



IPC ATHLETE CLASSIFICATION CODE REVIEW

**SUMMARY OF CHANGES
TO ACCOMPANY THE FINAL VERSION OF THE
2025 IPC CLASSIFICATION CODE AND
INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS
FOLLOWING CONSULTATION PHASE 3 AND SUBSEQUENT
APPROVALS**

NOVEMBER 2024

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Main Changes to the final Classification Code and Standards.....	5
The Purpose of Classification.....	5
The Scope of the Code	5
Fundamental Principles of Classification	6
Underlying Health Condition Assessment.....	7
Eligible impairment Assessment.....	8
Eligible Impairments.....	9
Designations 'Not Eligible'	10
The use of Adaptive Equipment	11
Sport Class Assessment	12
Observation Assessment	12
Sport Class Status.....	13
General Provisions Applicable to all Evaluation Sessions.....	14
Location of Evaluation Sessions.....	15
Classification Master List	16
Competition Formats	16
Protests and Appeals	17
Compliance with the Code	18
Roles and Responsibilities.....	19
Best Practice Classification and Research.....	19
International Standard for Classification Personnel and Training.....	20
International Standard for Intentional Misrepresentation.....	22
International Standard for Classification Data Protection.....	23



INTRODUCTION

This document accompanies the 2025 IPC Classification Code (the Code) and International Standards (the Standards) released in 2024, as a result of the final consultation phase in the review process of the 2015 IPC Athlete Classification Code and the subsequent approval by the IPC General Assembly and the IPC Governing Board.

The purpose of this document is to highlight the main changes and amendments in the final Code and Standards compared to the previous draft (dated July 2023), and to provide further context behind such changes and amendments. The document does not address all updates made to the final Code and Standards, it focuses on the main topics tabled for discussion during the consultation process. The document aims to help Members and stakeholders understand and interpret the Code.

The Code review process was set to include three consultation phases over a three-year period. The first consultation phase focused on obtaining feedback on the 2015 Code and International Standards, with a set of targeted questions. The second consultation phase in 2022 focused on obtaining feedback on the first new draft Code and International Standards with a set of different targeted questions specific to the items addressed in the new draft. The third and final consultation phase focused on the updated draft, further specific topics identified throughout the review, and more practical items in respect to implementing the Code.

Over the last three years, around 230 written responses were received on surveys, over 40 consultations calls were conducted with over 340 participants joining, feedback was received by e-mail, and individual calls or in-person meetings were held to maximise the dialogue throughout the review process. All collected feedback contributed to the final draft of the Code, the review of which was led by the Code Review Team. We are enormously grateful to all of those who have actively engaged in the consultation process, as well as to the Code Review Team for their invaluable input and collaboration in producing these final draft documents.

During the third consultation phase, feedback from Members and wider stakeholders was obtained through calls, in-person meetings, and a survey. The responses submitted through the survey are available on the IPC website ([Classification Code review \(paralympic.org\)](https://www.paralympic.org/classification-code-review)), however it is important to note that these responses represent only a portion of the overall feedback received thus far.

Capitalised terms refer to defined terms in the Code and Standards and have the meaning given to them in the Code and Standards. We encourage the reader to refer to the defined terms in the final Code and Standards in parallel with reading this document. We also encourage the reader to familiarise themselves with the content of the Code and Standards in full.

MAIN CHANGES TO THE FINAL CLASSIFICATION CODE AND STANDARDS

THE PURPOSE OF CLASSIFICATION

Relevant article: Chapter One, Article 1

Changes and rationale: The first chapter of the Code clearly defines the purpose of Classification within the Paralympic Movement. While no major changes have been made in this section, it has been refined for better clarity. The chapter underscores Classification's crucial role in enabling Athletes with Eligible Impairments to engage in competitive Para sport, ultimately leading to sporting excellence. It highlights the foundational importance of Classification in ensuring fair and meaningful competition by minimizing the impact of the Athlete's impairment on their ability to execute the specific tasks and activities fundamental to the relevant sport.

To make the purpose and application of Classification clearer for the Members, we have also reorganised some content. Specifically, the content from former Article 2, which elaborated on the link between Classification and IPC's vision and mission, has now been moved to the introduction section.

THE SCOPE OF THE CODE

Relevant articles: Chapter One, Articles 3-4

Changes and rationale:

In the final version, the Classification Code's scope remains unchanged but is further clarified to address that:

"All IPC Members and Recognised International Federations (RIF) are bound by and must comply with the Classification Code and the International Standards, subject to the following:

- International Federations are only required to comply with the Classification Code and the International Standards in relation to disciplines that are on the Paralympic Games Sport Programme. International Federations may choose to also apply the Classification Code and International Standards to disciplines outside of the Paralympic Games Sport Programme, but it is not mandatory to do so.
- Each Recognised International Federation must undertake to be bound by and to comply with the Classification Code and the International Standards in relation to at least one discipline that it administers."

In the final Classification Code, the term used previously "Relevant Competitions" has been updated to "Covered Competitions," with a broader definition that now explicitly includes;

- i) "the Paralympic Games;
- ii) World Championships;
- iii) any Competition that is part of the direct qualification pathway to participate in the Paralympic Games, as determined by the relevant International Federation;
- iv) any Competition where Observation Assessment may take place as part of a Classification process; and
- v) any other event or Competition specified by the International Federation in its Classification rules."

