



International  
**Paralympic**  
Committee

# International Standard for Eligible Impairments

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**International Paralympic Committee**

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## Introduction

The fundamental purpose of the IPC Athlete Classification Code (the Code) is to uphold confidence in Classification and advance participation by a wide range of Athletes. To achieve this purpose, the Code details policies and procedures common across all sports and sets principles to be applied by all Para sports.

The Code is complemented by International Standards that provide technical and operational standards for specific aspects of Classification to be carried out by all Signatories in a manner that Athletes and other Paralympic stakeholders understand and have confidence in.

Compliance with these International Standards is mandatory. This International Standard for Eligible Impairments should be read in conjunction with the Code and the other International Standards.

## Purpose

The purpose of the International Standard for Eligible Impairments is to define what an Eligible Impairment is in Para sports, thereby ensuring that Para sports are reserved for those that have an Eligible Impairment.

## Definitions

This International Standard uses the defined terms from the Code. Further defined terms specific to this International Standard are:

**Diagnostic Information:** medical records and/or any other documentation that enables the International Sport Federation to assess the existence or otherwise of an Eligible Impairment or Underlying Health Condition.

**Eligibility Assessment Committee:** an ad hoc body formed to assess the existence or otherwise of an Eligible Impairment.

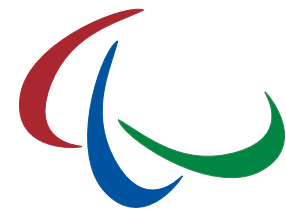
**Evaluation Session:** the session an Athlete is required to attend for a Classification Panel: to assess that Athlete's compliance with the Minimum Impairment Criteria for a sport; and to allocate a Sport Class and Sport Class Status depending on the extent to which that Athlete is able to execute the specific tasks and activities fundamental to the sport.

**Head of Classification:** a person appointed by International Sport Federation to direct, administer, co-ordinate and implement Classification matters for that International Sport Federation.



**Health Condition:** a pathology, acute or chronic disease, disorder, injury or trauma.

**Underlying Health Condition:** a Health Condition that may lead to an Eligible Impairment.



## 1 General Provisions

- 1.1 The Code and the International Standards (including this International Standard) designate certain Impairments as ‘Eligible Impairments’.
- 1.2 International Sport Federations must, by way of their Classification Rules, specify that any Athlete wishing to compete in a sport *must* have an Eligible Impairment. A reference to ‘sport’ in this International Standard includes an individual discipline within a sport.
- 1.3 International Sport Federations must, by way of their Classification Rules, specify the Eligible Impairment an Athlete must have in order to compete in a sport, and that the Eligible Impairment must be Permanent.

*[Comment to Article 1.3: While some sports include Athletes with all Eligible Impairments (for example athletics, swimming), other sports are limited to one Impairment (for example goalball) or a selection of Impairments (for example equestrian, cycling). Each International Sport Federation must define for which Eligible Impairments they provide sports opportunities.]*

- 1.4 In order to be satisfied that an Athlete has an Eligible Impairment, the International Sport Federation, in its discretion, *may* require an Athlete to provide evidence of any one or more of the following:
  - 1.4.1 the Eligible Impairment;
  - 1.4.2 that the Eligible Impairment is Permanent; and/or
  - 1.4.3 an Underlying Health Condition.

## 2 Eligible Impairments

The Eligible Impairments in the Paralympic Movement are:

### 2.1 Impaired Muscle Power

Athletes with Impaired Muscle Power have a Health Condition that either reduces or eliminates their ability to voluntarily contract their muscles in order to move or to generate force.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Impaired Muscle Power include spinal cord injury (complete or incomplete, tetra- or paraplegia or paraparesis), muscular dystrophy, post-polio syndrome and spina bifida.

### 2.2 Impaired Passive Range of Movement



Athletes with Impaired Passive Range of Movement have a restriction or a lack of passive movement in one or more joints.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Impaired Passive Range of Movement include arthrogyrosis and contracture resulting from chronic joint immobilisation or trauma affecting a joint.

