

Wellington Rowing Association's Full proposal for revitalising "classification according to ability"



Overview

Each year approximately **93%** of all the Season's non-Novice rowers are eligible for Club-class. This is a huge bottleneck in the classification system. The proposal to revitalise the classification system is:

1. Leave the existing Novice-class unchanged, as a gateway experience to rowing.
2. Split the existing Club-class into two parts; creating an Intermediate-class space for 2nd year rowers and making demonstration of ability the next step in a rower's progression.
3. Adjust the pathway for promotion into Senior-class; so the threshold for getting to Senior-class is not so high.
4. Leave Premier-class unchanged.

This tackles the existing Club-class bottleneck at both ends:

- A) It acknowledges and moves the best of the current Club-class rowers into Senior-class, which is an under-utilised classification.
- B) By splitting Club-class it creates a buffer between Novices and those current club-Class rowers who have both experience and ability.

The revitalised "classification according to ability" provides a classification system that is worthy of that name. And it provides better opportunities for rowers to end up competing against peers of similar ability.

The existing classes

"Classification according to ability" has evolved to the point where it is a serious misnomer. As it currently stands:

- Novice-class is a class you exit based on experience, not ability.
- Premier-class is a class you can only enter through selection into an RPC.
- Senior-class is mostly a selection-based class (for rowers who were previously selected to RPCs or national representative honours).¹
- **Club-class is the holding class for everybody else.**

At present Club-class is continuously topped-up with ex-Novice rowers. These are rowers who have not necessarily demonstrated any ability; beyond the ability to complete a race.

And the threshold for moving out of Club-class is ridiculously high. To leave the class rowers have to:

1. demonstrate sufficient ability merit national selection; or
2. demonstrate sufficient ability to be selected into an RPC i.e. skip Senior-class and become Premier-class; or
3. demonstrate they have the ability to win events at Nationals for classes higher than Club-class i.e. demonstrate they already have sufficient ability to be at the top of higher classes

When you have a single class that does not distinguish between rowers who only have enough ability to complete a race and rowers who place as high as 2nd in Senior or Premier class events then those rowers are not really being classified by their ability.

¹ Senior-class does include a small number of rowers who were promoted to the class; but only **after** demonstrating they already had the ability to win the Senior-class events they're moving up to.

The current situation

This year² there were 4662 holders of competition licences. When you look at how they were classified by ability it is astonishing.

At one end of classification according to ability, 1958 of those rowers were eligible for Novice-class. And at the other end of classification according to ability, just 156 of the remaining 2704 rowers were ineligible for Club-class. They are the Senior-class and Premier-class rowers. And just 39 of those were Senior-class.

What this means is a disproportionately large number of the non-Novice rowers end up assigned to Club-class: 93%



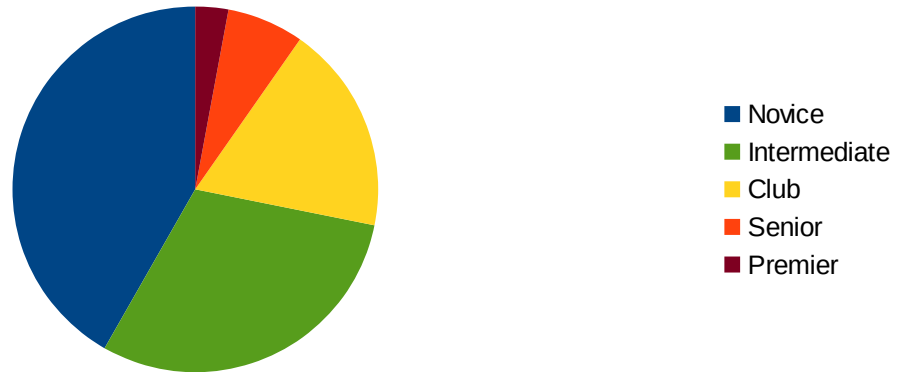
Inevitably, because most non-Novice rowers are crowded into the same class, Club-class covers a very broad range of abilities. At one of end of Club-class you have rowers who have experienced as few as one regattas but have not yet acquired any particular proficiency in rowing. At the other end you have rowers who regularly compete in Senior-class events but have not yet won one of those events at Nationals and thus have not been promoted out of Club-class.

Because we have reached a stage where the vast majority of rowers are all considered to have the same ability for the purposes of "classification according to ability", despite actually having a broad range of abilities, it is clear that classification is overdue a change. This proposal puts forward a way of doing that.

² figures from 1 April 2017

The refreshed classes

The proposal to revitalise classification according to ability involves bringing "ability" back into focus and splitting the block of 93% of non-Novice rowers who form Club-class into two parts.



1. Novices

It is not proposed to tinker with Novice-class other than to make it clearer when a person becomes Novice. A person will only become a Novice when they row their first race. Prior to that they will be unclassified.

