



Club Advancement Guidelines



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Section 1: Background

PSSA conducted a survey to determine the current trend in PSSA affiliated clubs with regard their club promotion systems. We received responses from 33 clubs.

The survey covered three topics, namely:

- The advancement levels of competency implemented in clubs.
- The requirements for advancement in clubs, and
- The award system used during photo appreciation sessions.

The advancement levels of competency in clubs

From the survey it is clear that PSSA initially gave a guideline with regards to levels of competency called the star system, and that this system covered a intro level (not measured) of 1-Star through to a 5-Star which was seen as very competent. As time went by, and as the members of clubs reached the top (5-Star) level, clubs invented their own extra levels in order to cater for the advancement of their most senior members. This resulted in a certain synergy between clubs with regards the first 5 levels of competency (1-Star to 5-Star), but a very diverse implementation of levels beyond the 5-Star level.

This document will therefore also propose an enhanced level of competency to cater for clubs with senior members beyond the first 5 star levels.

The requirements for advancement in clubs

Most clubs use a method of measuring club members' competency based on photos entered in appreciation sessions, and in the higher levels of competency additional requirements such as acceptances received in national and even international salons. Almost all clubs use a point system based on the quality of the photo accessed. In most cases the assessment of a photo is translated to an award. The awards used are:

- Certificate of merit
- Gold award
- Silver award
- Bronze award
- and lastly, *No award*

The rules with regards the number of awards required to advance from one level of competency to the next were found to be very diverse, and in most cases the motivation for the specific implementation was not clear.

This document will therefore propose an advancement system using the awards received during club assessment, as well as acceptances received in salons.



The award system used during photo appreciation sessions

There are basically two award systems used during photo appreciation session, namely

1. The star points system, and
2. The sliding scale system.

With the star points system, the judge (resident or visiting) needs to understand the levels as implemented by the specific club, as well as the rules associated with each award for each level in the specific club. Typically before each photo is judged, the photographer's level is announced and the judge then decides on the award based on the criteria given to the judge.

With the sliding scale system, the judge does not know the photographer's level of competency when judging a photo, thus using an equal scale of points (normally 1 to 5 points) for all photos (In most cases, clubs make use of 3 judges and therefore the final score is a mark out of 15). The rules for awarding a specific point are based on certain technical and artistic criteria. Once a point is determined, the club administrator translates this point to an award based on the current level of competency of the photographer. Thus, a score of 9 (out of 15) has a different meaning for a 1-star photographer than for a 5-star photographer, hence the term – sliding scale.

It was clear that there is an almost 50/50 split in the clubs who participated in this survey between those using the star points system and those clubs using the sliding scale system. 13 Clubs indicated that they are currently using the star points system, while 15 clubs indicated that they are using the sliding scale system. One club does not use an advancement system and 4 clubs indicated that they are in the process of changing over from the star point system to the sliding scale system.

A brief description of the two systems will be given in this document. For clubs already using a sliding scale system, it is highly recommended that they align their current system with the one proposed in this document.



Section 2: PSSA Proposed Club Advancement Guidelines

The proposed guidelines for club advancement will cover the three topics as discussed in the background section.

The proposed advancement levels of competency for clubs

In some of the more established clubs there are currently members that are a member of a specific club for more than 20 (or even 30!) years, and it is therefore necessary to implement an advancement system that will keep a member motivated and to continually give such members a new goal to strive towards.

We propose the following advancement levels for clubs:

- 1 Star
- 2 Star
- 3 Star
- 4 Star
- 5 Star
- Master Bronze
- Master Silver
- Master Gold
- Master Platinum
- Master Diamond

The above structure gives the club members 10 levels of advancement. Of the clubs who participated in the survey, 3 clubs currently have more than 10 levels. We propose the following levels above the first 10 levels (when necessary):

- Senior Master Bronze
- Senior Master Silver
- Senior Master Gold
- Senior Master Platinum
- Senior Master Diamond



The proposed requirements for advancement in clubs

The survey highlighted the fact that there is currently very little standardisation with regard club advancement rules. This makes it difficult to compare a photographer's apparent competency in one club with that of another photographer in another club on the same advancement level.

We also very often receive comments with regards the ease of advancing from one level to another using the current advancement rules in clubs. This problem could be the result of the fact that the advancement rules did not keep up with the advancements in photography (most of these rules were implemented for darkroom print photography or slide photography). The ease of the digital age brought the cost of participation down to such a level that in certain clubs it is nowadays possible to advance from entry level to 5-star level in less than 36 months!

