



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 five International Standards that provide technical and operational standards for specific aspects of Classification to be carried out by all Signatories in a manner which 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 identify what an Eligible Impairment is in Para-sports.

## Definitions

This International Standard uses the defined terms from the Code. A further defined term specific to this International Standard is:

**Permanent:** A Health Condition or Impairment that is unlikely to be resolved and, meaning the principal effects are lifelong.



## 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 (or any other relevant rules), provide that an Impairment is an Eligible Impairment only if it is Permanent.
- 1.3 Any Athlete wishing to compete in Para-sport must have an Eligible Impairment. International Sport Federations must comply with this International Standard by ensuring that their sport governance rules (including but not limited to their Classification Rules) clearly indicate which of the Eligible Impairment(s) an Athlete must have in order to compete in the sport.
- 1.4 The Code requires that an Athlete with an Eligible Impairment must also comply with the Minimum Impairment Criteria set by the International Sport Federation for the particular sport (or an individual discipline within a sport). These Minimum Impairment Criteria must be described in a manner that the relevant Eligible Impairment has an impact upon sport performance as defined in the International Standard for Athlete Evaluation.

*[Comment to Article 1: Each Para-sport has to clearly define for which Impairments they provide sports opportunities. This must be described in the Classification Rules of each sport. While some sports include Athletes of all Eligible Impairments (for example athletics, swimming), other sports are limited to one Impairment (for example goalball, boccia) or a selection of Impairments (for example equestrian, cycling).]*

## 2 Establishing Eligible Impairment

- 2.1 International Sport Federations are required (by way of their Classification Rules and in any other relevant rules) for each sport they govern to have a process in place by which the existence of an Eligible Impairment can be established.
- 2.2 This process must encompass the following features:
  - 2.2.1 the Athlete's National Body must initiate the process on behalf of an Athlete;
  - 2.2.2 the International Sport Federation Head of Classification for the relevant sport will assess the existence of the Eligible Impairment based upon the provision of medical documentation and any other records;
  - 2.2.3 the Athlete's National Body must provide medical documentation and any other records so that the International Sport Federation Head of Classification is satisfied that the Athlete has one or more Eligible Impairments;
  - 2.2.4 if the International Sport Federation Head of Classification for the relevant sport is satisfied that an Athlete has one or more Eligible Impairments this will be recorded.



- 2.3 An International Sport Federation may delegate any of the responsibilities described in Article 5.2 to a Classification Panel.

*[Comment to Article 2: this Article requires IFs to establish a process by which an Athlete can verify that he or she has an Eligible Impairment. This must be done before a Classification Panel commences the components of Athlete Evaluation that it is required to undertake (by the International Standard for Athlete Evaluation).]*

### **3 Eligible Impairments and Commonly Associated Health Conditions**

- 3.1 The following are Eligible Impairments in the Paralympic Movement, together with examples of Health Conditions that may lead to those Eligible Impairments:

3.1.1 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 include: spinal cord injury (complete or incomplete, tetra- or paraplegia), muscular dystrophy, post-polio syndrome and spina bifida.

3.1.2 Impaired passive range of movement

Athletes with impaired range of movement have a restriction or a lack of passive movement in one or more joints. Examples include: arthrogyrosis and contracture resulting from chronic joint immobilisation or trauma affecting a joint.

3.1.3 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).



- 3.1.4 Leg length difference  
Athletes that have a difference in the length of their legs as a result of a disturbance of limb growth, or as a result of trauma.
- 3.1.5 Short stature  
Athletes with short stature have a reduced length in the bones of the lower limbs and/or trunk. Examples include: achondroplasia, growth hormone dysfunction, and osteogenesis imperfecta.
- 3.1.6 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 include: cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and stroke.
- 3.1.7 Ataxia  
Athletes with ataxia have uncoordinated movements caused by damage to the central nervous system. Examples include: cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, stroke and multiple sclerosis.
- 3.1.8 Athetosis  
Athletes with athetosis have continual slow involuntary movements. Examples include cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and stroke.
- 3.1.9 Vision Impairment  
Athletes with impaired vision have reduced or no vision caused by damage to the eye structure, optical nerves or optical pathways, or visual cortex of the brain. Examples include: retinitis pigmentosa and diabetic retinopathy.
- 3.1.10 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 3: Many other Impairments exist (see also article 4), 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 an approval of the IPC General Assembly.]*



*[Comment to Article 3.1: the list of Eligible Impairments includes examples of Health Conditions which may lead to an Eligible Impairment. The examples are not exhaustive.]*

## **4 Non-Eligible Impairments**

4.1 Any Impairment not listed in Article 3 is referred to as a non-eligible Impairment. Examples include:

- 4.1.1 Pain;
- 4.1.2 Hearing impairment;
- 4.1.3 Low muscle tone;
- 4.1.4 Hypermobility of joints;
- 4.1.5 Joint instability, such as unstable shoulder joint, recurrent dislocation of a joint;
- 4.1.6 Impaired muscle endurance;
- 4.1.7 Impaired motor reflex functions;
- 4.1.8 Impaired cardiovascular functions;
- 4.1.9 Impaired respiratory functions;
- 4.1.10 Impairment metabolic functions;
- 4.1.11 Tics and mannerisms, stereotypes and motor perseveration

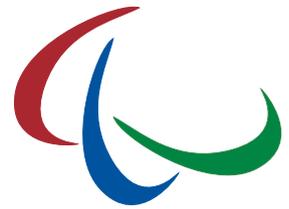
*[Comment to Article 4: the non-eligible Impairments listed in Article 4 are examples only, this is not a complete list of every non-eligible Impairment. The aim of the list is to assist IFs to enhance the clarity of rules governing eligibility.]*

## **5 Health Conditions that will not lead to an Eligible Impairment**

5.1 International Sport Federations may specify in their Classification Rules that certain Health Conditions do not lead to an Eligible Impairment. Any Athlete who is only affected by such Health Condition will not be considered for Classification in relation to one or more sports governed by that International Sport Federation.

5.2 The IPC has specified certain Health Conditions that do not lead to an Eligible Impairment. Examples are:

- 5.2.1 Health conditions that primarily cause pain, such as myofacial *pain*-dysfunction syndrome, fibromyalgia or complex regional pain syndrome.
- 5.2.2 Health Conditions that primarily cause fatigue, such as chronic fatigue syndrome.



- 5.2.3 Health Conditions that primarily cause joint hypermobility or hypotonia, such as Ehlers-Danlos syndrome
- 5.2.4 Health Conditions which are primarily psychological or psychosomatic in nature, such as conversion disorders or post-traumatic stress disorder.

*[Comment to Article 5: 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 IFs to enhance the clarity of rules governing eligibility.]*

*It is possible that an Athlete is affected by more than one Health Condition. In cases where the Athlete has a Health Condition which will not lead to an Eligible Impairment (such as Ehlers-Danlos syndrome), as well as a Health Condition which may lead to an Eligible Impairment (such as spinal cord injury), the Athlete may still be eligible for Para-sports. However, the following should be noted:*

*- if an Athlete has at the same time a non-eligible Impairment and an Eligible Impairment, the Athlete can be evaluated on the basis of the Eligible Impairment. The non-eligible Impairment must not influence the outcome of the evaluation.*

*- if the non-eligible Impairment interferes with the assessment of an Eligible Impairment, the Athlete Evaluation cannot be completed in accordance with the International Standard on Athlete Evaluation. An example is a case of an Athlete with severe rheumatoid arthritis where the assessment of restricted passive range of movement is impacted by pain.]*