Judo Athlete Categorisation Guidelines (August 2025)

1. Introduction

1.1. Following a review as part of Horizon 1 of the HP 2032+ Strategy, the National Athlete Categorisation Framework (NACF) has been updated for the LA2028 cycle and beyond.

There is greater reliance on Judo Australia's 'What it Takes to Win' (WITTW) model and Athlete Development Framework (ADF) to ensure all athlete categorisation decisions are supported by evidence.

1.2. The Judo Athlete Categorisation Guidelines provides a consistent framework to identify athletes with the greatest potential to contribute to Australia winning medals consistently and to continually improve Australia's standing at current and future Pinnacle Events.

1.3. The Judo Athlete Categorisation Guidelines support the united ambitions of the HP 2032+ Strategy, including:

- Identifying athletes genuinely on a pathway towards podium and providing options and flexibility to support varied athlete journeys and outliers, integrating para-athletes into the framework for LA2028 cycle and beyond.
- Recognising that as athletes aspire to Win Well, it is through their unique journeys and stories that they inspire future generations of athletes, communities, and Australians

1.4. To support the HP2032+ Strategy vision, 'We Win Well to Inspire Australians', Judo Australia will now recognise athletes who have been identified as having the potential to be selected to represent Australia for the current cycle Pinnacle Event as Representative Athletes.

1.5. This document outlines the Athlete Categories and guidelines that will be used for categorising athletes for the sport of Judo in Australia.

2. Judo Athlete Categorisation Panel

2.1. Athlete categorisation will be determined by the National Categorisation Panel (NCP). The NCP comprises key members of the CombatAUS High Performance program and the JA Performance Pathways Program. The composition of the NCP ensures the knowledge and capability required to make informed athlete categorisation decisions.

2.2. Current members of the NCP are:

- the CombatAUS High Performance Director (Chair);
- Judo Australia General Manager of Performance and Pathways;
- Two selected coaches from the JA National Coaching Pool;
- Judo Australia National Para Lead; and
- And an independent observer – e.g. AIS Performance or Pathway consultant

1.3. For each round of categorisation, the NCP will elect a Chair. All decisions of the NCP shall be by majority vote. Each member of the NCP shall have one vote. In the event of a deadlock in voting, the Chair's vote shall determine the decision.

1.4. The NCP is subject to change due to the nature of volunteers. CombatAUS and JA will notify the JA membership of any changes in membership of the NCP via an announcement on the CombatAUS and JA websites at the earliest opportunity.

3. Minimum eligibility requirements for Categorisation

3.1. To be eligible for Categorisation, an Athlete must satisfy all the following requirements:

- be an Australian Citizen or be on a committed path to obtaining Australian Citizenship to be eligible to compete for Australia at the next and/or future Pinnacle event.
- be a current member of JA, having paid all requisite membership fees owed for the relevant membership period.
- have signed and adhere to the CombatAUS and/or JA Athlete Agreements (as amended from time to time).
- be eligible to compete for Australia as per IJF/IOC rules (as amended from time to time).
- Be actively training to compete in a judo event that is to be contested at the 2028 Olympic or Paralympic Games.

3.2 Eligible Olympic Weight Divisions for Categorisation

Male	Female	Mixed Teams
-60kg	-48kg	-57kg women
-66kg	-52kg	-70kg women
-73kg	-57kg	+70kg women
-81kg	-63kg	-73kg men
-90kg	-70kg	-90kg men
-100kg	-78kg	+90kg men
+100kg	+78kg	

3.3 Eligible Paralympic Weight Division for Categorisation

Visual Impairment Classes:

- **J1:** Blind athletes
- **J2:** Visually impaired athletes

Male	Female
-70kg	-52kg
-81kg	-60kg
-95kg	-70kg
+95kg	+70kg

4. Conditions of Categorisation

4.1. To be categorised and/or maintain categorisation, an Athlete must always comply with the following conditions:

a) conduct oneself in a manner that complies with the JA National Integrity Framework and all JA Policies (as amended from time to time);

b) sign and adhere to an Individual Performance Plan (IPP) that has been agreed between the Athlete, their club coach and the CombatAUS Judo National Head Coach;

c) complete, sign and return paperwork as required, committing to the requirements for categorisation;

