UNION CYCLISTE INTERNATIONALE

October 31, 2025

To	National Federations/National Paralympic Committees
From	UCI
Ref	Sports Department / TF
Subject	**UCI Update Concerning 2026 H3-H4 Sport Class Regulation Changes**

The goal of the UCI and all stakeholders lie in growing the sport by creating a fair and even playing field and encouraging athlete participation. This includes striving towards an evidence-based Classification system, as described in the IPC Classification Code Chapter 7 (Best Practice Classification).

The UCI proposed a rule change to the Management Committee in September 2024 to address the overlap between H3 and H4, where Athletes presenting with almost normal trunk stability and non-functional lower limbs are currently classified in both Sport Classes.

The reason the UCI made the decision to implement a rule change in 2024 was that it aligned with the findings of the research as well as the Delphi study that was conducted. The comprehensive Delphi study involved athletes, coaches, and experts in the field, ensuring a broad range of insights were considered. The study was inclusive, inviting participation from all interested parties. This approach underscores our commitment to making informed decisions that reflect the collective expertise and experiences of our community.

Handcycle Working Group

Following a consultation process in the first quarter of 2025, the UCI created a Handcycling Working Group for further discussion with representatives of all stakeholder groups:

- Athletes
- Team representative
- Handcycle manufacturer
- Para Cycling Commission members
- Research team
- Classifier
- UCI
- IPC

Prior to the first meeting, the UCI presented documents including an initial position statement and the feedback received by stakeholders that were discussed during the first call. The key

items from the stakeholder feedback, alongside the research outcomes and the background for the rule change proposal were discussed and the following points noted.

Size and competitiveness of H3 and H4

The main concern raised was the projected growth of the H3 Class, resulting in a reduction of the competitiveness of H4 and therefore making the sport less attractive to the Athletes and spectators. The concerns also addressed the growing performance gaps between Athletes currently placing at the top or bottom of their respective Classes.

It was clarified that Classification is not intended to adjust the number of participants in a Sport Class, or to eliminate any performance disparities, but to pair Athletes in a Class based on their functional profile.

Impaired physiological functions

Another key item of feedback was the suggestion to adjust the H3 profile to include the impaired physiological functions seen in Athletes with higher thoracic spinal cord injuries.

Whilst there may be the need to conduct research into this topic throughout the whole Paralympic movement, the inclusion of physiological impairments such as impaired cardiovascular or respiratory functions is currently prohibited by the IPC Classification Code (see Article 9.2 “Non-eligible impairments”).

Athletes who present with both an eligible impairment (e.g. impaired muscle power based on an underlying health condition of a spinal cord injury) and non-eligible impairment (impaired cardiovascular and respiratory functions based on an underlying health condition of a spinal cord injury) will be assessed solely on their eligible impairment (e.g. impaired muscle power). Therefore, the Sport Class profiles must be adapted to the functional profile of an Athlete with impaired muscle power and cannot at this time consider impairments to the autonomic nervous system.

Involvement of pelvic closed chain

The stakeholders felt that the pelvic closed chain was more relevant to handcycling than a lower limb closed chain.

It was suggested that the years 2026-2028 are used to collect more data, prior to making an informed decision on whether further research is required into this topic.

Following the first call, the members were invited to provide written feedback, which was collected and presented to the working group prior to the second meeting. This included a

SWOT analysis for different scenarios, including the effects that any modifications to the timelines would imply on the next Paralympic cycle.

The third meeting was used to discuss some of the options in more detail, as well as looking at the current regulations to identify the gaps in the regulations as well as the research, with plans to collect further data in the coming years.

Following the final call, the members were once again invited to provide their feedback, which led to a revision of the rule proposal, which was presented to the UCI Management Committee in September 2025.

Revised rule proposal

Following the meetings with the Handcycle working group, UCI analyzed the available options, timelines and implications of any rule modifications.

In order to allow time for further discussion, data collection and implementation of potential future Sport Class changes, the following proposal was submitted to the Management Committee in September 2025 to come into effect in January 2026. We believe that this reflects both the feedback received by the stakeholders as well as the discussions between the Handcycling working group, whilst ensuring that future research and Classification data can be implemented in an evidence-based Classification system in the next Paralympic cycle(s).

