

# AUSTRALIAN MEN'S & WOMEN'S HANDICAP SYSTEM (Copyright)

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*Version – 27 April 2010 (note: reflects the amendments to the Four-Ball handicapping regulations to take account of the move to the 'rolling-sample' handicap calculation method, and amendments to the Decisions table in Section 9).*

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## 1. General

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### (A) Introduction

- (i) This Australian Men's & Women's Handicap System is the official Golf Australia regulatory code governing women's handicapping in Australia AND men's handicapping in Australia. Whilst it provides a single methodology for both women's handicapping and men's handicapping, it does not provide for single-gender handicaps. The Australian Men's & Women's Handicap System requires that Australian Women's Handicaps be determined in accordance with women's scores and standards, and that Australian Men's Handicaps be determined in accordance with men's scores and standards.
- (ii) The purpose of the Australian Men's & Women's Handicap System is to achieve the following objectives:
  - ~ Provide a system that may be administered and applied uniformly and efficiently throughout Australia.
  - ~ Encourage participation in social and competitive golf amongst males and females of all ages, and foster golf as a game for life.
  - ~ Enable as many golfers as possible (males and females, amateurs and professionals, club members and non-club members) throughout Australia to obtain and maintain a fair handicap.
  - ~ Make the game of golf more inclusive and enjoyable by enabling golfers of all abilities to compete against each other on as equitable a basis as possible.
  - ~ Produce fair handicaps which reflect golfers' ability based on better performances and which may be applied validly and reliably from course to course and from different sets of tees on the same course.
- (iii) The System is based on the assumption that every player will endeavour to make the best score they can at each hole in every round they play and that they will report every eligible round (in accordance with Section 1D) for handicapping purposes, regardless of where the round was played.
- (iv) Golf Australia delegates to its Member States the power to administer on its behalf the handicapping of all players who are members of Clubs affiliated with such States. **Any disputes shall be referred to Golf Australia whose decision shall be final.**
- (v) Any handicap administered by an affiliated Australian golf Club, and calculated in accordance with this system, is owned by Golf Australia.
- (vi) Whilst a professional golfer, or a player awaiting reinstatement to Amateur Status, may hold an Australian Handicap if they meet the various eligibility criteria, a committee is permitted to have a condition restricting entry to any (or all) event(s) it controls to Amateurs only (or to Professionals only).
- (vii) Essential points of the System are that:
  - ~ All handicaps shall be calculated in accordance with the System as outlined below.
  - ~ All handicaps referred to in this System are stroke handicaps.
  - ~ Regular and accurate records of all eligible course performances be kept.
  - ~ There be uniform determination of the course rating of golf courses in Australia.
  - ~ The Australian Men's & Women's Handicap System be properly applied.

### (B) Types of Australian Handicap

There are two types of Australian Handicap; an Australian Women's Handicap which is only available to female players, and an Australian Men's Handicap which is only available to male players. Where the term Australian Handicap is used within the Australian Men's & Women's Handicap System, it is deemed to mean either Australian Women's Handicap or Australian Men's Handicap or both, as the appropriate context determines.

### (C) Definitions

- (i) A **Bona-fide Body** is a formally constituted Club, association or group formed primarily for the purpose of conducting ongoing golf events, played in accordance with the Rules of Golf and appropriate local rules, or otherwise to administer golf for a defined area or group of golfers.
- (ii) The **Home Club** is the body which has primary responsibility for ensuring the proper administration of a player's handicap.
- (iii) The **Marker** is a female or male member of any golf club or golf association recognised by Golf Australia, or a person otherwise approved by the club committee.
- (iv) **Stipulated Round** – The number of holes in a stipulated round is 18 unless a smaller number is authorised by the committee. (Rules of Golf – refer to definitions.)

- (v) A **Competition Round** is defined as one conducted by a recognised golf Club, its professional or agent, or other bona-fide body, for which trophies or prizes are awarded for golfing performance.
- (vi) An **Extra Day Score** is any completed stroke round not in competition and may be returned on any day of the week.

**(D) Scores for Handicap Purposes**

- (i) All scores established in all 18-hole singles stroke (includes Par and Stableford) competition rounds played under the Rules of Golf at courses with either an ACR or a USGA Course Rating shall be used for handicapping purposes. However scores returned from corporate/trade days or the like, not played in a competition round but played in accordance with the Rules of Golf, may be used only if they will result in a handicap reduction.
- (ii) If there is only one player in a competition, the competition must still be processed for handicapping purposes.
- (iii) When a competition limits the number of clubs that may be used to fewer than 14, only a score that will result in a handicap reduction shall be used.
- (iv) When a player is disqualified, their actual score may be used for handicapping purposes, at the discretion of the Handicap Manager or Handicap Committee. Scores should be used when actual scores are known, but a Rules breach has caused disqualification, eg card not signed or handicap not recorded. (Note: See Section 9 for further related guidance.)
- (v) Four-ball scores (including mixed events) MUST be used for handicapping an individual player but only if the following requirements are met:
  - ~ The pair has a score of at least 42 Stableford points (6 up in Par or net 6 under in Stroke events).
  - ~ The individual player's score appears at least 9 times on the four-ball score card.
  - ~ The adjusted score (after the below method has been followed to create an individual score card) produces a handicap differential which is equal to or better than the individual player's handicap.

(GOLF Link Clubs will enter these scores as ad-hoc scores.)

**Note i:** WHERE AN INDIVIDUAL PLAYER'S SCORE IS TO BE HANDICAPPED (irrespective of whether the competition is played as Par, Stroke, or Stableford), IT MUST BE PROCESSED AS A STABLEFORD SCORE in accordance with the procedures contained within this regulation.