Everybody already takes up rowing on an equal basis: zero experience. And all Novices have no prior demonstrated ability at racing. This makes Novice-class a very good gateway to rowing. Rowers can be assured they're not being asked to compete against others who have racing experience from prior Seasons.

The breadth of Novice-class does mean some rowers will have a physical advantage within it. But that can be addressed by combining Novice-class with other classifications e.g. there are already Masters Novice and U18 Novice events, where age-group classifications help restrict Novice-class.

However, rowers are thrust into a very unequal class on exiting Novice-class. One where there is a huge range of abilities. Instead of trying to change the exit criteria for Novice-class to take ability into account it is proposed to begin using ability to distinguish between rowers in the next class up.

2. The existing Club-class

It is proposed to split this class in two. After leaving Novice-class rowers will have a new Intermediate-class. Here they all have some experience but are not yet presumed to have gained any particular level of ability. Demonstrated ability will be the key for rowers to leave this new class.

a) The new Intermediate-class

Intermediate-class becomes the starting point for rowers who have experienced rowing and decided to continue in our sport. It will be a class where rowers can gain

ability before moving on to more competitive classes. It is a class with a few similarities to one there used to be, called Maiden-class. Rowers used to leave Maiden-class when they demonstrated the ability to win. A related, but updated, principle will apply to Intermediate-class.

- i. Classification Regattas will be used to assess ability.
- ii. Qualifying for and competing in Finals races will be evidence a rower has demonstrated enough ability to be classified by their ability and progressed to the next class.
- iii. Progression will take place on a Season-by-Season basis (not immediately after the regatta where the rower demonstrates they're ready for the next class).

The threshold for leaving Intermediate-class is not particularly high. This is because roughly 1000 rowers are moving from Novice-class into their second year of rowing each Season. Having a high threshold would cause Intermediate class to balloon in size; like the existing Club-class.

b) The revised Club-class

These are the existing Club-class rowers who are capable and competitive rowers. They are rowers who have stuck with our sport for a few years and may compete for many more years.

At the moment, because there is a tremendously high threshold for Senior-class eligibility, the current Club-class group of rowers includes some who are highly capable. The best of those would be a better fit in an expanded Senior-class. So, to further reduce the bottleneck found in the existing Club-class, it is proposed to lower the threshold for leaving Club-class and provide better recognition of the range of abilities that exist.

3. Senior-class

Currently this is the smallest of all classes for ability. Smaller even than Premier-class. The majority of rowers in Senior-class get there by having previously been selected for national or RPC representation but there are limited opportunities to gain such selection. The only pathway for a rower to get to Senior-class directly through their own ability is by winning Senior-class, Premier-class or U20/U22 events (where Premier-class RPC crews compete) at Nationals. In other words, Club-class rowers have to prove they are already better than the rowers in the classes above them in order to join them.

It is proposed the pathway from Club-class to Senior-class be based on winning Club-class or U17 Classification Races or competing in Classification Races for higher ability/age classes. Classification Races are A Finals (unless it is a straight Final outside Nationals/Maadi)

This threshold marks **the top 10% of rowers** (made up of Seniors 7% and Premiers 3%).

Although the progression uses U17 events it is important to remember those rowers are not immediately becoming Senior. They will only become Senior the following Season i.e. when they will have gone from being the top U17 crews to the top U18 crews.

4. Premier-class

It is not proposed to alter this class. The class consists of RPC rowers who are unavailable to their clubs for most of the regular Season. Adding a few rowers to Premier-class from outside the RPCs would leave those rowers in an awkward position. Instead Senior-class should be left to be the pinnacle of what a rower can achieve through their own ability; before getting further recognition through selection to a national crew or RPC.

Classification Regattas/Races

At present the only opportunity for a rower to demonstrate their ability is at Nationals. Although Nationals provides the ability to definitively assess rowers it is very restrictive. 80% of rowers do not attend Nationals. And if a rower is unable to attend Nationals they miss out on an opportunity to move up a class.

Nationals also only provides a small number of opportunities to earn re-classification. For example a fairly standard set of boat types (eight + quad + four + double + pair + single) covers just 21 seats.

If winning Nationals is the qualifying standard for moving up a class then a maximum of 42 of the approximately 2500 Club and Senior-class rowers can earn eligibility for Senior class. And that's before the number is reduced through: rowers winning more than one event, being selected into an RPC, or finishing their rowing career and not carrying on for another Season.

In order to properly assess the ability of all rowers you have to take advantage of other opportunities throughout the year. Any regatta that brings together large numbers of rowers provides such an opportunity, which is why Classification Regattas are re-introduced.

Indicative Classification Regatta list: KRI's Club Regatta, Otago Champs, Cambridge Town Cup, Canterbury Champs, North/South Island Champs, Nationals, Mercury Junior Regatta, Canterbury Junior Regatta, North/South Island School Champs, Maadi.

However, not every race at a Classification Regatta is useful for assessing ability.

