



The Association of Scottish Philatelic Societies

National Exhibition – Rules & Advice to Exhibitors

Revised – October 2022

Why Exhibit?

Competitive exhibiting is an activity which takes place at a variety of levels within philately and exhibitors require a markedly different approach to that of the collector whose interest is primarily focused on the acquisition and arrangement of stamps and other philatelic material.

Many collectors never aspire to becoming exhibitors but will nevertheless display their material to local or specialist societies. This is arguably the first rung on the exhibiting ladder as any display given should be presentable and give a good story.

There are many reasons why you may choose to exhibit. However, you must bear in mind four principles:

- Do you have the necessary material with which to create an exhibit which conforms to competition rules?
- Are you prepared to put the effort into presenting your exhibit in a way that optimizes the chances of success?
- Are you prepared to subject your exhibit to external evaluation?
- Are you prepared to live with the disappointment that may follow if the opinion of those judging your exhibit does not coincide with your own?

If you can answer yes to each of these questions, then exhibiting may be suitable for you. Exhibiting develops both the understanding of the philatelic material involved but also develops your skill in presenting it to its best advantage with a coherent story that can be readily followed by those viewing the exhibit, despite you not being present. Furthermore, exhibiting competitively brings you into contact with other exhibitors and judges, allowing you to improve your own philatelic knowledge and exhibition skills.

Advice to Exhibitors

Having decided that you wish to exhibit, this advice has been produced to explain the requirements of the various classes, their marking schedules and also give some advice in the form of dos and don'ts.

Exhibiting at Federation Level

Advice to Exhibitors introduces the ideas and standards associated with exhibiting at federation level **and should be read with great care.**

The Association of British Philatelic Societies (ABPS) recognizes competitive exhibiting at local, federation, national and international levels.

ABPS has a suggested marking scheme for federations which is identical to that used at National level, but with the medal levels adjusted. However, ASPS has chosen to keep the National medal levels but adjust the marking scheme by allocating more marks for presentation and fewer marks for rarity. As this may be an exhibitor's first entry at a competitive level we consider it to be important to emphasize the need for presentation to be good. There is also likely to be the most disparity of marks for presentation at this level. At higher levels there are few marks for presentation and the judges would struggle to adequately reflect the breadth of presentations within the marks available. So we favour presentation of your material over the possession of rare items. It is hoped that any presentational issues will be 'fixed' before progressing to National and International Exhibitions.

Entry Classes

Traditional

Entries can be for any country, group of countries or other subject matter not covered in any other class.

The Association has trophies which cover Great Britain, Non Great Britain (pre-1900), and Non Great Britain (post-1900).

However, these divisions essentially relate to the award of the trophies. In particular for non-Great Britain the pre/post 1900 split is essentially arbitrary. An exhibit can straddle the date. Indeed, in some cases it would be appropriate to do so. Exhibitors should not artificially curtail their exhibit to fall wholly before or after 1900.

The judges will apply their discretion to award the trophies appropriately and will tend to view where the majority of an exhibit lies in doing so.

Material can be specialized or non-specialized and can include studies, proofs and essays. It can also include fiscal, revenue and other non-postal stamps, (experimental, locals, telegraphs etc.). For the purposes of this competition these latter items are defined as material not recognized for the international transmission of mail but accepted as being used locally or generally for the transmission of messages and packages, e.g. local, railway or telegraph or for the collection of non-postal revenue.

Postal History

Entries can be either Postal History or Scottish Postal History

As with Traditional, the division is largely to award an appropriate trophy. A Scottish Postal History exhibit could contain some non-Scottish material.

Entries in this class include items on rates and routes and studies of markings and marcophily. It is not normally advisable to include unused adhesives or postal stationery.

Postal History sub-class 2C (formerly Social Philately)

Exhibits in this sub-class will be Historical, Social or Special Studies and will include material developed by commerce and society for use in the postal system.

They may include non-philatelic material where relevant to the subject of the exhibit. The non-philatelic material should be incorporated into the exhibit in a balanced and appropriate manner that does not overwhelm the philatelic material. The non-philatelic items must relate directly to the postal history material.

Aerophilately

This class is for exhibits which are based on the study of philately prepared for and conveyed by airmail, whether official or unofficial. Exhibits which consist solely of airmail stamps will also be judged in this class rather than under Traditional.

Open Philately

This class allows exhibitors complete freedom to enter exhibits on any subject using up to 50% of non-philatelic material. The non-philatelic material can include items which would not readily conform to the requirements for evaluation in the other classes. In fact the non-philatelic content is positively encouraged by the allocation of some marks for that aspect.

