



**REPORT OF THE  
NCAA DIVISION II ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE  
FEBRUARY 11, 2019, MEETING**

**ACTION ITEMS.**

**1. Legislative Items.**

- None.

**2. Nonlegislative Items.**

**a. Recommendation regarding funds earmarked for assisting NCAA Division II institutions in the development or enhancement of academic advising programs for student-athletes.**

- (1) Recommendation. To allocate the \$150,000 earmarked annually for the development or enhancement of academic advising programs for student-athletes as follows: (a) That \$75,000 be allocated annually to institutional grants of up to \$1,000 each to meet identified and established needs (e.g., professional development opportunities, compliance blueprint recommendations); and (b) That \$75,000 be allocated annually to institutional grants of up to \$25,000 each, available through the NCAA Division II Strategic Alliance Matching Grant program, to support funding of new academic advising positions on campus.
- (2) Effective Date. August 1, 2019.
- (3) Rationale. Feedback from Division II faculty athletics representatives and directors of athletics indicated that the membership wants flexibility in how institutions use the \$150,000 earmarked annually for academic advising. The recommended allocations would enable institutional staff to choose between addressing existing needs and adding additional staffing for student-athlete academic advisement.
- (4) Estimated Budget Impact. None.
- (5) Student-Athlete Impact. None.

**b. Recommendation regarding progress-toward degree-waiver directive related to final-year eligibility.**

- (1) Recommendation. That the NCAA Division II Academic Requirements Committee Directive Regarding the Standard of Review of Progress-Toward-Degree Waivers be adjusted to include flexibility for student-athletes entering the final season of competition while only having a credit-hour deficiency.
- (2) Effective Date. August 1, 2019.
- (3) Rationale. The current directive outlining the authority for NCAA academic and membership affairs staff to approve academic waivers from member institutions is silent regarding student-athletes entering their final season of competition. The recommended change would allow staff to provide relief under certain circumstances when the student-athlete is entering his or her final season of competition. Additionally, the recommended change to the directive would be consistent with the NCAA Division I Committee on Academics Directive Regarding the Standard of Review of Progress-Toward-Degree Waivers.
- (4) Estimated Budget Impact. None.
- (5) Student-Athlete Impact. Varies. Student-athletes who meet the requirements could receive relief from progress-toward-degree requirements.

**c. Recommendation regarding the addition of a previously approved waiver list to the progress-toward-degree waiver process.**

- (1) Recommendation. That a list of previously approved waivers be adopted that would permit institutions to self-apply relief of NCAA Bylaws 14.4.3.2 (nine/eight credit hours earned per academic term), 14.4.3.3 (18/27 hours earned during regular academic year), 14.4.3.4 (24/36 annual credit hours earned) and 14.4.3.5 (2.0 minimum grade-point average) if the student-athlete's circumstances satisfy the specified criteria for a previously approved waiver.
- (2) Effective Date. August 1, 2019.
- (3) Rationale. The waiver scenarios would include common circumstances where relief traditionally has been provided by staff if the student-athlete was otherwise on pace to meet academic eligibility requirements when the unforeseen mitigation occurred. Allowing institutions to self-apply, on campus, a specific previously approved waiver without submitting a formal progress-toward-degree waiver request would reduce bureaucracy and improve membership and NCAA staff efficiency.

- (4) Estimated Budget Impact. None.
- (5) Student-Athlete Impact. Varies. The time required to receive waiver relief may be reduced because the institution may apply the directive instead of filing a waiver request.

