



SOFTBALL NEW ZEALAND UMPIRE

PATHWAYS FRAMEWORK

*Ehara tāku toa I te toa takitahi, tāku toa, he toa takitini
My strength is not that of one person, but the strength of many*



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Our Vision

The softball community experiences quality umpiring and the enjoyment it creates.

Our Mission

To lead and deliver quality and professional umpiring providing enjoyment and support to all those involved.

Our Values

Passion – encompassing excellence, enthusiasm, persistence and dedication.

Honesty – implicit to gain trust and portray fairness.

Courage – having presence, calmness in how we behave and leadership in game management.

Quality – achieved through consistency, teamwork and continuous improvement.

Enjoyment – for the umpires, players, team management and spectators.

Respect – for each other, players and the rules.



Foreword

Umpiring plays an important role in supporting our elite athletes to excel on the world stage and encouraging our local communities to participate, compete and enjoy Softball.

Over the years we have made significant progress in umpire development but there is much more to be done. We need to increase the number of active umpires in Softball and support them properly if we are to become a healthier, more successful part of the Softball community. We must ensure that our umpiring workforce is properly qualified and they have the skills and tools to work with all levels of athletes.

The Softball New Zealand Umpire Pathways Framework seeks to build on existing successes, putting in place systems which will deliver more and better supported umpires. We want Softball to be a sport where everyone who participates has access to an appropriately skilled umpire. A sport where umpires are appropriately recruited, trained, deployed and ultimately retained within Softball.

The Pathways Framework provides a clear direction and focus for our efforts to achieve a transparent, consistent and effective umpiring grading system throughout the country.

The Pathways Framework was developed by a working party, in conjunction with the National Umpiring Staff, to align with the Softball New Zealand Umpires Strategic Plan 2016-2021. The working party consisted of current national umpires from varying levels within the Framework.

Wiremu Tamaki

***Softball New Zealand Umpire in Chief
Kai-Whakawaa Matua – Poiuka Aotearoa***



Notes

1. The following document represents a guide to the minimum requirements for progression through the Pathways Framework. In exceptional circumstances only, earlier promotion may be made by the New Zealand Umpire in Chief and the National Umpiring Staff.
2. Umpires who do not meet the minimum requirements in a season will retain their grade followed by the letter “R”. Special circumstances will be taken into consideration by the National Umpiring Staff. A season game abatement of up to ten games will apply for tournament chief umpires and their assistants.
3. Progression to Level Two in one season is possible for start of season Umpire Recruits. If Level One is achieved by mid-season, Level Two accreditation could commence in the second half of their first season.
4. Eligibility for Levels Four, Five and Six evaluation is by accepting a National Umpiring Staff invitation. Eligibility for Level Seven evaluation at a WBSC international certification clinic is by approval of the Umpire in Chief and Softball New Zealand.
5. Pre-assessment is recommended for Levels Four, Five and Six. This may be conducted at any Regional Director of Umpiring approved tournament including regional or Club Premier Grade tournaments.
6. All holders of WBSC certification will be graded as Level Seven. Umpires who are not available for WBSC appointments but are fully active in the umpiring programme will be graded Level Seven “A”. Level Seven “R” as per note 2 will also apply.
7. In all cases conduct and dress, both on and off diamond, will contribute to overall evaluation mark.
8. Game statistics are to be returned annually for all umpire levels within associations.

Abbreviations Used In This Framework

SNZ – Softball New Zealand

WBSC – World Baseball and Softball Confederation

UIC – Umpire in Chief (Local or SNZ)

TCU – Tournament Chief Umpire

ATCU – Assistant Tournament Chief Umpire

NUS – National Umpiring Staff

RDU – Regional Director of Umpiring

Local Umpire

Has no interest in furthering their umpiring career at this stage.

