



U14 Programming Changes FAQs

Why are changes being made to the U14 Programming?

Based on feedback from the community, overall low registration numbers during the Fall season and structural challenges throughout the province (field availability, middle school rugby programming etc.) BC Rugby has taken feedback from the Community and the Age-Grade Competitions Committee to develop a new U14 plan for 2024 to address a number of these challenges.

These changes allow the U14 programming to better align with the Long Term Sport Development Model allowing for players to focus on skill development and allow for more participation for players. This change aims to provide a more consistent experience for players through having regularly scheduled festivals. This will ensure that rugby can take place each week, more games can occur and players who may previously have only had limited game play can get more time on field.

We have also seen unacceptable behavior, which directly breaches our Code of Conduct, from coaches, managers and other personnel involved in the U14 Age-Grade at a higher rate than other Age-Grades. This behavior has included verbal abuse of other players, coaches, officials, staff and volunteers, with some behavior resulting in incidents being taken to the BC Rugby Discipline Committee. This behavior does not create a welcoming environment for anyone and needs to be addressed.

Why is the U14 Competition being changed at the PRCs (Provincial Regional Championships)?

In place of a U14 competition BC Rugby will run a festival style event on the afternoon of Saturday, July 6 at the PRCs. This festival will focus on skill development and drills, followed by some smaller style games allowing players to implement the skills they learn. This change better aligns with the Long-Term Sport Development model providing a focus on development rather than competition. The Long-Term Sport Development recognizes Athletes start to specialize in the sport of their choice in this stage. While children start competing more seriously, the major focus during competition is on applying what they've learned in training — not on winning at all costs.

We recognize the importance of inspiring players to want to continue their rugby and still want to offer the opportunity to be exposed to this next level of competition and the next stage of their rugby development. Running this Festival alongside the U16 and U18 competition will allow players to see the opportunities for future development. There will also





be opportunities for coaches to learn from our BC Bears coaches and help in their own coach development and progression.

As noted, we have also seen some unacceptable behaviors from coaches, managers and other personnel involved in the U14 Age-Grade which breaches our Code of Conduct. The rate at which this has occurred is higher than we have seen in our other Age-Grades.

Why are no results being kept for the U14s in the Fall?

With the shift to a festival format and a focus on skill development for both players and coaches, we are focused on ensuring that players can participate and get more gametime overall. The focus of these festivals is to allow for more games to take place and players to be evenly split and shared amongst teams.

During the 2023 Fall Season we saw some extremely lopsided scores from teams, or teams unable to field full squads for games. These events can be discouraging for players, coaches and managers in this situation and does not encourage players to want to return to our sport.

By moving to a festival style format we aim to provide more playing opportunities for players, with full side games being able to take place more regularly and therefore more playing minutes for players. These festivals also allow for players to be mixed and have more even teams resulting in a better experience due to higher quality games. Games at the end of the festivals will be competitive and scores can be kept for games, but these will not be reported.

We have seen a number of coaches, managers and other personnel focused too strongly on the desire to win placing undue pressure on players and officials in matches. This has led to unacceptable behaviors which do not align with our Code of Conduct and does not create an environment which welcomes and includes all players.

Who is running the U14 Skills Camps by BC Rugby?

BC Rugby will be appointing the coaches to these sessions. These coaches are identified personnel who we are confident can help provide not only a strong experience for players, but also an atmosphere for coaches to learn and upskill.

These Skills Camps are an opportunity for players, coaches and other personnel to come together and build on their skills.



Why is this change taking place in the middle of the season?

In previous years there has been a lack of consistency in the way U14s have been treated and operated throughout the province. Typically U14s are not engaged during the Spring period or have limited engagement.

The aim of these changes is to provide a structure for Clubs to engage as it makes sense for their programs and unique challenges. There is no requirement for Clubs to engage in this programming, however we would like to work with Clubs to see how we can address the challenges you face and find solutions to these.

We lose access to our fields/coaches so cannot support the programming in the Spring.

We recognise that there are several challenges for Clubs across the province from January to June including access to fields, coach involvement, Middle/High School rugby programs and other unique challenges.

There is no requirement for Clubs to be involved in these activities, however we want to work with Clubs to identify where they can be involved as it makes sense to them. We also want to ensure we are providing opportunities for players during this period, and while they may not be able to participate at your Club, there will be more opportunities for players to attend festivals elsewhere.

We recognise that there is no single plan which addresses all the nuances in our province, however we want to work with Clubs to best align with the overarching structure.

For Clubs who lose access to their home fields, for U14 there is no requirement for fields to have uprights and we are able to work with Clubs to identify other fields to host these activities.

Why were Clubs not consulted with these changes?

BC Rugby has taken feedback we have received from the previous seasons (via email, phone, in-person etc.) and considered this alongside specific data such as registration numbers, reduced game sizes and alignment with the Long Term Sport Development Model to develop this new programming. This programming was reviewed by the Age-Grade Competitions Committee who represent various Age-Grades, Genders and Geographic regions of BC. This proposal was supported by this group and changes have been made during this process.



Is there a requirement for us to participate in the U14 Programming?

There is no requirement for Clubs to participate in this structure. If you do not wish to participate or there are challenges specific to your Club we would like to work and engage with Clubs to address the various challenges you face and try and find alternatives.

If Clubs wish to play games outside of the regularly scheduled activities Clubs and Regions can request their own Tournaments/Games as long as they do not conflict with the programming above. Clubs and Regions must follow U14 Age-Grade Law Variations and Sanctioning requirements for Tournaments/Games.

We would like to work with Clubs and Regions to ensure these activities do not conflict with the overarching structure of U14.

Will there be changes to this U14 programming for the future?

BC Rugby recognizes this structure is new and we are committed to trying different strategies to address the challenges we face in U14. We are committed to developing a structure which best suits the needs of our community, and will continue to monitor this programming throughout 2024 along with feedback we receive from the community. As we review this feedback and relevant data around registration we will continue to review, discuss and propose changes to best address the needs of our community.

Why are you opening registration in so early?

In previous years Clubs have asked for registration to be opened early so that they are able to capture different groups they have access to. Each Club is able to open registration when they see fit, however our goal is to ensure that Clubs are able to promote and register players early so that players do not move away to other sports due to them not being able to purchase registration.