### **2.3 Limb Deficiency**

Athletes with Limb Deficiency have total or partial absence of bones or joints as a consequence of trauma (for example traumatic amputation), illness (for example amputation due to bone cancer) or congenital limb deficiency (for example dysmelia).

### **2.4 Leg Length Difference**

Athletes with Leg Length Difference have a difference in the length of their legs as a result of a disturbance of limb growth, or as a result of trauma.

### **2.5 Short Stature**

Athletes with Short Stature have a reduced length in the bones of the upper limbs, lower limbs and/or trunk.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Short Stature include achondroplasia, growth hormone dysfunction, and osteogenesis imperfecta.

### **2.6 Hypertonia**

Athletes with hypertonia have an increase in muscle tension and a reduced ability of a muscle to stretch caused by damage to the central nervous system.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Hypertonia include cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and stroke.

### **2.7 Ataxia**

Athletes with Ataxia have uncoordinated movements caused by damage to the central nervous system.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Ataxia include: cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, stroke and multiple sclerosis.

### **2.8 Athetosis**

Athletes with Athetosis have continual slow involuntary movements.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Athetosis include cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and stroke.



## 2.9 Vision Impairment

Athletes with Vision Impairment have reduced or no vision caused by damage to the eye structure, optical nerves or optical pathways, or visual cortex of the brain.

Examples of an Underlying Health Condition that may lead to Vision Impairment include retinitis pigmentosa and diabetic retinopathy.

## 2.10 Intellectual Impairment

Athletes with an intellectual Impairment have a restriction in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour in which affects conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills required for everyday life. This Impairment must be present before the age of 18.

*[Comment to Article 2: Many other Impairments exist, but the Paralympic Movement originates from the creation of an umbrella organisation by the 'International Organisations of Sport for Disabled' (IOSDs) and by their respective national members. Today, and as a result of the activities of the IOSDs that founded the IPC and are currently in membership of the IPC, the Paralympic Movement identifies ten (10) Eligible Impairments.*

*Consequently, any other new 'Eligible Impairment' may only be introduced in a Para sport subject to approval of the IPC General Assembly.*

*The list of Eligible Impairments is an exhaustive list – an Athlete must have one of these Eligible Impairments in order to participate in Para sport. The list of Eligible Impairments also includes examples of Underlying Health Conditions that may lead to an Eligible Impairment. These examples are not exhaustive.]*

## 3 Non-Eligible Impairments

**3.1** Any Impairment that is not listed in this International Standard as an Eligible Impairment is referred to as a Non-Eligible Impairment.

**3.2** An Athlete who has a Non-Eligible Impairment and an Eligible Impairment may be evaluated by a Classification Panel in accordance with the International Standard on Athlete Evaluation on the basis of the Eligible Impairment, provided the Non-Eligible Impairment does not affect the Classification Panel's ability to allocate a Sport Class.

*[Comment to Article 3.2: For example, an Athlete with severe osteoarthritis may have Impaired Passive Range of Movement (an Eligible Impairment) and have pain (a Non-Eligible Impairment). If the presence of pain restricts a Classification Panel's ability to conduct an Evaluation Session the Athlete might not be allocated a Sport Class (see Article 11, International Standard for Athlete Evaluation), notwithstanding that the Athlete has an Eligible Impairment]*



**3.3** To assist International Sport Federations, examples of Non-Eligible Impairments include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 3.3.1 Pain;
- 3.3.2 Hearing impairment;
- 3.3.3 Low muscle tone;
- 3.3.4 Hypermobility of joints;
- 3.3.5 Joint instability, such as unstable shoulder joint, recurrent dislocation of a joint;
- 3.3.6 Impaired muscle endurance;
- 3.3.7 Impaired motor reflex functions;
- 3.3.8 Impaired cardiovascular functions;
- 3.3.9 Impaired respiratory functions;
- 3.3.10 Impairment metabolic functions; and
- 3.3.11 Tics and mannerisms, stereotypes and motor perseveration.

