

# NCAA Emerging Sports for Women Program Process Guide

The Emerging Sports for Women program was created in 1994 based on a recommendation from the NCAA Gender Equity Task Force. An NCAA survey conducted in the early 1990s showed that 20 years after Title IX was passed, female students had about 30 percent of the athletics participation opportunities offered by NCAA institutions. In 2016-17, female students had 44 percent of athletics participation opportunities but made up 54 percent of the complete undergraduate population on NCAA campuses. The purpose of this program continues to be to grow meaningful intercollegiate sport participation opportunities for female student-athletes in sports that have the potential to reach the required number of varsity teams to be considered for NCAA championship status.

The Emerging Sports for Women program is managed by the Committee on Women's Athletics. The committee oversees the application process for applicant emerging sports and recommends to each division through the NCAA governance structure to add or remove sports from the NCAA's Emerging Sports for Women program. The NCAA governance structure for each division determines which sports are Emerging Sports for Women and votes to establish a National Collegiate Championship or division championship for sports that satisfy legislated requirements.

NCAA legislation allows a National Collegiate Championship or a division championship to be established in an emerging sport if at least 40 NCAA institutions sponsor the sport at the varsity level. A sport is no longer considered an emerging sport once the sport has been established as a championship sport. Further, an emerging sport is limited to a 10-year period to become a championship sport unless it can be demonstrated that steady growth has occurred during that time. NCAA institutions may use emerging sports to satisfy minimum sports-sponsorship requirements for all divisions and minimal financial aid awards for Divisions I and II. If an institution lists an emerging sport on its NCAA sports sponsorship and demographics form, that sport must follow all applicable NCAA rules.

Since the Emerging Sports for Women program was established in 1994, five sports have earned NCAA championship status: rowing (1996); women's ice hockey (2000); women's water polo (2000); bowling (2003); and women's beach volleyball (2015).

The Committee on Women's Athletics created this process guide in 2016 as a resource for applicants pursuing membership in the NCAA Emerging Sports for Women program and for the leadership of current emerging sports.

## Definitions of Terms

The Committee on Women's Athletics defines several commonly used terms for the purpose of managing the Emerging Sports for Women program.

**Sport.** A sport shall:

- a. Be defined as an institutional activity, sponsored at the varsity or club level, involving physical exertion for the purpose of competition against teams or individuals within an intercollegiate competition structure.

- b. Operate under standardized rules with rating/scoring systems ratified by at least one official regulatory agency and/or governing body.

**Emerging sport for women.** An emerging sport for women is a sport that:

- a. Meets the definition of a sport.
- b. Is accepted and recognized by the NCAA (as approved by its divisional governance processes) as an emerging sport for women.
- c. Provides additional athletics opportunities to female student-athletes and demonstrates the NCAA's commitment to gender equity among student-athletes.

**Varsity intercollegiate sport.** A varsity intercollegiate sport is a sport that has been accorded that status by the institution's president or chancellor or committee responsible for intercollegiate athletics policy and satisfies the following conditions:

- a. It is a sport that is administered by the department of intercollegiate athletics.
- b. It is a sport for which the eligibility of the student-athletes is reviewed and certified by a staff member designated by the institution's president or chancellor or committee responsible for intercollegiate athletics policy.
- c. It is a sport in which qualified participants receive the institution's official varsity awards.

**Club sport.** A club sport is a sport that has been accorded that status by an institution and satisfies the following conditions:

- a. It is a sport that has not been accorded varsity status.
- b. It is a sport in which student-athletes compete in intercollegiate athletics.

**Sport sponsorship.** An institution is considered to sponsor a sport if the institution's varsity or club team engages in at least five intercollegiate contests against the varsity or club programs of four-year, degree-granting collegiate institutions each year. In individual sports, the institution's team shall include a minimum number of participants in each contest, as required per the sport's standardized rules.

**Contest.** A contest is any game, match, exhibition, scrimmage or joint practice session with another institution's varsity or club team, regardless of its formality, in which competition in a sport occurs between an intercollegiate athletics team or individual representing an NCAA institution and any other team or individual not representing the intercollegiate athletics program of the same NCAA institution.

**Intercollegiate competition.** Intercollegiate competition is considered to have occurred when a student-athlete at an NCAA institution does any of the following:

- a. Represents the institution in any contest against outside competition, regardless of how the competition is classified (for example, scrimmage, exhibition or joint practice session with another institution's team) or whether the student is enrolled in a minimum full-time program of studies.
- b. Competes in the uniform of the institution or, during the academic year, uses any apparel (excluding apparel no longer used by the institution) received from the institution that includes institutional identification.
- c. Competes and receives expenses (for example, transportation, meals, room or entry fees) from the institution for the competition.

