



Match & Handicap Convener

A practical guide



SCOTTISH GOLF
UNION

In association with:



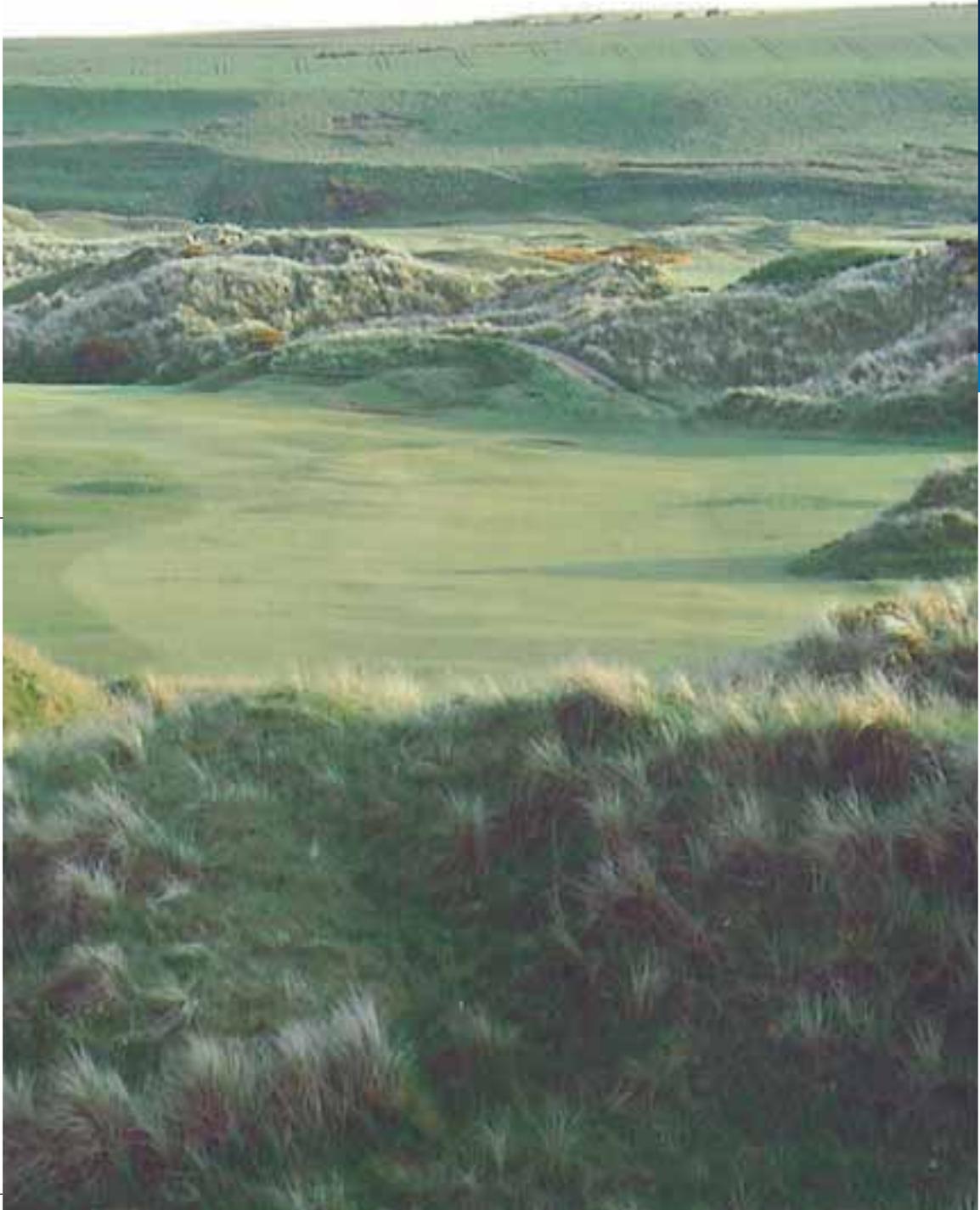
Scottish Ladies'
Golfing Association





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SCOTTISH GOLF
UNION

1. Introduction

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“In many sports such as tennis, one player’s superiority over another is quickly established and monotonously reaffirmed. The inexhaustible competitive charm of golf lies in its handicap strokes, whereby all players are theoretically equalised and an underdog can become, with a small shift of fortunes, a top dog”

Quote from John Updike

Although handicapping cannot be regarded as an 'exact science', if all parties honour their obligations by observing the spirit and intent of the handicapping system, an acceptable degree of uniformity can be achieved.

The Council of National Golf Unions (CONGU) Unified Handicapping System (UHS) is based on the premise that:

- Each player will endeavour to make the best score he/she can at each hole of every qualifying round he/she plays and that he/she will report all such rounds for handicap purposes.
- Each golf club or handicapping authority will, whenever possible run stroke play competitions as qualifying competitions, calculate a competition scratch score (CSS) and make all handicap adjustments strictly in accordance with the system. (Stroke play competitions include Stroke Play (Medal Play), Stableford and Par/Bogey formats.)

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2. The Role

To organise and administer stroke play and match play competitions for the benefit of club members and allot and maintain handicaps in accordance with the CONGU® UHS.

Should you require clarification on the implementation of any part of the CONGU® UHS please contact:

- SGU Golf Services Department - 01334 466489/490
- SLGA Handicap Committee Members. Contact details for North, South, East and West Divisions can be found on www.slga.co.uk.

3. Duties & Responsibilities

3.1 In Conjunction with the Club Handicap Committee

(It is recommended in the CONGU® UHS 2008 revision that the Handicap Committee be comprised of a minimum of three persons with the majority being club members. Now that men and ladies operate to the same handicapping system it is recommended that both genders are represented on a joint Handicap Committee.)



