



Achieving is Believing.



Achieving is Believing.

# Athlete Classification Handbook

Version 4.0

November 2003



DesignWorks | Enterprise | IG





Achieving is Believing.

---

## Contents

<b>Purpose .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1 Athlete Classification Pathway .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2 Principles of Classification .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 The Purpose of Classifications Systems .....	6
2.2 Sport Specific Classification Systems .....	7
2.3 General Classification Procedures .....	9
2.4 Higher Rather than Lower .....	11
2.5 Minimum Disability .....	11
<b>3 PNZ Classification Cards.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4 Classification Protests.....</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1 In-Competition Protests .....	13
4.2 Classifier Protests.....	13
4.3 PNZ Classification Protest Panel .....	13
4.4 Out of Competition PNZ Protest Procedure.....	14
<b>5 Code of Conduct.....</b>	<b>15</b>
5.1 Athletes.....	15
5.2 Classifiers.....	15
<b>6 PNZ Policy on Classifiers and Classification of all IPC Sports.....</b>	<b>16</b>
6.1 Classifier Eligibility .....	16
6.2 Certification of National Classifiers.....	16
6.3 Classification of National Athletes .....	18
6.4 Classification of International Athletes .....	18



Achieving is Believing.

---

## Purpose

This handbook is designed as an information resource for athletes, administrators and classifiers and details the generic process by which athletes are classified in New Zealand.

PNZ assists with the administration of the classification of the following sports.

- Archery
- Athletics
- Cycling
- Equestrian
- Lawn Bowls
- Sailing
- Shooting
- Swimming
- Table Tennis

For all other sports, detailed below, the Sport Specific Group (SSG) administrates classification and this handbook should be used as a guide to classification in conjunction with the relevant sport 's national classification policies and procedures.

- Boccia Association of New Zealand
- Disabled Snowsports New Zealand
- New Zealand Wheelchair Rugby
- New Zealand Wheelchair Tennis
- Wheelchair Basketball New Zealand

For further information on classification please contact the Paralympics New Zealand office or the relevant sport specific group.

Paralympics New Zealand  
PO Box 99178  
Newmarket  
Auckland  
New Zealand

Tel. (09) 526 0760  
Fax. (09) 526 0762  
Email. [info@paralympics.org.nz](mailto:info@paralympics.org.nz)  
Visit our website at  
[www.paralympics.org.nz](http://www.paralympics.org.nz)



Achieving is Believing.

---

## 1 Underlying Principles

Paralympics New Zealand (PNZ) is committed to providing the best classification services for New Zealand athletes across all sports.

