



CONGU Changes for 2018

Retirement of Club Handicaps and Introduction of Category 6

Purpose of this document

This guidance document explains the background to the revision of the Category boundaries to be implemented in the CONGU® UHS from January 2018. It is essential reading for all who administer handicaps within Scottish Golf Clubs and provides valuable information for all players who may be affected by the change.

Details of the change

- The 'Club Handicap' (and Disability Handicap) designation has been removed and replaced by a new Category 5 for Men and Category 6 for both Men & Women;
- Maximum handicap now 54.0 for all golfers;
- All handicap categories eligible for 'c' status if the requirements are met;
- Any player that currently has a Club Handicap and has returned three Qualifying Scores in 2017 will now hold a legitimate "c" status CONGU handicap.
- Categories 5 & 6 will not be included in the CSS (only Categories 1-4);
- The Buffer Zone for Category 6 players is six strokes;
- Decreases in Exact Handicaps in Category 6 to be at the rate of $0.6 \times$ number of strokes below the SSS or, when applicable, the CSS.

Drivers for change

Almost 7,000 male golfers hold a handicap of 28 and many of this group need more strokes to be competitive. There are nearly 3,500 female golfers with handicaps of 36 in a similar situation (*see Appendix A*). As a proportion this is much higher. Golf clubs cannot afford to lose these members and need to embrace ways of keeping them enjoying and getting value from their membership.

- The recognition that the traditional maximums of 28 and 36 do not always give both newcomers and decliners an equitable handicap to be competitive in club competitions;
- These players either play with little hope of success in competitions or no longer play in competitions;

- Some will have been given this maximum handicap but never played to it. Others will have previously held lower handicaps but as age increases so has their handicap;
- For many this becomes a downward spiral of decreasing participation ultimately leading to them being lost from the game;
- The recognition that both junior and adult beginners progress better with an official starting handicap that is high enough to enable them to record nett pars and (on occasions) birdies and as they improve to have a ratchet against which this improvement can be measured;
- The elimination of the existing gender differences in the upper handicap categories;
- The introduction of the change now will ease transition to a World Handicap System in the near future.

Implications for Golf Clubs

- How are clubs going to integrate Category 5 & 6 players into Competitions?
- Club Committees will need to consider the implications of this change in terms of their Conditions of Competition for Entry (both for club competitions and for open events) and also in the prize divisions that they use.

It is important that Members in all handicap categories have regular opportunities to return Qualifying Scores and play in Qualifying Competitions (CONGU® Definition of Member).

Clubs may need to think outside the box to ensure there are regular medals, Stablefords and/ or 9-hole Qualifying competitions to accommodate all categories without radically altering the traditions of the club, for example:

- ensuring that the prize divisions for club competitions are appropriate for the range of usual entrants;
- where a club has a Designated Nine-hole course, offering regular Qualifying Competitions over this layout;
- holding new match play knock-out competitions for higher category players only, particularly if the prestigious existing competitions have upper handicap limits for entry.

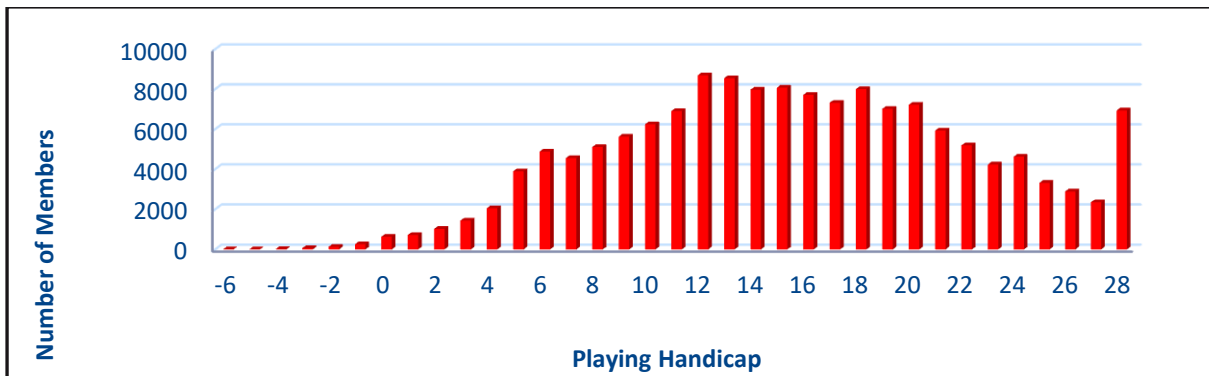
Each club will have different issues and different solutions – one size does not fit all. Clubs that embrace the opportunities arising from this change will find benefits when integrating new inexperienced players to golf and in retaining the competitive interest of existing members.

Summary Table of Handicap Categories from 1st January 2018

Handicap Category	Exact Handicap	Playing Handicap	Change
1	Plus to 5.4	Plus to 5	
2	5.5 to 12.4	6 to 12	
3	12.5 to 20.4	13 to 20	
4	20.5 to 28.4	21 to 28	<i>The upper limit for Category 4 for men is increased from 28.0 to 28.4</i>
5	28.5 to 36.4	29 to 36	<i>Category 5 for Exact Handicaps from 28.5 to 36.4 for both men and women</i>
6	36.5 to 54.0	37 to 54	<i>A new Category 6 for Exact Handicaps from 36.5 to 54.0 for both men and women</i>

Appendix A

Men's Handicap Distribution 2016



Women's Handicap Distribution 2016

