

NCAA Board of Governors decision on fall sports championships during 2020-21 and requirements for each division related to the conduct of fall sports and championships.

During this period of extraordinary disruption to our nation, higher education, student-athletes, member schools, and indeed all of sport around the world, the Board of Governors has made difficult and unprecedented decisions, each based on a bedrock commitment to the health and safety of student-athletes. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues — even intensifies — and new decision points are approaching with respect to the return of fall athletics generally and NCAA fall championships specifically, the board recognizes the myriad factors under consideration and varied circumstances across the country and across Divisions I, I and III. The board has determined the best course of action to ensure appropriate consideration of the wide-ranging concerns of the membership and the health and safety priorities of student-athletes is to direct each division to take appropriate actions based on requirements identified and approved by the board.

The most important consideration shall be whether championships can be conducted safely. We have very serious concerns about the continuing high levels of COVID-19 infection in many parts of our nation. The board has determined that it will only support moving forward with fall championships and other postseason play if strict conditions are applied and adhered to and there is significant reduction in COVID-19 spread. We understand that each division’s primary focus is health and safety, and some may not be similarly situated in terms of whether its members and governance structure have the resources available to take the necessary precautions (for regular-season competition or championships) given the health data trends and the spread of COVID-19. There are other student-athlete well-being determinations that also must be taken into account even if safety measures can be met and exceeded, such as mental and personal health concerns of student-athletes, available funding, logistics limitations and the quality of the championships experience.

This direction from the board requires each division to take action through its governance process and must include the requirements below for conducting fall sports seasons and related championships. The board will actively monitor any fall championship approach, and after receiving information from a division, retains the ability to make a final determination that fall sports championships will be cancelled. Further, this decision and direction only applies to fall sports and related championships, and decisions regarding winter and spring sports and related championships will be made at a later date.

Health and Safety

The Board of Governors directs the divisions in the following manner:

- All member schools must adhere to federal, state and local guidelines related to COVID-19. Further, the conduct of NCAA fall sports championships must be in line with federal, state and local guidelines.
- All member schools conducting fall sports programs must employ and adhere to the protocols set forth in the [Resocialization of Collegiate Sport: Developing Standards for Practice and Competition](#) document and subsequent updates. Such protocols should be implemented for all athletically related activities (voluntary, required and out of season) and in-season practice and

competition (preseason, regular season and postseason). If a change in local circumstances warrants a discontinuation of athletics activities, schools should make that decision in conjunction with public health officials as outlined in the resocialization document. We have set guidelines that schools must follow, but these guidelines do not support attempting sports in areas where there is significant spread of the virus.

- Because the resocialization document (and later updates) cannot speak to every scenario or circumstance involving potential exposure to COVID-19, it must not be used as an absolute fail-safe document but rather should be augmented with guidance from campus, local, state and federal authorities and other bodies most familiar with the specific circumstances of a community.
- All fall sports postseason competition involving NCAA student-athletes must adhere to the protocols set forth in the Resocialization of Collegiate Sport: Developing Standards for Practice and Competition document and subsequent updates.

Timeframe: The deadline for divisional governance action is Aug. 14.

Student-Athlete Well-Being

The Board of Governors directs the divisions in the following manner:

- All student-athletes must be provided an opportunity to opt out of participation due to concerns about contracting COVID-19, and if a student-athlete chooses to opt out, the individual's athletics scholarship commitment must be honored.
- Appropriate eligibility-related accommodations must be made for student-athletes who opt out of participating this fall or those whose seasons are interrupted or cut short due to COVID-19.
- While statements of personal commitment to health and safety are acceptable, member schools may not require student-athletes to waive their legal rights regarding COVID-19 as a condition of athletics participation.
- Divisions must develop rules providing that member schools will cover COVID-19-related health costs related to infections that local health officials reasonably believe were the result of student-athletes' sports participation.

Timeframe: The deadline for divisional governance action is Aug. 14.

Championships-Related Issues

If a division moves forward with planning for any fall championships, the Board of Governors further directs the division as follows:

- NCAA fall sports championships must be conducted using the principles associated with developing enhanced safety for student-athletes and essential athletics personnel. Such enhanced safety includes regular testing, separation of student-athletes and essential personnel from all other nonessential personnel, and physical distancing and masking policies during all aspects of noncompetition.
- If 50% or more of eligible teams in a particular sport in a division cancel or postpone their fall season, there will be no NCAA fall championship in that sport.
- If any division elects to postpone fall sports championships, the decision to conduct the championships at later dates must be based on the scientific data available at that time, as well as an assessment of the operational, logistical and financial impact of proceeding. When a championship is set to occur on a new date, an additional assessment must be made using the same factors (scientific data available at the time and operational, logistical and financial impact), and the division will report its determinations to the Board of Governors for its review.
- If a decision is made to move forward with fall sports championships, there must be a plan for scaling down the number of championship sites, including the possibility of single sites where appropriate, reduced bracketing, fewer competitors, and similar actions to create efficient and effective events.
- A division may allow for some fall sports championships to occur and others not be conducted based on level of risk to the student-athlete, but in all instances, decisions must comport with the Association's commitment to gender equity.

Timeframe: Based on when 50% threshold is met or divisional governance action is taken, which may be no later than Aug. 21.

Hotline

Further, the NCAA will publicize a phone number and email address for concerns to be raised about whether an athletics department is meeting the obligations reflected in the resocialization standards or otherwise engaged in behavior that puts student-athletes at risk of COVID-19. Upon receiving a concern, the NCAA will notify the campus athletics health care administrator and conference office about the concern. The athletics health care administrator will be expected to take immediate reasonable measures to review the concern and notify the NCAA of action taken, if action is necessary.

Timeframe: The deadline for NCAA national office action is Aug. 14.