## Application Requirements

Applicants pursuing membership in the NCAA Emerging Sports for Women program shall submit a complete and accurate application to the Committee on Women's Athletics. Completion of the application process does not guarantee acceptance into the Emerging Sports for Women program by the Committee on Women's Athletics or each division's governance structure. If an application is incomplete, inaccurate or late, the application will not be considered. If an applicant sport is not accepted into the Emerging Sports for Women program, the applicant sport is eligible to apply in a subsequent application cycle.

The application shall be a maximum of 30 pages (excluding the letters of commitment).

The application shall be received not later than **Aug. 1**.

An application must satisfy the following requirements:

- a. Demonstrate the applicant sport meets the definition of a sport as detailed in this guide (see "Definitions" section).
- b. Demonstrate at least 20 NCAA institutions, at the time of application, sponsor the applicant sport at the varsity or club level and offer female student-athletes comprehensive and robust participation opportunities. An NCAA institution is considered to sponsor a sport if the institution's varsity or club team can demonstrate it has engaged or will engage in at least five intercollegiate contests against the varsity or club programs of four-year, degree-granting collegiate institutions during the academic year in which the application is reviewed. In individual sports, the institution's team shall include a minimum number of participants in each contest, as required per the sport's standardized rules. The NCAA institutions can demonstrate proper sponsorship of the applicant sport in two ways:
  1. An NCAA institution must provide official contest and participant results. Results other than official contest and participant results from the institution OR conflicting results will not be considered; or

2. If official contest and participant results are not available at the time of submitting an application, an NCAA institution must provide either a set schedule of competition or official contest and participant results for the academic year in which the application is reviewed not later than **Feb. 1**. The schedule must be signed by the director of athletics (or the director's designee) AND the senior woman administrator.
- c. At least 10 letters of commitment from 10 NCAA institutions that either sponsor the applicant sport at the varsity level at the time of application or intend to sponsor the applicant sport at the varsity level during the academic year in which the application is reviewed. Each letter must be signed by the respective institution's chancellor or president AND director of athletics AND senior woman administrator and include the following supporting materials:
    - a. Actual or proposed budget with specific line items.
    - b. Roster size and number of full-time and part-time coaches.
    - c. Description of practice and competition facilities.
    - d. Local and regional competition opportunities.
    - e. Implementation timeline to varsity status.
    - f. Relationship with sport governing body/organization.
  - d. Suggested NCAA regulations (for example, playing and practice seasons; financial aid limits; coaching limits; and sport sponsorship).
  - e. Additional documentation: Applicants are encouraged (but not required) to supplement the application with additional documentation that demonstrates the sport's viability to grow meaningful intercollegiate sport participation opportunities for female student-athletes. Examples of additional documentation include, but are not limited to, the following:
    - a. Data of participants at the high school, collegiate and post-collegiate levels.
    - b. Data of ethnicity and race of participants.
    - c. Data of nonscholastic, high school, collegiate teams/program (for example, varsity, club, recreation and/or intramural).
    - d. Data of regional geography of sport.
    - e. Letters from state high school associations that recognize the sport.
    - f. Letter from the U.S. Olympic Committee if supporting the sport (for example, classify the sport as an Olympic/Paralympic sport; national governing body for the sport; grants for sport participation).
    - g. Confirmation of established national collegiate club/varsity championship or future championship plans, including identification of host association and/or organization.

- h. Letters of support from coaches associations.
- i. Letters of support from professional sports organizations.
- j. Letters of support from other associations or organizations.
- k. Letters of support from NCAA conferences interested in sponsoring the sport.

## Application Process

The application process follows the same timeline each year:

**Aug. 1 or earlier:** Applicant submits an application and supplemental materials to the NCAA office of inclusion. The completed application must be sent in electronic format (for example, flash drive) to the individual below:

Jean Merrill

[jmerrill@ncaa.org](mailto:jmerrill@ncaa.org)

NCAA office of inclusion

Attn: Jean Merrill

1802 Alonzo Watford Sr. Drive

Indianapolis, IN 46202

Phone: 317-917-6642

**September/October:** Committee on Women's Athletics conducts initial review of application during fall committee meeting.