To address these challenges and to make the proposed advancement guidelines more flexible and future proof, the proposed advancement guidelines will be based on principles rather than fixed accounting rules (as is the case with most current systems). A typical implementation will also be provided as a guideline for new clubs.

General principles for advancement

1. The main principle is to base the advancement system on time rather than accumulated points, and then to implement the point rules based on the average possible accumulation of points over the selected period.
2. Points accumulated will be awarded for all possible awards on a weighted system, but there will also be a requirement of a minimum number of Gold and COM awards.
3. In all but the entry level, advancement will be based on points acquired for club photo submissions, as well as for acceptances received in PSSA affiliated salons.
4. In the case of a photographer belonging to more than one club, his submissions and achievements in one club have no influence on the submissions and achievements in another club.
5. The use of international salon acceptances for club advancement is strongly discouraged, as this has an influence on principle no. 1 and could be seen as a way to fast track advancement.
6. Where salon acceptances are required for advancement, only 3 acceptances per photo should count towards advancements.

Time based advancement principles

1. The basic principle is to retain a member for at least 5 years.
2. At the end of year 4, the person must be ready to be promoted to the 5-star level.
3. The time periods are based on the time it would take an average photographer to reach the next level.



4. An average photographer is defined as:
 - a. A photographer who receives 75% Gold awards (or higher) during club assessment in his/her current star level.
 - b. A photographer who receives at least 20% acceptances for photos entered in a national salon (where applicable).
5. It is proposed that it should take the average beginner photographer 8 months to advance from joining the club as a 1-star photographer with no experience to the 2-star level.
6. The following table shows the proposed time period for an average photographer per star-level.

From Star Level	To Star Level	Time Period
1-Star	2-Star	8 Months
2-Star	3-Star	10 Months
3-Star	4-Star	14 Months
4-Star	5-Star	18 Months
5-Star	Master Bronze	18 Months
Master Bronze	Master Silver	18 Months
Master Silver	Master Gold	18 Months
Master Gold	Master Platinum	18 Months
Master Platinum	Master Diamond	18 Months

7. If the club prefers to change the number of photos allowed per photographer per assessment session, the calculation must be amended based on the above time table. It is suggested that such a change is discussed and approved at the annual general meeting of the club.

It is proposed that the requirements for the Senior Master Levels should be based on a 24 month period per level.

Example Advancement Implementation

This example implementation is based on the following club rules:

- The club meets once per month for advancement
- Each member may submit a maximum of 4 photos for advancement per month
- In the 1-star and 2-star levels, Bronze awards will not count towards advancement points.
- The following table shows the points awarded towards advancement for each award.

Bronze	1
Silver	2
Gold	3
COM	4



Advancement from 1-Star to 2-Star level

Based on the rules specified, the following will be the requirements to advance from the 1-star level to 2-star level:

- Possible Gold awards in an 8 month period:
 - (4 photos per assessment * 75% Gold awards) * 8 months = $3*8 = 24$ Gold awards
- Each Gold award will receive 3 points, thus, possible points based on Gold awards over the 8 month period = $24*3=72$ points.
- At the same time the other 25% of possible photos (8 photos) could receive 16 points (Silver awards receive 2 points).
- Total possible points required $72 + 16 = 88$

The advancement rule is therefore:

A 1-Star photographer requires 88 points of which at least 24 photos must receive a Gold or COM award to advance to the 2-Star level.

Advancement from 2-Star to 3-Star level

Based on the rules specified the following will be the requirements to advance from the 2-star level to 3-star level:

- Possible Gold awards in a 10 month period:
 - (4 photos per assessment * 75% Gold awards) * 10 months = $3*10 = 30$ Gold awards
- Each Gold award will receive 3 points, thus, possible points based on Gold awards over the 10 month period = $30*3=90$ points.
- At the same time the other 25% of possible photos (10 photos) could receive 20 points (Silver awards receive 2 points).
- Total possible points required is $90 + 20 = 110$

We also would like a 2-Star photographer to “test the waters” with regards salon participation, and therefore would require the 2 Star photographer to get at least 1 Salon Acceptance.

The advancement rule is therefore:

A 2-Star photographer requires 120 points of which at least 30 photos must receive a Gold or COM award to advance to the 3-Star level. The photographer also needs at least 1 salon acceptance to qualify for advancement to 3-Star level.



