFC Club Competitions Ranking.
East Region	The region comprising Member Associations from the ASEAN geographic zone and East geographic zone as identified in Article 7 of the AFC Statutes.
Entry Regulations	These AFC Club Competitions - Entry Regulations.
Member Association Eligibility Criteria	The criteria set out in Article 4 of these Entry Regulations.
Regional Ranking(s)	The West Ranking and/or East Ranking (as applicable).
Sporting Criteria	The criteria set out in Article 7 of these Entry Regulations.
Sporting Season	The period starting with the first official match of a competition and ending with the last official match of the relevant competition.
Titleholder	The champion of the most recently concluded edition of an AFC Club Competition.
West Ranking	The ranking for the West Region determined by the AFC Club Competitions Ranking.
West Region	The region comprising Member Associations from the West geographic zone, South geographic zone and Central geographic zone as identified in Article 7 of the AFC Statutes.

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

- (a) the singular shall include the plural and vice-versa;
- (b) the feminine gender shall include the masculine and vice-versa;
- (c) references to natural persons shall include any legal person or corporation;
- (d) references to the AFC shall include its successors and permitted assigns and, where the context requires, the AFC Committees;
- (e) references to the AFC Commercial Rights Partner or Commercial Affiliates shall include, where advised by the AFC, their successors and permitted assigns; and
- (f) all defined terms, unless otherwise stated herein shall bear the same meaning as ascribed in the AFC Statutes, the relevant AFC Competition Regulations, the AFC Competition Operations Manual and the AFC Club Licensing Regulations, unless the context indicates otherwise.

## SECTION 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS

### 1. Scope of Application

- 1.1. These Entry Regulations govern the entry of clubs into the AFC Club Competitions from the 2024/25 Sporting Season onwards.
- 1.2. These Entry Regulations set out the mechanism for allocating slots to Member Associations and their eligible clubs to participate in the AFC Club Competitions.
- 1.3. Any reference to the AFC Statutes and to AFC and FIFA regulations refers to those in force at the time of application.

### 2. AFC Club Competitions Ranking

- 2.1. The principles for determining the AFC Club Competitions Ranking are set out in Appendix 1 to these Entry Regulations. The calculations for the AFC Club Competitions Ranking carried out by the AFC General Secretariat are final and binding and not appealable.
- 2.2. The two (2) Regional Rankings shall be used to determine the number of slots allocated to each Member Association in the forthcoming AFC Club Competitions.
- 2.3. The AFC General Secretariat shall publish the AFC Club Competitions Ranking which shall be used to determine the Regional Rankings in accordance with the provisions set out in these Entry Regulations.

## SECTION 2: SLOT ALLOCATION

### 3. Slot Allocation

- 3.1. Subject to the other relevant provisions within these Entry Regulations, Member Associations in the West Ranking shall be allocated the following provisional positions and slots for AFC Club Competitions:

WEST RANK	ACL Elite		ACL Two		ACGL	
	DIRECT (LS)	INDIRECT (PS)	DIRECT (GS)	INDIRECT (PS)	DIRECT (GS)	INDIRECT (PS)
1	3		1			
2	2	1	1			
3	2	1	1			
4	1	1	1			
5	1		1			
6	1		1			
7			1	1		
8			1	1		
9			1	1		
10			1	1		
11				1	1	
12				1	1	
13					1	
14-25						1 each

\*LS: League Stage / GS: Group Stage / PS: Preliminary Stage



- 3.2. Subject to the other relevant provisions within these Entry Regulations, Member Associations in the East Ranking shall be allocated the following provisional positions and slots for AFC Club Competitions:

EAST RANK	ACL Elite		ACL Two		ACGL	
	DIRECT (LS)	INDIRECT (PS)	DIRECT (GS)	INDIRECT (PS)	DIRECT (GS)	INDIRECT (PS)
1	3		1			
2	2	1	1			
3	2	1	1			
4	1	1	1			
5	1		1			
6	1		1			
7			1	1		
8			1	1		
9			1	1		
10			1	1		
11				1		1
12				1		1
13-22						1 each

\* LS: League Stage / GS: Group Stage / PS: Preliminary Stage

- 3.3. For the avoidance of doubt, the AFC General Secretariat has the right to make any necessary adjustments to the slot allocations set out in Articles 3.1 and 3.2 in the manner provided for in these Entry Regulations. The adjusted slot allocation will be notified to the Member Associations by circular letter.

#### Clubs Eliminated in Preliminary Stage

- 3.4. Club(s) eliminated in the ACL Elite Preliminary Stage shall enter the ACL Two Group Stage for the same Sporting Season. In such cases, the relevant Member Association(s) shall receive additional ACL Two direct slot(s) only for the specific purpose of admitting the Club(s) that are eliminated in the ACL Elite Preliminary Stage (i.e. the relevant Member Association's previously allocated slots in ACL Two will not be affected).
- 3.5. Club(s) eliminated in the ACL Two Preliminary Stage shall enter the ACGL Group Stage for the same Sporting Season. In such cases, the relevant Member Association(s) shall receive additional ACGL direct slot(s) only for the specific purpose of admitting the Club(s) that are eliminated in the ACL Two Preliminary Stage (i.e. the relevant Member Association's previously allocated slots in ACGL will not be affected).