**February:** Committee completes full review of application.

**March:** Committee sends a summary of preliminary findings to the applicant. The summary of findings may include an invitation for the applicant to attend the committee's spring meeting.

**April:** Committee makes final decision on application during spring committee meeting. If invited, an applicant may attend the committee meeting to discuss in detail the application and the applicant sport's viability as an emerging sport for women.

**June 15:** Applicant receives final decision, including whether the committee will recommend legislation to propose the applicant sport be added as an emerging sport for women through the appropriate governance and legislative processes for Divisions I, II and III.

**Annually:** If accepted into the Emerging Sports for Women program, representatives of the emerging sport must provide a progress report to the committee before the fall and spring meetings.

## Application Review

The Committee on Women's Athletics will evaluate an applicant sport's potential to be sponsored by at least 40 NCAA institutions at the varsity level within the 10-year period. As part of its evaluation, the committee may consider an applicant sport's application within the following contexts:

- a. Health and safety.
- b. Growth potential at the high school and post-collegiate levels.
- c. Economic viability.
- d. NCAA governance and legislative priorities.
- e. Other applicant sports pursuing membership in the Emerging Sports for Women program.
- f. Level of support from the sport's national governing body or national association or organization.

The Committee on Women's Athletics and NCAA staff will provide feedback on all submitted application materials and may request additional information.

## Application Reconsideration

Applicants may request reconsideration of a committee decision only if new information is presented that was not reasonably available at the time of the original decision. Reconsideration may be requested by emailing or mailing a letter to the Committee on Women's Athletics via NCAA staff within 30 calendar days from the time a written decision is sent to applicants. An explanation must be submitted to clarify the reasons the new information was not originally available. Any additional or repetitive information that was originally available to the committee may not be submitted for reconsideration. The chair of the Committee on Women's Athletics shall determine if the new information standard is met for all reconsideration submissions. If the reconsideration request is met, the Committee on Women's Athletics will reconsider the new information and render a decision based on all of the information, including the new information submitted.

## Emerging Sports Governance and Legislative Process

If the Committee on Women's Athletics supports an applicant sport to be added to the Emerging Sports for Women program, the committee will make a recommendation to Divisions I, II and III. Pursuant to governance and legislative processes, each division will determine whether an applicant sport will be added to the division's Emerging Sports for Women list and legislation.

## **Committee Monitoring and Support of Emerging Sports**

The Committee on Women's Athletics manages the Emerging Sports for Women program, and the NCAA staff provides day-to-day support and guidance for emerging sports. The committee regularly reviews the status and progress of emerging sports for women and engages in dialogue with emerging sport representatives.

The committee uses the NCAA Sports Sponsorship Database to accurately identify the number of NCAA institutions that sponsor each emerging sport at the varsity level.

The committee may request specific information when conducting a review of an emerging sport for women. Typically, the committee requests the following information:

- a. Number of NCAA institutions (by division) that sponsor the emerging sport at the varsity level.
- b. Number of varsity student-athletes at NCAA institutions participating in the emerging sport (including data on ethnicity and race).
- c. Number of club teams.
- d. Number of NCAA conferences that have added the emerging sport.
- e. Description of national or conference championship opportunities.
- f. Summary of efforts by the emerging sport's representatives to grow the sport.

## **Championship Sport Governance Process**

The Committee on Women's Athletics may recommend an emerging sport become a championship sport to Divisions I, II and III through the respective governance and legislative processes when at least 40 NCAA institutions sponsor the sport at the varsity level (as reflected in the NCAA Sports Sponsorship Database).

## **Requirements To Remain in the Emerging Sports for Women Program**

The Emerging Sports for Women program was developed for emerging sports to achieve NCAA championship status within 10 years. A sport can remain in the Emerging Sports for Women program after 10 years if the Committee on Women's Athletics determines that the sport has demonstrated steady growth during that time.

Examples of growth include (but are not limited to) the following:

- a. Annual increase of NCAA institutions that sponsor the emerging sport at the varsity level.
- b. Increased student-athlete participation opportunities at NCAA institutions.

- c. Engagement with NCAA institutions to grow the emerging sport.

If the committee determines that the emerging sport is not making steady progress at the end of the 10-year period, it may recommend to each division that the sport be removed from the Emerging Sports for Women program in accordance with the governance and legislative processes for each division.

