



Para-Equestrian Classification Policies and Procedures

The following document outlines the policies and procedures that are used by Equestrian Canada for national athlete classification.

1. About Classification

Classification provides athletes with a physical disability the opportunity to compete against other athletes with similar abilities. Athletes are assessed by accredited 'classifiers' and are given a "Grade" based on their functional abilities in areas such as: muscle power, joint range and coordination. There are five Grades of competitions in para-dressage, with Grade IA representing the more severely impaired athletes, and Grade IV representing the least severely impaired athletes.

Equestrian Canada classifies (assesses) athletes in accordance with the methods and standards of the Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI), as outlined in the FEI Classification Manual. Athletes can only request to be classified once they are ready to compete at Equestrian Canada Silver and Gold Levels.

At each Grade, athletes may receive approval to use specific compensatory aids during competition, which would be listed on the athlete's classification card. The purpose of compensatory aids (sometimes known as adaptive tack or specialized equipment) is to level the competitive playing field. Examples of compensatory aids include: rubber bands to stirrups, two whips, etc. While compensatory aids are varied and can be unique to an athlete, they should never provide an advantage to the athlete.

Many para-equestrian athletes also compete alongside able-bodied competitors in Equestrian Canada competitions. At the grass-roots level, para-equestrian encompasses a number of different disciplines, while the international stream focuses only on para-equestrian dressage. Athletes are judged on their riding/driving skill against other athletes of the same Grade when competing, regardless of their impairment.

2. Minimal Disability Criteria (MDC)

Not all athletes who have a disability are eligible for classification. To be classified, athletes must have a recognized medical condition that causes impairment and that can be measured objectively. For example, a symptom such as lax ligaments, general pain or an impairment that changes from day-to-day is not classifiable.

In addition, athletes must have more than a 15% loss of power, range or coordination in any limb or the trunk to be eligible for classification (see baseline scores in the FEI classification manual for reference).

Athletes with minimal functional disability must meet the FEI criteria in order to compete in para-equestrian events. As outlined in the FEI classification manual, "*Classification is neither intended to be comprehensive nor to be all encompassing. Para-equestrian classification is not by definition, inclusive; it is exclusive. Therefore, there is no legal liability to classify everybody. To say someone is 'not eligible' or 'not*



classifiable' is not to say they are not disabled. The severity of the disability is not in doubt, but some disabilities do not fit into the classification system".

Individuals who do not qualify for Grade 1a, 1b, II, III, or IV because their condition is not eligible for classification, or they do not meet the conditions for minimal functional disability, may have an opportunity to qualify as Grade V and compete in non-disabled competitions using adaptive/compensating aids that are listed on their classification card or a Para-Equestrian Medical Form.

When the following conditions exist with no other physical impairment, the athlete is not eligible for classification:

- wear and tear due to advancing age,
- general debilitating disease,
- obesity,
- osteochondritis,
- psychiatric conditions,
- skin diseases,
- haemophilia
- epilepsy
- respiratory conditions
- fatigue as in fibromyalgia and myalgic encephalitis
- vertigo or dizziness
- internal organ dysfunction or absence
- International Blind Sport Association (IBSA) Class B3 and B4
- Cardiac/circulatory conditions

3. There are two levels of classification for Canadian riders.

3.1 National (Equestrian Canada) Classification

National classification is provided through accredited para-equestrian classifiers and enables eligible athletes to be assigned a Grade and to compete at Equestrian Canada Silver and Gold competitions using adaptive aids. The national classification process (including the issuance of a Para-Equestrian Athlete Classification Card) is administrated through Equestrian Canada.



Athletes who compete at the Equestrian Canada Bronze level do not require classification, but must use the Para-Equestrian Medical Form to identify any compensating aids that they use to compete. This form must be signed by the athlete's medical doctor and coach.

3.2 International (FEI) Classification

International classification is required for athletes competing at the international (FEI) level and is provided and administered through the FEI International classification system and are typically conducted at an international CPEDI event. Athletes interested in receiving international classification must be ranked on Equestrian Canada's Long List before submitting a request via Equestrian Canada.

International classification supersedes any Equestrian Canada classification. Therefore, once an athlete is classified at the international level, they must adhere to that classification for Equestrian Canada competition purposes as well. For example, if an athlete is classified as a 'Grade III' rider through Equestrian Canada, but becomes classified as a 'Grade IV' by the FEI, they must now compete in accordance with the Grade 'IV' classification at Equestrian Canada competitions. Additionally, if an athlete is deemed 'unclassifiable' at the international level, the athlete is therefore considered to be 'unclassifiable' at the national level as well.

4. To be eligible for Equestrian Canada classification, athletes must:

- Be actively competing in Equestrian Canada sanctioned Bronze competitions and pursuing competition at the Silver and Gold level in the immediate future.
- Meet the minimal disability criteria as outlined in the classification manual.
- Be in good standing with Equestrian Canada.

5. National Classification Process

- All athletes seeking classification must review the 'Para-Equestrian Classification Information' package, which can be obtained from the Para-Equestrian Department at Equestrian Canada.
- To receive classification, athletes must submit the following completed documentation at least 3 months before their first Equestrian Canada Silver/Gold level competition:
 - Signed copy of the Policies and Procedures Agreement
 - Classification Application Form
 - Payment Form
 - Consent for Classification Form



- Certificate of Diagnosis Form
- The cost for a classification is \$100.00, plus any additional travel expenses which may be incurred by the athlete as a result of travelling to a classifier.
- The Para-Equestrian Classification Committee will review the certificate of diagnosis form and confirm whether candidates qualify for classification. Only classifiers on the Classification Committee are able to determine whether a person meets the minimal disability criteria for a particular classification.
- Classification applications are reviewed bi-monthly by the Para-Equestrian Classification Committee. Classification sessions are scheduled based on the classifiers availability. Given the low numbers of classifiers across Canada, it is not always feasible for athletes to be classified near their hometown. At times, athletes must decide if they wish to travel for classification, or wait to be classified at a later date when there are more athletes in their area to be classified. Payment for classification is not processed until a classification date has been assigned.

