

Classification research Support

Background

VIRTUS (formerly known as INAS) has built up an enormous expertise in the area of eligibility and classification over the previous years. First as a recognized member of the INAS-IPC Research Group, that was charged with the task to develop an evidence-based classification system in the lead up to the re-inclusion of athletes with intellectual impairment (II) in the Paralympics Games. Since 2012, a system is in place for II-athletes to compete in three Paralympic sports (athletics, swimming and table-tennis). After 2012, VIRTUS remained involved as one of the main partners of the KU Leuven R&D Centre for Classification of para-athletes with intellectual impairment. The KU Leuven R&D Centre was recognized and supported by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) during two Paralympic cycles (2012 – 2020). The main roles of the R&D Centre were to further improve the existing II-classification system, scientifically describe the concept of evidence-based classification bearing in mind the particularities of the para-athletes with II, and to align this conceptual approach across all sports and sports disciplines in which II-athletes (want to) participate.

The Virtus Academy

In 2021, VIRTUS is launching its Virtus Academy, as a global hub of research and education to drive the development of elite sport for athletes with intellectual impairment. The Virtus Academy will be built around five pillars, including “Eligibility and Classification”. Under that pillar, The Virtus Academy will ensure the continuation of some of the former tasks of the R&D Center, i.e., offering guidance to international federations (IF) on how to develop more and better participation and competition opportunities for athletes with intellectual impairments (II). Classification is a central aspect in the development of II-sport, and the Virtus Academy will build on its previous expertise to offer assistance to IF’s in this process.

What can the Virtus Academy offer?

Depending on the specific request and phase in the process, we can offer a custom-made plan, tailored to the sport/IF of interest. VIRTUS Academy offers a tiered level of support, based on what the IF requires.

Some examples of our offer:

- VIRTUS Academy can provide an explanation of the scientific background, theoretical foundation and the conceptual framework underpinning the required research for implementation of II-classification in your sport.
- VIRTUS Academy can provide clear guidelines and realistic timelines for how evidence-based classification in II-sport will be achieved.
- For IF’s who can rely on their own network of researchers and/or university partners: VIRTUS Academy can provide a stepwise approach for those researchers with guidance during the entire procedure of developing an evidence-based system, from pilot phase towards implementation.
- FOR IF’s who do not have their own network of researchers and/or university partners: VIRTUS Academy can assist the IF to commission to conduct the research project from our own network of research partners and/or university partners
- FOR IF’s who have commissioned the research VIRTUS Academy can project manage and/or quality assure the classification development work.

- VIRTUS Academy can provide an estimation of budget/costs, depending of the required support in each phase of the procedure

What can you do to get in touch and receive more information?

A first consultation is free of charge, and can be arranged via a digital meeting.

Please contact VIRTUS Academy to make an appointment:

The Virtus Academy

Dr. Debbie Van Biesen

Email: academy@virtus.sport

Website: www.thevirtusacademy.com