

Athlete Categorisation Guidelines

2021-2024 (2022 update)

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1. Introduction

Athlete Categorisation Purpose

Aligned to the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) Athlete Categorisation Framework (refer appendix 1), the purpose of the Triathlon Australia (TA) Athlete Categorisation Guidelines 2021-2024 (Guidelines) is to provide an outline of the process by which athlete categorisation will be assessed and conducted.

The purpose of athlete categorisation is to identify athletes who have the potential to achieve Olympic and Paralympic Podium Success within two Olympic and Paralympic Cycles and support the achievement of the aims of the TA high performance program. Categorisation levels reflect the timeframe around which an athlete is likely to achieve podium success based on patterns of progression of podium athletes within the sport.

Athlete categorisation is the primary mechanism for access to TA high performance environments (and agreed external daily training environment (DTE) support for Paralympic Pathway athletes) and other daily training environment support (including high performance coaching).

Athlete Categorisation Rationale

To be categorised, an athlete must firstly meet the athlete eligibility requirements (section 2) and will then be assessed according to the Athlete Profiling Performance Matrix (APPM), set out in the supporting documents to these Guidelines.

As part of understanding what differentiates podium athletes and podium performances, TA has developed a Hierarchy of Discriminators (HoD, detailed in the supporting documents to these Guidelines) that must be developed over time to achieve podium success. These represent the factors that underly what it takes to win, when it matters.

The HoD forms the foundation of an evidence-informed holistic athlete profiling approach to better predict and monitor athlete progression over time. At different points in an athlete's journey, different factors may be weighted relatively more or less based on their association with long term performance.

It is critical to understand that the weighting does not represent the “relative importance” of each discriminator to performance at that point in time, but rather the insight it provides in assessing the probability of an athlete achieving podium success over the Olympic or Paralympic cycle they are targeting.

For example, at Podium level an athlete's results in the previous two years are highly associated with their likelihood to perform over the next two years. However, an athlete's results at junior level – while still relevant - are not significantly predictive of their likelihood to podium at senior Benchmark Event (BME) level. Therefore, at Emerging level, TA are assessing an athlete's potential to perform at senior BME level over time, not their current performance per se.

The overall approach is based on the analysis of triathlon data from the last 20 years and paratriathlon data from the last 5 years, combined with expert coaches' feedback on athlete progression.

An athlete's categorisation status, or level, is independent to the process of selection for any level of race or Australian team.

2. Athlete eligibility

The eligibility requirements to be considered for, and maintain categorisation, include that an athlete must, at all times:

- a) be a current member of TA;
- b) meet the eligibility requirements for citizenship as determined by the Australian Government;
- c) satisfy all relevant World Triathlon (WT), International Olympic Committee (IOC), International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) eligibility and nationality rules. Note that this clause is a general eligibility clause, not considering the medal events on the Commonwealth, Olympic or Paralympic Games programs;
- d) in the case of paratriathletes, hold an international WT classification of “Review” or “Confirmed” status (at the absolute discretion of the Categorisation Panel, in certain cases, where there is a known pathway to International classification, this requirement may be waived);
- e) not be serving any current sanctions;
- f) comply with all relevant TA and AIS policies including (but not limited to) relevant Codes of Conduct, team agreements, policies and rules;
- g) complete and sign the TA Athlete Agreement upon offer of categorisation on an annual basis;
- h) complete requested Integrity education requirements including (but not limited to) Sport Integrity Australia (SIA) anti-doping, anti-match fixing and classification integrity online e-Learning modules;
- i) be training (or be committed to training) in one of following DTEs;
 - Olympic Program
 - *Podium Centre*
 - *Performance Centre*
 - *Talent Transfer Centre*
 - *Agreed External DTE (relevant only for athletes categorised prior to 2022, see section 9)*
 - Paralympic Program
 - *Agreed External DTE*
 - *Performance Centre (where the performance centre possesses the capacity and expertise for appropriate class specific coaching and support)*
- j) participate in any required assessments, and upon completion be considered by the Athlete Categorisation Panel as being capable of achieving an Olympic/Paralympic podium performance over the targeted cycle.