Season Games	Umpiring local association and/or club games
Feedback	Regular helpful hints given when passing from local UIC or SNZ umpires
Other	Recognised and acknowledged by local association
Opportunities	Regional age grade and school tournaments



Level Zero – Umpire Recruit

A local umpire who has attended an introductory umpire presentation and/or expressed an interest in furthering their umpiring career

Level One – Rookie Umpire

Progression to Level One	
Workbook	Level One exercises completed
Annual Rules Test Entry Level	50% minimum, resit available via WBSC Pre or post season test result accepted
Feedback	Regular feedback from local UIC
Regional Evaluation	50% minimum over four games: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two plate • Two base
Local UIC and Delegate	One plate and one base per evaluator

Level One Maintenance	
Season Games	Eight minimum
Skills Required	Starting positions Signals and audible calls <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balls and strikes • Fair and foul • Foul tip • Safe and out • Count • Dead ball and time Obstruction ruling and signal Check swing Safety base General rules knowledge and application Refer to page 7 for a full list of criteria
Opportunities	Regional age grade and school tournaments SNZ Secondary School – Junior, Division Two SNZ Under 15

Level Two – Developing Umpire

Progression to Level Two	
Workbook	Level Two exercises completed
Annual Rules Test Entry Level	60% minimum, resit available via WBSC
Feedback	Regular feedback from local UIC
Regional Evaluation	60% minimum over four games:
Local UIC and Delegate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two plate • Two base One plate and one base per evaluator

Level Two Maintenance	
Season Games	10 minimum
Skills Required	In addition to Level One skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plate positioning – the slot • Strike zone consistency • Base positioning for play • Crew signals • Infield fly and interference • Two umpire system mechanics • General rules knowledge and application Refer to page 7 for a full list of criteria
General Form Only	
Other	Regional seminar – Attendance recommended Rules test – Recommended to sit each season
Opportunities	Regional age grade and school tournaments SNZ Secondary School – Junior, Division Two SNZ Under 15



Level Three – Emerging Umpire

Progression to Level Three	
Eligibility	Local UIC recommendation for evaluation
Workbook	Level Three exercises completed
Annual Rules Test Entry Level	70% minimum, resit available via WBSC
Feedback	Regular feedback from local UIC
Regional Tournament Evaluation	70% minimum over four games: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two plate • Two base One plate and one base per evaluator
TCU and Delegate	One plate and one base per evaluator

Level Three Maintenance	
Season Games	15 minimum
Skills Required	In addition to all Level Two skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-game responsibilities • Lineup changes • Moves to track hit balls • Trails batter-runner • Lead off and pulled foot calls • Illegal pitch – feet violations • Call timing and selling • Adaptability and reaction • Judgement and Decisiveness • Improved rules knowledge and application Refer to page 7 for a full list of criteria
Demonstrate Competency	
Other	Regional seminar – Attend Rules test – Recommended to sit each season
Opportunities	Regional age grade and school tournaments SNZ Secondary School – All Divisions SNZ Under 15, Under 18

Level Four – New Zealand Badge Umpire

Progression to Level Four	
Eligibility	Accept NUS invitation for evaluation
Annual Rules Test	70% minimum, resit available via WBSC
Feedback	Regular feedback from local UIC Pre-assessment recommended
Tournament Evaluation	SNZ Under 18 Tier One assessor OR Two x Tier Two assessors Tournament evaluation endorsed by NUS

Level Four Maintenance	
Season Games	20 minimum
Skills Required	In addition to all Level Three skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strike zone edges and consistency • Working the slot • Tracking the pitch • Illegal pitch • Hustles into position • Hustles players on and off field • Communicating with peers and officials • Three umpire mechanics and rotations • Good application of rules knowledge
Demonstrate Competency	
Other	Regional seminar – Attend Rules test – Recommended to sit each season
Opportunities	SNZ Secondary Schools – All Divisions SNZ Under 15, Under 18, Open Clubs Other SNZ tournaments will be considered International exchanges e.g. Friendship Series



Level Five – Senior Badge Umpire

Progression to Level Five	
Eligibility	Level Four minimum of two seasons (including current season) Accept NUS invitation for evaluation
Annual Rules Test	75% minimum, resit available via WBSC
Feedback	Regular feedback from RDU Pre-assessment recommended
Tournament Evaluation	SNZ Under 23 or Senior tournament Two x Tier One assessors NUS ratification required