### **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.**

1. **Review of Forward Progress Athletics Consulting report regarding academic data review.** The committee discussed the final report from the academic data review conducted by Forward Progress Athletics Consulting as part of the NCAA Division II Foundation for the Future initiative. The report contained recommendations based on reviews of institutional graduation rate and NCAA Division II Academic Performance Census (APC) data and feedback from surveys sent to the following individuals: (1) Institutional staff members who submit data in the NCAA Academic Portal; (2) Current and former members of Division II governance committees; and (3) Institutional and conference administrators, including directors of athletics, chancellors and presidents, and commissioners. The committee approved the following recommendations:
  - a. The enhancement of educational materials – accessible through NCAA Division II University – related to use of the Academic Portal, and the inclusion of links to the material in annual correspondence notifying the membership that the Academic Portal is open for data entry. The committee agreed that the correspondence should indicate that viewing the educational material is “highly recommended” for all recipients.
  - b. The distribution of an annual reminder notification to Division II presidents and chancellors, directors of athletics, senior woman administrators, faculty athletics representatives, compliance administrators, and conference commissioners regarding deadlines for all major data-reporting programs.
  - c. Continued promotional efforts to direct institutional staff in search of academic metrics (e.g., single-year eligibility and retention rates) to the NCAA Division II Institutional Performance Program, where they can compare institutional data with national and conference means.
  - d. The removal of nonessential and unreliable data fields from the Academic Portal, while retaining all transfer-related fields.

- e. Solicitation of membership feedback on the concept of including all student-athletes in Academic Portal data, instead of only those who meet the NCAA Division II Academic Success Rate (ASR) cohort definition.

The committee reviewed the following additional recommendations but agreed to take no action: The creation of an annual academic-data-review process for active and transitioning Division II institutions, the development of robust reporting mechanisms within the Academic Portal, and the removal of selected transfer-related fields from the APC.

2. **Discussion regarding initiatives to assist Division II institutions in the development or enhancement of academic advising programs.** The committee discussed ideas for utilizing \$150,000 annually to enhance academic advising on Division II campuses based on feedback from the NCAA Faculty Athletics Representatives Association annual meeting and a membership survey of directors of athletics. [See Nonlegislative Action Item No. 2a.]. The committee agreed to hold a conference call in March to review and approve guidelines and policies for approval and distribution of the funds.
3. **Update on Academic Performance Census data submission.** The committee reviewed a list of institutions that requested extensions of their APC deadline for the 2018-19 academic year and a list of institutions that failed to submit data by the deadline. The number of institutions requesting extensions increased more than 30 percent from the 2017-18 submission cycle.
4. **Review of institutions failing to submit data by the Academic Performance Census deadline in the 2018-19 academic year.** The committee reviewed requests from six institutions for waivers of the penalty set forth in NCAA Constitution 3.3.4.15 for failing to submit APC data by the original deadline of 15 weeks after the institution's first day of classes of the fall term, or by the extended deadline, if granted to the institution. The committee denied a waiver request from West Liberty University due to a lack of extenuating circumstances. The committee approved waiver requests from the following institutions based on the totality of the mitigating circumstances: Chadron State College; Eastern New Mexico University; Newman University; Ohio Valley University; and Urbana University. The committee also directed staff to develop a chart detailing the history of all APC waiver requests and a set of standards to guide future waiver deliberations.

[Note: Christina Whetsel, Augusta University, recused herself from discussion and voting on the request from Eastern New Mexico University.]

- 5. Issuance of official interpretation.** The committee reviewed a Division I official interpretation and discussed the application of the missed-term exception in Division II for student-athletes who attend classes during the term. The committee issued the following official interpretation and agreed to incorporate the interpretation into the NCAA Division II Manual.

Application of Missed-Term Exception.

The NCAA Division II Academic Requirements Committee confirmed that if a student-athlete is officially registered in a full-time program of studies in a regular term and attends the first day of classes, the missed term exception does not apply to that term.

