



# **Qualifying Competitions Guidelines for Golf Clubs**

**Tuesday 23 June 2020**

***Issued by the Joint Handicapping Committee of the ILGU and GUI  
following consultation with The R&A and CONGU***

# Qualifying Competitions Guidelines



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## Introduction

The following preliminary guidelines have been prepared by the GUI/ILGU following consultation with The R&A and CONGU on qualifying competitions/supplementary scores in Ireland during the Covid 19 situation.

The Qualifying Competitions Guidelines will support golf clubs to organise competitions while continuing to follow the latest Health Authority and GUI/ILGU guidance while re-introducing competitive golf safely to your golf club membership. These guidelines are also applicable for the submission of Supplementary Scores as they are for competitions.

We are in continuous discussion with all our partners and any of the following guidance may be updated at any stage to ensure that they continue to meet all requirements with the Rules of Golf and Handicapping. This guidance has been given to help clubs be as flexible as possible in the current situation while continuing to ensure the integrity of handicaps and qualifying competitions.

The validity of competition scores will be subject to the adherence of the following guidelines.

The guidance is broken down into the following sections

- 1) Permitted modifications to the Rules of Golf.
- 2) Advice on Operational Procedures.

## Permitted modifications to the Rules of Golf

### Returning of Qualifying Scores Competition and Supplementary Scores

Whilst the COVID-19 situation persists, the R&A has made a number of adjustments as to what is permissible under the Rules of Golf in respect of returning scores (specifically Rule 3.3b). In particular:

Committees may choose to allow methods of scoring in stroke play that do not strictly comply with Rule 3.3b, or do not comply with the normal methods used under Rule 3.3b.

For example:

- Players may enter their own hole scores on the scorecard (it is not necessary for a marker to do it).
- It is not necessary to have a marker physically certify the player's hole scores, but some form of verbal certification should take place.
- It is not necessary to physically return a scorecard to the Committee provided the Committee can accept the scores in another way.
- As provided in the Rules of Golf, scorecards can be electronic, which could include emailing or texting scores to the Committee.

**Note;** The only relaxation of Rule 3-3b is the requirement for a Marker to record the scores and sign the card. All other requirements are still in force.



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In addition, the R&A has confirmed that any of the above approaches are also acceptable for Handicapping purposes. It further advises that a Committee may accept such scores without any physical certification as long as scores are visible to all players to allow Peer Review. A published competition result sheet will satisfy this.

Whilst recognising the adjustments allowed by the R&A and wishing to enable the safe submission of qualifying scores, CONGU® would like to maintain a level of integrity within the Unified Handicapping System and make the following recommendations:

- The Committee should be satisfied that their approach to the safe receipt of scores allows them to identify the player(s) who have certified the score submitted.
- They should also be satisfied that the handicap that the player has used for their score is identifiable.

As allowed by the R&A, scores can be submitted in a variety of ways:

### 1) Physical Scorecards

a. If a Committee determines that the use of physical scorecards is still appropriate, it needs to be satisfied that the players in the group (who verbally agree the scores) are identifiable. It may be that all players are recorded on a start sheet (which may be paper or electronic), but CONGU® recommends that the player records the name of one of the other players to provide the Committee a contact name, should it be required. Note that this is a strong recommendation – a player cannot be disqualified for failing to do this. Any persistent disregard should be handled via the club disciplinary approach (in the same way that a persistent ignoring of the requirement to enter a score onto the computer would be).

b. Subsequent to the round, all scores must be entered into the club computer system. Options for this would be:

- i. By a Club Official – from a submitted card or from an image of the card sent electronically (e.g. email, or text).
- ii. By the player via Player Score Entry (noting the current recommendations in the ILGU/GUI Protocol on the non-use of communal touchscreen computers where possible).

c. When a scorecard is not physically submitted (e.g. for Player Score Entry, the club does not require the card to be physically submitted on safety grounds, or a card image has been submitted electronically) the player should be asked to retain their card at least until the results have been posted in case any issues arise.

### 2) Electronic returns

A Committee may determine that an electronic score return is sufficient, though it is recommended that the Committee is satisfied with the level of certification that this affords. Electronic Returns could be by simple text message (where hole-by-hole scores would be required in order to ensure that the handicap system requirements are met), by email (with the same hole-by-hole requirements) or via an App associated with the club's handicap system. In all of these approaches the recommendation for the Committee to ensure that the players in each group are identifiable will still apply. If the format used allows, it is recommended that one or other of the players in the group is entered along with the scores. In a free-form format method (e.g. email, text etc.) this should not present a



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problem to the player. However, an App may not provide this facility – this does not preclude such an App being used under the current COVID-19 situation, but an additional method of attestation would also be required.

**Note:** In addition a player must have the opportunity to verify/change his/her handicap as set out in the CONGU regulations.

**“8.5** Prior to playing in any competition ascertain whether all appropriate reductions to *Playing Handicap* have been made or alternatively comply with the responsibilities set out in **Clause 20.11**”

**“20.11** If a player returns a Qualifying Score or Scores below his Playing Handicap at his Home Club or Away Club and is unable to:

- (a) report an away score(s) to his Home Club; or
- (b) ascertain whether or not his Playing Handicap has been reduced as a result of the score, (s)he must, before playing in another competition at his Home Club or away, for that competition make such reduction to his Playing Handicap as shall be appropriate under the UHS by applying the Competition Scratch Score if known, otherwise the Standard Scratch Score, to calculate his Nett Differential and handicap reduction.

