



# Category Petition Guidelines

## Category Petition Process

Category Petitions are the only way student athletes are able to race in a category different from the one assigned by either the NICA Rule Book and/or based on their previous year's results. A Category Petition is to be filled out by both the student athlete and their coach. The League Director sends the petition on to the League's Rules and Appeals Committee. All petitions need to be submitted in time for review prior to the League's first race. It is recommended that a deadline of one to two weeks be set for petition submission prior to the first race. Category changes that occur during the season will result in the student athlete losing any previously earned points.

All members of the Rules and Appeals Committee should be familiar with the NICA Rule Book. The Category Placement Rules (Chapter 3) are copied below.

## Guidelines/Questions to Ask

One of the great attributes of high school racing in NICA leagues is the high level of fairness and racing integrity as a result of the category placement rules in the NICA rulebook. These placement rules are the result of years of experience with high school mountain bike racing combined with numerous rule modifications and "fine tuning" to produce this set of rules. Great care should be taken when creating exceptions to the category placement rules, as experience has shown that very small exceptions often produce numerous unintended consequences. Accommodating the needs of individual athletes is consistent with the spirit of the NICA rules, however these accommodations should be based on rational deliberations which preserve the integrity of the racing for the group at large.

### Petitions Down:

Petitions to a lower (less competitive) race category are declined in most cases. Compelling evidence of a specific physical or emotional disability have been reasons to grant downward petition requests. These are rare exceptions.

### Petitions Up:

Petitions to a higher (more competitive) category are approved in many cases. These petitions should be declined when the athletes health and safety may be compromised in the higher category.

Below are some things to consider when deciding whether or not a petition should be accepted. These guidelines are broken up into General Considerations/Questions; Petitioning up a Category; Petitioning down a Category; and Examples of other kinds of Petitions.

### General Considerations/Questions:

- Before a petition comes to the Rules & Appeals Committee they should impress upon the coaches that they need to judge petitions carefully before submitting them. It is not up to the Rules & Appeals committee to play "bad guy". If the coach does not think they petition is valid, they should express this to the rider and parent guardian.
- How will this impact the riders experience overall?
- How will the move impact the category the student athlete is moving from and the category they are moving to?

- How will this impact the category growth for the following year? Decisions should be based off of a growth perspective rather than a one year immediate perspective.
- Why is the student athlete submitting a petition? What is the motivation and does it align with goals of NICA and the league?
- Petitions should be heartily supported by coach, parent guardian, and student athlete for consideration.

### **Petitioning up a Category**

- How many races has the student athlete competed in (NICA and non-NICA races)?
- How competitive were those races? Who made up the competition, other high school league riders or similar age/skilled riders?
- Were the races cited cross-country mountain bike races or another race type that may not be comparable to a NICA race?
- If this is for a first year league, consider how this move will impact the formation of the league's categories. A league wants to build up each category, so caution should be taken when moving too many riders away from one category. For example, many riders will want to move to the Varsity category however, make sure the JV category is not left with an insufficient amount of competitive riders.

### **Petitioning down a Category**

- Student athletes are not moved down for competitive reasons or to ensure better placement. No student athlete should receive special consideration to ensure better race results.
- Has the student athlete been pulled before? If yes, how many times and can you tell why the student athlete was pulled (bad day, mechanical, etc.)?
- Did the student athlete just start with the league, have they had much to any experience racing before? If they just started with the league, sometimes it is appropriate to let student athletes petition down to help them get used to the racing environment.
- Student athletes should not be moved down if it is at all probable that they will finish with top placements (on the podium or within the top 10%).
- Special consideration should be taken for special need student athletes. Depending on the situation, they should have the flexibility to petition down due to physical or mental challenges that may impact their ability to participate safely at the events.

**Examples of other kinds of petitions:** Sometimes petitions involve circumstance beyond moving up or down from one category because of skill level. Below are some comments regarding some of these situations.

#### **1. Student athletes who ask to not race with their high school team**

Sometimes student athletes ask to not race on the team associated with the high school they attend. If a student has a compelling reason to not want to join the team at their high school, they can file a petition. However, the acceptable reasons for allowing this petition are far and few between. Before this should be allowed to happen, the League Director should work with the parent and student athlete to try and resolve the reason for not wanting to race on the team. These requests have been honored before, but in very rare circumstances and the committee should do it's best to avoid granting these exceptions.

#### **2. Teams changing division mid-season**

All teams need to have confirmed which division they will be racing under prior to the start of the season. Teams are not allowed to change, mid-season, their division. Even if a team's number fluctuate and go below or above the 10-12 rider recommend team number split, changing divisions mid-season creates confusion,

administrative and scoring issues, and can inadvertently encourage teams to change due to competitive advantages that might be gained.