d) provide to the HP Team the Athlete's current contact details (name, address, email address, best telephone/mobile number, passport number and expiry date, IJF Card, contact details of parent/guardian of Athlete (if the Athlete is under 18 years of age)) and promptly advise the HP Team of any changes to these contact details;

e) participate in CombatAUS/JA Training Camps (as required);

f) compete at the National Championships, if not engaged in National Team activities;

g) compete in domestic events as outlined in their IPP;

h) compete at international events for Australia as outlined in their IPP;

i) compete (if selected) for any pinnacle event for Australia;

j) maintain personal private health insurance to ensure access to medical services as required;

k) comply with all anti-doping requirements of the IOC, IJF, AIS, SIA, CombatAUS, and JA including completion of e-learning modules and updates as required from time to time.

5. Factors considered in JA Categorisation

5.1. In determining an athlete's current performance standard and future pinnacle event performance potential, the JA Athlete Categorisation Panel will consider the following factors in assessing athletes who have the best chance of contributing to the achievement of the JA's High-Performance goals and HP2032+ Win Well outcomes:

a) an assessment of the athlete's technical, tactical, physical and performance behaviours against the What it Takes to Win (WITTW) and/or Athlete Development Framework (ADF);

b) current performance and trajectory against performance indicators in the WITTW &/or ADF, with highest weighting given to factors in technical and physical progression for future cycle categories;

c) recent international competition performance measured against the relevant indicators as set out in the WITTW and/or ADF;

d) the athlete's age, with reference to the WITTW age precedence;

e) an athlete's ongoing commitment and application, including communication with national coaches, adherence to Athlete Plans, motivation to succeed and use of available resources within a daily performance environment to increase performance;

f) consistency in results and ability to repeat World Class results and deliver; performances under pressure;

g) IJF and IBSA World Rankings, and performance against opponents on the IJF and IBSA World Ranking List (WRL);

h) an athlete's commitment to the level of training necessary to achieve the desired performance;

i) the depth and quality of talent in Australia in comparison to our international competitors (talent pool);

j) development and progression of performance against timeframes for development progression outlined in the ADF;

k) performance progression against adequate and differentiated WITTW and ADF standards for the Pinnacle Event (PE) sport/discipline/event they are targeted for;

l) categorised based on individual potential to contribute to future cycle PE outcomes as outlined in the WITTW and ADF.

5.2. The NCP may, at its sole discretion, use several additional factors in assessing athlete's potential for future pinnacle event performance potential, including (without limitation):

a) any specific guidance from the AIS (as advised from time to time) on Athlete Categorisation;

b) during the 12 months prior to categorisation the extent to which the athlete has:

i) demonstrated a strong commitment to all national training and attended all national camps to which invited;

ii) if funded (i.e. any contribution to travel and accommodation), participated in all international competitions and camps for which selected; and

c) an athlete's commitment level to the use of the CombatAUS/JA Athlete Management System (AMS);

d) the athlete's age, with a particular and increased focus on junior and cadet international results (World Championships, and European Cups) in informing decisions for categorisation at Emerging and Developing;

e) variance in depth/strength of field between weight categories and genders – there are notable differences in the number of competitors between different divisions (e.g. between 73kg males and +100kg males, or between lightweight men compared to lightweight women). This difference occurs domestically, but to lesser extent internationally. As a result, it is difficult to compare directly between categories - i.e. a top 16 finish in one weight division in a competition may mean something very different from a top 16 finish in another weight division at the same competition;

f) depth of field in Para Judo domestically is very limited with a small pool of talent available across all divisions. At international level there is a high degree of variance between depth/strength of field between weight categories and genders in the J1 & J2 categories; and

g) noting that Judo is a sport which is very demanding in terms of physical load on the body and hence has a relatively high incidence of periods of injury and drop-out, the impact of any serious physical injury on the Athlete's ability to compete during the 12-month period prior to categorisation. It is the responsibility of any Athlete to notify the HP Team of any serious physical injury that may be impairing their ability to compete.

5.3. The "Representative" category has been introduced to identify those Athletes who do not currently satisfy the criteria to be categorised on the Podium Pathway but have competed for Australia at the most recent pinnacle event and/or provide significant value to our high performance training environments, most notably the National Performance Centre (NPC).