Throughout the review process, significant thought and consultation went into finding the right balance with the scope of the Code and defining the level of competitions it applies to. The proposed approach reflects the Paralympic Movement's commitment to harmonisation and standardisation of Classification at the highest competitive levels, while fostering the development at other levels and providing flexibility at those levels.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF CLASSIFICATION

Relevant article: Chapter Two, Article 5

Changes and rationale: Chapter 2 in the final Code outlines the four stages of Classification, as introduced in the previous draft version of the Code. While the stages themselves remain unchanged, the final Code places a stronger emphasis on clarifying Stages 1 and 2, to ensure the process and requirements from each stakeholder are clear.

The Underlying Health Condition ('UHC') Assessment is the first stage of the Classification process. Following this, the subsequent stages may be carried out in any order and/or combined, as specified by the International Federation. However, the decision-making process must follow the sequential order of the four-stage process.

Stage 1: Underlying Health Condition Assessment

Stage 1 focuses on verifying whether an Athlete has, or has had, at least one medically and/or clinically diagnosed UHC. This is determined through a review of Diagnostic Information provided by the Athlete's National Federation.

The revised definition includes consideration of past conditions with lasting effects that causes permanent impairment, emphasizing the significance of using credible, medical evidence for Classification.

The final Code also provides clarification in respect to the International Federation's responsibility to conduct Stage 1, the assessment of which may however be carried out by a number of persons/bodies, at the discretion and as specified by each International Federation.

Stage 2: Eligible Impairment Assessment

The Code refines Stage 2, aiming to make it more systematic and understandable. The Stage 2 definition outlines a process to verify two key aspects: (i) that the Athlete has an Eligible Impairment catered for by the sport that is consistent with one or more Underlying Health Conditions reported in the UHC Assessment, and (ii) that there are no inconsistencies with such reported Underlying Health Condition(s).

In other words, the emphasis in Stage 2 is placed on ensuring that the Athlete's presentation aligns with the Diagnostic Information they have provided.

Stage 3: Minimum Impairment Criteria Assessment

Provisions captured in Stage 3 are maintained, with the requirement for Minimum Impairment Criteria to be assessed by the Classification Panel in person with the Athlete, using impairment-based tests which use objective and reliable assessment methods, without taking into consideration the use of Adaptive Equipment. The Minimum Impairment Criteria must be set and subsequently assessed for each Eligible Impairment and any of its subtypes catered for by the sport. This approach follows the approach taken in the 2015 edition of the Code and has remained consistent throughout the review process.

Stage 4: Sport Class Assessment and Sport Class Status Allocation

Lastly, Stage four addresses the Sport Class Assessment based on the extent to which an Athlete's Eligible Impairment(s) impact(s) their ability to execute the specific tasks and activities fundamental to the sport. Stage four also includes allocation of the Sport Class Status, which indicates whether and when the Athlete is required to undergo Classification in the future.

UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITION ASSESSMENT

Relevant articles: Chapter Two, Part IV, Articles 6, 11 - 13

Changes and rationale:

- The Underlying Health Condition (UHC) Assessment represents the initial phase in which Athletes, through their National Federation, are required to provide relevant medical Diagnostic Information to the International Federation. The final Code maintains the approach to stage one and puts the emphasis on the importance of this stage and the role of National Federations in providing Diagnostic Information.

- International Federations are tasked with conducting UHC Assessment. The provisions around who is entitled to carry out UHC Assessment are maintained in the final Code with further tweaks made to the drafting.
- If the UHC Assessor is satisfied with the documentation provided by the National Federation, the International Federation must provide the Athlete's National Federation with the outcome of its assessment and the Athlete will automatically be assigned the designation 'New (N)'. This constitutes a change compared to the previous draft, where 'New (N)' was listed as a Sport Class Status.
- If the UHC Assessor is not satisfied with the documentation provided by the National Federation, the Athlete is designated as 'Not Eligible - Underlying Health Condition (Re-evaluation)'. This designation is introduced in the final Code to differentiate three distinct scenarios in which Athlete may be 'Not Eligible' based on the first three stages of the Classification process.
- With the addition of designation as 'Not Eligible - Underlying Health Condition (Re-evaluation)' and 'Not Eligible - Underlying Health Condition' in stage 1, the final Code also introduces a process for the second UHC Assessor to conduct the UHC assessment, similarly to the processes in stages two and three.
- Athletes designated as 'Not Eligible - Underlying Health Condition' will not be allowed to participate in Covered Competitions in that sport. Such designation may be automatically recognised by other International Federations in their respective sports, in their absolute discretion.
- It is mandatory for the International Federation to list all Athletes identified as 'Not Eligible - Underlying Health Condition (Re-evaluation)' and 'Not Eligible - Underlying Health Condition' on the Classification Master List.