- Allot and maintain handicaps in accordance with the Unified Handicapping System.
- Ensure, as far as possible, that all cards taken out in a Qualifying Competition are returned including incomplete cards.
- At the conclusion of each Qualifying Competition calculate a Competition Scratch Score and adjust handicaps as appropriate. (Note that the option to increase handicaps at the end of each month has been removed in the 2008 CONGU UHS Revision.)
- Post on the club notice board, or communicate by similar means, all changes to members Playing Handicaps immediately they are made. (See below for communication to members of handicap changes arising from the Annual Review or General Play Adjustment.)
- Ensure that a list of members' current Playing Handicaps is available in a prominent position in the clubhouse.
- Where the club is the player's Home Club, maintain a handicap record sheet for each member that includes all information on all Qualifying Competitions played. The handicap record sheet, as a minimum, should contain all scores returned in the current and previous year.



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- Ensure that the Player Handicap Information, i.e. the handicap record and the summary of scores complies with the requirements of Appendix I of the CONGU® UHS.
- Ensure scores are recorded immediately after completion of each Qualifying Competition at the Home Club or after the reporting of a Qualifying Score returned elsewhere.
- Provide a procedure for members to notify Away Scores e.g. Away Score Book.
(Note: the Away Score Book should have provision for recording any applicable Stableford Adjustment in compliance with Clause 19 of the UHS.)
- When a player changes his/her Home Club copy the handicap record sheet to the new Home Club.
- Carry out an Annual Review of the handicaps of all members. (See Sections 7.4 and 9 of this guide.)
- Exercise powers to adjust handicaps following the Annual Review or by a General Play Adjustment.
- Advise players of changes to handicap when Annual Review or General Play handicap adjustments have been made. It is not

considered to be sufficient for a Committee to merely post a list of changes on the club notice board. (Annual Review or General Play handicap adjustments do not become effective until the player has been informed.)

- Subsequent to the Annual Review publish a list of those members eligible for the return of Supplementary Scores.
- Specify the arrangements for eligible members to register for the return of Supplementary Scores. Ensure that such scores are recorded on the Players' Record as soon as practicable.
- Lapse (*) handicaps as directed by the Scottish Golf Union / Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association. See Clause 25 of the CONGU® UHS and supplementary information issued by these bodies.
- Specify the conditions for obtaining a handicap including the conditions by which a player with a 'starred' handicap may have a 'CONGU' handicap re-allocated.
- Specify the 'Preferred Lies' period in compliance with the Preferred Lies section of the UHS and provide a Local Rule for its implementation.
- To ensure full compliance with its responsibilities to the CONGU® UHS, clubs should conduct, on an annual basis, a self audit using the UHS Compliance Checklist contained in Appendix L of the System.
- Consider introducing Nine-Hole qualifying competitions into the competition programme and designate a 'Nine-Hole Course' which will be allotted an SSS by the Scottish Golf Union / Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association (See Clause 22.1).

Do Not:

- Run a competition in which the number of golf clubs is limited with the declared intention to make the competition 'Non-Qualifying'
- Declare a competition to be for 'Reduction Only'



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- Apply arbitrary cuts in handicaps for competitions beyond that allowed by the UHS.
- Routinely apply cuts in handicap for winners of match play competitions.

3.2 Running Stroke Play Competitions.

- Make suitable arrangements for competition entry and allocation of starting times.
- Determine the Conditions of the Competition including, starting groups, starting intervals, handicap limitations if appropriate (and handicap allowance e.g. Four Ball Better Ball.) See Section 6 for more specific advice.
- Notify entrants if competition is Non-Qualifying for handicap purposes. This must be done before play commences and only be in 'exceptional circumstances'.
- Determine procedure for a player late for his/her allotted starting time. (Rules of Golf 6-3)
- Define procedure in the event of a tie e.g. better inward half, followed by better last six holes, last three holes etc. Where silverware is at stake it may be deemed preferable for tying players to play-off.

- Determine who has the authority for suspension of play or abandonment of a competition in the event of adverse weather and define a procedure (Rules of Golf 6-8). The procedure should include the method by which competitors are made aware of dangerous playing conditions such as lightning e.g. by the sounding of a siren.
- Where appropriate, determine the procedure for running a competition by computer including starting and closing down practices.
- If necessary establish disciplinary procedures for players failing to discharge their obligations to the handicapping system e.g. failing to return scores recorded away from the home club and more seriously making false returns.
- Consider sanctions to be taken against players failing or refusing to enter scores into the computer, regularly failing to return scorecards on completion of a qualifying round, or regularly failing to turn up for a booked competition start time.
- Make arrangements to facilitate the reconciliation of entry list with cards returned, so that 'No Returns' are identified.
- Encourage all players to enter their gross scores for all holes completed on the computer, where applicable, even if they are recording a No Return. Simply entering an NR for every hole could potentially have an adverse effect in determining the player's Median Gross Differential in the Annual Review process.
- Establish competition winners ensuring that a check on winning cards is carried out i.e. has the player played from the correct handicap, are scores properly recorded and has the player and marker signed the card?
- Calculate handicap changes and display up to date handicap list following the conclusion of each qualifying competition.
- Retain all scorecards until the end of the current playing season.



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3.3 Match Play Events

- Establish entry fee, provide entry sheet, identify entry closing date.
- Make draw and specify completion dates for each round.
- Specify who has responsibility for arranging the tie / match.
- Determine policy for extension of closing date in the event of players failing to play within specified period e.g. application in writing with extenuating circumstances explained. It is important that the policy is consistently and fairly applied.
- Determine procedure in event of match finishing all square.
- Advise handicap differentials to be used. It should be noted full difference is mandatory in Singles and Foursomes match play. (CONGU UHS, Appendix F)
- Specify any special arrangements. (Some clubs require that the finals of all match play competitions be played on a designated date e.g. Finals Day).
- Consider procedures in the event of a tie, including stroke allowance implications, particularly where the Committee has granted permission to commence the tie other than from the first tee, in particular on 9 hole courses.

