

FAQ on UKAC Scoring Consultation

1. Why is this consultation being carried out?

This is being carried out as a result of an RSGB Presidential Review of Contesting which started in 2015. This review resulted in a number of actions to try and make contesting healthier in the UK, including the formation of the new committee structure, release of open logs, and some rule changes. The major VHF issue which was not resolved successfully during 2015 was a full review of the scoring systems for the UKAC contests to provide a scoring system which has no discrimination across the whole of the UK. This consultation attempts to close off that point.

2. What is the aim of the proposed scoring systems?

To develop a scoring system which

- Will be recognised as fair by the vast majority of entrants across a wide geography
- Is straightforward enough to be easily understood and explained (and coded)
- Works for all bands from 6m through SHF
- Works for all sections

This study aims to compensate for the fact that some places have lots of activity in the UKAC contests and some have very little and this means that some stations have access to a bigger pool of stations in range than others.

At the same time as making things better for those who have the toughest time, the new scoring systems are designed and tested to have minimal effect on the remainder of the country. They will not change the features that have made the VHF/UHF UKACs a success.

3. What's the point in doing this? No contests are ever fair!

The final aim of this study is to make something which is fairer across the whole UK. Fair representation and delivery of services across the UK is a key issue for RSGB. The **only** way in which we are aiming for a fairer scoring system is to compensate for the large differences in **numbers of available stations** that exist across the UK as a whole. We are specifically **not** trying to do anything about other geographical factors such as sites and propagation, and certainly not to handicap anyone based on station equipment or operating techniques.

The analysis has shown us that we can make the scoring system fairer across the whole country than it is right now, so the real question is: why should we **not** do that?

4. What's new about this study?

This study is evidence-based. It uses actual logs from all stations in events from January to August 2016 to figure out what scores could be made from all UK Locator squares. The impact of different scoring systems has been tested carefully to make sure that it has the expected effect.

The fact that this study uses real data and logs makes it unique in the history of RSGB contest rule-making.

5. This survey was triggered in part to address complaints from Scotland, Northern Ireland and the North of England about some existing scoring systems being unfair to them. I see stations from these parts of the UK doing well however. Does this not just make things even better for them?

Two points here:

1. It is wrong to focus just on the leading stations because they are not what UKACs are actually about. The UKACs are mainly club-based contests in which everyone should feel able to make a contribution. That is why the focus of our analyses has not been on 'who wins', but on how well stations at all levels are able to contribute to the scores of their own respective clubs. (As for the leading stations, our detailed analyses have once again verified that well-known saying that the same stations will probably do well under any scoring system. Also the existing UKAC normalisation system was specifically designed to remove the effects of any 'runaway scores' by leading stations.)

2. Although many complaints came from the north and west of the UK, the study showed that in fact northern England was not badly disadvantaged by the M5 and M7 scoring systems. The people who really have a hard time in VHF contests are the stations in Central and Northern Scotland – partly for reasons of terrain (which we did **not** address) but also for the simple lack of surrounding stations to work. The two proposed scoring systems do not significantly help stations in the far South of Scotland, but really do help the stations in the Central Belt and the North of Scotland... which in turn encourages them to get involved and improve their stations.

6. How do we know that these scoring systems will not fundamentally change the contest results?

We have tested the proposed scoring systems against last year's logs as shown by example in the paper, and the position changes across the majority of the UK are small. The biggest predicted impacts are in the low population areas – which is exactly what was intended.

7. How do we know that stations will not change the way in which they operate and so skew the results badly with the proposed scoring systems?

We can never be certain of what will happen as a result of introducing new rules, but UKACs are heavily time-limited, leaving fewer opportunities for entrants to change their overall strategies. While the most successful stations in the contest will have their own favoured strategy to optimise their scores in the limited time available, the only strategy open to the majority of entrants will continue to just try and work everyone who they hear, so overall the changes in behaviour are expected to be small.

8. Why are the non UK squares scored at 1000 points rather than 500 points?

Largely because of the relatively lower level of non-UK activity. When we tested different scoring systems, the scores from all UK squares were closer together (and hence the scoring system was fairer) with non-UK scored at 1000 points rather than 500 points

(This question was about the bonus-based B2 scoring proposal. A similar question could have been asked about the multiplier-based M8 proposal, and a similar answer would apply.)

