



GLASGOW DISTRICT PHOTOGRAPHIC UNION

Guidelines for the Organisation of a Photographic Club

CONTENTS

Page

1. PREAMBLE		3
2. THE CLUB	2.1 Club Goals	3
	2.2 Administration System	4
	2.3 Club Accounts	4
	2.4 Syllabus Content	5
	2.5 Syllabus Compilation	6
	2.6 Competitions	6
	2.7 Membership	9
	2.8 Member Profiles	10
	2.9 The Future	11
3. JUDGES and LECTURERS	3.1 Selection	14
	3.2 Booking	15
	3.3 Expenses	16
	3.4 Protocol	16
4. IMAGE ASSESSMENT	4.1 Introduction	17
	4.2 Assessment	17
	4.3 Marking/Scoring	18

1.0 PREAMBLE

This booklet is to be used as a guide to good club practices and is based on the experience of a number of clubs, lecturers and judges. It is not all embracing, but focuses on some of the most important points that clubs should consider and covers a wide range of topics from the organisation of a club to guidelines on members, syllabus and the different subject matter encountered in clubs.

It is not the intent to be a prescriptive booklet, but to offer a base from which clubs can develop their own individuality, organisation and content. If used as intended, the ideas and guidelines should provide clubs with the necessary tools and information to allow them to meet the challenges of the future, create a club that meets the expectations of its members and provide a reason for new members to join.

2.0 THE CLUB

2.1 Club Goals

In order for any camera club or society to function, there should be a coherent organisational structure run by a committee. The constitution of the club should allow this committee to be changed on a regular basis. However, this can raise problems, especially with small clubs who do not have enough members to rotate the committee. Nevertheless, any committee should be run as a democracy and care should be exercised when the same committee remains in office for a number of years. Even with a small membership or committee, the main office bearers such as President, Vice President and Treasurer should be rotated every 2 or 3 years.

A fundamental question that each club should ask is “*What is the purpose of our camera club and where is it going?*” Initially the answer seems obvious, but then if clubs think about the question they will realise that the majority follows traditional and established formulae with little change to their approach in devising syllabi or what they provide on an annual basis. This can result in a staple diet that rarely varies and is similar in content and set up to every other club.

Why? Whilst many club members are happy to have the same syllabus repeated each year, a change may prove beneficial to keep the members stimulated and attract new members. Clubs should consider that they are really a reflection of their membership and should adjust to the changing needs of that membership. It is preferable to not rely on tradition alone.

Most clubs' membership can be categorised as a mixture of social and competitive members. These can then be grouped into active and non-active. Some clubs can even have members who are actively involved in national photographic organisations. We then end up with a club profile where the ratio of these groupings should dictate the syllabus, content and direction of the club.

2.2 Administration System

Within any club, a degree of administration is required which means that certain documents and procedures should be followed. As each club has its own particular modus operandi, it is not intended to give a definitive methodology that clubs should follow. However, the GDPU has looked at the paperwork clubs usually need to carry out their administration and compiled a listing that has been found to be most useful. (See Table 1)

If clubs should wish help in preparing their documentation, then the GDPU will provide templates that can be adapted to suit individual requirements.

Group A	Group B	Group C
Std. Blank letter	Cost codes	Club Competition Rules
Std. MOM layout	Accounts record / format	I/Club Invite
AGM Records	Accounting system	I/Club Confirm
MOM Records	Syllabus schedule	I/Club Schedule
Member application form	Speaker booking letter	Club Competition Results
AGM Notice	Speaker reply form	Club Slide entry form
Constitution	Equipment List	Club Print entry form
Correspondence Records	PAT Records	Competition Records
Member Records	Spares Records	
	Equipment Manual List	
	Library List	
	Equipment loan list	

Table 1

2.3 Club Accounts

The administration of club finances can be quite daunting and for some, difficult. To ensure that club accounts are controlled and handled in an open and clear way that provides security and is robust, it is recommended that proprietary financial software be used.

Packages such as *Money Manager*, *MS Money* and *Quicken Books* are simple and easily used. Clubs may also prepare their own spreadsheets or other computer systems, but all should be based on good bookkeeping practices that allow the club member to follow the club finances.

