

The PGA Professional

A guide to understanding the structure of
PGA Membership and PGA Member Education



PGA®
The Professional Golfers'
Association

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Welcome

Introduction

This document is designed to provide information on The Professional Golfers' Association's (PGA) initial training programme, member education opportunities and membership classifications and titles that are part of The PGA's framework and structure.

Although the membership of The PGA is made up of individuals commonly referred to as 'PGA Professionals', all PGA Professionals are not of equal standing when one considers the type of role they have, the length of time served in various roles, their successes and achievements, ongoing commitment to personal and professional development, additional and further qualifications, PGA membership classifications, etc.

In pulling together the critical pieces of information that someone (employer, golf club committee member, member of the golf industry, etc.) might need to know when seeking to better understand what differentiates one PGA Professional from another, it is hoped that this document provides a useful guide for all.

Please note:

Throughout this document electronic references/websites (e.g. URL's) have been identified to help. Should one of these resources be unavailable please contact the Member Education Department at The PGA National Training Academy who will endeavour to find you an alternative option.

Purpose

The Professional Golfers' Association is a members' association with currently over 7000 working in over 70 countries around the world. The Association has a variety of different classifications which identify specific categories of membership and they include:

- Class A Professional
- Class AA Professional
- Tournament Professional (four levels: TP1 –TP4)
- Life Member
- Honorary Member
- Staff Member
- Inactive Member
- Retired Member

To identify Members who have qualified as a PGA Professional and gone on to demonstrate higher levels of knowledge and skill in a variety of roles, The PGA also affords Members the designations of:

- PGA Advanced Professional
- PGA Fellow Professional
- PGA Advanced Fellow Professional
- PGA Master Professional

This document sets out the process by which an individual can become a qualified PGA Professional and the conditions by which the two largest classifications of membership are identified (Class 'A' and 'AA' Professionals)¹, as well as giving some background on how the four PGA Professional designations listed are determined.

Information on the other categories of membership can be accessed by contacting the Membership Department at PGA Headquarters on 01675 470 333.

¹90 % of PGA members are classified as either Class 'A' and 'AA' Professionals (March 2011)

Background

Our research suggests that the PGA Professional fulfils one or more of the following roles on completion of their initial PGA qualification (the list is not exhaustive):

- A qualified teacher and coach who understands a wide range of issues relating to the coaching process, including the biomechanics of the golf swing, psychology, fitness and nutrition
- A knowledgeable retailer, able to understand not only selling techniques but also issues such as marketing and customer service
- A customer advisor who recommends the best products for their customers' needs
- A skilled business person who can satisfy the requirements of both the customer and the supplier
- A skilled club fitter who builds, repairs and customises golf equipment
- A manager of services, products, facilities and people
- An IT-literate individual
- A tournament organiser, course planner and referee
- A good player

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Initial training

PGA Membership

Potential Members of the Association undertake a three-year training programme which since 2003 has been a nationally recognised qualification – a Foundation Degree in Professional Golf. Prior to that The PGA awarded its own Diploma; a qualification recognised within the industry but not outside.

Since 2002, the University of Birmingham and The PGA have also offered the Applied Golf Management Studies (AGMS) degree. Although PGA membership is not secured through successful completion of the AGMS degree alone, the subjects covered are quite similar.

Amongst the subject areas covered in both qualifications, students study:

- Business management
- Golf coaching
- Sports science
- Equipment technology
- Rules and tournament organisation
- Coaching children
- Personal and career development

Further details of both qualifications can be found here - [How to Become a PGA Pro.](#)

Coaching qualifications

In addition to the PGA qualification (and since 2008) an assistant must also complete the Association of Sports Qualifications' (ASQ) Levels 1 and 2 certificate in coaching golf to be eligible for membership of The PGA.

These two certificates have been developed by The PGA on behalf of the UK Source Group for Golf² in line with UK Coaching Certificate (UKCC) guidance and standards. These qualifications have been designed to support the development of the sport of golf throughout the UK by providing a high quality coach education framework that meets the needs of golfers at all levels of the relevant player pathways.