**Note ii:** If two identical net scores are recorded by partners on a hole, both scores are eligible to be used on an adjusted individual score card. However, if the first player to hole out can be readily identified, the second player is deemed to have not recorded a score for that hole.

**PROCEDURE FOR CREATING INDIVIDUAL SCORE CARD FROM FOUR-BALL SCORE CARD FOR HANDICAPPING PURPOSES:**

- ~ When a player has no handicap stroke on a hole and their score is not recorded on the four-ball card, they are given 1 Stableford point.
- ~ On holes where a player receives 1, 2, or 3 handicap strokes and their score is not recorded on the four-ball card, they are given 1½ Stableford points.
- ~ When a player's score counts on the four-ball card for a hole, they are given the appropriate number of Stableford points for that hole.
- ~ When all the gaps in the card have been filled in, the points are totalled, and where a half appears in the total, the points total is rounded to the next lower whole number.

The score obtained is recorded in the player's handicap record and treated in the same way as all singles scores for handicap purposes.

- (vi) **Any stipulated round of 9-17 holes inclusive may be used for handicapping purposes.** (Note: A Q&A document describing procedures for competitions of 9-17 holes has been published to provide assistance to committees conducting competitions of this type. It is posted on [www.golfaustralia.org.au](http://www.golfaustralia.org.au).)

Please note it is a committee decision as to whether a 9-hole event (or an event of between 10-17 holes) is to be a competition round and handicapped. The score shall be converted to an 18-hole score by the following method:

- a) When the score is worse than net par for a stipulated round of less than 18 holes, the score is extended to 18 holes on a pro-rata basis, eg:  
Stableford round over 12 holes – score of 20 points is extended to 30 points.  
Par competition over 9 holes – score of -3 is extended to -6.  
Stroke competition over 9 holes – score of 4 over par is extended to 8 over par.
- b) When the score is equal to or better than net par for a round less than 18 holes, the score is extended to 18 holes by completing the card with net par figures, eg:  
Stableford round over 12 holes – score of 26 points is extended to 38 points (26 plus 12).  
Par competition over 9 holes – score of +3 is extended to +3 (+3 plus Square).  
Stroke competition over 9 holes – score of net 33 (par 36) is extended by adding the par of other 9 (say 35) = net 68.

The extended scores are then utilised as in a normal 18-hole competition.

- (vii) When a person plays within a competition field, but does not actually enter the competition, their score, if attested by a female or male member of any golf Club or golf association recognised by Golf Australia (or a person otherwise approved by the Club committee), should be used for handicapping purposes.
- (viii) A score returned by a player in a competition declared null and void should be used for handicapping purposes provided course or weather conditions have not materially compromised the proper playing of the game for that player.
- (ix) Scores returned in Open or Professional competitions by players with Australian Handicaps will be used for handicapping purposes.
- (x) All Extra Day Scores must be returned on the course of an affiliated Club and marked by a female or male member of any golf Club or golf association recognised by Golf Australia, or a person otherwise approved by the Club committee. (Committees are encouraged to introduce a condition requiring players to nominate prior to playing that their round is to count as an Extra Day Score.)

Extra Day Scores will be accepted only for the purpose of obtaining an initial Australian Handicap (see Section 3).

The marker must be responsible for ensuring the player conforms with the Golf Australia regulations, the Rules of Golf, and the Club's Local Rules and By-Laws and that they play from the correct tees.

- (xi) Where a player, without reasonable justification, fails to complete a round or fails to return a score for handicapping – see Section 9.

**(E) The Player**

- (i) A player shall have one Australian Handicap only and this shall be allotted by their Home Club.
- (ii) If a player is, or becomes, a member of more than one Club, they shall select one Club as their Home Club (for handicapping purposes only) and shall report to this Club their decision and the names of their other Club or Clubs. They shall also report to their other Clubs the name of their Home Club, their handicap there, and any alterations that may be made to their handicap from time to time (unless all their Clubs are on GOLF *Link*). If a player ceases to be a member of another Club, they shall report the fact to their Home Club so that it at all times has a record of all Clubs of which they are a member.
- (iii) A player shall report in writing or by returning the card to their Home Club all competition round scores returned by them at other Clubs whether or not these are at Clubs of which the player is also a member. (This is not necessary if the visited and Home Clubs are both on GOLF *Link*.) With such reported scores the player shall also give the ACR and the par of that course.
- (iv) It is desirable that the player, when playing at a visited Club, carries their GOLF *Link* card, or an introductory card that lists their current exact Australian Handicap.
- (v) A player is responsible for using their correct handicap at all times (see also Section 4H).

**(F) The Home Club**

Each club must have a Handicap Manager or Handicap Committee, responsible to the State Handicap Manager.

In some States, Handicap Managers shall be responsible to the District Association Handicap Managers, who in turn are responsible to the State Handicap Manager.

The Handicap Manager or Handicap Committee of the Home Club shall:

- (i) Maintain a satisfactory method of recording players' scores and handicaps.
- (ii) Ensure that players' scores are regularly and faithfully recorded and adjustments made as soon as possible to handicaps as required by this system.
- (iii) Apply this system in terms of its letter and spirit.
- (iv) As far as possible, insist that all cards are returned by competitors.
- (v) When a player, without reasonable justification, fails to complete a round or fails to return a score for handicapping, adjust their handicap records, in accordance with this System, such adjustment being based on their actual, estimated or potential score. (See Section 9.)

The Club committee may determine which of its membership categories are eligible to hold Australian Handicaps. Such handicaps shall only be available to golfers in respect of whom an annual fee is payable to the State governing body.

