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## **UK Athlete Classification Code**

**March 2019**



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## **UK Athlete Classification Code**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Scope and Purpose of the UK Athlete Classification Code

The UK Athlete Classification Code supports the implementation of the International Paralympic Committee's Athlete Classification Code and International Standards by following the IPC Model of Best Practice: National Classification. For further information on these documents please refer to: <https://www.paralympic.org/classification/2015-athlete-classification-code>

This UK Athlete Classification Code applies to the British Paralympic Association (BPA), its member organisations, national agencies that support the BPA and its members, as well as to identified groups of individuals - all of which are explicitly referenced in this document.

The purpose of this Code is twofold:

1. To clarify organisational responsibility for classification in the UK
2. To clarify individuals' responsibilities to help protect the integrity of Paralympic Sport in the UK and improve British athletes' experience of classification.

The effective implementation of the UK Athlete Classification Code will produce an ethical framework and culture towards classification, protecting athletes' rights, supporting athletes to meet their responsibilities as well as safeguard athletes' welfare in relation to classification.

### 1.2 Definition of Classification

Classification is a defining feature of Paralympic Sport. It aims to minimise the impact of eligible impairment on the outcome of competition. The list of eligible impairments in Paralympic Sport is contained in the [International Standard for Eligible Impairments](#).

Classification establishes who can and cannot compete in Paralympic Sport and groups athletes into sport classes, depending on how much their impairment impacts functional activities in each specific sport or discipline.

Classification processes of each Paralympic Sport share common features, but as the functional activities of each sport or discipline vary, the outcomes of the process are specific to each sport.

Classification follows a three steps process:

1. Does the athlete have one of the ten eligible impairments?
2. Does the athlete meet the minimum impairment criteria specific to the sport they wish to compete in?
3. Which sport class should the athlete compete in?

Classification's effectiveness is a critical factor in ensuring the Paralympic Games is an elite sport event. Identifying the most appropriate place for an athlete to undergo classification in each sport's pathway is also important for the effective promotion of participation in sport by disabled people.

## **2. Paralympic sport in the UK**

### **2.1 British Paralympic Association**

The British Paralympic Association (BPA) is the National Paralympic Committee for the United Kingdom and a member of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). The BPA selects the Great Britain and Northern Ireland team at each Paralympic Games. Its responsibilities include fostering the aims and ideals of the Paralympic movement throughout the United Kingdom in accordance with the principles and rules of the IPC, including the IPC Athlete Classification Code.

The BPA is a member organisation whose voting members are:

- UK National Governing Bodies of Sport
- National Disability Sport Organisations
- Home Nation Disability Sport Organisations

### **2.2 UK National Governing Bodies**

Each sport on the summer or winter Paralympic programme is represented by one UK National Governing Body (NGB), affiliated to an International Federation (IF) recognised by the IPC.

Each UK NGB is the authority for providing opportunities for Paralympic Sport in this country and is responsible for appointing athlete support personnel to work with athletes to prepare them for competition. Each UK NGB may collaborate with the National Disability Sport Organisations and Home Nation Disability Sport Organisations in the UK.

The IPC acts as the IF for a number of Paralympic Sports. According to the IPC Handbook, this obliges the BPA to act as the UK NGB for those sports. In practice, UK NGBs manage all day-to-day activities for their sport, including classification. For the purposes of this Code all references to UK NGBs apply whether the sport's IF is the IPC or not.

### **2.3 National Disability Sport Organisations**

Each National Disability Sport Organisation (NDSO) leads the development of sport for disabled people with one specific impairment type in the United Kingdom and are affiliated to an international organisation recognised by the IPC.

### **2.4 Home Nation Disability Sport Organisations**

The Home Nation Disability Sport Organisations (HNSDO) of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are each charged with developing sport for disabled people within each nation and are recognised by their respective Sport Council.

### **2.5 UK Sport**

UK Sport is the nation's high-performance sports agency, funded by the Government and The National Lottery. Its mission is driving and showcasing British medal success on the world stage and its vision is a nation inspired by Olympic and Paralympic success.

UK Sport invests Lottery and Exchequer funding in NGBs, the BPA, the English Institute of Sport, the British Athletes Commission and individual athletes through the Athlete Performance Award (as well as in other organisations not relevant to this Code).

## **2.6 Home Nation Institutes of Sport**

The Home Nation Institutes of Sport for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are the UK's largest providers of sport science, medical and technical support.