[Reference: Bylaw 14.4.3.8.1 (missed-term exception)]

- 6. Discussion regarding waiver directive related to final-year eligibility.** The committee reviewed language that could be added to the Division II progress-toward-degree waiver directive allowing staff to consider flexibility for a student-athlete entering their final season of competition provided certain conditions are met. The current directive outlining the authority for NCAA academic and membership affairs staff to approve academic waivers from member institutions is silent regarding student-athletes entering their final season of competition. The committee recommended approval of the additional language that will be included in the 2019-20 waiver directive. [See Nonlegislative Action Item No. 2b and Attachment A.]
- 7. Discussion regarding the waiver directive related to previously approved waiver checklist.** The committee reviewed a list of common circumstances where waiver relief has traditionally been approved by staff if the student-athlete was otherwise on pace to meet progress-toward-degree requirements when the unforeseen mitigation occurred. The committee recommended that the NCAA Division II Management Council approve adding this list to the existing progress-toward-degree waiver process. The committee agreed that this would reduce bureaucracy by allowing institutions to self-apply relief on campus when these specific conditions exist. [See Nonlegislative Action Item No. 2c and Attachment B.]
- 8. Review of 2018-19 initial-eligibility waiver statistics.** The committee reviewed data on initial-eligibility waivers for 2018-19. The number of waiver requests increased 77 percent over 2017-18 levels due to the new initial-eligibility standards that went into effect in August 2018.

9. **Discussion regarding impact of the 2018 initial-eligibility standards.** The committee reviewed data on the final certification status and final eligibility status (aid, practice, competition) of NCAA Eligibility Center registrants in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 enrollment periods. Among Division II National Letter of Intent signees, there was minimal change in final eligibility status after applying automatic waivers.
10. **Update on ACT/SAT concordance.** Staff provided an update on the timetable for research related to use of the ACT and SAT in initial-eligibility scales. It is anticipated that the committee will review study results and potential options for using ACT/SAT scores in initial eligibility in summer or fall 2020.
11. **Review of Federal Graduation Rate and Academic Success Rate data.** The committee received a report on the Federal Graduation Rate and ASR data released in November 2018. NCAA research staff presented data on trends in the federal rate and ASR.
12. **Update on Division II educational initiatives.** The committee received an update on the planning of educational programs and materials for the Division II membership, specifically NCAA Regional Rules Seminars and NCAA Division II Regional Compliance Seminars.
13. **Update on NCAA Division I academic misconduct interpretive issues and newly adopted legislative review.** Staff provided an update regarding an NCAA Division I Presidential Forum review of current academic misconduct and academic integrity legislation, policy and interpretations.
14. **Review of 2018-19 Division II priorities and 2015-21 Strategic Plan midterm assessment.** Staff provided an update on the 2018-19 Division II priorities and the midterm assessment of the 2015-21 Division II Strategic Plan.
15. **Review of the October 2018 NCAA International Student Records Committee report.** The committee received a report from the October 2018 International Student Records Committee meeting.
16. **Review of the January 2019 Academic Requirements Committee teleconference report.** The committee reviewed and approved its January 2019 teleconference report.
17. **Review of the 2019 Academic Requirements Committee Roster.** The committee reviewed the updated roster and approved changes to the subcommittee assignments.

- 18. Review of the January 2019 Division II Management Council and NCAA Division II Presidents Council summary of actions.** The committee reviewed the summary of actions from the January 2019 meetings of the Management Council and the Presidents Council.
- 19. Review of newly adopted Division II legislation.** Staff provided a summary of the legislation adopted at the 2019 NCAA Convention, including one Association-wide proposal and eight Division II proposals.
- 20. Review of NCAA Conflict of Interest policy.** The committee reviewed the conflict of interest policy for NCAA committee members.
- 21. Election of committee vice chair.** The committee elected Tim Ladd, faculty athletics representative at Palm Beach Atlantic University, to serve as vice chair, effective September 1, 2019.
- 22. Campus updates and issues.** The committee discussed academic updates and issues at their institutions.
- 23. Future meeting schedule.** The committee affirmed September 12-13 as the dates for its fall 2019 in-person meeting and February 10-11 as the dates for its winter 2020 meeting. Staff will coordinate with the committee to schedule teleconferences in March 2019 and June 2019.