### Slots for Titleholders

- 3.6. The Titleholder of each AFC Club Competition shall be allocated a slot in the next edition of AFC Club Competitions as follows:
  - 3.6.1. the ACL Elite Titleholder shall be allocated an ACL Elite direct slot;
  - 3.6.2. the ACL Two Titleholder shall be allocated an ACL Elite indirect slot; and
  - 3.6.3. the ACGL Titleholder shall be allocated an ACL Two direct slot.
- 3.7. All Titleholders shall be allocated the relevant slots as per Article 3.6 even if they do not qualify for the relevant AFC Club Competition by virtue of failing to meet the Sporting Criteria.
- 3.8. Notwithstanding Articles 3.6 and 3.7, the Titleholders must meet the eligibility requirements set out in Articles 4, 6 and 8 in order for the relevant slot(s) to be allocated to them.
- 3.9. Unless decided otherwise by the AFC, where any Titleholder participates in the next edition of the AFC Club Competition of which it is the Titleholder, it shall, for operational purposes (e.g. seeding for entries, draws), be deemed to be the highest-seeded club within the relevant stage (i.e. Preliminary Stage or Group Stage/League Stage) of that AFC Club Competition. For the avoidance of doubt, this provision shall apply as follows:
  - 3.9.1. the ACL Elite Titleholder shall be deemed the highest-seeded club of the ACL Elite League Stage and Preliminary Stage;
  - 3.9.2. the ACL Two Titleholder shall be deemed the highest-seeded club of the ACL Two Group Stage and Preliminary Stage; and
  - 3.9.3. the ACGL Titleholder shall be deemed the highest-seeded club of the ACGL Group Stage and Preliminary Stage.
- 3.10. Where any Titleholder, by virtue of meeting the relevant Sporting Criteria, qualifies for the relevant stage of the AFC Club Competition to which it is entitled in accordance with Articles 3.6.1 to 3.6.3, it shall occupy an existing slot allocated to its Member Association.
- 3.11. Where the ACL Two Titleholder qualifies for a direct slot in the next edition of the ACL Elite by virtue of meeting the Sporting Criteria, it shall occupy an existing slot allocated to its Member Association. Where the ACGL Titleholder qualifies for any slot in the next edition of the ACL Elite by virtue of meeting the Sporting Criteria, it shall occupy an existing slot allocated to its Member Association.
- 3.12. Where the ACL Elite Titleholder does not qualify for a direct slot in the next edition of the ACL Elite by virtue of failing to meet the Sporting Criteria, then either:
  - 3.12.1. it shall occupy an existing ACL Elite direct slot allocated to its Member Association. In such case, the ACL Elite Titleholder shall be deemed to be the highest-seeded club from its Member Association in the ACL Elite League Stage for the purposes of club entries; or

- 3.12.2. one (1) additional ACL Elite direct slot shall be allocated to the Member Association for the ACL Elite Titleholder in cases where the relevant Member Association has no ACL Elite direct slot based on its Regional Ranking (*cf. Articles 3.1 & 3.2*) or has only one (1) ACL Elite direct slot but the slot is allocated to the winner of its domestic top division league as per Article 7.1.3. In such case, the ACL Elite Titleholder shall be deemed to be the highest-seeded club from its Member Association in the ACL Elite League Stage for the purposes of club entries.
- 3.13. Where the ACL Two Titleholder does not qualify for an indirect slot in the next edition of the ACL Elite by virtue of failing to meet the Sporting Criteria, then either:
  - 3.13.1. It shall occupy an existing ACL Elite indirect slot allocated to its Member Association. In such case, the ACL Two Titleholder shall be deemed to be the lowest-seeded club from its Member Association in the ACL Elite Preliminary Stage for the purposes of club entries; or
  - 3.13.2. One (1) additional ACL Elite indirect slot shall be allocated to the Member Association for the ACL Two Titleholder in cases where the relevant Member Association has no ACL Elite indirect slot based on its Regional Ranking (*cf. Articles 3.1 & 3.2*) or has only one (1) ACL Elite indirect slot but the slot is allocated to the winner of its domestic top division league as per Article 7.1.3. In such case, the ACL Two Titleholder shall be deemed to be the lowest-seeded club in the ACL Elite Preliminary Stage for the purposes of club entries.
- 3.14. In case the ACGL Titleholder does not qualify for a direct slot in the next edition of the ACL Two by virtue of failing to meet the Sporting Criteria, then either:
  - 3.14.1. it shall occupy an existing ACL Two direct slot allocated to its Member Association. In such case, the ACGL Titleholder shall be deemed to be the lowest-seeded club from its Member Association in the ACL Two Group Stage for the purposes of club entries; or
  - 3.14.2. one (1) additional ACL Two direct slot shall be allocated to the Member Association for the ACGL Titleholder in cases where the relevant Member Association has no ACL Two direct slot based on its Regional Ranking (*cf. Articles 3.1 & 3.2*) or has only one (1) ACL Two direct slot but the slot is allocated to the winner of its domestic top division league as per Article 7.1.3. In such case, the ACGL Titleholder shall be deemed to be the lowest-seeded club in the ACL Two Group Stage for the purposes of club entries.
- 3.15. Subject to the exceptions stipulated in Articles 3.12 to 3.14, the total number of slots allocated to the relevant Member Association shall not change as a result of the operation of Articles 3.10 to 3.14. Subject to Articles 3.19 and 3.20, the remaining slots of the relevant Member Association in the AFC Club Competitions shall be reallocated to the next-best seeded eligible Clubs in accordance with Article 7.3.