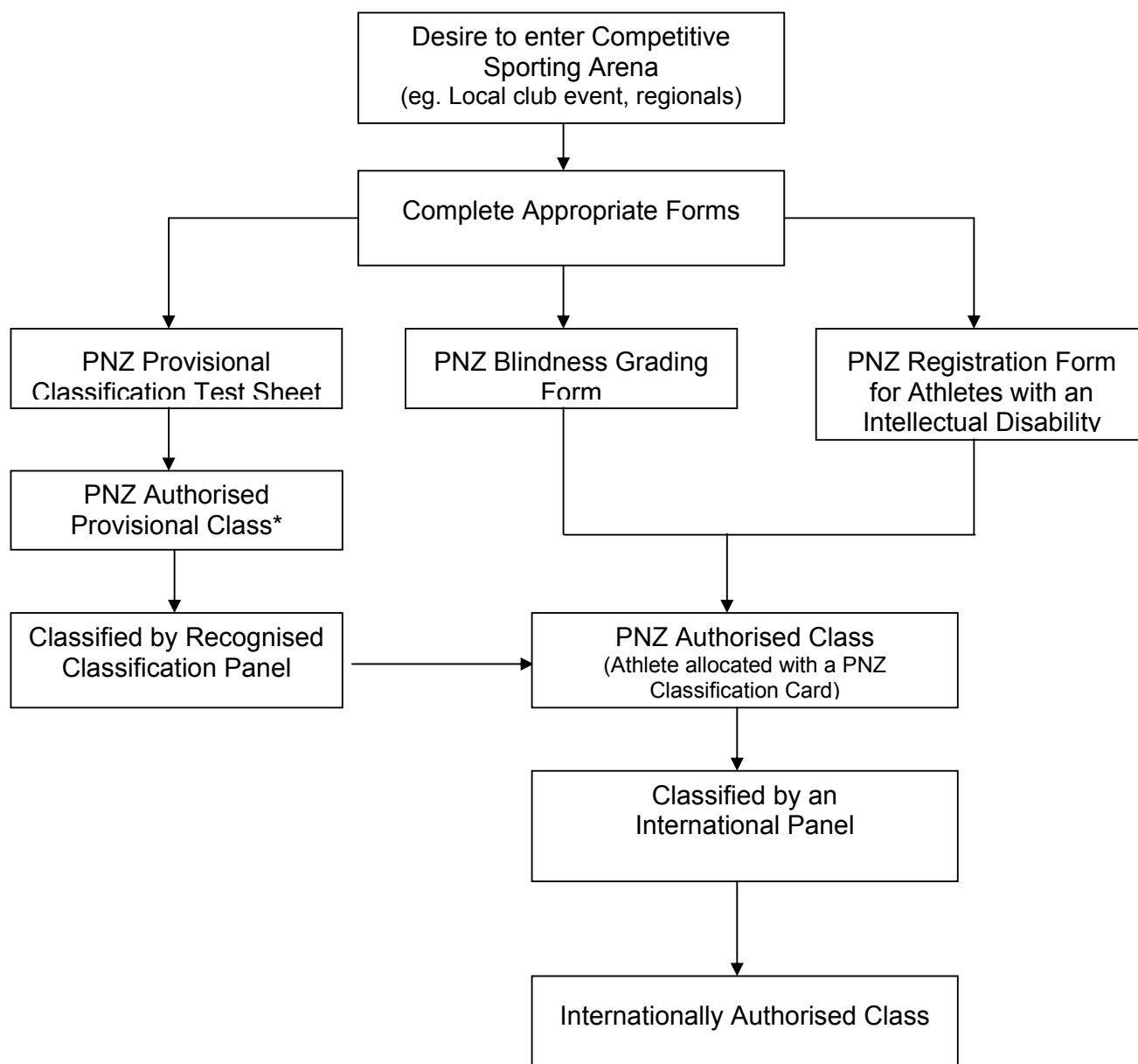
PNZ encourages all sports to adhere to their relevant International Sports Specific Classification Systems.

PNZ is the member nation of the following International Disability Sports Organisations.

- International Paralympic Committee (IPC)
- International Stoke Mandeville Wheelchair Sports Federation (ISMWSF)
- Cerebral Palsy International Sports & Recreation Association (CP-ISRA)
- International Sports Organisation for the Disabled (ISOD)
- International Sports Federation for Persons with an Intellectual Disability (INAS-FID)
- International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF)



## 2 Athlete Classification Pathway



**\* - Athletes with a PNZ provisional class are not eligible for national or international records.**

Relevant forms are available from Regional Parafeds, SSGs, Sport Opportunity Officers, National Sporting Organisations and from PNZ's website. Please forward all relevant forms and requested information to the PNZ Office.



Achieving is Believing.

---

### **3 Principles of Classification**

Classification is a unique and integral part of disability sport. It ensures fair and equitable competition at all levels of sport. Classification systems enable athletes to compete at the highest level, regardless of individual differences in physical, visual and intellectual function.

In order to achieve this many years of hard work has gone into developing classification systems that level the playing field for athletes with disabilities in all Paralympic sports. All classification systems are continually reviewed.