The GDPU can offer all member clubs the following services:

- Advice on available financial software and its use;
- An independent auditing service to clubs;
- Guidelines on setting up a club account system.

Currently, it is recommended that all clubs take out Public Liability and All Risk insurance. This can be done through known insurance companies, or member clubs can approach the GDPU to seek further information.

2.4 Syllabus Content

The club syllabus is one of the single most important aspects of any club. It is the doorway to all the club's activities, and a good syllabus will attract members to the club; a poor one will result in members staying away. Another advantage of having a good syllabus is that it projects an impression that the club is organised, efficient and well run. This can only help in attracting prospective members.

Some clubs tend to have their syllabi finalised just before the first member walks in the door. This shows a disorganised approach and the GDPU would recommend that a syllabus be prepared at least six months, but preferably a year, in advance. This allows speakers and judges to be booked, workshops and practical nights to be organised and external competition dates to be circulated for inclusion in other clubs' syllabi.

A syllabus should be interesting to all its members, innovative and provide the members with an enjoyable evening. Many clubs struggle to fill their syllabus and to vary it as much as they should. To allow clubs an opportunity to see what others are providing, over 20 club syllabi within the UK were reviewed and the content broken into specific areas. Table 2 (over) shows the results.

From this survey, the staple diet of clubs appears to be competitions and lecturers/ talks, as they account for an average of over 60% of the syllabus. This implies that many clubs follow the same format and content. Where clubs face falling membership, have difficulty in attracting new members or have poor submissions into competitions, then they should consider what they are offering their members. Do they have the right mix of evenings and events that suits the majority of their membership?

Clubs should consider varying their syllabus each year; they could even have a trial to cover less well-presented topics such as

- Audio visual;
- Practical evenings;
- Members' evenings.

The GDPU can offer advice on the content and structure of your syllabus and provide printed copies.

Activity	Maximum%	Minimum%	Average %
Club Competitions	32.7	17.8	23.8
Inter-club competitions [∇]	26.7	0	11.2
Lecturers / Talks	53.5	11.9	26.8
Practical evenings	20.8	0	9.3
Members nights	17.8	0	7.4
Misc. / Social evenings	26.8	8.9	15.6
Holidays	11.9	0	5.2
Audio Visual	3.0	0	0.7

Table 2

2.5 Syllabus Compilation

The club syllabus should be prepared and printed for the start of the session and should be complete. A club that advertises TBA on nights is not doing itself any favours in attracting new members or keeping existing ones. The printed syllabus can be as sophisticated and professional or as simple and basic as the club wishes. However, it should contain the following as a minimum:

- Date of each meeting night;
- Activity of the meeting. e. g. Lecture, club competition, practical night;
- Name address and phone numbers of significant committee members;
- Club details such as competition rules;
- Competition entry dates, including judges' names with photographic honours;
- Indication of home and away competitions;
- Lecture titles and speakers' names with photographic honours;
- Acknowledgements of any advertisers or sponsors;
- Club web address;
- Affiliated organisations, web addresses, contact personnel;
- Instructions for use of club equipment;
- Applicable fees and charges;
- Any other information deemed necessary by the committee.

[∇] No numbers are included for external competitions or events

The setting out and scheduling of the club's syllabus should be based on fixing the least variable events first. These may include:

- Any national/ major competition dates;
- Any dates that use travelling panels or exhibitions;
- Occurrence of special events and availability of high profile speakers;
- Inter-club competitions.

This then allows club competitions to be added, ensuring sufficient time elapses between the various clubs and inter-club competitions. The other events can then be placed according to any criteria that the club wishes.

Many clubs have a summer syllabus that can range from one or two events to meeting once a month for outings. This should be treated as importantly as the normal syllabus and clubs may wish to assign this task to another committee member. Any summer syllabus should be fixed and formalised to allow members the opportunity to plan their schedule. An ad hoc syllabus can lead to poor attendance and a disinterested membership.

2.6 Competitions

Competitions within and with other clubs can be one of the mainstays of the club. Each club will have established its own pattern of competitions and it is not intended to be prescriptive or define what clubs should or should not do about competitions. However, some guidance may be useful.

