**Frequently Asked Questions About the NCAA**

The following information provides answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about the NCAA. Read the most popular answers about the NCAA or select a category to learn more about specific issues in college sports. Find basic information about the Association [here](http://www.ncaa.org/content-categories/about-us" \o "here)or interact with the NCAA and other college sports fans at [twitter.com/ncaa](http://twitter.com/ncaa) and[facebook.com/ncaastudents](http://facebook.com/ncaastudents).

**General NCAA**

The NCAA is a nonprofit association committed to providing opportunity for more than 460,000 college student-athletes who compete annually in college sports. A commitment to academics and student-athlete success in the classroom is a vital part of the NCAA’s mission to integrate athletics into higher education.

Colleges, universities athletic conferences and other affiliated organizations are NCAA members.  The NCAA national office staff in Indianapolis supports the members.  Together, the members and the national office are known as the NCAA.

**Is the NCAA focused only on sports?**

No. The association’s belief in student-athletes as students first is a foundational principle. As such, college-bound and continuing student-athletes must meet academic standards to participate in NCAA sports. NCAA student-athletes as a group annually outperform counterparts in the general student body in graduation rates. The NCAA funds many programs that directly support the educational, financial, and health and safety needs of student-athletes.

**How does the NCAA set rules?**

The rules governing NCAA sports are developed through a member-led governance system. Using this system, NCAA members introduce and vote on proposed legislation. The national office staff provides administrative help, continuity, research and legal expertise.

**What does the NCAA do with the money it earns?**

The NCAA is a nonprofit organization with 96 percent of its expenses benefitting its members and student-athletes through distributions or services. The remaining amount funds national office building operations and staff not tied to particular programs.

**How many championships does the NCAA sponsor?**

Each year, more than 54,000 of the 460,000 student-athletes compete in the NCAA’s 89 championships in 23 sports across three divisions. Every winner earns the right to be called national champion.

**Future student-athletes**

**What are the new academic requirements for freshmen in Division I, beginning in August 2016?**

To get a scholarship, practice and compete in their first year, incoming freshmen must meet a series of academic requirements, including:

* Complete 16 [core courses](http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future/core-courses), 10 of which must be completed before the beginning of senior year of high school. Of the 10 core courses, seven must be in English, math or science.
* Earn a 2.3 grade-point average in the 16 core courses.
* Meet the [sliding scale requirement](http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Quick_Reference_Sheet.pdf) of GPA and test score (ACT or SAT).
* Graduate from high school.

To get a scholarship and practice in the first year, incoming freshmen must:

* Complete 16 core courses
* Earn a 2.0 GPA in the 16 core courses
* Meet the sliding scale requirement of GPA and test score (ACT or SAT).
* Graduate from high school.

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| **Full Qualifier** | **Academic Redshirt** | **Nonqualifier** |
| Complete 16 Core Courses:   * 10 of the 16 core courses must be complete before 7th semester (senior year) of high school. * 7 of the 10 core courses must be in English, Math, or Science. | Complete 16 core courses. | Does not meet requirements for Full Qualifier or Academic Redshirt status. |
| Minimum Core-Course GPA of 2.3 | Minimum Core-Course GPA of 2.0 |  |
| Meet the Competition sliding scale requirement of GPA and ACT/SAT score.\* | Meet the Academic Redshirt sliding scale requirement of GPA and ACT/SAT score.\* |  |
| Graduate from high school. | Graduate from high school. |  |

**Why are the requirements changing?**

Academic requirements for incoming freshmen were changed in 2011 to help make students more prepared to do college-level work. Enhancing the standards also is expected to improve graduation rates.

**Transferring**

A student-athlete who wants to transfer must receive written permission from his or her athletics director before contacting another school. To transfer, the student-athlete must be accepted through the new school’s admission process. The new school may or may not match financial aid offered by the student-athlete’s original school. Student-athletes who transfer must sit out of competition for one year, although many student-athletes qualify for exceptions allowing them to begin competing immediately.