**(G) The Visited Club**

- (i) Whilst it is the responsibility of the individual player to ensure that all scores returned in competitions at other Clubs are returned to the player's Home Club, in addition, visited Clubs shall return competition scores to a visitor's Home Club (unless they are both on GOLF *Link*).
- (ii) When a player plays a substantial amount of golf (36 holes or more) over a relatively short period of time at a Club (for this purpose called the Visited Club) which is not their Home Club and in circumstances which preclude the proper administration of their handicap record and handicap, the Visited Club may use the player's scores to alter their handicap temporarily, in accordance with this System to the extent possible.
- (iii) When a player comes to Australia with a current handicap certified by the governing body of another country, this handicap should be accepted for competition at any Club in Australia.

## 2. Australian Course Rating (ACR)

- (A) There are two types of Australian Course Rating (ACR); an Australian Women's Course Rating (AWCR) which is the evaluation of the playing difficulty of a course for a player with an Australian Women's Handicap of zero, and an Australian Men's Course Rating (AMCR) which is the evaluation of the playing difficulty of a course for a player with an Australian Men's Handicap of zero. Where the term ACR is used within the Australian Men's & Women's Handicap System, it is deemed to mean either AWCR or AMCR as the appropriate context determines.
- (B) When determining handicap differentials for use in the calculation of an Australian Women's Handicap, the appropriate AWCR must be used. When determining handicap differentials for use in the calculation of an Australian Men's Handicap, the appropriate AMCR must be used.
- (C) The ACR is expressed as strokes taken to one decimal place, and is based on distance and other obstacles to the extent they effect the scoring ability of the player with a handicap of zero. The ACR must be an 18-hole figure.
- (D) For the purpose of calculating handicap differentials, the ACR is considered to be the rounded whole number. (Note: .5 rounds up.)
- (E) Except where explicitly stated otherwise, the ACR is to be used to calculate all handicap differentials.
- (F) For the purposes of the Australian Men's & Women's Handicap System, a formally-assessed USGA Course Rating is deemed to be an ACR.
- (G) When Tee Up "through the green" applies, the ACR is reduced by 2 strokes.

**Note i:** "Through the Green" is a defined term in the Rules of Golf. It means: "The whole area of the course except; (a) the teeing ground and putting green of the hole being played, and (b) all hazards [i

bunkers, lateral water hazards, and water hazards] on the course.” So, “Through the Green” includes fairways AND rough.

**Note ii:** For GOLF *Link* Clubs, this reduction will be performed automatically if the appropriate GOLF *Link* box is ‘ticked’.

**Note iii:** When Preferred Lies “through the green” is in effect, the unaltered 18-hole ACR applies (ie NO change to ACR).

### 3. Allotment of Australian Handicap

#### (A) Allocation of Australian Handicap to Player Who Has NOT Previously Held an Australian Handicap or Recognised Overseas Equivalent

In order for a player who has NOT previously held an Australian Handicap or recognised overseas equivalent to obtain an Australian Handicap, the following process must be followed:

- (i) Have the player clarify in writing that they have not previously held an Australian Handicap or recognised overseas equivalent.
- (ii) The player must submit three cards which will be adjusted by the Handicap Manager or Handicap Committee by treating any score by a male of more than 3 over par at any holes as 3 over par, and treating any score by a female of more than 4 over par at any holes as 4 over par. Any stipulated Extra Day or competition round of between 9 and 18 holes inclusive returned on ANY course with an ACR will be acceptable for this purpose (subject to the normal additional conditions a Club may place on Extra Day Scores).

**Note:** This adjustment is only made to the initial three cards.

- (iii) After the adjustments have been made, the difference between the amended score and the ACR of each card is ascertained (note: Gross Score – ACR = Handicap Differential). Once three scores have been returned, the resultant three handicap differentials are compared, with the two worst handicap differentials being disregarded.
- (iv) The details of the player’s best handicap differential are recorded in the player’s handicap record as the player’s first official score (these same details are then added to the player’s handicap record a further two times such that the player’s handicap record will contain three official scores all with the exact same details). **(GOLF *Link* CLUBS MUST REFER TO SECTION 3B FOR INSTRUCTIONS AS TO HOW THIS PROCESS IS TO BE EFFECTED IN GOLF *Link*.)**

**Note i:** Section 4 details the procedure by which these and other scores are utilised to calculate an Australian Handicap.

**Note ii:** The Handicap Manager or Handicap Committee should immediately effect a handicap adjustment (see Section 4F) if it has good reason (other than that provided by any previously-held handicap (see Section 3C if the player has previously held an official handicap)) to consider that a lower or higher handicap is more appropriate to the player’s ability than that which results from this process. In such a case, the Club is not required to act in accordance with Section 8.

**Note iii:** Any previously-held Australian Handicap and handicap record must be reinitiated in accordance with Section 3C.

#### (B) GOLF *Link* Procedure for Initiating the Creation of an Initial Australian Handicap

The Tier 1 system and all Tier 3 systems contain a function which allows a Club to send a player’s exact initial handicap to GOLF *Link*. To initiate a handicap, the Club’s GOLF *Link* administrator must enter the player’s best initial-card handicap differential into this data box (eg 17.0 or 28.0). The administrator sends this to GOLF *Link*, and GOLF *Link* will perform all of the further required calculations. (Exception: Some Tier 3 systems alternatively require the entry into the system of all three initial scores by the Club administrator. Those Clubs operating such a Tier 3 system will need to enter the best handicap differential three times.)