6) Associated Policies

6.1. The NCP recognise athletes who are identified as contributing to the performance outcomes of the sport at the next pinnacle event (Olympic & Paralympic Games) where one of the following may apply:

a) an athlete is recovering from major injury or illness;
b) an athlete is taking time away from competition;
c) an athlete is transitioning into a sport from another; and
d) An athlete is pregnant or has recently become a new parent.

a) **Athletes recovering from major injury or illness**

The NCP recognise that an athlete may still be a contributor to national performance targets at the next pinnacle event despite suffering/recovering from a major injury or illness.

Generally, athletes who fall into this category will still be identified within JA Athlete Categorisation Performance Matrix and Guidelines, if they meet the following minimum criteria:

- Pre-injury/illness the athlete was categorised;
- there is an athlete plan with a return to competition focus and timeframes; outlined – including working with the W&E team member (or equivalent);
- the athlete is meeting the requirements of the agreed rehabilitation plan; and
- the athlete is tracking against rehabilitation benchmarks to achieve pre-injury/illness performance outcomes.

b) **Athletes taking time away from competition**

The NCP recognise that on occasion, to contribute to national performance targets at the next pinnacle event, an athlete may require some time away from competition for family, health and/or wellbeing reasons.

Generally, athletes who fall into this category will still be identified within the JA Athlete Categorisation Performance Matrix and Guidelines, if they meet the following minimum criteria:

- Prior to taking some time away, the athlete was categorised;
- there is an agreed athlete plan focusing on maintaining physical and mental wellbeing as it aligns to the sports needs and performance standards;
- the athlete has an agreed return to sport and competition plan including timeframes and regular pre-determined meetings scheduled with the sport PD (or equivalent); and
- the athlete maintains contact with W&E staff (or equivalent) on a regular basis to ensure athletes are focussed on maintaining their wellbeing.

c) Athlete transitioning into a sport from another

The NCP recognise that on occasion, high performing athletes may transition into a sport from another with the expectation they will contribute to national performance targets at the next pinnacle event of the new sport. Usually, a high performing athlete would only transition into a new sport if there was a strong likelihood of success.

Generally, athletes who fall into this category should be identified within the JA Athlete Categorisation Performance Matrix and Guidelines, if they meet the following minimum criteria:

- the athlete was categorised in the previous sport in the past 24 months;

- the athlete has an athlete plan focusing on contributing to the national performance targets at the pinnacle event within a 4-year period; and
- the athlete has an individual performance plan, agreed milestones and is meeting progression targets.

d) **Athletes who are pregnant or have recently become a new parent**
The NCP recognise that athletes may take some time away from intense training and competition when they become pregnant or have recently become a new parent. These athletes may still be on track to contribute to national performance targets at the next pinnacle event.

Generally, athletes who fall into this category will still be identified within the JA Athlete Categorisation Performance Matrix and Guidelines, if they meet the following minimum criteria:

- Prior to becoming pregnant (or new parent), the athlete was categorised;
- the athlete has an athlete plan focusing on maintaining physical and mental wellbeing as it aligns to JA needs (and informed by specific medical advice as it relates to pregnancy and birth where required);
- the athlete has an agreed return to sport and competition plan including timeframes and regular pre-determined meetings scheduled with the CombatAUS PD (or equivalent); and
- the athlete maintains contact with W&E staff (or equivalent) on a regular basis to ensure athletes are focussed on maintaining their overall wellbeing.

7) Timing of Reviews

7.1. Athlete categorisation will be formally reviewed annually, in or around the end of October each year (year-end process) and is applicable to the following calendar year. It is expected that most athletes will enter, move between or exit categories in line with this schedule.
Athletes nominated for categorisation will be notified via email directly from Judo Australia and the list of categorised athletes will be published on the CombatAUS and JA websites and shared with all system partners following each round of categorisation.

7.2. In exceptional circumstances, the NCP may (in its sole discretion) approve Athletes entering, moving between categories, or exiting the categories at other times. Such circumstances may include (without limitation) failing to comply with these Guidelines, retirement, arrival from overseas but with eligibility to compete for Australia, substantial performance gains etc.

8) Appeals

8.1. Only athletes who have previously been categorised may request reconsideration of the decision regarding their exit from categorisation or their change of categorisation level

(Request). This Request must be put in writing to the CombatAUS High Performance Director. In their Request, the athlete must address either or both of the following grounds for reconsideration, namely that the NCP (a) made an error of fact, or (b) failed to consider a relevant performance standard. The Request must be made within seven days of the notification to the affected athlete.

