



# SOFTBALL NEW ZEALAND UMPIRE- PATHWAYS FRAMEWORK

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





## Contents

- 1 Our Vision
  - Our Mission
  - Our Values
- 2 Foreword
  - Notes
- 3 Abbreviations Used In This Framework
  - Local Umpire
  - Umpire Recruit
  - Level One – Rookie Umpire
- 4 Level Two – Developing Umpire
  - Level Three – Emerging Umpire
- 5 Level Four – New Zealand Badge Umpire
  - Level Five – Senior Badge Umpire
- 6 Level Six – National Umpire
  - Level Seven – International Umpire
- 7 Regional Evaluation Criteria
- 8 Pathways Summary



## 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.

<b>Season Games</b>	Umpiring local association and/or club games
<b>Other</b>	Recognised and acknowledged by local association
<b>Opportunities</b>	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	
<b>Workbook</b>	Level One exercises completed
<b>Annual Rules Test Entry Level</b>	50% minimum, resit available via WBSC Pre or post season test result accepted
<b>Regional Evaluation</b>	Local UIC or their delegate Minimum of four games: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two plate</li> <li>• Two base</li> </ul>

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

## Level Two – Developing Umpire

Progression to Level Two	
<b>Workbook</b>	Level Two exercises completed
<b>Annual Rules Test Entry Level</b>	60% minimum, resit available via WBSC
<b>Regional Evaluation</b>	Local UIC or their delegate Minimum of four games: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two plate</li> <li>• Two base</li> </ul>
Level Two Maintenance	
<b>Season Games</b>	10 minimum
<b>Skills Demonstrated General Form Only</b>	In addition to Level One skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plate positioning – the slot</li> <li>• Strike zone consistency</li> <li>• Base positioning for play</li> <li>• Crew signals</li> <li>• Infield fly and interference</li> <li>• Two umpire system mechanics</li> </ul> Refer to page 7 for a full list of criteria
<b>Other</b>	Regional seminar – Attendance recommended Rules test – Recommended to sit each season
<b>Opportunities</b>	Regional age grade and school tournaments SNZ Secondary School – Junior, Division Two Regional Under 13, Under 15



## Level Three – Emerging Umpire

Progression to Level Three	
<b>Eligibility</b>	Local UIC recommendation for evaluation
<b>Workbook</b>	Level Three exercises completed
<b>Annual Rules Test Entry Level</b>	70% minimum, resit available via WBSC
<b>Pre-Evaluation</b>	Regular feedback from local UIC
<b>Regional Tournament Evaluation</b>	Local RDU or their delegate Minimum of four games: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two plate</li> <li>• Two base</li> </ul>
Level Three Maintenance	
<b>Season Games</b>	15 minimum
<b>Skills Demonstrated</b>	In addition to all Level Two skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-game responsibilities</li> <li>• Lineup changes</li> <li>• Moves to track hit balls</li> <li>• Trails batter-runner</li> <li>• Lead off and pulled foot calls</li> <li>• Illegal pitch – feet violations</li> <li>• Call timing and selling</li> <li>• Adaptability and reaction</li> <li>• Judgement and decisiveness</li> </ul> Refer to page 7 for a full list of criteria
<b>Other</b>	Regional seminar – Attendance recommended Rules test – Recommended to sit each season
<b>Opportunities</b>	Regional age grade and school tournaments SNZ Secondary School – All Divisions Regional Under 15, SNZ Under 17

## Level Four – New Zealand Badge Umpire

Progression to Level Four	
<b>Eligibility</b>	Accept NUS invitation for evaluation
<b>Annual Rules Test</b>	70% minimum, resit available via WBSC
<b>Pre-Evaluation</b>	Pre-assessment recommended
<b>Tournament Evaluation</b>	SNZ Under 17 or other equivalent event as approved by the NUS Tier One assessor or Two x Tier Two assessors Evaluation result advised at tournament Tournament evaluation endorsed by NUS