#### **3.1 The Purpose of Classifications Systems**

An efficient classification system must:

- 1) Enable fair and equitable competition.
- 2) Give each athlete with a disability an equal opportunity to compete at all levels.
- 3) Only measure functional limitations caused by the disability.
- 4) Be as simple as possible so that it can be used in a consistent way in every participating country.
- 5) Be sport specific.

The following should NOT under any circumstances affect an athlete's class in any sport:

- 1) Sporting skills or natural talent.
- 2) Genetic superiority or inferiority.
- 3) Body size or type, i.e. height, strength, length of arms etc.
- 4) Gender.
- 5) Training effect.
- 6) The use of strapping that provides stability and allows enhanced techniques.



---

Achieving is Believing.

## **3.2 Sport Specific Classification Systems**

All Paralympic sports have individual classification systems that have identified key areas that affect performance in the particular sport. Classification is based on the specific functions involved in performing a task (e.g. freestyle in swimming) when related to individual sporting technique.

For example, a major functional aspect in the sport of wheelchair rugby is trunk function. An athlete with trunk function will be significantly advantaged to an athlete with no trunk control. Therefore, points awarded for the trunk are higher than points awarded for biceps function.

Consequently, an athlete competing in two or more sports will receive a class for each sport, as each classification system differs (see 3.3 below)



Achieving is Believing.

### 3.3 International Sport Specific Classifications

Below is a list of recognised classes by the International Paralympic Committee. The classes indicated for each sport are a guideline only.

	<b>SPINAL CORD INJURY</b>	<b>CEREBRAL PALSY</b>	<b>AMPUTEES/ LES AUTRES</b>	<b>LITTLE PEOPLE</b>	<b>BLIND</b>	<b>INAS-FID (#)</b>
<b>SUMMER SPORTS</b>						
ARCHERY	ARW1-2 ARST1-2	ARW1-2 ARST1-2	ARW1-2 ARST1-2	*	*	*
ATHLETICS – TRACK	T51-54	T31-38	T42-46	*	T11-13	T20
ATHLETICS - FIELD	F51-58	F32-38	F42-46	F40	F11-13	F20
STANDING BASKETBALL	*	*	*	*	*	OPEN
WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL	1.0-4.5	1.0-4.5	1.0-4.5	*	*	*
BOCCIA	*	BC1-BC3	*	*	*	*
CYCLING	LC1-4	DV1-4	LC1-4	*	B1-3	*
EQUESTRIAN	ER1-4	ER1-4	ER1-4	ER4	ER3-4	
WHEELCHAIR FENCING	A,B,C	A,B,C	A,B,C	*	*	*
GOAL BALL	*	*	*	*	B1-3	*
JUDO	*	*	*	*	BY WEIGHT	*
LAWN BOWLS	LB1-5	LB1-5	LB1-5	*	LB6-8	*
POWERLIFTING	BY WEIGHT	BY WEIGHT	BY WEIGHT	*	*	*
WHEELCHAIR RUGBY	0.5-3.5	0.5-3.5	0.5-3.5	*	*	*
SHOOTING	SH1-2	SH1-2	SH1-2	*	*	*
SOCCER	*	C1-8	*	*	*	*
SWIMMING	S1-10 SB1-9	S1-10 SB1-9	S1-10 SB1-9	S1-10 SB1-9	S11-13 SB11-13	S14
TABLE TENNIS	1-10	1-10	1-10	*	*	11
WHEELCHAIR TENNIS	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	*	*	*
SAILING	1-7	1-7	1-7	*	3&7	*
<b>WINTER SPORTS</b>						
ALPINE SKIING	LW1-12	LW1-12	LW1-12	*	B1-3	*
X-COUNTRY SKIING	LW2-12	LW2-12	LW2-12	*	B1-3	*
ICE SLEDGE HOCKEY	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	*	*
ICE SLEDGE RACING	LWX-XI	LWX-XI	LWX-XI	*	*	*
WHEELCHAIR DANCE	LWD1-2	LWD1-2	LWD1-2	*	*	*

# Denotes - athletes with an intellectual disability

\* Denotes – ineligible for competition



Achieving is Believing.