In a similar way to the breadth of philatelic material desired in the Thematic class, as wide a variety of non-philatelic material as possible should be incorporated. Note that postcards (other than the postal markings on them) are not regarded as philatelic material. Exhibitors who exceed the 50% threshold are liable to lose a substantial number of marks.

Thematic

This class is for entries based on a theme or a subject which is developed according to a logical plan related to the subject chosen rather than the philatelic material. The theme is then illustrated using as wide a variety of philatelic material as possible.

Literature

This class is sub-divided into two sections:

Section One:

Handbooks, Monographs and Catalogues; including specialised works and studies not more than five years old at the date of the exhibition.

Section Two:

Articles; published by individual philatelists, Philatelic Societies or other organisations with a philatelic connection. Articles cannot be entered more frequently than once in three years.

All entries in the Literature Class must have been published in English.

Cinderella

This may include local stamps, telegraph stamps, railway stamps, revenues/fiscals, forgeries, bogus and phantom issues, Christmas, Red Cross, TB and other charity seals, registration labels, advertisement and exhibition labels etc.

However, things such as trade, cigarette and telephone cards (unless the image of a stamp is incorporated in the design), matchbox or cheese labels, aerial propaganda leaflets, and other forms of ephemera like emergency money are not considered as Cinderella items for this purpose.

Picture Postcard

An exhibit can have a geographical (topographical) treatment, including for example illustrations from a place or an area. It can also be developed thematically. An event may be shown as a form of reportage, or the exhibit may have the photographer, the artist, or the printer as the topic. Original thinking and creativity may also lead to different treatments of an exhibit.

The size, shape and material of the Picture Postcards may vary. The emphasis is on the picture, and not on the use or philatelic peculiarities (if present). Picture Postcards may be unused or used (sent through a mail system). Unused Picture Postcards should have printed address lines, stamp box, or other such markings, showing that the item was intended to be sent without cover.

Marking Structure

The marking structure for all classes is the same with the exception of the Literature, Thematic, Open Philately and Picture Postcard Classes. Marks are made up as follows:

Literature Class

Treatment of contents	40%
Originality, significance, and depth of research	40%
Technical matters	15%
Presentation	5%
Total	100%

Thematic Class

Treatment	
Title & Plan	15%
Development	15%
Innovation	5%
Knowledge, Study & Research	
Thematic	15%
Philatelic	15%
Condition & Rarity	
Condition	10%
Rarity	15%
Presentation	10%
Total	100%

Open Philately Class

Treatment & Importance	
Title & Plan	10%
Philatelic Treatment	5%
Non-philatelic Treatment	5%
Philatelic Importance	5%
Non-philatelic Importance	5%
Knowledge, Study & Research	
Philatelic Knowledge & Research	20%
Non-philatelic knowledge & Research	15%
Condition & Rarity	
Condition	10%
Rarity	15%
Presentation	10%
Total	100%

Picture Postcard Class

Treatment of the topic	
Idea and plan	10%
Treatment	20%
Knowledge and Research	35%
Condition and Rarity	
Condition	10%
Rarity	15%
Presentation	10%
Total	100%

All Other Classes (Traditional, Postal History, Aerophilately and Cinderella)

Treatment & Importance	
Treatment	20%
Importance	10%
Knowledge & Research	
Knowledge	20%
Research & Personal Study	15%
Condition & Rarity	
Condition	10%
Rarity	15%
Presentation	10%
Total	100%

Marking Criteria (Literature)

The literature class differs in its marking structure to reflect the different requirements.

Treatment of contents (40%) requires an evaluation of the literary style, clarity, and skill in communication shown in the exhibit.

Originality, significance, and depth of research (40%) requires an evaluation of the overall significance of the subject matter presented in the exhibit, as well as the degree to which the exhibit displays original discoveries, research, analysis, or approaches to a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Technical matters (15%) requires an evaluation of such aspects as title page and imprint, pagination, credits, bibliography, index, and use of illustrations.

Presentation (5%) requires an evaluation of the effect of binding, typography, and similar production factor on the usability of the publication. To avoid the impact of purely commercial aspects, this criterion will only be evaluated to the degree that it represents a negative factor.

Marking Criteria (Thematic)

The thematic class differs in its marking structure to reflect the non-philatelic element of the topic being shown. The entry must have an introductory page and a plan. On smaller exhibits, these may be combined on a single page. Larger exhibits may need separate pages for each.