**Why does the NCAA regulate transfer situations?**

Transferring from one school to another is a crucial decision for student-athletes. They need to consider a variety of factors, including academics, athletics, campus life and personal situation. Transfer rules safeguard the process and help student-athletes make rational decisions about the best place to pursue an education and compete in their sport. This is important, as student-athletes who transfer are less likely to earn a degree than those who remain at their original school. The transfer process also protects student-athletes who have chosen a school from ongoing recruiting attempts and third-party interference.

**How does a student-athlete get permission to contact another school?**

Generally, student-athletes enrolled as full-time students must get written permission from their athletics director before contacting another institution. Student-athletes may write to any NCAA school saying that they are interested in transferring, but the new coach must not discuss transfer opportunities unless he or she has received written permission from the student-athlete’s current school.  If the current school does not give permission, another school may not contact the student-athlete. This prevents continuous recruiting of student-athletes once they are enrolled on a campus.

**Can the NCAA prevent a student-athlete from transferring?**

The NCAA does not prevent any student-athlete from transferring. Student-athletes are free to transfer if they believe the decision is in their best interest; where NCAA rules come into play is with questions about how quickly a student-athlete can compete at the new school.

**Why can’t a student-athlete compete immediately after transferring?**

Requiring student-athletes to sit out of competition for a year after transferring encourages them to make decisions motivated by academics as well as athletics. Most student-athletes who are not eligible to compete immediately benefit from a year to adjust to their new school and focus on their classes. Student-athletes who must sit out for a year at their new school may or may not receive financial aid and practice with their new team.

**Rules**

The length of eligibility for a student-athlete varies by division. For instance, a Division I student-athlete has five calendar years to compete in four seasons of competition, while a Division II or III student-athlete has 10 semesters or 15 quarters of full-time enrollment to compete in four seasons of competition.

**What is amateurism certification and why is it so important for incoming student-athletes?**

The collegiate model of sports is centered on the fact that those who participate are students first and not professional athletes. Amateurism certification ensures this is the case and that NCAA amateurism regulations are applied uniformly for incoming Division I and II student-athletes. The process is a collaborative effort among student-athletes, the colleges and universities they hope to attend and the NCAA Eligibility Center. In Division III, amateur certification is completed solely by the school.

The amateurism certification process begins as prospective Division I and II student-athletes register with the [Eligibility Center](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org/). Each prospective student-athlete is asked several questions about his or her sports-participation history. If the answers indicate a possible violation of amateurism standards, the amateurism certification staff works with the college or university to determine the facts. If a violation of amateurism standards occurred, a penalty will be imposed based on the severity of the violations. Penalties include repayment of money, sitting out a specified number of games or, in rare cases, permanent ineligibility. Schools may appeal amateurism certification decisions.

**Can a college-bound student-athlete be paid for appearing in a commercial or receiving an endorsement?**

College-bound and current student-athletes who want to compete at Division I and II schools need to preserve their eligibility by meeting NCAA amateurism requirements. If a college-bound student-athlete is paid for appearing in a commercial or receives an endorsement before he or she is accepted at an NCAA member school, his or her eligibility could be affected.

If the college-bound student-athlete was chosen for the commercial or other event for reasons other than athletic ability, he or she may be compensated. If the college-bound student-athlete was chosen to participate because of his or her athletic ability, he or she may not be paid. However, the prospective student-athlete may receive expenses related to the commercial event such as meals or lodging.

**Can a student-athlete accept prize money?**

In all sports except tennis, a student-athlete or prospective student-athlete may accept prize money as long as the amount of the prize is less than or equal to his or her expenses for participating in the competition, such as meals or lodging. The prize money may not pay for expenses of parents or coaches.