1. Club-class eligibility

All the finals at a Classification Regatta are used to assess eligibility for Club-class. When assessing ability for Club-class we are looking for rowers who have progressed beyond the mere ability to complete a race (all that is required to leave Novice-class). Reaching a final indicates the rower has enough ability to beat other crews. Even a crew making an 'F' final at Maadi has shown it is better than 25% of the crews that entered the event.

2. Senior-class eligibility

Classification Races are a sub-set of the finals at a Classification Regatta. They are used to assess eligibility for Senior-class. When assessing eligibility for Senior-class we are looking for the best rowers in the country. 'A' finals, excluding straight finals (outside Nationals and Maadi), are the types of races where those top crews can be found.

Downward classification

- gaining re-eligibility for a lower class

The existing system for classification according to ability includes a pathway for dropping down classes. Rowers leave Premier-class when they are no longer selected into an RPC. Rowers leave Senior-class two years after that, or two years after the last time they prove they have the ability to beat Senior-class or Premier-class crews at Nationals. Because so few rowers are being promoted up out of the existing Club-class this pathway contributes to bringing rowers back into Club-class and keeping higher classes minimal in size.

It is proposed the ability-based pathway for exiting a class be better re-aligned with ability. Exit pathways will be available leading down to Club-class and Intermediate-class. However, they will be tied to demonstrated ability at Classification Regattas and in Classification Races; not simply time-based.

If a rower who is actively competing in a class can no longer meet the requirements from the next class down to qualify for their current class then after two Seasons they become re-eligible for that next class down.

So a rower who changes class will then have two Seasons to establish their appropriateness for that new class. After that time they become re-eligible for the lower class. But only if their performance has fallen below that required to move up into the class from the lower class.

Existing 2 years off rowing is sufficient to go from Premier to Club and compete against 2nd year rowers.

Premier + *dropped from RPC* = **Senior** + *2 years without winning Senior at Nationals nor being NZ rep* = **Club**

Revitalised 4 years of declining performance is required to go from Premier to Intermediate and compete against 2nd year rowers

Premier + *dropped from RPC* = **Senior** + *2 years finishing out of A finals nor being NZ rep*
= **Club** + *2 years without making finals* = **Intermediate**

Re-classification by application

With any rule-based system of classification there are always likely to be outliers. Instances where the rules include or exclude somebody whose actual ability is different than the rules would suggest. Even under the existing system for classification by ability there are regular enquiries about whether a rower can be re-classified (the answer is No). Without any form of appeal rowers could end up in a class that is inappropriate for their ability.

Having the ability to apply for re-classification is especially important in the context of a new classification system.

It is proposed to introduce a process allowing rowers to apply for re-classification by RNZ. Applications would be made during the off-Season. A successful application would see the rower re-classified for start of the following Season.

The process includes annual reporting by RNZ. This provides some transparency to the re-classifications. It will also help clubs work out what types of applications are likely to be successful or unsuccessful (and not worth pursuing).

Successful applications will also help inform an annual review of the classification system.

Classification system review

It is also proposed to have a classification system review mechanism. One that makes use of existing Board powers to change the Rules outside the usual four-yearly cycle.

Both re-classification by application and annual review of the classification system thresholds are seen as vital tools for smoothing the introduction of the revitalised classes.

Because Intermediate class does not currently exist there is a certain amount of educated guesswork going into the Rules. Waiting until 2021 to review and adjust the classifications after they start to be used is an unacceptably long wait.

Instead, by having annual review over the next four years, it should be possible to scale back the review mechanism in 2021 (e.g. to two yearly review) or remove it altogether.

Summary

"Classification according to ability" is failing to meet its description. In an average Season 45% of rowers are classified by experience (Novice = no prior experience) and 51% of the remaining 55% of rowers are considered to have the same ability: Club-class. Premier-class (3%) is a classification based on selection. And Senior-class (1%), which is the top-most class rowers can aspire to based purely on their own efforts, is both ridiculously hard to get into and the smallest of all classes.

The existing Club-class has become a major bottleneck for ability-based classification. This proposal provides for "classification according to ability" to be revitalised by clearing the bottleneck at both ends. It does that by preventing the accumulation of former Novice-class rowers in a class based on ability before they have a fair chance to develop that ability. And also by increasing the number of very able rowers who progress into Senior-class.

Under the proposal:

1. **the existing Novice-class remains unchanged**, as a gateway experience to rowing.
2. **the existing Club-class is split into two parts:**
 - a) When rowers have gained their initial experience with rowing in Novice class they become **Intermediate-class** rowers. Rowers remain in the new Intermediate-class only until they have demonstrated their ability has progressed sufficiently to warrant moving up a class. That is done by reaching the finals of events at Classification Regattas.
 - b) Rowers who have demonstrated ability become **Club-class** rowers. The new Club-class offers rowers a real opportunity to progress further with the development of their ability and move up to Senior-class. That is done by winning Club-class or U17 Classification Races, or by qualifying for Classification Races in class for higher ability/age.
3. **the existing Senior-class is kept and expanded**. That expansion is a consequence of adjusting the classification pathway so the threshold for eligibility is not so high. The rowers above Club-class will be those in the top 10% of the country: 7% Senior + 3% Premier
4. **the existing Premier-class is unchanged** and marks the top end of the selection pathway.
5. there are ample opportunities for rowers to reach a classification that corresponds to their ability; including becoming re-eligible for classes.
6. there are processes for reviewing individual classifications and the classification system threshold.

