



SOUTH AFRICAN RUGBY UNION ("SARU")

**[SARU Mandatory Covid-19 Vaccination Policy for SARU Competitions,
Tournaments, Training, and Matches]**

Approved by: SARU Executive Council
Approval date: Thursday, 17 March 2022
Updated: Wednesday, 04 May 2022



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1. Context

For the game of rugby to recover and to ensure that lives are protected from the impact of COVID-19 the sport needs to return to where it was before the pandemic. This would require that players attend training and participate in matches with as little disruption as possible. One of the key ways to ensure that this happens is for players, team management, operational members and match officials to be vaccinated. Due to the poor uptake of vaccinations amongst the South African population to date, it has resulted in many institutions and organisations implementing mandatory vaccination policies, in compliance with the prescribed procedural and substantive legal provisions, to ensure that employees and others are vaccinated. This, therefore, allows the organisation or institution to implement the legally required standard of care required to ensure the safety of their employees as well as assist the government of South Africa to reach the objective of restarting the economy.

SARU is committed to creating an environment where the health and well-being of employees, rugby players, team management members, operational staff, members of the media (print, online, photographic and broadcast) and match officials is considered so that they can safely participate and work.

Therefore, in order to achieve these two objectives, SARU will introduce a mandatory vaccination policy in all SARU competitions applicable to all rugby players, team management members, operational members and match officials and other stakeholders as may be relevant from time to time.

2. Preamble

This mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy aligns with SARU's broader approach to keeping employees and other stakeholders safe in the workplace and work-related activities. Our approach to protecting our employees, rugby players, team management members, operational staff, members of the media (print, online, photographic and broadcast) and match officials, crowds and staff in the workplace is guided by research, evidence-based clinical insights and data as well as legislative provisions.

Rugby is our national game; it brings people together and remains a huge part of our communities.

This mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy applies to all SARU-approved competitions, tournaments, training or matches.

According to scientific research, COVID -19 vaccines have proven to protect against serious illness and death as well as decrease the rates of transmission of the virus. It is also reported that vaccines provide stronger, longer, and superior protection against infection than the antibodies a person produces after they've been infected with COVID-19. Research has also shown that unvaccinated persons have a much higher infection rate transfer than vaccinated persons.

This document respects the individual's rights to bodily integrity, cultural beliefs and practices as well as religious freedom. It also caters for legitimate medical conditions. However, this is subject to the legitimate and justified operational requirements of SARU and provisions of law. It is worth mentioning, that this policy does not constitute an attempt by SARU to force or compel anyone to be vaccinated. The choice not to be vaccinated will be respected, however, it may prevent an individual from any continued involvement in SARU approved competitions, tournaments, training or matches as well as may impact continued employment of employees.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, rugby players, team management members, operational members, members of the media (print, online, photographic and broadcast) and match officials who are involved in SARU approved competitions, tournaments, training or matches. Other stakeholders not specifically identified but to whom this policy should reasonably apply shall also be within scope.

4. Purpose

Rugby is a team collision sport, though there are non-contact versions of the game affiliated to SARU. The result being that there is a large amount of physical and face-face interaction between those involved in the game, whether coaching, training, playing, volunteering or administering the game. Being vaccinated will enhance the health and safety of employees, rugby players, team management members, operational members and match officials involved in the game. Importantly, enhancing the health and safety of those individuals who engage with players, coaches, members of the public and one another must equally be protected.

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Observe rugby's duty of care to those people engaged in its pursuit and its support
2. Minimise the chances of its participants being prejudiced from a health and safety viewpoint
3. Reduce the chance that matches, and events may be impacted or cancelled because of the outbreak of COVID-19 infections
4. Create the most propitious environment for the sport to return to commercial viability
5. Support the national and international campaign to make the COVID-19 Coronavirus an endemic and manageable condition and not a global pandemic
6. Conduct the above within the legal framework provided from time to time.

It will also ensure less disruption to teams due to players and team management being off sick and close contacts having to quarantine. This is critical for the sustainability of the industry.

Vaccination offers SARU another tool to meet their objective of enhancing health, safety and well-being as it creates a safe environment for all employees, players, team management, operational members and match officials to participate in.

5. Definitions

COVID-19: This means Coronavirus Disease 2019, an infectious disease as a result of infection of SARS - Cov-2 Virus.

COVID-19 Vaccine: means the COVID-19 vaccines and boosters that have been scientifically evaluated and recommended by the WHO and registered or authorised by SAHPRA to be effective in preventing severe disease and death;

Vaccinated: For the purpose of this policy, vaccinated means you are considered vaccinated two weeks after the second dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine or 28 days after a single dose of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 Vaccine.