### Principles for Redistribution of Slots

- 3.16. A redistribution of direct slots shall occur in accordance with Article 3.17 in cases where:
- 3.16.1. any Member Association fails to fulfil any of the Member Association Eligibility Criteria; or
  - 3.16.2. as per the Regional Ranking (*cf. Articles 3.1 & 3.2*), any Member Association has more direct slots allocated to it than the number of maximum slots provided for in Article 3.19; or
  - 3.16.3. any Member Association has more direct slots allocated to it than the number of its eligible clubs (*cf. Section 4*); or
  - 3.16.4. otherwise expressly provided for in these Entry Regulations.
- 3.17. In case of a redistribution of direct slots, the following principles shall be applied within the relevant AFC Club Competition:
- 3.17.1. subject to Articles 3.19 and 3.20, any direct slot(s) that were forfeited shall be redistributed to the highest eligible Member Association in the same Regional Ranking of the same AFC Club Competition as follows:
    - 3.17.1.1. ACL Elite: redistribution of any such direct slot(s) shall be amongst Member Associations ranked 6th or higher in the same Regional Ranking.
    - 3.17.1.2. ACL Two: redistribution of any such direct slot(s) shall be amongst Member Associations ranked 12th or higher in the same Regional Ranking.
    - 3.17.1.3. ACGL: redistribution of any such direct slot(s) shall be amongst Member Associations ranked 11th or lower in the same Regional Ranking.
  - 3.17.2. should a Member Association receive direct slot(s) via a redistribution, an equal number of indirect slot(s) already allocated to the Member Association (if any) for the same AFC Club Competition shall be annulled and such slot(s) shall not be redistributed (e.g. 2+1 becomes 3+0).
- 3.18. For the avoidance of doubt, any indirect slot which is not allocated to an eligible club shall be annulled and not be redistributed.

### Maximum Number of Slots allocated to a Member Association

- 3.19. With the exception of any adjustments to slot(s) allocated to a Member Association in accordance with Articles 3.4, 3.5, 3.12.2, 3.13.2 and 3.14.2, the maximum number of total slots (direct and indirect) allocated to a Member Association across all AFC Club Competitions shall be limited to whichever number is the lower of the following:
- 3.19.1. A maximum of four (4) slots; or
  - 3.19.2. one-third (1/3) of the total number of clubs in the domestic top division league of the Member Association. For the avoidance of doubt, when determining the total number of clubs in the domestic top division league of a Member Association, 'foreign' clubs (i.e. clubs which are not affiliated to the relevant Member Association) shall not be considered. The AFC General Secretariat has the sole discretion to determine whether a club shall be considered 'foreign' for such purposes.
- 3.20. With the exception of any adjustments to slot(s) allocated to a Member Association in accordance with Articles 3.4, 3.5, 3.12.2, 3.13.2, 3.14.2 and 4.3, the maximum number of slots allocated to a Member Association in each specific AFC Club Competition shall be limited to the following:

COMPETITION	MAX. TOTAL SLOTS	MAX. DIRECT SLOTS	MAX. INDIRECT SLOTS
ACL Elite	3	3	1
ACL Two	2	2	1
ACGL	1	1	1

## SECTION 3: MEMBER ASSOCIATION ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

### 4. Member Association Eligibility Criteria

- 4.1. Member Associations must meet the Member Association Eligibility Criteria as set out below in order to be eligible to obtain direct slots for the respective AFC Club Competition:

<b>Criterion 1: Technical Standard</b>			
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ACL Elite</b>	<b>ACL Two</b>	<b>ACGL</b>
a) Member Association must be ranked in the Regional Ranking for the respective AFC Club Competition	6 <sup>th</sup> or higher (except for ACL Elite Titleholders)	12 <sup>th</sup> or higher (except for ACGL Titleholders)	11 <sup>th</sup> or lower (except for Clubs eliminated from ACL Two Preliminary Stage)