The ultimate outcome is a system for "classification according to ability" that is actually based on ability! And one that can be adjusted over the next four years to ensure it is fit for purpose.

APPENDIX 1: the revised Rules

Rule 10 – Season

A Season commences on the first day of September and ends immediately after NZSSRA's New Zealand championships the following year. The period between Seasons is an off-Season.

13.1 CLASSIFICATIONS.

- a) Every rower is classified according to ability into one of five classes: Novice, Intermediate, Club, Senior, Premier. (Classes listed in order of increasing ability from lowest to highest).
- b) A person who has never rowed in a race is unclassified according to ability and is eligible for Novice events.

13.2 CLASSIFICATION REGATTAS AND RACES.

- a) Classification Regattas are used to assess the ability of Novice and Intermediate rowers. They are Championships, NZSSRA's championships, and Major Regattas or other regattas identified by RNZ at the start of each Season.
- b) Classification Races are used to assess the ability of Club rowers. They are:
 - i. races at Classification Regattas;
 - ii. for events classified Club, Senior, Premier, Open, U17 or older (excluding Masters age grades);
 - iii. being the 'A' Final (or the only Final):
 - 1. at a Championships or NZSSRA's New Zealand championships; or
 - 2. at other Classification Regattas, only where an elimination preliminary round of racing is held e.g. there are more entrants than lanes in the Final

13.3 MOVING UP A CLASS.

- a) A person becomes Novice when they row in their first race.
- b) A Novice rower moves up to Intermediate at the first end of Season after becoming Novice.
- c) An Intermediate rower moves up to Club at the start of the next Season after qualifying by competing in the finals at a Classification Regatta.
- d) A Club rower moves up to Senior at the start of the next Season after qualifying by:
 - i. winning a Classification Race for Club or U17; or
 - ii. competing in two or more Classification Races in a Season for: Senior, Premier, Open, U18 or older (excluding Masters age grades).
 - iii. being selected to row for New Zealand in any Junior, Youth Olympic, U21, U23, Elite, or similar crew (as defined by RNZ).
- e) A rower becomes Premier immediately when selected to row for an RPC.

13.4 MOVING DOWN A CLASS.

- a) A rower stops being Premier and immediately becomes a Senior when they are no longer an RPC rower.
- b) A rower moves down to Club after two Seasons as Senior if the rower:
 - i. competed in events for Senior, Premier, Open, U18 or older (excluding Masters age grades) that had a Classification Race; and
 - ii. did not progress to a Classification Race more than twice in a Season; and
 - iii. did not win a medal in a Classification Race; and

- iv. was not selected to row for New Zealand in any Junior, Youth Olympic, U21, U23, Elite, or similar crew (as defined by RNZ).
- c) A rower moves down to Intermediate after two Seasons as Club if the rower:
 - i. is not moving up to Senior; and
 - ii. competed at Classification Regattas; and
 - iii. did not make the finals in events at Classification Regattas more than once in a Season.
- d) No rower can become Novice again.

13.5 RE-CLASSIFICATION BY APPLICATION TO RNZ

- a) A rower may apply to RNZ for re-classification to Intermediate or Club or Senior.
- b) A rower may only apply if seeking re-classification at the start of the following Season to:
 - i. move up more than one class; or
 - ii. remain in their current class instead of moving up a class; or
 - iii. move down one class instead of remaining in their current class.
- c) RNZ shall consider applications that:
 - i. have the support of the rower's club and Local Association; and
 - ii. set out a case explaining why RNZ should grant re-classification; and
 - iii. are received during the off-Season and at least one month before the start of the next Season.
- d) When RNZ considers an application it shall reach a decision whether to grant re-classification to the rower, and notify all parties of that decision, before the end of the off-Season when the application is received.
- e) If RNZ grants re-classification then it happens at the start of the next Season.
- f) At the start of each Season RNZ will publish a re-classification report. The report will summarise the outcomes of all applications. It may also include such details as RNZ decides may be helpful for future applicants.

13.6 CLASSIFICATION BY RNZ

- a) RNZ shall be responsible for classifying any rower other than a Novice or Premier who has not raced under this system of classification. This includes rowers from overseas and rowers whose previous racing all pre-dates this classification system.

