

Club Academies – Implementation of OSA Standards

A Discussion Paper

OSA definition of Academy is:

- an organization whose primary, long-term objective is to provide players with long-term training through the provision of the necessary training facilities and infrastructure.
- an Academy may be a Club Academy which is operated by an affiliated Club which is a Member Club of a District Association or, it can be a Non-Club Academy which is operated by an independent legal entity which is not affiliated as a Member Club of a District Association.

There are three levels of Academy based on the requirements defined in the OSA's Operational Procedures Section 22 - Academies, Procedure 1.1 and they are described below.

OSA's Three Academy Levels:

Level 1 - Professional Academy

The requirements for a Professional Academy will be determined by Professional Clubs playing in a Division 1 Professional League. Examples of a Level 1 Professional Academy are FC Edmonton Academy, Montreal Impact Academy, Ottawa Fury FC Academy, Toronto FC Academy and Vancouver Whitecaps Academy.

Level 2 - Elite Development Academy

The requirements for an Elite Development Academy will be developed by the OSA's Technical Development Committee as part of the Long Term Player Development implementation. Elite Development Academies will participate in the proposed OSA Elite Player Development Program as part of the Stage 5 (Training to Compete) in Long Term Player Development. A Level 2 Elite Development Academy will have to meet the standards of the OSA's OPDL which will be the same standards as required for the Clubs in the OPDL.

Level 3 - Academy

A ***Level 3 Academy can be either a Club Academy or a Non-Club Academy***. To be recognized as a Level 3 Academy by the OSA, the Academy must meet the OSA's standards for Staff, Facilities, Equipment and Program.

The standards for a ***Level 3 – Academy*** are the same, regardless of whether it is a ***Club Academy*** or a ***Non-Club Academy***.

Required Standards for Level 3 – Academy (Club Academy or Non-Club Academy)

Academy Staff

1. Academy Technical Staff to be overseen by Coach with a minimum of CSA National “B” Licence
2. All coaches of U13 to U21 teams require a minimum of Provincial “Pre-B” Assessment
3. Academy Coaches working solely with development players from U8 to U12 must hold the stage-appropriate LTPD coaching certification (Learning To Train + MED + RiS) or have obtained the USYSA National Youth Licence
4. Goal Keeper Coach with OSA GK diploma or equivalent
5. Have access to a strength and conditioning coach
6. An individual will be restricted to hold only one of the above coaching positions (in 1-4 above) within the Academy staff
7. Administrator / Manager - The Academy will employ an administrator to run the business side of the Academy
8. Staff ratio of coaches to students will be 1 coach for every 14 participants (specific to all age groups)
9. The Academy will provide screening and harassment policy and procedure
10. All Academy staff and volunteers will undergo required interview / screening process every two years
11. All Academy staff and volunteers will be required to have a **police records check** every two years

Academy Facilities and Equipment

1. The Academy will have ownership of, or access to, quality facilities and necessary equipment which will include:
 - Indoor Facility - Field
 - Outdoor Facility – Field
 - Board Room and Class Room / Lecture Hall - with IT capabilities for game analysis
 - Equipment - balls (2 sizes) - Goals (all-sizes) - Bibs / Cones - All Fitness Test Equipment - Training Gear / Uniform
2. Staff will ensure that all fields and equipment used must be kept in a safe, well maintained operating condition
3. The Academy will have the necessary property insurance relative to facility ownership

Academy Program

The Academy will provide:

1. programs for all age groups
2. the minimum number of hours per week spent on training the participants will be:
 - 3.0 hours minimum for Under-8 to Under-12 players
 - 5.0 hours minimum for Under-13 and Under-14 players
 - 6.0 hours minimum for Under-15, Under-16 and Under-17 players
 - 6.5 hours minimum for Under-18 and older players
3. the ratio of training sessions to games will be a minimum of 3:1
4. \$5 million liability insurance for staff and students to cover all activities
5. on-going and innovative ideas related to development of the soccer student
6. international relationships and soccer experiences for the soccer student
7. support resources of the highest quality
8. information about the National Team and Provincial Team programs
9. recognition to achievements in soccer excellence

While the OSA's academy standards apply equally to Club Academies and Non-Club Academies, there is currently no process to ensure that the Club Academies meet the OSA's standards for an Academy.