*[Comment to Article 3.3: the list of Non-Eligible Impairments in Article 3.3 is not a complete list. The aim of the list is to assist International Sport Federations in developing clear rules and guidelines regarding eligibility.]*

**3.4** An Athlete who has a Non-Eligible Impairment (including but not limited to one of the Non-Eligible Impairments listed above) but who does not have an Eligible Impairment will not be eligible to compete in Para sport.

## **4 Health Conditions that are not Underlying Health Conditions**

**4.1** A number of Health Conditions do not lead to an Eligible Impairment and are not Underlying Health Conditions. If an Athlete has both a Health Condition that will not lead to an Eligible Impairment and an Underlying Health Condition the Athlete may be eligible to compete in Para sports.

**4.2** An Athlete who has a Health Condition (including, but not limited to, one of the Health Conditions listed below) but who does not have an Underlying Health Condition will not be eligible to compete in Para sport.

**4.3** Health Conditions that:

- 4.3.1 primarily cause pain;



- 4.3.2 primarily cause fatigue;
  - 4.3.3 primarily cause joint hypermobility or hypotonia; or
  - 4.3.4 are primarily psychological or psychosomatic in nature,  
do *not* lead to an Eligible Impairment.
- 4.4 Examples of Health Conditions that primarily cause pain include myofascial *pain-dysfunction* syndrome, fibromyalgia or complex regional pain syndrome.
- 4.5 An example of a Health Condition that primarily causes fatigue is chronic fatigue syndrome.
- 4.6 An example of a Health Condition that primarily causes hypermobility or hypotonia is Ehlers-Danlos syndrome.
- 4.7 Examples of Health Conditions that are primarily psychological or psychosomatic in nature include conversion disorders or post-traumatic stress disorder.

*[Comment to Article 4: the Health Conditions listed in this Article are examples only - there are many other Health Conditions that do not lead to an Eligible Impairment. The aim of the list is to assist International Sport Federations in developing clear rules and guidelines regarding eligibility.]*

## **5 Establishing Eligible Impairment and Underlying Health Condition**

- 5.1 Any Athlete who wishes to compete in an International Competition must satisfy the relevant International Sport Federation that he or she has an Eligible Impairment before he or she can participate in an Evaluation Session with a Classification Panel (as described in the International Standard for Athlete Evaluation).
- 5.2 The International Sport Federation may require an Athlete to demonstrate that he or she has an Underlying Health Condition in order to establish that he or she has an Eligible Impairment.

*[Comment to Article 5.2: International Sport Federations are strongly recommended to require Athletes to demonstrate an Underlying Health Condition if they intend to participate in a sport on the basis that they have one or more of the following Eligible Impairments: Impaired Muscle Power, Impaired Passive Range of Movement, Hypertonia, Ataxia, Athetosis, Vision Impairment and Intellectual Impairment.]*





- 5.3** The International Sport Federation must determine if an Athlete has an Eligible Impairment or an Underlying Health Condition (if such a determination is required). The International Sport Federation may require an Athlete to provide it with Diagnostic Information in order to make this determination. In such instances the International Sport Federation may appoint an Eligibility Assessment Committee if it considers this necessary in order to assess the Diagnostic Information.

*[Comment to Article 5.3: the primary requirement is to determine whether or not an Athlete has an Eligible Impairment. For some Athletes, this will be a straightforward matter and not require the production of any Diagnostic Information (for example, if an Athlete has a Limb Deficiency). For other Athletes, Diagnostic Information may be required to enable the International Sport Federation to be sure that an Athlete has an Eligible Impairment, or that the Athlete has an Underlying Health Condition (for example, so that the International Sport Federation can be sure that the Eligible Impairment is Permanent).*

*An International Sport Federation should exercise careful discretion and form an Eligibility Assessment Committee only in situations where it needs specialist assistance in determining if an Athlete has an Eligible Impairment or an Underlying Health Condition. For example, an Athlete has Impaired Muscle Power, but it is not clear to an International Sport Federation what the origin of the Impaired Muscle Power is, and/or whether the Impaired Muscle Power is Permanent. In that case, the International Sport Federation might feel that determining these issues would be assisted by the forming of an Eligibility Assessment Committee.]*

