



Scottish
Golf

2024 World Handicap System Update

Introduction

As we look ahead to the 2024 playing season, we wanted to take this opportunity to make you aware of up-and-coming changes to the World Handicap System for 2024.

The World Handicap Authority (WHA) have been closely monitoring the implementation of the World Handicap System since 2020 and soliciting feedback from National Associations across Great Britain and Ireland. It is envisaged that, from now on, the system will be reviewed on the basis of a regular four-year cycle, similar to the manner in which the Rules of Golf are reviewed.

On the back of feedback recently received, the WHA is now bringing forward a number of changes which are to be implemented in Scotland by April 2024 at the latest.

We are pleased to provide golf clubs with an overview of the 2024 changes and guidance on how education will be rolled out across Scotland in the coming months..





WHS 2024 – Headline Changes

1. Course Handicap – Change in Calculation: Introduction of Course Rating minus Par

The method by which a player’s Course Handicap is calculated will change from 2024. It is an adjustment for the difference between the Course Rating and Par of the course being played. It will be implemented as part of the CH Calculation to give players the number of strokes required to play the course.

Currently across GB&I, the method is based on the Slope Rating of a golf course:

Course Handicap = Handicap Index x (Slope Rating/113)

With more tees being rated for all genders, more mixed tee competitions are being played, and so it has become evident that a ‘Course Rating – Par’ (CR-Par) adjustment is required. Added to this, the current method being used in GB&I to calculate a Course Handicap is becoming less commonly used elsewhere across the world. To provide additional consistency to the way Course Handicaps are calculated and to bring GB&I in line with the majority of the world, the decision has been taken by GB&I nations to adopt the ‘Course Rating – Par’ method when calculating a Course Handicap.

The new calculation method for 2024 will be:

Course Handicap = (Handicap Index x Slope Rating/113) + (Course Rating – Par)

It is likely in a number of specific circumstances this may mean little or no change while in others, depending on the difference between a club’s Course Rating and Par, the change could be quite significant.

CH for 15.0 H.I. Golfer – (No CR – Par)

Tee	Rating	Slope	Par	CH	Target Score
Black	73.1	132	72	18	91
Blue	71.4	129	72	17	88
Green	69.9	125	72	17	87

CH for 15.0 H.I. Golfer – (CR- Par)

Tee	Rating	Slope	Par	CH	Target Score
Black	73.1	132	72	19	91
Blue	71.4	129	72	17	89
Green	69.9	125	72	15	87

Without CR-Par, the target score for a golfer to play to handicap is the Course Rating™ (above, left). However, with CR-Par implemented, it will move that target score to PAR of the course or 36 points (above, right).

If the CR is Higher than Par, players will receive additional strokes, however if the CR is lower than the par, they will lose strokes, this is to ensure that handicap target score is Nett Par/36 points. This applies for all handicap indexes.

Benefits

- » Golfers are playing to PAR of the course for handicapping purposes.
- » More suitable adjustment between tee sets
- » Alignment with the majority of other jurisdictions
- » Interoperability worldwide
- » No 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.

[Read or download our Course Rating minus Par Explainer](#)



2. 9-Hole Scores: New Method for Scaling up Score

Under the WHS™ System, a 9-hole score is scaled up to an equivalent 18-hole Score Differential for immediate use on the scoring record. The method used to 'scale up' a 9-hole score has posed challenges in terms of complexity and being tied to a specific golf course. As a result, the method by which this is carried out is now changing.

Currently, the 9-hole score is scaled up to an equivalent 18-hole differential by adding net pars for the remaining holes plus one additional stroke (which is applied to the first hole not played) or 17 points in Stableford format.

How it works?

