



GUIDANCE NOTES

Eligibility and Classification – UK level (national)

SportExcel UK
www.sportexceluk.org

Version Feb 2024
SportExcel UK is the new name for the UK Sports Association (UKSA)

WHO IS SPORTEXCEL UK

SportExcel UK is the national charity for athletes with intellectual impairment that promotes, facilitates and supports talented athletes with intellectual impairment in the UK to train, compete and excel in national and international sport. SportExcel UK is responsible for managing, evaluating, and overseeing the UK and international eligibility and classification process for athletes wishing to compete in all Virtus, some International Federations and para-sport competition. This includes the Virtus Global Games and IPC Paralympic Games.

SportExcel UK is the official Great Britain member of Virtus, the international federation for sport for athletes with intellectual impairment. Virtus is a member of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC).

National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGB's) and other sports organisations in the UK support the co-ordination of the eligibility and classification system, but evaluation and decisions around applications are made by SportExcel UK. Intellectual impairment includes athletes with intellectual disability (class II1), Down syndrome (class II2) and autism (class II3).

WHAT IS UK CLASSIFICATION?

UK classification is a system designed to determine whether an athlete is eligible to compete in intellectual impairment sport. The UK system exists for athletes, in all sports, who are progressing, but are not yet at international level, but who may be required to prove they are an athlete with intellectual impairment in the UK.

Applications are managed and evaluated by SportExcel UK. We use the same criteria as for international classification but we can accept different types of evidence and pre-existing reports. This means that not every athlete will need to undergo new assessments to be considered at a UK level.

UK classification is sometimes called 'National classification' or 'SportExcel UK classification'.

UK classification enables athlete to compete in some sports and some competitions in the UK. It does not permit athletes to compete internationally or at every event in every sport across the UK. The rules vary from sport to sport.

WHAT COMPETITIONS AND SPORTS IN THE UK ACCEPT UK LEVEL CLASSIFICATION?

UK level classification permits athletes to compete in some but not all events in the UK only. This depends on the sports rules. It varies from sport to sport.

To find out if a competition accepts UK classification check the competition entry criteria carefully. Remember that not all competitions require classification. You can also speak to the Competition Organisers, your National Governing Body or SportExcel UK.

IS UK CLASSIFICATION THE SAME AS VIRTUS?

UK level Classification is not the same as Virtus. UK classification does not replace Virtus (international). UK level classification complements Virtus and exists to support athletes as they progress towards international levels. UK classification is evaluated using the same criteria established by Virtus, but accepting a wider range of evidence that exists in the UK to demonstrate intellectual impairment.

WHAT IS VIRTUS NATIONAL (PROVISIONAL) CLASSIFICATION?

Virtus national/provisional was introduced to support International Federations developing their performance sport programme, but for whom full eligibility may prove difficult for some countries to introduce.

Some countries, including the UK, had already established their own national system. Therefore, with the agreement of Virtus, the SportExcel UK level classification system can also be used for a Virtus national/provisional application. It can only be used for athletes seeking class II1.

In the UK, this is only appropriate in a small number of sports and a small number of competitions. SportExcel UK will advise an athlete if Virtus national/provisional is required. Athletes granted a Virtus national/provisional status will at a later point, be required to move to full Virtus eligibility.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET A DECISION?

All UK level applications should reach SportExcel UK **at least 6 weeks** prior to the closing date of any competition. Application is no guarantee of approval. If applying for a Virtus national/provisional, then more than 6 weeks will be required. If an application arrives incomplete, or there are questions on the evidence submitted it may take longer. The typical time is 6-8 weeks for decision.

WHAT IS THE FEE AND HOW IS IT PAID?

Please send your fee at the same time as sending the application. If the fee is not received, then there may be delays in the application being considered. Please follow the instructions for payment carefully. Email finance@sportexceluk.org to advise when the fee is paid. See <https://sportexceluk.org/classification/athlete-classification-procedure/> for fees and guidance.

WHAT SHOULD BE SENT IN AN APPLICATION?

- ✓ Application Form - Fill in every section. If it's not relevant, put n/a.
- ✓ Checklist - Fill it in and use it to make sure you send everything on it.
- ✓ Evidence – follow the guidance in the evidence lists and include the documents.
- ✓ Photo - include one passport size colour photo.
- ✓ ID - A copy of the photo page of a valid passport OR a copy of a birth certificate.
- ✓ Communication Passport – complete with full details
- ✓ AAI Form – completed if relevant
- ✓ Fee - Pay your fee and follow the instructions to inform SportExcel UK

Make sure all your documents are single sided, unstapled and can be read clearly. Finally remember to keep a photocopy of everything that you send.

WHERE SHOULD THE APPLICATION BE SENT?

Post your application to SportExcel UK, PO Box 1467, Enfield, Middlesex EN1 9PT. **Do not send by email unless SportExcel UK asks you to.**

If you are asked to send by email, then scan the application form and all evidence into one file. Send in PDF format to classification@sportexceluk.org with 'Application – and the athletes name' in the subject line. You will also need to send the entire application by post.

IMPORTANT

- Applying for a UK classification or Virtus national/provisional is no guarantee of approval.
- Receiving a UK classification is no guarantee that Virtus will grant an international classification if applied for at a later stage. Each application level is evaluated separately.
- Athletes granted a UK classification or Virtus national/provisional may at a later stage be required to move to a full Virtus classification.
- UK and International can be applied for at the same time if the full evidence exists and it is beneficial for the athlete to do so.

THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The eligibility criteria for UK level and/or Virtus national/provisional is the same as Virtus international and is applied in the same way. The difference is that at UK level and Virtus national/provisional level, we can accept a wider range of documents and evidence to prove eligibility in the UK. The following definitions and eligibility criteria have been extracted from the Virtus guidance notes.

II1 – Athletes with an Intellectual Disability
<p>Intellectual Disability is a disability characterised by significant limitation both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviour as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates before the age of 22'. Limitations in adaptive behaviour affect both daily life and the ability to respond to life changes and environmental demands (AAIDD – 2010, WHO ICD-10 and ICF-2001).</p> <p>Based upon this definition, the Virtus Eligibility Criteria for athletes with an intellectual disability is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Significant impairment in intellectual functioning which is defined as a Full-Scale IQ score of 75 or lower, and; 2. 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, and; 3. Intellectual disability must be evident during the developmental period, which is from conception to 22 years of age. <p>Athletes must meet all 3 criteria to be eligible for consideration for intellectual disability sport.</p>

II2 - Athletes with an intellectual disability and significant additional impairment
<p>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.</p> <p>Athletes will be eligible for II2 if it can be demonstrated that they have significant functional impairment in addition to an intellectual disability. That is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A formal diagnosis of Trisomy 21 or Translocation Down Syndrome. OR 2. Have a diagnosed intellectual disability (as defined by the II1 criteria) AND meet the minimum criteria for additional impairment as defined by the Virtus FAST Assessment.

II3 – Athletes with Autism
<p>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.</p> <p>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 accepted diagnostic techniques.</p>

THE EVIDENCE NEEDED

Class II1 Evidence – Intellectual Disability (All 3 areas need evidence)

1. IQ Report - showing full scale IQ of 75 or less. This may be a dedicated IQ assessment or may be contained within an SEN report or Educational and Health Care Plan. Must be a professionally administered test carried out by a registered psychologist. Pre-existing reports should be considered first. Short form or WRIT assessments are not accepted. Include the full report and test results. New assessments are only required if an athlete has never had an IQ assessment or reports cannot be located or sourced. If new assessments are needed, contact SportExcel UK for advice.

2. Significant limitations in Adaptive Behaviour or evidence of Social Adaptation: Evidence should show how a person is coping within society in their daily life and the limitations in their ability to respond to life changes and environment demands. Evidence must indicate that the persons coping skills are inadequate. An example of some of the areas considered are communication, self-care, self-direction, and social/interpersonal skills. You can send a test of Adaptive Behaviour OR two items from the social adaptation list (see below).

- ✓ *A formal test of Adaptive Behaviour* - carried out by a qualified professional psychologist who is registered with the Health Professions Council (HPC). Should include a full original narrative and analysis, including summary score sheets. Acceptable tests include Vineland, ABAS or AAMR that have utilised standardised measures that have been norm-referenced on the general population including people with disabilities. If a test of adaptive behaviour has not been carried out, then two items from the social adaptation list below can be sent instead. If new assessment needed contact SportExcel UK for advice.

OR

Social Adaptation (if there is no adaptive behaviour report, please provide 2 pieces from the list below)

- ✓ *Special Education*, eg. a full copy of the persons Statement of Educational Needs, Record of Needs, Education and Health Care Plan or equivalent and any appendices.
- ✓ *Special Accommodation*; A letter from the accommodation provider eg. Respite care home. Must be an original, on headed notepaper with an original signature from the principal. Must include athlete name, date of birth, address and confirm that special accommodation is being provided and duration. Special accommodation must be provided by a statutory provider.
- ✓ *Special Employment*: A letter from the Employer/Employment provider. Must be an original, on headed paper with an original signature from the Director or line manager. Include athlete name; date of birth, address and confirm that special employment is being provided and duration.
- ✓ *Statutory Financial support*: For example, PIP, Disability Living Allowance or equivalent. Attendance or Carers allowance for the individual's personal support. Send the full letters and not just the first page. Needs to show receipt of support now. Send the most up to date letter.

3. Intellectual disability must be evident from 0 to 22 years (Age of Onset) (One from this list)

- ✓ Statement of Educational Needs or equivalent referring to intellectual disability.
- ✓ IQ assessment done before age 22.
- ✓ Letter from GP or Psychologist who is registered with the Health Professions Council, referencing their knowledge of the athlete; including special school, statement of educational need, any IQ reports conducted whilst under 22 and include the rationale for their statement to support of Age of Onset pre-22. It needs to be explicit, refer to the documents assessed to aide their conclusion and include “in my professional opinion including my assessment of documents x, y and z [name of athlete] has an intellectual disability that was evident before age of 22”
- ✓ In exceptional circumstances, SportExcel UK reserves the right to accept contra indicators from either professional. Please speak to us for guidance.

Class II2 – Additional Significant Impairment – UK focus is Down Syndrome

- ✓ A blood cytogenetic test showing Trisomy / Translocation diagnosis
- ✓ A formal medical report with full diagnosis

Class II3 – Autism

- ✓ Report and test to show that athlete has a formal diagnosis of autism. The report should outline the tools and method assessment and be a full format report.

FURTHER ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

If you have questions, then contact SportExcel UK for further guidance.

Email classification@sportexceluk.org

Telephone 0203 633 6460 (you may get an answerphone; leave a message and we will contact you)

Find out more on www.sportexceluk.org or follow us on twitter @sportexceluk , Facebook or LinkedIn.

If you live in Scotland you can also speak to Scottish Disability Sport for guidance.

SportExcel UK is a registered charity and the new name for the UK Sports Association. Charity no. 1050767. A Company Limited by Guarantee. Registration no. 3124177 England and Wales.