

**Q.1** Are all handicap Systems the same throughout the world?

**A.1** No, there are four main handicap systems used by Golfing Authorities. The system used in all golf clubs affiliated to the National Associations and Unions in Great Britain and Ireland is the Council of National Golfing Unions (CONGU) Unified Handicapping System (UHS). However, in strokeplay, all systems use the principle of deducting from the Gross score to produce a Nett score.

**Q.2** What are the objectives of the CONGU® Unified Handicapping System?

**A.2** The objectives are:

a) To make sure, as far as is possible, that players' handicaps are allotted and adjusted in such a way that they reflect each players ability relative to other players.

b) To standardise the conditions under which the scores are obtained and the way that handicaps are administered by each club so that handicaps obtained at one club equally apply at other clubs.

**Q.3** How does the CONGU® Handicapping System do this?

**A.3** The CONGU® System uses scores returned by the player from competitions that are held on courses where a Standard Score (the Standard Scratch Score or SSS) has been determined and which have been set up in a standard manner. Each course at an Affiliated club is allocated an SSS according to its length and degree of difficulty measured using a common method of assessment known as Course Rating.

Every score returned by the player in competitions held under the strictly controlled conditions is then used to adjust the players handicap. When a player's score, after deduction of his handicap (the net score), is below the SSS his handicap is reduced. The amount of reduction depends on how many

shots under the SSS his net score is and what his handicap is at the time. When a player's net score is the same as the SSS or very slightly above it he has played to his handicap. This is known as playing within the 'buffer zone' and no change is made to his handicap. When the net score is over the buffer zone an increase of 0.1 is applied to the player's Exact Handicap.

Each player has two handicaps, an Exact Handicap e.g. 13.5 and a Playing Handicap e.g. 14 (13.5 rounded to the nearest whole number) Further examples are;

Exact 1.2 rounds to 1 Playing; Exact 6.5 rounds to 7 Playing.

**Q.4** There are organisations offering Golf Handicaps that are "calculated in accordance with CONGU® requirements", are these Official Handicaps?

**A.4** No, not in the generally accepted understanding of the term 'Official Handicaps'.

The term 'Official Handicap' used in a golf context has, over the years, become accepted as referring to a handicap obtained at a club affiliated to one of the Unions and Associations in GB&I. Commercial organisations, recognising that anything may be considered "Official" when referred to by the body issuing it, have taken to issuing 'Official Handicaps' that may be 'Official' to them but not in the generally understood meaning of the term.

It is only a CONGU® Handicap which is issued by clubs affiliated to the Unions and Associations in GB&I that make up CONGU® that is recognised as an Official Handicap by these Unions/Associations and many of the constituent golf clubs.

It is important to know that a Council of National Golf Unions Handicap can ONLY be obtained by members of golf clubs affiliated one of the seven Associations or Unions that administer golf in Great Britain and Ireland. These bodies have paid for the development of the Unified Handicapping System (UHS) and their members have exclusive right to a CONGU® handicap.

Other organisations, purely for commercial advantage, have broadly copied the system without permission (even though it is copyright) and offer handicaps "calculated in accordance with CONGU® requirements". Possession of a CONGU® handicap means that the player has had to meet, in addition to his golfing ability to achieve a handicap, the standards of golfing etiquette. In spite of claims to the contrary this is not the case with the "pirate" systems.

To ensure that the integrity of the system is maintained the Council took the initiative of Trademarking the acronym CONGU® and all handicaps that are issued and maintained by the affiliated clubs should be designated CONGU® handicaps. Only affiliated clubs and licenced suppliers of handicap software are allowed to use the Trademark. Anyone who uses the name CONGU® in association with golf handicaps without the Council's permission is in breach of trademark regulations.