

Sailor Categorisation Code

In the last twelve months since meeting in November 2023, there have been 9,721 active categorisations, 9328 of which were Group 1 and 393 were Group 3. There were 10 Group 3 decisions which were appealed this year, in all cases the original decision was upheld. In total, there are 25,121 categorisations in the system.

There trends being seen around the cases we have had cause to review or that were appealed can be broken into three main themes:

1. The applicant has made an error responding to the questionnaire.
2. The applicant does not understand the nuances or technicalities in the Categorisation Code and how it applies to them.
3. The system brought the case to our attention because of certain responses to the questionnaire.

We have received enquiries from sailors or representatives of an organising authorities wanting to question or dispute the categorisation assigned to a sailor. If sailor categorisation is essential to the integrity and objectives of the event, we really need the organising authorities to return to the practice of doing interviews electronically in the lead up and immediately before the event starts on site. This is no different to doing equipment inspection and measurement checks. When the Commission has helped classes running World Championships by being on site, sailors incorrectly categorised as Group 3 have been identified, in one case leading to a misconduct hearing and significant penalty to the boat.

The Categorisation Code and related resources need work. The Code has become out of touch with changes in the sport. There is a rise in National Authority supported systems and squads producing professionally trained sailors, the SailGP and its feeder events are not considered, the value of a club level coach who is paid to teach racing skills is not accounted for. However, the sailor who is paid a token amount to wash down the boat they race on, is still being captured as a Group 3 sailor. Changes to address shortcomings such as these will trigger a need to renew related resources and amend the system itself. This will incur a cost in time, effort and money shared between World Sailing and the Commission members doing the work.

The Commission membership is stable and I'm proud to say we have some terrific contributors. However, like any volunteer committee in any sport, more people are needed. The general criteria are having the ability to understand rules and regulations, having a strong understanding of the sport and the industry or work types that surround it, and the availability and willingness to do the work. The latter is inarguably most important.

The system World Sailing has in place is generally working well. There are database problems when some sailor records over a certain age (the record, not the sailor) cannot be reactivated and logged into because of them not being transported across to the current system. Invariably these come to our attention only when the event organiser contacts the Commission or staff on behalf of the sailor. They cannot be resolved by the Commission due to system permissions and access levels, but World Sailing staff have been handling these as they arose and all were resolved.

Glen Stanaway

Categorisation Commission Chairperson