

2025-26 NCAA MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Team Replacement Policy

The Division I Men's and Women's Basketball Committees developed the team replacement policy in light of the possibility of unforeseen circumstances impacting the championship fields. This policy will be implemented in accordance with the terms set forth below when, despite its best efforts, a team within the championship field is impeded or hindered from participating in the event for reasons beyond its control.

The following tenets are fundamental to the committees' implementation of the Team Replacement Policy:

- Once the brackets are finalized and released, the championships will not be reseeded, nor will the brackets change.
- A reasonable effort will be made to ensure full fields are in place before the start of the championships. No replacement teams will be introduced after the championships begin.
- Every participating conference should have the opportunity for at least one team in each championship field.
- Beyond the goal of having at least one team from every conference, replacement teams must be among the best teams being considered for an at-large bid.

Due to the time needed to coordinate travel and other participation logistics, the following provisions constitute the team replacement policy for the Division I Men's and Women's Basketball Championships.

1. Before the announcement of the championship fields and brackets.
 - a. Should an automatic qualifier, as determined by each conference, be unable to participate in its first game of the championship (Men's — March 17, 18, 19 or 20) (Women's — March 18, 19, 20 or 21), the conference may designate a replacement team, as determined by its AQ policy deadline the last Friday, February 27, 2026 prior to the start of conference tournaments.
 - b. The replacement AQ team shall be appropriately seeded and placed into the bracket before announcement of the championship fields and brackets.
 - c. Any potential at-large team that is determined by the institution to be unable to participate in its first game of the championship (Men's — March 17, 18, 19 or 20) (Women's — March 18, 19, 20 or 21) must notify the respective Division I Men's or Women's Basketball Committee by 11 p.m. Eastern time Saturday, March 14.
2. After the announcement of the championship fields and brackets.
 - a. For any single-bid conference, the league may replace its AQ, if it is unable to participate with the league's preapproved contingency replacement team. The

replacement team from the conference will take the place of its fellow conference member in the same place on the bracket.

- b. For any multibid conference that has a team, at-large or AQ, unable to participate, the policy for replacing that team is as follows:
 - (1.) The last four teams not selected as at-large teams for the original field shall be designated as replacement teams, if they choose to be considered as such.
 - (2.) The four replacement teams will be ranked 1-4. The first team in the ranking will be the first replacement team, the second-ranked team will be the second replacement team, etc.
 - (3.) The replacement team shall be placed in the bracket in the position left vacant by the withdrawing team.
 - (4.) Since all four replacement teams would have been seeded as a First Four team had they initially been selected as an at-large team, it is assured that their first-round opponent will not be put at a competitive disadvantage because the replacement team would be either a comparable or lower- seeded team.

The deadline for consideration of replacing a team unable to participate in the First Four is 10 a.m. Eastern time Monday, March 16, for both the men's and women's championships. The deadline for teams participating in the men's or women's first rounds is 6 p.m. Eastern time Monday, March 16. No replacement teams will be introduced into the NCAA championship bracket after these deadlines.

Once the tournament has begun, no team will replace a team that can no longer participate in the championship. Its opponent would advance to the next round via the no-contest rule.

The 2026 Team Replacement Policy was approved by the Division I Women's Basketball Committee at their July 8-10, 2025 meeting and the Women's Basketball Oversight Committee at their October 6-7, 2025 meeting.