#### (C) Reinitiating Handicap for Player Who Has Previously-Held an Australian Handicap or Recognised Overseas Equivalent

- (i) When a player (who has previously been a member of an affiliated Club) joins a Club after a period away from handicap golf, the Handicap Manager or Handicap Committee of the ‘new’ Club must reinitiate the status of the player’s last-recorded handicap (using the player’s archived GOLF *Link* handicap record if applicable) even if there is good reason to consider that a lower or higher handicap is more appropriate to the player’s current ability. If the player’s handicap record is not available, the player’s handicap must be reinitiated in accordance with the process described in Section 3B.
- (ii) **Where both the previous Home Club and the ‘new’ Home Club are on GOLF *Link*, the ‘new’ Home Club MUST perform a ‘Home Club Transfer’.** (Queries regarding this process should be directed to the GOLF *Link* Customer Service Centre on 1300 650 750.) A new handicap record must not be created.
- (iii) If the Handicap Manager or Handicap Committee of the ‘new’ Club quickly considers there is good reason for the player to hold an Exact Australian Handicap that is higher than their last recorded handicap, a handicap adjustment should be effected. In such a case, the Club is not required to act in accordance with Section 8. However, the State handicap manager must be consulted if the determined figure would fall into any of the following categories:
  - ~ More than two strokes higher than the most recent previous figure for players whose last recorded handicap was 4.4 or less.
  - ~ More than 3 strokes higher than the previous handicap for players whose last recorded handicap was 4.5-10.4.
  - ~ More than 4 strokes higher than any previous handicap for players whose last recorded handicap was greater than 10.4.
- (iv) If the Handicap Manager or Handicap Committee of the ‘new’ Club considers there is good reason for the player to hold an Exact Australian Handicap that is lower than their last recorded handicap, a handicap adjustment should be given due consideration. Any ensuing handicap adjustment must be effected in accordance with Section 8.

(v) The procedure detailed in Section 4F is to be used to effect handicap adjustments.

**Note:** 'Last recorded handicap' may include, at the discretion of the State Association, an official handicap issued by a recognised overseas handicapping authority.

## 4. Calculation of Handicaps

### (A) Handicap Differential

Handicap Differential = Gross Score – ACR (note: this is the value which is featured in the 'Played to' column on golflink.com.au).

### (B) Formula for Calculation of Exact Australian Handicap

An Exact Australian Handicap is calculated from a rolling sample of the player's most recent 20 scores. If a player's handicap record contains a lesser number than 20 scores, the number of scores used to calculate the player's handicap is as listed in the table below.

Once a player's handicap record contains 20 scores, the next score they return will result in the oldest of the existing 20 scores being removed (to be replaced by the new score). Hence, the handicap record is considered to be a 'rolling sample' of the player's scores.

The procedure for calculating an Australian Handicap is as follows:

**STEP 1** – Use the table below to determine the number of Handicap Differentials to be included in the handicap calculation:

<i>Number of Scores in Player's Scoring Record</i>	<i>Handicap Differentials to be Used in the Calculation</i>
3 to 6	Lowest 1
7 or 8	Lowest 2
9 or 10	Lowest 3
11 or 12	Lowest 4
13 or 14	Lowest 5
15 or 16	Lowest 6
17	Lowest 7
18	Lowest 8
19	Lowest 9
20	Lowest 10

**STEP 2** – Average the Handicap Differentials being used (as determined by the above table).

**STEP 3** – Multiply the average by 0.96. (Note: This is the 'bonus for excellence' factor. Bonus for excellence is the incentive for players to improve their golf game. As a player's handicap improves (gets lower), the player has a slightly better chance of placing high or winning a handicap event.)

**STEP 4** – After applying STEP 3, delete all numbers after the tenths' digit. Do NOT round to the nearest tenth. (For example 23.6983 becomes 23.6.)

**STEP 5** – In the example provided in STEP 4, the exact Australian Handicap is therefore 23.6.

**Note i:** The ACR is to be used to calculate all handicap differentials used in the calculation of an Australian Handicap, not any Calculated Course Rating which may have been determined at the time a round was played. Hence, all 'Played to' values stored and displayed in each player's GOLF *Link* handicap record from prior to 9 April 2010 have been recalculated according to the rule in effect as at 9 April 2010.

**Note ii:** There is no requirement for a player's most recent 20 scores to have been returned within a specific timeframe. For example, the most recent 20 scores may span a period of three years or they may span a period of three months.

### (C) Maximum Handicaps

- (i) The maximum value for an Exact Australian Women's Handicap is 45.4.
- (ii) The maximum value for an Exact Australian Men's Handicap is 36.4.
- (iii) There is no maximum value for a handicap differential.

### (D) Playing Handicap

The playing handicap is determined by rounding off the exact handicap. (For this calculation, .5 or more IS rounded up, so in the example listed in Section 4B the player with an exact handicap of 23.6 will play off 24.)

**Note i:** 0.5 rounds to 1, 10.5 rounds to 11, 20.5 rounds to 21, etc.

**Note ii:** If a player has an exact Australian Handicap of +0.6 or better, their playing Australian Handicap is the rounded figure (note: +0.5 rounds to Scratch, +1.5 rounds to +1, +2.5 rounds to +2, etc).

### (E) Player Fails to Return Score Card

If a player fails (for a reason which is not approved by the committee in charge of the competition) to post an acceptable score as soon as practicable after completion of their round, the following process should be followed:

- ~ The round is to be recorded in GOLF *Link* with the status of 'No Score – Not Approved'.
- ~ However, if the committee considers the player is most likely to have had a 'good' score, it should NOT use the 'No Score – Not Approved' option. Instead it should enter a score for the player for that round equivalent to the best handicap differential of the player's most recent (before the penalty score is added) 19 handicap differentials AND select the GOLF *Link* 'Disqualified' score status option. Note: A committee has complete discretion to make such a determination – to avoid such action moving forward, the player only needs to return their score card at the completion of every round.
- ~ Where a committee records a player's score status for a round as either 'Disqualified' (and also includes a score) or 'No Score – Not Approved', but then subsequently becomes aware of the score the player actually had, it SHOULD replace the 'penalty' entry with the actual score.