---

## 3.4 General Classification Procedures

The classification process of most Paralympic sports involves a variety of tests. These tests assess the physical potential of the athlete. All information gained from these tests is documented and held by PNZ and also by the SSG, if applicable. All information is confidential.

### 3.4.1 The Bench Test

This consists of a physical examination to ascertain in what areas the athlete's disability affects the athlete's physical function. This test is conducted in a private room and the results are recorded on a test sheet for future reference.

The Bench Test varies depending on the disability of the athlete, the presentation of the disability and the sport being classified for. Below are examples of various bench tests and the manner in which they are assessed. Please note that these systems are not exact and will be dependent on the classification system in place for the specific sport.

#### Strength Test

A strength test examines the strength of the affected muscles and is used when testing spinal cord and related injuries. Strength is usually tested using the Adapted Medical Research Council (MRC) scale, as detailed below.

- 0 *Total lack of voluntary contraction.*
- 1 *Faint contraction without any movement of the limb (a flicker).*
- 2 *Contraction with very weak movement with gravity eliminated (poor).*
- 3 *Contraction with movement against gravity (fair).*
- 4 *Contraction with moderate resistance (good).*
- 5 *Contraction of normal strength though the full range of movement against full resistance (normal).*

#### Co-ordination Test

A Co-ordination Test examines the affect of the disability on the athlete's co-ordination. This is conducted at a variety of speeds in order to ascertain the true functional ability at all speeds. This test is usually conducted on those athletes with types of Cerebral Palsy and neuromuscular disorders. The following illustrates how this test is graded.

- 0 *No functional movement at all.*
- 1 *Very severely restricted range of movement due to muscle stiffness and/or very minimally coordinated movements.*



- 
- 2 *Severely restricted range of movement with severe spasticity/muscle stiffness present and/or severe coordination problems.* Achieving is Believing.
- 3 *Moderate range of movement, moderate spasticity with tone restricting movement and/or moderate coordination problems.*
- 4 *Almost full range of movement, with slight spasticity and slight increase in muscle tone and/or slight coordination problems.*
- 5 *Normal.*

### **Range of Movement Test**

Reduced range of movement can severely affect an athlete's performance. However, range is only taken into consideration if it is a contributing factor of the disability of the athlete and not an unassociated injury, such as a shoulder problem brought about by overuse when pushing a wheelchair. Range of Movement is tested by using the following scale.

- 0 *No functional range of movement*
- 1 *Slight functional range of movement*
- 2 *25% functional range of movement*
- 3 *50% functional range of movement*
- 4 *75% functional range of movement*
- 5 *Normal function range of movement for the specific sport.*

#### **3.4.2 Demonstration of Technique**

All sports allocate classes primarily on what an athlete has the potential to achieve in the particular sport. Therefore, the demonstration of technique test is used with reference to the bench test previously conducted.

These tests consist of the athlete demonstrating techniques used in the sport. For example;

In swimming the athlete is required to perform a variety of skills in the water, where the classifier will analyze the athlete performance taking into consideration the results gained from the bench test.

In wheelchair rugby the athlete is required to demonstrate a number of ball skills, such as throwing and dribbling and also the athlete's maneuverability of their chair.

#### **3.4.3 Visual Review During Competition**

Integral to any classification testing procedure is the analysis of the athlete during competition. Competition enables the classifier to ascertain the true functional potential of the athlete, as this is the definitive sporting environment.



Achieving is Believing.

---

#### 3.4.4 Athlete Review

Many sports have a 'review' policy that enables classifiers to monitor an athlete's classification over time. It is not unusual for athletes to be observed over a period of a year or more.