ELIGIBLE IMPAIRMENT ASSESSMENT

Relevant articles: Chapter Two, Part IV, Articles 14 - 15

Changes and rationale:

- The Eligible Impairment Assessment aims to verify two aspects: (i) the Athlete has an Eligible Impairment that is catered for by the sport and aligns with one or more UHCs identified during the UHC Assessment, (ii) there are no inconsistencies between the identified UHC and the Eligible Impairment.
- Similarly to stage one, the final Code maintains the approach to stage two, with further strengthened and clarified provisions.
- In cases where the Classification Panel considers that there are inconsistencies with the Underlying Health Condition(s) reported in the UHC Assessment, the Classification Panel will either proceed with designating the Athlete with 'Classification Not Completed (CNC)' and request for

additional information or refer the assessment back to the UHC Assessor for reconsideration.

- Athletes designated as 'Not Eligible - Eligible Impairment (Re-evaluation)' have the right to undergo a second assessment conducted by another Classification Panel. The original Classification Panel must inform the International Federation of the decision, which in turn notifies the Athlete's National Federation. A new Panel must conduct any subsequent assessment to ensure impartiality.
- If the decision of the second Classification Panel remains the same, then the Athlete is designated as 'Not Eligible- Eligible Impairment', which means that the Athlete cannot compete in Covered Competitions within any Para sport based on the same Eligible Impairment(s) and cannot be re-assessed for the same Eligible Impairment(s) unless it is in the context of a new classification request based on a previously unassessed UHC.
- Introducing a second assessment opportunity allows the Athlete to be assessed by two independent Classification Panels to verify the presence of the Eligible Impairment.

ELIGIBLE IMPAIRMENTS

Relevant article: Chapter Two, Part III, Article 8

Changes and rationale: Eligible Impairment is defined as an impairment that is permanent and that falls into one of the categories recognised within the Paralympic Movement. These categories include five types of Physical Impairment, Vision Impairment, and Intellectual Impairment.

The definitions of Eligible Impairments have been refined for clarity, based on feedback received and expert opinion. The updated and final definitions are:

- **Impaired Muscle Power:** "Athletes with Impaired Muscle Power have a reduced (or no) ability to contract their muscles to generate force that is consistent with an Underlying Health Condition affecting the structure and function of the central or peripheral nervous system or the muscles (including the muscle origin and muscle insertion)."
- **Impaired Passive Range of Movement:** "Athletes with Impaired Passive Range of Movement have a reduced ability for a joint to be passively moved that is consistent with an Underlying Health Condition affecting a structure of bones, joints, connective tissue, or soft tissues."
- **Limb Deficiency and/or Limb Length Difference:** "Athletes with Limb Deficiency or Limb Length Difference have a total or partial absence of a limb or anatomically irregular limb dimensions that are consistent with an Underlying Health Condition resulting from trauma, illness, or congenital causes affecting the bones and/or joints. This Eligible Impairment can be

further divided into the following sub-categories: limb deficiency, leg length difference and/or arm length difference."

- **Short Stature:** "Athletes with Short Stature have reduced total body length (including head, trunk, and legs) as a result of congenitally or developmentally reduced length of the bones of the upper and lower limbs (and may also have reduced trunk length) that is consistent with an Underlying Health Condition. Athletes will not be considered to have Short Stature if their reduced total body length is the result of Limb Deficiency or Limb Length Difference only."
- **Hypertonia/Spasticity, Motor Ataxia and Dyskinesia** are retained under the umbrella term **Coordination Impairments** defined as: "Athletes with a Coordination Impairment have one or more of the following three movement disorders that (i) adversely affects the ability to voluntarily produce a full range of skilled movement fluidly, rapidly, and accurately; and (ii) is consistent with an Underlying Health Condition affecting the structure and function of the central nervous system:
 - **Hypertonia/Spasticity:** an increase in muscle tension that may be velocity-dependent and/or a reduced ability of a muscle to stretch.
 - **Motor Ataxia:** limited precision in direction and velocity of voluntary movement.
 - **Dyskinesia (athetosis, dystonia, chorea):** involuntary movements that interfere with voluntary movements."
- **Vision Impairment:** "Athletes with Vision Impairment have an Underlying Health Condition affecting the structure or function of the eye, optic nerve, optic chiasm, post chiasma visual pathways, or visual cortex of the brain resulting in reduced or no visual function even when using the best possible refractive or optical correction."
- **Intellectual Impairment** has not seen any further changes since the first draft Code. The definition reads: "Athletes with an Intellectual Impairment have an Underlying Health Condition causing restriction in general mental functions required to understand and constructively integrate the various mental functions including all cognitive functions and their development over the life span."

DESIGNATIONS 'NOT ELIGIBLE'

Relevant articles: Chapter Two, Part IV, Articles 13, 15 and 17

Changes and rationale:

The Code introduces and defines three distinct 'Not Eligible' designations to capture the different reasons an Athlete may not be eligible to obtain a Sport Class and compete in Para sport. These are 'Not Eligible - Underlying Health

Condition' (NE - UHC), 'Not Eligible - Eligible Impairment' (NE - EI), and 'Not Eligible - Minimum Impairment Criteria' (NE - MIC).

