

Tournament Regulations and planning – points to note

Players without Dynamic Grades (ranking grades)

The biggest change is about how to deal with **new players who don't yet have a Dynamic Grade (DG)** in the relevant ranking system¹ when places for a tournament are allocated by highest DG.

In future, rather than just allocating new players any places left over (after all players who do have a DG have places), **you should assign them a 'proxy DG'. To do this, look up the trigger point in the Automatic Handicapping System for the new player's handicap (available on all handicap cards, or here for AC and here for GC). Their proxy DG will be equal to the trigger point index.**

For example, say you are allocating places in an 8 player GC event and you have entrants with these grades:

(1) 1402	(4) 1328	(7) 1291	(10) no grade but handicap 8
(2) 1387	(5) 1306	(8) 1277	
(3) 1351	(6) 1299	(9) 1276	

Under the old system, the places would have gone to players (1) to (8), player (9) would have been first reserve and player (10) second reserve.

Under the new system, player (10) would be given a proxy DG of 1300 and slot in the order between player (5) and player (6). So player (10) would get a place, and players (8) and (9) would be the first and second reserves.

Grade adjustments for allocation (GC)

Currently, if a player has played fewer than 15 games in the last year, their DG is reduced by between 30 and 240 points depending on when they last played 15 games in a year (for GC only). There are complex competing arguments on this (at paragraphs 11 to 16 of the report for those who are interested), but the Executive has decided these **grade deductions should no longer be made for allocation purposes** unless and until there is robust statistical data supporting making deductions, and what the deduction scheme should be.

Allocation methods

No major changes are proposed to allocation methods, but the section of the regulations dealing with this is being completely re-written. In particular, doubles and singles are being

¹ [Golf Croquet Grading System \(worldcroquet.org\)](http://worldcroquet.org) and [Association Croquet Grading System \(butedock.com\)](http://butedock.com)

separated out, as the provisions about doubles could be hard to follow. In addition, various different methods of allocation are being set out. The detail should say what you expect, but please do read it when the Regulations are published before conducting your allocations.

Championship events and GC Series events must allocate by highest current Dynamic Grade, precisely as set out in the Regulations. Note the Allocation pitfalls below when carrying this out.

For all other events, clubs are free to choose their preferred method of allocation. However, if nothing is said in the fixture details about allocation method, ‘open’ events (see below) should be allocated by highest current Dynamic Grade and all other events should be allocated by drawing lots.

We are hoping that a new standard field will be introduced into the detailed Fixtures Calendar entries for clubs to state what method will be used, but it may now be too late to do that for 2025 (or at least, for all entries in 2025). If you have already confirmed your fixtures for 2025 and would like to add this, please contact the Office (office@croquetengland.org.uk).

The text should be short, for example:

‘by highest Dynamic Grade’

‘by lot with 50% of places reserved for club members’

‘by highest handicap’

‘by lowest handicap with 2 places reserved for club members’

‘see below’ (if you are including your own method in your Special Conditions rather than any of the ones in the Regulations)

‘first-come first-served’ (if you do not have an Allocation Date – see below)

The field can be left blank, for example if it is a consolation event.

What does ‘open’ mean?

An ‘open’ event is one played level (including level advanced and super-advanced for AC) which has no restrictions on who can enter other than by gender (e.g. women only) or the default condition restricting entry to Croquet England subscribers and overseas players with reciprocal rights. It can be open whether or not it says ‘Open’ in the event title.

So if there is a handicap restriction, either an upper or a lower limit, it is not an open event, even if it is open to non-club members – all Fixtures Calendar fixtures are open to non-club members. Using the word ‘Open’ in the event’s title normally indicates more prestigious events.

Different allocation options

The two recommended allocation methods are by highest Dynamic Grade or by lot. Clubs may however wish to use others for their own non-Series events.

By handicap

The review group does not recommend allocating by handicap, as despite the best efforts of a lot of people, there is too much inconsistency in handicapping. In addition, for tournaments

played to handicap rules, it defeats the object of enabling a wide range of abilities to play against each other with an equal chance of winning.