- ~ For 'repeat offenders' only, Clubs ARE PERMITTED to record the correct score IN ADDITION to retaining the penalty score (ie *'Disqualified'* (accompanied by the listing of a score) or *'No Score – Not Approved'*). The correct procedure for this is to enter the correct score in GOLF *Link* as an *'Ad Hoc'* score.

**Note:** See Section 4I for operational notes and handicapping implications of the above stipulated score statuses.

#### (F) Handicap Adjustments

##### Operational Notes:

When a Club's GOLF *Link* administrator uses the 'Adjust Handicap' function in GOLF *Link*, GOLF *Link* will automatically add a series of artificial scores to the player's handicap record. It is these artificial scores that will result in the player's handicap adjusting to the desired figure. Relevant points regarding this process are as follows:

- ~ If the required new handicap is a lower figure than the existing exact handicap, GOLF *Link* will populate the respective player's handicap record with ten identical artificial scores.
- ~ If the required new handicap is a higher figure than the existing exact handicap, GOLF *Link* will populate the respective player's handicap record with twenty identical artificial scores.
- ~ If the Club's GOLF *Link* administrator enters a required new figure of for example 17.3, GOLF *Link* will round this figure to the nearest whole number (in this case it would be 17). The artificially generated scores in this case will all have a handicap differential of 17. (Note: The average of the handicap differentials in the player's handicap record will be multiplied by 0.96 (see Section 4B). As a result, the figure entered into GOLF *Link* will not become the player's Exact Australian Handicap. Where a specific handicap figure is desired by a Club, it should allow for this consideration by slightly inflating the value it enters into GOLF *Link*, and also take account of 'good' scores in the player's handicap record.

**Note:** Non-GOLF *Link* Clubs will need to ensure their calculation processes replicate those performed by GOLF *Link*.

#### (G) Recalculation of Handicap after New Score Processed

Eligible scores are to be processed through GOLF *Link* as soon as practicable after their lodgement. GOLF *Link* will re-calculate a player's Exact Australian Handicap immediately upon the receipt of a new score for that player. **Note:** Non-GOLF *Link* Clubs will need to ensure their calculation processes replicate those performed by GOLF *Link*.

#### (H) Player Competes in Competition Round before a Previous Handicap-Altering Score is Processed

In a situation where a player competes in a competition round before a previous handicap-altering score is processed, their correct Exact Australian Handicap will be that displayed by either GOLF *Link* or (for Clubs not operating within the GOLF *Link* system) such other display item as designated by their Home Club (even if they are aware of what their new handicap will be).

(Note: The handicapping system provisions which enable a Visited Club to temporarily amend a player's handicap (ie Section 1(G)) will govern in the event of a conflict between those provisions and this Note.)

Additionally, the committee in charge of a competition may require a player to play off the figure their new handicap will be, even if their handicap is yet to be officially adjusted.

A committee may also adjust a player's handicap and net score after the player has submitted their score card in a stroke play competition. In such an instance, the listing of the incorrect handicap is considered to be a committee error and consequently the player is not penalised.

In a match play competition, a player's handicap may not be altered after their round has commenced. Any queries regarding a player's handicap must be raised with the Club Handicap Manager or Handicap Committee prior to the commencement of the player's round.

#### (I) GOLF *Link* Score Status Options – Operational Notes & Handicap Implications

The various GOLF *Link* score status options and their associated handicap implications are as follows:

- (i) **"Okay"**
  - ~ This is an actual score which is to be considered when determining a player's most recent 20 scores.
- (ii) **"No Score – Not Approved"**
  - ~ The player's handicap differential for that round will be deemed to be the equivalent of the worst handicap differential of the player's most recent (before the penalty score is added) 19 handicap differentials. (Note: If the player's handicap record contains less than 19 entries of actual or artificially generated score values, the player's handicap differential for that round will be deemed to be the equivalent of the worst handicap differential of all scores contained in the player's handicap record.)
  - ~ This is an actual score which is to be considered when determining a player's most recent 20 scores.
- (iii) **"No Score – Approved"**
  - ~ The entry appears in the player's handicap record however the player is not considered to have returned a score.
  - ~ This is NOT an actual score and is to be discounted when determining a player's most recent 20 scores.
- (iv) **"Disqualified" (accompanied by the listing of a score)**
  - ~ For handicapping purposes, the score is treated in exactly the same fashion as if the player had not been disqualified.
  - ~ This is an actual score which is to be considered when determining a player's most recent 20 scores.
- (v) **"Disqualified" (NOT accompanied by the listing of a score)**
  - ~ The entry appears in the player's handicap record however the player is not considered to have returned a score.
  - ~ This is NOT an actual score and is to be discounted when determining a player's most recent 20 scores.

