

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Athlete categorisation is an initiative implemented through the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) that is used to “identify, track and prioritise athletes at each stage of the Performance Pathway”. The National Athlete Categorisation Framework outlines the five categorisation levels recognised by the AIS in determining the prioritisation of resources. Importantly, athletes identified within the performance pathway through categorisation must demonstrate the potential to contribute to future medal success over the next 4yr, 8yr or 12yr Olympic cycles.
- 1.2 The Paddle Australia (PA) Athlete Categorisation (“Athlete Categories”) criteria have been developed following the AIS athlete categorisation framework. The PA Athlete Categories will provide a consistent basis to:
 - a) identify the athletes with the greatest potential to contribute to PA’s performance targets in Paris 2024 and beyond, as well as at World Championships annually;
 - b) track athlete’s performance over time; and
 - c) inform prioritisation of resources and support to athletes
- 1.3 Importantly, membership of an Athlete Category requires evidence of an athlete’s potential for future success. It does not solely recognise past results. A level of discretion and coaches’ input is applied to assist identifying and informing future potential.
- 1.4 PA has developed these criteria to identify athletes to the different categories and for nomination to the AIS for inclusion in the national list of Athlete Categories.
- 1.5 Resource allocation, including direct athlete funding support, will be commensurate with athlete categories and athletes categorised at higher levels (particularly Podium Potential and above) will receive significantly higher funding and resource allocation from PA than lower category levels.
- 1.6 SIS/SAS identification and support for athletes primarily is agreed with all parties; leading principle that NCE athletes re-locating recognise by identification their SIS/SAS of origin. Any other athlete is recognised by their permanent residence (daily training environment) as the athletes demographic location of choice.
- 1.7 Principle support for Developing and Emerging athletes will be from their respective SIS/SAS programs and/or National Performance Pathway activities.

2. CATEGORISATION PROCESS

- 2.1 These criteria may be amended or supplemented by PA, or the AIS, in its absolute discretion from time to time.
- 2.2 The Selection Panel will consist of the National Performance Director (NPD), General Manager of Performance – Sprint and Paracanoe, National Performance Pathway Lead – Sprint, the relevant NCE Coach(es) (Men,Women) and each of the four SIS/SAS Head Coaches. This panel will determine the nomination of athletes under these criteria within each State.

- 2.3 Annual athlete categorisation will occur twice yearly:
- a) April/May: following the domestic competition period and will be an opportunity to identify new talent at the Emerging and Developing levels and review the progress of Podium Potential and above.
 - b) Oct/Nov: following the international competition and will be an opportunity to review the progress of all categorised athletes Podium Potential and above. It is unlikely new talent will be categorised at this point.
 - c) Separate trialing process and timelines may be applied for the purpose of identifying athletes to be invited to the NCE Sprint Kayak program, which may influence selection to the Podium Potential category.
- 2.4 Athletes may be added, removed or moved to a different category, based on fulfilling the required performance standards, as outlined in Section 4 of these guidelines.
- 2.5 PA will submit the categorisation list to the AIS for ratification following the selection process.
- 2.6 Whilst there is close alignment between Athlete Categorisation and National Squads, selection to the PA Athlete Categories does not necessarily imply automatic selection to PA national teams or squads which are governed by separate selection criteria available on the PA website.
- 2.7 The Selection Panel will consider evidence provided to support each selection and will only select athletes that genuinely satisfy the performance guidelines.
- 2.8 The Selection Panel may at its discretion, request a review of an athlete at other times (e.g. following a benchmark event, domestic selection trial, or, if an athlete is not actively training or demonstrating the required commitment levels as determined by the SIS/SAS and/or NCE Coach and in consultation with the National Performance Director).
- 2.9 Athletes will remain in an Athlete Category until such time as they are removed. Athletes may be excluded at any time from the Athlete Categorisation program at the absolute discretion of PA.
- 2.10 As a principle, athletes must continue to demonstrate potential to medal at a future BME, or, demonstrate progressive improvement each year in performance areas identified in their Individual Performance Plans (IPP). Unless there is other evidence that an athlete is on-track to contribute to PA performance targets, athletes who fail to progress may be removed from the Athlete Categorisation List.
- 2.11 Any athlete who fails to maintain the performance level required to maintain a certain category or fails to fulfill the requirements of their IPP or Athlete Agreement, or, declines an invitation to attend a National Team or Squad activity may be removed from the categorisation list altogether, or in extenuating circumstances, may be demoted in category.
- 2.12 An athlete who is not categorised nationally may not be eligible to receive any support from their relevant SIS/SAS program.

