



Para Va'a Rules & Classification System (Effective for 2026 IVF World Elite & Club Sprint Championships)

Section I: IVF Para Va'a Rules for World Sprints

Age requirement: Competitors must have reached the age of 16 by or during the calendar year in which the competition takes place.

Note: International Canoe Federation (ICF) rules require the adult age category to start at 18. Anyone under 18 will automatically get a review status on their classification.

Eligibility determination: To determine eligibility to compete as a para va'a paddler, all candidates must submit all required documents and participate to the best of their ability in a Classification testing procedure.

All paddlers wishing to present for classification for the first time at the Championships shall submit all the required documentation to IVF at least one month before the start of the Championships.

Note: The forms and documents are currently being reviewed and will be available in March on our [para va'a page](#).

Para Va'a Paddler Classification score: The IVF Classification Panel will allocate a race class and status (review/confirmed) for individual paddlers with physical impairment following the Classification procedure.

The IVF Classification Panel may observe paddlers anytime during training and/or competition and review the classification of any paddler whose performance in a canoe exhibits functional ability that markedly differs from that which was demonstrated during testing.

Classification System

- VL1, VL2 & VL3 are physical impairment classifications for the ICF.
- VL1, VL2 & VL3, VL4, VL1a, VIS – are physical impairment classifications for IVF.
- If an athlete is officially classified as VL1, VL2 or VL3 at an official event their classification is recognised by the ICF and IVF.
- **V1 races** will include the following classifications as divisions for IVF competition: VL1, VL2, VL3, VL4, VIS.
- **V6 and V12** will include the following classifications: VL1, VL2, VL3, VL4, VL1a, VIS.

IVF Points System

Paddlers with a physical impairment that does not lose sufficient points to meet the ICF Classification system as a VL3 may be classified by the IVF as a VL4 (including those with vision impairment). They will contribute 4 points to the team total. Some impairments (such as pain) remain unclassifiable and do not qualify the paddler.

Paddlers who have additional physical impairments to those classified as VL1, and who the Classifiers determine to have a high level of functional impairment, but do not classify under the ICF/IVF Official IPC approved Classification System, shall be classified by the IVF as VL1a. They may participate in V1, V6 or V12 and will contribute 1 point to a team total.

Classification	Points
VL1	1
VL2	2
VL3	3
VL4	4
VL1a	1
VIS	4
NI	Point determined at classification. Aligned with existing points system.

a. V6 mixed team sprint competition shall:

- Teams may be comprised of paddlers with physical, visual or neurological impairment.
- Include a minimum of 2 female paddlers with physical, visual or neurological impairment (It is acceptable to have more than 2 females and more females than males).
- Include a low-point paddler- Points 1 or 2.
- Not exceed 18 points in total (e.g. 4+4+3+3+2+2=18 or 4+4+3+2+2+1=16, etc.).
- A team may compete with a lower number of points than 18.

b. V12 mixed team competition shall:

- Teams may be comprised of paddlers with physical, visual or neurological impairment.
- Include a minimum of 4 female paddlers with physical, visual or neurological impairment and no more than 8 Male paddlers with physical impairments (It is acceptable to have more females than males).
- Include at least 2 low-point paddlers- 1 or 2.
- Not exceed 36 in total.
- A team may compete with a lower number of points than 36.

Vision Impaired (VIS) Paddlers

Vision impaired paddlers are to produce documentation by an Ophthalmologist or Optometrist certifying that their visual impairment would fall into the B1, B2 or B3 Paralympic categories. All VIS paddlers are required to wear blinders (provided by the IVF) to occlude all vision.

For V1 racing when there is more than 1 VIS entry they will race against each other.

If there is only 1 entry then VIS paddlers are placed in VL2 category.

For V6 racing VIS paddlers will hold 4 points.

Visually impaired paddlers in V1 races are allowed a sighted guide who shall paddle behind them in the same lane to give directional cues. Visually impaired paddlers are required to wear blinders in the team Va'a too.

Should there be 2 or more vision-impaired (VIS) V1 paddlers entered in a V1 event, the IVF will create a race for those vision-impaired paddlers. The guidelines for Classification for athletes with vision impairment (VIS) are determined by the International Blind Sports Association (IBSA).

IBSA Classes:

- **B1:** From no light perception in either eye to light perception, but inability to recognise the shape of a hand at any distance or in any direction.
- **B2:** From ability to recognise the shape of a hand to a visual acuity of 2/60 and/or monocular visual field of less than 5 degrees.
- **B3:** From visual acuity above 2/60 to visual acuity of 6/60 and/or monocular visual field of more than 5 degrees and less than 20 degrees.

Adaptive Equipment

- Para Va'a Paddlers must supply their own adaptive equipment with the exception of Vision Impaired paddlers who will be required to wear blinders supplied by the Para Va'a Committee in all of their races.
- Para Va'a Paddlers who use personal assistive devices, adaptations, prosthesis, seating support, etc. during the Classification testing procedure must use the same equipment when racing.
- When racing, Para Va'a Paddlers may not use additional personal assistive devices, adaptations, prosthesis, support, etc. not used during the Classification testing procedure. For example, a paddler with limb amputation may not use a prosthetic device when racing if it was not used during the Classification testing procedure.