Fully Vaccinated: means vaccinated with vaccines and includes an additional dose or booster and "vaccination"

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has the same meaning;

Employee: Any person who conducts work for an employer involved with SARU Competitions and who is entitled to remuneration.

Rugby Player: This means any player selected who forms part of a group, squad or team to prepare for and/or participate in a specific SARU competitions, tournaments, training or matches.

Team Management Member: Means any person appointed to serve on the management of a specific squad, group or team to prepare for and/or participate in any SARU competitions, tournaments or matches.

SARU Competition: This means all matches played in competitions that form part of SARU's competition structures, including Provincial Youth Weeks and the Gold Cup or its successor competition or tournament. (Listed as appendix 1)

Affiliated competitions, tournaments or matches: This means all matches played on an amateur level by club teams of Unions and Associations, that do not form part of this Policy. Schools' rugby that falls under the auspices of the Department of Basic Education is automatically excluded from this policy.

Match Official: This means any person appointed as a match official for a specific SARU competitions, tournaments or matches.

Operational member: means any other person at a match and training venue, including but not limited to the following: citing commissioners, match doctors, contracted medical personnel, stadium managers, stadium staff members, employees employed or contracted to the respective union, franchise or stadium management company, stadium service providers permanent or temporary staff members including cleaning services, waste management, security, vendors, caterers and hospitality suite staff, volunteers and commercial stakeholders, sponsors and/or equity partners and shareholders.

“Vulnerable employee” means any employee, as contemplated in the Department of Health Guidelines:

- a. With known or disclosed health issues or comorbidities or any other condition that may place the employee at a higher risk of complications or death than other employees if infected with SARS-VOC-2 virus; or
- b. Above the age of 60 years who is at a higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease or death if infected.

6. Principles

6.1 Implementation of this Policy

The Mandatory Vaccination COVID-19 Policy, aimed at reducing the risk of COVID-19 infections to employees, players, team management, operational members and match officials involved in rugby and ensuring the sustainability of the game of rugby in South Africa, relies on the following principles:

- 6.1.1. Rugby Players must be considered high-risk due to the contact nature of rugby union;
- 6.1.2. The team nature of the sports results in a large amount of close quarter work and face-to-face engagement. Therefore, as a result of this high-risk status, all rugby players and team

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management, operational members and match officials have to be fully vaccinated;

- 6.1.3. They partake in high-risk activities such as air travel, travel on team busses, sharing ice baths, gymnasiums, staying in hotels and sharing team meeting rooms;
- 6.1.4. Vulnerable persons as well as those who are older than sixty with underlying health conditions (comorbidities)
- 6.1.5. Persons who come into contact with rugby players in the course and scope of their work and/or who engage in work in the furtherance of the organization are similar in scope given the above as well as the findings of the risk assessments;

The lifting of the lockdown restrictions allows rugby spectators to return to the stadiums and exposure of players, team management, operational members, and match officials who are involved in playing and managing rugby matches, competitions, and tournaments.

6.2 Guidelines and Process Description

- 6.2.1 SARU will require players, team management, operational members and match officials to register on the National Electronic Vaccine Data System Registration Portal for the COVID-19 vaccine when they participate in any SARU competitions, tournaments, training or matches.
- 6.2.2 Subject to availability of vaccines, players, team management, operational members and match officials not yet vaccinated must make arrangements to be vaccinated;
- 6.2.3 Should the player, team management, operational members and match official despite being so instructed, continue to refuse to make arrangements to be vaccinated, it shall be considered to constitute a refusal by the player, team management operational members and match official to be vaccinated.
- 6.2.4 If a player, team management operational member or match official fails to be vaccinated or refuses to be vaccinated, then it shall be considered to be a contravention of this policy and the individual will not be permitted to participate in any organised rugby squad, group, training and/or match competition or tournament.
- 6.2.5 The following is **ONLY** applicable to players participating in the endorsed **SARU Youth Week Tournaments**. When a player is selected for a provincial team to attend an endorsed SARU Youth Week tournament but is unvaccinated and whose parents/guardians will not permit such player to be vaccinated, that player can do so by adhering to one or more of the following alternative risk-mitigating measures:
 - 6.2.5.1. Undergo a COVID-19 test every 72 hours (72 hours was chosen as this is the government time frame to have a negative COVID-19 test before attending a rugby match as a spectator). This will be for the player's/union's cost. For example: When attending the U18 Craven Week a player will need to have a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours of reporting to the tournament on the Sunday. Then 72 hours after this test the player will have to be tested again. A negative test is required to continue in the tournament. The process of testing every 72 hours will continue for the duration of the tournament.
 - 6.2.5.2. Provide your laboratory report as proof of having had COVID-19 within six (6) months prior to and including the period of the SA Rugby Youth Week tournament.
 - 6.2.5.3. Proof of a positive COVID-19 antibody test. This will provide proof of a past infection.
 - 6.2.5.4. It will be the responsibility of the Union and team manager to ensure that the records, of whatever risk-mitigating measures are applicable to a particular player, are kept on file and captured on the SARU Footprint system for all SARU Competitions.

