



Q&A – Commonly-asked Questions Regarding the Changes to Australia’s Handicapping Systems (Published 11 December 2009)

The Board of GA has announced that Australia is moving to the USGA Handicap System. Will the full USGA Handicap System be introduced all at one time?

Australia’s handicapping systems are set for substantial changes over the next couple of years. However, this will not occur all in one hit. Instead the changes will be bundled into several packages and introduced incrementally.

The first package of changes to the Australian Handicapping Systems was initially scheduled for 1 February 2010. Why has it been delayed?

From the outset, GA has been determined to design the implementation strategy in such a way as to minimise cost and logistical challenges for all interested parties. This has involved GA and Golf Link working through a comprehensive analysis of each of the potential regulations considered for inclusion in the first package of changes. Such analysis has involved consideration of an array of potential macro changes. Additionally, the inter-connected nature of a regulatory framework has required the juggling of a significant number of micro changes.

Whilst this process has taken longer than initially anticipated, GA’s view is that timing concerns should not compromise the management of cost. We have also been particularly mindful to arrive at an outcome which will be as simple for clubs to manage as possible; particularly in the early phases.

As a result, we now wish to confirm that the first package of changes will be delayed and will NOT become effective on 1 February 2010.

When will the first package of changes to the Australian Handicapping Systems now be implemented?

GA will announce on Friday 29 January confirmation of the new implementation date for the first package of changes. We anticipate the implementation date being in late March or early April 2010.

What will GA be including in the first package of changes to the Australian Handicapping Systems?

- A. Calculation of handicap – commence operation of the USGA’s ‘rolling sample’ method.
- B. Remove CCR for men’s handicapping (note: CCR was removed from women’s handicapping in 2007).

Details of these changes were included in the 31 July 2009 GA memo which is posted on golfaustralia.org.au (go to ‘Rules & Handicapping’ then ‘Handicapping & Course Rating’ then ‘News & Communication’).

My club is trying to keep its members updated with all the latest GA handicapping news and announcements. Does GA mind if we have a link to golfaustralia.org.au on our website?

GA strongly encourages all clubs to include on their websites links to the relevant pages on golfaustralia.org.au. We also encourage clubs to refer their members in club newsletters to golfaustralia.org.au for more detailed information regarding handicapping changes. We would be pleased to hear any suggestions from clubs regarding potential changes or expansion to the information currently contained on golfaustralia.org.au.

I’m the handicap administrator of a club that is on Golf Link. When the first package of changes to the Australian Handicapping Systems takes effect, what will I need to do to enable the handicaps of my members to be calculated under the new regulations?

You won’t need to do anything. When first you connect to Golf Link after the initial package of handicapping regulation changes have become effective, you will see that Golf Link will have automatically re-calculated the handicaps of all of your members for you. Additionally, we have designed the initial package of changes so as to allow all Golf Link clubs (either Tier 1 or Tier 3) to continue to operate all of their computerised handicap operations exactly as they currently do. (Note: This includes for example the processing of competitions and the creation of initial handicaps.)

I've been trying to work out what my new handicap will be by going through my handicap record on golfink.com.au. Is it my score against the CCR I should be looking at or my score against the AMCR/AWCR?

It is your score against the AMCR (Australian Men's Course Rating) or AWCR (Australian Women's Course Rating) that will be used.

Will changes to my handicap still be immediate?

Initially there will be no change to the existing regulations and handicap changes will continue to be immediate.

At a later point, GA will amend these regulations. When this occurs, handicaps will only be altered either every two weeks or every month. The date this change will come into effect and the handicap revision time period are still to be determined however it is likely this change will come into effect at the same time as the Stableford scoring regulations. GA will give clubs plenty of advance warning once these decisions have been made.

Isn't it best to adjust handicaps immediately?

General reasons for not adjusting handicaps immediately are as follows:

- The purpose of a handicap is to reflect the player's scoring potential, and a single good or bad score is not a strong indicator of whether or not a player's potential is changing. We all know that if a player has 40 Stableford points one day, the next day they are just as likely to have a poor score as they are to have a further good score.
- A trend is generally a far more reliable indicator than a one-off event.
- A handicap adjustment is not designed to be a penalty for a good or bad score. Instead, the sole purpose of a handicap adjustment is to achieve a level playing field amongst handicap players.

I've read that all scores will need to be converted to Stableford scores for handicapping purposes. Is this going to happen immediately?

No. This change is likely to come into effect late in 2010. GA will notify clubs of the precise timing well in advance of implementation.