*Committee Chair: Christina Whetsel, Augusta University*  
*Staff Liaisons: Susan Britsch, Academic and Membership Affairs*  
*Gregg Summers, Research*

<b>NCAA Division II Academic Requirements Committee February 11, 2019, In-Person Meeting</b>	
<b>Attendees:</b>	
Olivia Faught, Southern Arkansas University.	
Jennifer Heimstead, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.	
Felicia Johnson, Virginia Union University.	
Tim Ladd, Palm Beach Atlantic University.	
Laura Liesman, Georgian Court University.	
Eric Schoh, Winona State University.	
Travis Smith, University of Indianapolis.	
Jessica Swiney, King University.	
Shawn Ward, Le Moyne College.	
Patrick Wempe, Henderson State University (via teleconference).	
Christina Whetsel, Augusta University.	
<b>Absentees:</b>	
None.	
<b>Guests in Attendance:</b>	
None.	
<b>NCAA Liaisons in Attendance:</b>	
Susan Britsch and Gregg Summers.	
<b>Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:</b>	
Jenny Collins, Alyson Grady, Terri Steeb Gronau, Maritza Jones, Melissa Marchini, Binh Nguyen, Stephanie Quigg Smith and Karen Wolf.	





## FINAL-YEAR ELIGIBILITY – STUDENT-ATHLETE ACADEMIC WAIVERS

### Background:

In September 2018, the NCAA Division II Academic Requirements Committee recommended adjusting the NCAA Division II Academic Requirements Committee Directive Regarding the Standard of Review of Progress-Toward-Degree Waivers to include flexibility for student-athletes entering the final year of eligibility. The current directive outlining the authority for NCAA academic and membership affairs staff to approve academic waivers from member institutions is silent regarding student-athletes entering a final season of competition. Staff has been rendering decisions in cases based on the student-athlete's academic record and documented mitigation presented without regard to remaining eligibility. The committee recommended a change to the directive and requested that staff develop language that could be added to the 2019-20 Division II waiver directive for review. Additionally, a recommended change to the directive would be consistent with the NCAA Division I Committee on Academics Directive Regarding the Standard of Review of Progress-Toward-Degree Waivers.

### Potential Guideline:

Relief to be provided if the student-athlete is entering his/her final season of competition and has only a credit-hour deficiency:

- (1) A degree audit specific to the student-athlete's current degree program; and
- (2) Certification that the student-athlete is in the coursework necessary to complete his or her degree requirements within 10 semesters or 15 quarters. The statement must be signed by the student-athlete and his or her academic advisor.

### Conclusions:

1. The Academic Requirements Committee **recommends** approval of a guideline to permit additional flexibility for student-athletes entering their final season of competition, as specified.
2. The Academic Requirements Committee **does not recommend** approval of a guideline to permit additional flexibility for student-athletes entering their final season of competition, as specified.

### Applicable Legislation:

**NCAA Division II Bylaw 14.4.3.12.** The Academic Requirements Committee shall have the authority to waive all other progress-toward-degree requirements based on objective evidence that demonstrates circumstances that warrant the waiver of the normal application of those regulations. The committee shall establish the process for granting such waivers and shall report at least annually to the Management Council and to the membership, the actions taken in summary, aggregate form. *(Adopted: 1/18/14 effective 8/1/16 for certifications of progress toward degree for fall 2016 and thereafter)*



**NCAA DIVISION II ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE  
PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WAIVER CHECKLIST –  
STUDENT-ATHLETE ACADEMIC WAIVERS**

**Issue:**

Whether the NCAA Division II Academic Requirements Committee should add a previously approved waiver list to the existing progress-toward-degree waiver process, which would reduce bureaucracy and permit the membership and NCAA staff to work more efficiently in limited circumstances. The waiver scenarios would include common circumstances where relief has traditionally been provided by staff if the student-athlete was otherwise on pace to meet the academic eligibility requirements when the unforeseen mitigation occurred.

**Background:**

In June 2018, the NCAA Division II Athletic Directors Association Regulatory Advisory Group supported the concept of a checklist recently adopted by the NCAA Division I Committee on Academics which allows institutions to self-apply, on campus, any previously approved waiver specifically listed without submitting a formal progress-toward degree waiver request to the NCAA national office.