For more information please view - [Coaching Golf](#)
PGA Professionals qualifying prior to 2008 were awarded a PGA Level 3 certificate. This award reflects the position of the Professional as a coach, and is a sign that they have completed the PGA golf coaching practical examination which is part of the Applied Golf Management Studies Degree and Foundation Degree process.

Eligibility

To be eligible for PGA membership, assistants must have:

- Successfully completed a PGA recognised training programme
- Obtained an ASQ Level 2 certificate in coaching golf
- Attained an emergency first aid certificate
- Completed an appropriate child protection course

- Undertaken an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check or equivalent
- Competed in professional competition to the agreed standard

Initial status

On admission to The PGA as a Member, an individual is given class 'A' status³.

Having gained three years experience they are then awarded class 'AA' status, providing they have amassed 100 points from Member Education activities (courses, additional qualifications etc.) at the relevant regrade date⁴.

From the beginning of the PGA Training Programme, assistants are able to engage in events that are recognised as part of the PGA Member Education programme.

²The UK Source Group for Golf consists of representation from the governing bodies of golf within the UK and includes the Home Nations Golf Unions (both men and women), the R&A, the PGA with support from sports coach UK

³This is the current situation (Oct 2011), however, previous regulations mean some members may have gained AA status more quickly

⁴Class A and AA status is re-graded each year on 1st October. Class A and AA status is explained further on in this document)

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Overview

PGA Member Education Programme

To ensure that Professionals have the opportunity to gain continuous access to current information and recognised professional development, various learning opportunities are offered as part of the Member Education programme. Courses form the majority of those opportunities at present. These courses are put on around the country and cover a number of subject areas. Many of the courses offer a tiered approach (beginner, intermediate and advanced).

Attendance on a course provides Members with the opportunity to collect CPD points – each learning hour is typically awarded five CPD points (a typical CPD event will offer 25 points per day). Points are also awarded for courses organised by external bodies. They must be recognised by The PGA as providing information that may be of benefit to PGA Members.

In working with partners across the golf and education sectors, The PGA has started to develop a range of online education opportunities that Members can access 24/7. These courses are designed to offer Members the chance to update their knowledge in certain areas at a time to suit them, where they can have more control over when they choose to learn.

PGA qualifications

As well as the aforementioned ways of accruing CPD points, The PGA offers its Members the chance to undertake the PGA Director of Golf Programme and the PGA Advanced Diploma.

PGA Director of Golf

This programme is a three-part process beginning with an induction day seminar, moving on to the assessment of a candidate's knowledge of topics relating to a senior management position at the golf club (e.g. Director of Golf) and concluding with an assessment of actual competence in the role. On completion of the second part a Member is awarded a certificate in golf management theory and after evidence of competence, the candidate is awarded the PGA Director of Golf qualification.

A candidate awarded the PGA Director of Golf qualification is deemed operationally competent in the following subject areas:

- Personal management
- Strategic management
- Operational management
- Managing people
- Financial management
- Managing marketing and customer service
- And other areas of specific operational golf knowledge

PGA Advanced Diploma

This qualification is currently made up of eight modules which each require an assignment to be submitted for an award of CPD points, plus on completion a certificate is awarded which can contribute towards any submission for an upgrade in membership designation.

Further education

As well as this qualification, all other education based qualifications (e.g., NVQ's, HND's, A-levels, Bachelors Degree, MPhil, PhD, etc.) are awarded varying numbers of points, depending on the amount of study undertaken.

This allows the Member to follow their own desired course and gain points to maintain or upgrade their membership category.

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Class A and AA

PGA Membership categories

As previously referenced The PGA uses the terms 'A' and 'AA' to differentiate between PGA Professionals with differing levels of current professional development. The following definitions may be helpful:

Class A

Class 'A' status is carried by PGA Professionals who have a PGA qualification and who have either been qualified for less than three years, and/or who have not engaged in sufficient recognised professional development at the time of the annual regrading of PGA Membership status.