The OSA standards for the **Level 3 Club Academy** have already been defined by the OSA. These standards apply to all Clubs which operate academy programs within their club operations including **Canadian Soccer League Clubs**, **League 1 Ontario Clubs** and **Community Clubs** affiliated with a District Association. The only exceptions are Clubs which operate a **Level 1 - Professional Academy** (eg., Toronto FC or Ottawa Fury FC) or a **Level 2 - Elite Development Academy** (ie., the Clubs in the Ontario Player Development League – OPDL).

While the OSA standards for the Level 3 Club Academy have already been defined, there is no process, policies or procedures to formally recognize these Club Academies as a Level 3 Club Academy.

The OSA Academy Working Group will need to consider how the OSA 'recognizes' and 'regulates' these Club Academies to ensure compliance with the OSA's standards as the OSA intent has always been that no Academy within the OSA structure (either Club Academy or Non-Club Academy) should be able to call itself an Academy unless it meets the OSA's standards.

The OSA Academy Working Group will also need to review the current OSA rules which prevent a Club Academy from playing in the same league as a Non-Club Academy.

With regard to the reporting of players involved in a **Level 3 Club Academy**, the OSA policy is:

A Club Academy shall register all of its participants as players and team officials with the District Association with which the Club is affiliated.

The players involved in a **Level 3 Club Academy** are treated the same as that Club's players who play for the Club's team in leagues, tournaments, cup competitions and exhibition games. In fact, most of the players in such an Academy program are already registered with that Club and play on that Club's teams. The **Club Academy** program is just providing extra player development opportunities for these players already registered with the Club.

In order to proceed with a **Level 3 Club Academy** program, we need to address the following questions:

1. Is there a need to recognize the Club Academy programs which meet the standards of a **Level 3 Academy**? Should the OSA have an **OSA Recognized Club Academy (ORCA)** program similar to the **OSA Recognized Non-Club Academy (ORNCA)** program?
2. Which organization level (OSA or District Association) should be responsible for managing the **OSA Recognized Club Academy (ORCA)** program?
3. Should the OSA be responsible for providing the guidelines to the District Associations for a proper assessment of the Clubs applying for **OSA Recognized Club Academy (ORCA)** status in order for a District Association to approve this status? Or, should the OSA be responsible for the **OSA Recognized Club Academy (ORCA)** program to the same extent that it is responsible for the **OSA Recognized Non-Club Academy (ORNCA)** program?
4. Should the OSA be responsible for the **OSA Recognized Club Academy (ORCA)** program involving **Canadian Soccer League Clubs** and **League 1 Ontario Clubs** while the District Associations are responsible for the **OSA Recognized Club Academy (ORCA)** program involving Clubs in their respective Districts?
5. Should the OSA be responsible for the **Academy Assessment Program** including the training of, and guidelines for, the **Academy Assessors**? The District Associations can then hire these **“OSA Approved” Academy Assessors** to assess the Club Academies for which each is responsible.

These are the initial questions which must be addressed before we proceed any further with an **OSA Recognized Club Academy (ORCA)** program.

POSTIONS REGARDING VARIOUS ISSUES SUBMITTED BY VARIOUS INDIVIDUALS:

1. Is there a need to recognize the Club Academy programs which meet the standards of a *Level 3 Academy*? Should the OSA have an *OSA Recognized Club Academy (ORCA)* program similar to the *OSA Recognized Non-Club Academy (ORNCA)* program?

Jake Doodnath, Academy Director, Toronto Skillz Soccer School

Yes, Club Academies who meet the standards should be recognized. I do believe we should have one designation for all Level 3 Academies - This could be a designation - OSA-L3-Academy or something as such. This will make it easier for parents and players to make informed decisions based on options available in their area. The OSA together with these academies can work together to carry out a co-ordinated PR campaign to ensure the public is made aware of this option and also allow parents and players to make informed choices.

Ron Smale, President, Ontario Soccer Association

Yes. As discussed at the meeting I believe it would be a good idea to move to an OSA Academy certification stamp, classification, symbol etc., as proposed by Liam and rid ourselves of the designations of ORCA and ORNCA.

Neil Brown, PDL Club Owner

Yes. We should be doing as much as possible to bring consistency to the system.

Frank Iazzo, Director, International FC Academy

Club Academies and any other programs that meet the standards of Level 3 Academies should be recognized. However, they should all be distinguished as "one" regardless of their organizational make-up.

Slobodan Pavlovic, Technical Director, Vardar Canada Soccer Academy

There should not be difference in criteria, governance and participation / treatment of the ORCA and ORNCA . This is opportunity for OSA to create single OSA Academy system (ORNCA AND ORCA together) that would have the same objectives and satisfy the same high standards.

