

## **APC Classification Standard - Athlete Evaluation**

### **1. Standard Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this standard is to:
  - 1.1.1 Outline the technical and operational procedures of the Australian Paralympic Committee (APC) with regards to Athlete Evaluation in Australia, in accordance with the requirements of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Classification Code and its Standards (Code)
- 1.2 This document details the procedures that are common to all sports, providing for flexibility as it may be applied to sports within Australia.
- 1.3 This document is applicable to all athletes eligible for Para-Competition i.e. athletes with a vision, physical or intellectual impairment.
- 1.4 The APC will only recognize Athlete Evaluations that are conducted in line with this standard and the APC Classification policy.
- 1.5 In the event that this Standard fails to provide for a matter in respect of which there is provision in the IPC Code, the provisions appearing in the IPC Code shall apply and be regarded as being part of this Standard

### **2 General principles of Athlete Evaluation**

- 2.1 Athlete Evaluation is the process by which athletes are assessed with reference to the impact of impairment on their ability to compete in a specific sport. The process results in an athlete being allocated both a sport class and sport class status, in accordance with the International Classification Rules of the International Federation in their sport.
- 2.2 The International Federation Classification rules and processes for Athlete Evaluation should be adhered to where possible at a national level.
- 2.3 A minimum age and level of sport competence may be established by the National Federation in order for athletes to access classification. It is recommended that this be restricted to the same age at which able bodied athletes are able to compete for medals, placings and standings.
- 2.4 National Athlete Evaluation can only be conducted by individuals recognised by the APC and National Federation as classifiers for that sport. The duties and responsibilities of classifiers are outlined in the APC Standard-Classifier Training and Certification.

### **3 Role of the APC**

- 3.1 The APC is responsible for the monitoring of Australian classification activities to ensure it conforms to the Code.
- 3.2 The APC will provide expertise, support and generic resources to assist National Federations, and their members, to deliver classifications according to this standard.

#### **4 Expectations of National Federations**

- 4.1 The APC expects that its members will comply with the Code, relevant International Federation classification rules, the APC Classification Policy and this standard in relation to Athlete Evaluation by way of:
  - 4.1.1 The development and implementation of organisational specific classification policy and processes for its membership that relate to Australian athlete evaluation;
  - 4.1.2 Structuring national competition in accordance with the classes defined by the International Federation classification rules;
  - 4.1.3 Ensuring that athletes hold a recognized national classification prior to competing at any international competition;
  - 4.1.4 The development and circulation of sport specific classification information and education for their athletes, program staff, member organisations and broader community in relation to this standard.

#### **5. Levels of Classification in Australia**

- 5.1 International Classification
  - 5.1.1 International classification is a sport specific classification process, carried out by authorised International classifiers, according to the rules, policies and procedures of the relevant International Federation.
  - 5.1.2 International Classification may occur in Australia, when internationally approved or sanctioned competitions are applied for and subsequently hosted in Australia. In this case, the International Federation has the responsibility and authority over the classification processes, in line with the IPC Classification Code and the rules of the relevant International Federation.
  - 5.1.3 International Classification is relevant only to athletes who are current or future potential members of High Performance Para-Preparation Program squads. Approval for athletes outside of this group, is at the National federations discretion.
  - 5.1.5 International classifications supersede any national classifications.
- 5.2 National Classification

- 5.2.1 National Classification is a sport-specific classification process, carried out by an authorised Australian classification panel, as per the composition, procedures and classification profiles of the International Federation Classification Rules.
  - 5.2.2 National classifications utilise the same sports class and status as determined by each International Federation.
  - 5.2.3 National classifications are only recognized where Classifiers are certified by the APC.
  - 5.2.4 National Classifications are valid for competition for athletes competing within events in Australia only.
  - 5.2.5 Nationally classified athletes are considered to be New (N) status internationally, until such time as they have undergone international classification.
- 5.3 Provisional Classification
- 5.3.1 Provisional Classification is a process that may allow sports to offer classification for athletes who do not have access to a full sport specific national classification panel. Provisional classification allows for potential athletes to gain an indication of their classification for their specific sport.
  - 5.3.2 Provisional classifications can only be allocated by a recognised classifier in that sport, in line with the procedures and class profiles of the International Federation classification rules.
  - 5.3.3 Provisional classifications, are generally not considered valid for national competition, but may be valid for local and state competition.
  - 5.3.4 Records, rankings and Australian national team selection are not open to athletes with a provisional classification, unless by prior approval of the APC and National Federation.
  - 5.3.5 All provisional classifications should be time limited to a 12 month period.
  - 5.3.6 Provisional classification is superseded by a National classification.