However, the survey indicated a lot of enthusiasm for allocating places by handicap, and options for this are therefore being introduced into the Tournament Regulations. It could be of particular use if allocation is by highest handicap, to help give opportunities to those who may struggle to get into events allocated by highest Dynamic Grade or to encourage new players.

If multiple players on the same handicap are tied for the last places, lots should be drawn.

50-50

There were also a number of comments supporting allocating half the places in an event by highest Dynamic Grade and half by lot to get the best of both worlds, even where that was not an option given in the survey. The level of support was not high enough to make it worth including in the Tournament Regulations, but if any clubs want to do this, it would be easy enough simply by including a Special Condition that, for example, “the first 50% of places will be allocated by lot and the second 50% and reserve list by highest Dynamic Grade”. It is worth stating the order as any Priority Places (see below) will come out of the first 50%. We would advise against doing this if any places are reserved for club members (see below), as that will get too complicated.

By drawing lots

This is the default option for events other than: open events (if nothing else is said in the special conditions), championships and Series events. It was not a popular option for open events, but some clubs were very keen to be able to allocate places by lot for open events, to ensure that the same set of players do not always monopolise oversubscribed events and to give more opportunity for improving players to pit themselves against strong players in order to improve further

However, the review group suggests giving careful thought as to whether you really want such events to be open, or whether you want to put an upper handicap limit on. A handicap 4 getting a place instead of a -1 is one thing, but a handicap 14 getting a place instead of a -1 makes a bigger difference to the nature of the tournament.

In order for the lots not only to be done fairly, but also be seen to be done fairly, a new recommendation has been added that lots be drawn in the presence of a witness.

Priority places

The Regulations will continue to provide that two places in every event should be reserved for Under 25 subscribers, to encourage younger players.

In addition, places will still be reserved for the manager, and the winner of the event last time it was held. This relates only to the winner of the event itself, not any other events such as consolation events played at the same tournament.

Clubs can of course disapply these for their own non-Series events if they wish, or add provision for priority places for other categories, for example holders of any consolation trophies won at the tournament the previous year if this might help ensure the trophies are returned!

Reserved places for club members

Places may not be reserved for club members in Series events or events organised by Croquet England and hosted by the club. Clubs are welcome to reserve a stated number or percentage of places for club members in any other events. It is recommended that this is done in the Tournament or Event conditions, not in the host notes, to make it clearer which events it applies to.

Clubs should however note that at least 25% of places must be open to non-club members for the games to be eligible for the rankings. There is no requirement that at least 25% of places are actually taken up by non-club members, as long as they were open to them.

Doubles events

Discretionary places

There are no doubles rankings, so places for doubles events that are allocated using Dynamic Grades are allocated on the basis of singles grades. This creates a risk of disability discrimination, where a player may have a poor singles ranking but nonetheless be a good doubles partner. An example might be a player with learning difficulties, who can strike the ball well under direction but cannot grasp tactics.

To guard against this, the Regulations will provide that **two discretionary places (i.e. one pair) should be reserved in every doubles event allocated by Dynamic Grade, to be allocated at the discretion of the Tournament Secretary**. While this is principally to support disabled players who play doubles at a level which merits a place, it could be used in other circumstances, for example a rapid improver for whom the event would be a good development opportunity. If there are no deserving entrants, the places will simply be allocated to the pair with the next highest average Dynamic Grade. If the Tournament Secretary does not feel confident about making the decision, they can of course seek advice.

Priority places for Under 25s

In future, the two Under 25s benefiting from priority entry in doubles events need not be in the same pair. While this could enable an older player to get priority entry by partnering a young player, that is their incentive to encourage a young player. If the pair is not likely to be competitive, they are unlikely to wish to enter. If two Under 25s in the same pair get priority entry, there will be no further priority places for a third Under 25 in a second pair.