Several criteria and the demands of the membership affect competition involvement. Clubs can consider two types of competition, viz. internal club and external competitions. Each has different criteria and requires to be handled differently. Individual club competitions are really a matter for each club where the structure and rules of the competitions should suit the aims and requirements of the individual club.

However, when it comes to external competitions these need to be viewed differently. Why do clubs enter external competitions? What benefits do the club and its members derive from entering external competitions?

Clubs should assess the worth of entering competitions and not just enter because it looks good or they feel it is their duty. External competitions are a statement of the standard of the club and its members; they must be enthusiastic about the competition and be willing to support the organising body. Complacency and submission of any old photograph does not do justice to the club or the competition. Clubs should think how serious they are in entering external competitions.

Success in local or national competitions requires that the club has an active core of photographers producing work of the required standard. Coupled with this is the number of competitions in which the club participates. Too many competitions could result in a drain on resources, whilst too few could alienate those who wish to enter competitions. It's about finding the right balance to suit the club profile.

Competitions can have an intrinsic benefit to the club and its members. However, there are drawbacks and clubs should weigh up the benefits gained against the effort expended.

The degree of competition involvement could be based on the following criteria:

- Aims of the club in entering competitions;
- Members' enthusiasm;
- Organisational structure to run and control the competitions;
- Number of members likely to enter competitions;
- Benefit to the club and/ or its members.

To help clubs evaluate the worth of any competition they should consider the following benefits and drawbacks:

Benefits

- Promotes picture-taking by members;
- Allows clubs to award status to individuals who are successful;
- Allows the club standard to be shown to others;
- Helps in promoting the club to new members; a successful club can usually attract new members for the quality of its work;

Drawbacks

- Too many competitions can lead to a disinterest by members;
- Rules for selection can be restrictive;
- Appeals more to the competitive member than the social member;
- Gives the beginner/ intermediate very limited access to external competitions.

Many clubs request external judges to assess and award marks in internal club competitions. They follow this methodology without change, but this system has been known to have certain inconsistencies. To overcome these problems, a number of clubs now have non-scoring club competitions in which the judge is requested to comment on each entry and advise the top entries, usually between six and ten. The main benefits of such a format are:

The members hear constructive commentary on each image without the potential of having a score assigned that does not appear to match the comments;

It makes the club awards more open and gives all competing members a chance of some club award.

In the non-scoring system, club awards are catered for by the club assigning marks to authors according to their placing in the competitions.

Each club should decide which system is best suited to their club but perhaps they should occasionally try the non-scoring system as an experiment.

2.7 Membership

All clubs and organisations rely on their members. Without members, clubs will not function correctly or will decline to the stage that they disappear. It is essential, therefore, that clubs understand what their members require. As discussed in the section for the syllabus, most clubs provide a variety of events throughout the year in which members can participate. However, do clubs understand what members wish, or are they content to follow the same format year in year out?

The membership of many clubs is declining; clubs are being forced to close altogether and many are finding it difficult to attract new members. The reasons are not clear but may include the following:

- Structure and organisation of the club;
- Costs involved;
- Time available to the members;
- Enthusiasm of its members;
- Technology;
- Ultimate goal of its members.

The majority of clubs are concerned about their membership. In the current climate, the most important question is how to attract new members. Clubs must understand their role in providing what new members want or are interested in. They should consider how they view their members.

Do clubs provide a static standard format in which 'one-size fits all' and its members should adapt and conform to this format?

Do they recognise the diversity of abilities and requirements and try to cater for this by providing a varied and dynamic syllabus? This includes the right balance of competitions, external activities and internal events to cater for all its members.

Clubs in the former are likely to have declining membership, poor attendances at events, and a lack of enthusiasm amongst members. Clubs in the latter have a strong membership that participates in all club events, is enthusiastic and represents the club in a positive dynamic way.

So how can clubs accommodate their diversity of members? Firstly, clubs have to establish their club profile and determine the type of club they want to be. Clubs must set out clear aims and direction based on the wishes of the existing members. As part of this concept, the type of member and the number of each type play an important role as these influence the possibilities that a club can consider in formulating their goals.

