



FOOTBALL FRAMEWORK 2027-2030

ANU Women's Football Club Football Framework 2027-2030

Endorsed September 2026

Purpose

The ANUWFC Football Framework describes how ANU Women's Football Club approaches football development across the Club. It provides a common foundation for:

- player development
- coaching
- team development
- playing principles
- selection and grading
- movement between divisions
- competitive performance
- coach development
- football culture.

The Framework supports the ANUWFC Strategic Plan 2027–2030, which commits the Club to establishing a consistent club-wide football philosophy and improving the quality of football offered at every level rather than increasing the number of teams or players.

It is not intended to prescribe every training session, formation, tactical decision or coaching method. ANUWFC teams compete across different divisions, with players who have different levels of experience, ability, ambition and availability. Coaches need enough flexibility to coach the team in front of them. Instead, this Framework establishes the principles that should be recognisable across ANUWFC football regardless of division.

Our football ambition

ANUWFC's strategic direction is simple: We are not seeking to become a bigger Club. We want to become a stronger one.

Between 2027 and 2030, ANUWFC aims to improve:

- competitive performance
- player development
- coaching capability
- movement and progression between divisions
- team quality and consistency
- player retention
- the overall football experience.

The Strategic Plan specifically aims to establish Divisions 1 and 2 as consistently competitive top-level Capital League teams while improving football quality across the entire Club. This does not mean every player or team must pursue the same football outcome.

ANUWFC provides football ranging from highly competitive through to developmental, social and beginner participation. Our football system should therefore allow members to compete, develop, belong and thrive at an appropriate level.

Our football philosophy

ANUWFC football is based on six principles.

Develop players

Every player should have a meaningful opportunity to improve. Development may include:

- technical ability
- game understanding
- tactical awareness
- physical football capability
- confidence
- decision-making
- communication
- positional understanding
- leadership
- ability to contribute effectively within a team.

The Coaches Handbook already expects coaches to develop players across technical ability, game understanding, physical capability, confidence and communication, while recognising different starting points, goals and circumstances.

Development does not necessarily mean promotion to a higher division. For one player, development may mean progressing from Division 4 to Division 3. For another, it may mean becoming a more effective Division 5 player, learning a new position, improving tactical understanding or becoming confident enough to take greater responsibility within their team. Progress is individual as well as divisional.

Build strong teams

ANUWFC prioritises strong teams over teams of strong players. Selection and squad development should consider not only individual ability but also:

- positional balance
- goalkeeper requirements
- complementary playing attributes
- tactical needs
- squad size
- availability
- development opportunities
- player movement
- the sustainability of teams across the Club.

Our aim is not to assemble the highest possible collection of individually talented players into each squad. Our aim is to create teams that can function, develop and compete effectively together.

Compete with purpose

ANUWFC wants to become more competitive. We want players and teams to:

- prepare properly
- compete hard
- seek improvement
- take responsibility
- respond constructively to setbacks

- learn from mistakes
- pursue strong results
- take pride in representing ANUWFC.

Competitive ambition is encouraged at every level. However, results do not justify unsafe, humiliating, discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour.

Play at the right level

Players develop best when they are appropriately challenged. ANUWFC will therefore aim to place players at a level where they can:

- compete effectively
- develop
- contribute meaningfully
- be appropriately challenged
- enjoy their football.

Playing at a higher division is not automatically better for every player. Similarly, playing at a lower division does not mean a player has stopped developing. The appropriate level depends on the player, their current football capability, their development needs and the needs of teams across the Club.

Create pathways

ANUWFC should operate as one football Club, not six disconnected divisions. Where appropriate, players should be able to move:

- into a higher division
- into a lower division
- between teams at a similar level
- temporarily through appropriate player borrowing
- into different positions
- into coaching or assistant coaching
- into other football leadership opportunities.

Movement should serve a genuine football or participation purpose rather than simply filling gaps.

Keep people in football

A strong football system should help people continue playing. Players' circumstances and football goals can change because of:

- work
- study
- injury
- health
- caring responsibilities
- age
- confidence
- changing competitive ambitions
- other life circumstances.

ANUWFC aims to maintain competitive, developmental and more social participation pathways so players do not have to leave the Club simply because their circumstances or

football goals change. Where appropriate, moving down a division can therefore be as valuable a pathway as moving up. Retention is part of player development.

Our playing principles

ANUWFC does not require every team to use the same formation or tactical system. A Division 1 team and a developmental lower-division team may need very different tactical approaches.