## **6. Sport class allocation**

- 6.1 Sport class is a category or class defined by each International Federation in which athletes are grouped according to activity limitation resulting from their impairment. The resulting sport class provides the structure for a sport's competition format.
- 6.2 Each International Federation has specific set of impairments and eligibility criteria which determines an athletes' eligibility to compete in that sport. If

an Athlete fails to meet the eligibility criteria in their sport, the athlete will be allocated the class Not Eligible (NE) in that particular sport, and is not eligible to compete within that Para-sports competition. An athlete may meet eligibility criteria in one sport, but not in another.

- 6.3 An athlete may change class under a number of conditions:
- 6.3.1 The athlete's condition changes, due to a number of factors such as medical intervention, age or nature of underlying health condition.
  - 6.3.2 International Federation Classification rules are modified which changes an athlete's allocated sport class and/or sport class status.
  - 6.3.3 A lead classifier for the sport lodges a protest under exceptional circumstances. In this scenario, International classifiers have the jurisdiction over International level Classifications and National classifiers over national classifications. Refer *Protests Under Exceptional Circumstances: APC Classification Standard-Protests and Appeals*.

## 7. Sport Class Status Allocation

- 7.1 A sport class status is a category allocated to each athlete's classification, which defines the status of their sport class and is always allocated as part of the classification process.
- 7.2 The sport class status determines which athletes:
- 7.2.1 Have not previously been classified
  - 7.2.2 Require a review of their sport class
  - 7.2.3 Are not required to attend classification
  - 7.2.4 Have the opportunity to protest their sport class and sport class status (Refer to *APC Classification Standard: Protests and Appeals*.)
- 7.3 The following Sport Class Status' are defined by the IPC Classification Code:
- 7.3.1 **New (N)**  
N status applies to new athletes that have not been previously classified at that level of competition.  
For International Competitions, athletes who hold a National level classification are considered as International New status.  
N status athletes must complete evaluation prior to competing at any national or International level competitions, where classification is held.
  - 7.3.2 **Review (R)**  
This status applies to athletes that have been previously classified by a Classification Panel, but for reasons as determined by the classification panel require a review of their sport class. A review sport class is considered valid for competition, but is subject to review at a later date. A review status classification may change upon re-evaluation. Review status is typically applied to:
    - athletes who have not reached physical maturity

- athletes who have not reached training maturity
- athletes whose condition is deteriorating
- athletes whose condition is fluctuating
- athletes with a new injury
- athlete with borderline classifications

Athletes with Review status may be allocated by the Classification Panel a Fixed Review Date, which means the athlete does not need to represent for classification until the date of review.

### 7.3.3 Confirmed (C)

This status applies to athletes that have previously been evaluated by a full Classification Panel for their sport and the panel has determined that their sport class will not change. They are not required to complete further classification for competitions, with the exception of re-evaluation due to:

- Protests Lodged Under Exceptional Circumstances
- Instances where the athletes medical condition no longer reflects the class allocated (Medical review process)
- The International Classification Rules for the sport have changed

7.4 At a National level the following sport class status codes are allocated to all classifications, and are allocated in accordance with the principles outlined in 7.3

- National New (NN)
- National Review (NR), with or without fixed review date
- National Confirmed (NC)

7.5 Additionally in Australia the following sport class status may apply:

- Provisional Review (PrR)  
Provisional Review applies to athletes who have undergone a Provisional classification, as per the conditions outlined in 5.3.