2.8 Member Profiles

Who is a typical camera club member? What is the profile of such a person and what do they hope to achieve from being a member of a club? In the past, most club members were enthusiasts who devoted most, if not all their (spare) time, to their passion for photography. Today the club member has different goals and requirements, and this is a fundamental point in the progress and development of clubs.

Club committees should ask themselves what are the expectations of the club member. What is the profile of today's club member and what do they look for in a club? This will go some way in determining how clubs can keep existing members and attract new members.

By evaluating how many members a club has in each of the suggested categories, it is relatively simple to determine the type of club you are and how best to provide for and meet the member expectations. This can help in preparing your syllabus, deciding what competitions are best to enter and what facilities the club should provide.

The categories that most club members fall into reflect their seriousness to their hobby and their enthusiasm for club events and competitions. These are the typical profiles of a club membership:

Serious workers

These members have ability, produce work for various uses and enter national and international competitions. This is the closest to an enthusiast that the club is likely to get. They will have a range of abilities and dedication, but will also show determination to succeed as photographers. Their ultimate goals may be quite diverse and they are quite likely to have interests outside the club but still associated with photography. Clubs benefit from this category of member as it gives prestige, raises the club profile and, through their contacts, can provide the club with interesting items for their syllabus. The down side is that their

outside interests may conflict with the club's aims, and they may feel that they need not participate in club competitions and club activities.

Good club workers

These members are reasonably interested in photography but may be able to spend the required time to improve their abilities. They are of a proficient standard and can produce good club work on a regular basis, occasionally entering exhibitions or international competitions. They may or may not maintain this standard depending on their other interests and they provide most of the work for club competitions and support most of the club's activities. They are unlikely to have outside photographic interests.

Average club workers

These members take photographs for pleasure and are not too interested in competitions. They are interested in seeing the work of others; they consider their ability to be better than the public norm but not as good as the best in their club. Occasionally, they can produce work of a good club standard. They may or may not enter any competitions or support club activities.

Social members

These members are interested in photography, but enjoy the social aspects, the lectures, and the demonstration side more than actually producing work or entering competitions. They may or may not have the ability to produce good work and will not readily enter any competitions. Depending on the event, they may support the club.

In all these profiles, the term **beginner**, **intermediate** or **advanced** has not been used as these terms are given by clubs but do not reflect the true category of the member. Normally, new members start as beginners but, depending on their ability and desire, will end up in one of the above categories. Therefore, these classifications are not relevant.

2.9 The Future

A club can have a very diverse and complex member profile. So how does it cater for this? Each club should define its role as a camera club by looking at what it provides for its members and listening to what the members actually want. By defining its nature on this basis, the club can then become more attractive to new members.

Assuming a club has now decided what it wishes to offer its members, how does it attract new members? This complex issue cannot be easily resolved as it depends on a number of factors, some of which are listed below:

- The catchment area of the club;
- The aims of the club;
- The member participation;
- The syllabus;
- The interests of the existing members;
- The reasons for new members joining;
- The aptitude of the new member.

A fundamental question is “What do new members look for and what do they want from the club?” Most clubs look at what they can offer members but not too many look at it from the new member’s perspective. It’s easy for new members to walk away from a club that does not meet their expectations. An established member usually leaves for other reasons.

As most clubs are aware, there are two types of new member, viz. one that comes from another club and one new to photography. The member who comes from another club is likely to be in a similar category to an existing member and therefore fall into one of the four profiles detailed in Section 2.8.

Those that are new to photography do not really know what they want or what is useful to them. If you were to ask most people in this category the likely answers are: “*I want to learn how to use my camera better*”, or “*I want to learn about photography.*” Roughly translated, these mean “*I don’t really know but I thought I would come along and see what you do.*”

Now, ask yourself the following questions:

- In my club, how many new members have joined over the last 5 years, either from another club or are new altogether?
- How many members have left or how many came along for a few nights then disappeared?
- Why we are not able to attract and keep new members?
- What attracts people into a camera club?
- What profile of person is interested in photography?
- Does a long list of equipment really attract new members or those from another club?