Institute of Sport practitioners work to help improve athletes' performance by delivering services that enable them to optimise training programmes, maximise performance in competition and improve health and availability to train.

## **2.7 Home Nation Sport Councils**

The Home Nation Sport Councils for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales aim principally to increase participation and improve performance in sport. To do this they invest in a number of organisations, facilities and events including their respective Home Nation Disability Sport Organisation and Home Nation Governing Bodies of Sport.

## **2.8 British Athletes Commission**

The British Athletes Commission (BAC) is an independent body and membership association offering confidential advice, support and guidance to individual athletes within the high-performance system, either directly or indirectly, including those who need help to resolve issues that may affect their welfare and / or performance through:

- End-to-end case management support;
- Early intervention and informal resolution, where possible, delivered by experienced and qualified staff;
- Signposting to external organisations where necessary;
- Supporting National Governing Bodies and UK Sport within the area of athlete representation; including recruitment, engagement, evaluation and training of appointed individuals

## **2.9 Athlete Support Personnel**

Athlete support personnel work with athletes to prepare them for training and competition. Examples include the roles of coach, manager, agent, doctor, physiotherapist, psychologist, nurse, performance director, strength and conditioning coach, soft tissue therapist, biomechanist, nutritionist, physiologist, performance analyst and performance lifestyle advisor. Athlete support personnel can operate on both a paid and voluntary basis and may be employed by an NGB, Home Nation Sport Institute or be self-employed.

Athletes have the right to select one athlete support personnel member to accompany them through the classification evaluation process.

## **2.10 Parents**

An athlete may ask a parent or guardian to accompany them through the classification evaluation procedure – particularly at national classification. In such circumstances for the purposes of this Code parents or guardians are considered athlete support personnel.

Parents and guardians are often important members of an athlete's support network and as such are strongly encouraged to familiarise themselves with this Code.

## **2.11 Classifiers**

A Classifier is an official who evaluates athletes and allocates a sport class as a member of a classification panel, in accordance with the classification rules of the sport.

Classifiers should possess the competencies and qualifications relevant to conduct all or specific parts of classification evaluation. For example: physiotherapists and biomechanists for athletes with a physical impairment, optometrists and ophthalmologists for athletes with a visual impairment and psychologists for athletes with intellectual impairments.

Classifier training and certification at a national level should follow the same principles as set forth by the applicable sport's International Federation policies, procedures, rules, and regulations for classifier training, curricular content and delivery, and certification requirements.

### 3. National Classification

As stated in the IPC's Model of Best Practice: National Classification, it is considered best practice for athletes to undergo national classification prior to presenting for international classification.

National classification serves to determine whether an athlete has one of the ten eligible impairments and meets the sport's minimum eligibility criteria as early as possible in their career, allowing athletes competing in the UK to benchmark themselves against international standards. It is therefore critical that national classification rules, practices and outcomes mirror those of each sport's International Federation as much as possible. NGBs may achieve this by adopting appropriate sections of their International Federation's classification rules verbatim.

National classification in the UK for athletes with a physical impairment is carried out by classifiers accredited by the UK's NGBs. As the process for classifying athletes with a visual impairment is currently generic across all sports, the BPA currently offers national classification opportunities that athletes' access through their NGB. Athletes with an intellectual impairment receive their national classification from that respective NDSO – the UK Sport Association for Athletes with a Learning Disability.

NGBs must remain mindful that IFs update the sport's classification rules from time-to-time. When this occurs, NGBs must update their own national classification rules and procedures accordingly. NGBs are strongly encouraged to contribute to the evolution of their sport's classification through participation in their IF's consultation processes.

For those NGBs that can provide meaningful national competition for eligible athletes due to their critical mass, national classification serves to determine an athlete's eligibility to compete in those national events.

NGBs, NDSOs and HNDSOs may also adapt a sport's competition rules at a national level to allow for meaningful competition and/or increase participation. These adaptations can include allowing athletes from certain classes to compete against each other, allowing classified disabled athletes to compete against non-disabled athletes and establishing additional sport classes not reflected in the sport's International Federation model. In these instances, it must be made clear which athletes are part of a formal Paralympic pathway and which athletes are not.

As stated in the IPC's Model of Best Practice: National Classification, when allocating a national sport class to a "borderline" athlete (or in other words an athlete who is on the cusp of two different Sport Classes), national classifiers should allocate the Sport Class for athletes with less impairment.

NGBs, NDSOs and HNDSOs are strongly encouraged to signpost sporting opportunities to disabled athletes that do not meet the sport's minimum eligibility criteria, while making it clear that those athletes are not on a formal Paralympic pathway.