6.3 Roles and responsibilities

- 6.3.1 Proof of full vaccination must be kept on record at the responsible and applicable rugby body (union, club and association). This information will be captured on Footprint for all SARU Competitions.
- 6.3.2 Objections to the vaccination as well the findings and recommendations of the independent review panel must be kept on record at the responsible and applicable rugby body (union, club and association).
- 6.3.3 Where the SARU MyPASS Accreditation system is used to manage a SARU match, competition, tournament or group then proof of vaccination must be loaded onto this system.
- 6.3.4 The following shall be regarded as acceptable proof of vaccination status:
- The record of immunization from a healthcare provider or pharmacy;
 - A certified copy of the COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card;
 - Proof of the official digital COVID-19 Vaccination Record (Version 2 for MyPASS digital verification);
 - A certified copy of medical records documenting the vaccination;
 - A certified copy of immunization records from recognised public health, or government immunization information system; or
- 6.3.5 The proof of vaccination record must include the player's, team management, operational member's or match official's name and identification number or passport number, the type of COVID-19 Vaccine administered, the date of administration and the name of the healthcare professional or clinic site administering the COVID-19 Vaccine.

7. Refusal to vaccinate

Rugby players, team management members, operational members and match officials that play or train rugby or are required to work at training or match venues during SARU Competitions who object to being vaccinated based on the three grounds, of bodily integrity, religious objection or medical constraints must submit requests for exemption/objection timeously in writing to the applicable Union CEO or General Manager.

An independent expert panel, identified and appointed by the Union will review the request for exemption and, having solicited as much relevant information, establish the facts of the case and provide this back in writing to the Union CEO or General Manager

The correspondence submitted in this regard must ensure that all necessary information is recorded in relation to the reason for the request for exemption/ objection. Please note this information may be required to be validated.

This feedback must be considered in the context of legal provisions guiding the mandatory vaccination policy. The Union CEO or General Manager must then make a final decision on the matter, in accordance with the governance structures that the Union operates within. For example, if it is a contracted player, the Union may then have to hold a separate disciplinary or incapacity hearing, and if it is a service provider the Union can then exercise their Right of Admission rights.