Class AA

Only Professionals who have a PGA qualification; have been qualified for at least three years⁵, and who have engaged in (at least) the minimum amount of professional development are recognised as class 'AA'.

The system

To be awarded 'AA' status Members must maintain 100 CPD points in a rolling three-year period, by engaging in relevant professional development, some of which are provided through the opportunities listed within the Member Education programme.

As part of the rolling programme concept, each Member is not simply required to get 100 points during a three-year period and then a further 100 points in the following three-year period, but rather maintain a 100 point profile at all times⁶. Failure to do so means the loss of class 'AA' status. It is important to recognise that if a Member is downgraded, then they have to make up the number of points needed to be eligible to be upgraded⁷.

However, once a Member reaches the age of 55, if they are a class 'AA' Member, they remain so for life. Members over 55 are still able to attend events, and if they are a class 'A' Member at the time they can still upgrade to class 'AA' status on achievement of 100 CPD points.

Evidence of professional development activities

Each year all Members receive a Continuous Professional Development Profile. This details the courses attended during the year, the points awarded and the total points to date (for the current three-year period). It also shows the number of points that will expire in the following year, so that Members will be able to see what is required to maintain/attain their class 'AA' status.

Should an employer or deployer of a PGA Professional wish to ascertain the exact nature (and amount) of professional development that a PGA Professional has engaged in, a PGA Member Education CPD Profile highlights all recognised education activities that have been accredited. These can be obtained by the Member from The PGA and provided to the employer/deployer. They are not available to employers/deployers directly.

⁵ This is the current situation (Oct 2011), however, previous regulations mean some members may have gained AA status more quickly.

⁶ Points gained in a single year expire after three years.

⁷ The upgrade/downgrade procedure is only run once a year on 1st October and it is at this time that a Member's status is confirmed for the whole of the following year.

PGA Membership designations

As well as the class 'A/AA' status, PGA Members are also differentiated through formal recognition of their previous experience, further education, achievements, accreditations, etc. Once qualified, and with a minimum length of time served in the golf industry, a Member can submit an application to be awarded any one of four additional titles. They rank hierarchically from PGA Advanced Professional up to PGA Master Professional – as below.



**PGA MASTER
PROFESSIONAL**

Meets the criteria laid down for PGA Master Professional and has been qualified for a minimum of fifteen years



**PGA ADVANCED
FELLOW PROFESSIONAL**

Meets the criteria laid down for PGA Advanced Fellow Professional and has been qualified for a minimum of ten years



**PGA FELLOW
PROFESSIONAL**

Meets the criteria laid down for PGA Fellow Professional and has been qualified for a minimum of eight years



**PGA ADVANCED
PROFESSIONAL**

Meets the criteria laid down for PGA Advanced Professional and has been qualified for a minimum of three years



PGA PROFESSIONAL

Has gained membership by successfully completing the PGA Training Programme

The process

The process to gain one of the four advanced membership designations requires that a Member completes an Accreditation of Professional Achievement and Learning (APAL) form, and submits it, with evidence, to the Membership Department⁸.

A committee sits and deliberates on the appropriateness of an application against a set of criteria which are published on the following pages and available to PGA Members⁹. The same process is applicable if a Member decides to re-apply later in their career when more experience, more recognition and more learning has resulted.

The criteria on the following pages identify some of the traits/behaviours expected of a PGA Professional at the different levels. They are set against a 'Novice to Expert' continuum designed to reflect skills and achievements. The scale relates closely to the various membership designations awarded by The PGA. (e.g. a PGA Professional given 'PGA Advanced Professional' status is expected to demonstrate a highly competent level of practice within their role in the golf industry, as well as being able to evidence achievements of a comparable nature).

⁸ A Member must be a full Member for a minimum of three years.

