

Equestrian Australia – Interschool All Abilities Competition Framework (Revised 2025)

Executive Summary

This Framework establishes Equestrian Australia's (EA) unified national approach to delivering inclusive Interschool competition opportunities for riders with intellectual, physical, or developmental disabilities.

It aims to ensure consistent, accessible, and ability-appropriate competitive experiences from school level through to national events, with clear alignment to Virtus and Para-Equestrian classification pathways.

1. Introduction

EA is committed to ensuring that all students, regardless of disability or accessibility needs, have the opportunity to participate meaningfully and safely in equestrian sport. The Interschool All Abilities Competition Framework provides consistent national guidance for classification, support, competition structure, and progression.

This model ensures all athletes—whether eligible through Virtus or Para-Equestrian systems—are integrated into one unified All Abilities competition pathway based on functional riding ability, not disability type.

Objectives

- Provide equitable access to Interschool competition for riders with intellectual, physical, or developmental disabilities.
- Establish clear eligibility, classification recognition, and permitted adaptive equipment.
- Deliver ability-based competition categories that accommodate riders across a range of functional abilities.
- Support State Branches, schools, and officials with education and consistent operational guidelines.
- Integrate All Abilities classes into State and National Championships from 2026 onward.
- Foster progression pathways from school competitions through to Virtus and Para-Equestrian opportunities.

2. Eligibility

Eligibility for All Abilities participation is determined by evidence that the rider's disability has a measurable impact on riding ability, motor coordination, learning, or behaviour relevant to safe riding and competition.

Riders may be eligible through:

- Virtus classification – Intellectual Disability, Autism.
- Para-Equestrian classification – physical or motor disability.
- Medical verification – for riders whose disability impacts riding function but may not fit formal classification.

Once approved, riders receive an EA Exemption Card outlining:

- Approved adaptive tack/equipment.
- Assistance permitted in competition.
- Eligible competition category (1–3).

All documentation is assessed by the EA Exemption Committee, who issue the rider's Exemption Card.

3. Competition Structure

The competition uses a unified three-tier system, grouping riders by functional riding ability rather than disability type. This ensures fairness, simplicity, and inclusion across all Interschool events.

Category 1 – Introductory (Walk Only / Simple Walk-Trot)

- 20 × 40m arena.
- Focus on control, rhythm, partnership, and basic patterns.

Category 2 – Progressive (Walk–Trot–Canter)

- 20 × 60m arena.
- Includes basic transitions, simple figures, and progressive patterns.

Category 3 – Advanced (Walk–Trot–Canter with technical elements)

- Tests may include more complex movements or extended Show Horse individual patterns (“workouts”).
- For riders with higher functional independence and riding skill.

Judging

All athletes are judged using unified EA All Abilities criteria with emphasis on:

- Accuracy
- Rider influence
- Control and rhythm
- Harmony and partnership

Judges with Para-Equestrian or All Abilities experience are preferred where available.

4. Competition Delivery

All Abilities classes are integrated directly into Interschool competitions.

Key delivery principles:

- Adaptive equipment permitted as per EA Exemption Card.
- Arena modifications allowed as needed and approved.
- Results are awarded per Ability Category.
- All Abilities results contribute equally to school and team points.
- Test lists should remain consistent nationally to support fair qualification and progression.

5. Pathways

Unified progression for all eligible riders:

School → State → National Interschool → EA All Abilities → Virtus or Para-Equestrian High Performance → International Representation (Virtus Global Games or FEI Para-Dressage).

This ensures a clear and achievable athlete pathway from school competitions to elite opportunities.

6. National Implementation Timeline

2025 – Framework finalised; communication and education rollout; pilots at select State Championships.

2026 – All States deliver All Abilities classes at their Interschool Championships; National Championships include All Abilities divisions.

2027+ – Review and refinement based on participation growth; potential expansion to disciplines such as Show Jumping and Combined Training.

7. Governance & Oversight

Delivered collaboratively by:

- EA Interschool Working Group
- National Interschool Committee
- State Interschool Committees
- Sport Inclusion Australia (Virtus)
- Para-Equestrian Technical Committee (advisory support)

Officials and organisers receive training on inclusive judging, classification awareness, and permitted adaptive equipment.