

# 2024 World Handicap System™ Update



**Information document for clubs**

## **2024 World Handicap System™ Update**

When the World Handicap System™ (WHS™) was introduced by The R&A and USGA in 2020, the World Handicap Authority (WHA) was formed to oversee the system. This body has closely monitored its implementation and, as part of this process, Wales Golf, like every other national association, has provided feedback to the Authority on an ongoing basis, arising from the experience of club committees and golfers.

Ahead of the 2024 season and on the back of feedback received, the WHA is now bringing forward several changes which are to be implemented in Wales along with the other Home Nations on **1 April 2024**. The main changes being brought forward are summarised below. The intention of these changes put forward by The R&A and USGA is to enhance the accuracy, fairness, and overall experience of the handicap system.

Full details of the revisions will be communicated to you as we move towards our implementation date and we hope many of you were able to attend our recent workshops where these changes were explored in much greater detail. We understand that these changes will seem complex, but we will provide extensive further detailed information and educational materials to help you communicate these changes to your members alongside education that is being rolled out by the R&A.

### **Key changes include:**

1. Change in the way Course Handicaps are calculated.
2. Method of scaling up nine-hole scores / hole not played.
3. Four-Ball scores are acceptable for handicap purposes
4. Playing Handicap Calculation
5. Annual Review Reporting
6. Minimum Length of Golf Course
7. Permitting competitions over a non-standard number of holes
8. Standardisation of Par
9. Communication

## **1. Change in the way Course Handicaps are calculated.**

### **What is the background for this change?**

When the system was introduced, there were two options provided for the calculation of course handicaps over 18 holes. In GB&I, Course Handicaps have been based solely on the Slope Rating™ of a course (i.e., without regard to the Course Rating™ and Par of the course). The alternative method, known as 'Course Rating-Par' seeks to use the Course Rating and Par of the course as material variables in the calculation of a Course Handicap.

Since the introduction of the system, the method used in GB&I has become an outlier with more and more countries adopting 'Course Rating-Par' as the method. Additionally, 'Course Rating-Par' is the only choice available for the calculation of nine-hole course handicaps.

The R&A's preference, therefore, is for the national associations in GB&I to use 'Course Rating-Par' to bring additional consistency to the way Course Handicaps are calculated.

### **What will the change mean in practice?**

The best way to illustrate the implications of this change is to compare your Course Handicap using the previous method and the current one. To do this, go to The R&A's Course Handicap Calculator ([The R&A - Course Handicap Calculator \(randa.org\)](http://www.randa.org)). Select 'Click Here to Enter Manually' and then enter the 18-hole details for a course you regularly play using both methods ('Course Rating-Par' and 'Excluding Course Rating-Par' (the latter being the method currently used)).

It is likely in a number of specific circumstances this may mean little or no change while in others the change could be quite significant.

Broadly speaking, 'Course Rating-Par' is better for formats where scoring is being assessed against par. It produces bigger differences in Course Handicap from different tees, which is more intuitive for players. As par is often the same from multiple tees, moreover, this eliminates or reduces the need to apply an adjustment to Playing Handicaps in multi-tee events.

### Course Handicap Charts

To avoid potential re-printing costs, we would advise your club not to make any changes to Scorecards or to Course Handicap™ Tables or boards at this time. I

We encourage clubs to consider the best option moving forward with this to ensure a cost-effective solution is found that might also allow flexibility to the club for future updates, either to the system or the golf course. The emergence of Apps such as the Wales Golf and other home union apps has meant that in many cases the course handicap can be looked up on your phone, or computer prior to play in some cases rendering the look up charts less used than first anticipated.



### Benefits Overview

- *Golfers are playing to PAR of the course for handicapping purposes.*
- *Golfers will receive shots based on the course difficulty.*
- *More suitable adjustment between tee sets*
- *Alignment with the majority of other jurisdictions*
- *Interoperability worldwide*
- *Less confusion for golfers when playing overseas.*
- *Easier calculation required for Mixed Tee and Mixed Gender events – as the difference on Mixed Gender will be the Course Par.*

### 2. Method of scaling up nine-hole scores/hole not played.

The new method endeavours to provide a more accurate prediction of what the player would have scored on holes not played (using expected score differential rather than net par) and should, therefore, result in a more accurate Handicap Index®.

### 3. Four-Ball scores acceptable for handicap purposes

As of 1 April 2024, scores from four ball (such as Strokeplay, Stableford and Par/Bogey) will be acceptable for handicap purposes in GB&I in specific circumstances. These additional and popular formats of play will allow more scores to be returned for handicap purposes based on some specified criteria.

**Note: this is for competition play only**

The specific circumstances relate to the pair returning a net score of at least six better than par, the individual's score counting at least nine times and the player's individual calculated score being at least 36 points.

- Once the acceptable pairs/team score is returned to WHS™, WHS will look for specific criteria, which is as followed: ✓
- One player of the pair must have scored on a minimum of 9 holes. ✓

- The total pair score must be at least 42 points or 6 under Par.

If these triggers are hit, then the golfer who has scored on the minimum 9 holes will have an upscaling value added for their un-played holes based upon their playing partners score and if the score equates to 36+ points/level par or better it will calculate a Score Differential™ and the score will be added to record for handicap purposes. This score may or may not be one of their best 8 score differentials used to update/recalculate their handicap index. For scores not hitting the specified trigger points, the score will still be added to records but not used in calculations, as it will be indicated so in the records.

### **Benefits**

- *Lots of clubs mentioned this as one of the major changes they wanted to see.*
- *Make the game more inclusive as more scores are available for handicapping purposes from various formats of play.*
- *Handicaps will be more reflective of a player's demonstrated ability.*

## **4. Playing Handicap Calculation**

Where software is being used for competitions, the Playing Handicap will be calculated based on the full Course Handicap This means the Course Handicap will not be rounded to the nearest whole number before being converted into a Playing Handicap).