Advancement from 3-Star to 4-Star level

Based on the rules specified the following will be the requirements to advance from the 3-star level to 4-star level:

- Possible Gold awards in a 14 month period:
 - (4 photos per assessment * 75% Gold awards) * 14 months = 3*14 = 42 Gold awards
- Each Gold award will receive 3 points; thus, possible points based on Gold awards over the 14 month period = 42*3=126 points.
- At the same time the other 25% of possible photos (14 photos) could receive 28 points (Silver awards receive 2 points).
- Total possible points required is 126 + 28 = 154

A 3-Star photographer must already feel comfortable in participating in national salons, and we would like them to enter in at least in 15% of the possible national salons. For the 2013 salon calendar there were 24 national salons. The possible number of salons in 14 months is 28, thus 28 * 15% = 5 salons. On average a salon allows 24 photos, therefore the photographer could enter 24 * 5 = 120 photos. At an average of 20% success rate, we would expect the photographer to receive at least 25 salon acceptances for advancement to the 4-star level.

The advancement rule is therefore:

A 3-Star photographer requires 154 points of which at least 28 photos must receive a Gold or COM award to advance to the 4-Star level. The photographer also requires at least 25 salon acceptances to qualify for advancement to 4-Star level.

Advancement from 4-Star to 5-Star level

Based on the rules specified the following will be the requirements to advance from the 4-star level to 5-star level:

- Possible Gold awards in an 18 month period:
 - (4 photos per assessment * 75% Gold awards) * 18 months = 3*18 = 54 Gold awards
- Each Gold award will receive 3 points; thus, possible points based on Gold awards over the 18 month period = 54*3=162 points.
- At the same time the other 25% of possible photos (18 photos) could receive 36 points (Silver awards receive 2 points).
- Total possible points required is 162 + 36 = 198

A 4-Star photographer must already feel very comfortable in participating in national salons, and we would like them to enter in at least in 35% of the possible national salons. For the 2013 salon calendar there were 24 national salons. The possible number of salons in 18 months is 36, thus 36 * 35% = 12 salons. On average a salon allows 24 photos, therefore the photographer could enter 24 *



12 = 302 photos. At an average of 20% success rate, we would expect the photographer to receive at least 60 salon acceptances for advancement to the 4-star level.

The advancement rule is therefore:

A 4-Star photographer requires 198 points of which at least 36 photos must receive a Gold or COM award to advance to the 5-Star level. The photographer also requires at least 60 salon acceptances to qualify for advancement to 5-star level.

Advancement Rules for all levels

The following table summarises this for all the star levels

Advancement	Target Period	Points	Gold or COMs	Salon % Participation	Salon Acceptances
From 1-Star to 2-Star	8 Months	88	24	-	-
From 2-Star to 3-Star	10 Months	120	30	-	1
From 3-Star to 4-Star	14 Months	154	42	20%	25
From 4-Star to 5-Star	18 Months	198	54	35%	60
From 5-Star to Master Bronze	18 Months	198	54	45%	78
From Master Bronze to Master Silver	18 Months	198	54	55%	95
From Master Silver to Master Gold	18 Months	198	54	70%	120
From Master Gold to Master Platinum	18 Months	198	54	75%	130
From Master Platinum to Senior Master Bronze	18 Months	198	54	80%	140
From Master Diamond to Senior Master Bronze	24 Months	264	72	75%	172
From Senior Master Bronze to Senior Master Silver	24 Months	264	72	80%	185
From Senior Master Silver to Senior Master Gold	24 Months	264	72	90%	210
From Senior Master Gold to Senior Master Platinum	24 Months	264	72	100%	230
From Senior Master Platinum to Senior Master Diamond	24 Months	264	72	100%	230



Award System during Assessment

As mentioned in the introduction, there are currently 2 assessment systems in use in clubs in South Africa, namely the Sliding Scale System and the Star Points System.

The Sliding Scale System

PSSA proposes a system where the assessment of a photo is divorced from the award assigned for advancement. The award assignment becomes a pure calculation based on the current advancement level of the photographer. This system allows the judge / judges to assess all photos on an equal basis. It also has the advantage that the photographer has a better understanding of the real quality of the presented photo compared to all other photos, no matter the advancement level of the photographer. (As an example, a score of 10 means the same for a photograph of a 1-star photographer and a 5-star photographer – although the 10 points will not result in the same award for the 1-star and 5-star photographers)

The Assessment Process

Club Assessment is a three stage process:

1. The judge assesses the photo and assigns a mark to the photo.
2. The administrator or computer system calculates the award based on the photographer's current advancement level. The mark, award and advancement level of the photographer is then announced.
3. The judge comments on the photo and ensures that the comments are directed towards the current advancement level and aligned with the mark assigned to the photo. (If the photo does not receive the highest score, it means that something could be done to approve similar photos in the future, and the judge must therefore add this to the comments).

Guidelines for Assessment

Most clubs assign points on a 5 point scale per judge. When assessing a photo, start by assigning full marks to the photo, but if the photo has some technical or compositional faults or lacks impact, deduct points appropriately.

