

NATIONAL ELIGIBILITY OFFICER (NEO)

GUIDANCE NOTES

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Introduction

Virtus is the brandname of World Intellectual Impairment Sport – the global governing body for sport for athletes with an intellectual impairment. We are responsible for managing and overseeing the eligibility process for athletes wishing to compete within the intellectual impairment classification group in Virtus and Paralympic competition.

Eligibility and classification

In 2008, Virtus adopted the IPC Classification Code - the code which governs classification in Paralympic sport and which all organisations within the Paralympic family must comply with.

The classification of athletes with an Intellectual Impairment is a two-stage process:

1. Primary Eligibility Check
2. Sports-Specific Classification

Virtus is responsible for stage one - the primary eligibility check.

For Paralympic competition, athletes will then need to present for sports specific classification. This is managed on a sport by sport basis and full details are available from the relevant International Sports Federation e.g. IPC, ITTF etc.

Virtus Member organisations are required to appoint a National Eligibility Officer (NEO). This person must be a qualified psychologist familiar with the testing and diagnosis of intellectual impairment and have a good understanding of the athlete eligibility criteria and the evidential requirements of intellectual impairment sport.

National and international eligibility

There are 2 levels of eligibility for athletes with an intellectual impairment:

- Level 1: National Eligibility - which permits entry to some sanctioned national competitions and developmental tournaments.
- Level 2: International Eligibility which - permits entry to Virtus Regional and World Championships and is a pre-requisite for Paralympic sports classification.

National applications require different evidence than International applications – please check the [Guidance Notes](#) for further information together with the checklist (below).

Eligibility Groups

Historically, Virtus has offered a single eligibility group in competition. This was defined as 'Intellectual Disability' and was characterised as an IQ of 75 or below, significant limitations in adaptive behavior and onset of disability before the age of 18.

Today this is known as group 'II1'.

In 2017, Virtus began a trial of additional eligibility groups in some competitions.

II2 – This is a new/trial group for athletes who demonstrate a more severe or multiple impairment.

- For athletes with Trisomy 21 - evidence of the presence of Down Syndrome is needed (ideally through a blood test). A full IQ/Adaptive Behaviour/Onset assessment is not needed.

I13 – This is a new/trial group for athletes who have a diagnosis of autism, but who fall outside the I11 criteria... ie. they have an IQ above 75, or limitations in Adaptive Behaviour are less significant.

- All I13 athletes must provide a diagnosis of autism, ideally through psychological assessment, however a full IQ/Adaptive Behaviour assessment is not needed.

Please refer to the Guidance Notes for full details.

Role of the National Eligibility Officer (NEO)

The exact role and level of involvement should be determined in consultation with your Member Organisation, but as a minimum should include:

- Review and assessment of all athlete eligibility applications and associated reports/evidence before they are submitted to Virtus
- Advise the Member Organisation on all issues regarding eligibility and classification
- Be a ‘first-point’ of contact within the nation for the Virtus Head of Eligibility
- Provide advice and guidance to psychologists undertaking athlete assessments
- Attending Virtus eligibility workshops as required

NEO’s should:

- Be a qualified psychologist appointed by the member organisation.
- Be familiar with the eligibility policy, eligibility criteria, forms and evidential requirements. These can be found at virtus.sport

Additionally, NEO’s should not be undertaking athlete assessments, but should review the information provided by other psychologists and specialists.

Any expenses incurred by performing this role must be agreed in advance with the Member Organisation.

Assessment of athlete eligibility application forms

Before an application is submitted to Virtus for consideration, it should be carefully reviewed by the NEO to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Virtus eligibility and evidential criteria. This will ensure that applications can be considered quickly and prevents delays.

It is your responsibility, working with the Member Organisation, to ensure that incomplete or sub-standard applications are not submitted to Virtus.

The following check-list should be used to ensure that all requirements have been met and should be read in conjunction with the Eligibility Application Guidance Notes which are available at virtus.sport

<u>Application form</u>	NEO Assessment
Has the latest version of the form been used?	Yes/No
Has it been completed in full and in English?	Yes/No
Does the athletes passport/ID details match the information on the front page?	Yes/No
<u>Assessment report and evidence</u>	

<u>Application form</u>	NEO Assessment
Has evidence/reports been submitted which meets the relevant criteria for the eligibility group (ii1, ii2 or ii3) and level of registration sought (national or international)?	Yes/No
<p>If an Adaptive Behavior assessment has been made by clinical observation, does the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a wide variety of sources of information (parents/carers, teachers, school records, medical records etc) been used • Assess ‘typical behaviour’ over a period of time/range of tasks • Take account of possible bias • Distinguish between Adaptive Behaviour and Problem Behaviour • Provide a detailed report under each domain of communication, self-care, self-direction, social/interpersonal skills and ability to respond to life changes and environmental demand? • Is there a clear summary/final diagnosis? IS the athlete considered to have ‘significant’ limitations in accordance with the AAIDD definition? 	Yes/No
<u>Onset</u>	
Has evidence of an IQ test before the age of 18 been included, or has the psychologist concluded that onset was before the age of 18 and presented the evidence on which this diagnosis was made??	Yes/No
<u>General</u>	
Overall, are the reports of sufficient depth/detail in order to make a valid assessment?	Yes/No
Do reports draw on a wide range of evidence/sources to ensure a fair and valid assessment?	Yes/No
Are you confident that the information presented is a fair reflection of the athlete, and do you agree with the reports findings?	Yes/No
Have all reports been provided in English, or has a translation been provided? Is this an accurate translation?	Yes/No

If you can answer YES to all the above questions, then proceed to complete and sign Page 3 of the application form. The application can then be sent to the Secretariat for consideration by the Virtus Eligibility Committee.

If you have answered NO to any of the above questions, then you should liaise with your Virtus Member Organisation representative to take the necessary steps to address the concern. The application should NOT be sent to Virtus until you can answer YES to all questions.

[Submitting the application](#)

Applications may only be submitted to Virtus using the ISMS. All Member Organisations have access to the ISMS and it is suggested that NEO's should have access too.

To submit the application, please refer to the [Guidance Notes](#) and [ISMS guide](#).

The five most common reason for forms being rejected:

A large proportion of applications received by the Secretariat are returned to the applicant because they lack critical information. This causes extra work for the Secretariat and the Eligibility Committee, it causes delay and frustration. The most common reasons for forms to be returned are:

1. Adaptive Behaviour reports that are not detailed enough or are inconclusive. Reports often do not have the level of detail needed to support a diagnosis of 'significant limitation'.
2. IQ reports that are not detailed enough, or have scores missing
3. Evidence of age of onset is missing, or there is no information to support how a diagnosis has been made.
4. Adaptive Behaviour profiles that fall outside the eligibility criteria or the definition of intellectual impairment
5. Missing summary/record sheets

It is your responsibility as the NEO to check the applications carefully.

Further Help and Advice

If you have any questions about the role of the NEO or how to assess applications, please contact the Head of Eligibility at eligibility@virtus.sport

More information about INAS can be found at virtus.sport