## **5. Annual Review Reporting**

Enhanced reporting will be available to help Handicap Committees in completing the Annual Handicap Review. The new updated version of the system's technical specifications will mean your handicapping software will have coded into it reports which will identify players who are consistently scoring above or below expectation – or where anomalies exist.

## **6. Minimum Length of Golf Course**

There will be a reduction in the minimum length of a golf course to be eligible for a Course and Slope Rating. The minimum length of a course was 3,000 yards – this will now reduce to 1,500 yards.

### **Benefits**

- Short courses play a big part in the recruitment of new players. Allowing these courses to have a WHS rating, will encourage more Junior, Beginner and Disabled golfers to gain a handicap which will aid retention and support their transition into full membership.
- Allow currently unaffiliated facilities/clubs with an unrated short course to seek affiliation, increasing participation.

## **7. Permitting competitions over a non-standard number of holes**

There will be a clause added to Rule 3.2 permitting competitions over a non-standard number of holes to be used for handicap purposes. This new clause allows competitions played over 9 or any number of holes over nine (such as 12, or 14 holes) to be used for handicap purposes, for example, over the winter months (once course conditions permit). The calculation will use the new method of expected score differential (scaling up) as outlined in no.2 above.

All the above changes are being implemented to enhance the accuracy, fairness, and overall experience of the handicap system.

## **8. Standardisation of Par**

Standardising par will allow clubs to retain the same Par across all tee sets rated for the same gender.

Currently the guidance given to clubs for the allocation of Par centres around a set of yardage limits within which a hole should fall to be allocated a particular scorecard Par. (appendix F – Rules of Handicapping). Moving forward, clubs now have a choice to standardise (keep the same) the par for each tee set regardless of whether they move out of certain yardage brackets as indicated in appendix F of the Rules of Handicapping.

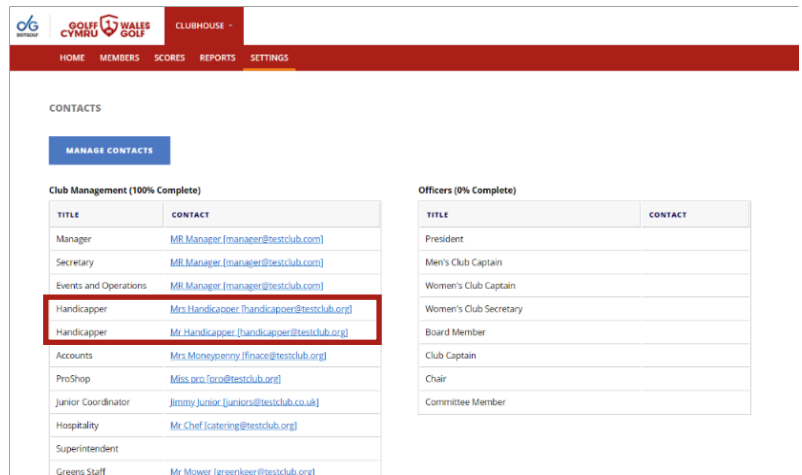
Since the introduction of WHS, shorter and longer tees are now being rated for each gender. Currently a hole which plays as a Par 5 from the White and Yellow tees but falls short of the minimum length for that same Par from the Red tees (shown in Appendix F), is advised to be allocated a Par 4.

With the change in Standardising par, the hole could remain a par 5 in line with all other tees sets for that gender. With the addition of CR-Par in the new course handicap calculation which will bring a players' "play to handicap" score back to 36 points regardless of the Par, clubs will now be permitted to standardise their Pars if they wish to.

## 9. Communication

Please ensure you have your key handicapping contacts information updated in the Clubhouse system to ensure that ongoing education on the rule changes finds the correct contact at your golf club over the next few months.

To add officials at your club simple click '**manage contacts**', and then on the drop down select '**create new contact**'. Add the persons contact details and importantly assign them to handicapper role.



CONTACTS

[MANAGE CONTACTS](#)

Club Management (100% Complete)

TITLE	CONTACT
Manager	<a href="mailto:MR.Manager@testclub.com">MR.Manager [manager@testclub.com]</a>
Secretary	<a href="mailto:MR.Manager [manager@testclub.com]">MR.Manager [manager@testclub.com]</a>
Events and Operations	<a href="mailto:MR.Manager [manager@testclub.com]">MR.Manager [manager@testclub.com]</a>
Handicapper	<a href="mailto:Mrs.Handicapper [handicapper@testclub.org]">Mrs.Handicapper [handicapper@testclub.org]</a>
Handicapper	<a href="mailto:Mr.Handicapper [handicapper@testclub.org]">Mr.Handicapper [handicapper@testclub.org]</a>
Accounts	<a href="mailto:Mrs.Money Penny.Finace [testclub.org]">Mrs.Money Penny.Finace [testclub.org]</a>
ProShop	<a href="mailto:Miss.pro [pro@testclub.org]">Miss.pro [pro@testclub.org]</a>
Junior Coordinator	<a href="mailto:Jimmy Junior [juniors@testclub.co.uk]">Jimmy Junior [juniors@testclub.co.uk]</a>
Hospitality	<a href="mailto:Mr.Chef [catering@testclub.org]">Mr.Chef [catering@testclub.org]</a>
Superintendent	
Greens Staff	<a href="mailto:Mr.Mower [greenkeeper@testclub.org]">Mr.Mower [greenkeeper@testclub.org]</a>

Officers (0% Complete)

TITLE	CONTACT
President	
Men's Club Captain	
Women's Club Captain	
Women's Club Secretary	
Board Member	
Club Captain	
Chair	
Committee Member	