

AWARDS FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC MERIT (APM)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, CONDITIONS OF ENTRY WITH NOTES FOR GUIDANCE OF APPLICANTS *PLUS, FREQUENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS*



The Photographic Alliance of Great Britain

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APM INFORMATION LEAFLET ONE

1. QUALIFICATION. All applicants must qualify and apply via their Federations. Entrants must have been active members of an affiliated Club for a minimum of 2 years for CPAGB, 3 years for DPAGB and 5 Years for MPAGB. A retrospective period of 10 years may be considered. Applications for MPAGB must have held DPAGB for at least 11 months on the date of adjudication. Please contact your Federation Awards Officer for further guidance. **Entries will only be accepted for one Class and one Media in any single Adjudication**

2. PRINTS & PROJECTED DIGITAL IMAGES (PDI). Print, and Projected Digital Image Adjudications will normally be held in April and November. Although the closing date for applications will be 31st January and 31st August respectively, most Adjudications fill up much earlier. The minimum number of entrants for any one day is normally 30 and the minimum for each section is normally 5. The maximum number of Prints and Projected Digital Images to be adjudicated on any one day is approximately 850. Pictures will not be presented as panels but will be mixed with those of all other Entrants in the Section and judged as individual photographs.

3. ADJUDICATION METHOD

3.1 Adjudications in Projected Digital Images (PDI) and Prints are carried out by a panel of six, selected from the PAGB Approved List of Judges for their photographic skill and their extensive experience. It is impossible to eliminate subjectivity totally but they are carefully briefed as to the standard required in each section.

3.2 Photography is more art than science and judges will always be influenced by their emotional response to an image. As in any competition, you should be prepared for some pictures to score higher than you had anticipated and for some to score lower.

3.3 Even pictures which you have submitted to a previous Adjudication may score a little better or a little worse than before.

3.4 The Non-Voting Chairman of the Adjudication Panel observes closely throughout the proceedings and has the authority to review near misses on the day.

3.5 Each of the 6 Adjudicators is required to **Vote** on each photograph and their Votes are recorded electronically using 'silent' scoring equipment. This leaflet explains how they are briefed to reach that decision, how they assess the work at each level and what each vote/score means.

3.6 In theory, if a photograph is not up to the required standard, it should receive 6 "NO" Votes = 2 points per judge x 6 = 12 or, if it is well up to the required standard, it should receive 6 "YES" Votes = 4 points per judge x 6 = 24. However, it is unrealistic to expect complete unanimity with 6 different Adjudicators and most total scores will represent a compromise between these limits. Scores above 24 are relatively unusual but can be achieved by the very best images.

3.7 Applicants should be aware that Photographs which would be best displayed as a coherent panel may score less well as individual images.

4. NOTES FOR GUIDANCE FOR ENTERING PDI AND PRINTS

For specific details of how to submit an entry, Applicants must refer to the separate APM Leaflet 2 downloadable at <http://www.thepagb.org.uk/library/>.

5. MIXED PRINT AND PROJECTED DIGITAL IMAGE entries are not permitted.

6. AUDIO VISUAL. Applicants may apply either singly or jointly for an Award in AV. Adjudications will be held as and when it is deemed appropriate and provided there is sufficient demand. Please see the separate APM Leaflet 6 dealing specifically with Audio Visual applications - downloadable at <http://www.thepagb.org.uk/library/>.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT. Applications will be acknowledged on receipt and an Adjudication Date will be provided as soon as possible, normally about 4 months prior to the Adjudication.

8. ENTRIES Prints may be sent in advance or they can be delivered and collected on the Adjudication Day. For details please refer to the separate APM Leaflet 2 downloadable at <http://www.thepagb.org.uk/library/>.

9. WITHDRAWAL OF ENTRY. It is difficult to fill places in the event of cancellations and nearer the Adjudication it is almost impossible. Therefore, anyone withdrawing from the event after their initial acknowledgement letter but more than 13 weeks from the date of their Adjudication specified in the letter will have their fee refunded less a £25.00 Administration charge. Anyone withdrawing later than 13 weeks from the date of their Adjudication will forfeit their entire fee. In either case, should the Applicant wish to take part in a future Adjudication they will need to complete a new Application Form, including the Certificate of Qualification by their Federation Awards Officer. The full fee, not the re-submission fee, will be payable.