Level Four Maintenance	
<b>Season Games</b>	20 minimum
<b>Skills Demonstrated</b>	In addition to all Level Three skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strike zone edges and consistency</li> <li>• Working the slot</li> <li>• Tracking the pitch</li> <li>• Illegal pitch</li> <li>• Hustles into position</li> <li>• Hustles players on and off field</li> <li>• Communicating with peers and officials</li> <li>• Three umpire mechanics and rotations</li> <li>• Good application of rules knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	Regional seminar – Attendance recommended Rules test – Recommended to sit each season
<b>Opportunities</b>	All SNZ tournaments will be considered International exchanges by NUS invitation



## Level Five – Senior Badge Umpire

Progression to Level Five	
<b>Eligibility</b>	Level Four minimum of two seasons (including current season) Accept NUS invitation for evaluation
<b>Annual Rules Test</b>	75% minimum, resit available via WBSC
<b>Pre-Evaluation</b>	Pre-assessment recommended
<b>Tournament Evaluation</b>	SNZ Open Clubs other equivalent event as approved by the NUS Two x Tier One assessors NUS ratification required

Level Five Maintenance	
<b>Season Games</b>	30 minimum including 5 junior grade games
<b>Skills Demonstrated</b>	In addition to all Level Four attributes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four umpire mechanics and rotations</li> <li>• Four essential elements theory application</li> <li>• Emphatic calls</li> <li>• Confidence in managing the game</li> <li>• Good communication with peers and officials</li> <li>• Contributes within local association</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	Regional seminar – Attendance expected (may be asked to deliver segment) Rules test – Expected to sit each season
<b>Opportunities</b>	SNZ – Any tournament





## Level Six – National Umpire

Progression to Level Six	
<b>Eligibility</b>	Level Five minimum of two seasons (including current season) Accept NUS invitation for evaluation
<b>Annual Rules Test</b>	80% minimum, resit available via WBSC
<b>Pre-Evaluation</b>	Pre-assessment recommended
<b>Tournament Evaluation</b>	SNZ Open Clubs or other equivalent event as approved by the NUS Two x Tier One assessors NUS ratification required

Level Six Maintenance	
<b>Season Games</b>	40 minimum including 5 junior grade games
<b>Skills Demonstrated</b>	In addition to all Level Five skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advanced knowledge of three and four umpire mechanics and rotations (including backfill)</li> <li>Advanced game management skills</li> <li>Adaptable to any given situation</li> <li>Contributes within local association</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	Regional seminar – Attendance expected (may be asked to deliver segment) Rules test – Expected to sit each season
<b>Opportunities</b>	SNZ – Any tournament Local international tournaments, internal tours



## Level Seven – International Umpire

Progression to Level Seven	
<b>Eligibility</b>	Level Six minimum of two seasons (including current season) Approved by UIC and SNZ for evaluation at a WBSC international certification clinic
<b>Pre-Qualification</b>	85% minimum WBSC-SD open book rules exam
<b>WBSC International Certification Seminar</b>	90% combined minimum (five measurements) WBSC fitness tests (four measurements) For full details refer to WBSC website: <a href="https://www.wbsc.org/documents/c/softball-umpire">https://www.wbsc.org/documents/c/softball-umpire</a>

Level Seven Maintenance	
<b>Season Games</b>	50 minimum including 5 junior grade games
<b>Skills Required</b>	In addition to all Level Six skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active mentor at national tournaments</li> <li>Remain abreast of WBSC best practice and share this knowledge within the programme</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	Regional seminar – Attendance expected (expected to deliver segment) Rules test – Expected to sit each season
<b>WBSC Recertification</b>	Refer to WBSC website: <a href="https://www.wbsc.org/documents/c/softball-umpire">https://www.wbsc.org/documents/c/softball-umpire</a>
<b>Opportunities</b>	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 1<sup>st</sup>
- Lead runner on 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Lead runner on 3<sup>rd</sup>

Check swing response

Safety base

#### Both Plate and Base:

Using clicker

Position between innings

Audible calls

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