13.7 CLASSIFICATION ELIGIBILITY REVIEW AND ADJUSTMENT.

- a) At the end of each Season RNZ shall convene a Committee pursuant to Article 25.1 of the NZRA Constitution to review the definition of Classification Race and the effect of the tests in Rules 13.3 and 13.4.
- b) The Committee shall conclude its review not less than five weeks before the date of the RNZ AGM.
- c) If, after consultation with Local Associations, the Committee determines Rules 13.2 and/or 13.3 and/or 13.4 should be adjusted then at the conclusion of its review it shall put forward an amendment to the Rules in accordance with Article 25 of the RNZ Constitution (for ratification at the RNZ AGM).

Rule 17.1 add... When an event is classified as Open ability everybody has the requisite eligibility to compete.

APPENDIX 2: explanation of the new Rule 13 clauses

- 13.1 Creates five ability-based classes for rowers. Intermediate is a new class between Novice and the existing Club class. Non-rowers are unclassified.
- 13.2 Identifies where a rower's ability will be assessed. Assessment will mostly take place in finals during big regattas at Ruataniwha and Karapiro. However, in some circumstances (outside Nationals and Maadi) some events will have too few entries to be used to assess ability.
Indicative regatta list: KRI's Club Regatta, Otago Champs, Cambridge Town Cup, Canterbury Champs, North/South Island Champs, Nationals, Mercury Junior Regatta, Canterbury Junior Regatta, North/South Island School Champs, Maadi.
- 13.3 Explains how a rower can move up through the classes. Rowers generally move up one class at a time. Moving from Novice to Intermediate is automatic. Moving from anything to Premier is immediate. Otherwise class changes take place at the start of the Season. Making the finals at a Classification Regatta demonstrates sufficient ability to move into Club next Season. This threshold is low because there is roughly 1000 rowers coming into Intermediate from Novice each Season. Moving from Club to Senior is harder (though far more achievable than at present) and involves winning Club or U17 or competing in 2 or more A Finals for higher/older classes (Any rower who can do this is in the top 10% in the country).
- 13.4 Explains how a rower can move back down through the classes. Moving from Premier to Senior is immediate. Nobody can move all the way back down to Novice. Otherwise class changes take place at the start of the Season after a rower has been in the class for two years and their results demonstrate they are in too high a class.
- 13.5 Creates the ability to apply to RNZ for re-classification. Re-classification is limited to making a rower Intermediate or Club or Senior. Application can be made by a rower who wants to: move up more than one class; or remain in their current class instead of moving up a class; or move down one class instead of remaining in their current class.

Decision summaries are published to provide transparency. This is so all clubs know what types of applications are accepted/rejected. Successful applications will also be relevant to the review process (in 13.7)

- 13.6 Gives RNZ the ability to classify rowers who haven't participated in the system. This is primarily for overseas rowers. But will also be used to help grandparent rowers into the classes when they're introduced.
- 13.7 Provides a mechanism for reviewing and adjusting the classification thresholds on an annual basis. This is essential when the new classes are introduced because there are some obvious unknowns (e.g. what will results look like when there are 3 classes between Nov and Prem instead of 2). Waiting another 4 years to adjust the classes once those unknowns are resolved is too long a wait.

It is anticipated the reviews would become less necessary over time and could be scaled back (e.g. to two-yearly) or removed altogether at the next Rule-change AGM (2021).

APPENDIX 3: some figures

There is no shortage of proposals for changing rowing classification but most rely on guesswork about how the distribution of rowers will be affected.

When the proposed new Rule is applied to results from the 2015-16 Season and rowers are classified into the revitalised classes it is possible to get an estimation of what the distribution of classes could look like:

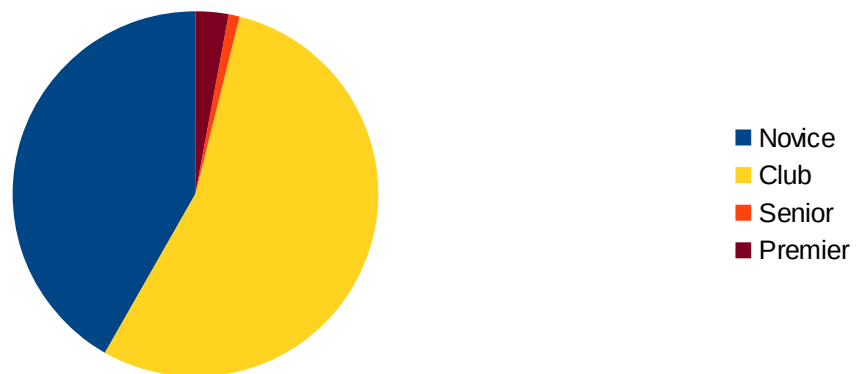
43% Novice + 31% Intermediate, 19% Senior, 7% Senior + 3% Premier