1. **Not Eligible - Underlying Health Condition (NE-UHC):** This designation applies to Athletes whose Health Condition does not lead to an Eligible Impairment recognised by the sport. This designation may be recognised other International Federations in their respective sports.
2. **Not Eligible - Eligible Impairment (NE - EI):** This designation applies to Athletes who are considered to have an Underlying Health Condition, however such Underlying Health Condition, upon assessment by the Classification Panel, did not lead to an Eligible impairment. sport. This designation may be recognised other International Federations in their respective sports.
3. **Not Eligible - Minimum Impairment Criteria (NE - MIC):** This designation is applied to Athletes who do have an Eligible Impairment but fail to meet the sport-specific Minimum Impairment Criteria. Considering this designation is sport-specific, an Athlete may meet the Minimum Impairment Criteria in one sport but not in another, meaning the designation does not preclude the Athlete from participating in other sports where their impairment may meet the respective Minimum Impairment Criteria.

Under each of the three stages of the Classification process where an Athlete may be designated any of the above designations, the Code provides for a second assessment to be conducted. The indication that the second assessment is due is captured by adding '(Re-evaluation)' to the designation. Should the designation be final, reference to '(Re-evaluation)' is removed.

The three designations cannot be Protested but may be subject to an Appeal.

THE USE OF ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT

Relevant article: Chapter Two, Part IV, Article 18.5

Changes and rationale:

In the final Code, the fundamental approach to assessing Athletes when using their Adaptive Equipment remains consistent, with clarification added on the requirements for International Federations, and their Classification Panels in identifying, assessing, regulating and monitoring the use of Adaptive Equipment in their sports. The role of Adaptive Equipment in the Classification process is described as follows:

- The Classification Panel is tasked with assessing Athletes when they are using the Adaptive Equipment that they will use in competition. This ensures that the Classification process, and specifically Sport Class Assessment,

considers the impact of Adaptive Equipment on the Athlete's ability to perform specific tasks and activities within the sport.

- International Federation must develop a system to document an Athlete's use of Adaptive Equipment and enforce consistency in its use across different Sport Classes. This might involve adding an 'Adaptive Equipment' designation to the Athlete's record or using a different mechanism to monitor Adaptive Equipment use.
- The use of Adaptive Equipment plays an important part in establishing a Para sport's Classification system and it plays a role in Sport Class Assessment. The final Code balances the new requirements around Adaptive Equipment with the importance it plays within the Classification process, with more responsibilities added towards the International Federations in establishing regulations around Adaptive Equipment and processes to identify and record its use.

SPORT CLASS ASSESSMENT

Relevant articles: Chapter Two, Part IV, Articles 18 - 19

Changes and rationale: Provisions around Sport Class Assessment remain consistent with the previous drafts with tweaks made to the structure of this section and wording. Following further consideration, an update is reflected in respect to Sport Class Assessment being based solely on the extent to which the Athlete's Eligible Impairment(s) impact(s) their ability to execute the specific tasks and activities fundamental to the sport - meaning that one or more Eligible Impairments may be considered, subject to each meeting the Minimum Impairment Criteria.

Important to note is that the new Code puts emphasis on the requirement for the International Federations to set out the assessment methodology and assessment criteria in the Classification rules.

OBSERVATION ASSESSMENT

Relevant article: Chapter Two, Part IV, Article 18.7

Changes and rationale: Following final consultations certain provisions related to Observation Assessment have been updated.

The Code requires that International Federations must define the circumstances under which an Observation Assessment becomes a prerequisite for assigning a final Sport Class and Sport Class Status to an Athlete. This includes specifying whether the Observation Assessment is mandatory for all Athletes or only under certain conditions. For instance, it could be that Observation Assessment may be

used in respect of certain Eligible Impairments and/or Sport Classes, but not in respect of others.

Furthermore, it's required for each International Federation to define what the Classification Panel will observe and how the Observation Assessment will be conducted. In other words, it is expected that each International Federation includes the assessment methodology for Observation Assessment within their Classification rules, similarly to the same requirements being in place for other parts of the Classification process. This level of detail guarantees a structured, transparent and consistent Classification process.

The articles concerning when and how an Athlete's First Appearance may take place have remained unchanged from the previous drafts. The Classification Panel may require the Athlete to be observed at one or more events during their First Appearance. For Team Sports that have preliminary (i.e., non-elimination) rounds of Competition, First Appearance must take place during such preliminary rounds (as defined by the relevant International Federation in its Classification rules). For Team Sports that do not have preliminary rounds of Competition, the Athlete's First Appearance must take place at the earliest possible opportunity which is to be defined by each International Federation.

Observation Assessment acts as a control mechanism to verify that previous components of an Evaluation Session are consistent and confirm the Classification Panel's decision around the allocated Sport Class.

As an outcome of Observation Assessment, the Classification Panel may allocate a final Sport Class and a Sport Class Status, redo any of the previous components of the Evaluation Session or schedule another Observation Assessment. The Classification Panel cannot, based on the results of the Observation Assessment alone, allocate the Athletes with a Sport Class different from that which they were initially allocated. The change of the Sport Class must be done followed by a re-assessment of any of the previous components of the Evaluation Session, at the discretion of the Classification Panel.

SPORT CLASS STATUS

Relevant articles: Chapter Two, Part IV, Articles 20-22

Changes and rationale: The following Sport Class Statuses are available under the Code: 'Confirmed (C)', 'Review at the Next Available Opportunity (R - NAO)', 'Review with a fixed review date (R - FRD)', and 'Expired (E)'.