<b>Criterion 2: Club Licensing System</b>			
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ACL Elite</b>	<b>ACL Two</b>	<b>ACGL</b>
a) Must have established a Club Licensing Administration within the Member Association or League, evidenced by: (i) a full-time Club Licensing Manager; (ii) a First Instance Body and Appeal Body; (iii) Club Licensing Regulations accredited by the AFC; and	✓	✓	✓
b) Club Licensing requirements applied to at least the domestic top division league.	✓	✓	✓

<b>Criterion 3: Sporting Integrity</b>			
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ACL Elite</b>	<b>ACL Two</b>	<b>ACGL</b>
a) An integrity officer appointed within the Member Association	✓	✓	✓
b) Regulations/disciplinary code(s) prohibiting and sanctioning match manipulation/match fixing	✓	✓	✓
c) A reporting mechanism and whistleblower policy for match manipulation/match fixing	✓	✓	✓
d) An education seminar for players and team officials per domestic Sporting Season	✓	✓	✓

<b>Criterion 4: Organisation of Professional Football League</b>			
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ACL Elite</b>	<b>ACL Two</b>	<b>ACGL</b>
a) A minimum of twenty-seven (27) matches per club in the domestic top division (including the domestic top division league, domestic cup and any grand final if applicable)	✓	✓	
b) Domestic top division shall have a minimum of eight (8)-month duration (including the domestic top division league, domestic cup and any grand final if applicable)	✓	✓	
c) An existing domestic top division (including the domestic top division league, domestic cup and any grand final if applicable)			✓
d) A home and away league format for the domestic top division league in which no stadium is shared by more than two (2) clubs	✓	✓	✓
e) An operational referees' department	✓	✓	✓
f) An education programme for referees	✓	✓	
g) Appointed referee assessors at matches	✓	✓	
h) Appointed match commissioners at matches	✓	✓	✓
i) Competition regulations	✓	✓	✓
j) National regulations for the status and transfer of players	✓	✓	✓
k) A national and/or league disciplinary and ethics code	✓	✓	✓
l) A national or league safety and security guidelines	✓	✓	✓
m) Appointed safety and security officers at matches	✓	✓	✓
n) Accurate measurements of attendance and announcement(s) of the figure at matches	✓	✓	
o) A highest decision-making body of the league (or for league matters), comprising members from relevant stakeholders who reflect the interest of different parties (e.g. representatives from clubs, the league, the Member Association, independent organisations and/or individuals)	✓	✓	✓
p) A full-time dedicated official who oversees operational matters for the league	✓	✓	✓
q) A dedicated management structure for the league	✓	✓	✓
r) An audited profit and loss statement and balance sheet for the league	✓	✓	✓
s) Frequent delivery of content of league matches and broadcasting of league matches through TV and/or other available communication platform(s)	✓	✓	
t) Media opportunity to cover matches both on match days and non-match days	✓	✓	✓

<b>Criterion 5: Stadium</b>			
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ACL Elite</b>	<b>ACL Two</b>	<b>ACGL</b>
a) The Member Association must have at least this number of stadiums in the domestic top division league that: (i) comply with the AFC Stadium Regulations; and (ii) comply with the AFC Safety and Security Regulations.	2	2	1

<b>Criterion 6: Logistics, Visa and Accommodation</b>			
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ACL Elite</b>	<b>ACL Two</b>	<b>ACGL</b>
a) A straightforward process for obtaining visas	✓	✓	✓
b) Daily international flights within the respective region (i.e. West Region or East Region)	✓	✓	✓
c) Simplified airport procedure, straightforward immigration/customs process	✓	✓	✓
d) Well-established local transportation infrastructure	✓	✓	✓
e) Teams and official hotels at the applicable standard	✓	✓	✓

- 4.2. Member Associations shall be responsible for ensuring that all criteria listed in Article 4.1 have been met and are properly implemented. The AFC General Secretariat may request Member Associations to provide information for assessments and is solely responsible for determining whether a Member Association meets the Member Association Eligibility Criteria.
- 4.3. With the exception of any additional slot(s) allocated to a Member Association in accordance with Articles 3.4 and 3.5, Member Associations that fail to fulfil the Member Association Eligibility Criteria shall, subject to Article 4.4, be eligible to be allocated only indirect slots for the relevant AFC Club Competition. In such cases, the number of direct slots for the relevant Member Association(s) in the relevant AFC Club Competition shall be wholly converted into indirect slots (e.g. 2+1 becomes 0+3).
- 4.4. Member Associations which are allocated only indirect slots must, as a minimum, meet the following criteria:
- 4.4.1. Criterion 5: Stadium;
  - 4.4.2. Criterion 6: Logistics, Visa and Accommodation; and
  - 4.4.3. their eligible club(s) must be licensed in accordance with Article 6.
- 4.5. In case of failure to meet the minimum conditions in accordance with Article 4.4, the indirect slot(s) allocated to the relevant Member Association shall be annulled and not redistributed.