Not every disabled athlete in the UK needs to be allocated a national sport class to participate in sport. National classification should only be offered to athletes to provide meaningful national competition – disabled people wishing to participate in sport at a purely recreation level may not need to undergo classification to do so. NGBs, NDSOs and HNDSOs should identify where in each sport's respective performance pathway is the most appropriate place to undergo national classification.

## 4. International Classification

International classification is carried out by classifiers accredited by the International Federation (IF) for that sport.

Athletes must undergo international classification to compete at international competitions sanctioned by the IF, including World Championships, European Championships, World Ranking events and other qualification events for the Paralympic Games.

In every case and without exception, outcomes of international classification supersede outcomes of national classification.

When a UK NGB identifies an athlete as ready to compete at an international level they must submit medical diagnostic information to the sport's IF. After reviewing the information submitted, confirming that the athlete has an eligible impairment and meets the sport's minimum eligibility criteria, the International Federation will allocate a classification appointment time, date and location for the athlete to attend classification evaluation. IFs usually offer classification opportunities immediately prior to IF sanctioned competitions.

The eligibility process for athletes with an intellectual impairment is managed by the International Federation for Intellectual Impairment Sport (INAS). Athletes with an intellectual impairment must first submit their eligibility paperwork via the national member for INAS, the UK Sport Association for People with Learning Disability (UKSA), before undergoing sport-specific evaluation under the relevant IF.

The UK High Performance System is committed to maximising the potential of its athletes. It is therefore critical that NGBs support their athletes to give a true reflection of their impairment and ability during international classification evaluation by ensuring the classifiers are given all relevant medical information and made aware of any exceptional skills and adaptations developed by the athlete. This will allow classifiers to work cooperatively to determine the most appropriate sports class.

In the event of a classification outcome that is unexpected, the NGB will ensure it understands the reason(s) for the outcome. If the NGB disagrees with the reasons for the outcome it may protest the decision in line with the IF's rules.

If the NGB feels that the IF has not followed its written procedures in carrying out a classification evaluation which has had an impact on the outcome and deems that outcome unfair, then it may appeal the decision in line with the IF's rules.

In all circumstances, the classifiers, classification process and its final outcome, including that of any protest or appeal, must be respected.



## 5. Intentional Misrepresentation

Intentional Misrepresentation is when an athlete or athlete support personnel:

- submits false and/or fraudulent medical diagnostic information as part of the classification process;
- attempts to deceive the classification panel during classification evaluation;
- deliberately presents at classification evaluation in a way that is inconsistent with how they present for competition;
- fails to make a medical notification as to a change in circumstances that will or may affect a Sport Class; and/or
- knowingly assists, covers up or disrupts the evaluation process with the intention of deceiving or misleading the Classification Panel.

Under Articles 6.6 and 6.7 of the IPC Athlete Classification Code, an athlete or athlete support personnel who is found to have been intentionally misrepresenting can be banned from Paralympic sport for up to 48 months for a first offence. A second offence carries a maximum sanction of a lifetime ban from Paralympic sport. The severity of these sanctions reflects the seriousness of the charge of Intentional Misrepresentation.

The UK Athlete Classification Code views Intentional Misrepresentation as one of the biggest risks to the integrity of Paralympic sport. Anyone with relevant information of genuine concerns of Intentional Misrepresentation should report those concerns either to their sport's UK National Governing Body, or where there are reasons those concerns cannot be shared with the National Governing Body (NGB) of the sport, information should be sent to the British Paralympic Association.

The British Paralympic Association has developed a template process for managing reports of Intentional Misrepresentation that UK NGBs may adopt.

The BPA and its member organisations will recognise, respect and enforce any ban imposed on an athlete or athlete support personnel for Intentional Misrepresentation by a signatory to the IPC Athlete Classification Code.

## **6. Athletes that are not eligible**

Certain disabled athletes will be unable to provide evidence that they have one of the ten eligible impairment listed in the International Standard for Eligible Impairments. While those athletes cannot compete in Paralympic sport, it must never be inferred that they do not have any impairment.

Certain disabled athletes may be able to provide evidence that they have one of the ten eligible impairments but fail to meet a sport's minimum impairment criteria. That athlete may still be eligible to compete in another Paralympic sport, subject to the classification rules for that sport.

