

Para Sailing Classification: The Athlete's Journey.

Classification & Para Sailing

Whilst all Para Inclusive Sailing Events are **Inclusive**, athletes who wish to compete at an elite level, and progress down the Paralympic path must be **Classified**.

Classification determines your eligibility, and ultimately what Sport Class you will be. Whilst this process may seem complex, or potentially even scary, for most Sailors it is a simple and quick journey.

What is Classification

Classification is the system used by all Para Sports which decides who is eligible to enter, compete, and engage in Para competition. The ultimate goal of Classification, as set out by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), is to not give any one player an advantage over another, due to the nature of an impairment. This system, common to all Para Sports, ensures fair competition, and is the centre of the Paralympic Movement.

Each Para Sport is bound by the IPC's 2025 Classification Code. This ensures standardisation, and a high quality of experience for all involved. Each Sport then builds upon the Classification Code, due to the different impact's impairments can have in different sports.

Sailing, by its very nature, is an equipment-based sport. This makes it incredibly inclusive, and it allows a level playing field across many different impairments, and able-bodied sailing.

New to the 2027 rules, a series of **Sailing Specific Functional Tests (SSFTs)**, dictate your **Sport Class**, which is a measure of to what extent your impairment affects your ability to Sail at a competitive level.

This is the core of what Classification is, and why it is central to our sport.

But how does one become Classified?

Becoming a Classified Athlete

Step 1: Apply for Classification

The first step towards Classification starts with the **Medical Diagnostics Form (MDF)**. This form helps our International Classifiers understand your health condition, and how it impacts you.

This **MDF** can be found on the [World Sailing Website](#). It needs to be filled out by your **Medical Practitioner** and then returned to your **Member National Authority (MNA)**. There is a guide for MNAs and Medical Practitioners on filling out the MDF also available on the website.

The form has two sections: The first section of Athlete Information (to be filled out by the Athlete or MNA), and the second section needs to be filled in by a Medical Practitioner who knows you and your health condition.

Once the form is completed, you must submit this form and **supporting Medical Documentation to your MNA**, who submits the Classification Application on your behalf.

Then a panel of three International Classifiers (a group of trained Medical professionals who have been appointed by World Sailing to Classify Athletes), convenes an **Underlying Health Condition Assessor (UHCA) panel**.

This panel assesses whether an Underlying Health Condition* exists that could lead to an Eligible Impairment.**

**An Underlying Health Condition (UHC) is a clinically diagnosed medical condition, evaluated by qualified personnel.*

***An Eligible Impairment is a predefined list published by the IPC, which is a broad list of grouping of types of Impairments which are recognised for competition at the Paralympic Games.*

The panel may come back and ask for further information before proceeding. This is routine and normal, this is intended to be a conversation between the UHCA, and the Athlete.

The panel aims to provide an outcome within three weeks. The panel will either decide:

- An Underlying Health Condition is present, and the Athlete may go forward for an Evaluation Session. OR,
- The Athlete is Not Eligible, a UHC is not present.

Although it may be disappointing news to hear that you are not eligible, this does not mean that sailing is closed to you. There are opportunities for you to take part in **Inclusive** events and in wider sailing activity, depending on the event format and eligibility requirements.

If it is decided that an Underlying Health Condition is present, you now progress forward for an Evaluation Session.

Step 2: Scheduling the Evaluation Session

The Evaluation Session is an opportunity to be seen by a panel of two International Classifiers, who will work with you towards establishing your Eligible Impairment, Minimum Impairment Criteria, and ultimately your Sport Class.

Your first step is to choose a Classification Event you'd like to attend. These generally take place in major competitions, but there are also select out-of-competition opportunities. These can be found on the [online World Sailing Para Inclusive Events Calendar](#).

Once you know which event you would like to be Classified at, please inform your MNA who will inform World Sailing.

World Sailing will then be in contact to schedule in your session. Depending on your application, the Evaluation Session may last from 20-60 minutes.

Step 3: The Evaluation Session

In the lead-up to your Evaluation Session you will receive communications from the Classifiers, Organisers, and World Sailing confirming details and logistics. But please remember we are here for you! If you have any questions about the session please contact World Sailing (full details can be found at the end of this form).

In the Evaluation Session, the panel will:

- Review your MDF and other medical documentation.
- Discuss your Medical Condition with you.
- Conduct a **Functional Anatomical Test**. This test is not strenuous and is made of various exercises aimed at looking at your muscle strength, range of motion, coordination, and other factors your impairment influences.

- After the Functional Anatomical Test, the panel will decide if you have an Eligible Impairment for Para Sailing, and if so, do you meet the **Minimum Impairment Criteria (MIC)**.
 - Minimum Impairment Criteria is the minimum level of impairment required to compete in Para Sailing. The full lists of **MICs** can be found in the Appendices of the Classification Rules.
- If it is found you do meet Minimum Impairment Criteria, then you will undergo a series of **Sailing Specific Functional Tests (SSFTS)**. The SSFTs are a series of tests designed to measure the impact of your impairment on actions relevant to Para Sailing.
- The result of these tests will determine your Sport Class.

At this stage the panel will assign you a Provisional Sport Class, and Sport Class Status. It may be that you will be required to undergo an Observation Assessment*, to confirm your final sport class.

**An Observation Assessment is an in-competition observation by the Classification panel on the water of your Sailing. This will not affect with your racing, and you should stay focused on sailing!*

Step 4: Becoming officially Classified

You are now a Classified Para Sailor! If your evaluation session took place at a competition your Classification outcome will be posted on the Official Notice Board.

Your MNA will also receive notification of your Sport Class and Sport Class Status.

Your details will also be added to the Para Sailing Classification Master List, which is published every quarter.

And that's your journey through Classification! Your MNA, the Classification team, and World Sailing are here to support you. If you have any questions, or require any support throughout the process, please don't hesitate to contact the team at para.classification@sailing.org.

Please refer to the World Sailing Website for the latest information.

