



What is the World Handicap System (WHS)?

The World Handicap System (WHS) aims to bring six different handicap systems together into a single set of Rules for Handicapping, enabling golfers of different abilities to play and compete on a fair and equal basis, no matter how or where they play.

While the six existing handicap systems have generally worked very well locally, on a global basis, their different characteristics have sometimes resulted in inconsistency, with players of the same ability ending up with slightly different handicaps. This has sometimes resulted in unnecessary difficulties and challenges for golfers competing in handicap events or for tournament administrators. A single WHS will pave the way to consistency and portability.

What does this mean for the sport?

The WHS initiative has provided an opportunity for all existing handicapping authorities to collaborate; to consider the best features within each of the current systems and create a system which is modern and relevant for both the way the sport is played today around the world and how it may be developed in the future.

The WHS is designed to be inclusive, easy to understand and implement, without sacrificing accuracy or integrity. Ultimately, this should help provide a solid foundation to the sport, for everyone from beginners to the experienced, from the recreational to the competitive, thereby supporting the development of the sport through increased participation.

The administration and oversight of handicapping will continue to be the responsibility of each handicapping authority and National Association, thus helping to ensure the credibility of the system at the local level. These organizations will also have the discretion to tailor the system to fit their own golfing culture. For example, the WHS will offer a broad range of formats that are acceptable for handicap purposes, with some form of corroboration, and handicapping authorities and National Associations will have discretion to select from that range to both support their local golfing culture as well as encouraging golfers to post as many scores as possible.

Despite these responsibilities, moving from six different systems to one will almost certainly lead to other efficiencies, allowing National Associations more opportunity to focus their resources on golf development and strategic initiatives to support the sport within their jurisdiction. It would also provide the opportunity to evaluate de-personal golfing data to help monitor the health of the game.

Why now?

Golf is a global sport, with a single set of playing Rules, a single set of equipment Rules and a single set of Rules of Amateur Status. The missing link is handicapping, and after significant engagement and collaboration with the existing handicapping authorities and National Associations, it has been agreed that the time is right to bring the different handicap systems together.