Athletes with Neurological impairment (NI)

In an effort to be more inclusive, the IVF will be promoting the inclusion of paddlers with Neurological impairments, NI, such as spasticity, ataxia and athetosis. There is currently no research base for classifying paddlers with NI and as such our classifiers will use their skill and experience to allocate paddlers with NI to a classification point that best represents their impairment in comparison with the existing classification points.

Neurologically impaired paddlers who would be equivalent to a VL1 would be considered ineligible to participate.

Neurologically impaired Paddlers:

- will be given an NI classification point at classification
- may take part in V6 and V1 events
- For V1 events paddlers must be experienced and must provide their paddling history prior to classification. The IVF Para Committee will make the final determination on inclusion into V1 events.
- Should there be 2 or more neurologically-impaired (NI) V1 paddlers entered in a V1 event, the IVF will create a race for those neurologically-impaired paddlers.

All Paddlers with neurological impairment wishing to present for classification (at the Championships) must submit supporting documents from their Specialist Consultant or General Practitioner. These could, for example, be clinic letters, X rays or MRIs.

The process for classifying paddlers with a neurological impairment:

1. Review reports from medical professionals.
2. The paddler will be scored on a range of physical tests by the Medical Classifier.
3. The paddler will be asked to perform on the paddling ergometer and observed by both Medical and Technical Classifiers and their performance will be correlated against physical test scores to give classification points.

Capsize/Huli

- In V1 races, in the case of capsize/huli, the contestant is eliminated from the race when it is not possible for them to resume their place in the va'a within three minutes, without any outside help.
- In V6 races, capsize/huli will be cause for automatic disqualification so immediate assistance can be given; paddlers will not be permitted to continue in the race.

Section II: IVF/ICF Classification System for Va'a events

The IVF has adopted the ICF Para Va'a Classification system and admits athletes with physical impairments on the same basis.

By adopting and extending this common core Classification system, the IVF Para Va'a Committee intends to assist the organisers of IVF World Sprints (and like events) to provide elite competition opportunities to those athletes with a functional impairment precluding their involvement in either elite or club open competition.

Note: The classification system does not include athletes with intellectual, visual or neurological impairments.

Functional Classification of Va'a (Outrigger Canoe) Paddlers. Purpose of a Classification System

- Enable fair and equitable competition at all levels, for mildly, moderately and severely physically impaired Va'a canoe paddlers
- Encourage crews of mixed physical impairment, from mild to severe, to compete and complement each other
- Measure only the functional limitations caused by physical impairment
- Not be affected by the canoeing skills, training or talent of the paddler

IVF/ICF Classifiers: There are two types of classifiers:

1. **Medical Classifier:** a medical doctor, doctor of osteopathic medicine, or physiotherapist (physical therapist).
2. **Technical Classifier:** a person with extensive practical knowledge of outrigger canoeing, such as a canoeing coach, sport scientist, physical educator or similarly qualified person.

The IVF Classification Panel consists of teams of classifiers, each team contains one medical and one technical classifier and a head classifier (3 total).

Classifiers have undergone training and qualification by the ICF and all classification at the IVF World Sprint Championships will be recognised as official by the ICF moving forward.

PROCESS FOR CLASSIFYING VA'A (OUTRIGGER CANOE) PADDLERS WITH A PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT

Application Process for Paddlers Seeking IVF Classification Before commencing the classification process, all paddlers are required to submit the required documents.

Note: Documents are currently being reviewed and will be available in March.

Note: Paddlers previously classified in ICF World Sprints do NOT need to submit a Certificate of Medical Diagnosis unless they have been given a 'Review' status.

Classification Procedure

Para Va'a paddlers are responsible for bringing all completed required forms to IVF World Sprints and delivering them to the IVF Classification Panel at the classification evaluation meeting.

Para Va'a paddlers must report to a classification evaluation meeting to a timetable determined by the IVF Classification Panel and declare all personal assistive devices, adaptations, prosthesis, seating support, etc. that they intend to use when racing.

Method of Assessment An IVF Classification Panel conducts the standard ICF/IVF classification process. This process may include the following parts, where appropriate:

1. Review of IVF Certificate of Medical Diagnosis.
2. Review of an IVF Vision Test Form using IBSA standards completed by an ophthalmologist.
3. Trunk function tests, lower limb function tests and/or upper limb function tests undertaken in the testing lab by the Medical Classifier assisted by the Technical Classifier.
4. On Water tests undertaken by the Technical Classifier assisted by the Medical Classifier.
5. Observation during training and competition. The classification of any paddler whose performance in a canoe exhibits functional ability that markedly differs from that demonstrated during the Functional Movement Test, may be reviewed. Paddlers who misrepresent their impairment to gain access to a race-class for more impaired athletes put themselves at risk of sanctions that may exclude them from competition.

The Para Va'a V1 Quota for 2026 can be found [here](#). For any questions, please contact admin@ivfiv.org