Sport Class Status is allocated to the Athlete following the Evaluation Session. Therefore, there is no longer a Sport Class Status 'New (N)', instead this is now a designation 'New (N)' allocated to the Athlete after successful completion of the stage one of Classification process (UHC Assessment), which means that the UHC

Assessor confirmed the presence of the Underlying Health Condition, and the Athlete is permitted to undergo the Evaluation Session.

The term 'Lapsed (L)' Sport Class Status has been changed to 'Expired (E)' Sport Class Status. The change to 'Expired (E)' Sport Class Status is simply a terminological update to more accurately reflect scenarios where an Athlete's Sport Class expires. The 'Expired (E)' Sport Class Status will be assigned in the following scenarios:

- An Athlete will automatically receive the 'Expired (E)' Status upon retirement, as defined by the International Federation's Classification rules.
- The 'Expired (E)' Status may also be assigned where the Athlete does not complete an Evaluation Session within the specified time period. If an International Federation decides to do so, it must specify in its Classification rules: (i) the maximum period of time for which the Sport Class Status 'Review at the Next Available Opportunity (R-NAO)' will remain valid; and (ii) the maximum period of time for which the Sport Class Status 'Review with a Fixed Review Date (R-FRD)' will remain valid after the Fixed Review Date has passed.

Athletes holding Sport Class Status 'Expired (E)' are prohibited from competing in any Covered Competitions and each International Federation should specify in their rules whether a new Evaluation Session to obtain a new Sport Class and Sport Class Status is required or in some cases the Athlete's Sport Class might be retained (e.g. when the Athlete previously held a Sport Class with Sport Class Status Confirmed and there was no change in the reported Underlying Health Condition and Eligible Impairment).

GENERAL PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL EVALUATION SESSIONS

Relevant articles: Chapter Two, Part IV, Article 23-34

Changes and rationale:

The Code introduces updates aimed at strengthening the Classification process, by clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. This section has undergone reorganization to ensure the updates are presented in a clear and structured manner. The section includes:

- General requirements for International Federations, including those in relation to: (i) binding all persons participating in Evaluation Sessions by their Classification rules and applicable code of conduct, (ii) providing reasonable notice of Classification opportunities to their members, (iii) ensuring Classification Panels have the relevant information to conduct

Evaluation Sessions, and (iv) retaining copies of any forms, reports, or other written records from UHC Assessors and Classification Panels.

- Provisions around attendance of Evaluation Sessions, capturing Athletes, National Representative, Classifiers, Trainee Classifiers, observers, and any person from whom the Classification Panel seeks advice.
- Detailed responsibilities of National Federations and Classification Panels, as well as considerations of previous Evaluation Sessions for the Classification Panels.
- Suspension or termination provisions, with a list of examples of circumstances under which such suspension may be considered by the Classification Panel, and further provisions regulating the process using 'Classification Not Completed (CNC)' designation.
- Provisions regulating circumstances when an Athlete fails to attend an Evaluation Sessions, and provisions around photos and audio-visual technology.

LOCATION OF EVALUATION SESSIONS

Relevant article: Chapter Two, Part IV, Article 33

Changes and Rationale: This section of the Code was further refined with clarification around the following:

- Evaluation Sessions may take place at any time or place specified by the International Federation in its Classification rules, with the exception of Observation Assessments, which must take place at a Covered Competition.
- If the allocation of a Sport Class might require an Observation Assessment, an International Federation may still allow for part(s) of the Evaluation Session to take place Out-of-Competition, but the International Federation must (in advance of the Evaluation Session) advise the relevant National Federations that a Classification Panel may conclude that it is unable to allocate a final Sport Class without an Observation Assessment (in which case the Athlete must be designated 'Classification Not Completed (CNC)' and required to undergo a further Evaluation Session at a later date).

The clarifications are intended to provide more flexibility for the International Federation to carry out Evaluation Sessions at a location and time they find appropriate, for example at Covered Competitions, In-Competition and/or Out-of-Competition. Specific requirements are made in respect to circumstances in which the Observation Assessment is carried out as part of the Evaluation Session.

CLASSIFICATION MASTER LIST

Relevant article: Chapter Two, Part V, Article 36

Changes and rationale: The final Code no longer requires the International Federation's Classification Master List to include details of whether or not the Athlete uses any Adaptive Equipment in competition (and if so, what that Adaptive Equipment consists of. Recognising the concerns raised about the feasibility and practical implementation of the initially proposed approach, it has been decided to remove the provision from the requirements under the Classification Master List, but maintaining the approach of this needing to be addressed elsewhere (see more details under Adaptive Equipment section and Code article 18.5).

This adjustment is made with the understanding that the practicality and relevance of such information can vary significantly across different sports and International Federations.

COMPETITION FORMATS

Relevant articles: Chapter Two, Part VII, Articles 38 – 39

Changes and rationale: Following further consultation with the Membership, the final Code retains provisions from the previous draft in respect to requesting International Federations to specify in their rules (i) which Sport Classes may be combined, and in respect of which Covered Competitions; (ii) any conditions or criteria applicable to such Combined Class Events (for example, that only specific combinations of Sport Classes are allowed); (iii) the reasons why the International Federation has decided to allow such Combined Class Events, and why it considers that the relevant Sport Classes may be combined in respect of such Covered Competitions and subject to the applicable conditions or criteria. Examples of three mechanisms of Combined Class Events are provided, those being competing up, multi-class events and multi class Team Sports and team events. Introducing these provisions in the Code for the first time will lead to the implementation of a standardised approach across R International Federations, where every Para sport will reflect their position on Combined Class Events in their rules.