If an athlete’s eligibility for athlete categorisation changes TA may end their categorisation at its sole discretion either as soon as practical after the athlete’s status has changed, or at the end of the TA Athlete Agreement (31 December each year). Examples of how an athlete’s eligibility might change include, but are not limited to, a planned change of nationality or change to eligibility for Australian citizenship, a change to an athlete’s classification or the classifications to be contested at the next Paralympic Games, an anti-doping violation or a violation of TA’s Code of Conduct.

3. Prospective athletes

New athletes (Olympic and Paralympic pathway) who wish to be considered for athlete categorisation must nominate via the [online application form](#) within the published timeframe.

To be eligible to nominate for athlete categorisation, prospective athletes must;

1. Meet relevant eligibility requirements (detailed in section 2) – Paralympic and Olympic pathway;
2. Have achieved a minimum individual discipline performance standard in one or more disciplines or achieve a result detailed in the Olympic Pathway APPM (see Appendix 3) – Olympic pathway only*.

**Note: To allow agile support for new classes, and due to the unique development trajectories of paratriathletes, there are no Paralympic pathway minimum performance standards required to apply for Athlete Categorisation.*

Following internal review of athlete applications, new athletes who remain in consideration, will be invited to an interview. The athlete interview is an opportunity for the athlete to discuss their plans and intentions as well as information and context that can be considered in the assessment of the athlete's probability to achieve podium success at future BMEs.

Further information about athlete interviews will be shared with athletes invited to interview, including involvement of a parent or guardian for athletes under 18 years. The TA Wellbeing and Engagement Manager (or an alternate Wellbeing and Engagement representative) will attend all athlete interviews.

A detailed categorisation decision process for new athletes wishing to be categorised in the Olympic or Paralympic pathway can be referenced in the supporting documents to these Guidelines.

3. Currently categorised athletes

Athletes who are currently categorised are not required to nominate and are not required to participate in an interview.

Athlete Categorisation Panel decisions regarding ongoing athlete categorisation (status and level) will be guided by APPM performance benchmarks assessed together with other APPM characteristics and capabilities. Achieving APPM performance benchmarks alone does not guarantee categorisation at any level. Categorised athletes are expected to show ongoing progress against APPM performance benchmarks, characteristics and capabilities and progression through categorisation levels to maintain categorisation status. While ongoing progress is expected, athlete development is not linear and individual factors and context are considered in the categorisation decision process.

A detailed categorisation decision process for existing categorised athletes in the Olympic or Paralympic pathway can be referenced in the supporting documents to these Guidelines.

Any athletes who are currently categorised but do not wish to be considered for categorisation in the future must notify the NPD in writing prior to the published date for the Athlete Categorisation annual review meeting.

4. Categorisation panel and key dates

The Athlete Categorisation Panel is responsible for athlete categorisation decisions, is appointed by the TA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and will include;

Voting members;

- TA National Performance Director (NPD)
- TA Performance Pathways and Athlete Development Manager
- TA Olympic Program Head Coach (Olympic Pathway Categorisation decisions)
- TA Paralympic Performance Manager (Paralympic Pathway Categorisation decisions)
- Additional member(s) as required to ensure gender representation

Three additional, non-voting members will attend the Categorisation meeting;

- TA Wellbeing and Engagement Manager
- National Institute Network representative
- Another person appointed by the CEO, usually with a sporting and legal background, to act as an “Independent Observer” of the process

The Athlete Categorisation Panel will consult TA’s Chief Medical Officer, the TA Head of Classification or any other person/persons it deems appropriate in informing categorisation decisions.

The Athlete Categorisation Panel will meet (Athlete Categorisation annual review meeting) on an annual basis typically after conclusion of the international season and post-BME review (generally Oct/Nov). Athletes can only be added, moved between levels, or exited from categorisation at the defined annual review meeting (with the exception of any change in athlete eligibility (as outlined in section 2)).

