

To: TGA Member Clubs
From: Texas Golf Association
Date: August 8, 2024
Subject: USGA Handicap Review Tool Cover Letter

Effective January 1, 2025, the USGA Handicap Review tool will be the only authorized tool to recommend an adjustment to a Handicap Index®. More details about the Handicap Review procedure can be found in Appendix D of the Rules of Handicapping.

About Handicap Review

One of the requirements for a golf club to be authorized to use the World Handicap System™ in the United States is to have a Handicap Committee. The Handicap Committee plays a vital role in the successful administration of a player's Handicap Index, ensuring that it represents the player's demonstrated ability. One of the ways to accomplish this is by conducting a Handicap Review for members and adjusting a Handicap Index upward or downward when appropriate.

Description and Timing of the New USGA Handicap Review Tool

To support the Handicap Committee in these responsibilities, the USGA is pleased to provide a new data-driven Handicap Review tool available exclusively to authorized golf clubs. It will be used to identify players who are consistently scoring above/below their expected scoring range or have other abnormalities within their scoring record over a defined period of 12 months. In these instances, a recommended adjustment to the player's Handicap Index will be provided. The recommended adjustment from the USGA should be applied by the Handicap Committee unless they determine otherwise based on other knowledge or evidence that they may have about the player and their demonstrated ability.

The new USGA Handicap Review tool will be rolled out in a phased approach. The launch date for Phase 1 was Tuesday, July 30, 2024. Below is a brief description of Phase 1:

- A Handicap Review is limited to a single player at a time.
- Handicap Review can be run for any active member of a club whether or not the club is designated as the Home Club of the player.
- The Handicap Committee can choose to "apply" or "deny" the recommended adjustment.
- Additional data points are provided for a Handicap Committee to use at its discretion – see toolkit for list and descriptions.
- A history of Handicap Review actions will be retained.

Phase 2, which will run the full Handicap Review procedure for all players on a club's roster, is planned for fall 2024. More details about Phase 2, as well as details about future iterations of the USGA Handicap Review tool, will be communicated by your Allied Golf Association.

Benefits to the Golf Club

The role of the Handicap Committee is made easier when equipped with a tool to identify when the calculated Handicap Index is no longer reflective of a player's demonstrated ability. Used appropriately, this tool is designed to ensure that players are treated fairly and consistently from golf club to golf club.

Use of the New USGA Handicap Review Tool

We strongly encourage you to read the USGA Handicap Review Introduction Packet which provides more detail about how to use the new USGA Handicap Review tool. The packet includes Questions and Answers, Data Points, as well as a distinction between the USGA Handicap Review tool and other software. In addition, it is important for the club to consider the importance of player notification – that is, the player must be informed of the USGA Handicap Review process, when the Handicap Index adjustment becomes effective, and the timeframe for any appeals.

Customer Support and Feedback

If you require support on the new USGA Handicap Review tool, please contact Mary Harrison at 214-468-8942 or mharrison@txga.org.

Your feedback on the new USGA Handicap Review tool is encouraged. Please fill out the form at the provided link which will help define future improvements and enhancements. [CLICK HERE FOR THE FEEDBACK FORM](#).

USGA Handicap Review Tool – Questions and Answers

1. During Phase 1, which reports should a golf club run to identify any players who may require a Handicap Review?

The following reports/information may be helpful to a golf club:

- Handicap Index history
- Most improved golfer
- Capped golfer
 - A follow-up opportunity with these golfers is to ensure they are properly following the *Rules of Handicapping* - for example, posting all acceptable scores for handicap purposes and adjusting hole scores for net double bogey and most likely score as appropriate.
- Exceptional score reduction
 - Consider whether the player had multiple ESRs or a single ESR of -2, and whether the score type was Home (H), Away (A), or Competition (C).
 - If there is a high frequency of ESRs at your course(s), evaluate daily course set-up to ensure it is consistent with each Course Rating™ and Slope Rating® issued by your Allied Golf Association.

Note: Phase 2 of the USGA Handicap Review tool will provide the ability to perform a Handicap Review analysis on every player within your golf club.

2. Who has the authority to run a Handicap Review on a player?

The Handicap Committee of an authorized golf club can run a Handicap Review on any active player within its roster. The Handicap Committee then determines whether to apply any recommended adjustment to the player's Handicap Index.

If a player is a member of more than one golf club, the Handicap Committee at their home club should be responsible for making any adjustments to their Handicap Index. Regardless of which club applied an adjustment, it is recommended that each club of which the player is a member is made aware of the decision and reasoning.