Further consideration went into the questions around performance compensation mechanisms (for example, so called factor systems and staggered starts.) and the final position in the Code reads: "International Federations that are using performance compensation mechanisms within Covered Competitions as of 17 May 2024 may continue to use such mechanisms. However, no other International Federations may use performance compensation mechanisms within Combined Class Events at Covered Competitions."

During the final consultation phase, it was acknowledged that further work is required to address the challenges with performance compensation mechanisms.

The IPC's position is that performance compensation mechanisms interfere with the purpose, principles, and scientific rationale of Classification because they use anticipated performance differences between Athletes to: (i) group Athletes with different Sport Classes together for competition; and (ii) inform the rules of that competition to try and neutralise the performance differences between Athletes of different Sport Classes. However, such mechanisms are not based on the impact of an Athlete's impairment(s) on the sport activity, but on performance differences. This conceptual difference also adds a further layer of complexity and risks stakeholder confidence in fair and meaningful competition outcomes that are not determined by the degree of impact of an Athlete's impairment(s). The IPC's current intention is therefore to prohibit the use of performance compensation mechanisms within Combined Class Events at Covered Competitions once a suitable alternative approach has been found and appropriate transition provisions are put in place. In the meantime, International Federations that are using performance compensation mechanisms within Covered Competitions as of 17 May 2024 may continue to use such mechanisms. However, no other International Federations may use performance compensation mechanisms within Combined Class Events at Covered Competitions.

The IPC remains committed to establish a multi-disciplinary working group to further address the position on Combined Class Events and performance compensation mechanisms.

PROTESTS AND APPEALS

Relevant articles: Chapter Three, Articles 40 - 50

Changes and rationale: In respect to Protests and Appeals, a few updates are made to the Code, without any substantial changes surrounding these two mechanisms to challenge the outcomes of Classification.

Protests are described as a challenge filed against the Athlete's Sport Class, whereas Appeals are described as a challenge to any aspect of the Classification process where a breach of the rules has occurred that could have led to incorrectly allocating a Sport Class or any of the designations, including 'Not Eligible - Eligible Impairment', 'Not Eligible - Minimum Impairment Criteria', and/or Sport Class Status.

The types of Protests (National Federation's and International Federation's) have not changed. While a National Federation cannot make a Protest in respect of a Sport Class allocated to an Athlete from another Country/Territory, it can present any concerns about the Sport Class allocated to such Athletes to its International Federation so that the International Federation may consider if it wishes to make an International Federation Protest. This clarification is added to the Code.

Under the 2007 Code and International Standards, it was permissible for National Federations to make Protests in respect of the Sport Classes allocated to Athletes from other National Federations. Following lengthy consultation and feedback from stakeholders, this was removed in the 2015 Code and International Standards and replaced with a process allowing for International Federations to make Protests, including based on concerns raised by National Federations, Athletes and others. This approach is intended to strike a balance between the rights of the various stakeholders (International Federations, National Federations, Athletes, and others), and forms part of a number of carefully balanced mechanisms in the Classification Code and International Standards that provide appropriate tools aimed at ensuring that Athletes are allocated the correct Sport Class.

In respect to the requirements for submitting a National Federation Protest, the Code no longer requires those Protest submissions to reference specific rule(s) alleged to have been breached or misapplied, but offers an opportunity to do so where applicable.

Consultation took place on whether a decision of a Protest Panel is final or can be further protested in respect to International Federation Protests made after the expiry of the deadline for a National Federation to submit a Protest. Different timelines were discussed during the consultation process, with the following position in the Code: where an International Federation makes a Protest after the expiry of the deadline for National Federation Protests to be made under the International Federation's Classification rules, the decision of a Protest Panel in relation to the International Federation Protest is not final and may be subject to further Protest by a National Federation or the International Federation. This provision is included with the acknowledgement that, contrary to National Federation Protests, which are always linked to an Evaluation Session and have a relatively short submission timeframe - International Federation Protests can be made at any time and regardless of when the last Evaluation Session for that Athlete took place.

In respect to Appeals, the Code includes a clarification that an Appeal cannot be submitted whilst a Protest is ongoing. However, in order to submit an Appeal, it is not necessary for the National Federation to have first made a Protest.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE

Relevant articles: Chapter Eight, Articles 64-66

Changes and rationale: No substantial changes were made to this section of the Code. The Code allows the IPC to issue supplementary regulations or guidelines from time to time to facilitate Compliance monitoring and enforcement. Details of the IPC's Compliance programme are not sitting within the Code but will be

developed separately and made available on the following webpage: [IPC - Classification Code compliance](#). During the final consultation phase of the Code review process, IPC Members were informed and consulted about a proposed approach to the Compliance strategy, activities, monitoring process and timelines.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Relevant articles: Chapter Six, Articles 53 – 60

Changes and rationale: The final version of the Code includes minor changes to this section, with a systematic overview of roles and responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders – the IPC, International Federations, National Paralympic Committees, Classification Personnel, Athletes, Athlete Support Personnel, and other Participants. Whilst this section of the Code does not refer to every article within the Code which captures a responsibility towards a stakeholder, this section provides an important overview of the roles and responsibilities in relation to Classification.