3.4 Other Duties

- Report on Match & Handicap matters at Club Committee meetings.
- Draw up and have approved by Committee, the programme of events and competitions prior to the playing season. Give consideration to the inclusion of a number of Nine-Hole Qualifying Competitions in the programme. See section 7.3 of this guide for more information on this important change to the CONGU® UHS.
- In conjunction with the Greens Convener, make such temporary Local Rules as may be necessary from time to time.
- Wherever possible, Local Rules should follow the recommended wording contained within the Rules of Golf (Appendix 1, Part B) Specimen Local Rule.
- Where appropriate, arrange for a starter in club competitions and define his duties and responsibilities.
- Where appropriate ensure that club competition results are reported to the newspapers or club website.
- If appropriate arrange dates for inter-club and league matches and select teams.
- Establish and promote a procedure to inform team members of their selection and check availability.
- In Mixed Foursomes events specify who plays from first tee.
- Make timely returns, of annual National Handicap Audit data (SGU / SLGA), when requested.
- Inform members of the significance of the Stableford / Nett Double Bogey Adjustment.
- Ensure all qualifying competitions are played from a measured course as defined by the Unified Handicapping System and with due regard to the definition of a Competition Tee.
- Inform the Union of course alterations, particularly length changes (increases and decreases) that may impact on the allotted Standard Scratch Score.



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4. Key Elements of the CONGU Handicap System

- A player's Exact Handicap is his/her handicap calculated to one decimal place.
- A player's Playing Handicap is his/her Exact Handicap rounded to the nearest whole number (0.5 is rounded upwards). The Buffer Zone is the margin within which an exact handicap remains unchanged.
- Handicaps are divided into the following categories, each with a Buffer Zone:

Category 1:	Handicaps	5 or less	Buffer Zone	0 to +1
Category 2:	Handicaps	6 – 12	Buffer Zone	0 to +2
Category 3:	Handicaps	13 – 20	Buffer Zone	0 to +3
Category 4:	Handicaps	21 – 28	Buffer Zone	0 to +4
[Category 5:	Handicaps	29 – 36	Buffer Zone	0 to +5]
- A Qualifying Competition is any competition in which Competition Play Conditions prevail and a CSS is calculated, subject to restrictions and limitations contained in the CONGU® UHS or imposed by the Union.

- A Qualifying Score is any score including a 'no return' returned in a Qualifying Competition.
- The Nett Differential is the difference (+ or -) between the nett score returned in a Qualifying Competition and the CSS after the application of the Stableford Adjustment as required by Clause 19 of the CONGU® UHS.
- The Standard Scratch Score (SSS) is the score allotted to an 18 hole golf course and is the score that a scratch player is expected to return in normal midseason conditions over a measured course.
- The Competition Scratch Score (CSS) is the adjustment that may be necessary to the SSS to take account of weather and course conditions and must be calculated for all Qualifying Competitions.
- Stableford / Nett Double Bogey Adjustments. When all holes on a returned scorecard have been completed the player's Nett Differential is reduced, where appropriate, by the number of strokes taken on any hole in excess of nett double bogey. Where a card does not have all the holes completed a gross score that would result in a nett double bogey is entered for any hole where no score has been recorded. This adjustment is for handicap adjustment purposes only.
- Alterations of Handicap
If a player after the application of a Stableford or Nett Double Bogey adjustment returns a score with a nett differential:
 - within the Buffer Zone the handicap is not changed.
 - above the Buffer Zone or records a 'no return' the exact handicap is increased by 0.1.
 - of less than zero the Exact Handicap is reduced by the amount per stroke as determined by his/her handicap category.

Category 1 = 0.1 per stroke below CSS
Category 2 = 0.2 per stroke below CSS
Category 3 = 0.3 per stroke below CSS
Category 4 = 0.4 per stroke below CSS
[Category 5 = 0.5 per stroke below CSS]

- Review of Handicaps

The Handicap Committee is required to carry out an Annual Review of the handicaps of all Members for whom it is the Home Club. This review should be conducted in compliance with the requirements of Appendix M of the System. Whenever the Handicap Committee considers that a player's handicap is too high or too low and does not reflect his/her current playing ability an adjustment must be made.

In exceptional circumstances the Handicap Committee may adjust the handicap of a player in the period between Annual Reviews by a General Play Adjustment if there is compelling evidence that his/her Exact Handicap does not reflect current playing ability.

Sections 7.4 and 9 of this guide provide additional information in support of Appendix M of the System. CONGU® licensed software contains an "Annual Review Report" designed to assist in this process.

5. Standard Scratch Score

- The Standard Scratch Scores of golf courses under the jurisdiction of the SGU and SLGA are determined, under license, by the Course Rating System of the United States Golf Association.
- Established golf courses are rated every ten years and new courses every three years until they mature.
- Each of the sixteen Areas of the SGU and the 15 Counties of the SLGA is responsible for carrying out course rating of affiliated clubs in their Area.
- Golf clubs are required to provide an up to date Certificate of Course Measurement to Course Rating Teams prior to their course being rated.
- Course Rating takes account of the measured length of a course together with factors that affect the effective playing length and the playing difficulty (Obstacle Factors).
- The factors that influence the effective playing length of a golf course are:
Roll, Lay-Up, Wind, Elevation.
- The ten obstacle factors that determine the playing difficulty of a golf course are:
Topography, Fairway, Green Target, Recoverability & Rough, Bunkers, Out of Bounds/Extreme Rough, Water Hazards, Trees, Green Surface, Psychological.
- Each hole on the golf course is evaluated on a scale 0-10 for each of the ten obstacles and account taken of the effective length correction factors.



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- The SSS arising from course rating is communicated officially to the club by the SGU and SLGA for men and ladies respectively.
- Clubs must inform the SGU / SLGA of any change to the measured length of a course that takes place (increase or decrease) so that the impact on SSS can be assessed. This must be done immediately the change has been implemented.
- Until such times as a course rating or re-rating can be carried out it may be necessary to allocate a Provisional SSS. The form entitled 'Application for Revision of SSS / Allocation of SSS' should be used for this purpose.