Single entries

The usual position under the Tournament Regulations is that where entrants do not name a partner who has also entered, they do not get a place unless there are places left over at the Closing Date or at the point where they pair up. At the Closing Date, any single entrants are paired at random. In other words, single entrants should be looking at the entry list to identify other single entrants and pair up to maximise their prospects of getting a place.

Some clubs do positively encourage single entrants, saying that they will be paired by the Manager, but do not state when or how this will happen. For example, it might be at the Allocation Date, or it might be only when doing the draw; pairing might be at random, or might be by pairing the highest and lowest available handicaps; players entering as pairs might get

priority or they might not; if players entering as pairs don't get priority, one partner might get a place but the other might not. **If there is any risk of oversubscription, clubs are therefore encouraged to specify how they will manage allocation. We will endeavour to provide wording to say what will happen if nothing is said in the special conditions about how pairing by the Manager will work, but this may be too difficult. If you do not specify how you will manage it, do check what the Tournament Regulations say nearer the time!**

Number of places

The Tournament Entry System works on entries by individuals. The number of places for a doubles event therefore needs to be the number of individuals who can be accommodated i.e. twice the number of pairs. (Note that different arrangements can apply for team events, but the Tournament Regulations and this briefing only deal with singles and doubles events.)

Allocation Dates

Allocation Deadline

One presentational change is going to be made: as well as the familiar Allocation Dates, a new concept of Allocation Deadline is going to be introduced. **The Allocation Deadline will be the day before the Allocation Date, and the Deadline, rather than the Date, will be shown in the summary list.** This will mean that for both the date under 'Alloc' and the date under 'Closing', entries received on the date itself will be in time. This we hope will reduce potential confusion for newer players – and if anyone does get confused, nothing bad happens if you are day too early, whereas something bad can happen if you are a day too late!

Choosing an Allocation Date

A number of comments in the survey highlighted the difficulty of being uncertain of a place in an event until a late stage, particularly with respect to booking accommodation and travel. **The recommendation for Allocation Dates is therefore being lengthened to between 8 and 12 weeks before the event.** Clubs may however want to set dates earlier or later than that.

Some considerations to bear in mind when choosing your Allocation Date are:

- If your club is near a popular holiday destination, or your event is at a particularly popular time of year for visitors to your area, an earlier Allocation Date may be better.
- If you want to attract entrants from overseas, or even further afield in the UK, an earlier Allocation Date may be better.
- If a player's handicap changes between the Allocation Date and the event, they are still eligible to play in the event even if their handicap is now outside the permitted range. So for handicap-restricted level play events, a later Allocation Date may be better.
- Allocation by highest Dynamic Grade gives players a better idea before the Allocation Date of whether they are likely to get in or not. Allocation by lot may therefore make an earlier Allocation Date better.
- Later allocation means that more up-to-date data is available when allocating by highest Dynamic Grade and should therefore result in a stronger field.
- Later allocation allows people more time to make arrangements before entering and may therefore result in a stronger field.

- Longer events may benefit from an earlier Allocation Date as they take more planning for individuals.
- If you attract the sort of players who value certainty and like planning ahead, an earlier Allocation Date may be better.

Not having an Allocation Date

A very few events have historically had no Allocation Date, meaning that places are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. This is not recommended by the review group, as it can be unfair on players who are not able to deal with entries on the same day the Fixtures Calendar goes live. The group would instead recommend having a very early Allocation Date. **The Regulations will state that an Allocation Date may not be before 15 February**, which will give everyone at least two weeks to get their entries in, although the group would encourage giving at least a month. **Series events must have an Allocation Date.**

However, over 20 respondents to the survey did ask for first-come, first-served, even though this was not given as an option, so clubs may like to consider it.

Note that if there is no Allocation Date for a handicap-restricted level play event, players could become ineligible to play if their handicap changes to outside the permitted range as late as one week before the event starts (Regulation H1(f)). This could be awkward for a player who has booked travel and accommodation. Clubs should therefore be particularly cautious about having no Allocation Date for these events.

Allocation pitfalls when allocating by Dynamic Grade

It is always worth saving a copy of the ranking list used to do the allocations, in case of future queries.