Many clubs believe that digital photography heralds a new dawn and has arrived in time to revitalise club photography. There is a belief that young people will be drawn into clubs because of their familiarity with computing techniques. Is this really a valid argument, and is it not the case that it sounds a good idea? How many clubs do you know have attracted new members because the club has obtained a computer system? However, let’s try to establish what it is that will attract a new member into a camera club.

The person must have an interest in photography. They are likely to have been taking some pictures and want to improve their skills and learn more. The person may realise that an existing hobby or interest could benefit from a photographic input. Many photographers have a keen interest in natural history, hill-walking, mountaineering or sports, and they find their hobbies complementary.

The person may recognise that photography could become a financially rewarding interest. Many photographers want to publish their photographs or sell them at exhibitions/ galleries. They may want to take wedding photographs or portraits.

When your club has thought about these points then it will be more aware of what the potential member's photographic objectives could be. From here, the club is in a better position to target new members.

This then raises the question of how to go about enticing people into your club. Why would someone select your club over another?

Some ways of promoting your club are more rewarding than others. The more productive include:

- Holding an exhibition in local libraries or schools;
- Having a photographic competition for local schools;
- Providing a series of lectures that can be used in high schools, colleges, other clubs and organisations;
- Participating in community activities.

The less productive have been found to be:

- Mail-shots in your area;
- Posters in local shops.

Most 'serious' members will have a fully furnished darkroom or an office computer system. They are not too worried if the club has these. The 'good club worker' is quite likely to have an ambivalent attitude towards the facilities they have at home and what they would hope their club has. They may find some use for the club's equipment depending on their particular preferences in photography. The 'average worker' or 'social member' may not really worry about the facilities of the club.

Where a club is likely to have large numbers of beginners, it should be willing to provide some structured tuition. Perhaps the place to start is to identify some of the basic, but essential, equipment.

Many beginners may have a single lens reflex (SLR); others may have a digital camera that is likely to be a low specification machine, whilst some may have a compact or APS camera. They are likely to be quite happy with their existing camera. However, once they attend a few meetings, see some competition images and listen to guest speakers, they will consider that their equipment is lacking and cannot produce the desired results. They start to believe that better equipment will make them better photographers. They have been caught in the upgrading trap! At this point, they may decide that they cannot compete and they may simply become social members if the club has a social side that is of interest. On the other hand, they may just leave the club altogether.

So, what can the club offer a newcomer who is just beginning? How many clubs try to discover what a newcomer wants? They could want to enter competitions, learn about computers, spend hundreds of pounds on new equipment, take better pictures or just have an evening of fun. They may end up doing all or none of these, but initially they have an idea of what they think they want and it is up to the club to try to find this out.

If so, it can then try to see if it can fulfil the members' expectations. It needs to be remembered that if new members are disillusioned, then they may be lost forever to photography.

Here is a checklist of questions that a club could ask of itself:

Do you solicit the views of new members on what they hope to achieve from the club, and do you actually meet those expectations?

Do you make the new member welcome?

Do you provide a starter pack for the new member?

Do you organise a syllabus that is novel, fresh and varied?

Do you meet the needs of existing members?

Do you balance competitions with the social side?

Do you make use of the expertise within your club?

Do you advertise what you can offer in the right areas?

Do you take part in community activities, advertising in local schools, colleges etc.?

Do you realise that they are competing with other hobbies, organisations, family and work commitments?

Do many in your club help out or is it left to just a few?

Are you parochial?

3.0 Judges and Lecturers

3.1 Selection of the judge or lecturer

Most clubs request a guest judge to review their club competitions and have lecturers from all over the country give talks. Whilst the majority of these guests are willing to attend for the pleasure, it is only right that certain protocols and procedure are followed.

Clubs should ensure that all judges are accredited by umbrella organisations as this helps maintain standards and gives the clubs security in that they have some recourse if they have any comment to make about the judge. It also ensures that clubs can be confident that the judge has been vetted by that body and meets a standard of knowledge and presentation.

Lecturers can be selected from any lists or from people who are willing to come and give a talk on the selected topic.

