

Classification 101

What is Classification?

Classification is a structure for competition. Paralympic athletes have an impairment in body structures and functions that leads to a competitive disadvantage in sport. Consequently, criteria are put in place to ensure that winning is determined by skill, fitness, power, endurance, tactical ability and mental focus, the same factors that account for success in sport for athletes who are able-bodied.

Classification is the process by which athletes are assessed by reference to the impact of impairment on their ability to compete in a specific sport.

International Classification Code [the “Code”]

In 2003, the International Paralympic Committee [IPC] developed a classification strategy with the overall objective to support and coordinate the ongoing development of accurate, reliable, consistent and credible sport focused classification systems and their implementation. The IPC Classification Code is a direct result of recommendations made in this strategy.

The IPC recognized the need for systems of classification that are evidence-based and explicitly mandates the development of such systems in Section 15 of the Code. This section establishes the taxonomic prerequisites needed for the development of evidence-based systems of classification.

The IPC continues to be committed to the development of evidence-based classification systems, so that athletes who enhance their competitive performance through effective training will not be moved to a class with athletes who have less activity limitation, but will be rewarded by becoming more competitive within the class they were allocated.

International Sport Class Status & Sport Class

The Code defines three (3) international sport class statuses for allocation following athlete evaluation. A sport class status is allocated to each athlete to indicate evaluation requirements and protest opportunities.

The three international sport class statuses are:

- N – New
- R – Review
- C – Confirmed

A sport class is a category defined by each International Federation [IF] in which athletes are categorized in reference to activity limitation resulting from impairment for that particular sport. Athletes are allocated a sport class (or sport classes as relevant) based on the classification rules of each IF. Ineligibility to compete is considered a sport class.

Classifiers & Classification Panels

A classifier is a person authorized as an official by an IF to evaluate athletes while serving as a member of a classification panel. Classifiers are trained and certified for a particular sport by the respective IF.

A classification panel is a group of classifiers empowered by the rules of the respective IF to evaluate athletes, allocate a sport class and designate a sport class status. International classification panels must include a minimum of two classifiers [an IF may require more than two classifiers constitute a classification panel].

The Code defines three (3) levels of classifier recognition internationally.

Trainee - An individual who is in the process of formal training by the IF, but who is not yet certified as a Classifier and may not be an appointed member of a Classification Panel at an international competition. This individual is unable to allocate an International sport class.

Level 1 - An individual who has successfully completed the formal training of the IF and has been certified to be a member of a Classification Panel at an international competition. This individual

may participate in the assignment of sport class with minimum supervision of more experienced classifiers.

Level 2 - An individual who has successfully completed the formal training of the IF and has demonstrated the appropriate level of experience as a Classifier in the relevant sport, as determined by the IF. This individual may participate in the assignment of sport class with no supervision from more experienced classifiers.

Each IF must establish the following positions:

Head of Classification: a classifier responsible for the direction, administration, coordination and implementation of classification matters for the IF.

Chief Classifier: a classifier responsible for the direction, administration, coordination and implementation of classification matters for a specific competition.

What is a protest?

A protest is the procedure by which a formal objection to an athlete's sport class is made and subsequently resolved. Protest procedures for each sport are included in the classification rules of the respective IF.

What is an appeal?

An appeal is the procedure by which a formal objection to the manner in which classification procedures have been conducted is submitted and subsequently resolved.

The International Paralympic Committee Board of Appeal on Classification [BAC] is the appeal body for the Paralympic Games.

National Classification System – U.S. Paralympics

It is incumbent upon each National Paralympic Committee (NPC) that is a signatory of the Code to ensure that national classification policies and procedures are in compliance with the Code.

The responsibilities of the NPC as per the Code include:

- Ensuring that classification rules conform with the Code;
- Developing and implementing a policy for its members to comply with the Code and establish procedures to address non-compliance with the Code;
- Promoting the development of a national classification strategy that includes education;
- Recommending to National Federations that individual National Federation Classification Rules should be in compliance with the Code.

The United States Olympic Committee (USOC) is the NPC and a signatory of the Code. All National classification policies and procedures will be implemented through the USOC's Paralympic Division (U.S. Paralympics).

As the NPC for the United States, and a signatory of the Code, U.S. Paralympics shall assume all governance for national classification.

Any classification conducted outside the scope of the National Classification Policies & Procedures will neither be recognized nor upheld in any official proceedings.

Organizations conducting classification in the USA outside of the scope of the National Classification Policies & Procedures may be sanctioned for non-compliance with the Code.

National Classification Policies & Procedures – U.S. Paralympics

The U.S. Paralympics Classification policies, procedures and documents outline national classification information and systems in compliance with the IPC's International Classification Code ["Code"]. The Code was approved by the IPC membership at the 2007 General Assembly, signed by member National Paralympic Committees and International Federations in September 2008, and implemented on March 12, 2010.

The three core documents of the U.S. Paralympics Classification strategy are available as PDF downloadable documents at www.usparalympics.org.

The USA Classification Policies and Procedures – GENERAL document addresses the aspects of classification that are applicable across all sports including governance; sport class statuses; protests, reviews and appeals; classification panels; and roles and responsibilities.

The USA Classification Policies and Procedures – LOC document includes information for local organizing committees that wish to conduct national classification at their competitions including how to request a classification panel, determination of athletes to be classified, facility needs, and roles and responsibilities.

The USA Classification Policies and Procedures – Education and Training document covers roles and responsibilities of the classifier, prerequisites for classifier training, levels of classifier certification and competency, and classifier training and education.

National Sport Class Status & Sport Class

National sport classes will strictly adhere to the guidelines set out by each respective IF. There will be no variation from the IPC/IF Sport Class system and the respective Sport Class designations in the national classification process.

The three national sport class statuses are:

- NN – National Classified
- NR – National Review
- NC – National Confirmed

National Classifiers & Classification Panels

National classification panels are defined on a sport by sport basis in the sport specific documents that supplement the USA Classification Policies and Procedures.

National classifiers, approved by U.S. Paralympics to conduct national classification within the United States, shall be designated with the following levels of education/certification:

USA Trainee

- An individual who is in process of classification training and education nationally by U.S. Paralympics
- May be appointed to a national classification panel and allocate a national sport class

IF/IPC Trainee (as per international designation described above)

Level 1 (as per international designation described above)

Level 2 (as per international designation described above)

U.S. Paralympics shall establish the following positions (national):

Head Domestic Classifier (HDC): A classifier who has international authorization (Level 2) for the respective sport and who will work at the direction of U.S. Paralympics to facilitate Code compliance for the sport within the United States. Specific roles and responsibilities of the HDC are outlined in the U.S. Paralympics Classifier Training & Education Manual.

Chief Classifier (CC): The Classifier responsible for the administration, direction, co-ordination and implementation of Classification matters for a specific competition.

Online Resources

International Paralympic Committee – www.paralympic.org

U.S. Paralympics – www.usparalympics.org