However, where appropriate to the team's level, ANUWFC coaches should aim to develop players who can understand and apply the following broad football principles.

When we have the ball

We aim to develop players who can:

- be comfortable receiving and using the ball
- make purposeful decisions rather than simply dispose of possession
- create and use space
- support the player in possession
- recognise when to retain possession and when to play forward
- move the ball with appropriate speed and purpose
- combine with teammates
- recognise opportunities to penetrate
- create and exploit overloads
- make effective movements off the ball
- communicate
- adapt to what the game presents.

When we do not have the ball

We aim to develop players who can:

- understand their defensive role
- protect dangerous spaces
- apply pressure appropriately
- support and cover teammates
- remain compact where appropriate
- communicate
- recognise pressing opportunities
- recover effectively when possession is lost
- defend individually and collectively
- transition quickly between attacking and defensive responsibilities.

In transition

Players should increasingly learn to recognise the moment possession changes. When winning the ball, teams should be able to recognise whether the best option is to:

- attack quickly
- exploit space
- secure possession and build again.

When losing the ball, teams should be able to:

- react
- communicate

- protect dangerous spaces
- recover shape
- apply appropriate immediate pressure where possible.

Set pieces

Set pieces should be treated as part of football development rather than an afterthought. The level of detail should be appropriate to the team. Coaches are encouraged to develop:

- clear responsibilities
- organisation
- communication
- basic attacking and defensive principles
- more sophisticated approaches where appropriate to the team's competitive level.

What this does not mean

This Framework does not require:

- a particular formation
- possession football at all costs
- playing out from the back regardless of risk
- high pressing regardless of player capability
- identical training sessions
- identical tactics between divisions
- lower divisions attempting systems that do not suit their players.

Principles should be consistent. Application should be appropriate to the team.

Player development

ANUWFC's player-development model focuses on four interconnected areas.

Technical development

Players should have opportunities to improve relevant football skills, including:

- first touch
- passing and receiving
- ball control
- dribbling and carrying
- finishing
- defending
- body positioning and movement
- use of both feet where appropriate
- position-specific skills, including goalkeeping.

Tactical and game understanding

Players should increasingly develop:

- spatial awareness
- positional understanding
- decision-making
- anticipation
- movement on and off the ball
- understanding and manipulation of space

- ability to read the game
- tactical awareness
- ability to adapt during play.

Physical football capability

Training should help players progressively meet the physical demands appropriate to their level of football. This may include:

- mobility
- speed
- agility
- strength
- endurance
- balance
- coordination
- repeat football actions.

Physical development should support football performance and player health. It should never be based on assumptions about appearance, body size or body type. The Selection Guide specifically requires physical attributes to be assessed through football performance rather than appearance or assumptions.

Psychological and interpersonal development

Football development also involves:

- confidence
- resilience
- communication
- decision-making under pressure
- learning from mistakes
- taking responsibility
- receiving and applying feedback
- supporting teammates
- leadership
- adapting to challenges.

At ANUWFC, this should occur within a psychologically safe environment. Players should be challenged without being humiliated. Mistakes should be treated as opportunities to learn rather than evidence of personal failure.

Development across different levels

The same development philosophy applies across the Club, but its emphasis may differ.

Higher competitive divisions

In higher divisions, there may appropriately be greater emphasis on:

- tactical detail
- training intensity
- position-specific performance
- physical preparation
- match analysis
- competition for playing time

- performance standards
- team structure
- decision-making speed
- competitive outcomes.

Players should have clear expectations about the demands of the level.

Developmental and intermediate divisions

The emphasis should balance:

- football development
- tactical understanding
- competitive improvement
- confidence
- appropriate challenge
- team cohesion
- enjoyment.

Players should still receive purposeful coaching and meaningful development opportunities.

More social and beginner participation

Social or beginner football does not mean football without development. Coaches should still:

- plan purposeful sessions
- teach football skills
- help players understand the game
- provide constructive feedback
- create opportunities to improve
- support the team to compete effectively at its level.

The balance may place greater emphasis on:

- confidence
- fundamental skills
- participation
- enjoyment
- connection
- retention.

All players deserve good coaching.

Training principles

ANUWFC does not prescribe a single training curriculum. However, training should generally be:

Purposeful

Sessions should have a football-development purpose rather than simply filling training time.

Appropriate:

Activities should reflect:

- the team's level
- the players' needs
- current development priorities
- competition demands
- available time and facilities.