3.2 Booking the Judge / Lecturer

When setting out the syllabus, the club should ensure that judges and lecturers are booked in sufficient time for the event. The club should send out an invitation pack shortly after contacting the guest and follow up with a contact a minimum of two weeks prior to the event to confirm that they are still available. The initial invitation pack should contain the following:

- Invitation letter;
- Response form (judge or lecturer as appropriate);
- Club map;
- Stamped reply envelope.

When judges have been invited to assess your competition images, they must be acquainted with the club's normal competition arrangements. The answers to the following questions should be addressed:

- Is it an Open or a Themed competition?
- Are the entries grouped according to Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced?
- What are the competition rules?
- What are your usual scoring/ marking procedures?
- What is the likely number of entries?
- Have you confirmed the date, time, place, contact, and telephone number?
- Have you indicated the usual arrangements for breaks and refreshments?
- Have you informed the judge of the equipment available on the night?
- Have you confirmed the expenses in advance?
- Have you some information that you can use when introducing the judge to the club membership?

Have you delegated a club member to propose a vote of thanks at the end of the evening?

3.3 Expenses

Expenses for judges or lecturers can be quite difficult to determine with some clubs applying a fixed fee whilst others ask the guest on the night. However, it is recommended that clubs agree any expenses prior to the visit and this should include overnight stay or a meal if required. All expenses should be given to the guest on the night and clubs should ensure that the treasurer or an appropriate committee member is delegated to this task.

The level of expenses is a matter between the club and the judge or lecturer but most GDPU judges/ lecturers will probably base their expenses on :

- Distance to travel to/ from the club;
- Mode of transport;
- Size of the club.

Table 3 indicates some guidelines for expenses; they are not mandatory.

Conditions / criteria	Club<15 Members	Club>20 Members
Travel within 15 miles of guests home	£5.00 / £10.00	£10.00 / £15.00
Travel within 40 miles of guests home	£12.00	£15.00
Travel up to 100 miles of guests home	£15.00	£20.00

Table 3

3.4 Protocol

When a guest judge or speaker visits a club, there are certain protocols that should be followed. These provide a number of significant benefits to the club and its members. Many of these are intangible but can assist the club in a number of ways.

The requirements, roughly in chronological order, are quite simple:

- You should welcome the guest at the door or entrance to the building;
- You should not let your guest wander around looking for you;
- You should make sure that a member is tasked with welcoming the guest;
- You should ensure that help is offered for bringing any materials into the club;
- You should make certain that any requested items or set up has been organised and are available;
- You should check projectors for operation and spare bulbs;

You should ensure that your meeting starts at the time advised;
You should introduce your guest in a courteous manner stating any photographic honours, areas of particular interest and membership of another club or external body;
You should remember to write a thank you letter shortly after the event;
You should consider writing a short positive report for the local newspaper.

Complying with these suggestions will result in positive benefits for the club:

Guests will feel part of the club and will inform others of their reception;
Members will see that the club is run in a proficient manner;
Visitors will feel that the club may be worth joining;
When other clubs visit, they will see how you are organised and may learn from it;
Because of the club's reputation, your syllabus secretary will find it easier to book high-profile lecturers;
It will make a positive statement about the club.

4.0 Image Assessment

4.1 Introduction

A section on image assessment has been included in this booklet because many clubs wanted it ! It is a major issue for both judges and clubs. However, club members should realise that if a prescribed division of the mark allocation were followed, then it would be simply a case of ticking off a score sheet. No individualistic or interpretative comments would be made and it would probably result in a very narrow band of marks. In addition, it would lead to a boring evening. In such a system, it would matter little which judge was asked to assess the images; the result would always be the same. Therefore, it is essential that you realise that the same image will **not** score the same mark from every judge.

4.1 Assessment

With the growing popularity of digital photography, judges are being confronted by an ever-increasing variety of image; some are 'conventional' but many are 'manipulated'. Regardless, a good image should satisfy certain criteria. Most photographers are aware of these and most judges will consider them when faced with an image. If authors can satisfy all or many of these criteria in their work, they stand the best chance of becoming proficient in photography and their images should be placed near or at the top in most club competitions.