10. ADJUDICATIONS are normally open to spectators. Applicants receive one free ticket. Further tickets may be purchased from the organising Federation. Details will be included with the Entry Information.

11. RETENTION OF PRINTS AND PDI Successful Print entrants are required to donate at least one Print scoring in the passing range, chosen by the APM Chairman/Committee. This will not be returned. Sometimes a second, high scoring or low scoring, print may be retained. PDI, including copies of the Print entries, will not be returned. Retained work will be used to demonstrate the passing standard to assessors and audiences at future Adjudications. They may also be used for APM Workshops and to promote the Awards, including publication on the PAGB Website or in **e-news** and possibly in the regularly updated Recorded Lecture Service CD. Copyright of these images remains with the Originator. The PAGB will try to credit the photographer wherever possible but accepts no liability for failing to do so. Whilst individual scores are not normally published, scores from successful entries may be disclosed where it is useful in a workshop, article or a recorded lecture.

12. RESUBMISSION Entrants who fail to gain the award may make further applications at the same level for the resubmission fee stated under each level. A new application form must be completed, including the Certificate of Qualification signed by their Federation Awards Officer

13. ALL REASONABLE CARE will be taken with entries but no liability of any kind is accepted for loss or damage.

14. CHAIRMAN OF ADJUDICATORS The Permanent Non-Voting Chairman will brief the adjudicators beforehand and observe throughout to ensure a high degree of consistency.

15. IMMEDIATE REVIEW OF RESULTS After every section of every Awards the Permanent Non-Voting Chairman of the Adjudicators, together with other experienced judges, reviews the “near miss” applications. There is no right of appeal and after this Review the decision made on the day cannot be changed.

16. DECLARATION By completing the Application Form the Applicant confirms that he/she has read this Explanatory Leaflet, accepts the Conditions for Entry and confirms that all the photographs entered are entirely their own work. Composite images are permitted provided all component images meet this requirement. For the avoidance of doubt, use of images from any other source including, but not limited to, royalty free image banks and clipart are not permitted.

17. APPLY EARLY but not before you are ready please as there is a cancellation penalty. Adjudications are usually oversubscribed well before the closing dates specified above. PAGB policy is to try to ensure that every applicant is offered an Assessment date not more than 12 months distant.

The Descriptive Guideline for CREDIT Award (CPAGB) is GOOD CLUB PHOTOGRAPHY

The entry fee is £60.00. Resubmission £50.00.

10 Prints or 10 PDI are required and a total score of 200 or more will gain the Award.

We must put some descriptive label on the Award to give an idea of the standard you require to achieve but there is no such thing as a consistent "Club Standard". The standard of photography varies considerably from club to club and what is 'Good' in one club may not be so successful in another one.

We cannot know the standard of work in your Club or in your Federation and, by their sheer variety, there can be no consistent "Club Standard". It is our experienced Adjudicators who define what "Good Club Standard" is.

Our Adjudicators have judged at a great many Clubs and they are well equipped to do this, plus we have in place a permanent team and careful briefings to ensure that this is as fair and consistent as is humanly possible.

VOTE "YES". Should do well in the good Average Club in domestic competitions or in Inter-Club competitions. Likely to be chosen to represent the club in Federation competitions. **This merits a vote of YES which is recorded as 4.**

VOTE "NO". In the opinion of our Adjudicators, not up to the required standard. May have some merit but does not meet the criteria for a pass. No better than average club photography. **This merits a vote of NO which is recorded as 2.**

VOTE "NEAR MISS". Only used when the Adjudicator is not quite sure or where the photograph has just missed the standard - **only very close misses would be marked as 3.** Remember that FOUR Adjudicators voting NEAR MISS and TWO Adjudicators voting YES is recorded as a passing score of 20. (3+3+3+3+4+4 = 20)