It is recommended that the boxes or other objects in use to mark the teeing grounds should be identified as follows:

Championship Tees	Blue
Medal Tees	White
Forward Tees	Yellow
Ladies Tees	Red

6. Conditions of Competition

- “The Committee must establish the conditions under which a competition is to be played.” (Rules of Golf 33-1).
- Appoint a committee responsible for all aspects of running a competition – e.g. a Competition Organising Committee.
- Establish conditions of competition in advance of the competition to enable the Committee to deal with any situations that may arise.
- Make the Conditions of Competition available for reference by all participating players.
- It is the Committee’s responsibility to interpret the conditions which they establish, therefore, the conditions should be clear and carry precise guidance as to what actions should be taken when certain situations arise.
- Whilst some of the following are covered in sections 3.2 and 3.3, Committee’s conditions of competition should consider – Eligibility to enter; Entry procedures; Format of play; Times of starting; Groupings for play; Handicaps and stroke allowances; Decision of ties; Prizes to be awarded; Practice; Conforming ball rules; The ‘One Ball’ condition; Caddies; Golf carts and buggies; Advice in team competitions; Driving clubs (this became a Rules of Golf change and limitation from 1 Jan 2008).
- Ensure appropriate references within your conditions are always made to the current editions of the Rules of Golf and the Decisions on the Rules of Golf.
- We recommend the R&A publication ‘Guidance on Running a Competition’ as an excellent reference source for Committees regarding Conditions of Competition.
- It is recommended that following the close of competition that the appropriate Competition Scratch Scores are readily accessible by all participants.

7. Principal Changes in 2008 CONGU® UHS Manual

The 2008 revision of the CONGU® UHS Manual resulted in a number of significant changes which are summarized below.

7.1 System Changes

Administrative

The changes to the UHS of an administrative nature include:

- Unions required to conduct an annual audit of the handicap records of players +1[1] or better – Clause 4.1(i).
- Union's requirement to ratify Playing Handicap reduced to below scratch deleted.
- Composition of Handicap Committee specified.

Operational

The changes to the UHS of an operational nature include:

- Monthly option for handicap increases removed. Both reductions and increases in handicaps to be made 'as soon as practicable' – Clause 20.9.
- Separate CSS calculations required for 'home' players (members of the host club) and 'away' players (visitors to the host club) in Open Competitions. See Clause 18.1(b) and Appendix B (of the CONGU® UHS).
- Stableford / Nett Double Bogey Adjustment applicable to all Qualifying Scores.
- In calculation of the CSS, Table B deleted (previously contained in Appendix G).
- Handicap Record Table B deleted (previously contained in Appendix A).
- Handicap Allowances now as directed by CONGU® – Appendix F.

- Handicap Stroke Index – Appendix G – expanded to include an alternative for Stableford and Par competitions.

Additional Appendices

- A Golf Course Measurement
- K Handicaps for Players with Disabilities
- L UHS Compliance Checklist
- M Guidelines for Annual Review / General Play Adjustment
- O Events in Which Competitors Play from Different Sets of Tees
- P Disqualified Scores in Qualifying Competitions

7.2 Supplementary Scores

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The UHS is based on the expectation that every player will return a sufficient number of scores to provide reasonable evidence of his current ability. To operate in the intended manner, the UHS requires information i.e. the return of Qualifying Scores to produce handicaps that reasonably reflect current ability.

Although golf club Committees and administrators may consider that in the course of a playing season they conduct an adequate number of competitions to provide ample opportunity for Members to participate, investigation has confirmed that a substantial number of Members do not return sufficient scores in the period between Annual Reviews to maintain a handicap that reasonably reflects their current ability. This may in part be due to:

- Work or family commitments preventing participation in competitions.
- Difficulty in obtaining an acceptable starting time on competition days in clubs with a large playing membership.
- A declining desire to play regular competitive golf.

Supplementary Scores have been introduced to provide players in the above situations an alternative route in which to submit scores for handicap purposes and augment the often sparse information derived from competition play. The intent is to encourage the provision of more evidence of playing ability over a wider range of players and so make handicapping more equitable and golf under handicap conditions more meaningful for all concerned.

To qualify for the return of a Supplementary Score a player must be in Handicap Categories 2-4[5] and must have returned only six or fewer Qualifying Scores (excluding Supplementary Scores) in the preceding year. The number of Supplementary Scores a player may return in a year is limited to ten and he/she must register his/her intent before commencing play. The format can be either Stroke Play or Stableford.

The 2008 CONGU® UHS requires all Affiliated Clubs to make provision for eligible members to return Supplementary Scores in accordance with Clause 21.

7.3 Nine-Hole Qualifying Competitions

In response to the changing needs of the game and the Members of Affiliated Clubs, Qualifying Competitions over Nine-Holes have been introduced into the UHS to provide additional opportunities for the return of Qualifying Scores.

It is envisaged that Nine-Hole Qualifying Competitions will be particularly attractive to clubs and their Members in summer evenings and in the restricted daylight hours of winter weekends.

Nine-Hole competitions could also be the means by which a greater number of senior golfers are encouraged to make returns for handicap purposes.

The format for Nine-Hole Qualifying Competitions is Stableford with a 'neutral' 18 points for the nine unplayed holes being added to the

Nine-Hole Stableford score. The designated Nine-Hole course will be allocated a Standard Scratch Score by the Union expressed as an eighteen-hole value. Only players in Handicap Categories 2-4[5] may return Nine-Hole scores for handicap purposes although Category 1 players can participate in the actual competition.

As there is no desire to change the traditional way in which competitive golf is played i.e. over 18 holes, the number of Nine-Hole competitions is restricted.

Clubs should review their competition structure and programme and give consideration to the introduction of a number of Nine-Hole Qualifying Competitions to satisfy the above needs. This should include Senior and Ladies Sections.