## SECTION 4: ELIGIBILITY OF CLUBS

### 5. Eligibility of Clubs

- 5.1. To be eligible to participate in the AFC Club Competitions, a club must:
  - 5.1.1. be granted a licence in accordance with Article 6;
  - 5.1.2. meet the Sporting Criteria; and
  - 5.1.3. comply with the rules on the integrity of the AFC Club Competitions as set out in Article 8.
- 5.2. In case of failure to meet any of the criteria defined in Article 5.1, a club shall be considered ineligible to participate in the AFC Club Competitions. Accordingly, subject to Articles 3.19 and 3.20, such club shall be replaced by the next-best seeded eligible club from the same Member Association in accordance with Article 7.3.

### 6. Club Licensing Criteria

- 6.1. Member Associations are required to implement a national club licensing system for all the clubs within their domestic top division league, in accordance with the AFC Club Licensing Regulations.
- 6.2. Clubs that meet the Sporting Criteria must have validly received a licence from the relevant national licensor.
- 6.3. Where a Member Association has fewer licensed clubs than slots allocated to it:
  - 6.3.1. any direct slot(s) shall be redistributed in accordance with Article 3.17; and
  - 6.3.2. any indirect slot(s) shall be annulled and not redistributed.

#### Extraordinary Application

- 6.4. Where a club has not acquired a licence from the relevant national licensor, that licensor may, on behalf of such club, request an extraordinary application of the club licensing system in accordance with the AFC Club Licensing Regulations.
- 6.5. Member Associations which do not have an approved national licensing process shall only request an extraordinary application once for each relevant club. This limit includes all requests undertaken in previous AFC Club Competitions Sporting Seasons.

#### AFC Entry Control Body

- 6.6. The AFC Club Licensing Regulations set out the matters relating to the club licensing criteria that may be lodged or appealed before the AFC Entry Control Body. Such decisions shall be made in accordance with the Procedural Rules Governing the AFC Entry Control Body.

## 7. Sporting Criteria

- 7.1. Subject to the relevant provisions of these Entry Regulations, each Member Association shall set the methodology for nomination of its representative club(s) for the AFC Club Competitions. Notwithstanding the foregoing, each Member Association shall ensure that, without exception:
  - 7.1.1. subject to Articles 3.6 to 3.14, its club(s) qualify for the AFC Club Competitions based on sporting merit;
  - 7.1.2. it clearly identifies a domestic top division league and domestic cup (if applicable) for the purposes of these Entry Regulations;
  - 7.1.3. subject to Articles 3.9, 3.12, 3.13 and 3.14, the highest-seeded club nominated by the Member Association is the winner of its domestic top division league. In case the domestic top division league consists of different formats (e.g. a Knockout Stage after the completion of a League Stage), the Member Association shall be responsible for determining the winner of the domestic top division league as part of its nomination principles;
  - 7.1.4. the principles of objectivity, transparency and non-discrimination are respected with a view to ensuring fair entry into the AFC Club Competitions; and
  - 7.1.5. the nomination principles are approved by the relevant competent bodies within its Member Association and/or League prior to submission to the AFC.
- 7.2. Member Associations shall submit their proposed methodology for nominating their representative clubs to the AFC in writing by no later than 31 March preceding the start of the relevant AFC Club Competition Sporting Season. Once submitted, Member Associations shall only be required to resubmit their proposed methodology for the subsequent AFC Club Competition Sporting Seasons if any changes have been made to the methodology (in which case the aforementioned deadline shall apply).
- 7.3. Member Associations shall submit a list of eligible clubs with their respective seedings for the relevant AFC Club Competitions in accordance with the principles set out in these Entry Regulations to the AFC in writing by no later than 15 June preceding the start of the relevant AFC Club Competition Sporting Season.
- 7.4. Only clubs finishing in the top fifty percent (50%) of the final ranking in the domestic top division league (based on the total number of clubs that participated on its first match day) are eligible to meet the Sporting Criteria. For the avoidance of doubt, this Article 7.4 shall not apply to the winner of a domestic cup competition.
  - 7.4.1. For example, in a domestic top division league of twelve (12) clubs, only the top six (6) are eligible to participate in the AFC Club Competitions on the basis of their finishing position.
  - 7.4.2. For the avoidance of doubt, if the same domestic top division league commenced the Sporting Season with twelve (12) clubs, but only ten (10) completed the full Sporting Season for whatever reason, the top six (6) are eligible to participate in the AFC Club Competitions on the basis of their finishing position.

- 7.4.3. For the avoidance of doubt, when calculating the number of clubs that participated on the first match day of a domestic top division league and the final finishing position, 'foreign clubs' (i.e. clubs which are not affiliated to the relevant Member Association) shall not be considered. The AFC General Secretariat has the sole discretion to determine whether a club shall be considered 'foreign' for the above purpose.
- 7.5. This Article 7 shall only take into consideration the domestic top division league and domestic cup ending in the domestic Sporting Season immediately preceding the relevant AFC Club Competition.
- 7.5.1. Where there was no domestic top division league and/or domestic cup(s) held in the domestic Sporting Season immediately preceding the relevant AFC Club Competition, the relevant Member Association shall submit a written proposal to nominate the representative club(s) to the AFC for its approval by no later than the deadline stipulated in Article 7.2.