NGBs, NDSOs and HNDSOs are strongly encouraged to signpost sporting opportunities to disabled athletes that are unable to provide evidence that have one of the ten eligible impairment listed in the International Standard for Eligible Impairments, or do not meet the sport's minimum eligibility criteria, while making it clear that those athletes are not on a Paralympic pathway.

If an athlete is found to not meet the sport's minimum impairment criteria they are entitled to a second opinion. NGBs must establish processes that facilitate a second opinion, this may include the right to formally challenge the decision and/or be seen by a second classification panel.

## **7. Rights and Responsibilities**

### **7.1 Athletes' rights**

Under the UK Athlete Classification Code, athletes will have the right to:

1. Be evaluated by appropriately trained classifiers with relevant credentials
2. The appropriate management, handling, sharing and storage of personal information submitted and created as part of the classification process
3. Their sport class being based solely on the impact their impairment has on the fundamental tasks and activities of their sport
4. Protest and Appeal a classification decision
5. Receive a briefing of the process prior to undergoing classification evaluation
6. Receive appropriate support when raising a potential breach of the UK Athlete Classification Code
7. On request, receive copies of all classification data relating to them, including video footage and documented decisions made by the classifiers that have an impact on the outcome of the classification evaluation process
8. Select one person to accompany them during the classification process
9. Work with athlete support personnel that are appropriately informed around classification
10. Put competition and training commitments before education or research requests relating to classification

### **7.2 Athletes' responsibilities**

Under the UK Athlete Classification Code, athletes are responsible for:

1. Giving a true reflection of their impairment and ability during classification evaluation
2. Providing accurate and up-to-date medical evidence as directed by their National Governing Body in advance of classification evaluation
3. Notifying their NGB if they experience a change in their condition (whether through a medical intervention or organically) that may impact on their sport class
4. Being respectful towards classifiers and their decisions, the classification process and fellow athletes
5. Arriving at classification evaluation informed of the classification process, in good time for the start of the appointment with relevant sports clothing and equipment and in good health, in order to participate fully in the evaluation
6. Contributing to classification education and classification research if appropriate

### **7.3 BPA's responsibilities**

Under the UK Athlete Classification Code, the BPA is responsible for:

1. Respecting and abiding by the IPC Athlete Classification Code, its International Standards and the UK Athlete Classification Code
2. Monitoring the implementation of this Code
3. Supporting member organisations to comply with this Code
4. Requiring as a condition of membership compliance with this Code
5. Disseminating relevant classification information to its membership, including updates to the IPC Classification Code, International Standards and Models of Best Practice
6. Providing national platforms to allow classification best practice to be shared
7. Providing classification education templates and tools
8. Establishing and maintaining a process for receiving and managing reports of Intentional Misrepresentation

## 7.4 UK NGBs' responsibilities with regards classification

Under this Code, the UK's National Governing Bodies are responsible for:

1. Respecting and abiding by their International Federation's Classification Rules and the UK Athlete Classification Code
2. Establishing an effective classification strategy that delivers against each of these responsibilities, including the identification of an individual with appropriate time and budget to ensure its delivery
3. Providing athletes and athlete support personnel with appropriate education regarding the classification process
4. Having policies and procedures that ensure the appropriate management, handling, sharing and storage of sensitive data submitted and created as part of the classification process
5. Maintaining a clear and well communicated process for athlete or athlete support personnel to raise queries around classification and to resolve any complaints or disputes with regard to classification at a national level
6. Sharing classification policies and procedures with the BPA and any examples of best practice with fellow NGBs and the BPA
7. Safeguarding athletes' welfare, including those that are retiring from the sport as a consequence of classification
8. Have a process for receiving and managing reports of Intentional Misrepresentation

Under this Code, the UK's National Governing Bodies are responsible for facilitating a National Classification process:

9. That mirrors their International Federation's and allows the NGB to identify which athletes are eligible to compete in their sport before allocating them a national sport class
10. That includes a process which allows athletes to receive a second opinion if the NGB considers the athlete to have not met the sport's minimum impairment criteria
11. That recruits and trains national classifiers to an appropriate standard

When engaging with their International Federation's classification processes, under this Code, the UK's National Governing Bodies are responsible for

12. Supporting their athletes to give a true reflection of their impairment and ability during international classification evaluation
13. Supporting an athlete through the Protest or Appeal of an international sport class
14. Notifying the IF in the event of a change in an athlete's condition (whether through a medical intervention or organically) that may impact on that athlete's sport class
15. Supporting their International Federation achieve compliance with the IPC Athlete Classification Code, if not yet attained

