

5 Disciplinary Procedures; On-field

The USAFL Disciplinary process applies to the following on-field football activities:

- **USAFL Operated Tournaments** (i.e Nationals, Regionals, other USAFL tournaments)
- **USAFL Sanctioned Club Tournaments or Games** (defined under USAFL game definitions issued by the USAFL in 2018, reference per Appendix 1)
- **International Tournaments and Games within USAFL Jurisdiction** (i.e Parallel Cup)

Any disciplinary process associated with club metro football and non USAFL-sanctioned intra club football is the responsibility of the clubs involved. The USAFL can be consulted to provide assistance where necessary.

Figure 5.1 Disciplinary process for USAFL Operated Tournaments

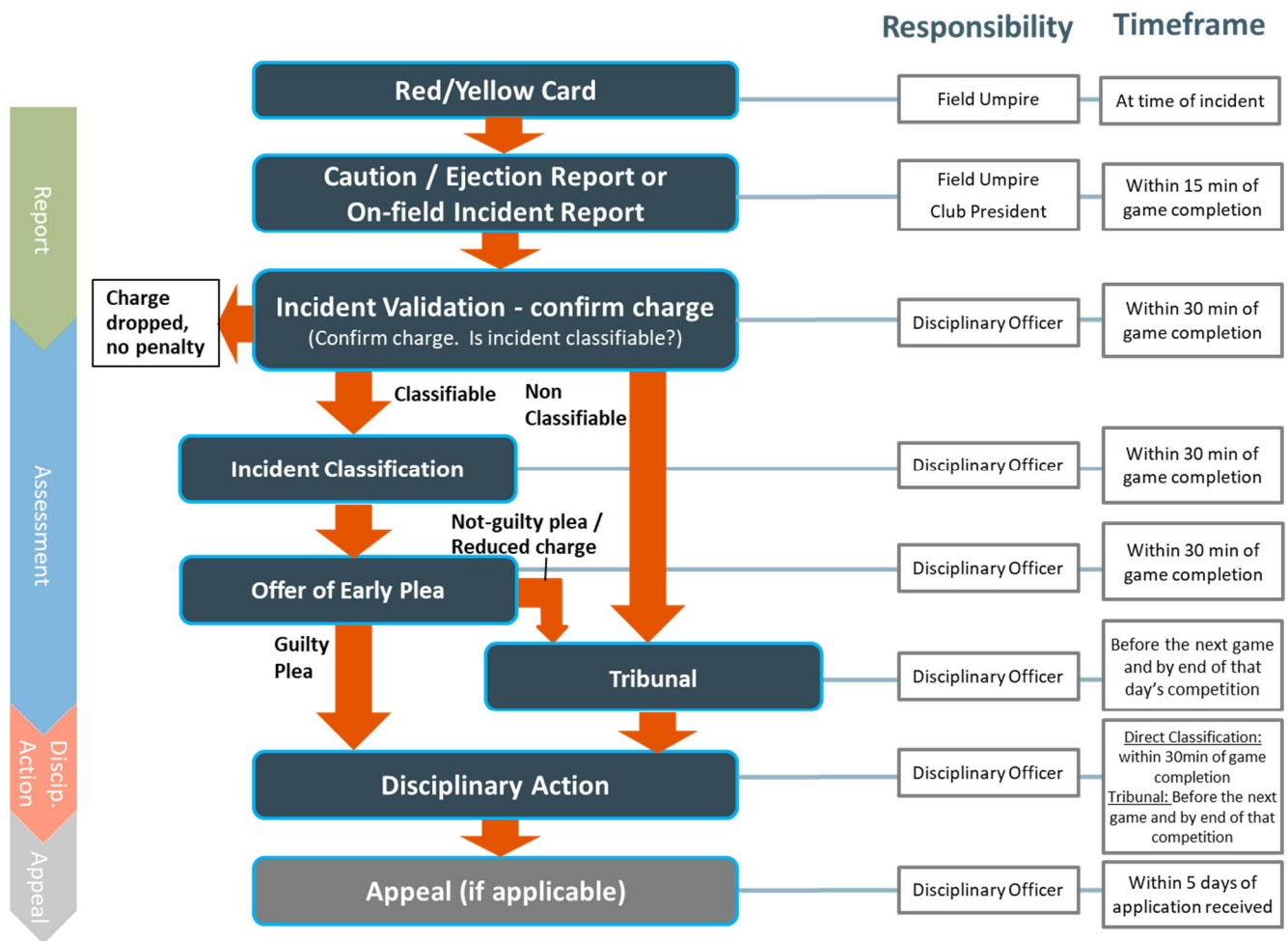
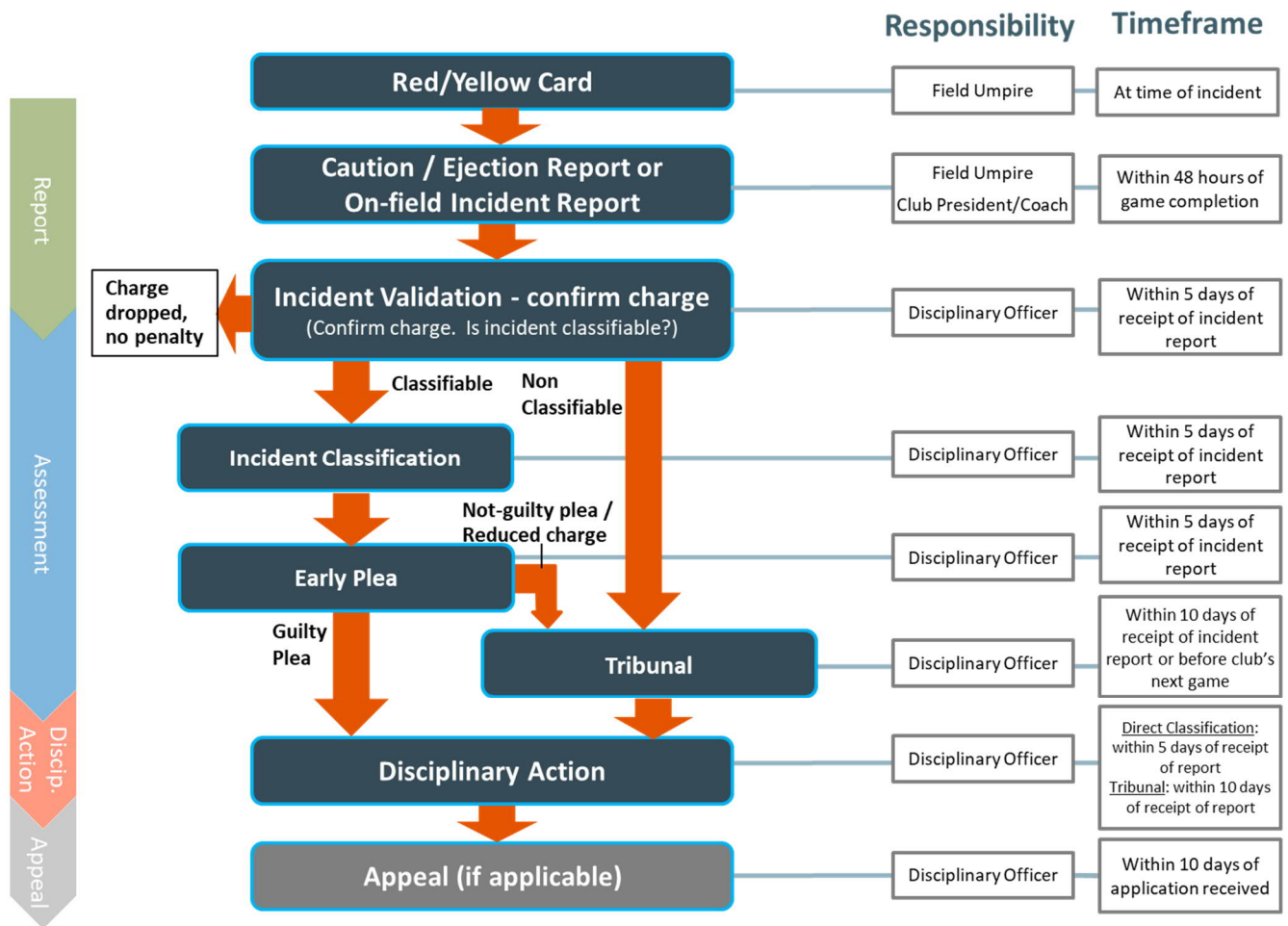