This system of OSA Academies should be managed by OSA directly the same way ORNCA are managed now. Number of academies in the system would allow OSA to create OSA Academy league that could become second tier to the OPDL for age groups U13 and up and first tier for younger age groups providing PROPER COMPETITION ENVIRONMENT FOCUSED ON PLAYER DEVELOPMENT VS. RESULT. As OPDL only covers U13 and older players there is need for improvement of the competition at lower age groups following requirements of LTPDP and for the players following academy programs (high training to games ratios).

Dino Rossi, Director-at-Large, Ontario Soccer Association

Most club academy programs are really nothing more than supplemental training programs. They confuse the marketplace when they call their programs "Academy programs". In those cases, I don't see much value in trying to impose the Level 3 Academy standards on them. I believe enforcement would be very challenging.

However, we do need to have an OSA Recognized Club Academy program for those clubs who wish to organize their competitive/rep programs to be in line with ORNCA standards and who may wish to apply to enter their competitive teams to play in a league like SAAC.

I have heard from clubs who have interest in possibly re-organizing their competitive programs along ORNCA lines so we need a program for those clubs.

Frankly, if we are serious about improving the state of the game, all clubs should be adopting a standards based approach to their competitive programs. In my opinion, the ORNCA standards should be the standard for all youth soccer above House League / All Star / Select.

Marco Reda, Director of Coaching, Power Soccer Academy

Our position is that there should only be two levels of Academy designation. Level 1 can be Professional Academy (even though in some cases that might be a stretch) but Level 2 should be any clubs or academies that meet the standards required for OPDL status. Any club or ORNCA organization that does not meet the standards of OPDL should not be given "Academy" status under the OSA.

2. Which organization level (OSA or District Association) should be responsible for managing the **OSA Recognized Club Academy (ORCA)** program?

Jake Doodnath, Academy Director, Toronto Skillz Soccer School

OSA should be responsible for managing the program, the cost of managing and auditing the standards can be covered by a yearly membership fee.

Ron Smale, President, Ontario Soccer Association

Based on capacity and numbers of Academy Clubs I would believe a centralized approach would be best. Districts do not have the resources or capacity to oversee, audit, asses etc., and also may not have the skill set to draw on. A survey or quick communication to clubs to identify numbers of club Academies within the system by Region would be helpful in identifying the resources required and who should provide the oversight.

Neil Brown, PDL Club Owner

I believe the OSA should be responsible for managing the system....again to bring consistency.

Frank Iazzo, Director, International FC Academy

The OSA should be responsible for managing the OSA Recognized Academies.

Slobodan Pavlovic, Technical Director, Vardar Canada Soccer Academy

OSA should be the only organization responsible for all Ontario academies being placed under the same umbrella (as per 1.)

Dino Rossi, Director-at-Large, Ontario Soccer Association

If clubs wish to operate a PROPER academy program, equivalent to the standards ORNCA groups are expected to adhere to, then they should go through the same audit process as ORNCA groups do. If that means the OSA is responsible, so be it. A consistent approach is what's most important.

Marco Reda, Director of Coaching, Power Soccer Academy

If implemented, the OSA should be directly responsible for managing this.

3. Should the OSA be responsible for providing the guidelines to the District Associations for a proper assessment of the Clubs applying for *OSA Recognized Club Academy (ORCA)* status in order for a District Association to approve this status? Or, should the OSA be responsible for the *OSA Recognized Club Academy (ORCA)* program to the same extent that it is responsible for the *OSA Recognized Non-Club Academy (ORNCA)* program?

Jake Doodnath, Academy Director, Toronto Skillz Soccer School

Same as above, this program should be fully managed by the OSA, it is important to ensure that Academy Standards are managed by the OSA.

Ron Smale, President, Ontario Soccer Association

Yes. I believe both programs need to be under the same umbrella of oversight, audit, assessment etc. Two distinct bodies or entities working potentially in isolation would not be efficient or effective in my opinion. This would lead to a fractured, non-cohesive environment.

Neil Brown, PDL Club Owner

OSA should be responsible as it is for ORNCA entities.

Frank Iazzo, Director, International FC Academy

OSA should be responsible for approval status.

Slobodan Pavlovic, Technical Director, Vardar Canada Soccer Academy

OSA should be responsible for managing all Ontario academies to ensure uniform criteria and objectives (LTPDP implementation and execution).