Marks are awarded in each of the following areas using the criteria given

Treatment – Title & Plan (15%)

The title with any subtitle defines the scope of the exhibit.

The plan defines the structure of the exhibit and its subdivisions and covers all major aspects relevant to the title. It should be entirely structured according to thematic criteria. The order of the main chapters and their subdivisions should demonstrate the development of the plan rather than list its main aspects.

Treatment – Development (15%)

The development means the elaboration of the theme in depth, aiming to achieve an arrangement of the material fully compliant with the plan. The elaboration utilises only the thematic information, postally authorised, available from:

- the purpose of issue or use of the item
- the primary and secondary elements of the design of the item
- other postal characteristics.

Such elaboration requires:

- a thorough knowledge of the chosen theme
- a high degree of philatelic knowledge
- a thematic text, to ensure the necessary thematic links and to provide thematic details, whenever needed.

Treatment – Innovation (5%)

Innovation is shown by the

- introduction of new themes, or
- new aspects of an established or known theme, or
- new approaches for known themes, or
- new application of material.

Innovation may refer to all components of Treatment.

Philatelic Knowledge (15%) & Thematic Knowledge (15%)

The criterion for Knowledge, Personal Study and Research requires the evaluation of the thematic and philatelic aspects of the exhibit.

Thematic Knowledge, and its related Personal Study and Research will be evaluated considering the

- appropriateness, conciseness, and correctness of thematic text
- correct thematic use of the material
- presence of new thematic findings for the theme.

Philatelic Knowledge, Personal Study and Research will be evaluated considering the

- full compliance with the rules of postal philately
- presence of the widest possible range of postal-philatelic material and its balanced use
- appropriateness of postal documents
- appropriateness and correctness of philatelic text, when required
- presence of philatelic studies and related skilful use of important philatelic material.

Condition (10%) & Rarity (15%)

Condition and Rarity require an evaluation of the quality of the displayed material considering the standard of the material that exists for the chosen subject, the rarity and the relative difficulty of acquisition of the selected material.

The condition of all items will be assessed on their quality in relation to their scarcity and age, as well as knowledge of the average for that particular issue. The rarity of items is evaluated according to their actual availability (i.e. difficulty of acquisition) and not simply according to monetary value.

Presentation (10%)

Presentation requires an evaluation of the clarity of display, the text as well as the overall aesthetic balance of the exhibit.

Marking Criteria (Open Philately)

Marks are awarded in each of the following areas using the criteria given

Treatment – Title & Plan (10%)

The relationship between the title of the exhibit, the scope of the story, and the structure of the exhibit is important. All Open Philately exhibits must contain an Introductory or Title Page to show:

- The aim of the exhibit
- Relevant general information on the subject being developed in the exhibit
- A plan explaining the development of the exhibit. The plan should not include an extensive text, but a logical division of the topic in sections to provide idea of the contents of the exhibit for the jury and the public
- An indication of personal research
- A bibliography.

Philatelic Treatment (5%) and Non-philatelic Treatment (5%) requires an evaluation of the completeness and correctness of the selected material made by the exhibitor to illustrate the chosen subject.

Philatelic Importance (5%) and Non-philatelic Importance (5%) requires an evaluation of the significance of the subject chosen by the exhibitor, in terms of its scope, degree of difficulty of the subject, and the interest of the exhibit.

Knowledge Study and Research, Philatelic (20%) and non-Philatelic (15%). Research should be interpreted in a wider sense and generally show the exhibitor's thorough knowledge of the topic. This knowledge is documented through the choice of material and the use of brief but sufficient text.

Condition (10%) and Rarity (15%), both philatelic and non-philatelic, require an evaluation of the quality of the displayed material considering the standard of the material that exists for the chosen subject, the rarity and the relative difficulty of acquisition of the selected material.

All philatelic material must be original. All non-philatelic material, including photographs, should be original where at all possible. It is expected that exhibitors exploit the possibilities available with the use of non-philatelic material in the development of the topic, and that they use a variety of non-philatelic material and not just postcards and other pictorial matter.

Presentation (10%)

Presentation requires an evaluation of the overall aesthetic appearance of the exhibit.

Marking Criteria (Picture Postcard)

Marks are awarded in each of the following areas using the criteria given

Idea and Plan (10%)

There must be a clear connection between title, structure and treatment, including information on how the exhibitor has chosen to develop the topic, i.e. the choice of Picture Postcards to illustrate the topic, and how the exhibitor has used the material. The introduction should lead to the story line which carries the viewer through the exhibit. Originality, imagination, and creative ideas will be specially awarded.