5.1 The Classification Process

- The athlete must bring one person with them to the classification. It is preferred that the athlete bring their coach so that the classifier may discuss the compensating aids with both athlete and coach.
- The classifier will not watch the athlete riding before or during the classification, as the classifier's role is to assess the athlete's physical impairment and NOT the athlete's ability on the horse.

5.2 The Classification Exam

- The classification exam is referred to as a 'Bench Test'. There are different versions of the test that can be used, depending on the athlete's disabilities (see page 48 of the FEI Classification Manual).
- During the exam, the classifier(s) will evaluate either muscle strength, coordination, range of motion or a combination thereof throughout the athlete's body, from head to toe.
- There are a number of assessments conducted during the exam, such as power, joint range and coordination abilities. Each assessment is given a number on a scale of 0-5 (Includes ½ marks. i.e. 1.5).
- A result of '0' generally indicates that the athlete has no activity or movement in a specific assessment, while a result of '5' indicates that the athlete has normal performance.
- Once the exam is complete, the numerical figures are calculated from each assessment by the classifier and sent to the Para-Equestrian Classification Committee to verify the athlete's 'Functional Profile'. Please note that it may take a couple of weeks for this process to be complete.
- The athlete's Functional Profile determines which 'Grade' they are assigned for competition purposes: Grade 1a, 1b, II, III, or IV.



- In competition, the athlete who has been assigned a Grade is only permitted to use the compensatory aids that were approved by the classifiers. Any requests to have the compensatory aids changed must be directed to a classifier. While compensatory aids are varied and can be unique to a para-athlete, they should never provide an advantage to the athlete.

5.3 After the Exam

- Two-to-three weeks after the exam, the athlete will receive confirmation from Equestrian Canada of their Functional Profile and Grade, verified by the Para-Equestrian Classification Committee.
- A copy of the athlete's classification results and papers are sent to the Para-Equestrian department at Equestrian Canada where they are securely stored and held in strict confidence.
- Equestrian Canada sends a Para-Equestrian Athlete Classification Card to the athlete that states their Functional Profile, their Grade, and the compensating aids allowed, as applicable.
- Classification cards are required at each show and MUST be carried at all times for immediate presentation upon request.

6. Classification Files

- Active classification files are kept at the Equestrian Canada office.
- New classification requests will be held at the Equestrian Canada office for one year from the date of receipt. If the classification session is not assigned within the year, the file will be destroyed.
- Expired classification files will be destroyed two years after the date of expiry of classification.
- Inactive classification files will be destroyed two years after last date of correspondence with rider.

7. Classification Card Expiry Date

- The expiry date of a classification card is determined by the nature of an athlete's impairment and/or the athlete's age at the time of classification.
- Athletes must notify Equestrian Canada at least 3 months before their Classification Card is due to expire if they wish to continue being classified.
- Depending on the nature of the athlete's disability and age, the Para-Equestrian Classification Committee may request an athlete to be re-classified when their card is due to expire.
- In addition, the expiry date of a classification card may also be extended at the discretion of the Para-Equestrian Classification Committee.

8. Compensating Aids



Athletes who wish to add or amend a compensating aid to their Classification Card must submit a request with a rationale through Equestrian Canada, which will be reviewed. The decision as to whether a compensating aid may be added or amended is at the discretion of the Para-Equestrian Classification Committee.

9. Classification Timelines

An athlete may only be classified once every 12 months. However, athletes who experience a significant change to their medical diagnosis or condition within 12 months of their previous classification may request consideration for a reclassification sooner than once every 12 months. Such a request for reclassification must be made to the Para-Equestrian Classification Committee. The Classification Committee may, in the exercise of its discretion, permit such a reclassification to occur only if it is satisfied that:

- (1) A change in the athlete's medical diagnosis or condition has occurred,
- (2) Such a change is significant, and
- (3) The athlete files with the request for reclassification credible and reliable evidence (which is the athlete's responsibility to provide) consisting of appropriately signed and well-documented material that clearly supports the athlete's contentions with regard to (i) and (ii) above.

10. Classification Appeal

Athletes who wish to appeal the decision of the profile/grade that is granted in their application for national Para-Equestrian classification shall have 21 days from the date on which they received their classification results to submit an appeal in writing to Equestrian Canada. Appealing the decision of the profile/grade initially granted will result in the immediate approval of a reclassification by a different Para-Equestrian classifier.

The fee for the reclassification is \$50.00. All fees (including travel) for the reclassification are at the expense of the athlete. The classifier's decision regarding the profile/grade granted at the reclassification is final and binding, regardless of the result, and may not be further appealed through Equestrian Canada.

International classification supersedes any national Equestrian Canada classification. Therefore, once an athlete is classified at the international level, they must also adhere to that classification for Equestrian Canada national competition purposes. For example, if an athlete is classified as a 'Grade III' rider at the national level, but becomes classified as a 'Grade IV' rider at the international level, the athlete is required to compete in accordance with the 'Grade IV' classification at all subsequent Equestrian Canada national competitions. Additionally, if an athlete is deemed 'unclassifiable' at the international level, the athlete is therefore considered to be 'unclassifiable' at the national level. The decisions of international classifiers may not be appealed pursuant to the Equestrian Canada Appeals Policy.