Upon receipt of a valid Request, the CombatAUS High Performance Director will ask the Independent Observer to review the athlete's Request. Following this review, the Independent Observer may invite the NCP to reconsider their decision or may request the NCP to provide further detail to the athlete addressing it's concerns and/or the reasons for the NCP panel's decision. The Independent Observer should provide reasons for their decision to the affected athlete and NCP.

For the avoidance of doubt:

a) The Independent Observer is not entitled to make or substitute selection decisions; any changes would need to be made by the NCP;
b) athletes are not entitled to appeal against the categorisation of any other athlete; and
c) there is no further avenue of appeal.

9) Amendments

9.1. These Guidelines may be varied from time to time by CombatAUS and JA. Any updates will be published on the CombatAUS and JA websites.

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Schedule 1:

Judo Athlete Categories LA2028 Cycle and Beyond

ABLE-BODIED ATHLETE PATHWAY		
CURRENT CYCLE PERFORMANCE PATHWAY ATHLETES		
Performance Categories		
Athlete Category Description	**Key Performance Indicators**	**Time in Category**
PODIUM Medallist at the most recent Olympic Games or IJF Senior World Championships Athletes are assessed against factors outlined in the WITTW and ADF and are deemed capable of a podium outcome at the next Olympic Games	• Medallist at Olympic, or IJF Senior World Championship within previous 24-month period AND • Progression against JA WITTW and ADF evidenced by the JA Assessment Tool	Undefined – until no longer meeting the KPIs for Podium categorisation
PODIUM READY 5th to 8th at the most recent Olympic Games or Senior World Championships, or Top 10 on the IJF Senior WRL at the time of categorisation	• Top 8 placing at Olympic, Paralympic Games, or IJF Senior World Championship, or • Top 10 on the IJF Senior WRL within previous 12-month period AND **Meeting any of the below considerations within the previous 12-month period:**	Undefined – until progressing to Podium categorisation; or until no longer meeting the KPIs for Podium Ready categorisation

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Athletes are assessed against factors outlined in the WITTW and ADF and are deemed capable of a podium outcome at the next Olympic Games	• Medallist at Grand Slam/Grand Prix events • Wins against Top 20 WRL ranked athletes • Win/loss 70% across all international events AND • Progression against JA WITTW and ADF evidenced by the JA Assessment Tool	
PODIUM POTENTIAL Senior athletes that have achieved defined international competition performance benchmarks that reliably confirm their world standard Athletes are assessed against factors outlined in the WITTW and the ADF and are deemed capable of podium outcomes at future Olympic Games	**Meeting a minimum of four (4) of the following considerations within the previous 12-month period:** • Top 16 placing at Senior World Championships • Top 5 placing/s at Grand Slam and Grand Prix events (dependent on depth of field and quality of opponents*) • Wins against Top 40 WRL ranked athletes • Medal performances at Senior Continental Open events (excl OJU Open and dependent on depth of field and quality of opponents*) • Positive win/loss % across all international events AND • Progression against JA WITTW and ADF evidenced by the JA Assessment Tool	May stay at this category for up to 4 years

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FUTURE CYCLE PERFORMANCE PATHWAY ATHLETES		
Development Categories		
Athlete Category Description	**Key Performance Indicators**	**Time in Category**
DEVELOPING Athletes that have progressed through a reliable national talent confirmation phase, including achievement of relevant international competitions performance outcomes Athletes are assessed against factors outlined in the WITTW and ADF and are deemed capable of progressing to Podium levels within prescribed timelines	**Junior Considerations:** • Progression against JA WITTW and ADF evidenced by the JA Assessment Tool AND **Meeting a minimum of two (2) of the following considerations in the previous 12-month period.** • Medallist performances at Junior Continental Cup events or equivalent (excl OJU Cup and dependent on depth of field) • Top 8 at Junior World Championships • Positive win/loss % across all international events **Senior Considerations:** • Maximum age of 26 on 31 December of the calendar year • Progression against JA WITTW and ADF evidenced by the JA Assessment Tool AND **Meeting a minimum of three (3) of the following considerations in the previous 12-month period.** • Medal performances at Senior Continental Open events (excl OJU Open and dependent on depth of field and number of fights won)	May stay at this category for up to 4 years