The idea and plan will be evaluated according to the correspondence between the title, the plan, and the development of the story through the whole exhibit.

Treatment (20%)

The treatment will be evaluated by considering the choice of the items, and where they are placed within the storyline, as well as the positioning of the appropriate text in relation to the item. The variety (diversity) of the material is important and will be rewarded.

The treatment and detailed description of typography, printing method, and printer/publisher is equally important. If such information is not available, the reason why should be explained.

Original photographic archive material used as a basis for essays and proofs in the production of a picture postcard will be rewarded.

Privately produced photo postcards, which are sent by the postal service, are not in themselves suitable for a whole exhibit, although they are allowed as part of an exhibit.

Knowledge and Research (35%)

Research is a pre-requisite for knowledge of the topic, and this must be documented through the choice and variety of the material as well as in a brief text in connection with the Picture Postcards. The texts must contain essential information about the topic and may contain information about photographer or artist. Information about the typography, printing method, and printer/publisher may be demonstrated in an appropriate manner. Picture Postcards must be correctly chosen with regard to the topic, and the descriptive text must be correct.

Personal knowledge and research can also be demonstrated by the presence of material, where only little or no research has been undertaken, for example an unusual area of collecting. Topical knowledge may also be shown by the use of material that has a topical qualification discovered by the exhibitor.

Condition (10%)

The best possible quality available for the chosen subject should be shown. Missing or bent corners, scratches, and scuffs, etc. will influence condition, however, a certain tolerance will be granted for older, posted items. This will also be the case for older Picture Postcards with handwriting on the picture side, before the divided back was introduced, insofar as this writing is not of a particularly bad quality with ink stains, smudging, etc.

Rarity (15%)

Rarity is directly related to the difficulty in finding such postcards, the difficulty of acquisition. How difficult would it be to duplicate the exhibit. Some 'Real Photo' postcards may be close to unique, as they were often produced only in very small numbers. Even some printed Picture Postcards can be extremely difficult to find. Picture Postcards showing details with people, activities, transport, etc. are more important than general views.

Golden age picture postcards were often printed by several publishers in numbers of variations. The contemporary variations can be treated as originals, while modern reprints must be presented as such. Forged items, which are not clearly marked as such, will cause the downgrading of the exhibit by the Jury.

Presentation (10%)

The text must be attractive and tastefully arranged. The overall impression of the exhibit is important, as is variety in the mounting. Heavily coloured pages should be avoided. Framing or matting of the Picture Postcards may increase the visual impression. Illustrations (maps, drawings, etc.) or objects, which have a direct connection to the topic or development of the Picture Postcard, may be used in limited numbers, but not so that the Picture Postcards become secondary to the exhibit.

Marking Criteria (All Other Classes)

Marks are awarded in each of the following areas using the criteria given

Treatment (20%)

Treatment requires an evaluation of the completeness and correctness of the selected material made by the exhibitor to illustrate the chosen subject

Marks are given for the presence and adequacy of the plan and its consistency with the chosen title. Correct logical and balanced subdivisions of the plan will be evaluated together with its ability to demonstrate the development of the subject. The development of the subject will be evaluated to the degree of completeness. Every item shown should add to the development.

Importance (10%)

Philatelic Importance requires an evaluation of philatelic significance of the subject chosen by the exhibitor, in terms of its scope, degree of difficulty of the subject, and the philatelic interest of the exhibit.

Knowledge (20%) Personal Study & Research (15%)

Philatelic and related Knowledge, Personal Study and Research require the following evaluations:

- Knowledge is the degree of knowledge of the exhibitor as expressed by the items chosen for display and their related description;
- Personal Study is the proper analysis of the items chosen for display;
- Research is the presentation of new facts related to the chosen subject.

Condition (10%) and Rarity (15%)

Condition and Rarity require an evaluation of the quality of the displayed material considering the standard of the material that exists for the chosen subject, the rarity and the relative difficulty of acquisition of the selected material.

Presentation (10%)

Presentation requires an evaluation of the overall aesthetic appearance of the exhibit.

Judging

Judging is carried out by ABPS accredited National and Federation judges. Exhibits will qualify for awards according to the marks gained. In addition, there are several trophies. However, these may be held back by the judges if no exhibit is deemed to be of sufficiently high standard.