During its September 2018 Academic Requirements Committee meeting, the committee approved a review of the current directive language and asked staff to draft similar language for consideration. The committee reviewed the proposed language during its January 2019 teleconference and directed staff to add the issue to the agenda for its February in-person meeting.

An institution is only permitted to self-apply relief (waive an otherwise applicable progress-toward-degree requirement) if the institution's circumstances appear on the list of designated previously approved waivers and the circumstances satisfy the specified criteria established for the previously approved waiver. If an institution's circumstances do not appear on the list of previously approved waivers, or if the circumstances do not satisfy all established criteria for a previously approved waiver, the institution must submit a formal progress-toward-degree waiver application to the national office for consideration.

An institution that grants relief of NCAA legislation based on the specific previously approved waiver circumstances listed below, must maintain the documentation used to make the determination on campus. The list of previously approved waivers will be reviewed on an annual basis by the committee.

**Conclusions:**

1. The Academic Requirements Committee **recommends** the addition of a Division II Academic Requirements Committee Previously Approved Waiver Checklist that allows institutions to self-apply relief for student-athletes.
2. The Academic Requirements Committee **does not recommend** the addition of a Division II Academic Requirements Committee Previously Approved Waiver Checklist that allows institutions to self-apply relief for student-athletes.

**Applicable Legislation:**

**NCAA Division II Bylaw 14.4.3.12.** The Academic Requirements Committee shall have the authority to waive all other progress-toward-degree requirements based on objective evidence that demonstrates circumstances that warrant the waiver of the normal application of those regulations. The committee shall establish the process for granting such waivers and shall report at least annually to the Management Council and to the membership, the actions taken in summary, aggregate form. (Adopted: 1/18/14 effective 8/1/16 for certifications of progress toward degree for fall 2016 and thereafter)



## **NCAA DIVISION II PROGRESS-TOWARD-DEGREE WAIVER COMMITTEE PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WAIVERS CHECKLIST**

### **Background:**

The intent of the following modifications to the existing progress-toward-degree waiver process is to reduce bureaucracy and permit the membership and NCAA staff to work more efficiently in limited circumstances. The waiver scenarios listed below are common circumstances where relief has traditionally been provided by staff if the student-athlete was otherwise on pace to meet the academic eligibility requirements when the unforeseen mitigation occurred.

### **Process:**

An institution is only permitted to self-apply relief (waive an otherwise applicable progress-toward-degree requirement) if the institution's circumstances appear on the list of designated previously approved waivers and the circumstances satisfy the specified criteria established for the previously approved waiver. If an institution's circumstances do not appear on the list of previously approved waivers, or if the circumstances do not satisfy all established criteria for a previously approved waiver, the institution must submit a formal progress-toward-degree waiver application to the NCAA national office for consideration.

An institution that grants relief of NCAA legislation based on the specific, previously approved waiver circumstances listed below must maintain the documentation used to make the determination on campus. The list of previously approved waivers will be reviewed on an annual basis by staff.

### **Previously approved waiver scenarios:**

Institutions seeking a progress-toward-degree waiver on behalf of a student-athlete for relief of NCAA Bylaws 14.4.3.2 (nine/eight credit hours earned per academic term), 14.4.3.3 (18/27 hours earned during regular academic year), 14.4.3.4 (24/36 annual credit hours earned), 14.4.3.5 (2.0 minimum grade-point average) may self-apply relief (waive an otherwise applicable progress-toward-degree requirement) if the institution's circumstances appear on the list of designated previously approved waivers and the circumstances satisfy the specified criteria established for the previously approved waiver.