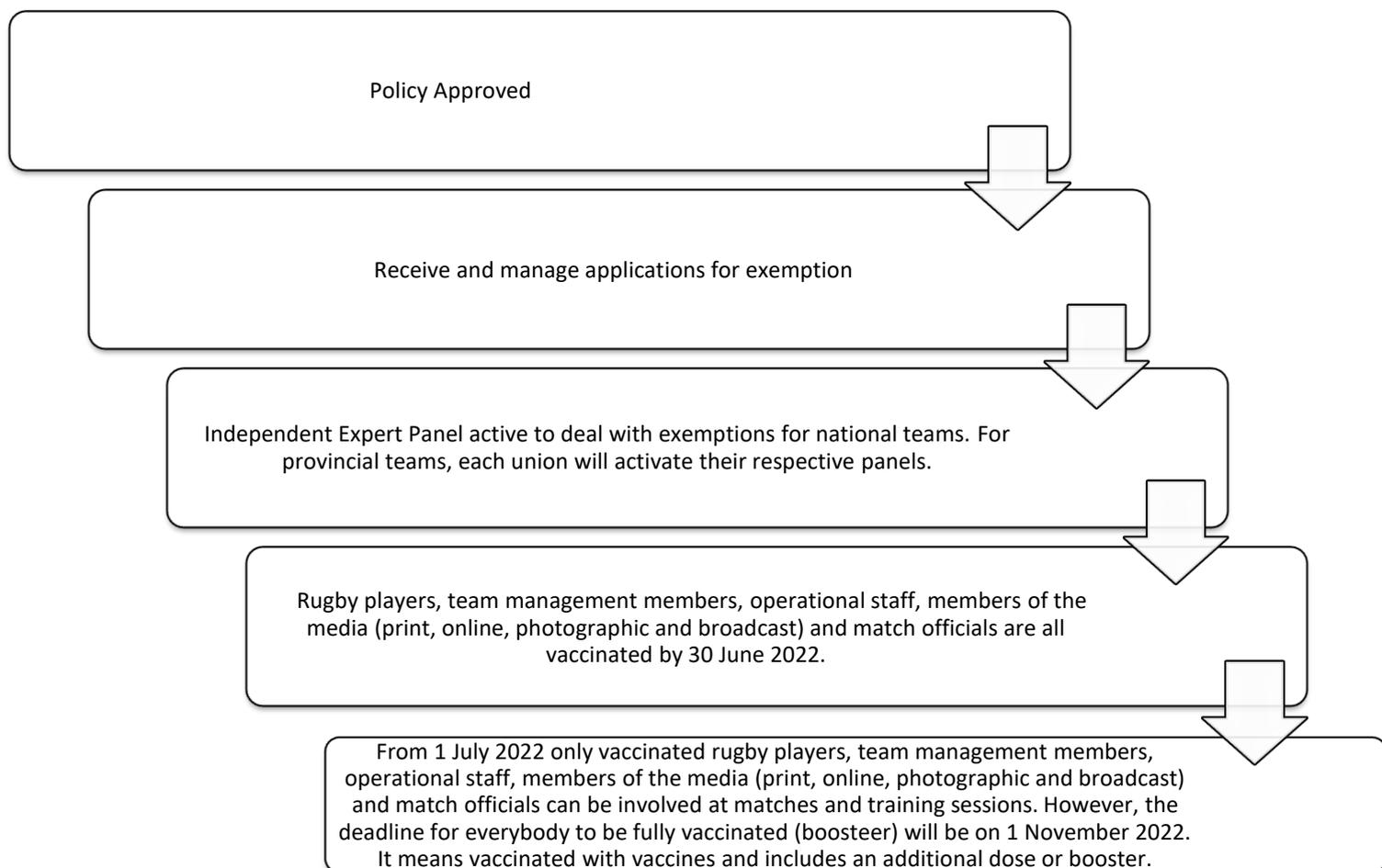
8. Phased approach to implementation

For unvaccinated rugby players, team management members, operational members and match officials to comply with the provisions of the policy, a phased approach must be introduced to allow them to get vaccinated or to submit objections based on the three grounds, bodily integrity, religious objection or medical constraints.

All rugby players, team management members, operational members and match officials must be vaccinated by no later than the 30th of June 2022. For the purposes of this policy, the prerequisite is that you are considered **vaccinated** two weeks after the second dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine or 28 days after a single dose of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 Vaccine.

The deadline for everybody to be **fully vaccinated** will be on 1 November 2022. It means vaccinated with vaccines and includes an additional dose or booster. However, should other tournaments or competitions require you to be boosted before this date you must adhere to those directions

Phased approach map



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9. Implementation date

This policy must be implemented with immediate effect following the SARU Executive Council approval. SARU encourages rugby players, team management members, operational members and match officials to get vaccinated as soon as possible as the date for automatic exclusion from SARU matches, tournaments and competitions are the 1st of July 2022. However, the deadline for everybody to be fully vaccinated will be on 1 November 2022 , however, should other tournaments or competitions require you to be boosted before this date you must adhere to those directions. It means vaccinated with vaccines and includes an additional dose or booster.

10. Changes and amendments to the policy

SARU may from time to time amend this policy and communicate it to all employees, players, team management, operational members and match officials to update them on any new applicable guidelines and rules.

11. Compliance with SARU Policies

Players, team management, operational members and match officials who will participate in SARU approved matches competitions and tournaments are required to comply with this policy.

Appendix 1:

Teams that participate in SARU Matches, Competition and Tournaments

Teams that participate in SARU Matches, Competitions and Tournaments
Springboks
SA A Team
Springbok Women
SA Men and Women Sevens
Sevens Academy
Junior Springboks
SA U20 Women
U20 Academy
U20 Women
United Rugby Championship
Currie Cup – Premier Division
Currie Cup – First Division
U21 SARU Championships – Cup
U21 SARU Championships - Shield
U20 SARU Championships - Cup
U20 SARU Championships – Shield
U19 SARU Championships - Cup
U18 Craven Week
U18 Academy Week
U16 Grant Khomo Week
U13 Craven Week
LSEN Week
Women’s Premier Division
Women’s First Division
Girls U16 and Girls Under 18 Youth Weeks
Club Championships/ Gold Cup or successor tournament

- ✓ *Competitions are subject to change between years.*
- ✓ *Affiliated competitions, tournaments or matches played on an amateur level by club teams of Unions and Associations, do not form part of this Policy. Each Provincial Union and Association can implement a mandatory vaccination policy applicable to their needs.*
- ✓ *Schools' rugby that falls under the auspices of the Department of Basic Education is automatically excluded from this policy, except for SARU Youth Competitions, where SARU has direct control.*