**Note:** Non-GOLF Link Clubs will need to ensure their calculation processes replicate those performed by GOLF Link.

## 5. Life of Scores & Lapsed Handicaps

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- (A) A score is a 'live' score if it is one of the player's most recent 20 eligible actual scores. There is no requirement for a player's most recent 20 scores to have been returned within a specific timeframe.
- (B) When a player changes from one Home Club to another, a copy of their handicap record shall be given to the new Home Club so that administration of their Australian Handicap can be taken up by the new Home Club. **Where both the previous Home Club and the 'new' Home Club are on GOLF Link, the 'new' Home Club MUST perform a 'Home Club Transfer'.** (Queries regarding this process should be directed to the GOLF Link Customer Service Centre on 1300 650 750.) **A new handicap record must not be created.**
- (C) If a player has no current membership of an affiliated body, their most recent 20 scores remain live, however their Australian Handicap will be considered to be Lapsed and will have no official status.

## 6. Par or Stableford Competitions, Novelty Events, & Pro-Ams

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- (A) The number of strokes awarded in all of these competitions should be the player's full Australian Handicap. The amount by which the par of the course differs from the ACR shall be added to or deducted from the player's score to obtain the correct score against the rating.  
For example, a player who is 4 up on par 68 when the ACR is 65 is only 1 up on the rating of 65. If the ACR exceeds the par, the difference shall be added to the player's score.
- (B) Scores returned in novelty events such as Bisque Par, Three-Ball, and Aggregate Teams Events may be used for handicapping at the discretion of the committee but only after conversion to a regular stroke, par, or Stableford format, and only if the Rules of singles stroke play have been adhered to (note: the committee should make and announce its determination prior to the commencement of the round).
- (C) Scores returned in Pro-Am events may, at the discretion of the committee, be used for handicapping provided one of the following requirements is met:
  - (i) The Rules of singles stroke play are adhered to and each player's hole-by-hole scores are recorded on the submitted score card.
  - (ii) The Rules of four-ball stroke play are adhered to.

## 7. Club Handicaps

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- (A) Calculation of Australian Women's Handicaps beyond 45.4 is not permitted. Calculation of Australian Men's Handicaps beyond 36.4 is not permitted. Official "Club Handicaps" are not permitted and will not be recognised by Golf Australia.
- (B) Should a committee consider it appropriate, it may allocate selected members with internal "Club Handicaps". "Club Handicaps" must be recorded separately to Australian Handicaps (ie there must be separate record sheets). It will be solely for the respective committee to determine how it calculates the "Club Handicaps" of its members.

## 8. Generally – Re-Assessment of Handicaps

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### RE-ASSESSMENT OF AUSTRALIAN HANDICAP

- (A) Handicaps are intended to enable players to compete in handicap events on even terms. When a player is showing better form than their handicap or is showing an increased interest in playing better golf but is not returning cards which lead to an automatic reduction in handicap and the improvement, current ability, or some other justifiable circumstances make it apparent to the Handicap Manager or Handicap Committee of any Club of which the player is a member that the player is over-handicapped, their handicap may be reduced and/or frozen. The objective of such action must not be to achieve a punitive outcome, it must be solely to provide uniformity in handicapping among all who play handicap golf. Such alterations may be effected at any time as the circumstances which give rise to such action may be such that fairly prompt action is required in order to achieve fairness for all concerned.
- (B) Decision to Freeze a Player's Australian Handicap
  - B.i A freeze may be effected for a stipulated period of either one month, two months, or three months only.
  - B.ii Upon the expiration of the initial freeze period, and given reasonable justification has not expired, there will be nothing to stop the body that took an initial decision to freeze a handicap from extending the freeze period.
  - B.iii The figure at which the handicap is frozen may not necessarily reflect the figure the normal calculation method would produce.
  - B.iv Where a player's Australian Handicap is frozen at an exact figure (for example 12.4), their "Exact Handicap" listing in the "Your Handicap" area of golfink.com.au will read: "Exact Handicap: 12.4 (FROZEN)".
  - B.v A frozen handicap may still be used by a player in exactly the same fashion as a non-frozen handicap.
- (C) A player's handicap may also be increased for players who may be recovering from injuries, illness or other justifiable reason. Such alterations may be effected at any time as the circumstances which give rise to such action may be such that fairly prompt action is required in order to achieve fairness for all concerned.
- (D) When a player's returns give rise to suspicion they may be attempting to "manipulate a handicap", or are in serious breach of this System or the Rules of Golf or Etiquette (as contained in the Rules of Golf booklet), any Club of which the player is a member is empowered to investigate the player's performances and, if considered warranted, temporarily decrease and/or freeze, or suspend their Australian Handicap.