Should a player not know his Exact Handicap, such reduction should be made from his Playing Handicap less 0.5 (e.g. If the Playing Handicap is 16 then reduction should be from 15.5).”

**If this cannot be done via the digital solution/APP then the club must have some provision in place to allow this.**

### Peer review

Traditionally, the prime way of verifying the accuracy of scores returned has been through the physical attestation of a player’s score by his/her marker. The publication of scores does allow any other player within the same group to identify any score that may have been input erroneously, but this may happen after the event.

Heretofore in Ireland, such peer review has not been used for the attestation of individual returns but more as a way in which other players can draw the Committee’s attention to a player or players whose performance does not match their observed ability. Posted competition results are reviewed more out of interest than as a verification process. However, for the purpose of using virtual scorecards clubs should inform their members that verification of scores will be through Peer Review and this will be the only means used.

### Flagsticks

Committees may:

- Require flagsticks to remain in the hole at all times
- Not have flagsticks at all
- Modify the depth of the hole to allow players to remove the ball without touching the flagstick. In this case the ball will be considered holed if **any** part of the ball is below the surface of the putting green, even if not lodged against the flagstick



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- As a temporary provision, flagsticks can be used for the purpose of player safety which do not meet the specifications in part 8 of the equipment rules
- Penalty for breach of local rule or by clubs' code of conduct may be added.

**Note-** The use of gimmies and raised cups are not permissible for qualifying competitions

### Bunkers

As the GUI/ILGU Guidance on the return to golf in Ireland recommends the removal of rakes from bunkers, the course committees may;

- Request players to smooth bunkers using either their foot or a club **after** playing their stroke.

In addition, clubs may:

- Introduce a local rule allowing preferred lies in the bunker following the provisions for a ball in the general area (MLR E-3). The relief area permitted is 6 inches from the reference point. Note – the area may not be smoothed before placing. or
- **In exceptional circumstances** where the condition of bunkers is so poor that it interferes with the proper playing of the game, committees may declare all bunkers to be Ground Under Repair.

**Note;** a combination of bunkers out of play and preferred lies is not permitted.

### Unplayable ball and out of bounds

To allow groups to keep their position on the course, players should be encouraged to play provisional balls if there is a chance that the ball may be lost outside a penalty area or be out of bounds. Scores must **not** be accepted for handicapping purposes if the alternative to stroke and distance (MLR E-5) is used.

**THESE TEMPORARY PROVISIONS ARE APPLICABLE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

## Advice on Operational Procedures

### Procedures for the return of acceptable qualifying scores

Clear Terms of Competition together with the safety procedures which have been adopted in your club must be communicated to all club members eligible to return qualifying scores.

Clubs should ensure that all members who wish to play can be accommodated in the competition. Clubs may need to use specified alternate day/s and may arrange up to two. Although the two day's scores are combined for the purposes of the results.

A separate CSS must be calculated each day.



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### UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES MAY A PLAYER PLAY MORE THAN ONCE IN ANY ONE QUALIFYING COMPETITION

#### Terms of competition

Clubs should review their Terms of Competition to ensure the appropriate and safe provision of the following:

- Scorecard issue / collection.
- Payment of entry fee should be online or cashless.
- **Registering intention on the day** to return scores acceptable for handicapping including supplementary scores – it is not sufficient for a player's name just to be pre-booked on a booking or start sheet.
- Request players to record all required information on the scorecard.
- Method of returning cards which satisfies all safety procedures including by taking a photo or scan of the card/electronic scorecard or by App if provided by your ISV in compliance with the CONGU requirements and Rules of Golf (Rule 3.3b).
- Some form of scorecard needs to be produced and then kept for the remainder of this handicapping year in line with Clause 6.11 of the CONGU Manual. This can be electronic.
- The designated recipient for return of cards and way(s) in which cards must be returned.
- Dates on which scores are considered officially returned and the result considered final.

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Clubs should ensure that their members:

- Play by the rules of golf and handicapping.
- Apply all temporary rules provided along with club Local rules.
- Are aware that they may enter their own scores on the scorecard and keep markers scores on the side.
- Know that the marker should verbally agree that the score is correct, record the markers name clearly on the card, sign it and ensure the correct handicap is recorded.
- Make sure any APP or digital scoring method meets the requirements as outlined in the document regarding **handicap verification and marker ID**.

Potential issues or rules queries may be resolved by contacting an appropriate committee member prior to having the score validated.

#### FIVE STEP GUIDE TO A SAFE COMPETITION

- Provide an online or contactless option for entering and paying for competitions
- Outline the safest procedure to record competition scores
- Competitions may be played over more than one day to cater for membership demand of tee times



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- Ahead of the competition, provide clarification on the competition terms to ensure competitions can be run fairly and in the safest manner on the course
- A reminder that it is the player's responsibility to follow all the temporary measures outlined to adhere to the guidelines. This will help to reduce the risk of transmission while allowing golfers to enjoy competitive play once again.