Football-relevant

Where practical, training should provide players with opportunities to:

- make decisions
- interact with teammates and opponents
- recognise space
- solve football problems
- apply skills under realistic pressure.

Progressive

Coaches should be able to:

- simplify an activity
- increase difficulty
- change space or numbers
- add/remove pressure
- modify rules
- adapt sessions according to how players respond.

Inclusive

Training should provide meaningful participation rather than leaving players unnecessarily standing or excluded.

Safe

Coaches should:

- provide reasonable warm-up opportunities
- consider player workload
- respond appropriately to injuries
- modify activity where conditions are unsafe
- avoid pressuring injured or unwell players to participate.

These expectations align with ANUWFC's existing trial and coaching safety requirements.

Individual player development

Formal individual development plans are not required for every ANUWFC player. That would not be proportionate for a volunteer-run community Club. Instead, coaches should aim to provide players with useful feedback across the season. This might include:

- informal feedback at training
- conversations about position or role
- specific development suggestions
- identifying a strength to build
- identifying one or two areas for improvement
- discussing whether another division may provide an appropriate opportunity
- suggesting relevant development programs where available.

Players should also be encouraged to:

- ask for feedback

- identify their football goals
- ask questions
- communicate where they want greater challenge
- take reasonable responsibility for their own development.

The relationship should be two-way.

Player pathways between divisions

ANUWFC wants movement between divisions to become a normal part of player development rather than something that only happens during annual trials.

Movement upward

A player may be considered for higher-level opportunities where they demonstrate:

- performance appropriate to the higher level
- development potential
- suitable technical and tactical capability
- readiness for the physical demands of that level
- appropriate team contribution
- consistency
- a genuine opportunity within the higher squad.

Opportunities may include:

- training with another team
- borrowing into a higher division where permitted
- participating in an assessment session
- moving teams during an appropriate registration/competition period
- consideration during the next selection process.

Movement downward

Players may also wish or need to move to a lower division because of:

- changed football goals
- injury or return from injury
- work or study commitments
- changing physical capacity
- confidence
- desire for a more social experience
- another legitimate circumstance.

This should not be treated as failure. Where possible, ANUWFC should help players find a level that allows them to keep enjoying football and contributing to the Club.

No automatic promotion system

Development does not create an automatic right to promotion. Movement depends on:

- the player's current level
- development needs
- available places
- team balance
- positional requirements
- other players

- competition rules
- coach assessment
- broader Club needs.

Coach collaboration and player movement

Player development is a Club responsibility, not the property of an individual team. Coaches are expected to work collegiately with one another and the Coaches Coordinator. Where appropriate, this may include:

- identifying players ready for additional challenge
- discussing development opportunities with another coach
- supporting legitimate player borrowing
- allowing a player to train with another team
- sharing relevant football information appropriately
- supporting movement between divisions
- avoiding unnecessary territorial behaviour around players
- considering what benefits ANUWFC as a whole.

Player movement should also consider the impact on the player's registered team. Development opportunities should strengthen the Club rather than repeatedly weakening one team for another.

Player borrowing as development

Borrowing players is primarily an operational mechanism governed by current Capital Football requirements. However, where appropriate, it can also support development.

Borrowing may provide a player with:

- exposure to a different competitive level
- experience in a different role or position
- additional match experience
- connection with other ANUWFC teams
- an opportunity to demonstrate readiness for progression.

Borrowing should not:

- place unreasonable workload on players
- pressure players into additional matches
- be used to avoid sustainable squad planning
- repeatedly disadvantage the player's registered team
- breach current competition requirements.

Because Capital Football player-movement rules can change, coaches must confirm current requirements rather than relying solely on handbook summaries.

Selection and grading

The ANUWFC Selection Guide 2027 remains the governing Club document for trials, selection and team allocation. This Framework does not replace it. Selection should support the football philosophy by:

- placing players at an appropriate level
- creating balanced and sustainable teams

- supporting player development
- facilitating appropriate movement
- providing meaningful competitive challenge
- strengthening overall Club performance
- maintaining a positive and respectful player experience.

Selection must be fair, transparent, consistent and football-focused. ANUWFC will continue to prioritise strong teams over teams of strong players. Where Club capacity is exceeded, the priority process in the Selection Guide determines access to a Club place. It does not guarantee a particular team, division or playing role.