- (E) A decision to decrease and/or freeze, or increase, or suspend a player's handicap under this Section must be ratified by the General Committee (Board of Directors) of the Club which is taking such action.
- (F) F.i Notification of a decision to decrease and/or freeze, or increase, or suspend a player's handicap under this Section must be forwarded by the Club taking such action to the relevant State Association (and, if the Club taking such action is not the player's Home Club, the Club taking such action must also immediately notify the player's Home Club). Such notification must include copies of the accumulated information on which the decision was based.
- F.ii In all cases of decisions to increase, decrease, or suspend a player's Australian Handicap, it is the Home Club that is responsible for making the adjustment to GOLF *Link* (or other handicap record system maintained by the Home Club).
- F.iii In the event that it is not the Home Club that has made the decision to increase, decrease, or suspend a player's Australian Handicap, the Home Club will be obligated to immediately adjust the player's handicap record in accordance with the direction of the Club that has made the decision. The Home Club may appeal the decision to the State Association, however any such appeal must not delay the amendment of the player's handicap record to have it reflect the determination of the other Club. Once such advice has been forwarded to the Home Club, any competition committee should consider the figure contained in this advice to be the player's current Australian Handicap.
- F.iv Only Golf Australia will have the physical access to the GOLF *Link* freezing functionality (note: this does not alter the power of a Club or State Association to take a decision to freeze a player's handicap). The process to follow in order to effect the freezing of a handicap on GOLF *Link* is for the Club to notify its State Association of the decision to freeze (note: such notice must include stipulation of the figure at which the handicap is to be frozen); the State Association will then notify Golf Australia. Golf Australia will only effect the decision of a Club to freeze a player's Australian Handicap upon the written request of a State Association. Any competition committee must consider an Australian Handicap to be frozen upon the earlier of either; it becoming aware that notification of the determining Club's decision has been received by the State Association, or the player's GOLF *Link* handicap display being accordingly amended.
- (G) Should the State Association or Golf Australia, on inquiry, be satisfied that a player's Australian Handicap has not been determined in accordance with the Golf Australia Handicapping System or that the player has acted in serious breach of this System or the Rules of Golf or otherwise detrimentally to the best interests of the game, it may withdraw that player's Australian Handicap.
- (H) The State Association or Golf Australia, on inquiry, may amend or re-instate a player's Australian Handicap. A decision of the Golf Australia Handicapping & Course Rating Committee will be final.
- (I) Implementation Conditions: The following conditions are to assist Clubs in implementing this Section and to provide uniformity in handicapping among all who play handicap golf:
- I.i The General Committee (Board of Directors) must accumulate data, cards, scores, competition results, that would indicate it is necessary to decrease and/or freeze, or increase, or suspend the player's Australian Handicap in order to maintain uniformity in handicapping among all who play handicap golf.
- I.ii The General Committee (Board of Directors) must as a body, make a decision to decrease and/or freeze, or increase, or suspend a member's handicap as indicated by this Section of the Australian Men's & Women's Handicap System.
- I.iii No one person or group of persons, other than the General Committee (Board of Directors) has the power to decrease and/or freeze, or increase, or suspend a member's handicap when exercising a Club's authority under this Section.
- I.iv Appropriate letters for use by Clubs are available from State Associations wishing to implement this Section. The first letter advises the member that their handicap is to be reviewed due to better than reflected, or otherwise, performances. The second letter advises of the newly-approved handicap.

#### **ALLOCATION OF SPECIAL COMPETITION HANDICAP IN EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES**

A committee in charge of a competition is authorised to allocate to a competitor (or group of competitors) a Special Competition Handicap if the following requirements are met:

- (A) The State Association must first have been consulted to determine whether a general adjustment or otherwise of the player's Australian Handicap is warranted. (Note: That the State Association may have decided a general adjustment or otherwise of the player's Australian Handicap is unwarranted does not prevent a committee in charge of a competition from allocating a Special Competition Handicap. A committee in charge of a competition will be eligible to allocate a Special Competition Handicap as soon as it has lodged in writing with the State Association a submission or notice regarding re-assessment or otherwise of the player's Australian Handicap.)
- (B) The committee in charge of the competition must accumulate a body of evidence (eg data, cards, scores, competition results) that would indicate the application of a Special Competition Handicap is necessary. The body of evidence need not be extensive but it must be compelling. (Note: It will be for the committee in charge of the competition to determine whether or not this requirement has been met.)
- (C) The Special Competition Handicap must reflect the accumulated body of evidence. (Note: It will be for the committee in charge of the competition to determine whether or not this requirement has been met.)

**Note i:** Any committee in charge of a competition which allocates a Special Competition Handicap will be solely responsible for all associated outcomes.

**Note ii:** Neither Golf Australia, nor any State Association, will be obliged to assist with any outcomes associated with the allocation of a specific Special Competition Handicap.

**Note iii:** When entering a score into a player's handicap record (or when processing a competition for handicap purposes), it is the player's Australian Handicap that must be used to calculate a net score, NOT any Special Competition Handicap that may have been used for the purposes of determining; competition placings, allocation of prizes, or event/match winners or results.



**Note iv:** It is for the committee allocating a Special Competition Handicap to determine in which competitions the Special Competition Handicap will apply. A committee is not permitted to allocate to a player a Special Competition Handicap for a competition of which it does not have charge.

## 9. General Decisions on Australian Handicap Regulations

The following table of Decisions is listed to provide enhanced guidance for all committees (note: non-GOLF *Link* clubs should refer to Section 4.1 for full details of the required GOLF *Link* score status options stipulated in the Handicapping Action column):