3. ELIGIBILITY

- 3.1 Athletes seeking selection to the Athlete Categories must:
- a) be an Australian Citizen (or on a committed path to obtaining Australian Citizenship);

- b) be a current member of PA, eligible and available to represent Australia in ICF sanctioned international competition and actively training towards the Olympic Games, or the World Championships.
- c) when requested to do so, have submitted to PA a signed Athlete Agreement and an IPP endorsed by the Coach (NCE or SIS/SAS Head Coach or nominated delegate), and attend athlete development meetings with the General Manager of Performance – Sprint and Paracanoe, National Performance Pathway Lead – Sprint, or their nominated delegate, and other PA or NIN high performance staff, as required;
- d) comply with all anti-doping requirements of PA;
- e) maintain a lifestyle conducive to sporting excellence and continual improvement, as outlined in the PA Athlete Agreement;
- f) abide by both the rules and the spirit of the sport;
- g) maintain the high standard of personal behavior expected of an athlete representing Australia; and
- h) not bring PA, or any of its partners into disrepute.

4. ATHLETE CATEGORY PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

- 4.1 The Athlete Categorisation Framework determined by the AIS consist of five levels (Podium, Podium Ready, Podium Potential, Developing and Emerging). Generally, the higher level of categorisation, requires greater evidence and objective performance criteria than the lower levels of categorisation. For selection to all levels, recent performance must be supported by evidence that the athlete demonstrates progression towards meeting PA's performance targets within a defined time period. Schedule A outlines the performance standards that will be used when considering athlete categorisation for Sprint Canoe/Kayak.
- 4.2 A level of discretion and coaches' input may be applied, particularly for categories Emerging, Developing and Podium Potential.
- 4.3 If discretion is applied, the selection panel may consider the following criteria:
 - a) demonstrated performances in domestic and international competitions over the past 24months as assessed against age-related prognostic performance targets in K1/K2/C1/C2 (Schedule A)
 - b) athlete profile indicating an upward performance trajectory against age-related prognostic performance targets in K1/K2/C1/C2.
 - c) demonstrated individual performance traits (e.g physical or technical assessments), which may include, but are not limited to, factors such as demonstrated physical attributes, technical skills (individual and team boat) and training age.
 - d) an assess of an athlete's individual performance behavioural characteristics, such as: commitment, professionalism, attitude and coachability.
 - e) Extenuating Circumstances as outlined in Section 5.
- 4.4 For the purposes of the above Athlete Categories:
 - a) Only athletes competing in Olympic disciplines and events are eligible for the PA Athlete Categories.

- b) Athletes with performances in non-Olympic events may be included only where there is clear evidence that performance in a non-Olympic event will contribute to the performance targets in Olympic events.
 - c) Athletes who do not satisfy any of the Podium Pathway category criteria but has earned selection for the national team or squad preparing for the NSOs benchmark event may also be considered, at the selection panel's discretion, for a level of categorisation which will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
 - d) Should an extenuating circumstance prevent an athlete from achieving the benchmark event criteria for Podium Potential or above, and there is compelling evidence that the athlete would otherwise meet the criteria for that level, PA may take into consideration extenuating circumstances, as outlined in Section 5 below. In particular, PA will consider the Athlete's likelihood to qualify to a future Olympic Games and contribute to PA performance targets.
- 4.5 Athletes in an athlete category are expected to show a continual progression in performances and results. A detailed review will be undertaken of all categorised athletes. Athletes should be able to demonstrate improvement each year, e.g. an improvement in their personal best, or maintenance of a medal winning position.
- 4.6 An athlete is expected to progress between categories within in 3 years. This includes athletes who continue to demonstrate improvement but remain categorised at the same level according to their relative age category. There is an expectation that to be progressing towards podium performances, an athlete will need to move beyond their own age category.
- 4.7 Percentage of prognostic speeds across different age categories will be utilised as a way of benchmarking athletes against international standards and will be used heavily throughout the categorisation process.
- 4.8 Percentage of prognostic speeds for the purpose of categorisation, will be weighted highly in Olympic K1 or C1 events. Non-Olympic events (specifically: MK1 500, MK1 200 and WK1 200) as well as K2/C2 events (specifically MK2 500, WK2 500 and WC2 500) may also be considered if there is additional evidence to support inclusion (e.g team boat performances and/or skills). Times must be completed in neutral conditions (approx. +/- 0-1ms). The selection panel may, at their discretion, apply a correctional factor to assist determining prognostic speeds.
- 4.9 Where an athlete achieves a 'one off' prognostic time and there remains some degree of uncertainty as to their ability to repeat that performance, based on the Selection Panels assessment of that athlete, they may be selected in a lower category.
- 4.10 For categories, Podium and Podium Ready, athletes must achieve the International Performance Standard as outlined in Schedule A. Only if Extenuating Circumstances apply, will the Selection panel consider the Domestic Criteria as further evidence.
- 4.11 For categories, Emerging, Developing and Podium Potential:
- a) an athlete is required to achieve either the International Performance Standard, or, the Domestic Performance Standard
 - b) an athlete who has not yet demonstrated a prognostic performance standard does not preclude them from being selected into a particular category if there are other characteristics that have been identified by the Selection Panel.