## 8. Suspension of the Athlete Evaluation process

8.1 A Classification Panel may suspend Athlete Evaluation in one or more of the following circumstances:

- 8.1.1 the Athlete fails to meet any of the requirements outlined in these procedures
- 8.1.2 the Classification Panel considers that the use (or non-use) of any medication disclosed by the Athlete will affect its ability to conduct Athlete Evaluation in a fair manner;
- 8.1.3 an Athlete fails to produce sufficient medical documentation and the Classification Panel considers that the absence of such medical documentation will affect its ability to conduct Athlete Evaluation in a fair manner;
- 8.1.4 if an Athlete has a health condition (of any nature or description) that limits or prohibits the Athlete from complying with requests

- made by the Classification Panel during the course of Athlete Evaluation, which the Classification Panel considers will affect its ability to conduct Athlete Evaluation in a fair manner (e.g. pain);
- 8.1.5 if an Athlete refuses to comply with any reasonable instructions given to him or her by a Classification Panel (or a Chief Classifier or the relevant Head of Classification) during the course of Athlete Evaluation to an extent that Classification Panel considers that this means it cannot conduct Athlete Evaluation in a fair manner. Such behavior shall be referred to as a case of Non-Cooperation. (see IPC Classification Code, Article 10);
  - 8.1.6 if an Athlete's presentation of his or her abilities is inconsistent with other information made available to the Classification Panel to the extent that the Classification Panel considers that this means it cannot conduct Athlete Evaluation in a fair manner.
- 8.2 If a Classification Panel suspends an Athlete Evaluation the Classification Panel will explain the reason for the suspension to the Athlete and detail the remedial action that is required on the part of the Athlete, and written confirmation of the suspension be recorded on sport classification documentation.
- 8.3 The classification panel may result the athlete evaluation should remedial action by the athlete be taken.
- 8.4 If the Athlete fails to take the remedial action required to the Classification Panel's satisfaction the Athlete should be designated as "Classification Not Completed " (CNC) within the Classification Master List for the sport. This designation will preclude the Athlete from competing at any Competition until Athlete Evaluation is completed.

## **9. Organising Athlete Evaluation at Competitions**

- 9.1 The requirements for each sport's athlete evaluation processes are outlined in the specific International Federation classification rules. These processes should be followed at a national level.
- 9.2 The generic operational requirements for the delivery of national classification should follow the processes outlined in the APC Event Organizers Guide for National Classification [www.paralympic.org.au](http://www.paralympic.org.au)

## **10. General Athletes responsibilities for Evaluation**

- 10.1 All athletes shall familiarize themselves with their rights and obligations related to Classification, in accordance with the APC's Athlete Code of Conduct, IPC Code of Ethics and IPC Classification Code and responsibilities as outlined by the International Federation and National Federation for their sport.
- 10.2 Athletes must make themselves available to undertake classification where this is required for entry into competition, in accordance with the classification and competition rules for their sport.

- 10.3 Athletes must disclose information to their National Federation details of previous classifications, relevant medical information or assessments as requested.
- 10.4 Athletes must notify the relevant National Federation if their condition has changed. A failure to do so may result in disqualification from competition.
- 10.5 Athletes who do not cooperate to the best of their ability or intentionally misrepresents their skills through the classification process will be considered to be in violation of the sport rules. Such athletes may be barred from further national or international competition.

## **11 Athlete Representative during Evaluation**

- 11.1 Athletes may attend classification with a nominated athlete representative. In the case of national level classification this may be a parent, coach or other individual as nominated by the athlete.
- 11.2 All athletes under the age of 18 years, or those with an appointed guardian, must have an accompanying representative.
- 11.3 Should the athlete require an interpreter, this person may be in addition to the athlete representative.
- 11.4 Athlete representatives must conduct themselves according to the IPC Code of Ethics, relevant International Federation classification rules and APC Classification Policy. Athlete representatives, who do not adhere to the above, will be considered to be in violation of the sport rules. Such support personnel may be barred from further involvement in national or international competition.