3. How is the player's scoring record affected once the Handicap Committee has applied a Handicap Index adjustment?

Once a recommendation is applied, the player's Handicap Index will immediately reflect the adjustment. The method is consistent with "resetting the Handicap Index" from Rule 7.1a(ii) of the Rules of Handicapping. The adjustment value is applied to each of the most recent 20 Score Differentials™ in the player's scoring record to achieve the Handicap Index determined to better reflect the player's demonstrated ability. This will allow for the Handicap Index to be updated as new scores are posted, i.e. the adjustment will not apply to subsequent scores. If fewer than 20 scores are recorded on a player's scoring record, then the adjustment is applied to all recorded Score Differentials.

4. How does applying a Handicap Index adjustment impact the Low Handicap Index™? Are there subsequent actions required or recommended by the golf club?

If an adjustment reduces a player's Handicap Index, then the adjusted Handicap Index resets the Low Handicap Index to the adjusted Handicap Index, unless a lower Handicap Index is still eligible.

If an adjustment increases a player's Handicap Index, then the Handicap Committee should consider resetting the player's Low Handicap Index to the same value as the adjusted Handicap Index. This is to avoid the player receiving a cap unnecessarily, such as when there's been minimal upward movement after the adjustment.

5. How is an adjustment removed from a player's Handicap Index and scoring record?

For GHIN Admin Portal users, once a Committee adjustment has been applied, it can be removed within the 'Score Maintenance' tab. Click 'Edit' for the first score with the Committee adjustment, then click 'Remove Score Differentials'. The user must then click 'Special Update' within the 'Handicap Management' tab to remove the adjustment, or "M", and recalculate the Handicap Index.

6. What options does a golf club's Handicap Committee have when a recommended Handicap Index adjustment is returned for a player?

If a Handicap Review is run on a player and a recommended Handicap Index adjustment is returned, then the Handicap Committee can choose to apply the adjustment or not. Another option is to adjust the Handicap Index by a different value – for example, if the recommendation is to decrease the Handicap Index by 1.0 stroke the Handicap Committee may decrease by 1.5 strokes.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Handicap Committee has the ability to apply a Handicap Index adjustment. With the GHIN Admin Portal, this can be accomplished by going to the 'Handicap Management' tab within a player's profile and clicking "Modify H.I."

7. What are examples of circumstances where the golf club's Handicap Committee may choose to manually apply a Handicap Index adjustment rather than accept the recommended adjustment from the USGA Handicap Review tool?

As stated in Rule 7.1a(i) of the Rules of Handicapping, the Handicap Committee should consider all available evidence before making any adjustment to a player's Handicap Index. Below are examples that might prompt the Handicap Committee to use a different adjustment value than what is recommended:

- Whether the player's scoring potential has been affected by a temporary or permanent injury, illness or disability which is significant enough to impact the player's ability to play with or against all other players on a fair and equitable basis.
- Any Handicap Index previously held by the player.
- Whether the player's ability is rapidly improving or declining.
- Whether the player's performance is significantly different in one format of play compared to another – for example, between organized competitions and general play.

- Where it has been determined that a player’s actions are for the purpose of gaining an unfair advantage.

More information can be found in Appendix D of the Rules of Handicapping.

8. Can you share more about how the USGA Handicap Review tool works?

The USGA Handicap Review tool utilizes Expected Score and Player Equations intrinsic to the World Handicap System™. A high or low flag is triggered when the Score Differential, compared to an Expected Score, is outside of a tolerance that allows for a normal variance in scores for a player with a given Handicap Index – because we all have good and bad days on the golf course. Frequency of play is also considered, so the more scores in a player’s record during the Handicap Review period, the more high/low flags that are needed to result in a recommended Handicap Index adjustment.

The analysis is based on the player’s Handicap Index on the day of the Handicap Review and compares each Score Differential within the review period against the expected Score Differential and normal standard deviation of a player with a given Handicap Index. The following provides more insight into what constitutes a flagged Score Differential, as well as the number of flags to provide a recommended Handicap Index adjustment.

Downward Adjustment

A score which is two standard deviations better than a player’s expected score should occur approximately 2.5% of the time, therefore the criteria for flagging a score is set at two standard deviations from a player’s expected score. The number of low flags and the total number of scores posted is then applied to the table below to determine the recommended adjustment.

| Scores posted in review period | Low Flagged Score Differentials |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 – 14 | 2 or more |
| 15 – 33 | 3 or more |
| 34 – 55 | 4 or more |
| 56 + | 5 or more |

Upward Adjustment

A player's bad scores tend to have a non-normal distribution, so the criteria for triggering a high flag is set at three standard deviations from a player's expected score. Further, the number of flagged scores needed to trigger an upward adjustment is greater than for downward adjustments. The number of high flags and the total number of scores is then applied to the table below to determine the recommended adjustment.

| Scores posted in review period | High Flagged Score Differentials |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 – 14 | 3 or more |
| 15 – 33 | 4 or more |
| 34 – 55 | 5 or more |
| 56 + | 6 or more |

9. How will the USGA Handicap Review tool treat a Score Differential that has already been adjusted by the Committee or has an exceptional score reduction (ESR) applied?