Table of H3 and H4 Sport class Profiles at each stage of process

2025 regulations	Initial Proposal for 2026	Final regulations approved by UCI Management Committee for 2026
16.5.005.3 Sport Class: H3 Impaired Muscle Power – Paraplegic with impairments corresponding to a motor complete lesion from Th1 to Th10; – Trunk stability varies from very limited trunk stability (Nil to minimal muscle strength in abdominals) to limited trunk stability (reduced to normal upper and lower abdominal strength) with a muscle grade of 0-4; – Non-spinal cord injury/incomplete spinal cord injury with a sport specific activity limitation equivalent to sport class H3.	**16.5.005.3 Sport Class: H3 Impaired Muscle Power** – Paraplegic with impairments corresponding to a motor complete lesion from Th1 to L1; – Trunk stability varies from very limited trunk stability (Nil to minimal muscle strength in abdominals) to normal trunk stability; – No lower limb function – Non-spinal cord injury/incomplete spinal cord injury with a sport specific activity limitation equivalent to sport class H3.	**16.5.005.3 Sport Class: H3 Impaired Muscle Power** – Paraplegic with impairments corresponding to a motor complete lesion from Th1 to Th10 – Trunk stability varies from very limited trunk stability (Nil to minimal muscle strength in abdominals) to limited trunk stability (reduced to normal upper and lower abdominal strength) with a muscle grade of 0-4; – No lower limb function – Non-spinal cord injury/incomplete spinal cord injury with a sport specific activity limitation equivalent to sport class H3.
16.5.005.4 Sport Class: H4 Impaired Muscle Power – Paraplegic with impairments corresponding to a complete lesion from Th11 or below; – No lower limb function/impaired lower limb function; – Normal or almost normal trunk stability (normal abdominal strength, muscle grade 4-5); – Non-spinal cord injury/incomplete spinal cord injury with a sport specific activity limitation, equivalent to sport class H4;	**16.5.005.4 Sport Class: H4 Impaired Muscle Power** – Paraplegic with impairments corresponding to a complete lesion from L2 or below; – Impaired lower limb function; – Non-spinal cord injury/incomplete spinal cord injury with a sport specific activity limitation, equivalent to sport class H4	**16.5.005.4 Sport Class: H4 Impaired Muscle Power** – Paraplegic with impairments corresponding to a complete lesion from Th11 or below; – No lower limb function/impaired lower limb function; – Normal or almost normal trunk stability (normal abdominal strength, muscle grade 4-5); – Non-spinal cord injury/incomplete spinal cord injury with a sport specific activity limitation, equivalent to sport class H4;

Implications

The UCI regulations state in Article: 16.4.016 Changes to Sport Class Criteria

"If the UCI changes any Sport Class criteria and/or assessment methods defined in Chapter V, then:

– The UCI may re-assign any Athlete who holds Sport Class Status Confirmed (C) with Sport Class Status Review (R) or Fixed Review Date (FRD) and require that the Athlete attend an Evaluation Session at the earliest available opportunity; or

– The UCI may remove the Fixed Review Date for any Athlete and require that the Athlete attend an Evaluation Session at the earliest available opportunity"

With this revised rule proposal, Athletes in H3 will be required to resubmit medical information (including but not limited to MDF and medical reports). Athletes with an eligible impairment of impaired muscle power or unclear medical information will be placed on review to undergo Classification at their next event. This medical review will apply to the entire Sport Class, including athletes that were classified in 2025. Athletes with Sport Class status Review or FRD 2026 (or earlier) will retain their Status, as they are required to undergo Classification at their next event, but they may be required to resubmit up to date medical information on a case by case basis.

Conclusion

We acknowledge that there are further existing questions regarding the Classification regulations, and we are acutely aware of the need to conduct further research into Para Cycling Classification. Further data collection and research, including the consideration of a closed pelvic chain, will continue over the coming years with the potential of revising Sport Class profiles at the start of the next Paralympic cycle.

One of the challenges throughout the first research project was ensuring that all stakeholders remain invested and engaged in efforts to improve the Classification system. While engagement improved over the course of the project, and the Delphi study had specific requirements for a minimum number of participants, we encourage you to stay involved in future planned projects.

In collaboration with the VU Amsterdam, a new 4-year research project was launched in September 2024 to further strengthen the evidence-based Classification system in Para Cycling. Your continued participation is crucial to achieving the most valuable and robust results for the future of the Classification system.

We would like to thank everyone for their engagement and the constructive feedback received.

This response was prepared following discussions with the Handcycle working group and the IPC as well as the research team.

Timeline

January – April 2025	Review of received feedback, formation of Handcycling working group
April – June 2025	Elaboration of rule changes with Handcycling working group, Para Cycling commission and stakeholders
August 2025	Update meeting with nations at Ronse 2025 UCI Para cycling Road World Championships
September 2025	Revised rule changes approved by UCI Management Committee
November 2025 – February 2026	Review of medical documentation for H3 athletes
February – March 2026	Identified Athletes are placed onto Review status
March – December 2026	Athletes reclassified

References and Classification education

The IPC Classification Code

Handcycling Classification - A first step towards an evidence-based system

UCI iLearn platform - Classification online education course