#### Eligible Club refuses to enter AFC Club Competition

- 7.6. For the avoidance of doubt, in case a club is eligible to participate in more than one (1) AFC Club Competition, it shall participate in the highest-tier AFC Club Competition for which it is eligible. If an eligible club refuses to enter any AFC Club Competition, despite meeting the criteria in accordance with Article 5.1, the slot(s) allocated to its Member Association shall be:
- 7.6.1. for any direct slot(s): redistributed in accordance with Article 3.17;
- 7.6.2. for any indirect slot(s): annulled and not redistributed.

### 8. Integrity of AFC Club Competitions

- 8.1. To ensure the integrity of AFC Club Competitions, clubs shall comply with all the provisions of this Article 8.
- 8.2. Decisions of the AFC Entry Control Body shall be made in accordance with the Procedural Rules Governing the AFC Entry Control Body.

#### Clubs directly or indirectly involved in Match Manipulation

- 8.3. If, on the basis of all the factual circumstances and information available to it, the AFC Entry Control Body concludes to its comfortable satisfaction that a club has been directly and/or indirectly involved, since the entry into force of Article 73.6 of the AFC Statutes on 8 June 2010 (or its future equivalents), in any activity aimed at arranging or influencing the outcome of a match at national or international level, such club shall be declared ineligible to participate in the AFC Club Competitions. Such ineligibility is effective for only one (1) Sporting Season.
- 8.3.1. When making this administrative decision, the AFC Entry Control Body can rely on, but is not bound by, a decision of a national or international sporting body, arbitral tribunal or state court.

- 8.3.2. The AFC Entry Control Body can refrain from declaring a club ineligible to participate in the AFC Club Competition if it is comfortably satisfied that the impact of a decision made in connection with the same factual circumstances by a national or international sporting body, arbitral tribunal or state court has already had the effect to prevent that club from participating in an AFC Club Competition.

#### Control or Influence of Clubs

- 8.4. The following criteria aim to safeguard the integrity of the AFC Club Competitions and its matches. Clubs must be committed to ensuring that they conform to the highest ethical and sporting standards regarding matters of control and influence.

In this regard:

- 8.4.1. No participating club may, either directly or indirectly:
- 8.4.1.1. hold or deal in the securities or shares of any other participating club;
  - 8.4.1.2. be a member of any other participating club;
  - 8.4.1.3. be involved in any capacity whatsoever in the management, administration and/or sporting performance of any other participating club; and/or
  - 8.4.1.4. have any power whatsoever in the management, administration and/or sporting performance of any other participating club,
- if there is a material risk that such circumstance(s) would actually or potentially jeopardise the integrity of an AFC Club Competition and/or any match in an AFC Club Competition.
- 8.4.2. No individual or legal entity may simultaneously be involved, either directly or indirectly, in any capacity whatsoever in the management, administration and/or sporting performance of more than one (1) participating club if there is a material risk that this would actually or potentially jeopardise the integrity of an AFC Club Competition and/or any match in an AFC Club Competition.
- 8.4.3. No individual or legal entity may have control or influence over more than one (1) participating club if there is a material risk that this would actually or potentially jeopardise the integrity of an AFC Club Competition and/or any match in an AFC Club Competition.

In this context, control or influence shall be defined as:

- 8.4.3.1. holding a majority of the shareholders' voting rights in the relevant participating club(s);
- 8.4.3.2. having the right to appoint or remove a majority of the members of the administrative, management, or supervisory body of the relevant participating club(s);

- 8.4.3.3. being a shareholder and alone controlling a majority of the shareholders' voting rights in the relevant participating club(s) pursuant to an agreement entered into with other shareholders of the relevant participating club(s); and/or
  - 8.4.3.4. being able to exercise by any means a decisive influence in the decision-making of the relevant participating club(s).
- 8.5. The burden of proof shall rest on the relevant club to prove its compliance with the provisions of Article 8.4 and the AFC shall be entitled, at its discretion, to request information from the relevant club in this regard.
- 8.6. If the AFC considers that any clubs may not or do not comply with Article 8.4, it shall refer the matter to the AFC Entry Control Body. The AFC Entry Control Body shall make all final decisions in this regard.
- 8.7. Should the AFC Entry Control Body determine that any clubs do not comply with Article 8.4 then only one (1) of the relevant clubs may be admitted to compete in the relevant AFC Club Competition (including the potential case of clubs competing in the same AFC Club Competition due to the operation of Articles 3.4 and 3.5). In such case, Article 8.8, 8.9 or 8.10 shall be implemented by the AFC.
- 8.8. If the non-compliance is determined prior to the relevant clubs' participation in the relevant AFC Club Competition and the AFC determines at its discretion that it is reasonably practicable to do so, then, subject to their compliance with these Entry Regulations and provided that the applicable slot allocations allow it, the relevant club(s) may be admitted to different AFC Club Competition(s) in accordance with the following principles (to apply in descending order):
- 8.8.1. in the first instance, where applicable, the eligible club which qualifies on sporting merit for the higher-tier AFC Club Competition shall have priority (i.e. in descending order, as applicable: ACL Elite, ACL Two or ACGL);
  - 8.8.2. if, having applied Article 8.8.1, and the relevant eligible clubs are affiliated to different Member Associations, the eligible club which is affiliated to a Member Association with the higher ranking in the AFC Club Competitions Ranking shall have priority; and
  - 8.8.3. if, having applied Article 8.8.2, and the relevant eligible clubs are affiliated to the same Member Association, the eligible club which is the higher seed shall have priority.