The calculation of an expected score is automated and is used to attribute a statistical value against any hole or holes not played within an acceptable 9-hole or 18-hole round. The procedure for calculating a Score Differential using an expected score can be summarised as follows:

- » An expected Score Differential for the hole or holes not played is calculated, based on a given Handicap Index and a course of standard difficulty.
- » A Score Differential for the holes played is calculated using the player's actual scores and the rating value of the holes played.
- » For 9-hole rounds - An 18-hole Score Differential is created by combining the 9-hole Score Differential for the 9 holes played with the player's expected score over 9 holes.

Note – expected scoring is a closed calculation which is generated by computer precision software.

The new method being introduced in 2024 endeavours to provide a more accurate prediction of what the player would have scored on holes not played by using an expected score differential rather than net par, and should, therefore, result in a more accurate Handicap Index®.

3. Four-ball Scores are Acceptable for Handicap Purposes

Currently only scores from certain singles formats of play are returned to WHS for handicap index calculation within GB&I. 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. 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 and will not apply to match play.

How it works?

Once the acceptable pairs/team score is returned to WHS™, WHS will look for specific criteria, which is as follows:

- » 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

- » 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 will be calculated based on the full Course Handicap maintained to machine precision

Where software is being used for competitions, the Course Handicap will not be rounded to the nearest whole number before being converted into a Playing Handicap

*Please note this was already in place in Scotland as per the rules of WHS, this is just a change in other GB&I jurisdictions.

5. Enhanced CDH Reporting

The new updated version of the system's technical specifications will mean your club's Dot Golf WHS Portal will be hard-coded to report and identify players who are consistently scoring above or below expectation – or where anomalies exist. Improving your club's ability to monitor and maintain the handicap records of your members.



6. Minimum length of a golf course to be eligible for a Course and Slope Rating

Until recently, before a golf course was eligible for a WHS Course and Slope Rating, the minimum length that a golf course needed to measure was 3,000 yards (1,500 yards for a 9-hole course). We are pleased to advise that the minimum length has now been reduced to 1,500 yards for an 18-hole golf course and 750 yards for a 9-hole golf course. This will allow scores to be acceptable for handicap purposes over more golf courses and make it easier for more players to obtain a Handicap Index®.

7. Competitions over a non-standard number of holes to be used for handicap purposes

There will be a new clause added to Rule 3.2 permitting competitions played 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.

The calculation will use the new method of expected score differential, to scale up the score for immediate use on a player's handicap record.

Benefits

- » The calculation will use the new method of expected score differential, to scale up the score for immediate use on a player's handicap record.
- » The new method being introduced in 2024 endeavours to provide a more accurate prediction of what the player would have scored on holes not played by using an expected score differential rather than net par, and should, therefore, result in a more accurate Handicap Index®.
- » More scores will be available for use on a player's Handicap Record.

What's next?

Education Materials

Full details of the revisions will be communicated to your club later in the year along with education material aimed at Handicap Administrators and Golfers.

- » [Read or download our **Handicapping Advice**](#)
- » [Read or download the **Mixed Tee Calculator WHS**](#)

Education Workshops

Scottish Golf will embark on a roadshow of education workshops in the New Year, aimed at preparing handicap administrators for the new playing season and changes to the World Handicap System™ will be incorporated into the workshop sessions.

Please stay tuned to the Scottish Golf website, Club e-newsletter and social media channels to keep up-to-date with the announcement of dates and venues for the 2024 roadshow.

Course Handicap Charts

As a result of the introduction of 'CR-Par', there may be implications to the information contained on your club's Course Handicap chart. Further details will be provided shortly on where you can obtain a new version of your club's Course Handicap chart.

In the meantime, to avoid potential re-printing costs, we would advise your club not to make any changes to your Course Handicap™ Tables or boards at this time. If you also detail the Course Handicap™ Table on your scorecard, we would ask you to consider this when making any purchase of new cards

If Boards are being used, we would also advise you to consider a more cost-effective way of displaying Course Handicaps.



New WHS Rules of Handicapping Book

A new WHS™ Rules of Handicapping will be produced by the R&A and USGA. As and when this is ready, we will make this available via the Scottish Golf



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