When running the analysis, the Score Differential as calculated by the formula in Rule 5.1 of the Rules of Handicapping is used. This includes any adjustment determined by the playing conditions calculation but does not include a previous Committee adjustment or ESR.

10. If the Handicap Committee applies a recommended upward adjustment to a Handicap Index, what happens if that results in the player receiving a cap?

The upward adjustment is applied before the Handicap Index is recalculated. If this results in the player receiving a cap, then the adjusted Handicap Index may not reflect the full amount of the adjustment, i.e. it suppresses the amount of the adjustment.

11. If the Handicap Committee applies a recommended downward adjustment to a Handicap Index, how does that impact a player who is already receiving a cap?

If a player is capped, the downward adjustment will either reduce or possibly eliminate the cap since the player's new Handicap Index with the adjustment will be closer to their Low Handicap Index. For example, if a player has a 1 stroke soft cap, a downward adjustment of 1 stroke will reduce the capped value by 0.5, essentially resulting in an overall reduction to the Handicap Index of 0.5.

12. Can multiple Handicap Reviews be run on a single player?

Yes, a Handicap Review History is available for each player. However, in order to run a new Handicap Review on a player, a previously recommended Handicap Index adjustment must be either "applied" or "denied".

13. What are the benefits of the USGA Handicap Review tool?

It is an added safeguard – The Handicap Review process gives a Handicap Committee the ability to ensure the Handicap Index of a player reflects their demonstrated ability.

The analysis is data-driven – The USGA Handicap Review tool uses the player’s handicap data to compare posted scores to expected performance.

There continues to be a human element – A Handicap Index adjustment will be applied only at the discretion of the Handicap Committee, based on any other knowledge or evidence that they have about the player and their ability.

14. Who do I contact for support or feedback?

Please contact your local Allied Golf Association for support. The golf club’s staff or Handicap Committee is encouraged to provide feedback on the new USGA Handicap Review tool. Please fill out the form at the provided link which will help define future improvements and enhancements. [CLICK HERE FOR THE FEEDBACK FORM.](#)

USGA Handicap Review Tool – Data Points for Phase 1

The following data points are available to authorized golf clubs in the United States to support the Handicap Review process. Additional data points will be available with future enhancements to the USGA Handicap Review tool.

General View

1. Review Date – The date the Handicap Review was run.
2. Review Period – The date range in which the Handicap Review was based upon (the default time frame is a rolling 12 months).
3. Handicap ID (GHIN #) – The player’s unique identification number. Each player in the United States whose Handicap Index® is calculated by the USGA has a Handicap ID.
4. Player Name – The first and last name of the player who received a Handicap Review.
5. Player’s Current Handicap Index – The current Handicap Index on the date the Handicap Review was run.
6. Number of Scores Played/Posted – A count of the total number of scores posted to the player’s scoring record during the Review Period, based on the date played.
7. Number of High/Low Flags – A count of each of the total number of high and low flags during the Review Period. A flagged score is one that is significantly outside of the player’s expected scoring range.
8. Percentage of High/Low flags – The percentage of each of the high and low flags based on the number of scores posted during the Review Period.
9. Recommended Adjustment – The upward or downward value recommended after the Handicap Review was run. Once applied by the golf club, the player’s Handicap Index will be adjusted by that value (e.g., -1) and designated with the letter “M”.

USGA Handicap Review Tools – Comparison to Other Software

The following table is intended to provide distinction between the USGA Handicap Review tool and other software available to golf clubs, where other software is permitted to provide additional information to support the Handicap Committee, as well as Competition Committees who have the discretion to set the terms of their Competition(s).

The USGA Handicap Review tool is the only tool authorized to recommend an adjustment to a player’s Handicap Index®. The USGA Handicap Review tool uses the Expected Score and Player Equations intrinsic within the World Handicap System™ (also used for the playing conditions calculation (PCC) and treatment of 9-hole and 10-17-hole scores).

| USGA Handicap Review Tool | Other Software |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusively for Handicap Committees at authorized golf clubs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily used by Committees in charge of competitions. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only authorized tool to recommend an adjustment to a player’s Handicap Index® (effective January 1, 2025). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be used to recommend an adjustment to a player’s Course Handicap™/Playing Handicap™. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizes World Handicap System™ Expected Score and Player Equations intrinsic to the WHS™. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May consider order of finish to award points for recommending adjustments. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided and delivered by the USGA to authorized golf clubs through their Allied Golf Association. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be used for additional data points to assist the Handicap Committee in its Handicap Review, such as tee-sheet comparisons for posting on the day of play. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated into handicap administration software for ease of use by clubs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May or may not be integrated with USGA handicap data. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retains historical information on recommended adjustments and action taken by the Committee. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>MAY NOT</u> recommend an adjustment to a player’s Handicap Index. |