For the avoidance of doubt, it is not necessarily the case that all of the relevant clubs will be admitted to the AFC Club Competitions.

- 8.9. If the AFC determines at its discretion that it is not reasonably practicable to implement the provisions of Article 8.8 for whatever reason(s) then the AFC shall determine the next steps at its discretion, having regard to the importance of safeguarding the integrity and smooth operation of the AFC Club Competitions and matches in the AFC Club Competitions.

- 8.10. If the non-compliance is determined after the relevant clubs' participation in the relevant AFC Club Competition then the relevant clubs shall be permitted to complete the AFC Club Competition, however, the relevant clubs shall be declared ineligible to participate in the AFC Club Competitions for the following two (2) Sporting Seasons.
- 8.11. For the avoidance of doubt, nothing in these Entry Regulations shall be interpreted as limiting the ability of the AFC to initiate disciplinary proceedings in accordance with the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code.

## 9. Appeal

- 9.1. Any appeal against a decision of the AFC Entry Control Body shall be made in accordance with the Procedural Rules Governing the AFC Entry Control Body.

## SECTION 5: CLOSING PROVISIONS

### 10. Draw Mechanism

- 10.1. The draw mechanism for the AFC Club Competitions shall be published by the AFC General Secretariat in advance of any draw.

### 11. Disciplinary Measures

- 11.1. All disciplinary measures in relation to these Entry Regulations shall be undertaken in accordance with the current AFC Statutes, AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code and any relevant AFC circular.

### 12. Decisions

- 12.1. All decisions made in accordance with these Entry Regulations, except where expressly identified otherwise, are final and binding and not appealable in accordance with the AFC Statutes.

### 13. Amendments

- 13.1. The AFC reserves the right to make amendments to any part of these Entry Regulations for any reason whatsoever. Such amendments shall be duly communicated to the Member Associations and clubs in due course.

### 14. Matters Not Provided For

- 14.1. Matters not provided for in these Entry Regulations shall be decided by the AFC Competitions Committee. Such decisions are final and binding and not appealable.

### 15. Implementing Provisions

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

## 16. Enforcement

- 16.1. These Entry Regulations were ratified by the AFC Executive Committee on 19 October 2023 and, subject to Article 16.2 of these Entry Regulations, came into force immediately.
- 16.2. These Entry Regulations shall be applicable to the AFC Club Competitions from the 2024/25 Sporting Season onwards.
- 16.3. For the avoidance of doubt, the Entry Manual for AFC Club Competitions (2021 Edition) shall be applicable to the editions of the AFC Champions League™ and AFC Cup™ taking place prior to the 2024/25 Sporting Season.

For the AFC Executive Committee

Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa  
President

Datuk Seri Windsor John  
General Secretary



## APPENDIX 1: AFC CLUB COMPETITIONS RANKING PRINCIPLES

### How are the rankings determined?

The AFC Club Competitions Ranking is a ranking of Member Associations based on the results of all their clubs in the AFC Club Competitions (and where applicable, the AFC Champions League™ and AFC Cup™) over the previous eight (8) relevant Sporting Seasons. To ensure the rankings better reflect the latest sporting results, points obtained in each relevant Sporting Season have a different weighted value as below:

SPORTING SEASON	Y	Y-1	Y-2	Y-3	Y-4	Y-5	Y-6	Y-7
WEIGHTED VALUE	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3

\* Y = most recently concluded AFC Club Competitions Sporting Season

\* The 2020 Sporting Season is excluded from all point calculations and Y-8 will be included instead for such cases

*e.g. calculation of points for 2023/24 ranking*

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Points for 2023/24 Ranking} = & \quad 2023/24 \text{ points} \times 1 \\
 & + 2022 \text{ points} \times 0.9 \\
 & + 2021 \text{ points} \times 0.8 \\
 & + 2019 \text{ points} \times 0.7 \\
 & + 2018 \text{ points} \times 0.6 \\
 & + 2017 \text{ points} \times 0.5 \\
 & + 2016 \text{ points} \times 0.4 \\
 & + 2015 \text{ points}^* \times 0.3 \quad \text{*included as Y-8, instead of 2020}
 \end{aligned}$$

The rankings determine the slot allocation of each Member Association in the forthcoming AFC Club Competitions.