VOTE "NEXT LEVEL". Well above the standard required. Likely, but not of course guaranteed to score 4 at the DPAGB level. This merits the best vote possible indicating that the photograph will be satisfactory at the NEXT LEVEL and that the Adjudicator would vote Yes at the DPAGB level. **This is recorded as 5.**

The Descriptive Guideline for DISTINCTION Award (DPAGB) is OPEN EXHIBITION STANDARD PHOTOGRAPHY

The entry fee is £90.00. Resubmission £80.00

15 Prints or 15 PDI are required and a total score of 300 or more will gain the Award.

Application can be made for the DPAGB Award without first gaining the CPAGB provided the applicant meets their Federation requirement.

The Adjudicators are looking for photographs that, in their opinion, would be likely to achieve a high level of acceptance in Open Exhibitions but, although there is a much greater commonality of standard at exhibition level, there are still considerable variations. Some Exhibitions accept up to 40%, or more, of the entries, many accept around 20%. Some Exhibitions have experienced judges whom the PAGB would choose as Adjudicators, some don't. Some Exhibitions apply different criteria and standards. Not necessarily poorer but different.

Exhibitions cannot therefore be relied upon to define a consistent "Exhibition Standard". Other bodies, such as FIAP and PSA award distinctions for a high number of exhibition acceptances but the PAGB Award is given based on an assessment by an expert panel of Adjudicators. The pictures do not need to have been previously entered in any Open Exhibition but success at this level is obviously a good guide. Conversely, a high number of acceptances in exhibitions for a photograph does not necessarily guarantee a high mark in the PAGB Adjudication.

VOTE "YES". In the opinion of our Adjudicators, up to the standard that is likely to do well in Open Exhibitions, achieving a very high rate of acceptance. **This merits a vote of YES which is recorded as 4.**

VOTE "NO". Not likely to be accepted very often in Exhibitions and will probably, in the opinion of our Adjudicators, be rejected more often than it is accepted. **This merits a vote of NO which is recorded as 2.**

VOTE "NEAR MISS". Only used when the Adjudicator is not quite sure or where the photograph has just missed the standard - **only very close misses would be marked as 3.** Remember that FOUR Adjudicators voting NEAR MISS and just TWO voting YES is recorded as a passing score of 20. (3+3+3+3+4+4 = 20)

VOTE "NEXT LEVEL". Well above the standard required. Likely, but not of course guaranteed to score 4 at the MPAGB level. This merits the best vote possible indicating that the photograph will be satisfactory at the NEXT LEVEL and that the Adjudicator would vote Yes at the MPAGB level. **This is recorded as 5**

The MASTER Award (MPAGB) seeks to recognise the HIGHEST STANDARD OF UK AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHY

The entry fee is £120.00. Resubmission £110.00.

20 Prints or 20 PDI are required and a total score of 450 or more will gain the award.

Applicants for MPAGB must have held DPAGB for a least 11 months on the date of the adjudication

The Adjudicators are looking for an extremely high standard of photography, photographs which, in their opinion, would enjoy a very considerable level of success in International Exhibitions, including consistent and frequent acceptances. Pictures do not require to have been entered or accepted previously in any International but must be of an exceptional standard.

As an applicant for MPAGB you will probably have submitted to many exhibitions and you will be aware that even your most successful pictures sometimes fail if, for example, a photograph has achieved 40 acceptances in 50 attempts that still represents a 20% failure. A large number of Exhibition acceptances indicates the probability of a high Adjudication score but does not guarantee it.

Some photographs, such as record or architectural photographs, are not particularly successful in most International Exhibitions, but they will be given due and fair consideration by our Adjudicators.

