



Sport Inclusion
AUSTRALIA

Eligibility Policy & Procedures

Sport Inclusion Australia

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Policy

Introduction

Sport Inclusion Australia is a National Sporting Organisation established in 1986 to assist the inclusion of people with an impairment, primarily an intellectual impairment into the mainstream community using sport as the medium. Sport Inclusion Australia is the Australian member of Virtus, International Sport Federation for athletes with intellectual impairment.

Our **Purpose** is to build a more inclusive community.

Sport Inclusion Australia facilitates, educates and supports sporting organisations and the wider community about the power of sport to deliver social inclusion, while advocating for the rights of all Australians to be treated with dignity.

Our **Mission** is to drive inclusion through sport.

The philosophy has never wavered 'Promote sporting opportunities for people with an impairment in mainstream settings with sport owning and delivering sport for all Australians at the appropriate ability level with a 'person first' approach'.

We want to make sure no one is left behind.

Purpose

A significant component of Sport Inclusion Australia's role in the promotion of competitive opportunities for athletes with an intellectual impairment is to ensure that all such inclusion is based on equity and fair play.

As such, Sport Inclusion Australia is committed to the implementation and facilitation of a just and unbiased eligibility system for athletes with an intellectual impairment at regional, state, national to international level.

Sport Inclusion Australia works closely with National Sporting Organisations, Paralympics Australia, School Sport Australia and others as required to establish systems which meet the respective sport's needs and then process all eligibility documentation accordingly. Sport Inclusion Australia also works with Virtus to build strong eligibility systems where athletes can access competition pathways.

Core Policy

This document outlines the policy and procedures adopted by Sport Inclusion Australia to ensure compliance with international standards for determining intellectual impairment to ensure a fair and equitable base, where athletes with an intellectual impairment compete against records, standards or other athletes with an intellectual impairment.

It also details the Primary eligibility standards for national and international level applications and the respective appeals process.

This document covers only the scope of eligibility process for athletes whose impairments fall under the Virtus Eligibility criteria. Sport Inclusion Australia does not provide eligibility assessment for impairments that sit outside of the Virtus scope.

Procedures

Responsibilities

Athletes and or their advocates are responsible for submitting a complete application with all necessary documentation to verify that they meet the respective eligibility criteria along with additional supporting documentation such as photos and payment of the applicable fee.

Sport Inclusion Australia will work with the athletes and or their advocate to assist with the submission and assessment of applications, ensuring they are processed within a timely manner including all associated processes such as printing of registration card and uploading names on the Masterlist.

Where athletes are deemed not to be eligible, Sport Inclusion Australia will provide athletes and or their advocates with a full explanation of why they were assessed as ineligible. Sport Inclusion Australia will at all times consider an athlete's wellbeing and provide support wherever possible. Sport Inclusion Australia will maintain a list of athletes deemed ineligible and share with the relevant sport and organisation.

Sport Inclusion Australia is responsible for identifying and appointing a National Eligibility Officer, NEO, according to the standards and approval processes for NEOs set by Virtus, who verifies all Virtus applications before being forwarded to the Virtus Secretariat.

Professional Responsibilities

Sport Inclusion Australia relies on the professional integrity, independence and accuracy of all information provided as part of the eligibility process.

Professionals completing assessment documentation are expected to provide information that is accurate, evidence-based and prepared in accordance with relevant professional and ethical standards.

Where Sport Inclusion Australia reasonably believes that a professional may have knowingly engaged in professional misconduct, collusion, or the provision of false or misleading information intended to improperly influence an eligibility outcome, the matter may be referred to relevant regulatory, professional, integrity or disciplinary bodies, including AHPRA where appropriate.

Eligibility Types

II-1 – Athletes with an Intellectual Disability

The Primary Eligibility Criteria agreed to by Virtus and subsequently Sport Inclusion Australia is based upon the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental disability (AAIDD, 2010) definition of intellectual disability which is consistent with that of the World Health Organisation (WHO, ICD-10 and ICF, 2001) and states:

‘Disorders of intellectual development are a group of etiologically diverse conditions originating during the developmental period characterised by significantly below average intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour that are approximately two or more standard deviations below the mean (approximately less than the 2.3rd percentile), based on appropriately normed, individually administered standardized tests.’

