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ESA para-astronaut John McFall during parabolic zero-gravity flight training in April 2023

John McFall cleared for takeoff

Astronauts with disabilities could one day fly on missions to the International Space Station

Former British Paralympian John McFall has taken one step closer to becoming the first astronaut with a disability to be eligible for flight missions, after being medically certified for long-duration spaceflights.

McFall, who has a prosthetic leg, helped the European Space Agency with their Fly! Feasibility study from 2022 to 2024. The study assessed the challenges barring people with disabilities from

flying on the International Space Station, ultimately concluding that it's feasible for someone with certain physical disabilities to become a fully integrated crew member on the ISS.

"Now we're progressing to the next phase, and what we want to do is realise that opportunity to fly, so we're moving forward... into the Mission Ready phase," says McFall. "This phase will include looking at hardware certification and

moving further down that process.

One of the roles of an astronaut is to do important science in microgravity whilst working in space and it's really my hope that, if I get the chance to fly, we realise what we do in space – the things we learn, the problems we solve, the technology that we develop – has a trickle-down effect and benefits people here on Earth in wider society."

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