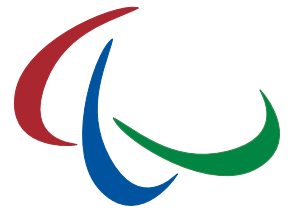
- 5.4** The process by which an Eligibility Assessment Committee is formed and considers Diagnostic Information must comply with the following provisions:
- 5.4.1 The Head of Classification will notify the relevant National Body that Diagnostic Information must be provided on behalf of the Athlete. The Head of Classification will explain what Diagnostic Information is required, and the purposes for which it is required.
  - 5.4.2 The Head of Classification will set timelines for the production of Diagnostic Information.
  - 5.4.3 The Head of Classification will appoint an Eligibility Assessment Committee. The Eligibility Assessment Committee must, if practicable, be comprised of the Head of Classification and at least two other experts with appropriate medical qualifications. All members of the Eligibility Assessment Committee must sign appropriate confidentiality undertakings.



- 5.4.4 If the Head of Classification does not believe that he or she holds the necessary competencies to assess the Diagnostic Information, the Head of Classification will not participate in the review of the Diagnostic Information, but will assist the Eligibility Assessment Committee.
- 5.4.5 Wherever possible all references to the individual Athlete and the source of the Diagnostic Information should be withheld from the Eligibility Assessment Committee. Each member of the Eligibility Assessment Committee will review Diagnostic Information and decide whether it establishes the existence of an Eligible Impairment.
- 5.4.6 If the Eligibility Assessment Committee concludes that the Athlete has an Eligible Impairment the Athlete will be permitted to complete Athlete Evaluation with a Classification Panel.
- 5.4.7 If the Eligibility Assessment Committee is not satisfied that the Athlete has an Eligible Impairment the Head of Classification will provide a decision to this effect in writing to the relevant National Body or National Paralympic Committee. The National Body or National Paralympic Committee will be given an opportunity to comment on the decision and may provide further Diagnostic Information to the Eligibility Assessment Committee for review. If the decision is subsequently revised, the Head of Classification will inform the National Body or National Paralympic Committee.
- 5.4.8 If the decision is not changed, the Head of Classification will issue a final decision letter to the National Body or National Paralympic Committee.
- 5.4.9 The Eligibility Assessment Committee may make its decisions by a majority. If the Head of Classification is part of the Eligibility Assessment Committee, he/she may veto any decision if he or she does not agree that the Diagnostic Information supports the conclusion that the Athlete has an Eligible Impairment.
- 5.5 An International Sport Federation may delegate one or more of the functions described above to a Classification Panel.

## **6 Sport Class Not Eligible**

- 6.1 If an International Sport Federation determines that an Athlete does not have an Eligible Impairment it must allocate Sport Class Not Eligible to that Athlete, and designate the Athlete with Sport Class Status Confirmed.



- 6.2** An Athlete who is allocated Sport Class Not Eligible because the Athlete does not have an Eligible Impairment has no right to any further evaluation or assessment by the International Sport Federation and the provisions in the International Standard for Athlete Evaluation relating to Sport Class Not Eligible do not apply.
- 6.3** If another International Sport Federation has allocated an Athlete with Sport Class Not Eligible because the Athlete does not have an Eligible Impairment the International Sport Federation may do likewise without the need for the process detailed in Article 5 of this International Standard.

*[Comment to Article 6: an Athlete who does not have an Eligible Impairment will not be eligible to compete in Para sport, and so must be allocated with Sport Class Not Eligible. International Sport Federations are encouraged, subject to the International Standard for Classification Data Protection and applicable privacy laws, to share data regarding Athletes who have been allocated Sport Class Not Eligible for this reason.]*

*The allocation of Sport Class Not Eligible by a Classification Panel is subject to an automatic re-assessment by a separate Classification Panel, as provided for in the International Standard for Athlete Evaluation. The determination as to whether an Athlete has an Eligible Impairment is not subject to any such automatic review, even if the determination is made by a Classification Panel empowered by the International Sport Federation to make that determination.]*