Playing time

ANUWFC does not impose one identical playing-time model across every division. Expectations may legitimately differ according to:

- competitive level
- squad size
- match context
- player development
- training engagement
- position
- tactical requirements
- injury and fitness
- competition rules
- team expectations communicated by the coach.

However, coaches should:

- communicate expectations clearly
- apply expectations fairly and consistently
- avoid arbitrary or punitive treatment
- consider development as well as results
- take reasonable account of work, study, injury, health and other legitimate circumstances
- provide respectful feedback where players have concerns.

Where competitive playing-time expectations will be materially different from other teams, players should understand that as early as reasonably possible

Team culture and performance

ANUWFC rejects the idea that a team has to choose between high standards and psychological safety. Strong team cultures should include:

- clear expectations
- accountability
- effort
- preparation
- constructive challenge
- honest feedback
- respect
- trust
- learning from mistakes
- appropriate humour and connection
- support between teammates

- shared pride in representing ANUWFC.

A coach may set demanding football standards. A coach may not use:

- humiliation
- intimidation
- threats
- discriminatory behaviour
- degrading comments
- deliberate exclusion
- punishment unrelated to legitimate football expectations
- unsafe practices

as coaching tools.

Coaching at ANUWFC

Coaches are central to delivery of this Framework. Every ANUWFC coach should aim to:

- understand the needs and level of their squad
- plan purposeful training
- develop individual players and the team
- set clear football expectations
- provide constructive feedback
- support appropriate player movement
- communicate with other coaches
- build a positive team culture
- prioritise safety and wellbeing
- model Club values
- continue developing their own coaching capability
- ask for support when needed.

Coaches are not expected to know everything. The Coaches Coordinator should support coaches through:

- annual induction
- shared resources
- peer support
- development opportunities
- Football Australia and Capital Football education
- mentoring
- practical problem-solving
- appropriate feedback.

The Club's existing expectation is that every team should have a capable, supported coach and every player should have meaningful opportunities to improve.

Developing future coaches

ANUWFC's football pathway extends beyond playing. The Club will encourage interested current and former players to consider:

- assistant coaching
- co-coaching
- coaching a team
- supporting preseason/trials

- mentoring
- Football Australia coaching education
- other football-development roles.

Nobody should feel pressured to coach simply because they are an experienced player. For those who are interested, ANUWFC should aim to make the pathway accessible and supported. Our strategic target is for at least two current or former players to enter coaching or assistant coaching each year.

Goalkeeper development

Goalkeepers have specialist development needs that cannot always be met through ordinary team training. Where resources and capacity allow, ANUWFC should seek opportunities for:

- goalkeeper-specific training
- coaching resources for team coaches
- connection between goalkeepers across divisions
- specialist development sessions
- experienced goalkeepers to support developing players
- goalkeeper coaching development.

This does not require ANUWFC to maintain a permanent specialist goalkeeper program where capacity does not permit it.

Player wellbeing is part of football development

Development should be sustainable. Football improvement is undermined where players are:

- repeatedly injured
- overloaded
- afraid to make mistakes
- excluded
- humiliated
- unable to raise concerns
- pressured to play while unwell
- treated as interchangeable resources rather than people.

ANUWFC therefore considers: player safety + wellbeing + development + competitive performance to be interconnected rather than competing objectives.

The Club's broader wellbeing strategy explicitly seeks to help people keep playing football through injury prevention, support, retention pathways and mental-wellbeing referral.

Development and accessibility

ANUWFC recognises that members have different:

- football backgrounds
- levels of experience
- bodies and physical capabilities
- work and study demands
- health circumstances
- financial circumstances

- caring responsibilities
- football goals.

Reasonable flexibility does not mean lowering legitimate football standards. It means distinguishing between: what is genuinely required to participate or perform at a particular football level and unnecessary barriers that do not help us assess or develop football capability.

How we measure football development

ANUWFC does not need complex player-performance dashboards across six community divisions. We will use a proportionate combination of:

Competitive measures

- Team performance over time
- Division 1–3 performance against the 2027 baseline
- Appropriate team grading and competitiveness.

Player-development measures

- Movement between divisions
- Players receiving higher-level development opportunities
- Player Experience Survey results
- Player perceptions of development opportunities.

Coaching measures

- Teams with appointed coaches
- Annual coach induction
- Coaching qualifications and development
- Player/former-player movement into coaching.

Retention measures

- Annual player retention
- Exit feedback
- Ability to retain members whose football needs or circumstances change.

