



ATHLETE ELIGIBILITY EXPLAINED



Virtus is the International Sports Federation for athletes with an intellectual impairment – a global organisation that governs, advocates, organises and promotes elite sport for athletes with an intellectual impairment and founding member of the International Paralympic Committee.

The VIRTUS sport programme includes some 15 annual events across both summer and winter sports. More than 7,500 athletes are registered to compete at an international level, whilst more than 500,000 people with an intellectual impairment worldwide have the opportunity to enjoy sport through the work of our member organisations.

Intellectual Impairment and Eligibility

Intellectual impairment is an umbrella term to describe a neuro-diverse group of people with different types of cognitive impairments.

Having an intellectual impairment impacts on an athlete's performance in competitive sport. It can affect their ability to learn and retain information such as training regimes, mental preparation for competition, and might affect how they communicate and interact with other people.

Eligibility is a process that ensures that an athlete has an underlying health condition which leads to an intellectual impairment and can compete in para-sport fairly with others who have the same disability. We use evidence-based classification systems based on clinical evidence to verify an athlete's eligibility.

Virtus offers three eligibility groups for the purpose of fair competition:

- II1 - for athletes with an intellectual disability
- II2 - for athletes with an intellectual disability and significant additional impairment (including athletes with Down Syndrome)
- II3 - for athletes with autism

II1 - for athletes with an intellectual disability

II1 athletes will have significant impairment in intellectual functioning (defined as an IQ of 75 or below), significant impairment in adaptive functioning (which is difficulty in engaging the conceptual, social and practical skills to manage everyday life) and these will be present before the age of 22.

II1 athlete may struggle with cognitive skills such as reaction time, remembering specific game rules or strategies, keeping focus for long periods of time, or maintaining impulse control, among other difficulties. For many, it is a non-visible disability.



II2 - for athletes with an intellectual disability and significant additional impairment.

Many people with an intellectual disability also have one or more associated conditions which can substantially affect their participation and performance in sport.

An II2 athlete will meet the II1 criteria for intellectual disability but have additional impairments or conditions such as Down syndrome, physical or sensory impairments. Other conditions might include differences in anatomical or muscular structures or include heart or breathing problems which the athlete must adapt to and overcome.

These additional impairments will make it difficult for the athlete to compete fairly against an II1 athlete.



II3 - for athletes with autism

II3 has been developed by Virtus to provide life-changing opportunities and offer a new pathway for people with autism to compete at the highest levels of sport.

Autism has a consistent set of features which includes issues in social communication, and restricted and repetitive types of behaviour. This might include sensitivity to equipment, clothing and crowd noise, ability to process information, commands and communicate with coaches, and managing new environments or changes in routine.

Athletes with autism have told us that they can find it difficult to access sport and competition due to a lack of understanding and awareness regarding the impact autism can have on sports performance.



Further information:

- Visit the Virtus website – virtus.sport/eligibility
- Contact your Virtus member organisation – see virtus.sport/member
- Add facebook/twitter links etc