Dino Rossi, Director-at-Large, Ontario Soccer Association

Please see my answer to question #2.

Marco Reda, Director of Coaching, Power Soccer Academy

The OSA should certainly be responsible for implementing, auditing, and ultimately approving this status for ORCA designation. Districts have a direct benefit of giving their clubs this status.

4. Should the OSA be responsible for the *OSA Recognized Club Academy (ORCA)* program involving *Canadian Soccer League Clubs* and *League 1 Ontario Clubs* while the District Associations are responsible for the *OSA Recognized Club Academy (ORCA)* program involving Clubs in their respective Districts?

Jake Doodnath, Academy Director, Toronto Skillz Soccer School

OSA should manage the certification program for all academy types.

Ron Smale, President, Ontario Soccer Association

Again, my previous comment of all under one umbrella would be the best effective solution. More effective and efficient in setting and ensuring standards are monitored and applied correctly.

Neil Brown, PDL Club Owner

Yes.

Frank Iaizzo, Director, International FC Academy

Same as above for the purpose of removing any domestic bias and protectionism.

Slobodan Pavlovic, Technical Director, Vardar Canada Soccer Academy

OSA should be the only responsible body for all Ontario academies organized and managed under the same umbrella.

Dino Rossi, Director-at-Large, Ontario Soccer Association

Please see my answer to question #2

It is better to have one standard process for all organizations that wish to operate according to the academy standards. I'm not sure districts would be able to handle the process consistently across the process. It is better that we have one organization responsible for the ORCA and ORNCA programs so we have consistent management of the standards.

Marco Reda, Director of Coaching, Power Soccer Academy

The OSA should certainly be responsible for implementing, auditing, and ultimately approving this status for ORCA designation. Districts have a direct benefit of giving their clubs this status.

5. Should the OSA be responsible for the **Academy Assessment Program** including the training of, and guidelines for, the **Academy Assessors**? The District Associations can then hire these “**OSA Approved**” **Academy Assessors** to assess the Club Academies for which each is responsible.

Jake Doodnath, Academy Director, Toronto Skillz Soccer School

Yes, I firmly believe that the OSA should be in charge of this process.

Ron Smale, President, Ontario Soccer Association

I would agree with this proposal. This provides a standardized approach and ensures consistency of messaging and assessing across the Province.

Neil Brown, PDL Club Owner

Yes.

Frank Iazzo, Director, International FC Academy

Yes. Academy Assessors under the guidance of the OSA can be contracted to assess domestic and foreign clubs/academies if requested.

Slobodan Pavlovic, Technical Director, Vardar Canada Soccer Academy

OSA should be responsible for all aspects of Ontario academies management including assessment.

Additional Comments:

It is our position that this represents huge opportunity for OSA to unify the best soccer organizations in the province (club academies that will apply and pass requirements and ORNCA) into the single high level player development system to be used by OSA / CSA as the tool for implementation and execution of the LTPDP. OSA Academies would be assessed and guided by OSA Technical Staff in meeting short term and long term goals and objectives.

OSA Academy System would be self-sufficient from all aspects of high level player development including high level and local competition.

This system would be great tool for development and assessment of the academy and players abilities leading to satisfaction of the OPDL standards and their promotion based on objective observation and achieved results as it would allow focused selection process (one system operated by one OSA management team vs. multiple, small, divided academy groups managed by different entities).

OSA Academy league could be tier 2 OPDL for players U13 and up and tier 1 for younger players creating tip of the developmental pyramid for younger age groups (league would follow LTPDP in terms of game formats and frequency). I am sure that regional and provincial coaches would love to have such system at hand to facilitate selection process for regional and provincial teams.

SAAC is an excellent model for such system with proven efficiency in operation and management.

USSF Academy system is another example of such system at higher level.

Dino Rossi, Director-at-Large, Ontario Soccer Association

Please see my answer to question #2 and #4

It is better to have one standard process for all organizations that wish to operate according to the academy standards. I'm not sure districts would be able to handle the process consistently across the process. It is better that we have one organization responsible for the ORCA and ORNCA programs so we have consistent management of the standards.

If the OSA decides to implement standards to provide guidance/best practices to Club's who offer additional training programs to their athletes, then those kinds of programs can be overseen by district associations.

Marco Reda, Director of Coaching, Power Soccer Academy

Yes. Assessors should be directly linked with the OSA and not by/from the Districts themselves.