When the new Stableford scoring regulations come into effect, will we need to have a computerised club handicap management system that operates hole-by-hole scoring?

No. Some clubs will upgrade their computerised club handicap management system to incorporate this type of functionality, but it is not necessary. The only scores Golf Link will need will be the total scores for the round. We will encourage clubs to have their members calculate their Stableford scores for medal rounds in exactly the same fashion as they do for Stableford rounds (ie by performing their own hole-by-hole calculations). Moving forward, there is no reason why the new regulations should create any more work for the player in a Medal round as is required in a Stableford round.

I've heard that the new Stableford scoring regulations will mean we will have to redesign our score cards. Is this correct?

No. As your current score card will be able to cater for a player's hole-by-hole stroke scores and their hole-by-hole Stableford scores, it will not need to be redesigned to cater for the new regulations.

If I play in a Par competition, what process will I need to follow to calculate a handicapping score when the new Stableford regulations come into effect?

Firstly, the change to using Stableford scores is likely to come into effect late in 2010. GA will notify clubs of the precise timing well in advance of implementation.

Secondly (when Stableford score regulations come in), players should continue to play Par events as they have always done. Once they can not get a half on a hole, they should pick up.

The Stableford score for a Par event will be calculated by adding 36 points to the player's final result. **However this calculation will be performed by Golf Link.** Clubs and Tier 3 systems will only need to provide Golf Link with each player's total Par score. AS A RESULT, CLUBS, PLAYERS, AND TIER 3 SYSTEMS WILL ALL CONTINUE TO HANDLE EVERY ASPECT OF A PAR COMPETITION JUST AS THEY HAVE ALWAYS DONE.

Examples of the calculations WHICH WILL BE PERFORMED BY GOLF LINK:

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|----|---|----|---|----------------------|
| 2 down | : | -2 | + | 36 | = | 34 Stableford points |
| 5 up | : | +5 | + | 36 | = | 41 Stableford points |
| All square | : | 0 | + | 36 | = | 36 Stableford points |

Under the new 'rolling sample' method for calculating a handicap, Golf Link will average the best 10 of my last 20 scores. What if haven't returned 20 scores in the past 12 months?

Golf Link will go back into your handicap record as far it needs to in order to find your last 20 scores. This could be six weeks or it could be three years.

I've played a lot of golf over the past 12 months and my scores are all listed on Golf Link. When the new 'rolling sample' method first comes into effect, will everything start afresh and will I have to return another 20 scores?

No. Golf Link will calculate your new handicap by using the existing scores. An old score will only be dropped off when it is no longer one of your most recent 20 scores.

I'm the handicap administrator at my club. When the new regulations take effect, how should I handle NCRs?

Exactly as you currently do unless you suspect the player has had a good score. You will then have the option of using your computer system's existing functionality to credit the player with the equivalent of one of their best scores. We will provide more information regarding this on 29 January.

I've heard people saying that all handicaps will change significantly. Is this likely to happen?

The new method of calculating handicaps is quite different to the existing method so some handicaps will change reasonably significantly. If GA felt handicaps would stay largely the same under the new method, we would have no reason for making a change. Your new handicap will be more likely than your existing handicap to be reflective of your recent scoring trends. Whilst some people will be disappointed to see their handicap become higher, their changed handicap will be the direct result of their recent scoring trends.

The USGA Course Rating System uses imperial measurements (ie yards, feet, etc). Will we need to change all our score cards and distance markers?

No. Measurements in imperial figures will be for internal purposes only. They will not be publicly released.

Our club is not currently on Golf Link because we've heard it's difficult to access and we don't have a clubhouse or a club computer. Is it difficult to use?

There are now only 4% of Australian club golfers not on Golf Link. GA requires that the handicaps of all players be maintained in accordance with the proper regulations. While it will be possible to maintain handicaps manually under the new regulations, GA feels the members of these clubs will clearly be best served by having their handicaps maintained by Golf Link.

Some factors to note regarding Golf Link are as follows:

- All you need is access to the internet.
- You do not need to be using the same computer each time you connect to Golf Link. In fact, you could use a different computer each time you connect to Golf Link.
- You can authorise more than one administrator to have access to Golf Link.
- Many club Golf Link administrators are elderly people with little prior experience with computers.
- There is a free Golf Link help line available to assist you with any problem.
- The Golf Link fee is only \$2.75 per member per year (includes GST).
- It will be much easier, simpler, and less time consuming to let Golf Link do all the work for you.