The typical categorisation period is from 1 January – 31 December each year. Athletes will be informed in writing if they are exited from categorisation and typically membership will end on 31 December with any transition period and support to be agreed on a case by case basis.

The list of nominated athletes will be submitted to the AIS for review and endorsement prior to any general announcement.

An athlete’s categorisation status, or level, is independent to the process of selection for any level of race or Australian team.

Olympic pathway national training partners

Olympic pathway national training partners are not categorised but may add value to TA environments (and categorised athletes) and could support the achievement aims of the TA high performance program. At the discretion of the NPD, athletes who are exited from categorisation, meeting these criteria may be supported to continue as national training partners, training in TA environments.

National training squad partners status for any athlete is determined at the discretion of the NPD on a case by case basis.

5. Appeals

Prior to a formal appeal an athlete who would like to understand or seek feedback on the decision around their categorisation or non-categorisation should first discuss directly with the NPD. The athlete may request an additional member of the panel be involved in this discussion (i.e. the Wellbeing and Engagement Manager or the Independent Observer).

Only existing categorised athletes (in the year prior to the relevant decision) and prospective new athletes who were invited to the interview stage (eligible athletes), may appeal the decision (categorisation status or level).

Eligible athletes may appeal the decision around their categorisation on the following grounds:

1. The panel has failed to follow the process set out in these Guidelines
2. The panel has reached a decision around categorisation based on one of more materially inaccurate facts/inputs
3. The panel has reached a decision that is so unreasonable, such that an alternative panel of similar expertise, using the same process, could never have reached such a decision.

The appeal process will be conducted as follows:

- An athlete submits an appeal in writing to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of TA. This should clearly set out the basis for the appeal, explicitly citing one of the conditions above and must be submitted within seven (7) days of the notification to the athlete in writing of the Athlete Categorisation decision.
- The CEO will appoint an independent review panel, of two individuals including an individual with Triathlon knowledge and a HP system representative (from AIS, NIN or other National Sporting Organisation) to review the decision.
- Together they will review whether there are any grounds for appeal (as above). If they deem this so, they will direct the original panel to review their decision. In this case, review panel members will be included together with the original panel in reviewing the decision.
- Once the original panel, together with review panel members have reviewed the decision they will confirm to the athlete in writing their decision.
- There is no further avenue of appeal.

The TA Wellbeing and Engagement Manager can provide confidential support to any athlete considering a request for reconsideration/appeal.

6. Athlete Support – TA and National Institute Network

Competition and daily training environment support

The support available to the categorisation levels will be reviewed and updated annually and will be specified within the TA Athlete Agreement and the supporting documents of these Guidelines (re-published annually post BME).

Olympic pathway athlete support is based on providing categorised athletes with access to TA environments delivered in partnership with our NIN partners and led by world class employed coaches. Centralising performance support and resourcing to these centres will provide categorised athletes the best opportunity to develop and progress.

Categorised paratriathletes will be supported through agreed environments including agreed external DTEs (with support from the relevant NIN partner), a Performance Centre (where the performance

centre possesses the capacity and expertise for appropriate class specific coaching and support) as well as through the camps-based Paratriathlon Hub.

Support will be delivered in partnership between TA, the AIS and NIN as and where available. It should be noted the provision of performance support to athletes is subject to TA and NIN partner capacity, may vary across and within categories and on the basis of IAPP priorities.

This support model represents the strategic intent setting the environmental conditions for success and to most effectively support athletes to achieve podium success at BME's. Athlete support will be prioritised based on the athlete's IAPP and the athlete's probability of achieving BME podium success.

Athletes are not obliged to accept categorisation should it be offered and are reminded that an athlete's categorisation status, or level, is independent to the process of selection for any level of race or Australian team.