Players with the same name

In a few instances, two or more players have the same name, particularly with common surnames such as Smith. Wherever possible, the ranking lists include middle initials to distinguish them, and players are encouraged to ensure their name in the Croquet England Directory matches the ranking list. However, in some cases player A is listed as Joe C Bloggs and player B simply as Joe Bloggs. If player A has entered your tournament, but you find Joe Bloggs in the ranking list first, you could easily use the wrong data.

It is therefore worth looking at the full alphabetical player list of all players in the rankings ([Player List \(worldcroquet.org\)](http://worldcroquet.org) for GC and [Player List \(butedock.com\)](http://butedock.com) for AC) to check if there are duplicate names unless you are confident you know all your entrants. Where players have grades that round to the same integer, look at the ranking list as well as the alphabetical list to check the order - noting that you may need to set the number of games to 0 to display all players.

Allocating after the Allocation Date

The expectation is that allocation will be done on the Allocation Date itself. However, sometimes a Tournament Secretary will be unable to do this. If so, it is strongly recommended that the Secretary asks someone to download the ranking list for them on the Allocation Date, to show the grades as at the Allocation Date. Otherwise, it will be much more labour intensive to

do the allocation, as each individual player's record should be checked to see what their grade was on the Allocation Date, since it might have changed in the interim.

Submission of results

Sometimes allocation is affected because games have been played before the Allocation Date but not yet added to the rankings. To be fair to everyone, **it is really important that results are submitted as soon as possible after all ranked events**, whether that is a Fixtures Calendar event, a Federation event, an inter-club match or anything else. The easiest way to do this is for the scores to be entered on [CroquetScores](#), ideally as the event is happening, then all the manager needs to do is email results@croquetengland.org.uk to say the results are in CroquetScores.

Any volunteer can update CroquetScores, it doesn't have to be the manager. Please do encourage all managers to appoint someone to do it. Please also include the series/competition/federation and clubs/venue as appropriate in the CroquetScores event title, and CqE/Croquet England where relevant e.g.

'SWCF: Budleigh v Sidmouth' (with the home club listed first)

'CqE Inter-Club Championship: Nottingham v Roehampton' (same convention as above)

'East Dorset GC A-Level Series'

Draw dates

For events where some or all of the players are seeded by dynamic grade, the draw should ideally use the most up-to-date rankings, and at least for GC it is unwise to rely on the rankings from one weekend's tournament being included before Wednesday. **A new recommendation is therefore being added that the draw for seeded events should not be done earlier than 3 days before the event, and this will be a requirement for Series events.**

For non-Series events, clubs are free to do the draw earlier if they wish, for example if one or more players will have a late start and it would be helpful to know which so they can change travel plans if necessary. Do bear in mind though that the earlier you do the draw, the greater the risk of needing to adjust or re-do it if someone withdraws late.

Handicap changes

As indicated above, if a player's handicap changes after they have been allocated a place but before the event, they are still allowed to compete in a handicap-restricted level play event even if their handicap is now outside the permitted range.

However, the same is not true **if their handicap changes after they have entered but before allocation**. In that case, **they should not be allocated a place if their handicap is outside the permitted range by the Allocation Date**.

It can happen that a player is mistakenly allocated a place, because they haven't updated their handicap in the Croquet England Directory. This could happen for a handicap restricted event, but it could also now happen if it is a new player without a Dynamic Grade, who is allocated a place on the basis of a proxy dynamic grade derived from an incorrect handicap.

If they are mistakenly allocated a place, the player should be disqualified, in the same way as if they play in a handicap play event off the wrong handicap. Tournament secretaries may therefore want to email entrants shortly before the Allocation Date to remind them to check their handicap is correct in the Directory by logging on to the Croquet England website.

The Tournament Manager does however have a residual discretion to allow the player to compete anyway. Circumstances in which they may wish to exercise this might be if the event is undersubscribed, or if none of the reserves still wish to play and the event would be left with an awkward number, or if it is the only way to ensure a qualified referee will be present.