### **3. First year leagues and lack of riders in categories**

First year leagues often have disproportionate number of riders in various categories. Specifically, in the girls fields sometimes there are a few to only one rider in a category. Things to consider when making a decision on moving a rider from one category that may only have that one rider to another category with more riders, is how this will impact the leagues categories long term. Though in the first year a category may only have one rider, this can act as an impetus to encourage other riders to join the league, and keeping the rider in the category will help build this or subsequent categories in the next year. Instead of deleting the category, encourage the rider to recruit friends to race in the league.

### **4. Part time riders and racing with their high school team**

Sometimes it can be difficult to tell if a student athlete is required to ride with the high school team because they are a part time student at that school. The question to ask here, is could that student athlete race or participate on another school team, such as football or basketball? If yes, then the student athlete should race with that high school team.

## Category Placement Rules

### 3.7B CATEGORY PLACEMENT RULES (CRITERIA FOR ALL LEAGUES EXCEPT FIRST YEAR LEAGUES)

<u>BOYS</u>	<u>GIRLS</u>
<p><b>9th Graders</b> must compete in the FRESHMAN category.</p>	<p><b>9th Graders</b> must compete in the FRESHMAN category.</p>
<p><b>10th Graders</b> must compete in the SOPHOMORE category except all 10th graders who placed in the top 10% as 9th graders; these student-athletes must compete in the JV category. <i>10th graders who raced in JV as 9th graders follow the 11th grade rule below.</i></p>	<p><b>10th Graders</b> must compete in the SOPHOMORE category except all 10th graders who placed in the top 20% as 9th graders; these student-athletes must compete in the JV category. <i>10th graders who raced in JV as 9th graders follow the 11th grade rule below.</i></p>
<p><b>11th Graders</b> must compete in the JV category except all 11th graders who placed in the top 5% as 10th graders; these student-athletes must compete in the VARSITY category. <i>11th graders who raced in JV last year follow the 12th grade rule below. 11th graders who raced VARSITY last year stay VARSITY.</i></p>	<p><b>11th Graders</b> must compete in the JV category except all 11th graders who placed in the top 10% as 10th graders; these student-athletes must compete in the VARSITY category. <i>11th graders who raced in JV last year follow the 12th grade rule below. 11th graders who raced VARSITY last year stay VARSITY.</i></p>
<p><b>12th Graders</b> must compete in the JV category except all 12th graders who placed in the top 15% as 11th graders; these student-athletes must compete in the VARSITY category. <i>12th graders who raced VARSITY last year stay VARSITY.</i></p>	<p><b>12th Graders</b> must compete in the JV category except all 12th graders who placed in the top 30% as 11th graders; these student-athletes must compete in the VARSITY category. <i>12th graders who raced VARSITY last year stay VARSITY.</i></p>
<p><b>At least the top-3 finishers (each race and overall) in each case above are promoted to the next category (regardless of placement percentile).</b></p>	<p><b>At least the top-3 finishers (each race and overall) in each case above are promoted to the next category (regardless of placement percentile).</b></p>

### 3.7C CATEGORY PLACEMENT RULES (CRITERIA FOR FIRST YEAR LEAGUES ONLY)

<u>BOYS</u>	<u>GIRLS</u>
<p><b>9th Graders</b> must compete in the FRESH/SOPH category. 9<sup>th</sup> graders with previous racing experience may petition to race in the JV category.</p>	<p><b>9th Graders</b> must compete in the FRESH/SOPH category. 9<sup>th</sup> graders with previous racing experience may petition to race in the JV category.</p>
<p><b>10th Graders</b> must compete in the FRESH/SOPH category. 10<sup>th</sup> graders with previous racing experience may petition to race in the JV category.</p>	<p><b>10th Graders</b> must compete in the FRESH/SOPH category. 10<sup>th</sup> graders with previous racing experience may petition to race in the JV category.</p>
<p><b>11th Graders</b> must compete in the JV category. 11<sup>th</sup> graders with previous racing experience may petition to race in the Varsity category.</p>	<p><b>11th Graders</b> must compete in the JV category. 11<sup>th</sup> graders with previous racing experience may petition to race in the Varsity category.</p>
<p><b>12th Graders</b> must compete in the JV category. 12<sup>th</sup> graders with previous racing experience may petition to race in the Varsity category.</p>	<p><b>12th Graders</b> must compete in JV category. 12<sup>th</sup> graders with previous racing experience may petition to race in the Varsity category.</p>