This in no way has any disadvantages to an individual and should not be perceived as a threatening situation. It is the job of the classifiers to ensure fair play and it is only fair to the athlete and those participating in that sport that the classifiers take every opportunity to ensure an accurate class is allocated.

#### 3.5 Higher Rather than Lower

Each classification system is not infallible and athletes sometimes do not fit exactly in to the systems in place. When a classifier is unsure of the exact class of a particular athlete it is recommended that the following procedure be followed:

- Allocate a higher, rather than lower class for that athlete. This enables the athlete to compete in the sport. Over the years it has proved to be less damaging to the athlete to start at a higher class (i.e. the more able class) and if necessary drop the athlete a class rather than the reverse. It can be extremely unsettling for an athlete to be raised a class.
- The athlete will then be observed for a period of time in both competition and training if necessary in order to allocate an accurate class. This process can continue throughout the career of an athlete.

#### 3.6 Minimum Disability

An athlete who cannot participate on reasonably equal terms in an able-bodied sport because of a functional disadvantage due to a permanent disability is eligible for that sport within the IPC programme.

If an athlete cannot be placed in any of the available classes then the athlete cannot be allowed to compete in either PNZ regional and national competitions or international competitions.

The minimum disability is determined in and by each sport, depending on functional factors. Therefore an athlete may be eligible for one sport and not for another.

In order to take part in a competition an athlete must be classifiable according to the rules of the sport event in which he/she is entered.

**If, in the opinion of the Classification Panel, an athlete is not classifiable due to their failure to co-operate in the classification process then the athlete shall be declared ineligible to compete.**



Achieving is Believing.

## 4 PNZ Classification Cards

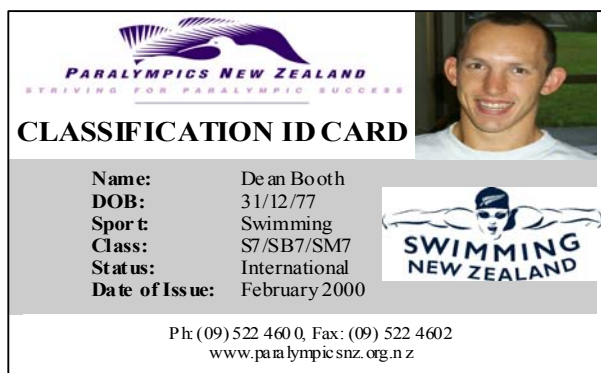
As more and more athletes with a disability are competing in able bodied competition a number of technical issues have been identified. In order for competition officials to identify the exceptions to the national and international sporting rules for various disabilities and so that the athlete is not disqualified for a technique that is not possible, PNZ issues all athletes with an authorised class with an official classification identification card (see example below). This card is recognised by the National Sporting Organisation of the sport.

The ID Card is required to be presented to the meet manager/referee when competing in all competitions, both segregated and integrated. In this way the rule exceptions will be observed by the competition officials. Athletes not presenting an ID Card will be required to compete under the able bodied rules. Consequently, it is in the athlete's interests to present their card at every competition.

The PNZ Classification Card will identify that the athlete

1. Maintains a PNZ authorised classification.
2. Has the necessary exception to the rules when competing.
3. Is eligible for New Zealand records.

A replacement ID Card will be issued at a cost of \$20.



### Exceptions to FINA & SNZ Rules:

Start = Nil  
Free = Nil      Back = Nil  
Fly = Right hand touch  
Breast = Right hand touch with simultaneous intent with other; Show intent to kick.



Achieving is Believing.

---

## 5 Classification Protests

Possible reasons for the protest of an athlete's class are:

- Progressive condition directly affected by the disability.
- An increase in potential function by the athlete.
- Incorrectly classified.

An athlete may have a difference of opinion with their allocated class. If an athlete does not agree with results of a classification of an individual, be it themselves or a competitor, the procedures identified below should be followed.

