



Rules for Pipe Band Competitions

Status: January 2021

1 General

The interpretation of all rules for BAG Competitions is the responsibility of the BAG board and / or the Band-Board on its behalf. If there are doubts about the interpretation, the Band concerned should report to the BAG. All Bands and their Players are obliged to follow these rules in a sense of Fair Play and to make truthful statements accordingly.

Band dress is highland dress or other traditional clothing for Bagpipe Players (Bagad, Gaiteros and military uniforms for armies with Pipe Bands).

In order to participate in a BAG Competition in Germany, a Band membership in a national association such as the BAG as of Grade 4 or higher is mandatory. A corresponding membership for Grade 5 is appreciated, but not mandatory.

The BAG reserves the right to exercise unannounced checks at any time to ensure compliance of the rules.

2 Grades

The BAG offers Grade 5 in addition to the Grades of the RSPBA. This Grade is intended to make it easier for new or inexperienced Bands to enter the Competition Scene.

Grade 4 and Grade 3 are divided into 4B and 4A or 3B and 3A in very large Competitions in Scotland, the so-called "majors". German Bands are classified accordingly.

In Grade 4, in addition to the Standard Competition, the RSPBA is running a so-called "Grade 4 - MSR" Competition, which aims to improve comparability, the musical performance as well as the training of Bands on the basis of prescribed tunes and defined presentation forms. The BAG offers these at the BAG Competitions in Germany. It is obligatory for all participating Grade 4 Bands to play Grade 4-March or Grade 4-MSR.

Competing in Other Grades

It is possible for Bands from Grade 4 and higher to additionally compete in other Grades than their own. This means the next higher Grade as well as Open Grade, but only as long as the Band fulfils the minimum Player requirement and has the ability to play the required music. It is up to the Competition Organiser whether or not to allow any Band to participate in the corresponding higher Grade. If the Organiser allows it, then it is permissible. Any Band (except Grade 5) is allowed to participate in Open Grade if it is offered.

Requirements for each Grade

Grade 5

- minimum 4 Pipers, 1 Side Drummer, 1 Bass or Tenor Drummer
- 6 Parts in Quick March Tempo (Marches of any time signature, change of time signature is permitted, no tempo change, 3 Marches with 2 Parts or 1 March with 4 Parts and 1 March with 2 Parts)
- playing while marching into the Competition Circle with changing formation is not mandatory. The Band may start the performance directly in circle formation
- this event is open to Grade 5 Bands

Grade 4 – March

- minimum 6 Pipers, 2 Side Drummers, 1 Bass Drummer
- 8 parts in Quick March Tempo (Marches of any time signature, change of time signature is permitted, not tempo change)
- this event is open to Grade 4A und Grade 4B Bands

Grade 4 – MSR

- minimum 6 Pipers, 2 Side Drummers, 1 Bass Drummer –
- Current RSPBA regulations are recommended for Grade 4A MSR. In addition to the Tunes of the "RSPBA Prescribed Tune List" others are permitted (1 March with 4 Parts or 2 Marches with 2 Parts each, 1 Strathspey with 4 Parts or 2 Strathspeys with 2 Parts each, 1 Reel with 4 Parts or 2 Reels with 2 Parts each)
- this event is open to Grade 4A and Grade 4B Bands

Grade 3

- minimum 6 Pipers, 2 Side Drummers, 1 Bass Drummer
- Medley of 3 to 5 minutes (selected tunes must vary in time signature and playing tempo)
- this event is open to Grade 3A and Grade 3B Bands, as well as Grade 4A and Grade 4B Bands, who want to compete one Grade higher

Grade 2

- minimum 6 Pipers, 2 Side Drummers, 1 Bass Drummer
- MSR (March, Strathspey and Reel, minimum 4 Parts each)
- this event is open to Grade 2 Bands, as well as Grade 3A and Grade 3B Bands, who want to compete one Grade higher

Open Grade

- minimum 6 Pipers, 2 Side Drummers, 1 Bass
- Medley of 3-6 minutes (selected tunes must vary in time signature and playing tempo)
- this event is open to all participating Bands except for those competing in Grade 5

3 Judging

The German Competitions are considered to be „Minor Competitions“. Maximal one Piping and one Drumming Adjudicator per Grade is required and permissible (thus no Ensemble Adjudicator).

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The musical performance is evaluated. The Bands are ranked not only for Piping, but also for Drumming. The ranking of the Piping is doubled and then added to that of the Drumming. This results in a score for the Band. The Band with the lowest score wins.