Figure 5.2 Disciplinary process for USAFL Sanctioned Club Tournaments or Games or International Tournaments and Games within USAFL jurisdiction



5.1 Report

There are only 2 mechanisms for reporting all on-field incidents associated with USAFL sanctioned football:

- 1) **USAFL Caution/Ejection Report:** Officiating umpires that issue a red card for any incident during a game must complete the USAFL Caution/Ejection Report and submit to the USAFL Disciplinary Officer within the timing specified for each form of USAFL sanctioned football contained in Table 5.1. The Caution/Ejection form is contained in Appendix 2.

If a red card is issued at a USAFL Operated Tournament, the reporting umpire must inform the accused that they have been reported and that they must report to the Disciplinary Officer at Tournament Central within 30mins of the game completion.

- 2) **On-field Incident Report:** Clubs may submit an On-field Incident Report to the Disciplinary Officer via their Coach or President after the completion of a game, including USAFL operated tournaments. The form must be fully complete and submitted within the timeframes specified below. The form can be obtained from the USAFL Disciplinary Officer or via the Regional VP via email. The On-field Incident Report is contained in Appendix 3.

The Disciplinary Officer must acknowledge receipt of the report to the accused by the method and timeframes listed in Table 5.1.

The USAFL Disciplinary Officer may decline a report or seek additional information if the report is inadequately completed or submitted outside the specified timeframes. A report cannot be declined for undue cause and the Disciplinary Officer must inform a club of any declined report by email.

In cases where incidents are reported beyond the specified timeframes (such as a later video citing), the USAFL Disciplinary Officer will use discretion in applying this process.

Table 5.1 Incident Reporting Timeframes

	Caution/Ejection Form			On-field Incident Report		
	Responsible	Submission	Confirmation	Responsible	Submission	Confirmation
USAFL operated tournaments	Reporting Umpire	15mins after game completion	Verbally, within 30mins of game completion	Club President or Coach	15mins after game completion	Verbally, within 30mins of game completion
USAFL sanctioned club tournaments/ games**	Reporting Umpire	48 hours after game completion	By email, 24 hours after submission	Club President or Coach	48 hours after game completion	By email, 24 hours after submission

5.2 Assessment

5.2.1 Incident Validation

All incidents must be validated by the Disciplinary Officer in accordance with the procedure below in accordance with the timeframes shown in Table 5.1 above;

- a) Confirm the report has been completed correctly; request additional information if needed.
- b) Determine whether there is a charge to be answered in accordance with the **USAFL On-field Offense Descriptions** (see Appendix 4).
- c) If assessment deems that there is no charge to answer, the charge will be dropped.
- d) If a charge must be answered, determine if the incident can be classified in accordance with the **USAFL Incident Classification System** described in Section 5.2.2
- e) If the offense cannot be classified, the charge must be referred directly to a tribunal in accordance with the procedures contained in Section 5.3

5.2.2 Incident Classification

Incident classification and associated definitions for the USAFL has been adapted from the 2022 AFL Tribunals Guidelines (Reference 1).

The Disciplinary Officer must determine whether an incident is *classifiable* or must be referred directly by a Tribunal. Table 5.2.1 defines the specific types of incidents that are classifiable and those which must be assessed by tribunal.

Directly Classifiable incidents will be assessed by the Disciplinary Officer using the **USAFL Incident Classification System** shown in Table 5.2.2 to determine the appropriate penalty. Penalties apply to officially sanctioned USAFL games only (not unsanctioned games or metros).

Table 5.2.1 Incident Classification

Classifiable Offenses	Direct Tribunal Offenses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Striking / Kicking● Tripping● Rough Conduct (lower body)● Rough Conduct (upper body)● Rough Conduct (Dangerous Tackle)● Verbal Abuse● Rough or Reckless contact● Brawl/Melee● Head-to-Head Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Spitting● Eye Gouging● Stomping● Abuse involving race, gender identity, sexual orientation, place of origin, or religion● Umpire Abuse● Contact with an umpire● Serious Misconduct

The following assessment criteria will be applied by the Disciplinary Officer for an on-field incident in consideration of the classification based on the information provided in the Incident Report:

- a) **Conduct: Careless or Intentional:**
 - i. Was the action completed with the intent to produce a specific consequence?