## **12 Athlete consent for Evaluation**

- 12.1 All athletes must provide written consent prior to the classification process indicating their willingness to undergo classification and an agreement to provide full effort and co-operation in the classification process.
- 12.2 Athletes should be adequately briefed regarding the process of classification, as part of the consent process.
- 12.3 The consent for classification shall include the athlete's agreement to the following:
- Willingness to undergo a complete classification process, including all components as required by the specific sport
  - Co-operate and perform, to the best of their ability
  - Allow photographs and/or videotaping for classification purposes.
  - Acknowledgement that classifiers are not held liable for any pain or suffering experienced in the course of the evaluation.
  - For National level classifications, the consent process must also include

consent to share relevant information with identified third parties such as the APC, National Federation, competition organizers, health professional as deemed necessary for classification purposes.

### **13 Athlete Presentation for Evaluation**

- 13.1 Information regarding the classification opportunities and requirements for New (N) or Review (R) must be outlined in competition specific information. Where an athlete is required to attend classification as a requirement of the competition rules, the physical assessment must be commenced before the start of competition.
- 13.2 Athletes requested to attend evaluation must present themselves dressed appropriately, and bring all equipment and devices as required by their sport that they intend to use during the competition (eg, assistive devices, optical aids, competition wheelchair, prosthesis, orthoses, or any device essential to enable the athlete to compete).
- 13.3 Athletes should make available any relevant documentation as detailed in the respective International Federation Classification Rules that would assist the classification panel in their decision making e.g. diagnostic reports, vision assessments, X-rays. In the case of rare or uncommon diagnosis, athletes should always ensure that they provide relevant supporting specialist documentation, when presenting for evaluation.

### **14 Methods of Athlete Evaluation**

- 14.1 Classification typically involves the following methods of evaluation:
- Physical Assessment
  - Technical Assessment
  - Observation Assessment
- 14.1.1 Physical Assessment  
The physical assessment involve a variety of examinations and tests to establish parameters such as visual acuity, visual field, sports cognition, limb length, muscle strength, muscle tone and co-ordination, range of movement depending on the nature of the athlete's impairment and the relevance to the specific sport.
- 14.1.2 Technical Assessment  
The technical assessment is the process of evaluation of the sport specific skills under simulated conditions, prior to the commencement of competition e.g. shooting and rebounding in basketball, starts, strokes and turns in swimming
- 14.1.3 Observation Assessment  
Observation assessment involves observation of an athlete performing specific sport skills in the training and/or during competition, as per the International Federation Classification rules.



14.2 The classification panel may utilise video footage during any part of the classification process to assist in their decision making. Where video footage is critical to the decision making process this should be stored with the classification paperwork.

14.3 Findings from athlete evaluations are to be documented on a classification form for the sport and are to be made available to the athlete.

## **15 Notification of Classification outcomes**

15.1 Following the classification panel's decision on an athlete's sport class and sport class status and is soon as is practically possible, a member of the classification panel, shall verbally inform the athlete of the decision.

15.2 Information provided to the athlete shall include the:

- Athlete's sport class;
- Athlete's sport class status;
- Rationale for the decision; and
- Opportunities to Protest the decision.

15.3 The athlete may be accompanied by not more than one athlete representative and an interpreter (if required) during the notification of the decision.

15.4 At the end of each session during the Classification Evaluation Period, the Chief Classifier must convey the classification outcomes to the Organising Committee so that they can prepare start lists and make associated event management arrangements.

15.5 All National classification outcomes shall be confirmed in writing to the athlete, within four weeks of the decision.

## **16 Ineligibility Re-evaluation**

16.1 In circumstances where the classification panel determine an athlete Not Eligible (NE), the Athlete will be permitted to be reviewed by a second Classification Panel.

16.2 The second classification panel should consist of classifiers who were not involved in the initial NE allocation of sports class.

