



Press release: New partnership signed between the Universities Pool Council and the International Referees Organisation

The International Referees Organisation (IRO) and the Universities Pool Council (UPC) are delighted to announce a new partnership to ensure future UPC events will be refereed by IRO officials. This means all pool events in the BUCS (British Universities and Colleges Sports) programme, as well as other UPC pool events, will now be refereed by the IRO.

"We are delighted that IRO have reached out to the UPC and want to work with the student cue sports community within the UK and Ireland. We are impressed by the IRO's professionalism and commitment to the highest standards of refereeing," said Ben Hubbard, Executive Chair of the UPC.

"We are honoured and privileged to have the opportunity to work alongside the UPC and provide referee services at all their pool events going forward. We are inspired by Ben and his team in just how driven they are to move the game forward for students in the UK, their philosophy is closely aligned to our values and we look forward to working closely with them for the remainder of 2026 and beyond," said Marc Gough, Director of the IRO.

The IRO offers a high standard of eight-ball pool and nine-ball pool refereeing including the following:

- A nationwide network of professionally trained and accredited referees capable of servicing events across the United Kingdom.
- Comprehensive referee education, mentoring, and continuous professional development programmes.
- Consistent application of rules through structured training and quality assurance.
- Professional appearance, conduct, and communication at every event.
- An experienced management team providing planning, scheduling and operational support before, during and after each competition including post-tournament analysis and continuous improvement planning.
- Proven experience delivering officiating services at high-profile competitions and live televised events.

The IRO believes officials should contribute positively to the overall event experience by supporting organisers, assisting players, maintaining schedules and representing the values of fairness, respect and sportsmanship that are central to university sport.

The IRO further understands the importance of safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion within higher education sport. These principles align closely with IRO's own organisational values, committing to ensuring all participants are treated with professionalism, dignity and respect.

Although the UPC will be moving to the IRO and their referees, we would like to acknowledge the time and efforts of the EPRA (English Pool Referee's Association). We have utilised the EPRA for over fifteen years, including when the BUCS-UPC Eight-Ball Pool Championships was hosted in Great Yarmouth. They have demonstrated excellent knowledge and professionalism, especially during the World Rules era of our events. Additionally, our conversations with George Bradbury were always constructive and conducted with profound mutual respect. We thank all those at the EPRA for their dedication during this partnership.

For any contact regarding this announcement, please e-mail Ben Hubbard at ben.hubbard@upc-pool.org.uk.