- 4.12 It is acknowledged that athlete progression is not always linear and therefore performance plateaus and regression may be considered. Generally, affordance to maintain categorisation levels will be provided for a period of 18-24mths, but only when there is evidence of strong athlete commitment and compliance to continuous improvement. For instance, an athlete who fails to qualify for a BME event or a particular event, but still demonstrate strong signs of performance progression may be maintained at a certain category, despite not achieving the objective performance targets.
- 4.13 The AIS framework stipulates that athletes should not be demoted between Podium Potential and Developing, or, between Developing and Emerging. Athletes who fail to progress or demonstrate the required commitment will be removed from the Athlete Categories. Under extenuating circumstances, and upon agreement with the AIS, demoting an athlete between these categories may be permitted.
- 4.14 Selection to a certain category does not automatically entitle an athlete to receive servicing and/or financial support, and athletes within the same category may not receive the same level of support.
- 4.15 Separate to the official AIS Categorisation process, Paddle Australia acknowledges that there may be certain athletes who fail to achieve the necessary criteria but add significant value to the performance pathway within either the SIS/SAS DTE or national team or squad. Hence, Paddle Australia will identify, in conjunction with each respective SIS/SAS program, additional athletes under an 'Associate' category. These athletes will not be formally recognised as being 'Categorised' but rather identified and may be treated at the discretion of each SIS/SAS jurisdiction, to a maximal resource allocation limit equivalent to an Emerging athlete, until a 'confirmation' performance can be achieved.

5. EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES & SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

- 5.1 Notwithstanding anything contained within this Criteria, the Selection Panel may consider Extenuating Circumstances.
- 5.2 For the purposes of this Criteria, "Extenuating Circumstances" means:
- a) injury or illness, as confirmed by the PA Chief Medical Officer, or their authorised representative;
 - b) an unanticipated event occurring at a Selection Competition(s) or BME event.
 - c) Covid-related circumstances (assessed on a case-by-case basis)
 - d) an athlete having an extended break from the sport, with a commitment to return
 - e) injury or illness (see injury and illness policy)
 - f) pregnancy (see pregnancy policy)