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	• Top 16 placings at Grand Slam and Grand Prix events (dependent on depth of field) • Wins against Top 50 WRL ranked athletes within last 12 months • Positive win/loss % across all international events	
EMERGING Athletes who have been identified by JA/CombatAUS via a valid and reliable talent identification profiling method and are going through a set, time-limited talent confirmation period Athletes are assessed against factors outlined in the WITTW and ADF, and are deemed capable of progressing to Developing within prescribed timeframes	**15 – 19 Age Considerations:** • Progression against JA WITTW and ADF evidenced by the JA Assessment Tool AND **Meeting a minimum of three (3) of the following considerations in the previous 12-month period.** • Wins against athletes from IJF Top 20 Ranked Judo Nations • Top 8 placings at Cadet and/or Junior European Cups or equivalent (dependent on depth of field and number of fights won) • Medal performance at Cadet/Junior Asian Cup events • Positive win/loss % across all Domestic and International events **20 to 23 Age Considerations:** • Progression against JA WITTW and ADF evidenced by the JA Assessment Tool AND **Meeting a minimum of three (3) of the following considerations in the previous 12-month period.**	Cadet/Junior athletes may stay at this category for up to 4 years Senior athletes may stay at this category for up to 2 years

	• Top 5 at Senior European Cups (dependent on depth of field and number of fights won) • Top 8 placings at Senior Continental Open events (excluding OJU Open and dependent on depth of field and number of fights won) • Wins against Top 100 WRL ranked athletes within last 12 months • Positive win/loss % across all domestic and international events	

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Judo Athlete Categories LA2028 Cycle and Beyond

PARA ATHLETE PATHWAY		
CURRENT CYCLE PERFORMANCE PATHWAY ATHLETES		
Performance Categories		
Athlete Category Description	Key Performance Indicators	Time in Category
PODIUM Medallist at the most recent Paralympic Games or IBSA World Championships Athletes are assessed against factors outlined in the WITTW and ADF and are deemed capable of a podium outcome at the next Paralympic Games	Medallist at Paralympic Games, or IBSA World Championship within previous 24-month period AND • Progression against JA Para WITTW and ADF evidenced by the JA Assessment Tool	Undefined – until no longer meeting the KPIs for Podium categorisation
PODIUM READY 5th to 8th at the most recent Paralympic Games or IBSA World Championships Top 5 on the IBSA WRL within categorisation period Athletes are assessed against factors outlined in the WITTW and ADF and are deemed capable of a podium outcome at the next Paralympic Games	• Top 8 placing at the last Paralympics or IBSA World Championships (winning minimum of two matches) within last 12-month period and/or • Top 5 on the IBSA Para Judo WRL within previous 12-month period. AND • Progression against JA Para WITTW and ADF evidenced by the JA Assessment Tool	Undefined – until progressing to Podium categorisation; or until no longer meeting the KPIs for Podium Ready categorisation

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	And meeting any of the below considerations within the previous 12-month period: • Medallist at IBSA Grand Prix events • Wins against Top 20% IBSA Para Judo WRL ranked athletes • Positive win/loss % across all international events	
PODIUM POTENTIAL Senior athletes that have achieved defined international competition performance benchmarks that reliably confirm their world standard Athletes are assessed against factors outlined in the WITTW and the ADF and are deemed capable of podium outcomes at future Paralympic Games	**Meeting a minimum of two (2) of the following considerations in the previous 12-month period**: • Top 16 at IBSA World Championships (dependent on depth of field, winning a min. two fights) • Top 8 placings at IBSA Grand Prix events (dependent on depth of field, winning a min. two fights) • Wins against Top 30% of IBSA Para Judo WRL ranked athletes of the specific weight category (number of international competitors varies greatly by division) AND • Progression against JA Para WITTW and ADF evidenced by the JA Assessment Tool	May stay at this category for up to 4 years