## **7.5 National Disability Sport Organisations and Home Nation Disability Sport Organisation's responsibilities**

Under this Code, National Disability Sport Organisations and Home Nation Disability Sport Organisations are responsible for:

1. Respecting and abiding by the UK Athlete Classification Code
2. Collaborating with UK NGBs to ensure that national classification processes and outcomes mirror international classification processes and that classification is delivered at the appropriate stage of the pathway
3. Facilitating the provision of appropriate and relevant classification education

## **7.6 UK Sport's responsibilities**

Under the UK Athlete Classification Code, UK Sport are responsible for:

1. Respecting and abiding by the UK Athlete Classification Code
2. Upholding the clauses of funding agreements between UK Sport and UK NGBs that reference classification

## **7.7 Home Nation Institutes of Sport's responsibilities**

Under the UK Athlete Classification Code, Home Nation Institutes of Sport are responsible for:

1. Respecting and abiding by the UK Athlete Classification Code
2. Supporting its practitioners to become conversant with the classification rules of the sports they are engaged in
3. Facilitating the provision of appropriate and relevant classification education for its practitioners to safeguard against interventions that might undermine the classification process, intentionally or unintentionally

## **7.8 Home Nation Sport Councils' responsibilities**

Under the UK Athlete Classification Code, Home Nation Sport Councils are responsible for:

1. Respecting and abiding by the UK Athlete Classification Code

## **7.9 British Athletes Commission's responsibilities**

Under this Code, the British Athletes Commission are responsible for:

1. Respecting and abiding by the UK Athlete Classification Code
2. Supporting BPA to implement and review this Code in a manner that is athlete focused
3. Supporting athletes understand their rights and meet their responsibilities under this Code

## **7.10 Athlete Support Personnel's rights and responsibilities**

Under the UK Athlete Classification Code, athlete support personnel have the right to:

1. Receive education on the sport's classification processes, including how to best support athletes through evaluation and best manage questions that athletes may have regarding classification

Under the UK Athlete Classification Code, athlete support personnel are responsible for:

1. Respecting and abiding by the UK Athlete Classification Code
2. Supporting athletes to give a true reflection of their impairment and ability during classification evaluation
3. Being respectful towards classifiers and their decisions
4. Being conversant with the classification rules for the sport
5. Being mindful that their interventions do not undermine the classification process
6. Cooperating with any investigations concerning classification violations
7. Not prejudging the outcome of classification evaluations
8. Reporting any suspected cases of Intentional Misrepresentation

## **7.11 Parents' rights and responsibilities**

Under the UK Athlete Classification Code parents and guardians of athletes have the right to:

1. Receive education on the sport's classification processes

Under the UK Athlete Classification Code parents and guardians of athletes are responsible for:

1. Respecting and abiding by the UK Athlete Classification Code
2. Respecting the classifiers, process and outcome of classification

## **7.12 Classifiers' rights and responsibilities**

Under the UK Athlete Classification Code, the UK's Classifiers have the right to:

1. Receive training on the NGBs' Ethics and Safeguarding Policies
2. Receive ongoing training to maintain their skills as a classifier
3. Interact with athletes, athlete support personnel and parents that are respectful towards classifiers and their decisions

Under the UK Athlete Classification Code, the UK's Classifiers are responsible for:

1. Respecting and abiding by the UK Athlete Classification Code
2. Complying with the National Governing Body's Code of Ethics and Safeguarding Policy
3. Acting as neutral evaluators in determining sport class and sport class status for all athletes
4. Performing their duties courteously, respectfully, competently, consistently and objectively for all athletes
5. Maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the International Standard for Athlete Evaluation
6. Complying with the UK Data Protection Act
7. Declaring any actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest
8. Not assuming any other role and responsibility that conflicts with their duties as a Classifier at a competition
9. Maintaining and developing their skills as a classifier

## **8. Implementation**

This Code was approved by the Board of Trustees of the British Paralympic Association in December 2017 and takes effect from 1 March 2018 onwards.

## **9. Modifications to the Code**

The UK Athlete Classification Code was drafted following extensive consultation with the Paralympic Movement in the UK. This Code will be updated from time-to-time with a review of its content and effectiveness taking place at the very least every four years following a Summer Paralympic Games. Its evolution will be required to reflect feedback from the Paralympic Movement in the UK, including athletes, and to reflect any updates of the IPC Athletes Classification Code, supporting International Standards and Models of Best Practice.

ENDS  
March 2019