- ii. Or was the offense not intending to produce a consequence but still a breach of the duty of care for the opposition player?
- b) Impact: Low, Medium, High, Severe:**
- i. What was the severity of impact based on degree of force and/or injury sustained?
 - ii. Cases assigned severe impact must be referred to a tribunal
- c) Contact: High/Groin or Body:**
- i. Where was the location of the contact (could be direct or referred contact; i.e contact resulting in head hitting the ground)
- d) Prior Record: Yes or No:**
- i. Player currently on Reprimand or prior suspension in past 24 months

Table 5.2.2 USAFL Incident Classification System

Incident Severity Factors (number of games suspended)**			
Conduct:	Impact:	Contact:	Prior Record:
<input type="checkbox"/> Careless (0)	<input type="checkbox"/> Low (0)	<input type="checkbox"/> Body (0)	<input type="checkbox"/> No (0)
<input type="checkbox"/> Intentional (+1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium (+1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Head/Groin (+1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (+1)
<input type="checkbox"/> N/A (0)	<input type="checkbox"/> High (+2)	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A (0)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Severe*		
	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A (0)		

*Severe offenses must be referred to a tribunal.

**For incidents whereby a severity factor is not applicable (N/A), that severity factor does not attract a penalty.

The penalty is assessed using the following procedure for all classifiable incidents from Table 5.2.2:

$$\text{Penalty (suspension)} = \text{Total of games from each Incident Severity Factor category in table 5.2.2} \\ \text{Less Early Plea discount (Guilty plea – see 5.2.3)}$$

5.2.3 Penalties:

All penalties determined via the Incident Classification System or the outcome of a Tribunal are effective immediately. Suspensions apply to the next USAFL sanctioned game(s) a player's club is due to compete in. In the case of USAFL Tournaments this includes all tournament pool games and finals.

A *reprimand* is an official warning that counts as a prior offense for a guilty player. If a player under a reprimand is reported for a subsequent on-field incident, they are liable to receive additional penalty for that offense as defined by the Disciplinary Offer or Tribunal. A reprimand applies for 12 months.

5.2.4 Early Plea

Once an incident has been classified and a penalty determined, the Discipline Officer must offer the accused the opportunity to make an early Plea. The accused has the option to plead Guilty, Not Guilty or Guilty to a lesser charge. The following outcomes apply for each:

- a) **Guilty Plea****: the penalty as determined by classification. Subject to reduction due to early plea at the discretion of the Disciplinary Officer (maximum deduction 1 game, minimum deduction 0 games, minimum charge Reprimand).
- b) **Not-Guilty Plea**: the charge is referred directly to a tribunal
- c) **Guilty Plea to lesser charge**: the charge is referred to a tribunal. If the lesser charge is granted by tribunal, the charge will be amended, and lesser penalty applied

**An Early Guilty Plea not applicable to incidents assessed as Careless (0), Low Impact (0), Body Contact (0), No prior record (0). The minimum penalty for a Guilty offense is a *Reprimand*.

5.3 Tribunal

5.3.1 Incidents referred to Tribunal

For all on-field incidents not directly classifiable per Table 5.2.2 or if the accused pleads Not Guilty or Guilty to a lesser charge, the Disciplinary Officer must coordinate a tribunal in accordance with the procedure in Section 5.3.3. This includes standing up a tribunal panel of 3 members per Section 5.3.2.

Tribunal hearings must be initiated and completed within the timeframes specific in Table 5.3.1 below:

Table 5.3.1 Tribunal Timeframes

	Tribunal	
	Coordination	Completion
USAFL operated tournaments	Disciplinary Officer	Before the club's next game or by the end of that day's competition
USAFL sanctioned club tournaments/ games**	Disciplinary Officer	Before the club's next game or within 10 days of report receipt

***In situations where additional information becomes available (such as video footage of an incident) after a tribunal has been held, this information can only be considered through the Appeals process (see Section 5.5).*

5.3.2 Tribunal Panel Selection

A tribunal panel must be formed by the Disciplinary Officer and be made up of 3 eligible individuals including the following composition:

- 1 USAFL Board member (which may include the Disciplinary Officer)
- 2 Disciplinary Panel Committee members (as defined in Section 3 Disciplinary Roles)

To be eligible, a tribunal member must not be affiliated with any club involved in the tribunal nor have any perceived or actual personal or otherwise connection with the accused. The Disciplinary Officer is responsible for confirming eligibility of tribunal panel members to a specific hearing.