9. Why don't the rarer squares of JO00 and JO03 count for more than 500 points?

Making JO00 and JO03 count 1000 points makes a very marginal decrease in the overall fairness score, but not enough to be significant. We'll happily take feedback if entrants think the extra effort spent searching for these rarer bonuses / multipliers should attract extra credit.

(This question was about the bonus-based B2 scoring proposal. A similar question could have been asked about the multiplier-based M8 proposal, and a similar answer would apply.)

10. Why does the map show JO00 gaining 500 points for an English QSO, but 1000 points for a French QSO?

We'd now propose to implement a simple rule of each square having a fixed bonus level regardless of country worked, so JO00 would have the same bonus value regardless of country worked.

11. The B2 proposal looks just like a minor re-hash of the B1 proposal from last year which was rejected.

It is true that B2 is based on last year's proposal, but only because that proposal continued to perform well in the much more rigorous 2016 analyses. We tested lots of other options and found this B2 variant to be the fairest. There is a lot more detail on what's different between the 2015 and 2016 proposals on page 21 of the main report.

12. What other options did you look at

We looked at :-

- M5
- M7
- 1 pt/km
- M7 with variable multipliers by part of the country
- Options for working some of the multipliers or bonuses more than once
- Higher bonuses to all rare squares (e.g. JO00, JO03, IO70 – 73, IN79 etc.)
- Variations in the boundaries and score ratios for B2 and M8
- Combinations of the options listed above

These were all rejected in favour of the B2 option because that was the fairest scheme, with M8 being the fairest multiplier scheme.

13. Why haven't you included 1 point / km as an option?

1 point / km was looked at in some detail in the study. In terms of fairness, viewed across the whole county, it looks slightly fairer than M5 and M7, but is significantly less fair than M5 and M7 in more active squares. This means that it would cause some disruption and loss of fairness across the most active areas in the contest. But importantly both M8 and particularly B2 are significantly fairer proposals than 1 pt /km so we saw no good reason to offer it as an alternative.

We also believe that the use of multipliers or bonuses adds a piece of strategy and interest to the contest which is popular with entrants. It also promotes people moving their beams around to catch as many bonuses / multipliers as possible making sure that there is good activity heard everywhere.

There is one exception to this. We are proposing 1 point/km for the SHF UKACs because on those bands with small numbers of QSOs and short ranges, both bonuses or multipliers are too sensitive to very local concentrations of activity.

14. I'm in the South West of England – this proposal means no-one will beam my way. The models don't show any bias against the South West of England. The presence of a bonus or multiplier scheme means that stations need to beam in ALL directions to maximise their score, just as they have to do now under M7.

15. Why are you recommending option B2 over option M8?

Both systems use the same 'blue-green-red' squares map to apply either bonuses or multipliers in a more selective way. However, the analysis showed that B2 would give fairer results than M8, so that is why we are recommending B2.

Another advantage of B2 is that an additive bonus system tends to reduce the spread in scores between the top and bottom of the results table. Multiplier systems often give a spread of over 1000:1, which can look very discouraging to new entrants near the bottom of the table. (Normalisation takes care of that, eventually, but new entrants are much less likely to be aware of that subtlety.)

16. I don't like either of these options. What should I do?

Just answer question 3 to say that you don't support the change. If you'd like to provide some alternative options, please go ahead and write about them in the comments field.

17. If we change the scoring system, will we then have a period of some years of stability?

We would like to keep stability. Of course we will watch carefully and review what happens during the 2017 contests if we make a change to the scoring systems. We would look to see if activity shifts significantly and see if any of the weightings need to change to maintain fairness, or whether there needs to be anything done to correct for other unexpected happenings. However, the analysis has shown that the distribution and overall fairness of results are remarkably insensitive so it's quite likely that no changes would be required. We certainly would not tweak the system for only minor gains.

18. Can I change my survey responses after I have submitted the survey?

You can change your response / update your comments up to the closing date of the survey.