

International Ice Hockey Participation History Pilot Program Survey: Conference Report

March 2020

INTRODUCTION

During the 2019-20 academic year, Division III extended the international ice hockey pilot for a second year based on survey results from last year's pilot participants. The pilot parameters included the NCAA Eligibility Center (EC) reviewing the sports participation history of all international first-year ice hockey players as part of their amateurism review process.

To enhance the pilot and better inform the membership of the benefits and drawbacks of certification through the EC, the Management Council determined that certification should align more closely with the current EC review for international student-athletes in Divisions I and II. Therefore the 2019-20 pilot included several important changes, incorporating feedback from the first year of the pilot and reflecting more closely the actual experience of working with the EC for amateurism certifications. Specifically, the EC conducted the second year of the pilot through the EC membership portal that is used for amateurism certifications in Divisions I and II. In addition, prospective student-athletes paid half the cost of EC certification and Division III refunded the other half of the registration fee.

- On August 1, 2019 or later, the 93 institutions that sponsor men's and/or women's ice hockey had the option to submit names of international first year student-athletes to the EC for amateurism certification.
- 51 institutions submitted names. The 42 other institutions did not have first-year international ice hockey student-athletes or chose not to participate.
- 159 names were submitted for amateurism certification which included an assessment of the teams and leagues with which the prospective student-athlete participated, evaluation of any compensation or other benefits associated with athletics participation and evaluation of possible agent involvement.
- 156 student-athletes were certified and three were not certified.

The survey was sent to all 44 Division III conferences in order to gain the broadest perspective on the issue. Thirteen (13) conferences responded. Two conferences that responded do not have any schools that sponsor ice hockey.

Ten of the 13 responding conferences required their schools to participate in the pilot in the first year while seven required participation in the second year. The reasons cited for not requiring participation in the second year included the cost burden on the prospective student-athlete and not having any international ice hockey student-athletes to submit in the second year.

Benefits of the EC Conducting Participation Reviews	
Benefit	% of Respondents
Assurance of the consistent application of Bylaw 12 (Amateurism)	92
Confidence in the final decision	92
Reduces the compliance administrative burden	85
Establishes a “level playing field”	77
Reduces the timeline for certification	46

The most significant benefit noted by the survey respondents was the assurance of the consistent application of Bylaw 12 (92 percent) and confidence in the final decision (92 percent). Seventy percent or more indicated that participation reviews conducted by the EC establishes a “level playing field” and reduces the compliance administrative burden.

POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS

Respondents were asked to provide their input in determining what this program could look like moving forward. They were asked to put funding, legislation and EC logistics considerations aside.

Three-quarters of respondents were comfortable with student-athletes paying the registration fee to the EC to conduct amateurism certification.

Rationale for these responses included:

- “I checked no for EC conducting all amateurism certifications because of the cost involved for the PSA's. However, I am sure our institutions would appreciate that level of thoroughness. I checked yes for the registration fee because in the world of hockey, many of the PSA's are paying the fee (or are minimally aware of the fee) because of conversations with D1 institutions as well. I would imagine tennis would be similar. While it's an unfortunate added cost, I also do not think the cost would deter PSA's from attending a DIII institution.”
- “I am ok with them paying a REDUCED fee, say \$25. Their certification does not involve an academic component and in the large majority of cases a minimal amateurism component. Another option would be to allow institutions to request a certification for specific PSAs with a minimal fee charged to the institution (no more than \$25).”
- “Would like to see it continue, even if it is just for ice hockey.”
- “Having all incoming student-athletes that fit the criteria for needing amateurism review go through the EC would reduce the burden for most Division III compliance offices which

are not staffed to a level to conduct these types of reviews. The EC already has the tools in place to conduct these reviews in a timely fashion that ensures accuracy and consistency of the decisions.”

- “Hockey is most definitely the most confusing sport, but to be consistent with all international students I think it is helpful to do it all the same way. DIII athletes are already paying to go to school and not on scholarship, I hate to put the burden of yet another expense to play.”