16.3 If the second classification panel, confirms that the athlete's sports class is Not Eligible, the athlete will not be permitted to compete, and will have no protest opportunities or further evaluation, unless the athlete changes in their condition, in which case the medical review process should be followed.

16.4 Should a second panel not be available for re-evaluation immediately following the athlete's previous classification, ineligibility re-evaluations

should be reviewed at the next available competition where classification takes place.

- 16.5 Athletes found Not Eligible through a provisional classification process are permitted to be reviewed by a National classification panel.

## **17 Medical Review of Classification**

- 17.1 Medical Review Request applies to the following situations where a change in an athlete's condition changes their impairment profile such as:

- athletes receive medical interventions
- athletes condition changes ie is progressive/fluctuating
- athlete's skeletal maturity (growth) changes

The athlete's impairment and function must have changed since last classification, to an extent that the athlete most likely does not fit his/her current Sport Class Profile anymore.

Examples of interventions include:

- Change of amputation level
- Change in spasticity eg Botox injections, medication;
- Change in joint range of movement eg tendon releases, Harrington rods or joint fixations to assist posture/stability;
- Corrective eye surgery in case of athletes with vision impairment

- 17.2 Any such applications for review must be accompanied by medical evidence.

- 17.3 Application for Review applies only to athletes with a classification of Confirmed Status or Review Status with Fixed Date for Review.

- 17.4 It is the athlete's responsibility for informing their sport of any change in condition. Failure to correctly notify the Sport within the designated timeframe indicated by their sport may be considered a case of intentional misrepresentation (see IPC Classification Code, section 11).

- 17.5 Approval processes for Medical reviews are the responsibility of the National Federation.

- 17.6 If the Review Request is accepted, the athlete's sport class status will be changed to Review status on the sport classification masterlist with immediate effect, and the athlete is required to undergo re-classification at the next available opportunity.

## **18 Classification Master Lists**

- 18.1 A Classification Master List will be maintained for each sport in Australia, where those classifications that are conducted in accordance with this standard. Only those classifications submitted to the Masterlist Administrator for the sport are to be included to the masterlist.

- 18.2 A summary version of the masterlist is to be published online via the National Federation website. The masterlist typically involves information such as athlete name, state, date of birth, sport class and sport status, and classification review date, where applicable.
- 18.3 Maintenance of the classification masterlist is the responsibility of the National Federation for the sport.
- 18.4 International Classification masterlists are the responsibility of the relevant International Federation.

## **19 Confidentiality of Classification Data**

- 19.1 Classification data should be stored confidentially. Electronic versions of data should be password protected.
- 19.2 Historical classification data should be made available to classifiers in the sport as required for conduct of classification activities.

## **20 Multiple Classifications**

- 20.1 Athletes with more than one impairment type may be eligible to hold multiple classifications in their sport, where they meet the minimal disability criteria for each impairment system. It is the responsibility of the International and National Federations to determine the conditions of competition entry for these athletes. Classification masterlists should list the classification for each impairment group relevant for athletes with multiple impairment types, where dual eligibility is permitted.
- 20.2 Athletes who compete in more than one sport will hold separate classifications for each sport, where they meet the minimal disability criteria in each sport.

## **21 Associated documents**

IPC Classification Code

[http://www.paralympic.org/export/sites/default/IPC/Reference\\_Documents/2008\\_2\\_Classification\\_Code6.pdf](http://www.paralympic.org/export/sites/default/IPC/Reference_Documents/2008_2_Classification_Code6.pdf)

APC Classification Policy ([www.paralympic.org.au](http://www.paralympic.org.au))

APC Classification Roles and Responsibilities in Australia ([www.paralympic.org.au](http://www.paralympic.org.au))

APC Classification Standard- Classifier Training and Certification ([www.paralympic.org.au](http://www.paralympic.org.au))

APC Classification Standard- Protests and Appeals ([www.paralympic.org.au](http://www.paralympic.org.au))

APC Classifier Handbook ([www.paralympic.org.au](http://www.paralympic.org.au))