Level Five Maintenance	
Season Games	30 minimum including 5 junior grade games
Skills Required	In addition to all Level Four attributes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four umpire mechanics and rotations • Elevated application of rules knowledge • Emphatic calls • Confidence in managing the game • Good communication with peers and officials • Contributes and actively mentors within local association
Demonstrate Advanced Competency	
Other	Regional seminar – Deliver segment Rules test – Recommended to sit each season
Opportunities	SNZ – Any tournament International exchanges e.g. Friendship Series



Level Six – National Umpire

Progression to Level Six	
Eligibility	Level Five minimum of two seasons (including current season) Accept NUS invitation for evaluation
Annual Rules Test	80% minimum, resit available via WBSC
Feedback	Pre-assessment recommended
Tournament Evaluation	SNZ Open Clubs or NFC Two x Tier One assessors NUS ratification required

Level Six Maintenance	
Season Games	40 minimum including 5 junior grade games
Skills Required	In addition to all Level Five skills:
Demonstrate Mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced knowledge of three and four umpire mechanics and rotations (including backfill) Advanced application of rules knowledge Advanced game management skills Adaptable to any given situation Contributes and actively mentors within local association
Other	Regional seminar – Deliver segment Rules test – Recommended to sit each season
Opportunities	SNZ – Any tournament Local international tournaments, internal tours and international exchanges



Level Seven – International Umpire

Progression to Level Seven	
Eligibility	Level Six minimum of two seasons (including current season) Approved by UIC and SNZ for evaluation at a WBSC international certification clinic
Pre-qualification	85% minimum WBSC-SD open book rules exam
WBSC International Certification Seminar	90% combined minimum (five measurements) For full details please refer to: http://www.wbsc.org/softball-umpire-area/becoming-a-certified-softball-umpire/
WBSC Delegation	WBSC fitness tests (four measurements) For full details please refer to: http://www.wbsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Softball-Fitness-testing-protocols-September-1-20151.pdf

Level Seven Maintenance	
Season Games	50 minimum including 5 junior grade games
Skills Required	In addition to all Level Six skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCU or ATCU at any SNZ tournament Active mentor at national tournaments
Other	Regional seminar – Deliver segment Rules test – Recommended to sit each season
WBSC Recertification	85% WBSC-SD recertification exam each rule book period File up-to-date positive on-field evaluation with WBSC-SD Director of Umpires
Opportunities	SNZ – Any tournament International tournaments, tours and exchanges WBSC World Cups



Regional Evaluation Criteria

Level One

Demonstrates generally

Plate:

Starting position

Signals

- Balls and strikes
- Fair and foul
- Foul tip
- Count

Check swing request

Base:

Starting position

- No runners on
- Lead runner on 1st
- Lead runner on 2nd
- Lead runner on 3rd

Check swing response

Safety base

Both Plate and Base:

Good presence

Position between innings

Calls audible

Signals

- Safe and out
- Dead ball
- Time
- Obstruction

Obstruction ruling

General rules knowledge and application

Level Two

ALL Level One criteria PLUS the following:

Demonstrates generally

Plate:

Working in slot

Heel toe

Gap

Eyes at top of zone

Strike zone consistent

Base:

Ready stance

Set position for call

Inside / outside

Angle to play

Distance to play

Both Plate and Base:

Crew signals

Infield fly ruling

Infield fly signal

Interference

Two umpire mechanics



Level Three

ALL Level One and Two criteria PLUS the following:

Demonstrates competency

Pre-game:

Dress / presentation

Bat / helmet check

Plate meeting

Plate:

Lineup changes

- Clearly recorded
- Coach communication
- Scorer communication

Moves to track hit balls

Trails batter-runner

Base:

Button hook

Lead off calls

Pulled foot calls

Tag up position

Illegal pitch (feet violations)

Both Plate and Base:

Call timing

Selling call on close plays

Tag call

Adaptability to secondary plays

Attitude and approachability

Decisiveness and Judgement

Physical reaction

Pressure reaction

Softball New Zealand Umpire Pathways Summary

