



# PRESTON PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

## FAQs - External Exhibition Competitions (Salons)

The following covers non commercial events available to amateur photographers. Reference is made to some of the external organisations that provide patronage to External competitions and to the Distinctions that these organisations award. For information on these see the separate set of FAQs on [External Organisations](#) and [Distinctions](#)

### 1. Why would I want to enter External Competitions?

Good question because with very few exceptions there are rarely valuable prizes to be won. However, medals, ribbons and certificates are awarded. Acceptances gained in UK and International competitions count towards the many Distinctions awarded by some of the external organisations that sponsor these events. These are recognised universally as having achieved a given standard of photography amongst your peers. Alternatively, you may just enjoy competition and want to test your work against more established workers. On the other hand, you may see it as a means of stretching your ability to take your work to another level. There is no doubt that external competition exposes you to high quality work and ideas.

### 2. Who Organises External Competitions

Most are organised by Photographic Clubs and societies like our own. The exceptions are a few competitions organised by Regional bodies such as the L&CPU or its UK and worldwide equivalents.

#### What Sort of Competitions Can I Enter?

Some competitions are for digital images only, some are Print only and some are for both. Usually there are sections for both mono and colour. Occasionally there will be a dedicated "creative" section. Some exhibitions still maintain a section for slides but these are dwindling. There are probably three types of competition:

**Regional Competitions** – are held by the regional organising bodies for clubs and/or individual club members from within their region. In our case these are organised and run by the L&CPU who publish details on their WEB site.



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**UK National Competitions** – are competitions held in the UK for photographers that reside in the UK. Entrants do not have to be a member of a UK club. These are normally held annually under the sponsorship of British Photographic Exhibitions and occasionally the PAGB who require commonality of approach and a minimum standard of organisation from clubs wishing to hold them. BPE and PAGB medals Ribbons and certificates are awarded to those participants gaining the highest marks.

The BPE also awards a series of Distinctions to participants meeting set criteria. The PAGB does not, preferring to award Distinctions against a different criteria regime. Use the links at the beginning of this FAQ sheet to see separate FAQs for a description of the BPE and PAGB organisations and for a resume of the available Distinctions. Our nearest example of a UK National competition is the Southport Annual.

**International Competitions** – are competitions organised and run by clubs around the world, entry to which is open to anyone – including on occasion, professional photographers. These competitions are either held under the sponsorship and rules of FIAP or the Photographic Society of America or both.

Occasionally, the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) in the UK provides additional sponsorship, usually for competitions organised by UK or Commonwealth clubs. FIAP, PSA and RPS medals, ribbons and certificates are awarded for the top rated images and acceptances in FIAP and PSA sponsored competitions count towards FIAP and PSA distinctions. Most of these competitions are annual events but one or two are held bi-annually. UK examples are the open salons held by Southampton PS, Bristol PS and Smethwick PS. Unusually, the Northern Counties Photo Federation also holds an International open salon. The Northern Counties PF is the sister organisation to the L&CPU and represents Yorkshire, the North East of England and Cumbria.

### 3. How Do External Competitions Differ From Club Competitions

There are probably three major differences. These are in the way that the competition is judged.

Firstly, unlike club competitions, there is a panel of three judges instead of just the one. Secondly, entries go through a two stage process. All entries are marked but only entries attaining a minimum mark are “accepted” for exhibition. This mark can vary but is always published after the event. Award winners (medal winners etc.) are then selected from the “accepted” group.



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Finally, the method of judging is different. A club judge will consider work submitted to him or her over a period of time. Panels convened for external competitions are exposed to each image for just a number of seconds. This normally happens twice, once to accept/reject and then to choose the award winners from the acceptances. Whereas a club judge has the time to appreciate subtleties in an image and we have heard how their opinions can change over time as they review the overall entries, External competition judges have to make a snap decision. This means that when submitted to an external competition, the initial impact your image makes becomes more important.

## 4. How Do I Find and Enter an External Competition

Most National and all International salons each have a dedicated WEB site from which you can download Entry Forms, Competition Rules and information on entry fees. The easiest way to find these sites is to visit the competition pages of the BPE, FIAP, the PSA and the RPS where you will find listings of sponsored competitions taking place within a given year, usually with links to the sites in question. Some UK external competitions still don't have a Web site. In these instances the BPE generally provides a download of the associated rules and entry forms.

The Club will include a link to the appropriate FIAP and PSA pages and will from time to time publish details of the more interesting up and coming competitions on PPS Forum Website.

There is always a deadline date for entries.

The more enlightened clubs have invested in software that allows you to register and in the case of digital images, upload your entry on line. The same software will then calculate your entry fee and link you directly to a PAYPAL account for the Salon in question. This is practical, safe and in the case of digital entries, means that you can wait until the last minute.

Prints and slides need to be posted. For overseas competitions, this means ensuring that there is enough time for delivery. Postal delivery outside of Europe and the US can take weeks. Increasingly, to ease posting, Print entries do not always need to be mounted.



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Non UK competitions that don't use this system require entries on CD with a paper (sometimes electronic) entry form. Payment for these can be difficult. Cash through the post is not usually accepted and in some countries, is illegal. Only personal cheques drawn on a bank based within that country are normally acceptable and so bank transfer is usually preferred.

For most UK competitions, entries are required on a CD with a paper entry form. Payment is by cheque or postal order. This is beginning to change as one or two clubs invest in on-line systems.

*It is worth reading the rules carefully to avoid rejection out of hand. Image and print size is important. In the case of digital images in particular, file format (usually JPEG) and the way you format your title must be in accordance with the rules. Many clubs are now employing software that uses the title format to carry out an automatic sort of the entries for marking and results notification purposes.*

## 5. How do I Receive My Results?

Results are normally notified by a set date. Depending on the competition in question, you will either receive a post card or an e-mail. Additionally, if your image(s) is accepted, it will be listed and may be shown on the salon WEB site and in the salon Catalogue. The Catalogue may be printed or it may take the form of a CD in which case your accepted image will also be included. The entry fee covers the cost of these but occasionally a CD is available in addition to the printed catalogue. There is normally an extra charge for this.

## 6. What Does It Cost?

Fees differ significantly. Most competitions limit entries to four images per section (colour/mono/nature etc.). In UK competitions, the first four images will cost of the order of £6 (in 2010) with additional sections being charged at a lower rate of around £4. Some international competitions set their fees at around this level also but some charge more. Much depends on the standard of catalogue that is produced. High quality images in print can be expensive.



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Sometimes you will find that several clubs have banded together although each club will judge the overall entry as a separate Salon. These are usually referred to as "Circuits". The advantage is that you only have to send one entry to enter several competitions<sup>1</sup>. The disadvantage is that the single entry fee is correspondingly higher and at a given point in time, is less affordable (if you need to justify these things).

**1 - This sort of entry also has the advantage of giving you a more balanced view of your work. If an image fails in one competition, the temptation is not to use it again but in practice, if an image is accepted in say three out of five Salons in a circuit, you will have gained a more accurate view of its merits.**

Gaining Acceptances in External competitions can be fun, improve the standard of your Photography and give you a real sense of achievement. Give it a try and remember and if at first you don't achieve an acceptance, don't give up. Judges are only human and one judge's opinion will be different to the next.