

Photographic Alliance of Great Britain AWARDS FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC MERIT



The Girl In The Shawl by Jay Hallsworth

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APM LEAFLET 1 Supplement (FAQ&A)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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. Acceptance into one exhibition and rejection from the next is not unusual. Over the longer term these fluctuations should even out.

Even judges are human ..

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**.

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 Adjudicator but if two or more Adjudicators 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 too 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. By the same token an image may score **more** than it did previously.

Neither adjudicating panel is necessarily right or wrong. Perhaps the first panel averaged out a little high and the second averaged a little low. The image is still borderline - sometimes it will get a passing score, sometimes it will not. A picture which meets our requirements 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, although this has seldom generated a complaint.

We work very hard to ensure consistency. Our Adjudicators 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 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 will be considered.

Q3. How can a photograph with several Exhibition Acceptances not be up to the DPAGB or EPAGB Standard which is based on Exhibition Standard?

A3. We must put some label on the Award to describe our requirement to achieve the DPAGB but there is no such thing as a consistent “Exhibition Standard”. Some Exhibitions accept up to 40% or more 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 that it meets our requirement for the Award. Exhibition Acceptances and even Medals will not be considered.

It is our highly experienced Adjudicators who define what the PAGB requirement is based on the information given in this leaflet and, of course, 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 several exhibitions does not necessarily mean that the image meets our requirements.

Also, the audience may not be aware that the version of the picture submitted is not necessarily the version which won the medal, nor that it may have secured the Award in a limited “specialist” section, nor how long ago the medal was awarded. Perhaps it was entered to a Salon as a PDI, but the Adjudicators are assessing a print. Perhaps it is even a different, not so well executed print. Over the years, we have observed many examples of this happening.

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If our Award for Photographic Merit was made for success in Exhibitions, we wouldn’t need you to submit work to our Adjudicators.

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

A5. We must put a descriptive label on the Award to describe our requirement to achieve the CPAGB, 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 the PAGB requirement is, based on the information given in this leaflet, and, of course, 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 for success in your Club, we wouldn't need you to submit work to our Adjudicators.

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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 is 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, in particular, are genres which have dramatically improved. There are also fashion changes and there are subjects and styles which may score lower today than in earlier years. The APM seek to reflect what is happening at Club and Exhibition level.

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

A7. We must have a suitable print exactly reflecting the requirement, 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, presentations and in our Recorded Lectures.

Q8. What is the Review?

A8. After every section of every Awards Adjudication the Chairman of the Adjudicators, together with an experienced team of judges, reviews the “near miss” applications. This is not an attempt to undermine the work of the Adjudicators but recognises that the system of voting can sometimes lead to “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 or more for Credit, 280 or more for Distinction and 430 or more for Master.

Q10. How is the review conducted?

A10. A sympathetic stance is taken. The review team will look at every picture and add points 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.

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 cannot change the decision but who is 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 always make themselves available at the end of each day and will be happy to look at your work at that time. Surprisingly few people take this opportunity.

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, GB Trophies and the Masters of Print.

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

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Please note that, although there is nothing to prevent you showing your pictures to an Adjudicator, we advise those who are already empaneled to

avoid detailed discussion with prospective entrants prior to the event.

Several Federations have a 1:1 Mentoring Scheme. Please be wary of placing too much reliance on scores you may have achieved at a “Mock Adjudication” organised by your Federation or Club.

Q15. Are there any suitable workshops?

A15. Federations often run such workshops. The PAGB will pay the travelling expenses to allow the Chairman and/or other members of the APM team to attend Federation Workshops with images 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

The PAGB runs an Online Advisory Service. Please see APM Leaflet 7

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 our immediate review has ensured that nobody has ever failed who should have passed. Since we only review entries which have not achieved the passing score, we cannot say that nobody has passed who might have failed.

Q17. How are the judges selected and would 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. Normally two of the Adjudicators will be drawn from the most experienced judges in the APM team.

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, but this is not always possible.

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 continuity.

Q18. What other information can the PAGB provide?

A18. Some Federations have a “mentoring” service, and we recommend those – you should contact your Federation Awards Officer in the first instance. The PAGB also runs an Online Advisory Service. <http://www.thepagb.org.uk/awards/apm-advice-service/>

APM Guidance Leaflets are available from the PAGB Library on our website at <http://www.thepagb.org.uk/library/>

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 “advisers”. Information about APM Advisory Workshops 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

Q19. If I apply for MPAGB unsuccessfully but score well enough, can I be awarded the EPAGB?

A19. These are entirely separate Levels of Award which must be entered specifically and there is no “fall back” from any Level to the Level below, in the same way as there we have never offered a “fall back” from an unsuccessful DPAGB to CPAGB.

Q20. Can I use images from my BPAGB for CPAGB or images from my DPAGB or EPAGB for MPAGB?

A20. Yes, but remember that you are probably looking for scores over 24 at the lower level to be confident that they will score sufficiently high at the next level..

Q20. Why can't I use images from my DPAGB for EPAGB?

A20. The EPAGB is a separate challenge, designed to show your improvement, and this would not be achieved using the same images.