1. Significant impairment in intellectual functioning. This is defined as two standard deviations below the mean – a full IQ score of 75 or lower;
2. Significant limitations in Adaptive Behaviour as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills. This is defined as performance that is at least two standard deviations below the mean;
3. Evidence that the intellectual disability was evident before the age of 22.

II-1 National and International Eligibility

For II-1 athletes, there are two levels of eligibility.

- II-1 National Eligibility – permits entry to some developmental events and some sanctioned national events;
- II-1 International Eligibility – permits entry to regional and World Championships and is a pre-requirement of Paralympic sports classification in identified Paralympic Sports – athletics, swimming and table tennis.

II-1 National Eligibility

Permits entry to national events, youth events and Virtus' developing sports. It will not permit athletes to enter World and Regional Championships, the Global Games or progress to Paralympic sports classification.

The diagnostic criteria for national and international eligibility are the same, but the evidential requirement for national registration is lower.

Where possible the results of a formal psychological assessment resulting in a diagnosis of intellectual disability should be submitted, however if this is not available, then the following will be accepted:

- A signed statement by a psychologist which confirms a diagnosis of intellectual disability;
- Proof of attendance at a special school/college for students with an intellectual disability;
- Diagnosis by state or government for receipt of support, clearly identifying the support required as resulting from intellectual disability, e.g. ICD-11 diagnosis.

II-1 International Eligibility

The Virtus Eligibility Criteria for athletes with an intellectual disability is:

Significant impairment in intellectual functioning which is defined as a Full-Scale IQ score of 75 or lower, and;

Significant limitations in adaptive behaviour as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills.

This is defined as performance that is at least 2 standard deviations below the mean of, either:

- a. One of the following 3 types of adaptive behaviour: conceptual, social, or practical skills;
- b. An overall score on a standardised measure of conceptual, social and practical skills.

Intellectual disability must be evident during the developmental period, which is from conception to before 22 years of age.

Athletes must meet **all 3 elements** of the criteria to be eligible for consideration for intellectual disability verification and have their diagnosis confirmed by a qualified psychologist or psychiatrist.

A qualified psychologist should make the IQ assessment, taking into consideration the three criteria. It is essential that they come to a stated diagnostic clinical decision based on a thorough consideration of the athlete's development history and the clinician's findings across all three areas, including any additional information they have access to and provide the rationale for this decision and the test must have been done within 5 years.

- The full IQ assessment with testing sheets needs to be included;
- The full Adaptive Behaviour assessment with testing results included;
- Evidence of the intellectual disability being evident before the age of 22. (e.g. Prior tests).

II-2 – Athletes with intellectual disability and additional significant impairment

A significant additional impairment is defined by Virtus as a lifelong condition that affects the functional capacity of the individual and substantially impacts on their sports performance. This includes athletes who have an intellectual disability, associated lifelong conditions, and/or a genetic condition, such as Down syndrome.

Athletes will be eligible for II-2 if it can be demonstrated that they have significant functional impairment in addition to an intellectual disability. That is:

- i. **A formal diagnosis of Trisomy 21 or Translocation Down Syndrome;**

OR

- ii. **Have a diagnosed intellectual disability (as defined by the II-1 criteria) AND meet the minimum criteria for additional impairment as defined by the Virtus FAST Assessment with supporting medical evidence.**

II-3 – Athletes with Autism

Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as *‘persistent deficits in the ability to initiate and to sustain reciprocal social interaction and social communication, and by a range of restricted, repetitive, and inflexible patterns of behaviour, interests or activities that are clearly atypical or excessive for the individual’s age and sociocultural context. The onset of the disorder occurs during the developmental period, typically in early childhood, but symptoms may not become fully apparent until later when social demands exceed limited capacities. Deficits are sufficiently severe to cause impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning and are usually a pervasive feature of the individual’s functioning observable in all settings, although they may vary according to social, educational, or other context. Individuals along the spectrum exhibit a full range of intellectual functioning and language abilities.’* ([ICD 11](#)).