Culture and safety measures

- Player safety
- Inclusion
- Overall member experience
- Coach feedback
- Relevant wellbeing trends.

By 2030, ANUWFC's Strategic Plan seeks:

- 100% of coached teams have an appointed coach before the season
- 100% of coaches completing annual Club induction
- at least two current/former players entering coaching or assistant coaching each year
- an established player-development and selection framework supporting movement between divisions
- measurable improvement across Divisions 1-3 against the 2027 baseline
- at least 85% of players reporting that they have opportunities to develop their football.

Annual football cycle

Before the season, ANUWFC should:

- assess likely player and team numbers
- recruit and appoint coaches
- confirm available facilities
- review relevant competition requirements
- review the Selection Guide
- brief selectors
- run trials and grading
- build balanced and sustainable squads
- conduct coach induction
- identify relevant development opportunities.

During the season, Coaches and the Club should:

- deliver purposeful training
- monitor player/team development
- provide constructive feedback
- support appropriate borrowing and movement
- identify players who may benefit from additional challenge
- support coaches
- monitor team viability
- maintain safe and positive football environments
- respond to emerging development needs.

After the season, ANUWFC should consider:

- competitive outcomes
- coach feedback
- Player Experience Survey findings
- player retention
- player movement
- selection/trial lessons
- coaching-development needs
- emerging players/coaches
- structural team issues
- practical priorities for the following season.

Roles and responsibilities

- **Committee:** the Committee provides overall oversight of the Club's football strategy and ensures football priorities remain consistent with the Strategic Plan, available resources and Club values.
- **Coaches Coordinator / football lead:** the Coaches Coordinator should:
 - lead implementation of this Framework
 - support recruitment and development of coaches
 - promote consistent football-development principles
 - support collaboration between coaches
 - coordinate trials and selection with relevant roles
 - support player pathways and movement
 - identify development needs

- lead the annual football review.
- **Coaches:** are responsible for applying the Framework in a way appropriate to their team. They remain responsible for football decisions within their role, subject to Club policies, selection arrangements and applicable competition requirements.
- **Players:** Players are encouraged to:
 - engage constructively in their own development
 - seek feedback
 - communicate football goals
 - contribute positively to team culture
 - support teammates
 - remain open to appropriate challenge
 - raise concerns through Club pathways where needed.

Implementation 2027-2030

2027: Establish

- Adopt the Football Framework.
- Embed Framework principles in coach induction.
- Continue implementation of the Selection Guide.
- Establish a simple approach to tracking player movement and development opportunities.

2028: Develop

- Review the first year of implementation.
- Strengthen player pathways between divisions.
- Expand coach-development opportunities.
- Strengthen player-to-coach pathways.
- Respond to themes from player and coach feedback.

2029: Improve performance

- Review competitive outcomes against baseline.
- Identify specific football-development gaps.
- Target coaching/player-development support accordingly.
- Strengthen the internal coaching pipeline.

2030: Consolidate

- Evaluate competitive and development outcomes.
- Review player pathway effectiveness.
- Review coach capability and pipeline.
- Consider player and coach feedback.
- Use findings to inform the next ANUWFC Strategic Plan and Football Framework.

This mirrors the sequencing already established in the Strategic Plan: foundations in 2027, people and pathways in 2028, performance in 2029 and consolidation in 2030.

Governance and review

The Committee will oversee this Framework, with the Coaches Coordinator or equivalent football lead responsible for coordinating its practical implementation.

The Framework should receive a brief annual currency and implementation check after each season.

That review should consider:

- competitive performance
- player-development opportunities
- player movement
- coach feedback
- Player Experience Survey findings
- retention
- selection outcomes
- team balance
- coaching capability
- relevant changes to competition structures or requirements
- whether any aspect of the Framework is creating unnecessary work.

A fuller review should occur alongside the Strategic Plan or earlier if there is a significant change to ANUWFC's football structure.

Relevant outcomes and actions can be recorded through:

- ordinary Committee minutes
- the Club Changer Commitments Register
- player/coach feedback
- selection review
- annual strategic review
- existing Club records.

Our football commitment

ANUWFC wants to be a Club where people can play good football and have a good football experience. We will challenge players to improve, support coaches to develop, build competitive teams and create clearer pathways through the Club. We will pursue higher standards without losing the qualities that make ANUWFC worth playing for.

We develop players.

We build strong teams.

We compete hard.

We support progression.

We look after our people.

And we get stronger together.

Version control

Version 1.0 drafted August 2026.