Tribunal Panel members must be available for the duration of the tribunal process.

5.3.3 Tribunal Procedure

5.3.3.1 Eligibility to Attend a Tribunal Hearing

The following persons are eligible to attend tribunals:

- a) The person charged;
- b) The person reporting the charges (field umpire or President or Coach of the reporting club);
- c) Any other umpires on duty (field or goal umpires);
- d) Tribunal panel as selected by the Disciplinary Officer;
- e) Disciplinary Officer;
- f) Witnesses as approved by the Tribunal Chair;

Note: The Disciplinary Officer has the right to limit the number of witnesses within reason.

5.3.3.2 Conditions on Attending a Tribunal

- a) Legal representation is not permitted;
- b) Written submissions (or submissions made via other media) may be permitted at the tribunal Chair's discretion from the person charged, the umpire or club involved in bringing the charges, and any other people summoned by the tribunal;
- c) If any person fails to attend, the tribunal may continue in their absence;
- d) Any person summoned to appear that chooses not to attend and fails to provide a reasonable justification may be penalized.

5.3.3.3 Procedure of the Tribunal

- a) The tribunal may conduct proceedings in person or via teleconference/video, but not offline.
- b) The tribunal will read the charges as presented in the relevant incident report.
- c) The tribunal chair will ask the accused if the charges are understood, and the tribunal will ask if the charges correctly represent the intentions of the umpire or club involved in bringing the charges.
- d) The tribunal will ask the accused to submit a plea. In the event of a club or group being charged, the tribunal may direct that one person will act as spokesperson for the club/group.
- e) If the accused pleads guilty, the tribunal shall deliberate, and the chairperson shall hand down the appropriate penalty based on consideration of the intent, actions taken and prior disciplinary history of the offending player.
- f) If the accused pleads not-guilty, that person and the umpire or club involved in bringing the charges have the right to hear all of the evidence presented. The tribunal may ask witnesses to leave the room/teleconference until such time as they are required to give their evidence.
- g) The umpire or club involved in bringing the charges shall describe the circumstances leading to the filing of charges. The tribunal shall hear the witnesses called by the umpire or club involved in bringing the charges. The accused may not directly question witnesses, but the accused may request that the tribunal chair ask certain questions. The tribunal chair has the right to refuse to convey the accused questions for due cause.
- h) The accused shall present their defense. The tribunal shall hear the witnesses called by the accused. The umpire or club involved in bringing the charges may not directly question witnesses, but the umpire or club involved in bringing the charges may request that the tribunal

chair ask certain questions. The tribunal chair has the right to refuse to convey the accused questions for due cause.

- i) The tribunal has the right to question any person giving evidence. All questions asked by the tribunal must be answered.
- j) The tribunal may call any person to give evidence as it sees fit.
- k) All persons shall leave the room/teleconference while the tribunal deliberates.
- l) The tribunal will decide issues on a simple majority. The tribunal's word is final.
- m) After the tribunal has deliberated, if the charges are sustained the tribunal chairperson will determine the appropriate punishment for the charged person. The Tribunal shall determine the appropriate punishment per Appendix 4 with guidance from the 2022 AFL Tribunal guidelines (See Appendix 7, Reference 1).
- n) The tribunal decision shall be announced in the presence of all those involved in the hearing. If the tribunal is conducted via teleconference/video, the tribunal decisions shall be announced via teleconference/video as part of the same proceedings or email to all those involved in the hearing.
- o) All proceedings from any tribunal hearing will be documented by the tribunal chair and provided to the Disciplinary Officer to be recorded in the USAFL Disciplinary Register.

All findings from the incident assessment whether by direct classification or tribunal are final. An appeals process is available by application as described in Section 5.5.

5.3.3.4 Amended Charges

A tribunal may allow charges to be amended prior to or at any time during a tribunal hearing. This is to ensure that an appropriate case is assessed based on the evidence before the tribunal, and thereby the charge will be amended in accordance if necessary.

