



PARA EQUESTRIAN

FEI PARA EQUESTRIAN FORUM 2022 Session 3, 28 January 2022

The final day of the 2022 FEI Para Dressage Forum focused on the assessment and review of the Classification System to ensure that Para Equestrian remains compliant with the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) code.

Classification Research

The first session was led by Dr Sarah Jane Hobbs from the University of Central Lancashire, who provided a detailed overview of the Classification Research Project being conducted in partnership with Hartpury University.

The Classification Research Project was created to undertake a comprehensive examination of the methods used to classify eligible impairments and their impact on performance in Para Dressage.

The project aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of the effect of different physical impairment types on performance in dressage, which will inform recommendations for an evidence-based, sport-specific Classification system for Para Dressage.

Initial stages of the project included a scoping exercise to identify objective measurements of horse and Athlete performance in dressage and the functional skills and abilities of the rider that may influence them to achieve higher scores.

In a second phase of the project, researchers identified existing clinical assessments that could measure the impairments recognised to have the greatest impact on an individual's performance in Para dressage. Dr Hobbs provided examples of how the variables of the horse's gait and movement (biomechanics) were analysed and how the impact of these variables on the various impairments that riders have within each Grade.

Dr Hobbs told delegates that the research was now at an exciting stage as the assessment tools have been identified and the research project will proceed with the ridden simulator and clinical testing stage.

When asked if testing would take place in more countries than just Great Britain, Dr Hobbs agreed that while widening the testing pool would be preferable, there is a need to ensure that the protocols being used for data collection are replicated exactly. FEI Head Classifier Sharyn Gregory highlighted that the research would be expanded to include targeted research in other areas, such as visual impairment.



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More information on the Classification Research project, including links to publications and the research papers on the results of the project to date can be found on the dedicated [FEI Classification Research website](#).

FEI Classification through the Pandemic

FEI Head Classifier Sharyn Gregory provided a report on the FEI Classification process during the Covid-19 pandemic. Classifiers were required to adapt to the ever-changing set of rules and restrictions globally, so that the sport could still provide classification opportunities, especially to those athletes on track to compete at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

A total of 105 Athletes, of which 28 were new athletes, were classified across 28 events held between January 2020 and November 2021. All modifications to the specific FEI Classification Rules required discussion with the IPC, specifically in the lead up to the Paralympic Games, and FEI Board approval. Some Covid-19 restrictions are still in place until further notice.

Classification Governance

Forum participants were given an overview of the Classification Governance system and the steps that International Sport Federations like the FEI must take to develop and implement a classification system that complies with the IPC Code and the International Standards.

Delegates were encouraged to review the processes and access the relevant forms required for FEI Classification [on the FEI Classification page](#).