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FUTURE CYCLE PERFORMANCE PATHWAY ATHLETES		
Development Categories		
Athlete Category Description	**Key Performance Indicators**	**Time in Category**
DEVELOPING Athletes that have progressed through a reliable national talent confirmation phase, including achievement of relevant international competitions performance outcomes Athletes are assessed against factors outlined in the WITTW and ADF and are deemed capable of progressing to Podium levels within prescribed timelines	• Progression against JA Para WITTW and ADF evidenced by the JA Para Assessment Tool AND • Top 16 placings at IBSA Grand Prix events (dependent on depth of field and number of fights won) • Wins against Top 50% of IBSA Para Judo WRL ranked athletes of the specific weight category within last 12 months (number of international competitors varies greatly by division)	May stay at this category for up to 4 years
EMERGING Athletes who have been identified by JA/CombatAUS via a valid and reliable talent identification profiling method and are going through a set, time-limited talent confirmation period Athletes are assessed against factors outlined in the WITTW and ADF, and are deemed capable of progressing to Developing within prescribed timeframes	Progression against JA Para WITTW and ADF evidenced by the JA Assessment Tool AND • Wins against Top two-thirds (66%) of IBSA Para Judo WRL ranked athletes of the specific weight category within last 12 months (number of international competitors varies greatly by division) • Positive win/loss % across all international events	May stay at this category for up to 4 years Timeframes for Para athlete progression may be shorter noting smaller international divisions and potentially accelerated initial developmental trajectory at lower Categorisation levels

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OTHER RECOGNISED ATHLETES		
CURRENT CYCLE RECOGNITION ATHLETES		
Recognition Category		
Athlete Category Description	**Key Performance Indicators**	**Time in Category**
REPRESENTATIVE Current senior National Able-bodied team or Para judo team members representing Australia at the most recent pinnacle event (i.e. Olympics or Paralympics) The athlete demonstrates a commitment to the HP2032+ Strategy vision to win well to inspire Australia and adds value to the DTE. Selection is at the absolute discretion of the National Categorisation Panel (NCP)	**Considerations:** • Athletes selected for a National Team to compete at a pinnacle event (Olympics or Paralympics) and do not fall in the above categories; or whose performance standards do not currently demonstrate medal potential for future BME	Undefined - until progressing into the Podium Pathway; or until no longer meeting the KPIs for Representative

**Progression against Judo Australia (JA) 'What it Takes to Win' (WITTW) and Athlete Development Framework (ADF) will be informed predominantly by the following.*

- Technical & Tactical - *Performance data (Data set to include – Win/Loss%, Wins v WR Opponents, scoring analysis from competition data, coach technical/tactical progression assessment)*

- Physical Attributes *- Benchmarking against ADF National Senior, Junior + Cadet Standards; and*

- Performance Behaviours & Environment *- Coach and Service Provider ratings + feedback*

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SCHEDULE 1: DEPTH OF FIELD & QUALITY OF OPPOSITION ASSESSMENT – ONLY APPLICABLE FOR SENIOR DIVISIONS

- ***Depth of field Assessment*** (Distribution of elite competitors, IJF World Ranking Data, Number of IJF Top 20 Ranked countries represented in each division)
- ***Quality of Opposition Assessment*** (Historical Performance Index / IJF Ranking Data / Coaches Eye Assessment)

Scoring Reference Guide

Depth of Field (DoF) Score

Rate the competitiveness of the division at the event:

1 – Very shallow field: <10 entries, ≤3 countries, no Top 50 WRL athletes

2 – Shallow: 10–20 entries, 1–2 Top 50 WRL athletes

3 – Moderate: 20–30 entries, 2–4 Top 30 WRL athletes

4 – Strong: 30–40 entries, 4–6 Top 20 WRL athletes

5 – Elite: >40 entries, >6 Top 20 WRL athletes, >8 countries represented

Quality of Opposition (QoO) Score

Rate the calibre of opponents the athlete faced or defeated:

1 – All wins vs unranked or <100 WRL athletes

2 – 1–2 wins vs 51–100 WRL athlete, others unranked

3 – 1–2 wins vs 30–50 WRL athletes

4 – Wins vs 2–3 WRL 11–30 athletes

5 – Wins vs WRL Top 10 or BME medallists

Required Performance Context Score (PCS)

- Podium Potential = ≥ 3
- Emerging/Developing = ≥ 2

PCS scores for Cadet/Junior divisions will be assessed by the NCP members.

Performance Context Score (PCS)

PCS = (DoF + QoO) / 2

Provides a contextual score (1–5) for each event result and can be used to compare results across divisions or track progression over time.