BEST PRACTICE CLASSIFICATION AND RESEARCH

Relevant articles: Chapter Seven, Articles 62-63

Changes and rationale: The sections dedicated to Classification research and the development of sport-specific Classification systems have been expanded, acknowledging the evolving nature of science and research in the relevant fields, which shapes the understanding of human movement, medicine and impairments, and sports performance.

The Code now reflects a new term – Best Practice Classification as the minimum standard all International Federations must achieve, whilst still pursuing the gold standard evidence-based Classification systems.

The Code mandates that International Federations have sport-specific Classification systems that reflect Best Practice Classification. Best Practice Classification means that the Classification system (i) adopts the four stages of the Classification process, (ii) uses the best available evidence in each stage, (iii) applies principles of clinical reasoning and critical thinking, (iv) is consistent with established principles of human movement science, low vision science, cognitive science, and sports performance, and (v) is consistent with current knowledge of Underlying Health Conditions and Eligible Impairments.

The Code further requires International Federations to conduct multidisciplinary Classification Research to ensure that their Classification systems meet (and continue to meet) the requirements for Best Practice Classification, and monitor the quality of their assessment systems and improve their evidence base.

The Code says International Federations should also invest in Classification Research that is designed to assist in developing evidence-based Classification systems – the gold standard systems that are supported by scientific evidence that indicates that the methods used for assigning Athletes a Sport Class will result in Sport Classes that each comprise Athletes who have Eligible Impairments causing approximately the same degree of activity limitation in that sport.

The Code also emphasizes the importance of adhering to internationally recognized ethical standards and research practices in the development and implementation of Classification systems. This adherence safeguards the dignity and rights of all Athletes, fostering a Classification environment that is not only scientifically rigorous but also ethically sound.

Finally, the development and refinement of Classification systems must incorporate active input from key stakeholders, including Athletes and Classifiers. International Federations are responsible for creating mechanisms to gather feedback and integrate this input into their Classification research and system development efforts. This collaborative approach, aligned with the principles outlined in Article 66.1, ensures that Classification systems, in addition to being scientifically robust and ethically grounded, are also reflective of the needs and experiences of the Para sport community.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD FOR CLASSIFICATION PERSONNEL AND TRAINING

Following the final consultation phase, this Standard received further attention in respect to addressing the roles and competencies of Classification Personnel, and in respect to who can become and maintain Certification as a Classifier and Head of Classification in the context of addressing potential, perceived and/or actual conflicts of interest.

The following points, some of which were shared within the previous Code review resources, are worth noting:

- Classification Personnel are fundamental to the management and delivery of Classification. The International Standard for Classification Personnel and Training sets out provisions on the roles, responsibilities, recruitment and development of Classification Personnel, including Classifiers as the key personnel. The Standard aims to outline the procedures for the recruitment, education, training, and development of Classification Personnel.
- Classification Personnel means Persons acting with the authority of a Classification organisation in relation to Classification, for example Classifiers and administrative officers.

- Head of Classification is required to have a minimum number of years' experience as a Classifier in a Para sport (recommended to be the same Para sport), as determined by the International Federation. However, if more than one person is appointed as the Head of Classification, only one such person must meet this requirement.
- UHC Assessors competencies have been outlined in the International Standard to capture the minimum requirement around the skills and experience to conduct UHC Assessments.
- The provisions on identifying and managing conflicts of interest have been updated in the final document to reflect the following:
 - As part of that policy, International Federations must define what they consider to be a conflict of interest in relation to Classification Personnel. That definition must include, as a minimum, any direct or indirect interest(s) and/or any relationship(s) with any Person(s) that might affect, or be reasonably understood by others as affecting, the Classification Personnel's objectivity, judgement, or conduct in carrying out their Classification responsibilities.
 - International Federations must identify, actively manage, record, and keep updated a register of actual, perceived and potential Classification Personnel conflicts of interest.
 - In order to manage actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest, it is not permitted for the following persons to (i) commence practical training to become a Classifier (i.e., they cannot participate in any Evaluation Sessions e.g., as a Trainee Classifier); (ii) receive or keep their Certification as a Classifier; or (iii) act as a Head of Classification:
 - an international athlete who is currently competing in any Para sport, or who has retired from the same Para sport less than four years ago;
 - a national team coach or national team assistant coach involved in the same Para sport, or who has retired from the same Para sport less than four years ago; or 8.7.3. other Athlete Support Personnel in the same Para sport with direct involvement with the national team or international athletes, or who have retired from such involvement in the same Para sport less than two years ago (including but not limited to a team physiotherapist, medical doctor, psychologist, massage therapist).
- The Standard provides an example of the above provisions. This final approach balances the potential risks with Classifiers holding dual roles which could lead to an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest, with the opportunities for recruitment of Classifiers. It is anticipated that

each International Federation will require careful assessment with their Classifiers in order to manage and implement these provisions over time.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD FOR INTENTIONAL MISREPRESENTATION

The Standard has been further reviewed and expanded upon following the final consultation phase.

What constitutes Intentional Misrepresentation, and the examples provided have been further tweaked to ensure they are clear and all encompassing.