7.4 Review of Handicaps

The Annual Review is an important element of the handicapping system. It is the process by which the Handicap Committee reviews, and adjusts as necessary, the handicaps of all Members to ensure that, as far as practicable, they reflect current playing ability.

It should be stressed that uniformity in handicapping can only be achieved by all Handicap Committees applying the same principles in a uniform and equitable manner. These principles apply just as much to the manner in which the Annual Review is conducted and General Play Adjustments applied, as to the routine administration of handicapping related to returns in Qualifying Competitions.

Handicap Committees should recognise, however, that the majority of players who have returned a reasonable number of Qualifying Scores through the year will most probably have had appropriate handicap adjustments applied by the UHS to take account of any changes in their playing ability. They should also be confident that provided the intent of the system is honoured by all parties, the UHS produces handicaps in relation to each player's current ability that stand comparison with the handicaps of players at other clubs.

In clubs with a large playing membership the Annual Review is difficult to undertake effectively. To address this problem a feature, “The Annual Review Report”, has been incorporated in the licensed software packages. This report is designed to assess the performance of all players who have returned three or more Qualifying Scores in the review period and is based on the expected playing performance of players with respect to their Handicap Category. The report will ‘flag-up’ players who require consideration. It is strongly recommended that it is **not** the intention that every player ‘flagged-up’ qualifies automatically for an increase or decrease in handicap. Any adjustment should only be made when all the evidence available on the player has been considered.

It is recommended that the Annual Review should be conducted at a time convenient to the Handicap Committee between the 31st of October and the 1st of March.

Unlike changes to handicap resulting from participation in Qualifying Competitions, adjustments of handicap under this clause are not of a routine nature and often cannot be anticipated by the players affected. Consequently, it is not considered to be sufficient for a Committee to merely post a list of changes on the club notice board. Individual Members should be notified in writing or by some other agreed method of communication adopted by the club.

7.5 Separate CSS Calculations for Home and Away Players in Open Competitions.

Home advantage is recognised as an influencing factor in most forms of sporting contest. The advantage, in the context of golf played under handicap conditions, was confirmed and quantified in the course of an extensive investigation into the possible value of introducing Slope Rating into the CONGU® Unified Handicapping System. The investigation examined the comparative scoring performance of ‘Home’ and ‘Away’ players in a wide range of Open competitions.

It was established that players competing at their home course enjoyed, on average, an advantage over visiting players of between one and two strokes.

Furthermore, an additional analysis of Open competition returns revealed that when separate CSS calculations were retrospectively carried out for 'Home' players as a group, and 'Away' players as a group i.e. visitors, the CSS for the visiting players was frequently:

- higher than that calculated for the 'Home' players and
- higher than the original CSS calculated for the overall field.

Consequently by carrying out separate CSS calculations and applying the resultant Competition Scratch Scores to the 'Home' and 'Away' player returns, the imbalance in scoring performance related to home advantage / away disadvantage will be substantially reduced, with more visiting players returning nett scores to their Buffer Zone or better.

In addition, the incorporation of this feature into the UHS should mean that there is no valid reason for clubs to declare an Open competition to be Non Qualifying and the reluctance of some players to enter Open competitions because of the perceived concern of a handicap increase each time they compete away from their Home Club should be dispelled.

The separate CSS calculations for 'Home and 'Away' players in Open competitions are for handicap purposes only and do not impact upon the results of the competition or allocation of prizes.

8. How Level Is the Handicapping Playing Field?

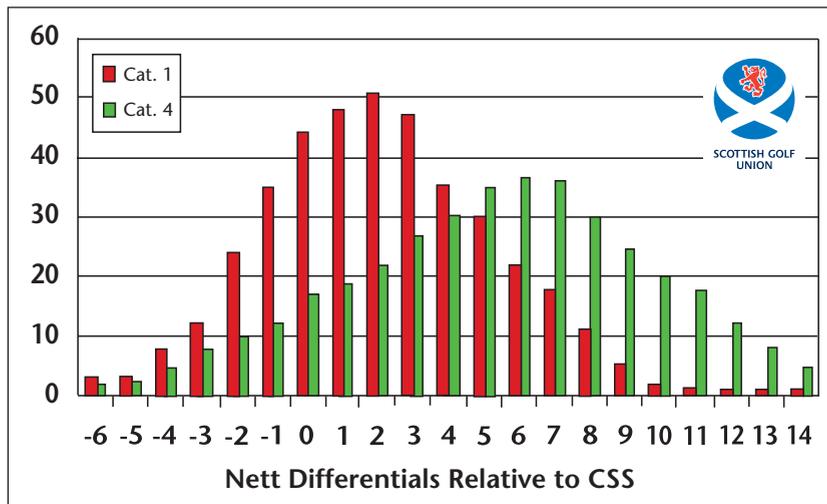
This fundamental question has generated considerable research and the findings below illustrate one of the key factors in the operation of the CONGU® UHS.

Research:

- A large number of stroke play returns were obtained for players in Category 1 and the nett differentials plotted against frequency of occurrence. The resulting bar chart is shown in red print.
- The plot shows a normal distribution depicted by the 'bell shaped curve'. It can be seen that Cat.1 players typically return nett differentials in the range 2 below to 6 above their handicap with a mean nett differential of around 2 above the CSS.
- In contrast the bar chart on the right, in green print, shows the nett differentials plotted against frequency of occurrence returned by Category 4 players from a large number of stroke play competitions and can be compared to the distribution for Category 1 players.

(It should be noted that the number of returns from each category has been adjusted to the same total rounds to allow a strict comparison to be made.)

- This chart is the key to the understanding of golf handicapping under the CONGU® UHS.
- It can be seen that the scoring pattern of the Cat.4 players has a wider spread and a mean nett differential of approximately 6 strokes above the CSS, compared to 2 strokes above CSS for Cat.1 players as previously identified.
- This demonstrates that handicapping is not strictly a 'level playing field' and that the CONGU® handicapping system, as in all major handicapping systems, incorporates a 'bonus for



excellence' in favour of the lower handicap players. The reason for the difference is that Category 1 players are set a more challenging 'examination' each time they play i.e. the Buffer Zone for a Cat.1 player is one stroke compared to four for the Cat.4 player. In addition, handicap reductions for Cat.1 are 0.1 of a stroke for each stroke below the CSS in contrast to 0.4 per stroke for Cat. 4 players.