1. The number of Premier rowers is unchanged: 156 (3%).
 - This is because Premier is unchanged. It still comprises the RPC rowers plus a handful of overseas rowers who attended regattas and were assessed as Premiers by RNZ.
2. The number of Senior rowers grows from 39 (1%) to 306 (7%).
 - This is a 780% increase compared with the current Rules. But, when combined with Premiers, this group of rowers are the top 10% of rowers in the country.
 - The number of clubs that have Seniors jumps from 17 to 42. So most clubs will have Seniors and be able to contest Senior events.
 - The average number of Seniors (in clubs that have them) leaps from 2.2 to 7.2. More importantly, clubs with Senior females have an average of 3.6; and clubs with Senior males have an average of 4.6. So clubs can put together fully-Senior crews; including fours and quads.
3. The number of Club rowers drops from 2509 (56%) to 850 (19%).
 - This big decrease is due to the top 266 being recognised as Seniors and the bottom 1393 not having demonstrated the requisite ability to move out of Intermediate.
 - The fields of entrants in Club-class events will be smaller and no longer span such a huge range of abilities.

4. There would be 1392 Intermediates (31%)
 - The biggest proportion of Intermediates is made up from rowers continuing into a 2nd year after Novice. But there is also a large contingent of rowers who had not met the new threshold for becoming Club-class rowers.
5. The number of licensed people eligible for Novice is unchanged: 1958 (43%)
 - This is because eligibility for Novice has not changed. It still comprises people who have not raced in a previous Season.
 - Note: under the new Rules a Season always starts with 0 Novices. That is because anybody who hasn't previously rowed is unclassified. By the end of the Season the count of Novices is the number of people who've had their first ever race during the Season.

The above breakdown needs to be compared with the actual 2016-17 Season mix, which was:



43% Novice + 56% Club + 1% Senior + 3% Premier

APPENDIX 4: Seniors

The following tables show what each club's Roster of Seniors was for the 2016-17 Season and what it would have looked like if the proposed Rule had been applied using 2015-16 Season regatta results. Unlisted clubs have no Seniors under either rules.

Club	current	f + m	NEW	f + m
AKGC			1	0 + 1
AKLC	1	1 + 0	24	15 + 9
ASHC	1	1 + 0	4	3 + 1
AVNC	6	4 + 2	46	20 + 26
AWGC	2	0 + 2	7	1 + 6
BPCC			2	0 + 2
CAMC			8	3 + 5
CHCC			11	0 + 11
CLIC			3	2 + 1
COLC			3	3 + 0
CTYC			5	3 + 2
CURC	4	0 + 4	11	3 + 8
DUAC	2	2 + 0	4	4 + 0
HAMC			1	1 + 0
HKIC			1	1 + 0
HWBC			19	8 + 11
INVC	1	0 + 1	2	0 + 2
KICC			2	0 + 2
MERC	1	1 + 0	1	1 + 0
NELC	3	0 + 3	8	3 + 5
NOEC			4	0 + 4

Club	current	f + m	NEW	f + m
NSHC	2	1 + 1	20	4 + 16
OAMC			3	0 + 3
OGUC	2	2 + 0	9	9 + 0
OTAC			1	0 + 1
PETC	1	1 + 0	3	3 + 0
PORC			5	5 + 0
ROTC			5	0 + 5
SGEC	1	0 + 1	2	1 + 1
SKEC	1	0 + 1	10	3 + 7
STAC			10	1 + 9
TAWC			1	0 + 1
TGAC			8	3 + 5
TIMC			6	3 + 3
WELC			4	3 + 1
WESC	1	0 + 1	13	7 + 6
WHAC	1	0 + 1	7	1 + 6
WHOC			2	2 + 0
WKOC	7	5 + 2	12	6 + 6
WRAC			4	3 + 1
WREC			8	4 + 4
WTUC			4	0 + 4

	current	f + m	new	f + m
total Snrs	37	18 + 19	304	129 + 175
clubs w Snr	17	14 + 16	42	36 + 38
average	2.2	1.3 + 1.2	7.2	3.6 + 4.6

note: there were also 2 overseas rowers classified as Seniors in the 2016-17 Season

APPENDIX 5: FAQ

Following are some of the questions that have already been raised about the proposal:

1. What is the purpose of the classification system?

The purpose of any classification system is to make a sport accessible to a wide range of people. Classification in rowing is the same.

All sports have an optimum competitor demographic. These are people who will excel at the sport in open competition. Anybody who does not share those characteristics is at a disadvantage when competing. Some people can legitimately aspire to become part of the optimum demographic but for most others it will always be out of reach.

Some sports are recreational and offer opportunities for non-competitive involvement. When a sport is recreational the inability to be competitive is not an impediment to involvement. Yet, rowing is a highly competitive sport. There are very few opportunities for recreational rowing.

Rowing was a sport developed by and for men in their prime to prove their strength, stamina, and expertise in a boat. Being young puts you at a temporary disadvantage. Being old puts you at a worsening disadvantage. Being female puts you at an immediate disadvantage. Physical characteristics such as weight, height, and reach will also create disadvantage.