The Standard provides a comprehensive framework intended to ensure transparent, fair, and consistent management of Intentional Misrepresentation cases with the objective to uphold confidence in Classification. By offering clear rules and procedures, the Standard fosters transparency during the investigation and disciplinary proceedings.

The Standard outlines obligations to report and cooperate, the requirements and process around investigations, including the ability for the IPC to (i) offer assistance to the International Federations in conducting investigations, (ii) directing an International Federation to conduct investigations, and (iii) conducting its own investigation; provisions around proceedings; notice of charge; resolving charges without a hearing; hearing requirements; confidentiality provisions; details on sanctions; decisions; appeals rights; and public disclosure requirements.

The section on sanctions has been expanded upon to reflect details around a minimum default period of ineligibility of four years which may be increased or reduced subject to different circumstances. A list of aggravating and mitigating circumstances is now provided in the Standard to help guide the decisions on the period of ineligibility.

A new section in the Standard has been added to capture requirements around Public Disclosure, mandating the International Federation to (i) Publicly Disclose the disposition of the matter, including the identity of the Participant, the nature of the Intentional Misrepresentation involved, and the consequences imposed; and (ii) publish an updated version of its Classification Master List to include the Participant's Intentional Misrepresentation designation, together with the duration and date of commencement of their period of ineligibility. The section also includes further provisions covering Public Disclosure under specific circumstances.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD FOR CLASSIFICATION DATA PROTECTION

No material changes have been made to this International Standard from the version distributed previously during the consultation process.

The following points shared within the previous Code review resources are worth noting:

- Classification Organisations (any organisation that is responsible for any aspect of Classification and/or holds Classification Data pursuant to the Classification Code) will usually be subject to the data privacy laws implemented by the country within which they are 'resident'. Classification Organisations need to understand how their national laws apply to their use of personal data in conjunction with complying with this Standard.
- In respect to principles for processing Classification Data, an Athlete has a number of legal rights in relation to their Personal Information. While Classification Organisations can use Personal Information in connection with Classification, there are a number of key principles that the Classification Organisation must adhere to ensure use complies with applicable data privacy laws and the International Standard. These include that the information will be processed securely and safely, only used for a legitimate Classification-related reason, and that Personal Information is deleted or anonymised when there is no longer any Classification purpose to retain it.
- Data privacy laws state that Classification Organisations can only use an Athlete's Personal Information if there is a 'lawful basis' for doing so. One such 'lawful basis' is that the Athlete has consented to the use. However, there are other equally valid legal bases, including that the Classification Organisation has a legitimate reason for using the personal information (even if the Athlete does not consent). For example, a Classification Organisation might ask an Athlete to consent to the use of Personal Information in order to classify the Athlete however, because the Athlete cannot compete in Para sport without engaging in Classification, their consent is not in fact voluntary. Under applicable Data Privacy laws this cannot be considered consent as that concept is defined. As an alternative a Classification Organization may determine it is more appropriate to rely on legitimate interest as the lawful basis for processing an Athlete's data for the purposes of undertaking Classification. This provision represents a change from the current practice, where obtaining consent has been considered the main basis for processing Classification data. Practical implications of these provisions in the Standard will be further discussed with Members.
- Similarly, Classification Organisations may Process Classification Data to engage in Classification Research, and in these circumstances the

Classification Organisation must ensure that a valid legal basis exists to permit such Processing. Depending on the circumstances, the Classification organisation may determine that the only lawful basis that the Classification organisation can rely on to process the Athlete's Personal Information is consent.

- The Standard further addresses the requirement under data privacy laws to inform individuals involved in Classification what Personal Information of theirs is obtained and processed. The common way in which Classification Organisations do so is by providing to individuals, or otherwise making available (i.e. via the Organizations' website) their data privacy, policy and/or any consent or other forms containing this information for individuals to review at the start of their Classification process, and before any Personal Information is collected.
- Classification Data security and disclosure provisions in the Standard are important aspects for Classification Organisations to comply with to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of Personal Information is maintained. When it comes to sharing of Personal Information with other Classification Organisations, Classification Organisations must consider the purposes of sharing and ensure that sharing is supported by one or more valid lawful bases.
- Classification Organisations should only keep Personal Information for as long as it is needed. Once the Personal Information is not needed or does not serve a useful Classification-related purpose, it should be deleted and/or anonymised. It is helpful for Classification Organisations to develop a policy that explains how long they will retain Personal Information for and what the triggers are for deleting or anonymizing it.
- Classification Organisations may be asked by individuals what Personal Information they hold about them, may request copy of such data and/or request to correct or delete certain Personal Information. Classification Organisations must be able to provide Athletes with information about the Classification Data they Process, as well as respond to requests seeking access to, correction or deletion of such Personal Information. A Classification Organisation should respond to such a request within a reasonable period of time. However, Classification Organisations may also refuse to grant such requests where it would interfere with efforts to maintain the integrity of the Classification process, prevent a Classification Organisation from complying with the Code or refusing the request is otherwise permitted under applicable data privacy laws. Classification Organizations should be aware of their obligations under data privacy laws in responding to and dealing with requests from individuals with respect to their Personal Information to ensure requests are dealt with appropriately and in line with applicable data privacy laws and this Standard.