**Protests, although a right of athletes and classifiers, should not be used in a manner that would unfairly affect the outcome of the competition. "Tactical protests" are a breach of the principles of fair play.**

### 5.1 In-Competition Protests

All events held both nationally and internationally should have a set protocol for the protest of a classification. This will be identified in the event documentation and at the team managers meeting.

If a protest is upheld and an athlete's class is changed during an event, it is recommended that the athlete concerned be allowed to compete under their original classification. This is to avoid changing the line-ups of team sports and to avoid any distress to the athlete during competition. In such cases, event and international classification procedures for the relevant sport take precedent.

### 5.2 Classifier Protests

Most sports allow for the Classification Panel to protest an athlete's classification following observation during competition. Such protest shall be without fee.

### 5.3 PNZ Classification Protest Panel

All out of competition protests will be dealt with by either the SSG Classification Protest Panel or, in the absence of a SSG Classification Protest Panel, the PNZ Classification Protest Panel.

The PNZ Classification Protest Panel will consist of the following,

- PNZ Representative
- PNZ Medical Director
- Head Classifier for the relevant sport.



Achieving is Believing.

---

## 5.4 Out of Competition PNZ Protest Procedure

4. All protests to the PNZ Classification Protest Panel must be made on the official PNZ Protest Form (see Appendices) and forwarded to the PNZ office with all supporting information (medical records, video footage, etc.). The written request must contain an outline of the reason for the protest based upon and citing where the athlete's physical profile does not fit their allocated class. The protest must also be accompanied by a protest fee of NZ\$50, which will be refunded, if the protest is upheld.
5. The PNZ Classification Protest Panel shall deal with classification protests as soon as possible after the protest has been received. The PNZ Representative shall decide the time and venue of the hearing.
6. The athlete will be given the opportunity to present himself or herself for a classification review. This could involve nothing more than observation in competition to performing a new bench and 'demonstration of technique' test. At re-classification tests the athlete may be accompanied by a person of their choice.
7. If an athlete refuses to attend a protest re-classification test they will be banned from further participation.
8. The final decision will be written on the official form. The original will be kept by PNZ. Copies will be distributed to the athlete concerned and the relevant sport's Head Classifier.
9. Following any re-classification the implementation of the change shall be according to the rules of the relevant sport.
10. If it can be shown that the PNZ Code of Conduct for classification (see 7.2) has not been followed during a classification, an alternative Classification Panel shall reclassify the athlete.
11. Any decision by a PNZ recognised Protest Panel is final and will not be reconsidered within a year of the protest, unless certified medical evidence exists showing that the competitor has a progressive condition affecting their physical or sensory ability.



Achieving is Believing.

---

## **6 Code of Conduct**

### **6.1 Athletes**

1. Arrive for classification in a timely manner.
2. All athletes must present themselves for classification with all their personal aids, adaptations, prosthesis, orthotics, swim suit, playing chairs etc. that they intend to compete with. There is no exception to this rule. The athlete may be accompanied by their coach/team manager/parent if they wish.
3. All athletes must give full effort and co-operation. Any athlete not fully co-operating with the classification process will not be given a class and will therefore not be eligible to compete.
4. It is the responsibility of all those involved in the classification process to educate themselves regarding the proper procedure and assure that the procedure is followed.
5. All athletes must respect and adhere to the decision of the Classification Panel. Any queries / complaints must be referred to the Head Classifier of the Classification Panel.

### **6.2 Classifiers**

1. Respect the athlete and their coach.
2. Maintain a courteous attitude during the classification process.
3. Involve the athlete and coach/team leader in discussions in matters pertaining to their classification and explain the results.
4. Handle protests in a fair, non-threatening and non-arbitrary manner.
5. Respect the rules.
6. Establish clearly defined procedures for the classification and follow them.
7. Make the procedures widely known to athletes and their coaches/team leaders.
8. Respect each individual classifier.
9. Treat each discussion as confidential information.
10. Maintain confidentiality of the athlete's information wherever possible.
11. Do not criticise other classifiers in public - the Chairperson or Head Classifier shall act as spokesperson.
12. Remember you are acting for the sport and the classification process and not for your region or nation.