1. If the photo is incorrectly exposed a point is deducted and the comments must point this out.
2. If the photo is not sharp (inappropriate motion-blur, or focus point wrongly selected) a point is deducted and the comments must point this out.
3. If the digital processing of the photo is incorrect, (overdone contrast, colour cast, over sharpening, dust spots visible, haphazard selective processing, etc.) a point is deducted and this must be pointed out as part of the comments.
4. If the photo lacks good composition elements (compositional elements such as the use of balance, space, colour, lines, and specific light to convey the mood), a point is deducted and comments must provide some guidelines to improve the composition.



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5. If the photo lacks impact a point may be deducted, but remember that impact is very subjective and is influenced by your background knowledge of the subject, your current state of mind and even which photo has preceded this one!

Traditionally, club photo assessment is done by a group of three judges, and the total points of the three judges are added up to form a final score out of 15.

Some clubs started using a scoring system where each judge scores out of 15 and the average score is then used as the final score. The reasoning behind this is that each judge has a finer scale of points while assessing the photo. As an example: on a 5 scale system the judge will deduct a point for the exposure, while in the 15 point scale the judge could decide to deduct one point for a slight exposure problem, while for a grossly over or under exposed photograph the judge could use more than one point.

With the sliding scale the score is translated to the appropriate award based on the advancement level of the photographer. It was found that some of the clubs using the sliding scale are very lenient with regards awarding GOLD awards.



The Sliding Scale Conversion Table

We propose the following table of conversion:

Star Level	No Award	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Certificate of Merit
1-Star	1-3	4-5	6-7	8-10	11-15
2-Star	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-11	12-15
3-Star	1-5	6-7	8-9	10-12	13-15
4-Star	1-6	7-8	9-10	11-12	13-15
5-Star	1-7	8-9	10-11	12	13-15
Master Bronze	1-9	10	11	12	13-15
Master Silver	1-9	10	11	12	13-15
Master Gold	1-9	10	11	12	13-15
Master Platinum	1-9	10	11	12	13-15
Master Diamond	1-9	10	11	12	13-15
Senior Master Bronze	1-10	11	12	13	14-15
Senior Master Silver	1-10	11	12	13	14-15
Senior Master Gold	1-10	11	12	13	14-15
Senior Master Platinum	1-10	11	12	13	14-15
Senior Master Diamond	1-10	11	12	13	14-15



The Star Point System

With the star points system, the judge needs to understand the levels as implemented by the specific club, as well as the rules associated with each award for each level in the specific club. Typically before each photograph is judged the photographer's level is announced and the judge then decides on the award based on the criteria given to the judge. Most clubs using this system will prepare a briefing document that needs to be studied by the judge before judging may commence.

The Assessment Process

Club assessment is a three stage process:

1. The judge is made aware of the star level of the photographers
2. The judge is given the criteria for the particular star level being assessed and the award is based on the photographer's current advancement level, as well as taking into consideration the criteria set by the club for that star level.
3. The judge comments on the photograph and ensures the comments are directed towards the current advancement level and aligned with the mark assigned to the photograph. (If the photograph does not receive full marks, it means that something could be done to improve similar photographs in future and the judge should therefore add this to the comments.)

Guidelines for Assessment

The following generic guidelines are used in the star point system. The guideline is for awarding a Gold award, and based on the lack / good implementation of the guideline, a lower or higher award may be given.

Star level	Art	Craft
1 star	Element of composition Correct exposure	Correct exposure Correct post processing Image clean and well presented
2 star	Element of composition Correct exposure Some knowledge of when and where to crop	Correct exposure Correct post processing Image clean and well presented
3 star	Element of composition Correct exposure Some knowledge of when and where to crop Should begin to show understanding of line, shape and form	Correct exposure Correct post processing Image clean and well presented
4 star	Element of composition Correct exposure Some knowledge of when and where to crop Should have an understanding of line, shape and form	Correct exposure Correct post processing Image clean and well presented



5 and higher	The language of visual elements and design principles to convey information emotions, thoughts, ideas, concepts or feelings	Relies on the understanding and mastering of the craft in order to successfully communicate
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Award Assignment

Based on the criteria given by the club for each star level, the judge needs to assign the appropriate award. The following table shows the possible awards. When more than one judge does the assessment, an administrator will add up the scores and announce the award. In the latter case, a point system is used, which is then converted into the appropriate award.

Award	Score (Single Judge)	Scores if 3 Judges
No award	01	03
Bronze award	02	04 – 07
Silver award	03	08 – 10
Gold award	04	11 – 13
Certificate of Merit	05	14 – 15