In tennis, a prospective student-athlete may accept up to $10,000 per year in prize money. Once he or she has accepted $10,000 in prize money in a particular year, he or she may accept additional prize money on a per-event basis as long as the amount of the prize does not exceed his or her expenses. A current tennis student-athlete may accept prize money as long as the amount of the prize is less than or equal to his or her expenses for participating in the competition.

**Why does the NCAA have a rules enforcement process?**

The rules enforcement process is designed to ensure integrity and fair play among NCAA schools and a level playing field for participating student-athletes. Schools that abide by the rules should not be competitively disadvantaged.

**What happens during an investigation of a possible breach of conduct?**

Preliminary information is reviewed by the NCAA staff assigned to investigate the case. The investigator first tries to speak with the source who reported the potential violation. Usually, the staff conducts interviews both on and off campus. To protect the integrity of the case, the staff will often gather as much information as possible before contacting those directly involved in an alleged violation. In addition to conducting interviews, the staff usually obtains significant supporting documentation such as recruiting logs, phone records, compliance files, academic records, emails, and financial records if needed.

**How are penalties for breaches of conduct decided?**

If the NCAA staff concludes its investigation and believes major violations occurred, the case is then considered by the Committee on Infractions, comprised of representatives from member colleges and universities and some members of the public. Cases are reviewed during a hearing of the committee or, when all parties agree on the violations, through a written summary disposition report. The committee then writes a report that documents its specific findings, the penalties and the supporting reasons for the decisions. Sanctions are intended to deter schools from breaking the rules and to eliminate any unfair competitive advantage.

The Infractions Appeals Committee, independent of the Committee on Infractions, hears appeals from either the institution or the involved individual on the findings, the penalties or both. This committee also is made up of representatives from member colleges and universities and some members of the public.

**Why does it seem to take so long for the enforcement process to work?**

It’s an important process that must be done correctly to ensure it is fair. It takes time to conduct interviews, collect supporting documentation, research leads and compile the actual report. If there are multiple violations, each violation must be thoroughly investigated. The uncovering of additional information can lead to more possible infractions that must be investigated. The involved schools may request additional time to respond to allegations. In the end, a standard of proof must be met before alleging a rules violation. There can be no rush to judgment.

**Scholarships**

Many athletics scholarships, like most merit-based scholarships, are granted for one academic year. However, Division I schools are allowed to provide multi-year scholarships. Allowing these schools to award scholarships for longer than a single year gives student-athletes greater assurance their education will continue even if they suffer an injury, their athletics performance does not live up to expectations or the coaching staff changes. If a school plans to reduce or not renew a student-athlete’s aid, the school must provide the student-athlete an opportunity to appeal. In most cases, coaches decide who receives a scholarship, what it will cover and whether it will be renewed.

**Is a scholarship a binding contract between a student-athlete and a school?**

No. The scholarship is an agreement between the school and the student-athlete with expectations on both sides, but the agreement is completely separate from transfer regulations. A student-athlete may choose to transfer at any time. With multi-year scholarships now available for Division I schools, those colleges and universities have the option to offer athletics financial aid for more than one year. Such an agreement requires the school to provide financial aid to the student-athlete in accordance with the terms and conditions of the agreement. However, the agreement does not bind the student-athlete to the institution any more than the current transfer rules – he or she may transfer during the term of the award.

If a student-athlete signs a National Letter of Intent, he or she cannot transfer during the initial year of competition without penalty.

**Can a coach cancel a student-athlete’s scholarship?**

Depending on various circumstances, a school can choose not to renew or cancel a student-athlete’s scholarship\*. The school has the choice to reduce or cancel the scholarship at the end of the period of the award.  The school could also cancel the scholarship during the period of the award under the following circumstances:

* Student-athlete becomes ineligible
* Student-athlete commits fraud
* Misconduct
* Quits the team for personal reasons

*\*Note that scholarships outside of the athletics department may be handled differently by the institution.*

Resource: NCAA Website