

ATHLETE CATEGORISATION GUIDELINES 2025

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1. Introduction

Athlete Categorisation Purpose

Aligned to [The National Athlete Categorisation Framework](#), (refer appendix 1), the purpose of the AusTriathlon (AusTri) Athlete Categorisation Guidelines 2025 (Guidelines) is to provide the process by which Athlete Categorisation will be assessed and conducted for existing categorised athletes.

The purpose of athlete categorisation is to identify athletes with the greatest potential to contribute to Australia winning medals consistently, to continually improve Australia's standing at current and future Benchmark and Pinnacle Events. 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 support within AusTri High Performance program.

Athlete Categorisation Rationale

To be categorised, an athlete must firstly meet the athlete eligibility requirements (clause 2) and will then be assessed according to the Athlete Categorisation Performance Matrix (ACPM), and our What it Takes to Win (WITTW) modelling, set out in the supporting documents to these Guidelines.

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) meet the eligibility requirements for citizenship as determined by the Australian Government;
- b) in the case of Para-triathletes, 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);
- c) not be serving any current sanctions;
- d) complete and sign the AusTri Athlete Agreement upon offer of categorisation on an annual basis;
- e) 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 next two (2) cycles.

3. Prospective Athletes

New athletes (Olympic and Paralympic Pathway) who wish to be considered for Athlete Categorisation will be assessed in April - May 2025 in line with updated categorisation guidelines and ACPM (linked to updated HP 2032 strategy).

4. Currently Categorised Athletes

Athletes who are currently categorised are not required to nominate to be re-considered categorisation.

Athlete Categorisation Panel decisions regarding ongoing Athlete Categorisation (status and level) will be guided by ACPM. Achieving ACPM performance benchmarks alone does not guarantee categorisation at any level. Categorised Athletes are expected to demonstrate ongoing progress against ACPM performance benchmarks, characteristics and capabilities, and trajectory 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.

The 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 General Manager – Performance (GMP) in writing prior to the published date for the Athlete Categorisation annual review meeting.

Injury and/or Illness Considerations for Existing Categorised Athletes

For existing categorised athletes, long-term injury/illness over the season will be considered for athletes that are required to meet performance standards as per the ACPM to maintain categorisation for the following year.

To be eligible for this consideration to apply, an athlete must provide the Panel written correspondence, supported by AusTri's Chief Medical Officer (CMO) (confirming impact on training availability and competition readiness) outlining their request to maintain categorisation for the following year. Written correspondence is to be sent via email to the HP Operations Manager by 8 November 2024.

It will be at the Panel's full discretion if this should be deemed applicable when looking at maintaining an athlete's categorisation status. No further consideration on injury or illness will apply.

5. Categorisation Panel and Key Dates

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

Voting members;

- AusTri GMP (Chair)
- AusTri Performance Pathways Manager (PPM)
- AusTri Olympic Campaign Lead (Olympic Pathway Categorisation decisions)
- AusTri 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;

- AusTri 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 (Chair) will consult AusTri’s CMO, the AusTri Head of Classification or any other person/persons it deems appropriate in informing categorisation decisions.

The Athlete Categorisation Panel will typically meet on an annual basis after the conclusion of the international season (generally Oct/Nov). However, as we move into the LA Quad, and refine strategy and structure, there will be a mid-season review in line with the NEW 2025 – 2028 Guidelines at the completion of the domestic season with another to take place at the end of 2025. Athletes can only be added, moved between levels, or removed from categorisation at the defined review ‘s except for any change in athlete eligibility (as outlined in clause 2).

The categorisation period commences 1 January 2025. Athletes will be informed in writing if they have not maintained categorisation for the following season. A transition support process will be agreed upon 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.

6. 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 shall first discuss directly with the GMP. 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).

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 AusTri Chief Executive Officer (CEO). 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, the review panel members will be included together with the original panel in reviewing the decision.
- Once the original panel, together with the 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 AusTri Wellbeing and Engagement Manager is available to provide confidential support to any athlete considering a request for reconsideration/appeal.

7. Athlete Support – AusTriathlon and NIN

Competition and Daily Performance Environment Support

The support available to the categorisation levels will be reviewed and updated annually and will be specified within the AusTri Athlete Agreement.

Categorised Athlete support, delivered in collaboration with our NIN partners is currently centred around performance servicing, competition support, facility access, and coaching.

It should be noted the provision of performance support to athletes is subject to AusTri and NIN partner capacity and may vary across and within categories as well as with Individual Athlete Performance Plan (IAPP) priorities.

Athlete support will be prioritised based on the athlete's IAPP and the athlete's probability of achieving Benchmark & Pinnacle event success.

8. Athlete Support – dAIS

dAIS Support

The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) dAIS Scheme ensures athlete support is aligned to The 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 AusTri ACPM for both Olympic and Paralympic Programs.

Athlete nomination is subject to AIS endorsement and in accordance with total AIS grant allocation and athlete ranking within each level of categorisation. Several factors will be taken into consideration as per the ACPM and WITTW modelling to rank athletes within the Emerging to Podium Potential levels.

More information is available [HERE >](#)

Dependent Support

Athletes (Podium or Podium Ready) who are experiencing financial hardship due to their responsibilities for dependants (primarily children) may be eligible for an additional dAIS allocation or 'top up'. AusTri is required to nominate eligible athletes to the AIS for consideration of this payment.

Athletes who are considering dependant support should contact the AusTri Wellbeing and Engagement Manager by 8 November 2024, for further information in relation to eligibility and nomination.

Transition / Retirement

The dAIS Scheme – Transition/Retirement Support, may be available to eligible categorised athletes (podium, podium ready or podium potential) who are transitioning out of competitive HP sport either due to retirement or moving to a non-supported Triathlon pathway (i.e. Long Course Triathlon). 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.

