

Reclassification

This article is an extension of the classification article. Many unit staffs and judges have felt that it would be useful for units to have some more insight into the process that AIA Percussion uses for reclassification. The process described below only applies to AIA percussion units and not to AIA guard units or WGI units.

To begin with, judges assume that unit instructors put their units in the correct class. There is no set number of units that the judges are trying to get in each class, and there is no cap to the number of units in a class. AIA is not eager to move units out of the class in which they place themselves. Secondly, judges cannot make a unit move down a class. If the instructor of a first year line of eighth graders wants the line to compete in the world class, they are welcomed to do so (they would probably win the class with one of the lowest scores given in AIA, but they are welcomed to do so.)

If a judge sees a group that they think is in the wrong class, they probably won't specifically say so on tape. The reason for this is that we've had commentary about classification on tape in the past, and it's a little awkward if the other judges at the show don't agree with that opinion. It can be confusing for the unit because one judge said they might get moved up a class, another didn't even have them in the top three, and one person was from out of town and has never seen other AIA units before.

Judges should make a statement with their number that reflects their opinion regarding reclassification. This will usually be at least a box 4 score, but it doesn't have to be a box 5 or 6. This can be confusing, because the descriptor in previous WGI manuals for box 6 is that units in A and Open are "ready for the next class." This description has been removed to eliminate the confusion. There is no set total or caption score at any point in the season that makes a group eligible for reclassification. This policy is different for guard units, so please be aware of the distinction.

After the show, and before critique, the judges discuss any classification issues at the show. If they come to a consensus that a certain line might be misclassified, they will tell the unit staff at critique that the unit is being referred to the percussion advisory board for potential reclassification. If the unit staff is not present at critique the percussion coordinator will inform the staff via email and/or phone within 2 days of the event. Once informed, the unit has 7 days to deliver a current performance video for evaluation. This video does not have to be a full-uniform run through in front of an audience, but it should be representative of the current production development of the show. The video can be posted to a private Youtube channel or Dropbox folder, with the link or folder invitation given to the percussion coordinator. Once this video is received, the percussion advisory board will take no

more than three days to confer and decide whether that unit will be reclassified up into a higher class. If the advisory board does not receive access to a video within 7 days the unit will automatically be reclassified into the next class.

Another option is for a unit to self-reclassify when they are informed that they are being referred to the advisory board. In this case, the staff would inform the judges and show coordinator during critique and the reclassification would be confirmed at the weekly EBOD meeting. This option eliminates the need for the unit to produce a video for review and shortens the turn-around time of the process, but it is important to note that AIA ENCOURAGES units to go through the advisory board review process. Sometimes the advisory board reviews a video and makes the decision not to reclassify at that time. Being referred to the advisory does not make reclassification a certainty, just a strong possibility.

The review procedure is designed to be more accurate and consistent. It allows for the panel to take some time and review all aspects of the program. The advisory board consists of the two percussion coordinators (which are unit directors), two at-large members from World Units (which are unit directors), the chief judge (representing the Effect-Music caption), and judge representatives covering the Music, Visual, and Effect-Visual captions. This diversity of experience should allow for a more thorough evaluation of the unit to help determine which competitive environment is in the best interest of the unit and the circuit as a whole.

The percussion coordinator will inform the EBOD and the unit staff after a decision has been reached. The timeline for this new process presents certain challenges. For example, a unit might be referred for possible reclassification one weekend and not have a decision from the advisory board before competition on a following weekend. Also, the unit has the right to appeal the decision. This can further elongate the time that they potentially compete in the “wrong” class. These timeline issues can be minimized if a unit has a current video of their unit. Video review can be an essential teaching tool, so it is in the best interest of the unit to have a current video on file. If a unit has significant challenges producing a video they can petition the advisory board for an extension. Any extensions granted would be at the discretion of the advisory board, and would be based on their evaluation of the unit’s circumstances. Having said that, it is in a unit’s interest to hasten this process. The competition season is short, and if a unit is to be reclassified they should get as much feedback as possible in their final class before championships.

Reclassification is a delicate issue. Some lines are very happy to be recognized as having progressed to another class. Other lines are concerned about the competitive ramifications of being moved into a more competitive class. The judging community is sensitive to this dilemma, and we realize that it can be a difficult situation. The goal is to preserve a system where lines can be competitive with other lines at a similar maturity level. If a line is easily superior to other lines in their chosen class they won’t be challenged to reach their full potential.

The other side of that statement is that a line competing with lines far above their maturity level can find the season very discouraging. The judges at AIA will never force a unit to move down a class, but if the judges at a show agree that a unit could benefit from moving down they might mention the possibility to the instructor at critique. If that occurs, the conversation will stay as part of the critique process—there is no referral to the advisory board for reclassification to a lower class unless the staff requests a review for informational purposes. After that, it is completely in the hands of the instructor. The only reason that the Percussion Coordinator would contact a unit asking about potential reclassification to a lower class is if that unit's staff didn't come to critique. In that instance the staff might be contacted about the possibility, but it is entirely the staff's decision. If a staff wants to reclassify down a class they simply need to contact the Percussion Coordinator, who will bring it up at the following EBOD meeting. The EBOD can deny reclassification in certain circumstances (for example, if none of the judges agree with the instructor and think that unit would beat up on the lower class). After the meeting the Percussion Coordinator will inform the unit of the EBOD's decision.

There is no cutoff date for percussion reclassifications, however we are conscious of the logistical challenges that schools fielding percussion and guard units face at unit championships. With that in mind, the goal is to have most of the reclassifications done by the beginning of March, but season dynamics could cause late season reclassifications.

If you have any more questions regarding reclassification please feel free to contact me at daniel.valadie@atlanticindoor.org. Thanks and good luck this season.

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