



**NCAA Division III COVID-19 Question and Answer Guide
for Alternative 2020-21 Playing and Practice Season Model**

Bylaw 17 - Playing and Practice Seasons.

Action Taken.

On July 21, 2020, the NCAA Division III Management Council, upon recommendation of the NCAA Division III Playing and Practice Seasons Subcommittee, approved an alternative playing and practice seasons model for the 2020-21 academic year due to the impact of COVID-19. Click [here](#) for the approved model.

The alternative playing and practice seasons model is optional. Institutions could adhere to existing playing seasons legislation or apply the alternative model for the 2020-21 academic year.

Whether applying the existing parameters or the alternative model, institutions should consult health and safety personnel as well as risk management personnel to ensure appropriate safety protocols.

Question No. 1: How does the alternative playing and practice seasons option differ from the current bylaws concerning the playing and practice seasons?

Answer: The alternative model, which applies to all Division III sports, primarily differs from the existing regulations as follows: (a) The playing and practice seasons are defined by days; (b) Those days do not have to occur consecutively or in consecutive weeks; (c) There is not a distinction between the traditional and nontraditional segments.

Structure of the Alternative Playing and Practice Seasons Model.

Question No. 2: What is the structure of the alternative playing seasons model?

Answer:

	Fall Championship Sports	Winter Championship Sports	Spring Championship Sports
Length	114 days	114 days*	114 days*
First permissible practice date.	The earlier of Aug. 10 or the first day of class.	Oct. 1 for basketball, bowling, ice hockey and wrestling. For all other sports, the earlier of Sept. 7 or the first day of class.	The earlier of Aug. 10 or the first day of class for golf, tennis and rowing. For all other sports: the earlier of Sept. 7 or the first day of class.

First permissible contest date	Existing legislation	Existing legislation	Existing legislation
End of season.	Five weekdays before the 1st day of the institution's final exam period for the regular academic year.	Five weekdays before the 1st day of the institution's final exam period for the regular academic year.	Conclusion of NCAA championships.

*For an institution that sponsors both indoor and outdoor track and field that season is 144 days.

Question No. 3: Must the days of the playing season be used consecutively?

Answer: No.

Question No. 4: Must the days of the playing season be used in consecutive weeks?

Answer: No. The institution may determine when it is best to use the days for the particular sport. Institutions should consult medical and risk management personnel in determining and applying appropriate return to play protocols including those found in the [Interassociation Recommendations: Prevention Catastrophic Injury and Death in Collegiate Athletes](#).

Question No. 5: Between the first practice date and the end of the playing season for each sport, is there any period in which days may not be used?

Answer: Yes. Spring championship sports may not conduct athletically related activities five weekdays before the first day of the institution's exam period for the fall term through the end of that examination period.

Question No. 6: Is an institution required to provide a day off each week?

Answer: Yes. For purposes of providing a day off, under the alternative playing season model, the week is defined by the institution as any consecutive seven-day period [Bylaw 17.1.2-(a)].

Question No. 7: Must the required day off be the same for all student-athletes in the sports of track and field (indoor/outdoor) and swimming and diving?

Answer: No. The current exception in Bylaw 17.1.4.1.1 that permits the required day off to apply individually to each student-athlete in the sports of track and field (indoor/outdoor) and swimming and diving still applies.

Question No. 8: Are the exceptions to providing a required day off in Bylaw 17.1.4.1 still applicable?

Answer: Yes.

Question No. 9: Must a multisport student-athlete be given the same day off?

Answer: Yes. For a multisport student-athlete, an institution will still be required to provide one day off per week of all athletically related activity.

Question No. 10: Are student-athletes prohibited from missing class to engage in practice activities under the alternative model?

Answer: Yes. Student-athletes are still prohibited from missing class time for practice activities.

Question No. 11: May the length of the playing season, pursuant to the alternative playing and practice season model, be extended for participation in the NCAA championship?

Answer: Yes, consistent with current legislation.

Athletically Related Activities and "Days".

Question No. 12: When can an institution conduct athletically related activities pursuant to the alternative playing and practice seasons model?

Answer: The institution may only conduct athletically related activities on the defined 114 days of the season.

Question No.13: How is a "day" defined for purposes of the alternative playing and practice seasons model?

Answer: For purposes of the alternative playing and practice seasons model, a "day" is defined as any day in which athletically related activity (Bylaw 17.02.1.1) occurs. The definition of athletically related activity has not changed under the alternative model. Some examples of activities that may only occur on defined days of the playing season are:

- In person or virtual team meetings;
- Required workouts or conditioning sessions;
- Practice;
- Competition.

Question No. 14: Does the limit on days apply to the team or to student-athletes individually?

Answer: Days are team specific. Therefore, any day in which any student-athlete engages in athletically related activities would count towards the maximum days for that team.

Question No. 15: Does the days limit apply to varsity and subvarsity teams separately?

Answer: No. There are a 114 days per sport which includes varsity and all subvarsity teams.