VOTE “YES”. In the opinion of our Adjudicators, up to the standard that has a high probability of being accepted into Open Exhibitions and should win an occasional award. **This merits a vote of YES, recorded as 4.**

VOTE “NO”. Does not have a high probability of a high acceptance rate in Open Exhibitions. May achieve acceptances but will also be rejected. **This merits a vote of NO which is recorded as 2.**

VOTE “NEAR MISS”. Only used when the Adjudicator is not quite sure or where the photograph has just missed the standard - **only very close misses would be marked as 3.** To obtain the passing average you require just ONE Adjudicator to vote NEAR MISS and Five to vote YES, which is recorded as a passing score of 23. (3+4+4+4+4+4 = 23). You can afford TWO Near Miss Votes for perhaps half your entry.

VOTE “PROBABLE AWARD WINNER”. Well above the standard required. Will not only be accepted into Open Exhibitions most of the time but also very likely to win awards. **This really is the very best photography and merits the best vote possible which is recorded as 5.**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Please be assured that, if you are planning to apply for the first time or to apply again after an unsuccessful attempt, your entry will receive as fair an assessment as we can possibly achieve.

Q1. Why has one of my pictures scored lower than it did in a previous Adjudication?

A1. Even judges are human and Six Adjudicators marking separately cannot be as precise as one marking alone. This variation is seen at club level when pictures are entered in different competitions and becomes even more noticeable if the picture is entered to several exhibitions. Over the longer term these fluctuations should even out.

The first thing to understand is that the Adjudicators VOTE, rather than score. A **YES** VOTE is indicated by pressing 4, a **NO** VOTE is shown by pressing 2. They only use 3 for a very **NEAR MISS**, whilst the 5 means it is **GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE NEXT LEVEL**, where it might score a 4 (YES).

If the Adjudicators look at a picture which is borderline, maybe **just below** or maybe **just above** the standard required, then they must decide to vote **FOR** (4) or vote **NEAR MISS** (3). This can be a tiny movement for an individual judge but if two or more judges move from 4 to 3 then the score drops by 2 points or more.

We understand how difficult it can be when you are making a second attempt. Obviously, since you need to average 20, you will feel that the pictures which scored 20 or more should score just as well this time as they did at a previous Adjudication. This is a dangerous assumption. Remember that a score of 20 probably means that **only two** of the Adjudicators thought it was good enough, voting 4 for Yes, whilst the other four Voted 3 for a Near Miss. As a single image this picture was, in fact, **not good enough** to meet the passing criteria and, since it is so borderline, the next set of Adjudicators might all vote NEAR MISS for a total of 18 or even NO, for a total of 12.

A drop of 5 to 7 points for a single photograph from one Adjudication to the next is not very unusual and simply means that some of the Adjudicators in one panel were a **tiny** bit more sympathetic to your work than some Adjudicators were in another. For the Adjudicators, it was a very small movement, but, for you, the reduction in score can be massively disappointing.

Neither adjudicating panel is wrong, nor is either panel necessarily correct. Perhaps the first panel averaged out a little high and the second averaged a little low. The photograph is still borderline - sometimes it will get a passing score, sometimes it will not. A picture which is up to the required standard in the opinion of all 6 Adjudicators will score 24 and these are the ones you can rely upon. Any score lower than that had not convinced all the Adjudicators and can easily score lower at a subsequent Adjudication. Of course, there is a little bit of luck involved, and even a 24 may score significantly lower or higher if this panel disagrees – even slightly – with the last.

It is not unusual for re-submitted photographs to score higher the second time around but no-one has ever complained about that.

We work very hard to ensure consistency. Our judges are the best there are but judging photography is not a science. There are no real objective criteria to assess against and nobody is pretending that there isn't a little bit of luck involved. If your total entry is borderline, you have at least as much chance of passing as you have of failing but you cannot be confident of either.

Q2. What can I do about these fluctuations?

A2. Where you have two different scores for the same picture, the truth is probably somewhere between the two. On different occasions the Adjudicators shaded their marks up or down to your benefit or disadvantage. You almost certainly need to improve, or replace, that photograph. However, the fact that the same team have conducted the Review for many years ensures that these observed fluctuations in scores are considered.

Q3. How can a photograph with several Exhibition Acceptances not be up to the "Exhibition Standard" that the DPAGB requires?