- It is worth re-iterating that each time a scratch player takes part in a stroke play competition his expected score is not to his/her handicap (i.e. nett differential of zero) but to two strokes above his handicap. In contrast if a Cat.4 player plays to around six strokes above the CSS that is no more, or no less, than his/her expected performance.
- It is for this reason that it is necessary in match play to allow the full difference in handicaps to promote fairer and more equitable competition.
- It should not be concluded, however, that the handicap system is unfairly biased in favour of the better player. It should be noted from the above right bar chart that due to the greater

spread of the Cat.4 returns, the two scoring patterns come closer together at the extreme left hand side i.e. low nett differential end, from which the 'winning' scores in competitions are derived.

- The scoring pattern of Cat.2 and Cat.3 players lies between that of the Cat.1 and Cat.4 players and these distributions again come together at the 'winning end'.
- It should be noted that the scoring pattern for Cat.5 Ladies is more widely dispersed than for a Cat.4 player, with a Mean Nett Differential of 8.4.

9. Some Statistics Related to the Annual Review

The Annual Review Report is based on statistical information of the type discussed above and has been designed to 'flag – up' players whose playing performance lies outside the expected parameters.

There are a number of factors considered in the review including:

- The Median Gross Differential (MGD) (*gross score minus CSS*) of the player over the period under review. (If the Handicap Record contained, for example, 15 scores the 8th score would be the median score).
- The player's Exact Handicap at the time of the review.
- The Expected Nett Differential (END or 'target score') for the player related to his/her handicap category.
- The +/- tolerance in performance related to the handicap category and number of rounds played.

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For example:

- A player with an Exact Handicap of 16.6 at the time of the Annual Review, having played 15 qualifying rounds has a MGD of 22 in the period under review.
- His/her Median Nett Differential is:
 $22 - 16.6 = 5.4$.
His/her Expected Nett Differential from known statistical data is:
5.5.
The player is consequently deemed to be 'correctly' handicapped.
- If the MGD had been, for example 26, the player would have been 4 strokes above the Expected Nett Differential and he/she would be 'flagged-up' for consideration by the Handicap Committee for an increase in handicap.

- If the MGD had been, for example, 19 the player would have been 3 strokes below the Expected Nett Differential and he/she would be 'flagged-up' for consideration by the Handicap Committee for a reduction in handicap.

In comparison the 'Target Score' for an 8 and 19 handicap player is 3.5 and 6 strokes above the CSS respectively.

10. Questions Frequently Asked of a Match & Handicap Convener.

In your role as Match & Handicap Convener you will be asked many questions regarding handicapping and the running of competitions. The questions are likely to include some or all of the following:

The low handicap players in our club claim that the handicap system favours the higher handicap player and puts them at a disadvantage. Is there any substance to this claim?

The SGU carries out a considerable amount of research into matters relating to handicapping and in particular how equitable the system is across all handicap categories. Our research does not support, in any way, the contention that the system discriminates against the low handicap golfer – quite the opposite in fact. In all handicap systems there is a ‘bonus for excellence’ which gives considerable advantage to the low handicap golfer.

The ‘bonus for excellence’ is outlined in more detail in Section 8.

Can a member club run competitions where handicaps can be reduced but not increased?

Absolutely not. A club committee has the authority to deprive certain competitions of their status as Qualifying Competitions provided they do so before play commences. When a competition is declared Non-Qualifying (exceptional circumstances only), handicaps can neither be reduced nor increased and competitors should be made aware of this before play commences. See CONGU UHS definition ‘Reduction Only’.

There are only two situations when handicaps can be reduced but not increased. These are:

- In a competition where application of the CSS calculation determines that the competition is Reduction Only (R/O).



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- When a competition has been abandoned for any reason reductions of handicap shall be on the basis that the CSS is equal to the SSS.

Why is the calculation of a CSS necessary?

Golf in Scotland is played in a wide variety of course and weather conditions. The CSS system was designed to quantify the effect of weather and course conditions, adverse or favourable, on the scoring ability of players in all handicap categories. When the CSS differs from the SSS there is usually a valid reason – and that is not always attributable to the weather on the day of the competition. Course conditions such as a period of high rainfall increasing the effective playing length, or cored and top dressed greens adversely affecting putting, are examples of conditions, other than weather, influencing scoring.

The application of the CSS system means that the performance of a player who returns a nett differential of -2 on a day of very high wind when the CSS is $+3$ equates to that of another player returning a nett differential of -5 on a day when the CSS equals the SSS.

Why is a separate CSS not calculated for each handicap category?

This question is usually asked by low handicap players on occasions when the CSS is SSS -1. A statistical analysis of a wide range of CSS's calculated separately for each handicap category and compared to the overall CSS has shown that the system does not favour or discriminate against any of the categories.

Although there are occasions when one or other of the categories, if calculated separately, would result in a CSS that differed from the overall CSS, on average there is very close agreement. One of the problems in calculating a separate CSS for the Category 1 golfer is that he/she represents on average less than 10% of the field in club competitions. This is often not a statistically meaningful figure and could lead to erratic CSS values.

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How can CONGU justify a situation in which the CSS reduces to one stroke less than the SSS of the course? This can result in a player being denied a reduction in handicap or scoring outside his/her Buffer Zone.

The Course Rating system from which the SSS is derived is based on normal mid-season playing conditions and includes an allowance for average wind speeds at the various golfing locations. When course or weather conditions are more or less difficult than 'normal', the expectation is that scoring will be affected. Scoring conditions more favourable than 'normal' include little or no wind, favourable pin positions and additional roll. In such circumstances the CSS can be one stroke less than the SSS. Conversely in unfavourable weather and course conditions the CSS can increase by up to three strokes above the SSS.