Achieving is Believing.

---

## 7 Paralympics New Zealand Policy on Classifiers and Classification of all IPC Sports

The following applies to all IPC sports.

### 7.1 Classifier Eligibility

Classifiers must be part of either of the following groups

1. Individuals with formal training in neuromuscular evaluation and training.
- OR**
2. Individuals with experience and proven knowledge of the relevant sport.

***Please Note:***

In order to become internationally certified classifiers in most IPC sports the individual must be part of group 1 as listed above. For further information on sport specific requirements for internationally accredited classifiers please contact the Paralympics New Zealand office.

### 7.2 Certification of National Classifiers

The following certification levels for classifiers are recognised at a national level. International levels of certification do not influence National certification levels unless stated in the following eligibility definitions.

#### **New Zealand National 'Trainee'**

1. Eligibility
  - Completed a Paralympics New Zealand recognised sport specific National classification workshop.
  - Approval of sport specific Head Classifier.
  
2. 'Trainees' are required
  - To complete all classifications with a National Level 1 classifier or above.
  - To complete further sport specific classification training within 18 months of first completing a workshop to maintain their 'Trainee' status.
  - Must have knowledge of the sport and/or a willingness to increase their knowledge of the sport.



Achieving is Believing.

---

### **New Zealand National Level 1**

#### 1. Eligibility

- Completed a Paralympics New Zealand recognised sport specific International workshop.
- OR
- Endorsed by the sport specific Head Classifier.
- Must be able to perform a complete classification independently and explain findings to both athlete and other classifiers.

#### 2. Level 1's are required to

- Seek guidance where necessary.
- Maintain a classification logbook detailing all classification contact hours with the sport.
- Demonstrate increasing responsibility in classification issues.

### **New Zealand National Level 2**

#### 1. Eligibility

- Demonstrates a minimum of two contact years with the sport in a classification role.
- Participate in a National tournament as a member of the classification panel.
- Endorsed by PNZ and sport specific Head Classifier.

#### 2. Level 2's are required to

- Be involved in the administration or conducting of a classification workshop on an annual basis, where appropriate.
- Maintain a classification logbook detailing all classification contact hours with the sport.

#### **Please Note:**

National Level 2 classifiers will ideally be at a similar level to sport specific International Level 1 classifiers. However, no classifier may become a National Level 2 classifier without two years experience, regardless of their international certification.

Where international classification opportunities are available only National Level 2 classifiers will be considered, unless in exceptional circumstances. (i.e. New Zealand only has National Level 1 classifiers in the specific sport)



Achieving is Believing.

---

### **7.3 Classification of National Athletes**

The sport specific Head Classifier must approve all national classifications before they are deemed official national classifications. In sports where there is a recognised panel of classifiers in operation, the panel must approve all classifications before they are deemed official national classifications.

Head Classifiers are asked to forward all officially completed classification test sheets to Paralympics New Zealand. On receipt of the classification test sheet Paralympics New Zealand will issue each athlete with a Paralympics New Zealand Classification ID Card.

### **7.4 Classification of International Athletes**

All athletes with an International class shall compete under their international class except in the following circumstances.

- The panel of classifiers issuing the new class is greater or equal to that of the panel that previously classified the athlete internationally.
- The athlete has deteriorated to such a degree that they are disadvantaged in their international class. In this instance, the following procedure shall be followed.
  1. The Head Classifier or PNZ shall inform the international SSG.
  2. The Head Classifier or PNZ will then follow the international procedure of investigating a change in class.
  3. Only on recommendation of the international SSG shall the athlete's class be changed.
  4. Until all of the above is completed the classification of the athlete will remain that of their international class.