Both the ICD 11 and the [DSM 5 definition](#) of Autism are accepted by Virtus and therefore Sport Inclusion Australia. Based upon this, the Virtus eligibility criteria for athletes with autism is **a formal diagnosis of Autism or ASD carried out by qualified practitioners, using clinically accepted diagnostic techniques.**

Process

Eligibility application forms can be lodged by email, mail or in person at the Sport Inclusion Australia office.

The Sport Inclusion Australia Eligibility Officer will review all applications and where necessary seek additional information.

Once satisfied that all requirements have been met and the application is complete with all supporting documentation, the application will be forwarded to the Sport Inclusion Australia, Eligibility Manager to approve.

Note: Additional information may be requested at any stage of the application process and if at any stage an athlete is deemed ineligible or there is doubt about the original determination, the athlete is informed and Sport Inclusion Australia reserves the right to have an independent psychologist consulted and the athlete can follow the Appeals procedures.

All information collected by Sport Inclusion Australia is stored according to the Sport Inclusion Australia Privacy Policy.

II-1 Eligibility – National

The following process applies to National Eligibility: (Applicants should allow a minimum of 3-4 weeks)

- Eligibility application forms received must be signed by a psychologist confirming a diagnosis of intellectual disability; or
- Proof of attendance at a special school/college for students with an intellectual disability; or
- Diagnosis by state or government for receipt of support, clearly identifying the support required as resulting from intellectual disability, e.g. ICD-11 diagnosis;
- The Sport Inclusion Australia Eligibility Officer will check application forms, at which point additional information may be requested;
- Once satisfied, the application is forwarded to the Sport Inclusion Australia Eligibility Manager for endorsement;
- Athlete's name and details are added to Sport Inclusion Australia database and Masterlist;
- A summary is forwarded to relevant Member organisation and sporting organisation to which the athlete has agreed;
- Registration letter and card is printed and forwarded to the athlete with receipt of registration cost.

II-1 Eligibility – International

The following process applies to the Virtus/IPC Eligibility: (Applicants should allow a minimum of 12 weeks)

- Eligibility application forms received must have the appropriate evidence attached, e.g., Approved Psychological testing detailed above and must be conducted within 5 years and testing sheets included;
- The Sport Inclusion Australia Eligibility Officer will check application forms, at which point additional information may be requested;
- Once satisfied, the application is forwarded to the Sport Inclusion Australia, Eligibility Manager for endorsement;
- Forms are scanned and sent electronically to Sport Inclusion Australia's National Eligibility Officer, NEO (Volunteer) for endorsement;

- Once ratified by NEO, finalised applications are forwarded electronically to Virtus;
- Once approved by Virtus, endorsed Athlete's name and details are added to Sport Inclusion Australia database and Masterlist;
- A summary is forwarded to relevant Member organisation and sporting organisation to which the athlete has agreed;
- Registration letter and card is printed and forwarded to the athlete with receipt of registration cost;
- Virtus adds athlete, sport and country to the master list;
- Only athletes receiving an Virtus eligibility number may proceed to Para-Sports Classification in the inclusive Para sports.

II-2 - National and Virtus Eligibility (Additional Impairment)

For II-2 Eligibility – Sport Inclusion Australia applies Virtus standards (Applicants allow 3-4 weeks for national and 12 weeks for international)

The evidential requirements for II-2 vary according to the nature of the additional impairment. There are two routes to apply for II-2, one for those with Trisomy 21/Translocation Down Syndrome and one all other athletes (including those who have Mosaic Down Syndrome).