Institutions are expected to maintain documentation to demonstrate the identified criteria existed at the period of time to which the previously approved waiver is applied. Additionally, an academic recovery plan designed by the institution that demonstrates how the student-athlete's individual efforts, course schedule planning (including consideration of academics and athletics related time demands) and use of academic resources (including appropriate accommodations for any education-impacting disability) will allow him or her to overcome academic eligibility deficiencies. A reasonable academic recovery plan will also demonstrate that the student-athlete

is likely to graduate within five years of initial full-time enrollment and should include term-by-term scheduling of courses to the greatest extent possible. The plan must be signed by both the student-athlete and an institutional representative with academic oversight for the student-athlete. If the institution or student-athlete fail to adhere to the academic recovery plan on file and it results in a future progress-toward-degree deficiency, the institution must submit a formal progress-toward-degree waiver application to the national office for consideration.

### **Personal Hardships:**

#### **Death of an immediate family or team member:**

- The student-athlete experienced the death of an immediate family or team member during the academic year that immediately precedes a deficiency.
- For purposes of relief in this scenario and others, immediate family member is defined as spouse, parent or legal guardian, child, sibling or domestic partner.

#### **Diagnosis of terminal illness or hospitalization of immediate family or team member:**

- The student-athlete's immediate family member or team member was diagnosed and/or hospitalized with a terminal illness during the academic year that immediately precedes a deficiency.
- Immediate family member is defined above.

#### **Victims of inappropriate sexual behavior:**

- The student-athlete was a victim of inappropriate sexual behavior during the academic year in which the deficiency occurred. Inappropriate sexual behavior includes, but is not limited to, sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct or sexual violence.

#### **Inpatient hospitalization:**

- The student-athlete is hospitalized for a significant amount of time (e.g., two weeks) during the term or academic year that immediately precedes a deficiency.

#### **Catastrophic events:**

- The student-athlete experienced a loss due to a catastrophic event that occurred at the student-athlete's institution or in the student-athlete's hometown during the academic year immediately preceding the deficiency.

- A catastrophic event as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency is "any natural or manmade incident, including terrorism, that results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely impacting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale and/or government functions."

**High achieving students:**

**Nontransfers with a 3.5 or above cumulative grade-point-average:**

- The student-athlete is a continuing, non-transfer, undergraduate student that presents a cumulative GPA at or above 3.50 and on an academic track to graduate within five years of initial full-time enrollment.
- Institution has on file an academic recovery plan that shows graduation within five years.
- The mitigation asserted must conform to the current directive regarding the standard of review of progress-toward-degree waivers and any documentation corroborating the mitigation must be kept on file.
- In cases of misadvisement, the institution must complete an institutional recovery and it must be kept on file.

**Student-athlete entering final season of competition (credit-hour deficiencies only):**

- The student-athlete is entering his or her final season of competition and the following academic criteria are met for a credit-hour deficiency:
  - Certification that the student-athlete received a satisfactory grade in all degree-applicable courses during the previous academic year (two semesters or three quarters);
  - Certification that the student-athlete is seeking to participate in his or her final season of competition during the ensuing two semesters or three quarters;
  - Documentation that the student-athlete will complete his or her degree at the end of the ensuing two semesters or quarters;
  - Documentation that the student-athlete meets or exceeds the cumulative grade-point-average required for graduation in the student-athlete's degree program;
  - Certification that the student-athlete had no prior progress-toward-degree deficiencies; and

- Evidence that demonstrates that it is reasonable to believe, based on the student-athlete's accelerated completion of his/her degree requirements, that the student-athlete will earn his/her degree in less than five years of initial enrollment.

**Restrictive degree programs:**

- The student-athlete is enrolled in a specific degree program that, due to course sequencing, offering limitations, catalog changes or a lack of course substitutions, has resulted in credit-hour deficiencies.
- If a waiver of an institution's specific degree program is provided, an institution may self-apply a progress-toward-degree waiver to individual student-athletes enrolled in the degree program provided the following criteria are satisfied:
  - The student-athlete's failure to pass a course within the degree program, or attain a requisite grade-point-average, did not inhibit his or her progression through the degree program or create the deficiency;
  - The student-athlete is completing his or her degree as outlined by the institution in its published policies and/or curriculum for the degree program;
  - The number of hours in which the student-athlete is enrolled is not below nine; and
  - The student-athlete will graduate within the degree program's intended timeline.