A Marking Sheet will be returned to you with your exhibit. The judges try to provide helpful comments on each Marking Sheet. In addition, judges are available at Congress for a feedback session of up to one hour at the time announced in the Congress Programme.

Marks Awarded and Class of Medal

Mark	Award (Medals awarded for 50+ marks)
0 – 39	Certificate of Participation
40 – 49	Diploma
50 – 59	Bronze
60 – 69	Bronze Silver
70 – 74	Silver
75 – 79	Small Silver Gilt
80 – 84	Large Silver Gilt
85 +	Gold

Trophies

Traditional (GB)
Traditional (non-GB, Pre 1900)
Traditional (non-GB, Post 1900)
Thematic Class
Postal History
Scottish Postal History
Aerophilately
Open Philately
Picture Postcards
Cinderella
Literature – Books and Catalogues
Literature – Periodicals, Journals etc
Best Presentation
Best First Time Entrant
Best Host Society Display`

Carson Trophy
William Ferris Memorial Trophy
Bridge of Allan Trophy
Scottish Thematic Rose Bowl
Glasgow 800 Cup
Bruce Auckland Centennial Quaich
Aerophilatelic Shield
Iain T. Boyle Vase
Scottish Postcard Trophy
Jean Osborne Cinderella Award
Robson Lowe Award for Literature
The James S. Merrylees Quaich
Dr. Hirst Bowl
Cowell Salver
The Robert Burns Quaich

Dos and Don'ts of the National Exhibition

The following comments have been provided in consultation with experienced exhibitors and judges to offer additional advice and explanation in respect of philatelic exhibits. To the uninitiated the Rules and Guidelines issued by the various philatelic bodies that govern competitive philately do not often give as much detail as the exhibitor may wish. These additional notes are designed to give the exhibitor guidance as to how the judges interpret the existing rules and guidance and how to avoid falling foul of what experience judges and exhibitors would regard as basic mistakes.

They are grouped under a number of headings.

Plans

- A Plan is essential for any exhibit. It gives a structure to the exhibit and is a fundamental in the marking of Treatment. The Plan need not be the detailed plan often associated with thematic exhibits. It could be a simple sentence outlining the three or four sections of a one frame exhibit. It could be essentially a table of contents on the title page

Demonstrating your Knowledge

- An exhibitor is expected to demonstrate his or her own knowledge throughout the exhibit. If an item is unusual or rare or 'only one known' etc; tell the judges it is. If you know that this was the first flight cover, or a postmark predates the known reference book by e.g. three months, then say so.
- It is part of the skill of exhibiting to bring to the attention to the judges in the write-up special items in the exhibit. Consider red outlines or red dots or other colours or markings. Make sure any such indicator is referenced in the introductory page.
- If the judges are unfamiliar with a subject then your help is needed to guide them with it. In contrast if they are experts in the subject then they expect you to understand your exhibit. If you don't demonstrate that, they may doubt your knowledge.

Permissible Material

- Items used, other than in Social Philately and Picture Postcard exhibits, must, in general, be issued by a postal authority. Illustrations on privately produced covers have no philatelic merit and will not gain any marks.
- It is acceptable for a non-philatelic item to appear on the introductory page.
- Scans of material, if the original is not present, are treated as part of the write-up.
- In thematic exhibits it is not advisable to use used stamps if mint versions are readily available.

Thematic & Postal History sub-class 2C (formerly Social Philately)

- Writing-up should be kept to a minimum, sufficient only to connect items to the theme.
- Using a different font or script for philatelic comments aids the judges in spotting these items.

Presentation

- Ensure that your exhibit is on uniform pages of good quality. It is advisable not to mix odd horizontal pages with standard vertical ones. See Rule 5 for the maximum sheet size.
- Make sure all items are securely fastened to the page.
- Ensure that the quality of the protectors does not detract from the appearance of the exhibit.
- Spelling and grammatical errors/mistakes will only lose marks if it affects the ability of the judges to understand the exhibit.
- If a postmark is being used to illustrate an item, the full stamp must be shown, even if the item is windowed.
- Blocks of modern stamp are superfluous. Only where there is philatelic rarity should blocks of stamps be used e.g. with older stamps.
- Postal Stationery items should normally be displayed in full. It is acceptable to overlap several items of postal stationery on the same page provided the relevant markings are not obscured.
- Where the exhibitor wishes to show the reverse of an item (perhaps in a thematic entry to show the relevant postal part or in postal history where there are markings on both sides) this may be shown as a photocopy at 75% size. Postmarks may be reproduced at full size.