Route 1 – Trisomy/Translocation Down Syndrome

Athletes applying should submit:

- A copy of the results of a blood test (cytogenetic analysis) for that athlete confirming Trisomy 21 or Translocation Down Syndrome. The test should be based on a minimum of 20 cells and clearly diagnose Trisomy or Translocation Down syndrome;
- Evidence regarding Atlantoaxial Instability (AAI) should also be submitted, as outlined below.

Route 2 – The FAST assessment for all other athletes (including athletes with Mosaic Down syndrome)

Athletes applying for II-2 using Route 2 must already hold – or must also apply for – II-1 eligibility. Athletes should submit:

- An II-1 application including all evidence described above (unless II-1 eligibility is already held);
- A completed Virtus FAST Assessment form with overall score;
- A brief description, including medical diagnosis, of the main additional impairments for which II-2 eligibility is sought;
- Detailed medical supporting documentation for the additional impairment;
- Details of ‘best performance’ in the sport/event with year and competition.

Overall:

- II-2 application forms must be signed by a qualified medical practitioner with appropriate evidence attached. (E.g. Genetic testing in case of Down syndrome);
- The Sport Inclusion Australia Eligibility Officer will check application forms, at which point additional information may be requested;
- Once satisfied, the application is forwarded to the Sport Inclusion Australia Eligibility Manager for endorsement or if national uploaded to the Sport Inclusion Australia Masterlist as a National II-2;
- For international forms are scanned and sent electronically to Sport Inclusion Australia’s NEO for endorsement;
- Once ratified by NEO, Sport Inclusion Australia stores all information according to the Privacy Policy;
- Finalised applications are forwarded electronically to Virtus;
- A summary is also forwarded to relevant Member organisation and sporting organisation;
- Registration letter and card is printed and forwarded to the athlete with receipt of registration cost;
- Virtus adds athlete, sport and country to the II-2 Masterlist.

II-3 - National and Virtus Eligibility - Autism

For II-3 Eligibility – Sport Inclusion applies Virtus standards (Applicants allow 3-4 weeks for national and 12 weeks for international).

Evidence should be submitted which supports a diagnosis of Autism or ASD. For most athletes the original historical diagnostic report confirming the athlete is autistic will contain the required information. This evidence must meet the following criteria:

1. The assessment has been carried out by an appropriately qualified professional or multi-disciplinary team of professionals;
2. There is a detailed developmental history focusing on the developmental and behavioural features consistent with ICD 11 or DSM 5 criteria for autism;
3. The assessment has included direct contact and interaction with the athlete, focusing on the autistic features as defined above;
4. Autistic specific tools have been used in the assessment. Those accepted within Virtus are:
 - ADOS/ADOS2 (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule);
 - ADR-I (Autistic Diagnostic Interview – Revised);
 - CARS (Childhood Autism Rating Scale);
 - DISCO (Diagnostic Interview for Social and Communication Disorders Framework);
 - GARS (Gilliam Autism Rating Scale);
 - Adult Asperger Assessment (AAA);
 - RIMLAND (Autism Diagnostic Instrument);
 - Autism Spectrum Rating Scales (ASRS);
 - Indian Scale for the Assessment of Autism (ISAA).

It is important that a formal autism assessment instrument is used that is appropriate to the nationality and spoken language of the athlete and also meets strict psychometric criteria as a valid and reliable measure.

As many people with autism are now assessed and diagnosed in early life it is common that historical records are used as part of this eligibility process, hence there is no requirement as regards how old these reports are. It may also be the case that the NEO will need to compile a portfolio of documents from different sources and using historical records, this is appropriate but each of the historical reports should include the following information:

- Details of the assessor’s professional qualifications and expertise to assess for autism;

- A developmental history;
- Details of the assessment methods used;
- Full results of the assessment, including scores (if available) for any assessment tools used;
- A detailed analysis and discussion of assessment findings;
- Consideration of any factors which may have affected the results;
- A clear conclusion including a signed declaration stating that the diagnosis of Autism can be confirmed.