⁹ In exceptional circumstances, where a Member is able to demonstrate achievements that belie their years, The PGA reserves the right to award a higher level of membership than their time in membership might dictate

		Highly capable	Highly competent	Highly proficient	Highly expert
Roles in the game					
Coaching	Evidence of effectively introducing golfers to the game and keeping golfers in the game through their actions	Evidence of sustained influence and some success at club, county or regional level	Sustained influence and success with players who have gone on to success at national level	Sustained influence and success with players who have gone on to success at international level	Highly regarded person who has had significant and sustained success in this area
Retail	Evidence of providing a retail experience which offers customers goods and services with good quality customer care	Evidence of operating, managing and continuously developing all aspects of the golf retail business with some success	Evidence of operating, managing and continuously developing all aspects of the golf retail business with sustained success	Evidence of operating, managing and continuously developing all aspects of the golf retail business with sustained success. There is strong evidence of entrepreneurial behaviour in this person's actions and results	Highly regarded person who has had significant and sustained success in this area
Golf management	Evidence of effectively delivering all aspects of golf operations under their control	Evidence of effectively delivering and developing all aspects of golf operations under their immediate control	Evidence of operating at both a tactical and strategic level, managing and continuously developing all aspects of the golf business with some success	Evidence of sustained success in operating at both a tactical and strategic level, managing and continuously developing all aspects of the golf business with evidence of strong customer care, improved revenues and profitability	Highly regarded person who has had significant and sustained success in this area
Equipment tech	Evidence of providing recognised club fitting and repair service. Offers Members technical advice on equipment matters	Provides a complete fitting service to a customer which includes a club fitting service based on a thorough and holistic analysis of all parts of the game based on measurable data	In addition to offering a complete club fitting service, they offer a wide range of options in the customisation of equipment and build clubs from components	Evidence of a strong commitment and contribution within the field of equipment technology and/or repairs, which has enhanced the reputations of golf Professionals	Highly regarded person who has had significant and sustained success in this area
Other	Comparable evidence of operation, success and continued development as per coaching, retail, golf management, equipment tech definitions. For example: golf course architecture, refereeing, education, etc.				

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Summary

Summary

The classifications and designations that have been identified within this document are used by The PGA to identify various levels of expertise and attainment of PGA Members, as well as recognising ongoing personal and professional development.

Members are encouraged to use these to market and promote themselves. The golf industry is encouraged to use them to identify and recruit appropriate individuals that meet the needs of a particular role.

When seeking to differentiate between PGA Professionals; the key questions that should be asked are as follows:

Q - What class of membership do you have?
Possible responses Class A = less than three years qualified and /or not kept up to date with the minimum professional development recognised by The PGA Class AA = Qualified for at least three years and has at least the minimum requirements expected of a PGA Professional
Q - What membership designation do you have?
Possible responses A qualified Member with no further recognition of their achievements, professional development, etc. will be recognised as a qualified PGA Professional. The hierarchy then goes up to PGA Advanced Professional, PGA Fellow Professional, PGA Advanced Fellow Professional and those Professionals at the pinnacle of the game and the Association are known as PGA Master Professionals.
Q - How were your class of membership and membership designation achieved?
Possible responses A PGA Member Education CPD Profile can highlight the type of activities that a professional has engaged in as part of their professional development. An employer might question whether or not that information is suitable for the role that they are trying to fill.

In addition, a Member's CV should highlight some areas of expertise that cannot be captured by either continuous professional development and/or categories of membership. This will include the amount of time spent in the profession and other personal details.

The PGA offers the services of its Business Relationship Officers to any club seeking to employ a PGA Professional for a particular role. To speak to someone in your region (GB&I only) contact the regional office or call the Member Education team at PGA Headquarters on 01675 470 333.

Document amendments

Date	Amendment
January 2012	Time until member is eligible to apply for Advanced status once they become a member has been reduced from five years to three years
September 2013	Update of URL's with the introduction of the new PGA.info website.
	Additional information provided on PGA Director of Golf programme
	Additional information provided on the role of the PGA Business Relationship Officers



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