If rowing only offered open competition that would leave a large proportion of the population at a disadvantage. It would provide a significant disincentive for those people to ever become involved in rowing.

Having classifications mitigates these disadvantages. It makes it possible for a broader demographic to compete in rowing.

2. Why change the system for classification by ability?

An effective classification system makes a sport accessible to a wider range of people. Rowing does not currently have such a system.

Rowing uses four systems of classification: sex, age, weight, and ability. The first three of those are essentially proxies for ability. There is a general correlation between a rower's sex, age, and weight and their potential in open competition. But those three classifications all have known shortcomings. And, as discussed in this paper, proper classification by ability has evolved so much it no longer achieves its purpose.

It makes more sense to try and fix classification by ability than to try and make sex and age or weight a better proxy.

Fixing classification by ability addresses the essence of competition. It provides an opportunity for closely matched crews to find out which is the best crew. Grouping crews based on ability mitigates the effect of demographics.

It makes competitive rowing more accessible to a wider range of people.

3. Why leave Novice-class as it is?

We left Novice-class unaltered because there is a huge difference between those rowers and others.

NZSSRA researched this difference. They found being a non-Novice increased a pupil's chances of earning a medal by three times (compared with their Novice counterparts). That's an advantage measured in hundreds of percent; not just a few per cent.

Extending Novice-class would create a new inequality within the class. One that is just as bad as the existing inequalities within Club-class. This carries a significant risk of further discouraging rowers who are trying rowing for the first time.

The current problem for Novices is they shift into a class that covers a huge range of ability. The proposal tackles this problem by creating an intervening Intermediate-class. This creates a class that's more competitive for the incoming ex-Novices.

It leaves Novice-class as a gateway experience for rowing. One followed by a class more suited to the rowers' developing ability.

4. How do the changes to Senior-class affect my club?

Please see **Appendix 4** for an indication of how many Seniors your club might have. The table provides a comparison with this Season. It shows what numbers would probably have looked like for your club if the new Rule had been in effect.

5. Why leave Premier-class as it is?

The proposal does not create additional opportunities for rowers to become Premier-class. This is because those rowers would be extremely isolated. The situation for such rowers would be even worse than the current situation for the small pool of existing Senior-class rowers.

A Premier-class rower who was not in an RPC would be unable to train with their peers. Clubs would either need to restrict those rowers to small boats or commit non-Premier rowers to support them race against RPC crews.

By leaving Premier-class as it is Senior-class becomes the highest class obtainable for rowers who are active in their clubs. More importantly, there are sufficient numbers of Senior-class rowers to sustain that class as a viable class at all regattas.

6. Why include downward classification?

There is provision for downward classification because we want rowers to remain involved in rowing for as long as possible.

Unless rowers retire at their peak it is inevitable they will reach a stage where their ability is

no longer what it used to be. There can be many reason for that. For example: age, or changing priorities e.g. work, family, competitive aspirations.

If rowers cannot become re-eligible for a more appropriate classification then they face the prospect of being permanently stuck in a class where they're no longer competitive.

Downward classification provides an incentive to remain involved in rowing.

7. Why use Classification Regattas?

Restricting re-classification to Nationals overly-limits the number of rowers who can earn re-classification. Having multiple classification regattas provides more opportunities for rowers to demonstrate they've reached the requisite ability to change class.

We mostly use Major Regattas and Championships for classification purposes because they bring together a broad range of rowers at the best facilities.

Outside of non-Major regattas competitors are far more likely to face small fields. They are also more likely to encounter uneven fields e.g. particularly strong or weak fields. Both of these things make it difficult to objectively assess ability.

The majority of non-Major regattas are also held under less ideal conditions e.g. shorter courses, unheld starts, moving water, etc. These variations make it difficult to benchmark ability between regattas.

Major Regattas and Championships are more uniform. Restricting classification to these regattas makes the assessment of ability fairer and more consistent.

8. What regattas will be Classification Regattas?

An indicative list of Classification Regattas is: KRI's Club Regatta, Otago Champs, Cambridge Town Cup, Canterbury Champs, North/South Island Champs, Nationals, Mercury Junior Regatta, Canterbury Junior Regatta, North/South Island School Champs, Maadi.

9. Why use finals at Classification Regattas?

By using finals we are immediately narrowing in on rowers who have sufficient ability to beat other crews and make it past the first round of racing.

When assessing eligibility for Club-class we look at all finals. There is a relatively low threshold for becoming Club-class. That is because Intermediate receives a large influx of ex-Novices each year. So only the least able crews should remain there. Reaching a 'B' Final or any other small final shows the crew already has the ability to beat other crews.

And when assessing eligibility for Senior-class we are looking for the best rowers in the country. 'A' finals are the types of races where those top crews can be found. So those races become Classification Races.

10. Will all events at Championships Regattas have Classification Races?

No. There will need to be consideration given to the number of entries received. Clearly the fewer the number of crews entered the harder it is to assess their ability. And making a straight final requires no ability other than the ability to enter an event.