The intent of the CSS procedure is to standardise the 'reward' for equal performance in different playing circumstances.

What impact does a very low score affect the CSS calculation?

It is a common misconception that an extremely low score(s) has a greater influence on the CSS calculation outcome than one at the top end of the SSS +2 range. This is incorrect. For example, in a competition held on a course with a SSS of 70, a nett 64 has no more influence on the CSS calculation outcome than a nett 72. It is the total number of players with a nett score of SSS +2 or better as a proportion of the number of participants in the competition together with their handicap category that determines the CSS.

Can a club impose an arbitrary rule whereby those players returning a nett score of e.g. five strokes or more below the CSS incur a handicap reduction greater than that determined by the UHS?

A. Such a practice is not acceptable. Handicap reductions should be based strictly on the provisions of the CONGU® Unified Handicapping System for the appropriate handicap category of the player.

Are there any recommendations for the application of General Play Adjustments?

A General Play Adjustment should only be made under exceptional circumstances.

- It must not be used as a mechanism to reduce the handicaps of competitors returning scores below the SSS in a Non-Qualifying Competition.
- It should not be used to 'reward' or 'punish' winners of match play events if scores in stroke play do not support a reduction.
- Application in a downward direction is most likely to be appropriate for younger players and new members (most likely to be 'improvers') where it has been identified that the rate of handicap reduction has not kept pace with the improvement in playing performance.



- Although they are few in number, Clause 23B should be employed against handicap 'builders'.
- It is important to increase the handicap of players who because of illness, accident or advancing years are unable to play to their current handicap. Such an increase is usually more appropriate at the Annual Review.

Is the Stableford / Nett Double Bogey Handicap Adjustment applied to Stroke Play returns not contrary to the spirit of the Rules of Golf whereby the player is required to hole out at each and every hole?

The application of the Stableford / Nett Bogey Adjustment is purely for handicapping purposes. It was introduced to lessen the impact of the occasional 'bad' score on a player's medal return and to reduce the incidence of 'No Returns' which at some clubs can run as high as 30% of the entry. It allows a competitor who has, for example, lost a ball and does not complete the hole to continue the rest of the round for handicap purposes. As well as providing valuable evidence in regard to the playing potential of the player it also sustains interest on a day that may be otherwise spoiled from a golfing viewpoint. Club members should be encouraged to take advantage of this clause.



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Must handicaps be allocated strictly in accordance with the Allotment of Handicaps section of the System?

The procedure outlined in the CONGU® UHS provides the basis for the allotment of Handicaps. It does state, however, that “The Handicap Committee may allot a player an initial whole number Exact Handicap less than the best score if it has reason to consider that a lower handicap is more appropriate to the player’s ability.”

Factors to be considered would include:

- Time of year and prevailing weather conditions when cards submitted.
- Previous playing history and any handicap previously held at home club or elsewhere. It is important that this information is obtained before a new handicap is allocated to a player who has previously held a CONGU® handicap.
- Information from peers.

Can scores from e.g. competitions overseas other than EGA events, university competitions, golf outings or society events be accepted for handicap purposes?

Generally, no. Under the authority delegated within the Unified Handicapping System, the Scottish Golf Union and Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association publish on an annual basis, a list of Competitions Qualifying for Handicapping Purposes (See Appendices 1 and 2). Only competitions complying with this list are Qualifying Competitions. The current list of qualifying competitions is circulated annually to all affiliated golf clubs.

How should Juniors be handicapped?

The procedure for allotting and adjusting handicaps for Juniors is contained within Appendix J of the CONGU® Unified Handicapping System. It is important that where a Junior has a handicap of 28 or less that his handicap is maintained strictly in accordance with the requirements of the UHS and that competitions are played from a measured course for which an SSS has been allocated. In addition a Handicap Record Sheet that complies with Appendix I of the UHS should be maintained for each Junior member with a CONGU® handicap.

Can a Club extend the 'Preferred Lie' period?

A club does not have the authority to extend the preferred lie period. If a club considers that course conditions necessitate an extension of the preferred lie period they should apply to their Area Authority who have been delegated by the SGU to deal with this matter (National Scratch Score assessor for SLGA). See Part 3, Clause 15.2 of the System.



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Our golf club uses computer software that can rank the holes on the course in order of playing difficulty against par. Should our Stroke Index be allocated on the basis of this information?

For match play the answer is no. Good practical guidance for the allocation of handicap strokes is contained in Appendix G of the UHS and the principles contained therein are strongly recommended.

The situation for Stableford and Par/Bogey competitions, however, is different and the 2008 CONGU® manual suggests that a separate Stroke Index for such competitions may be appropriate. Advice is contained in Appendix G of the UHS.

Where a club requires the use of a small piece of mat to protect the fairway during the 'Preferred Lie' period, can competitions be deemed to be Qualifying Competitions?

'Yes', provided the ball is placed on the mat within six inches of where it originally lay, but not nearer the hole. Precise guidance on the operation of 'preferred lies' is contained within the CONGU® UHS, for reference. In a situation where the ball must be moved

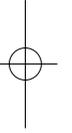
from the fairway into rough or semi-rough, the conditions for a Qualifying Competition are not satisfied.

See [CONGU® UHS](#):

- **Clause 15**
- Dec.1(a)
- Dec.1(b)
- Dec.1(c)
- Dec.1(d)



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SCOTTISH GOLF
UNION

Appendix 1

SCOTTISH GOLF UNION COMPETITIONS QUALIFYING FOR HANDICAPPING PURPOSES 2008

Clause 4.1(g) of the CONGU UHS gives the Scottish Golf Union (SGU) authority to determine the Competitions that may be recognised for Handicapping Purposes. The SGU has decided that the following events shall be recognised as Qualifying Competitions by Handicapping Authorities in Scotland.