Internal Process

- II-3 application forms must be signed by a qualified professional as indicated above with appropriate evidence attached;
- The Sport Inclusion Australia Eligibility Officer will check application forms, at which point additional information may be requested;
- Once satisfied, the application is forwarded to the Sport Inclusion Australia Eligibility Manager for endorsement or if national uploaded to the Sport Inclusion Australia Masterlist as a National II-3;
- For international forms are scanned and sent electronically to Sport Inclusion Australia's NEO for endorsement;
- Once ratified by NEO, Sport Inclusion Australia stores all information according to the Privacy Policy;
- Finalised applications are forwarded electronically to Virtus;
- A summary is also forwarded to relevant Member organisation and sporting organisation;
- Registration letter and card is printed and forwarded to the athlete with receipt of registration cost;
- Virtus adds athlete, sport and country to the II-3 Masterlist.

International – International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Para-Sports

For athletes competing in IPC Para-sports of Para-athletics, Para-swimming and Para-Table Tennis, the International – Virtus Eligibility is the first step in their Para-sport eligibility/classification process. To be eligible to compete in World Para-athletics, World Para-swimming and International Table Tennis Federation-Para events athletes must have completed the Virtus International Eligibility process (Primary Eligibility) and be listed on the Virtus International Masterlist.

Only athletes in the II-1 group are eligible to compete in Para-sport events and classes at an international level.

Ineligible

If the eligibility assessment does not determine the athlete as an eligible impairment, Sport Inclusion Australia will provide a decision to this effect in writing to the athletes and/or their approved representative. The athlete will be given an opportunity to comment on the decision and provide further diagnostic information to Sport Inclusion Australia for review. If the decision is subsequently revised, Sport Inclusion Australia will inform the athlete. If the decision is not changed, Sport Inclusion Australia will issue a final decision in writing to the athlete and/or their representative with no right of protest to this decision.

Appeals Procedure

1. Where an athlete is deemed ineligible for competition, they may appeal the decision within 28 days. This should be done in writing to the Sport Inclusion Australia CEO.
2. The application, together with any additional evidence will be sent to the original decision makers for further consideration.
3. A notice of Appeal must:
 - Specify the party who is requesting the Appeal;
 - Provide the name of the Athlete who is the subject of the Appeal;
 - Identify the decision being Appealed by attached a copy of the decision or briefly summarise the situation;
 - Specify the grounds for the Appeal;
 - Appeals must be accompanied by the Appeal Fee (\$50).

4. Appeals regarding eligibility procedure

- Where the appeal concerns a decision regarding eligibility, the relevant paperwork (including the Appeal) will be sent to the Chief Executive Officer of Sport Inclusion Australia and the relevant determinant in verifying the athlete's eligibility;
- An independent Appeals Committee will be established made up of qualified Clinical Psychologists;
- The decision of the Appeals Committee will be made within 28 days of receipt and the athlete will be notified accordingly;
- If the appeal is turned down, then the decision will be final and a new application may not be made for a period of two years.

5. Confidentiality

- Appeal proceedings are confidential. The parties and the Appeals Committee shall not disclose facts or other information relating to the dispute or the proceedings.

Intentional Misrepresentation

Misrepresentation is a deliberate attempt by an Athlete or Athlete Support Personnel (either by deed or omission) to mislead Sport Inclusion Australia regarding the existence or extent of the Athlete's impairment.

This includes circumstances where an Athlete or Athlete support person:

- submits false and/or fraudulent psychological diagnostic information as a part of the eligibility process, or withholds relevant documentation that may have an impact on the eligibility process;
- knowingly assists, covers up, is involved in any type of complicity with the intention of deceiving or misleading Sport Inclusion Australia.

Athletes and/or Athlete support personnel may be subject to disciplinary actions if found guilty of offences under this policy, Virtus Eligibility Policy, the IPC Classification Code, IF classification rules, PA Classification Policy and/or NSO rules.

Any sanctions that are applied to Athletes or Athlete Support Personnel by Virtus, PA or an NSO are recognised by Sport Inclusion Australia across all levels of sport.

Related Documents

- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Selection Policy](#)
- [NIF Member Protection Policy](#)