The most simple approach is to only recognise events when there are sufficient entries for some crews to be eliminated before the finals i.e. the fact crews have to qualify for an 'A' final is a strong indicator ability is being demonstrated.

11. Why re-classify rowers Season-by-Season instead of more frequently?

There are examples of classification systems that have been implemented on a regatta-by-regatta basis. These are often accompanied by stories of crews throwing races because it will affect their classification at subsequent regattas.

We didn't want a situation where a good crew would ever need to decide between racing to its best ability or not racing to its ability so it can remain in class until later in the Season.

12. Is the threshold for {insert class here}-class progression final?

Yes and no.

This is no longer a draft proposal. So it contains specific thresholds. Those are the final ones being proposed.

However, it is also recognised they will need fine-tuning over subsequent years; once their effect in action can be reviewed. So the proposal contains a mechanism for reviewing and fine-tuning the thresholds annually. This mitigates the uncertainties that exist about the thresholds.

13. What about a rower who {insert special case for re-classification here}?

There is a Rule giving RNZ a clear and transparent process for re-classifying rowers.

14. What is the effect on the programme at {insert regatta here}?

Age-group regattas (e.g. Masters and School regattas) will be unaffected by re-vitalised classes. Most other regattas will need to update their programme of events. However, updates can be gradual. They do not require all regatta programmes to immediately undergo massive changes

Nationals

The proposal has a large impact on Senior events. Most clubs will have Senior rowers and be able to enter proper Senior crews in events. 179 of the new Seniors were already at Nationals this year; including 66 school-age rowers.

Increasing the pool of Senior rowers by seven times also makes space for the next cohort of rowers to rise to the top of Club-class.

But 80% of rowers do not attend Nationals. And the type of rower who becomes an Intermediate is the type of rower who is currently least likely to attend Nationals to compete in Club-class. Adding Intermediate events could provide a draw-card for those rowers.

Nationals will need a serious programme review in due course. It currently has 72 events. Yet 34 of those target Premier-class rowers (U20/U22/Lightweight/Premier). That's 47% of events targeting 3% of rowers. This suggests the programme needs re-balancing to better reflect participation. The addition of Intermediate-class provides an excellent opportunity for review.

However, clubs might want to wait until 2021 when the new classes have settled down before changing the list of events for Nationals. Intermediate-class does not need to be immediately introduced. This provides time to resolve the existing problems. Also time for people to get used to the classes. And, if the introduction of Intermediate events is delayed, those rowers are no worse off than at present (they can still race Club-class).

In general

Under the re-vitalised classes there will be enough Senior-class rowers in clubs to warrant separate events for them; even outside Major Regattas. Yet it would not always be necessary to add large numbers of events. Instead open-class events (which are currently needed for the handful of Senior-class rowers) could be re-purposed e.g. hold Senior 1X/2-/2X and Open 4-/4X-/8+

There will also be an entirely new Intermediate-class to cater for. This will require hosts to consider extra events. But this does not mean providing all boat types for every class. Some Club-class events could remain solely Club-class instead of being offered as both Intermediate and Club e.g. 2-/8+.

A practical approach might involve starting by putting Intermediate and Club-class events back-to-back. This effectively splits the existing Club-class entries between the two classes without requiring programmes of events to be completely re-written.

Further offsetting any requirement for extra events is the fact Club-class will be smaller. This means its events will require less races or rounds of racing e.g. entries below semi-final levels.

15. What is the effect on age-group rowing?

Another effect of the revitalised classes is the number of age-group events could be decreased.

Classification by ability is supposed to apply to all rowers; not just non-age-group rowers. The current Club-class covers a wide range of ability and is an uncomfortable fit for many Masters and school pupils. In effect age-group rowing currently provides a way of subdividing the thousands of Club-class rowers. The re-vitalised classes provide better opportunities for age-group rowers to compete without it being necessary for to have

separate age-group events for them.

We hope the wider range of abilities covered by the classes will encourage more Masters rowers to compete outside of Masters regattas. This could increase engagement between Masters and other rowers. The best outcome would be more Masters participating during the general club Season and more rowers encouraged to remain involved and become Masters.

The re-vitalised classes will also provide better opportunities for properly dividing school pupils by ability. This reduces the need for age-group events. Removing the older age-group events for pupils altogether would put them firmly on the ability pathway; rather than leaving them on an age-group pathway that ends at school. This should help blur the lines between school and club rowing. That could result in more pupils staying involved in clubs after school.

16. What other benefits are there to changing classification by ability?

The re-vitalised classification system should provide many rowers with an incentive to remain involved with rowing for longer.

Not all rowers aspire to, or can make it onto, the elite rower pathway. The re-vitalised classification by ability provides a secondary pathway. One that lets rowers aspire to reaching a higher class without getting caught in the current bottle-neck at Club-class.

With more goals available to be achieved there is more motivation to keep rowing a little bit longer.