SITUATION	COMPETITION ACTION	HANDICAPPING ACTION / GOLF <i>Link</i> SCORE STATUS
1. No handicap on card. (i) Stroke (Rule 6-2b). (ii) Par & Stableford (Rule 6-2b & 32-2a)	(i) Disqualified from net event. (ii) As above. Note: If scratch event is held, card accepted for scratch.	(i) & (ii) Apply correct handicap and use for handicapping. The total score is entered into GOLF <i>Link</i> with a Score Status of: <b>"Disqualified"</b> .
2. Higher handicap on card which affects the number of strokes received (i) stroke (Rule 6-2b). (ii) Par & Stableford (Rule 6-2b & 32-2a)	(i) Disqualified from net event. (ii) As above. Note: If scratch event is held, card accepted for scratch.	(i) & (ii) Apply correct handicap and use for handicapping. The total score is entered into GOLF <i>Link</i> with a Score Status of: <b>"Disqualified"</b> .
3. Lower handicap on card in Stroke, Par or Stableford (Rule 6-2b & 32-2a).	Card accepted for competition as returned.	Apply correct handicap and use for handicapping. GOLF <i>Link</i> Score Status – <b>"Okay"</b> .
4. (a) Player picks up on hole/s in Stroke but returns scores for all other holes. (b) Score not listed on score card in Stroke for hole or holes which have been completed.	(a) & (b) Disqualified from the competition.	(a) The player is deemed to have a stroke score for that hole or holes which would result in them getting 2 over net par for that hole or holes (ie 0 Stableford points). The total score is then entered into GOLF <i>Link</i> with a Score Status of: <b>"Disqualified"</b> . (b) (i) If correct score/s can be identified, adjust and use for handicapping. The total score is entered into GOLF <i>Link</i> with a Score Status of: <b>"Disqualified"</b> . (ii) If correct score/s cannot be identified, the player is deemed to have a stroke score for that hole or holes which would result in them getting 2 over net par for that hole or holes (ie 0 Stableford points). The total score is then entered into GOLF <i>Link</i> with a Score Status of: <b>"Disqualified"</b> .
5. Score for hole omitted in Par & Stableford. (a) Hole played but score not recorded. (b) Hole not played.	Card accepted as returned. (No obligation under the Rules of Golf to record a score for every hole.)	GOLF <i>Link</i> Score Status – <b>"Okay"</b> . (a) Use correct score for handicapping. (b) The committee should extend the player's score to an 18-hole score in accordance with the stipulated process contained within this handicap system. It is this 18-hole score that should be used for handicapping.
6. Card not signed (Rule 6-6b).	Disqualified from the competition.	Use for handicapping as returned. The total score is entered into GOLF <i>Link</i> with a Score Status of: <b>"Disqualified"</b> .
7. Higher score than actually taken recorded in Stroke, Par and Stableford (Rules 6-6d & 32-2a).	Card accepted as returned.	Use correct score for handicapping. GOLF <i>Link</i> Score Status – <b>"Okay"</b> .

SITUATION	COMPETITION ACTION	HANDICAPPING ACTION / GOLF <i>Link</i> SCORE STATUS
8. Lower score than actually taken on a hole recorded in Stroke (Rule 6-6d).	Disqualified from the competition.	(i) If correct score can be identified, adjust and use for handicapping. The total score is entered into GOLF <i>Link</i> with a Score Status of: <b>“Disqualified”</b> . (ii) If score cannot be identified, the player is deemed to have a stroke score for that hole which would result in them getting 2 over net par for that hole (ie 0 Stableford points). The total score is then entered into GOLF <i>Link</i> with a Score Status of: <b>“Disqualified”</b> .
9. Lower score than actually taken recorded in Par and Stableford. (Please refer to Rule 32-2a and relevant Rules of Golf Decisions.)	(i) If result of hole affected – Disqualified from the competition. (ii) If result of hole not affected, no penalty applies and card accepted for the competition.	(i) Use correct score for handicapping. The total score is entered into GOLF <i>Link</i> with a Score Status of: <b>“Disqualified”</b> . (ii) Use for handicapping as returned. GOLF <i>Link</i> Score Status – <b>“Okay”</b> .
10. Card handed in after competition has closed.	Disqualified from the competition.	Use for handicapping. The total score is entered into GOLF <i>Link</i> with a Score Status of: <b>“Disqualified”</b> .
11. Withdrawal after player commences round as a result of the player's experience of any of the following being considered by the committee in charge of the competition to be of reasonable significance; illness, injury, emergency, bad weather, or other impinging condition or circumstance considered valid by the committee in charge of the competition. (Note: In this context, 'bad weather' does NOT generally need to be of such intensity as to warrant the suspension or cancellation of play. If some players are willing to continue does not mean it is necessarily unreasonable in this context for others to cease. Competition committees should be reasonably understanding in determining when weather is considered to be 'bad'. It should be remembered that club golfers play the game as a recreation.) (i) Player has completed less than 9 holes. (ii) Player has completed 9 holes or more.	(i) & (ii) The player's result in the competition should be recorded as <b>“Withdrawn”</b> .	(i) Not used for handicapping. GOLF <i>Link</i> Score Status – <b>“No Score – Approved”</b> . (ii) (a) If the player's incomplete score is identified, the committee may choose to extend the player's score to an 18-hole score in accordance with the stipulated process contained within this handicap system. If the committee creates an 18-hole score, that score is used for handicapping. GOLF <i>Link</i> Score Status – <b>“Okay”</b> . (b) If the committee does not, or can not, create an 18-hole score, the card is not used for handicapping. GOLF <i>Link</i> Score Status – <b>“No Score – Approved”</b> .
12. When not approved by the committee in charge of the competition: ♦ Withdrawal after player commences round, or; ♦ Card not returned.  (i) Player has completed less than 9 holes. (ii) Player has completed 9 holes or more.	Disqualified from the competition.	(i) GOLF <i>Link</i> Score Status – <b>“No Score – Not Approved”</b> . (ii) (a) If the player's incomplete score is identified, the committee may extend the player's score to an 18-hole score in accordance with the stipulated process contained within this handicapping system. If the committee creates an 18-hole score, or if an 18-hole score is identified (reasonable effort should be made to ascertain the correct score), that score is used for handicapping. The total score is entered into GOLF <i>Link</i> with a Score Status of: <b>“Disqualified”</b> . (b) If the committee does not, or can not, create an 18-hole score, GOLF <i>Link</i> Score Status – <b>“No Score – Not Approved”</b> .

## 10. Handicap Information Disclosure

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No affiliated Club, association or other affiliated or non-affiliated body may make handicaps or records of handicaps calculated under this System available outside the environs of its course, clubhouse or office. This prohibits the unauthorised display of handicap information on the Internet and other forms of public media. For the purpose of viewing members' handicap information outside the Club environs, the Club, association or other body may, **with the express written consent of Golf Australia**, link its Internet site to the approved Golf Australia GOLF *Link* Internet site, and/or other GOLF *Link* media facilities as advised from time to time.