Question No. 16: Do small group practices or one-on-one sessions count as a day?

Answer: Yes. Any time a small group practices on a day or a one-on-one session is conducted, one of the permissible days is used. However, teams may conduct multiple small group practices on the same day or conduct multiple one-on-one sessions on the same day.

Question No. 17: Will activities that are exceptions to athletically related activities per Bylaw 17.02.1.1.1 count as a "day"?

Answer: No. The exceptions to athletically related activities (e.g., academic and compliance meetings, voluntary strength and conditioning, fundraising activities) that are permissible outside the season per current legislation would not constitute a day.

Contests and Dates of Competition.

Question No. 18: Does this alternative model change the definitions of a contest, intercollegiate competition, date of competition (team or individual) or countable contest (team or individual)?

Answer: No.

Question No. 19: What are the maximum contests/dates of competition under this alternate model?

Answer: The maximum contest/dates of competition are those set forth as the traditional segment maximum contests and dates of competition limitations.

Question No. 20: Is the contest limits separate for varsity and subvarsity teams.

Answer: Yes, this would apply the same as it currently does for traditional segment limitations. However, a day used for either a varsity or subvarsity competition would count against the 114-day overall limit.

Question No. 21: Does the standard contest or date of competition exemptions still apply?

Answer: Yes, the standard contest or date of competition exemptions in Bylaw 17.1.4.5 still apply.

Question No. 22: Would participation in a virtual contest or virtual date of competition count against the maximum contests/dates of competition limit?

Answer: No, participation in a virtual contest or virtual date of competition would not count against the maximum contests/dates of competition limitations. However, a virtual contest or date of competition would count against the 114-day overall limit.

Additionally, a virtual contest or virtual date of competition may not be used to satisfy minimum sports-sponsorship requirements. (See February 2, 2015 staff interpretation).

Impact on Eligibility.

Question No. 23: Does this alternative playing and practice seasons model change any student-athlete eligibility requirements?

Answer: No.

Question No. 24: Does the alternative playing and practice season model change the current definition for the use of a season of participation or use of semester/quarter?

Answer: No.

Question No. 25: How is a hardship waiver analyzed under the alternative playing and practice seasons model?

Answer: A hardship waiver would be analyzed the same as it is under the existing legislative model. The injury would have to be season ending. The end of the season would be the last day of athletically related activity for that particular team. The first half of the playing season as well as the one-third contest standard as set forth in Bylaw 14.2.5 and Figure 14-1 are still applicable.

Designation of the Playing Season.

Question No. 26: Under the alternative playing and practice seasons model, is an institution still required to declare its playing and practice season before the beginning of the playing season (per Bylaw 17.1.1.1)?

Answer: No. Under this alternate playing season model an institution is not required to declare its playing season before each sport season begins. However, an institution is required to keep a record of the days each team uses and to file that record in writing in the office of the institution's director of athletics at the end of the playing season for that sport.

Question No. 27: Will the NCAA create a tracking chart for institutions?

Answer: No. Each institution is responsible to keep its record in the format it deems appropriate.

Additional Questions.

Question No. 28: Does the alternative playing and practice seasons model change the permissible awards, benefits and expenses an institution may provide under Bylaw 16?

Answer: No. Bylaw 16 legislation still applies.

Question No. 29: Are the current acclimatization periods in the sports of football and ice hockey still applicable?

Answer: Yes. Those periods would not change, and institutions would be expected to follow the legislative parameters of those acclimatization periods. For example, the football acclimatization period is a five-consecutive day period conducted in accordance with Bylaw 17.10.2.2. Similarly, ice hockey is a five-day period conducted in accordance with Bylaw 17.13.3.1 that must be completed before any student-athletes engage in competition.

Question No. 30: How does the elimination of the distinction between segments in the alternative playing and practice season model impact the use of male practice players?

Answer: The traditional segment restriction in Bylaw 14.1.1.1-(a) will no longer apply under the blanket waiver; however, the restrictions in Bylaw 14.1.1.1-(b) and (c) are still applicable. Specifically, the involvement of male practice players is still limited to one practice per week (as defined the same for purposes of the day-off requirement), and the number of male practice players involved during any particular practice still shall not exceed half the number of student-athletes of a typical starting unit for that sport.

Question No. 31: If an institution applies the alternative playing season model, when is a student-athlete permitted and prohibited from engaging in outside competition (i.e. competition while not representing the institution)?

Answer: Each institution determines whether it will permit its student-athletes to practice or compete as members of an outside team in any noncollegiate, amateur competition. It remains impermissible for coaching staff members to direct student-athletes to engage in outside competition or otherwise arrange opportunities for outside competition that is not counted as part of the 114 days season. Further, it remains impermissible for student-athletes to compete on a professional team without losing their eligibility in that sport.

In the sport of wrestling a student-athlete still may not engage in outside competition prior to November 1 (Bylaw 14.7.2.5.1).