If the Manager does exercise this discretion not to disqualify the player in a handicap play or handicap restricted level play event, the player may not win a prize, or any points in a Series event. They should also be placed in the consolation event rather than the main event as soon as possible: they may not qualify for the knockout from a block or progress to the second round of a knockout (i.e. even if they win, their opponent will progress to the second round). This does not apply to new players who were given the wrong proxy Dynamic Grade as a result of an incorrect handicap, as they will on paper be weaker than the other entrants, and can claim the reward of performing better than expected.

Titles of fixtures

The group observed that not all fixture titles make clear to potential entrants what sort of tournament it is. While the codes can help with this, not everyone is familiar with what the codes mean, and the group thought that clearer titles are more likely to attract more entrants.

In particular:

- For handicap GC events, the title should say whether it is Advantage or Extra Turn
- For all fixtures, a historical name, such as the name of the trophy, gives less clue to potential entrants whether, for example, it is handicap or level play, singles or doubles, or open or with handicap restrictions. A title such as “June Tournament - Handicap and Level Play Events (AC)” may therefore be more helpful than a title such as “Great Snodbury June Tournament” or “the Dumbledore Cup”.
- The term ‘class’ event may not be familiar to newer players and alternative wording such as ‘grouped by handicap’ may be clearer, unless it is for one class only.

Start times

As a result of the feedback, we are not changing the standard start time from 9.30am – but we are changing the wording to make it clearer (a) that this is the time the first game starts, not the time players should aim to arrive and (b) that clubs can change this if they want, either in the special conditions, or by emailing players nearer the time to advise of a late start, or for later days in an event by telling them of an early/late start on the previous day.

If the start time is not going to be 9.30am on the first day, you must say so in the special conditions. It is not compulsory to say what the start time is going to be on later days, but if you expect it not to be 9.30am, saying so in the special conditions will help players plan.

Some factors to consider when setting start times include:

- What is the impact on the volunteers or staff who set out the lawns and do other tasks such as prepare refreshments?
- Are players travelling from a distance? Will a later start time, perhaps even later than 9.30am on the first day, enable them to commute from home and save on accommodation costs?
- Are players staying in hotels or B&Bs? If so, is breakfast served early enough for them to have it before getting to the club?
- What time of year is it? If it is early or late season, will an early start make it easier to fit all the games in before it gets dark? 3 GC best-of-3s can be hard to fit in without a 9am start except perhaps in June or July. Alternatively, does the greenkeeper want to allow more time for the dew to evaporate?
- Does the manager want the flexibility to be able to start some games early on subsequent days to cope with any late running rounds? If so, too early a regular start makes that harder, if less likely to be needed.
- Will an earlier start mean an earlier finish or just a longer lunch break?
- Is the traffic better earlier or later? Will public transport be an issue for an early start?
- Are there neighbours who could complain about an early start, either for mowing or for play, especially on a Sunday?
- Do your likely entrants like lie-ins in the morning or do they prefer getting home, or to dinner, earlier? Do they have long journeys home on the last day?
- Do your likely entrants want to fit a lot of play in, or do they prefer more relaxed days?
- Players who are used to starting at 9.30am may turn up for 9.30am whatever you say! There is merit in consistency.

Warm-ups

The Regulations (P4(e)) provide that players may warm up during the ten minutes prior to the advertised start of play (unless informed otherwise by the Manager). Assuming the courts are ready and any manager's briefing has been given, players are usually allowed to warm-up and start games early.

There has been some comment on players thinking the start time is an arrival time, so managers and secretaries may want to make more explicit in communications with players that an earlier arrival time is needed to have time to get ready and warm up – and that they are not automatically entitled to any warm-up time if they don't arrive early enough!

Lateness

The Regulations give managers power to declare that a player who is late (or otherwise not available for play) has lost the game, but normally only if the player is at least an hour late for a first offence. This will remain the case for AC, but **in GC the period is being reduced to half an hour.**

Lateness is reckoned from the appointed start time, so good communication about when players are expected to start their next game will be important if you think there is a risk you might need to impose this penalty.