7. Athlete Support – dAIS

dAIS Support

The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) dAIS Scheme ensures athlete support is aligned to the AIS National Athlete Categorisation Framework (NACF). Direct athlete funding support provided by the AIS is therefore linked to athlete categorisation level, which is underpinned by the TA APPM for both Olympic and Paralympic pathways.

Athlete nomination is subject to AIS endorsement and in accordance with total AIS grant allocation and athlete ranking within each level of categorisation. A number of factors will be taken into consideration as per the APPM and What it takes to Win modelling to rank athletes within the Emerging to Podium Potential levels.

More information is available at https://www.sportaus.gov.au/grants_and_funding/dais/info/guide

Dependent support

For eligible athletes (Podium or Podium Ready) who are experiencing financial hardship due to the athletes' responsibilities for dependants (primarily children), TA will support the nomination to the AIS for additional dAIS allocation subject to athlete eligibility and the ongoing availability of the additional allocation from the AIS.

Transition / Retirement

The dAIS scheme – transition/retirement support, is available to categorised athletes who are transitioning out of competitive sport either due to retirement or exit from categorisation. Where eligible, athletes may be provided with up to half (0.5) dAIS allocation based on their most recent categorisation level, for a period of 6 months.

The TA Wellbeing and Engagement Manager will discuss eligibility requirements and nomination processes for dAIS Dependant and Transition/Retirement support with relevant athletes. Categorised athletes with dependants or who are considering retirement should contact the TA Wellbeing and Engagement Manager to discuss this further.

8. Planned absence

A planned absence from the sport is any pre-planned extended period when an athlete is unable to prepare and/or compete at the level required to meet the aims of the TA high performance program. Where an athlete will be supported through any agreed planned absence, TA may nominate them for dAIS.

Illness, injury or other reason

Athletes whose performance in the next calendar year is likely to be affected by a known performance limiting factor or planned absence from the sport will only be considered for inclusion on the list of categorised athletes in exceptional circumstances and where the NPD supports that it is in the best interests of the athlete and aims of the TA high performance program.

Athletes may be required to complete a medical form and, if deemed necessary by the TA Chief Medical Officer, undergo further examination.

Each case will be judged on an individual's circumstances such as their previous performance level and trajectory. Where an athlete will be supported through a planned absence – Illness/injury or other reason, TA may nominate them for dAIS.

Pregnancy

Athletes will be supported through pregnancy, and a period of parental leave should they wish to start a family while still competing at an elite level while categorised. Athletes will be supported to develop and agree to an appropriate return to training and competition plan, in consultation with the TA Chief Medical Officer, Wellbeing and Engagement Manager, their coach and relevant HP staff. This plan must be approved by the NPD and meet the aims of the TA high performance program to deliver medals at Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2024, 2028 and beyond.

9. Review of these Guidelines

A major review of these Athlete Categorisation Guidelines will occur in line with AIS requirements on an Olympic/Paralympic Games cycle basis (next major review to commence in 2024). Between major reviews of the Guidelines, annual reviews will be conducted as a business as usual practice.

2022 Guidelines update note

As detailed in the 2021 Guidelines, from 2022 onwards, new Olympic Pathway athletes will not be eligible for categorisation unless they are training (or are committed to train) in a TA environment. Categorisation status and support for existing Olympic Pathway categorised athletes in external DTEs, will be discussed with relevant athletes on an individual basis.

Any Olympic Pathway athletes supported at the Podium categorisation level will receive agreed support irrespective of their training environment (TA environment or external DTE).

While International travel has recommenced following the COVID-19 Pandemic, where domestic/international travel is in any way compromised, TA reserves the right to continue to consider any disruption or impact of COVID-19 in applying these guidelines so long as it is consistent with the purpose and intent set out in the Rationale for Athlete Categorisation (section 1).

Appendix 1: AIS National Athlete Categorisation Framework

The TA Athlete Categorisation Guidelines 2021 – 2024 are aligned to the AIS National Athlete Categorisation Framework 2021-2024, as set out below. TA will consider athletes for inclusion in each of the categorisation levels in Table 1.