In the event of a tie, the Band with the better result in Piping wins ("Piping Preference", must be abbreviated to "PP" next to the points).

In addition to the Band evaluation, a prize for the best Drum Corps can be awarded for each Competition. The Drum Corps with the best rating in Drumming in each Grade receives it.

Furthermore, regardless of the musical performance, the appearance of the Band can be evaluated in "Marching and Discipline". This is usually taken over by a third judge. The appearance of a Band should have no influence on the results of the musical performance.

4 Regular Players and Guest Players

A list of Regular Players for the current Season must be submitted to the Bandboard in the first quarter of the year. In the case of a first participation of a Band the list must be submitted before the registration deadline of their first Competition. An individual Player may only be listed once as a Regular Player. If someone enters a commitment in an additional Band, the Player may only compete there as a Guest Player.

The number of allowed Guest Players is equal to the value of 20% of the total Players (including the Guest Players). If this value is not an integer, it will always be rounded up. For example, 4 Guest Players would be permitted with a total of 18 Players.

At a Competition, each Band must produce a complete list of their Players, including the name of the Pipe Major and Leading Drummer, as well as the name, date of birth and instrument (Pipe, Side, Tenor, Bass) of all Players, including Guest Players. Guest Players must be indicated in the list. For this purpose, the Player is marked with the letter "G". The list of Players must be presented to the Organisers before the Competition.

It is not allowed for a person to compete in a Competition event in two or more different Bands using the same instrument. Exceptions are made for Pipe Majors or Leading Drummers, who are allowed to play in a Band of a higher Grade, although not as Pipe Major or Leading Drummer.

5 Bandboard & Grading

All Board Members should have at least five years experience as a Pipe Major, Pipe Sergeant or Leading Drummer in a competing Band; or have equivalent RSPBA qualifications; or be an experienced Band Player and likewise achieved outstanding soloist results.

Applications for Band Regrading should be submitted to the Band Board. Gradings are normally decided at the end of a Season, usually in the fourth quarter of a calendar year.

However, if necessary up or down-grading can be declared during a running Competition Season.

A Board Member may not vote on the Grading of his/her own Band as this is considered to be biased. The same applies to Bands he/she regularly teaches. In such a case, an unbiased person from the Board of Directors or Solo Board takes over the Board Member's duties for the respective Band, provided they have the qualifications mentioned above. In addition, suitable candidates within the Band Scene may be consulted. In the case of a tie, the Band remains in the old Grade. A new Band may personally request to start its Competition career in Grade 5 or Grade 4B. Otherwise, reclassification to a higher or lower Grade can be granted for the following reasons:

- the Band constantly presents good or bad results for over at least two Seasons **and** demonstrates a playing quality appropriate to the target Grade
- the Band demonstrates exceptionally good or bad results regardless of duration and/or playing quality which shows an obvious miscalculation of the current level
- the Band has reformed, carries the same name but has mostly new or different Players.

However, individual Competition results alone may not necessarily result in a Regrading, due to the fact that the rankings depend on the number of Competitors in a single Competition. A single first place can not be the only basis for an upgrade. The principles of Regrading apply to all Grades. All Bands affected by changes are to be contacted prior to public release of the grading results in order to discuss the Regrading with them. If there are valid reasons for not Regrading, the Band remains in the previous Grade.

6 Alternative Formations

Quartets

A quartet is made up of 4 pipers. Membership in a national pipe band organisation is not obligatory. Beyond this, the same rules as for bands will be applied in each grade, except for Grade 5 quartets being permitted to also play a grade up.

Quintets

A quintet consists of 3 Pipers, 1 Side Drummer and 1 Bass or Tenor Drummer. A membership in a National Organisation is not obligatory. Otherwise, the same conditions for Bands apply for each Grade with the exemption that a Grade 5 Band may also play upgrade.

Mini Bands

A Mini Band consists of 4-5 Pipers, 2 Side Drummers and 1 Bass and 0-2 Tenor Drummers. 2 guest players are permitted as long as they do not play the same instrument (i.e. one guest player may play the pipes, the other drums). Beyond this, the same rules as for bands will be applied in each grade.

Footnote for Participants and Organisers of Competitions:

The aim of the BAG for the Competitions is the contact between the Bands and with the audience, mutual benchmarking, as well as the development of experience. The latter is for example achieved by playing as many individual Competitions as possible at a single event.

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The BAG recommends that the Organisers in Germany offer as many of the above-mentioned Competitions as possible.

The Board and the Pipe Band workgroup of the Bagpipe Association of Germany e.V.