

Cross Country Handicapping Policy

Updated in May 2025

AIM: Everyone has a chance to win and there are a range of winners over the season

Criteria to meet:

1. Athletes should be able to understand how their handicap has been determined,
2. The method should apply equally to all athletes,
3. The handicap should be adjusted to the distance of the race and
4. The handicap should reflect the athlete's level of ability.

General handicapping procedure:

- The handicapper will assign a time for each race to be completed in, an athlete's handicap is then set as the difference between this race time and the athlete's predicted time, based on their expected or handicapping pace (time per km).
- All handicaps will be calculated as a 5km equivalent rate and adjusted according to race distances each week.
- For returning athletes their initial handicapping pace of the season is the fastest of:
 - The athlete's fastest pace from the previous season,
 - The athlete's pace from their first race of the season.
 - The athlete's pace in a recent parkrun.
- For the purpose of handicapping if an athlete competed in fewer than three races in the previous season they will be classified as a new runner and should refer to the new runner handicapping procedure below.
- There are no "lifts" in handicaps due to deteriorating performance i.e., injury or sickness. However, where an athlete performs **15s/km** (seconds per kilometer) or more, slower than their best pace from the previous season over their first 5 runs, their handicapping pace may be adjusted up to their fastest pace of the current season **minus 5s/km**.
- Adjustment of handicapping paces may be considered by the handicapping panel if an athlete has consistent performances similarly below the athlete's handicapping pace but does not meet the above condition.
- Where a handicap has been incorrectly applied which has given a winning athlete a material advantage a discussion with the athlete will be initiated by the handicap committee and the correct handicap may be retrospectively applied and race results adjusted.

When an athlete changes division

- Their handicapping pace will initially be set as their fastest pace from the previous division, with an adjustment of **minus 10s/km** per Division when moving to a lower division (shorter distance) (i.e., Div. 1 to Div. 2 or Div. 2 to Div. 3 is -10s/km and Div. 1 to Div. 3 is -20s/km).
- The handicapping pace for an athlete in a new division will be adjusted as necessary for

their first 3 events, to the fastest pace run, if faster than their initial pace.

- After the first 3 races if an athlete has run **15s/km** or more, slower than their initial handicapping pace, their handicapping pace will be adjusted to their fastest pace of their first 3 races in the new division **minus 5s/km**.
- If an athlete changes divisions between seasons, then they will be handicapped as an existing runner, with their fastest pace of the previous season taken as their handicapping pace and adjusted as required if they are moving to a lower division as per the above points.

Once an athlete has won a race

- Their handicapping pace for that division will be changed to their fastest recorded pace of the season in that division, provided it is faster than their current handicapping pace, and
- Their handicapping pace across all divisions will be adjusted by **subtracting**:
 - **20s/km** for the first win of the season and
 - An additional **10s/km** for every additional win.
 - The total number of wins will be counted across all divisions.

Mount Barrow Challenge

- Handicapping for Newstead Athletics Mount Barrow Challenge is conducted separately to the regular weekly cross country season handicaps.
- Handicapping Paces are based on:
 - The fastest pace of the season so far, for club members or
 - The current 10km Season or Personal Best, for Non-club members or Club members if they have not competed in at least 3 regular cross-country season races.
- Handicaps are based off estimated times to run:
 - 19km for the 14km Race, and
 - 14km for the 10km Race, at the selected handicapping pace.
- The previous year's winners will have their handicapping pace adjusted by **minus 20s/km**.