5.4 Disciplinary Action

The Disciplinary Officer is responsible for communicating the disciplinary action from the incident assessment process via the modes of communication within the timeframes specified below.

Table 5.4.1 Disciplinary Action Communication

	Method of communication	Timeframe	Responsible
USAFL operated tournaments	Directly with accused or club coach in person or via phone and email	30 mins after incident assessment or tribunal completion	Disciplinary Officer
USAFL sanctioned club tournaments/ games	Email to accused and Club President	48 hours after incident assessment or tribunal completion	Disciplinary Officer

The following details about all incidents must be documented by the Disciplinary Officer within the USAFL Disciplinary Register within 1 week of incident completion (including any Appeals);

5.4.1 Documentation of Disciplinary Process

The Disciplinary Register will contain the following information:

- a) The original Incident Report (Caution/Ejection Report or On-field Incident Report)
- b) If the incident is classifiable, the incident classification assessment and penalty
- c) The early plea of the accused
- d) Tribunal report and outcome if a tribunal is held
- e) Appeal application documentation
- f) Appeals report and outcome if an appeal accepted and held

5.4.2 Disciplinary Action Adherence

The USAFL Board is responsible for monitoring adherence to the disciplinary action handed down via this policy.

Any player and club found to be in violation of disciplinary action will be subject to further discipline as deemed appropriate by the USAFL Board.

5.5 Appeals

An appeals process is available for on-field incidents by completing a request for appeal. All requests for appeal must be sent via email to the USAFL Disciplinary Officer within the time specified in the table below. Once received, the Disciplinary Officer will determine whether there are valid grounds for and the acceptance of the appeal. Such consideration includes:

- a) allegations for significant determinable bias or unfairness in the assessment of the original incident with supporting argument or;
- b) additional information or evidence coming to light (such as video or new witness) since the original incident assessment.

The Disciplinary Officer has the jurisdiction to deny appeal application without a sufficient basis. Any denial of appeal must be presented in writing by email within 5 days to the accused including reason for denial.

If an appeal that fails to be upheld, the accused may be subject to additional penalty if deemed appropriate by the Appeal panel.

5.5.1 Appeals Process

If an appeal is accepted by the Disciplinary Officer, an Appeal Panel will be formed which will include 3 members as defined in the table below, none of which can have been involved in the original investigation or be connected in any way to the incident.

Table 5.5.1 Summary of On-field Appeals Hearing Process

	Request for Appeal Timeframe	Panel Members (3 required)	Appeal Completion Timeframe
USAFL operated tournaments	Request to be received by the end of the day of competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● USAFL Board Member ● And 2 of the following: ● WA Board Member ● UA President or delegate ● Disciplinary Committee Member 	Completion within 5 days of the date of competition
USAFL sanctioned club tournaments/ games**	Request to be received within 5 days of original disciplinary action communicated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● USAFL Board Member <i>And 2 of the following:</i> ● WA Board Member ● UA President or delegate ● Disciplinary Committee Member 	Completion within 10 days of appeal request received

5.5.2 Appeals Hearing Procedure

Appeals will follow the following process:

- a) The Appeal panel to receive a statement of appeal from the accused in the form of the appeal application by email to the Disciplinary Officer
- b) Appeal hearings can be conducted by phone conference or video and will include the following participants only:

- a. Appeals panel (per Table 5.5.1)
 - b. Person who requested the Appeal (the accused) and a club representative (President or Coach only)
 - c. Disciplinary Officer or a USAFL Board Member
- c) The appeal panel may conduct proceedings in person or via teleconference/video, but not offline.
 - d) The Appeal panel chair (defaults to USAFL President or a USAFL Board member) will read the *request for appeal* as submitted by the accused.
 - e) The Appeal panel chair will ask the accused for any further information for consideration by the Appeals tribunal.
 - f) The Appeal panel will deliberate and determine the outcome at the time of the sitting appeal or within the completion timeframes listed in Table 5.5.1 above.
 - g) If upheld, the Appeals panel will determine and communicate the revised outcome to the applicant and the club President via email within **2 days**.
 - h) The Disciplinary Officer must record details and outcomes of all Appeal hearings in the USAFL Disciplinary Register.