A. Any Competition organised and administered by:

- The Scottish Golf Union
- The English Golf Union
- The Golf Union of Wales
- The Golfing Union of Ireland
- The Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews
- An SGU Area or Association of SGU Areas (and their equivalents in England, Ireland and Wales)
- Links Trusts
- Golf Clubs affiliated to the Scottish Golf Union (who pay a specified annual per capita fee in respect of each eligible member)
- Golf Clubs affiliated to the English Golf Union, The Golfing Union of Ireland and the Golf Union of Wales

B. In addition the following championships/competitions have been granted qualifying competition status:

- National Championships of the Armed Services, Police and Civil Services
- Scottish Champion of Champions Championship
- Scottish Schools Golf Association Championship
- Scottish Universities Golf Championship and annual Order of Merit competitions
- The Regional Rounds & Finals of the Golf Foundation/Weetabix Age Group Championships
- All competitions authorised by the English Golf Union, The Golfing Union of Ireland and the Golf Union of Wales as qualifying competitions for handicapping purposes e.g. Golf Illustrated Gold Vase, Faldo Junior Golf Series
- The Rotary International Championship
- National Scottish Golfers Alliance Championship
- Jameson Golf World Champion of Champions Regional Qualifying
- St. Andrews Children's Golf Club
- GM Junior Golf Tour 2008

The organisers of events within category B must ensure that:

1. The event is played over a measured course as defined by the Unified Handicapping System
2. The CSS is correctly calculated in accordance with Clause 18 of the Unified Handicapping System
3. The event complies with all criteria for a round to be qualifying in accordance with CONGU® Unified Handicapping System

In addition, organisers of events in Category B are required to send score and CSS details to the Home Clubs of all competitors as soon as possible after the event.

Note 1

To be recognised as a “Qualifying Competition” the event must be covered by one of the categories above and satisfy the requirements of competition play conditions as defined within the Unified Handicapping System. Only the scores of players holding a CONGU Handicap shall be used for calculating the CSS.

Note 2

Organisers of events covered by A & B must display a notice

- a - Advising competitors if for any reason the event is not a Qualifying Competition (e.g. is not being played over a measured course)
- b - Advising competitors as soon as possible of the CSS as determined by Clause 18 of the System

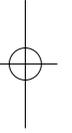
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Note 3

Events played outside the GB&I directly organised by or under the auspices of the National Federation controlling golf in that country will not be accepted as “Qualifying Competitions” for handicapping purposes. However, this does not preclude the scores being used as a contributory element in any adjustment of handicap made under Clause 23 of the System.



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**Scottish Ladies'
Golfing Association**

Appendix 2

SCOTTISH LADIES' GOLFING ASSOCIATION COMPETITIONS QUALIFYING FOR HANDICAP PURPOSES 2008

Clause 4.1 (g) of the CONGU® UHS (UHS) gives the SLGA authority to restrict Competitions that may be recognised for handicapping purposes. The SLGA has decided that the following events shall be recognised as Qualifying Competitions by Handicapping Authorities in Scotland.

A. Any Competition organised and administered by:

- The Ladies' Golf Union
- The English Womens' Golf Association
- The Irish Ladies' Golf Union
- The Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association
- The Golf Union of Wales
- Junior competitions run by the Scottish Golf Union, The English Golf Union and The Golfing Union of Ireland.

B. Competitions meeting the criteria below and organised and administered by:

- Golf Clubs Affiliated to SLGA, EWGA, ILGU, GWU
- English Womens' County Golfing Associations
- English Womens' Divisional/Regional Committees
- English Schools' Golf Association
- Irish Ladies' Golf Union District Committees
- Irish Ladies' Golf Union District Junior Committees
- St. Andrews Links Junior Golf Association
- St. Andrews Children's Golf Club
- Scottish Ladies' County Golf Associations
- Scottish Ladies' Divisional Committees
- Scottish Girls' Divisional Committees
- Scottish Schools' Golf Associations
- Welsh Ladies' County Associations
- Welsh Ladies' Regional Associations
- Welsh Schools Golf Associations
- Links Trust Management Committees
- The Golf Foundation
- JSA Ltd – The Duke of York Young Champions Trophy
- The Daily Telegraph Junior Golf Championship
- Faldo Junior Golf Series
- Donald Ross Junior Championship
- National Championships of the Armed Services and Police
- The Rotary International Championship
- Scottish Veteran Ladies' Golf Associations

Note 1

To be recognised as a Qualifying Competition the event must be covered by one of the categories above and satisfy the requirements of the Definitions of Competition Play Conditions and Qualifying Competition of the UHS. Scores returned in overseas tournaments may only be considered, if appropriate, in accordance with Decision 2(e).

Note 2

Organisers of events covered by A & B must display a notice advising competitors:

- a) if, for any reason, the event is not a Qualifying Competition (e.g. it is not being played over a measured course)
- b) of the CSS as determined by clause 18 of the UHS as soon as possible

Note 3

The organisers of events within Category B must ensure that:

- 1 The event is played over a Measured course as defined in the UHS.
2. The CSS is correctly calculated in accordance with clause 18 of the UHS
3. The event complies with all the criteria for a round to be qualifying in accordance with the UHS

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Note 4

All Clubs at which a player is a member, Clubs staging Open Qualifying Competitions and organisers of events in Category B are requested where practicable to send score, CSS and clause 19 adjustment details to the Home Club of all competitors as soon as possible after an event. This does not absolve the player from the responsibility of returning all her away Qualifying Scores but serves to assist Handicap Committees in the timeous processing of Away Scores.

Note 5

Organisers of events wishing to be considered for inclusion in this list should apply to the SLGA prior to 30th November for inclusion the list for the following year. Organisations already authorised under Category B do not need to re-apply annually. Organisations no longer wanting to hold Qualifying Competitions should notify the SLGA as soon as possible. The SLGA reserves the right to remove any Organisation from the list if it has not fulfilled its responsibilities under the UHS or the above clauses.

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