SCHEDULE A

Paddle Australia Athlete Categorisation – Performance Standards – Canoe Sprint

Level	AIS Categorisation Description	INTERNATIONAL	DOMESTIC			
Podium	<p>Olympic Pathway – Athletes have won a medal at an Olympic Games, World Championships or agreed event in the previous 24 months AND must be assessed against the sport-specific matrix as being capable to win a medal at the next Olympic Games.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Podium in at least one of the past two most recent Senior BME in an Olympic Event; ▪ and, the athlete is capable of a medal at the next Olympic Games 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Must achieve the International standard; ▪ If further evidence is required (e.g. Extenuating Circumstances), as a guiding principle, the following percentages of prognostic speed apply^{**#}: 			
			SNR	U23	U21	JNR
			% Prog. Speed	98%	97.5%	97%
Podium Ready	<p>Olympic Pathway – Athletes have placed 4-8th at the most recent Olympic Games /World Championships OR by exception an agreed equivalent alternative (ie an objective, data verified performance or World Ranking) AND must be assessed against the sport-specific matrix as being capable to progress to PODIUM level, targeting a medal at the next Olympic Games.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Place 4th – 8th in at least one of the past two most recent Senior BME in an Olympic Event; ▪ and, athlete is capable of a medal at a BME in the next 3 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Must achieve the International standard; ▪ If further evidence is required (e.g. Extenuating Circumstances), as guiding principle, the following percentages of prognostic speed apply^{**#}: 			
			SNR	U23	U21	JNR
			% Prog. Speed	96.5%	96%	95.5%
Podium Potential	<p>Athletes will have achieved agreed performance benchmarks which, alongside international competition performances, reliably indicate their future potential for podium success. Athletes must be assessed against the sport-specific matrix as being capable to progress to at least PODIUM READY level within the agreed sport-specific matrix timeframes.</p>	<p>SENIOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Place 9th – 12th in at least one of the past two most recent Senior BME in an Olympic Event; and finish in the Top 50% of their competitors; or, <p>U23:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Podium in at least one of the past two most recent U23 BME in an Olympic Event; ▪ and, athlete is capable of progressing to Podium Ready in the next 3 years. ▪ Where either the Senior or U23 BME result was achieved in a K4, athletes must have also demonstrated the ability to achieve a percentage of prognostic speed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieve the following percentages of prognostic speed^{**#}: 			
			SNR	U23	U21	JNR
			% Prog. Speed	95%	94%	93%
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Athletes may also be considered by absolute discretion of the Selection Panel (as outlined in clause 4.3). ▪ Discretionary decision to also consider the future potential of the athlete and the ability of the athlete to benefit from, as well as contribute to, the NCE sprint kayak program. ▪ athlete is capable of reaching Podium Ready in the next 3 years. 			

Developing	Athletes have progressed through a reliable national talent confirmation phase and placed within a dedicated national development program. Athletes must be assessed against the sport-specific matrix as being capable to progress to at least PODIUM POTENTIAL level within the agreed sport-specific matrix timeframes.	U23: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place 4th - 9th at the most recent U23 BME in an Olympic Event; and finish in the Top 50% of their competitors; or, Junior: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place 1st - 9th at the most recent Junior BME in an Olympic Event; and finish in the Top 50% of their competitors; and, athlete is capable of progressing to Podium Potential in the next 3 years. Where either the Junior/U23 BME result was achieved in a K4, athletes must have also demonstrated the ability to achieve a percentage of prognostic speed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve the following percentages of prognostic speed^{^#}: 					
				SNR	U23	U21	JNR	
			% Prog. Speed	94%	93%	92%	90%	
Emerging	Athletes have been identified by an NSO via a valid and reliable talent identification profiling method (agreed in advance and with future podium potential characteristics identified) and are going through a set, time-limited talent confirmation period.	U23: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place 10th-16th at the most recent U23 BME in an Olympic Event; and finish in the Top 50% of their competitors; or, Junior: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place 10th-16th at the most recent Junior BME in an Olympic Event; and finish in the Top 50% of their competitors; and, athlete is capable of progressing to Developing in the next 3 years. Where either the Junior/U23 BME result was achieved in a K4, athletes must have also demonstrated the ability to achieve a percentage of prognostic speed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve the following percentages of prognostic speed^{^#}: 					
				U23	U21	JNR	U17	U16
			% Prog. Speed	91%	90%	88%	87%	86%
Training Agreement (Associate)	Athletes have been identified by an NSO via a valid and reliable talent identification and profiling method (agreed in advance and with future podium potential characteristics identified) and are going through a set, time-limited talent confirmation period.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Athletes selected in the National Development Squad (NDS) line with NDS selection criteria which must include a requirement to meet appropriate PPS. <i>NDS is for athletes aged U16/U17.</i> Athletes may also be considered by absolute discretion of the Selection Panel (as outlined in clause 4.3). Athlete is capable of reaching Developing in the next 3 years. 					

Note: BME = Benchmark Event. This refers to the single highest level of international competition within in each year for each respective age category (Senior/U23 and Junior). Typically, it refers to the World Championships and in the Olympic year, it refers to the Olympic Games.

* Percentage of prognostic speeds must be achieved in Olympic K1 or C1 events.

^ MK1 500, along with M/W K1 200 and M/W K2/C2 500 results may also be considered, where there is additional evidence to support inclusion.

Times must be completed in neutral conditions (approx. +/- 0-1ms).