## How are the Points of each Sporting Season calculated?

From the 2024/25 Sporting Season, each participating club is awarded points as follows:

		ACL Elite	ACL Two	ACGL
Preliminary Stage	Win	0.3	0.3	0.3
	Draw	0.15	0.15	0.15
League/Group Stage & Knockout Stage	Win	3	3	3
	Draw	1	1	1
Participation Bonus	Preliminary Stage			0.5
	League/Group Stage	3	3	3
	Round of 16	3	3	
	Quarter Finals	1.5	1.5	3
	Semi Finals	1.5	1.5	1.5
	Final	1.5	1.5	1.5

### Preliminary Stage

- Performance points (points for win and draw) shall be adjusted per AFC Club Competition as follows:
  - ACL Two points = two-thirds (2/3) of ACL Elite points (i.e. 0.2 for win & 0.1 for draw)
  - ACGL points = one-third (1/3) of ACL Elite points (i.e. 0.1 for win & 0.05 for draw)
- Participation bonus points (fixed points of 0.5 without any tier adjustments) shall only be awarded to participating clubs entering and eliminated from the ACGL Preliminary Stage. For the avoidance of doubt, no bonus points shall be awarded for participating clubs entering the ACGL Preliminary Stage and subsequently qualifying to the ACGL Group Stage, as well as participating clubs in the Preliminary Stage of ACL Elite and ACL Two, as they will receive separate points for participating in the League/Group Stage of an AFC Club Competition.
- Based on the above, each participating club's total points from the Preliminary Stage shall be calculated as the sum of points awarded in the relevant AFC Club Competition.

### League/Group Stage & Knockout Stage

- All points awarded in the League/Group Stage & Knockout Stage shall be adjusted per AFC Club Competition as follows:
  - ACL Two points = two-thirds (2/3) of ACL Elite points
  - ACGL points = one-third (1/3) of ACL Elite points
- In consideration of the different formats and number of matches required to reach the Final of each AFC Club Competition, the calculation shall also consider the difference in maximum points obtainable by the participating club compared to the maximum points obtainable from ACL Elite in the same Sporting Season.

- Based on the above, each participating club's total points from the League/Group Stage & Knockout Stage shall be calculated as below:
  - ACL Elite points = Sum of points awarded in ACL Elite
  - ACL Two points = Sum of points awarded in ACL Two  $\times$  (maximum points obtainable in ACL Elite  $\div$  maximum points obtainable in ACL Two)  $\times$  2/3
  - ACGL points = Sum of points awarded in ACGL  $\times$  (maximum points obtainable in ACL Elite  $\div$  maximum points obtainable in ACGL)  $\times$  1/3

*\* The same principles shall apply in case of any discrepancy in the format and/or number of matches played between the participating clubs of ACL Elite. In such case, their points shall be calculated as = Sum of points awarded in the ACL Elite  $\times$  (maximum points obtainable in the ACL Elite  $\div$  maximum points obtainable from relevant format and/or number of matches)*

*e.g. calculation of 2023/24 rankings points of Club A participating in ACGL*

*Max. Points obtainable from ACL Elite 2023/24 = 49.5*

*Max. Points obtainable from ACGL 2023/24 = 33*

*Club A is awarded 15 points from ACGL 2023/24*

*Club A's Points from League/Group Stage & Knockout Stage  
= 15  $\times$  (49.5  $\div$  33)  $\times$  1/3 = 7.5*

Each participating club's total points for a Sporting Season shall be calculated as below:

*Participating club's points*

*= Sum of points from Preliminary Stage + sum of points from League/Group Stage & Knockout Stage*

Each Member Association's total points for a Sporting Season shall be calculated as below:

*Member Association's points*

*= Sum of points of Member Association's participating clubs in Preliminary Stage + average points of Member Association's participating clubs in League/Group Stage & Knockout Stage*

#### Additional Notes

Performance points (points for win and draw) are determined based on the results at the end of normal playing time. Results of Extra Time and Penalties (Penalty Shoot-outs) shall not be taken into consideration.

Points shall be rounded up or down, as appropriate, to the third decimal point (e.g. 1.1234 becomes 1.123 and 1.1235 becomes 1.124) when calculating the total points of each participating club and Member Association.

In case of a tie in the total points of two (2) or more Member Associations, the following shall apply to determine the higher-ranked Member Association, in descending order:

- 1) ranking points of the most recent Sporting Season in which the points are not equal among the Member Associations in question;
- 2) latest applicable FIFA Rankings of the Member Associations in question at the time of the publication of the ranking.



**ASIAN FOOTBALL CONFEDERATION**

AFC House, Jalan 1/155B, Bukit Jalil, 57000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

T: +603 8994 3388 | F: +603 8994 2689

**the-AFC.com**