A3. We must put some descriptive label on the Award to give an idea of the standard you require to achieve but there is no such thing as a consistent "Exhibition Standard". Some Exhibitions accept up to 50% of the entries, many accept around 20% and one, at least, accepts less than 7%. Some Exhibitions have high class

judges who the PAGB would choose as Adjudicators, some don't. Some overseas Exhibitions apply different criteria and standards. Not necessarily poorer, but different and not in line with UK camera club work. Most active exhibitors have experienced the variation between Exhibitions. A medal at one and being rejected from another is not unusual.

By their sheer variety, Exhibitions cannot be relied upon to define a consistent "Exhibition Standard". Other bodies, such as FIAP and PSA award distinctions for a high number of exhibition acceptances but the PAGB APM is granted on an assessment by an expert panel of judges and acceptances into Exhibitions does not guarantee that the PAGB will agree it is of the required standard.

It is our highly-experienced Adjudicators who define what the PAGB thinks "Exhibition Standard" is and we have in place a permanent team and careful briefings to ensure that this is as fair and consistent as is humanly possible.

Q4. How can an exhibition medal winner score poorly?

A4. Regular exhibitors know that there is no such thing as a guaranteed acceptance and that a medal winner at one event can easily be rejected from the next. The PAGB cannot know what the standard of entry was or the expertise of the judging panel at any exhibition. Some exhibition selectors are much more exacting than others and they will often seek to accept, and sometimes commend, pictures which are outside the normal run - "something a bit different". Such images run the risk of not appealing to other judges at other times against other competing images. Being accepted into an exhibition and even winning a medal at an exhibition does not necessarily mean that the image meets our "Exhibition Standard".

Q5. I am a member of a good club and my pictures do well in their competitions and in inter-clubs. Why have they scored lower than 20 for the CPAGB?

A5. We must put a descriptive label on the Award to give an approximate idea of the standard you require to achieve but there is no such thing as a consistent "Club Standard". We cannot know the level of work in your Club or in your Federation nor can we know the expertise of the judges you use. It is our highly-experienced Adjudicators who define what "Good Club Standard" is and we have in place a permanent team and careful briefings to ensure that this is as fair and consistent as is humanly possible. If the Award was made just for success in your Club, we wouldn't need you to submit work to our Adjudicators.

Q6. Is the standard rising all the time?

A6. The PAGB is confident that we have maintained the standard at the same level but external standards have risen. Good Club Photography, for example, is still assessed against what our Adjudicators consider to be good club photography, bearing in mind that Club Photography and Exhibition Photography are generally much better now, than when the APM started. A major factor has been the constant improvement in digital technology and the increasing "digital" skill level of entrants. Nature and Creative photography are genres which have dramatically improved. There are also fashion changes and there are subjects and styles which will probably score lower today than in earlier years.

Q7. If I don't want the PAGB to retain the print they choose can I change it?

A7. We must have a suitable print exactly reflecting the standard but there may be room for negotiation. Talk to the Chairman at the end of the day. You can provide a duplicate mounted copy if you wish – say because there are important labels on the back – but all postage and packing is your responsibility. We will not allow you to take your print away on the promise of a replacement. This has happened several times in the past and no replacement has ever arrived. (We keep all the PDI.) The photographs are used for workshops and for our Recorded Lectures.

Q8. What is the Review?

A8. After every section of every Awards Adjudication the Chairman of the Adjudicators, together with other experienced judges, reviews the "near miss" applications. This is not an attempt to undermine the work of the Adjudicators but recognises that the system of scoring can lead to excessive, "unfair" swings in scores. The PAGB has maintained a solid level of experience and continuity in the Review personnel since 1994 when the Awards commenced.

Q9. At what score, will an entry be reviewed?

A9. The level at which this review is conducted is decided by the APM Team on the day. Note is taken of the general trend in scoring in any given section as well as the individual scores awarded by each Adjudicator. Usually we will look at entries scoring 185 -190 or more for Credit, 280 - 285 for Distinction and 430 for Master.

Q10. How is the review conducted?