Categorised athletes who are considering retirement, should contact the AusTri Wellbeing and Engagement Manager for further information.

9. Planned Absence

AusTri recognise that on occasion, athletes may require some time away from competition for family, health and/or wellbeing reasons.

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 AusTri HP program. Where an athlete will be supported through any agreed planned absence, AusTri may nominate them for dAIS.

Categorised Athletes who require a planned absence, should contact the AusTri Wellbeing and Engagement Manager for further information.

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 GMP supports that it is in the best interests of the athlete and aims of the AusTri HP program.

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

Each case will be assessed 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, AusTri may nominate them for dAIS.

Categorised Athletes should contact the AusTri Wellbeing and Engagement Manager for further information.

Pregnancy

Athletes will be supported through pregnancy (e.g. maintaining level of categorisation for a defined period), 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 AusTri Chief Medical Officer, Wellbeing and Engagement Manager, their coach and relevant HP staff.

Categorised Athletes should contact the AusTri Wellbeing and Engagement Manager for further information.

10. Review of Guidelines

These guidelines will be reviewed between January and April 2025 to align with the AusTriathlon HP 2032+ Strategy (2025 – 2028 Guidelines). Athlete categorised under these guidelines will be re-assessed against the 2025 – 2028 Categorisation Guidelines in April-May 2025.

Annual reviews of the AusTri Athlete Categorisation Guidelines 2025 – 2028 will be conducted as a business as usual practice once the new guidelines are in place.

Refreshed National Athlete Categorisation Guidelines Note

As part of Horizon 1 of the HP 2032+ Strategy, the National Athlete Categorisation Framework (NACF) has been refreshed for the LA2028 cycle and beyond.

Following extensive consultation with HP system partners, the critical change to the Framework is an elevated focus on performance potential criteria when categorising athletes at a sport level. There will be a greater reliance on the NSO evidence informed What it Takes to Win (WITTW) and Athlete Development Frameworks (ADF) to ensure all athlete categorisation decisions are supported by evidence. The changes provide an opportunity for the system to focus on athletes who demonstrate a trajectory to podium success at the Pinnacle Event.

APPENDIX 1: THE NATIONAL ATHLETE CATEGORISATION FRAMEWORK

The AusTri Athlete Categorisation Guidelines 2025 are aligned to the National Athlete Categorisation Framework (NACF) which provides a generic guide for NSOs to establish sport specific criteria to categorise individual athletes at differing stages of the performance pathway.

Athletes will be identified as Performance Pathway Athletes and AusTri will consider athletes for inclusion in each of the categorisation levels set out in Tables 1 & 2.

Table 1: Performance Pathway Athletes

CURRENT CYCLE ATHLETES				FUTURE CYCLE ATHLETES		
PERFORMANCE CATEGORIES	PODIUM: Performance Confirmation	PODIUM READY: Performance Ready	PODIUM POTENTIAL: Performance Potential	DEVELOPMENT CATEGORIES	DEVELOPING: Athlete Development Verification	EMERGING: Athlete Development Confirmation
	Medaled at pinnacle event or has been the World #1 or medaled at a World Championship event (in current cycle pinnacle event/discipline) in the past 24 months and demonstrates a trajectory capable of winning a medal at current cycle pinnacle event aligned to the WITTW as referenced in the NSO athlete performance matrix.	Displays performance capability aligned with WITTW, demonstrating a trajectory capable of winning a medal at current cycle pinnacle event as referenced in the NSO athlete performance matrix.	Displays performance capability to qualify and compete in current cycle pinnacle event, contributing to inspiration and wellbeing outcomes AND performance capability is aligned to WITTW demonstrating a trajectory capable of podium performance as referenced in the NSO athlete performance matrix.		Displays performance potential aligned with WITTW and demonstrates a trajectory capable of contributing to future (next) cycle outcomes as referenced in the NSO athlete performance matrix.	Displays performance progression informed by the sport specific athlete development framework as it relates to WITTW for future cycle outcomes as referenced in the NSO athlete performance matrix.

** Meeting the criteria of the NACF and being identified through an NSO Athlete Categorisation Performance Matrix does not guarantee access to services or support from the NIN. The use of these tools enables the prioritisation of support to the right athletes at the right time. As a general guide, resource and service prioritisation will be given to Podium, Podium Ready, Podium Potential, Developing and Emerging athletes respectively.*

More information about the NACF can be found at [LA2028 Key Framework Updates | HP2032 \(ausport.gov.au\)](https://ausport.gov.au/la2028-key-framework-updates-hp2032)

APPENDIX 2: 2025–2028 BENCHMARK / PINNACLE EVENTS

	Event	Location	Date
2025	WT Mixed Relay World Championship	TBC	June/July
	WT Championship Final	Wollongong, AUS	October
	WT Paratriathlon MR World Championship	Wollongong, AUS	October
	WT Paratriathlon World Championship	Wollongong, AUS	October
2026	WT Mixed Relay World Championship	TBC	June/July
	WT Championship Final	TBC	Sep/Oct
	WT Paratriathlon MR World Championship	TBC	Sep/Oct
	WT Paratriathlon World Championship	TBC	Sep/Oct
2027	WT Mixed Relay World Championship	TBC	June/July
	WT Championship Final	TBC	Sep/Oct
	WT Paratriathlon MR World Championship	TBC	Sep/Oct
	WT Paratriathlon World Championship	TBC	Sep/Oct
2028	Olympic Games (Individual)	LA, USA	July/August
	Olympic Games (Mixed Relay)	LA, USA	July/August
	Paralympic Games	LA, USA	August/September

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