Table 1: AIS National Athlete Categorisation Framework

Description and Criteria		
National Performance Pathway Categorisation	PODIUM	Athletes have won a medal at an Olympic/Paralympic Games, World Championship or agreed event in previous 24 months AND must be assessed against the sport specific matrix as being capable to win a medal at the next Olympic/Paralympic Games.
	PODIUM READY	Athletes have placed 4th - 8th at most recent Olympic/Paralympic Games/World Championship OR by exception at an agreed equivalent alternative (ie an objective, data-verified performance or World Ranking] AND must be assessed against the sport specific matrix as being capable to win a medal at the next Olympic/Paralympic Games.
	PODIUM POTENTIAL	Athletes will have achieved agreed performance benchmarks which, alongside international competition performances, reliably indicate their future potential for podium success. Athletes must be assessed against the sport-specific matrix as being capable to progress to at least PODIUM READY level with the agreed sport-specific matrix timeframes.
	DEVELOPING	Athletes have progressed through a reliable national talent confirmation phase and placed within a dedicated national development program. Athletes must be assessed against the sport-specific matrix as being capable to progress to at least PODIUM POTENTIAL level with the agreed sport-specific matrix timeframes.
	EMERGING	Athletes must have been identified by an NSO via a valid and reliable talent identification profiling method (agreed in advance and with future podium potential characteristics identified) and are going through a set, time-limited talent confirmation period.

More information about the AIS National Athlete Categorisation framework can be found at <https://www.ais.gov.au/edm/national-athlete-categorisation-framework>.

Appendix 2: 2021 – 2024 Benchmark events

2021 - 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Pathway Benchmark Events			
Year	Event	Location	Date
2021	Olympic Games (Individual)	Tokyo, JPN	July
	Olympic Games (Mixed Relay)	Tokyo, JPN	July
	Paralympic Games	Tokyo, JPN	August
	WT Championship Final	Edmonton	August
	WT Paratriathlon World Championship	Abu Dhabi, UAE	November
2022	WT Mixed Relay World Championship	Montreal, CAN	June
	WT Championship Final	Abu Dhabi, UAE	November
	WT Paratriathlon World Championship	Abu Dhabi, UAE	November
2023	WT Mixed Relay World Championship	Hamburg, GER	July
	WT Championship Final	Pontevedra, ESP	September
	WT Paratriathlon World Championship	Pontevedra, ESP	September
2024	Olympic Games (Individual)	Paris, FRA	July/August
	Olympic Games (Mixed Relay)	Paris, FRA	July/August
	Paralympic Games	Paris, FRA	August/September

The Athlete Categorisation Panel reserves the right NOT to accept performances from any of these races (and races detailed in the APPM) should they have been achieved at races which were compromised by either a large-scale racing incident (such as a crash) or environmental conditions/exceptional circumstances which resulted in an altered or reduced race format (such as removal of the swim portion of the race).

Appendix 3: Olympic pathway minimum performance standards

For prospective categorised Olympic pathway athlete, the individual discipline performance standards are the set minimum standards required for athletes to apply to be categorised. Standards have been developed using evidence based conversation of WT winning times, IAAF and FINA point score conversion and progression window benchmarks.

To apply, Olympic pathway athletes must have achieved a minimum individual discipline performance standard in one or more disciplines or achieve a result detailed in the Olympic Pathway APPM

These standards can be demonstrated in either a sanctioned Swimming or Athletics meet, or a sanctioned triathlon. The Olympic pathway standards are as follows:

Olympic Pathway Minimum Performance Standards			
Individual Discipline	Event	Female	Male
Swim	200m	2:31	2:12
	400m	5:09	4:42
Run	800m	2:22	2:04
	1500m	4:50	4:11
	5000m	17:45	15:10

To allow agile support for new classes, and due to the unique development trajectories of paratriathletes, there are no Paralympic pathway minimum performance standards required to apply for athlete categorisation.