A10. A sympathetic stance is taken. The review team will look at every picture which has scored LESS than the average required and upgrade whenever possible without compromising the integrity of the Awards. They never mark any picture down even if it seems to have scored better than they might have expected. In fact, they don't really look at the higher scoring pictures at all, except, very occasionally, when the total after points added on during the review is still just short of the total required when they might spread out the whole entry and decide based on the overall appearance and standard.

Q11. Can I appeal against failure?

A11. There is no right of appeal and the decision made on the day will not be changed. If you are really dissatisfied and think that you have been unfairly treated, you can write to the Chairman of the Adjudicators who may be able to examine your evidence and your entry to provide you with feedback.

Q13. Can I discuss my unsuccessful entry with someone from the PAGB?

A13. We regret that it is not normally possible to discuss your personal entry afterwards. This would only be possible with the pictures to look at and would have to be done face to face. It would be just too time consuming. However, the Adjudicators normally make themselves available at the end of each day and will be happy to look at your work at that time.

Q14. How can I improve my entry?

A14. Enter as many Open Exhibitions as you can and try to be involved in PAGB competitions such as the GB Cups and GB Trophies. Seek as much advice as possible from qualified people. Preferably people who have acted as Adjudicators at previous events or, at the very least, people who have been successful at the level you hope to achieve. However, even if you have been advised by an Adjudicator, he/she could vote slightly differently in the highly-focussed atmosphere of an actual Adjudication. (Please note that, although there is nothing to prevent you showing your pictures to an Adjudicator, we advise those who are already empanelled to avoid detailed discussion with prospective entrants prior to the event). Be wary of placing too much reliance in scores you may have achieved at a "Mock Adjudication" organised by your Federation or your Club.

Q15. Are there any suitable workshops?

A15. Federations often run such workshops and the APM Leaflet 7, <http://www.thepagb.org.uk/library/>, has details of the assistance that the PAGB can give. Several Federations have a 1:1 Mentoring Scheme. The PAGB will pay the travelling expenses to allow the Chairman, Rod Wheelans MPAGB, and/or other members of the organising committee to attend Federation Workshops to show photographs from previously successful panels and to advise applicants individually. The PAGB also offers an "Introductory APM Workshop" to those Federations scheduled to Host the Adjudication two years hence. These are designed to introduce the Awards and to appeal to Club members who are only starting to think about participating. The object is to "kick start" people to be ready to enter when the Adjudication comes to their own Federation. Contact your Federation Awards Officer for further information.

Q16. Has anyone failed who should have passed?

A16. The APM team and those involved in the Review process are confident that it has ensured that nobody has ever failed who should have passed. Since we do not review pictures scoring above the required average we cannot say that nobody has passed who might have failed.

Q17. How are the judges selected and wouldn't it be better to have the same judges every time?

A17. The judges are chosen each year by the PAGB from the best in the UK, those who have been appointed to the PAGB List of Approved Judges. We try to keep a measure of continuity, with at least one or two taking part in the subsequent Adjudication, but this is not always possible. We also work hard to create a balanced

group representing different genres of photography. For example, we strive to have at least one Nature “specialist” judge, although this is not always possible either. As the APM are held each time in a different Federation we also need to take account of travelling distances and we like to ensure that the Host Federation is represented on the panel. Although we cannot keep the same judges for every Adjudication, which may lead to small variations in scoring, we have in place a long-standing Review Panel with a Procedure to ensure as much continuity as possible.

Q18. What other information can the PAGB provide?

A18. This and other guidance leaflets are available from the PAGB Website. Several, generously illustrated and regularly updated, DVDs, which describe the standard required for CPAGB and DPAGB, are available for clubs (only) to hire from the Recorded Lecture Service of the PAGB at

<http://www.thepagb.org.uk/services/recorded-lectures/>

The PAGB also supports Federation Advisory Workshops where you can have your work reviewed by APM “advisors”. Information about the APM and all the other PAGB events and activities is regularly published in our free newsletter. You can register for **e-news** and browse back issues at www.pagbnews.co.uk