However, it is important to note that we are talking of club and inter-club competitions; whilst the same criteria may apply to national and international competitions, other aspects such as the creativity, novelty and individuality of the image will count significantly more.

Clubs should also appreciate that the assessment of every image cannot be purely objective. For example, the three or four top images in any competition will usually be equally strong on most criteria and the final placing will very likely be governed more by some subjectivity on the part of the judge.

A judge's subjective views may come down to interpretation. This is not to say that one image is better than another; rather, it is the judge's preferred interpretation of the image and how strongly he or she holds to this interpretation. If the judge makes this clear then, much as you might wish a different outcome, you will have to accept the preferred choice.

The editor of Digital Photo Art wrote recently

Our response to images is necessarily subjective; it is a personal response conditioned largely by our own interests, beliefs and the resonance of our personal lifetime experiences. There are some objective factors involved, particularly on the technical side, but these only have an influence to the extent that they aid or hamper the image's ability to communicate with us.

You may think this is quite controversial and leaves the photographer at the mercy of the judge's foibles and prejudices, but there is a grain of truth in what the editor writes.

Some of us enjoy and appreciate modern art; others of us think that a child could do better! Both opinions are valid, but we agree to disagree. Similarly, some of us enjoy and appreciate a photograph of a familiar Scottish landscape; others think it is a cliché and too 'chocolate-boxy'. Again, both opinions are valid. If it were not so, then, as was said earlier, clubs requiring the services of a judge could stick a pin in the GDPU list, knowing that, regardless of who was selected, it would make no difference to the comments on the images and the outcome of the competition. Surely, club members enjoy listening to a variety of views on their photographs as long as they are backed up with clear reasoning, advice and some humour?

4.3 Marking / scoring

A judge's marks will normally be based on some objective criteria and an element of subjectivity based on what he or she considers is a successful image.

When you submit an entry for a competition, you should ask yourself:

Does this image 'communicate' with the viewer? (See quote above)
Have I managed to convey the purpose in taking this particular photograph
or creating this particular image?

You could approach the answer to these questions by asking yourself three
further questions:

Is the image visually striking? (Originality? Colour? Lighting?
Composition?)
Does the image make the viewer think? (Interpretation? Story?)
Does the image stir up emotions or evoke a mood? (Mysterious? Humorous?)

If the answer to all these questions is 'Yes' then you will likely have a successful
image. It really is that simple! However, you could find yourself saying to one
or more of the questions '*No, but is that important in this particular image?*'. If you
can convince yourself that it isn't, then you could still have a successful image.

All competition images should comply with certain basic technical criteria that
include:

The choice of exposure for the situations;
The appropriate degree of sharpness in the situation;
The suitable use of filters;
The choice and suitability of the medium for the image;
An appreciation of colour in slides and colour prints;
An awareness of grey scale in monochrome prints.

You will see that 'artistic' merit is not mentioned here; this is where we start to
move from the objective to the subjective. 'Composition' could be considered
the start of this process and we are all familiar with the so-called 'rule-of-thirds'
as a conventional guide to composition.[∇]

Generally, all entries can be grouped into categories or bands that indicate its
compliance with the basic technical norms and subjective interpretation. The
mark can be taken as measure of the image competence and Table 4 (over) gives
a guide as to the standards associated with various bands of scores.

[∇] '*Rule of thirds*' is a simplified version of the 'golden rule'

Mark	Category	Comments
10 - 12	Poor images	Lacking in several areas (eg. Technical flaws, poor composition, no interesting features)
13 - 14	Average images	Competently photographed but lacking any strong features of interest
15 - 17	Good club photography	Well photographed with minor shortcomings but with the intent of the image very obvious
18 - 20	Top / exhibition standard	Excellently photographed, answering most or all of the objective criteria and inviting a subjective interpretation

Table 4

However, this booklet will close with one golden rule:

Never, never, never take photographs that you think might please a judge.

Why?

Photography is a hobby to be enjoyed and any photographs that you take should be for your enjoyment;

What you think might please a judge possibly won't because club judges are the most hard-to-please people you will encounter in photography!

The GDPU committee endorses the views expressed in this document.

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