A sport that is removed from the Emerging Sports for Women program and the applicable divisional legislation may seek reinstatement. At least 12 months must pass after the effective date of removal from the program and legislation. The criteria for the application remain the same except the application must include 15 letters of commitment from NCAA institutions that either sponsor the applicant sport at the varsity level at the time of application or intend to sponsor the applicant sport at the varsity level during the academic year in which the application is reviewed. Additionally, the application must explain what circumstances have changed since the applicant sport's removal from the program. For applicant sports that have been removed from a specific division, the 15 letters of commitment must be from NCAA institutions in that division.

## Branding for Emerging Sports

The NCAA has developed licensing and marketing programs that make use of NCAA trademarks and championship marks. Such programs are closely monitored to ensure consistency with the purposes and objectives of the NCAA, its members institutions and conferences and higher education.

Representatives of emerging sports for women must refrain from any direct or indirect use of the NCAA's marks and logos unless they have obtained prior consent from the NCAA. Requests for consent must be submitted to the NCAA via the [NCAA Content Request Form](#). All such requests will be conditioned on approval with the NCAA Content License terms and conditions, a copy of which will be provided to the requestor on conditional approval. The NCAA may revoke its consent to the use of NCAA logos or trademarks at any time.

In limited circumstances, with prior written approval, the NCAA may make available to emerging sport representatives one or more of the following logos identifying the status of Emerging Sports for Women.

### Logos for specific emerging sports as of 2018



**Equestrian**  
An NCAA Emerging Sport for Women





On receipt of NCAA written consent, examples of acceptable use of these logos may include placement on letterhead for correspondence to NCAA institutions and conferences about the emerging sport (along with the primary organization's logo) and on a webpage maintained by the emerging sport's representatives to provide information to NCAA institutions and conferences.

Under no circumstances may emerging sport representatives use any NCAA logo or trademark in conjunction with an athletic competition in the emerging sport or in any manner that suggests a relationship between the NCAA and any corporate entity (including but not limited to any corporate sponsor of an emerging sport).

If a sport is removed from the Emerging Sports for Women program, all use of NCAA logos or trademarks in connection with that sport must cease.

## **Publicity for Emerging Sports**

Publicity is important to the growth and success of an emerging sport. The governing body of an emerging sport is encouraged to create its own national media list and social media platforms to regularly publicize rankings, regular-season competitions and student-athlete achievements. However, an emerging sport may partner with the NCAA public and media relations group and social media team in the following ways:

- a. Provide a news release that points to a rise of NCAA institutions that sponsor an emerging sport at the varsity level.
- b. Provide information about NCAA student-athletes (or former NCAA student-athletes) who also participate in an emerging sport.
- c. Provide information about an emerging sport's scheduled national championship.

## Compliance With NCAA Rules for Emerging Sports

NCAA institutions that sponsor an emerging sport for women at the varsity level must abide by all NCAA regulations, including playing and practice seasons, financial aid, recruiting, eligibility and amateurism. Violations of NCAA legislation related to an emerging sport for women should be reported and addressed in the same manner as rules violations of NCAA-sponsored sports.

The NCAA Divisions I, II and III manuals contain legislation that provides important information about the Emerging Sports for Women program. Representatives of emerging sports for women should refer to the [NCAA Legislation and Interpretations](#) when seeking additional information about NCAA legislation.

### Division I Legislation

**20.02.4 Emerging Sports for Women.** The following shall be considered emerging sports for women and countable for purposes of revenue distribution (for sports sponsorship and grants-in-aid): (Adopted: 1/11/94 effective 9/1/94)

(a) **Team Sports:** rugby; and (Revised: 4/15/97, 4/27/00 effective 8/1/00, 4/25/02, 1/17/09 effective 8/1/09, 4/30/09, 1/16/10 effective 8/1/11, 10/30/14 effective 8/1/15)

(b) **Individual Sports:** equestrian and triathlon. (Revised: 1/12/99 effective 8/1/99, 4/24/03 effective 8/1/03, 1/17/09 effective 8/1/09, 1/15/11 effective 8/1/11, 1/18/14 effective 8/1/14)

**20.02.4.1 Additional Emerging Sports.** The Board of Directors periodically shall identify future emerging sports for women that shall be countable sports for revenue distribution and minimum sports sponsorship criteria and shall establish procedures to determine minimum contests and maximum grants in those sports. (Adopted: 1/11/94 effective 9/1/94)

**20.02.4.2 Removal of Emerging Sports.** A sport shall no longer be considered an emerging sport once the sport has been established as a championship sport. Further, an emerging sport is limited to a 10-year time period to become a championship sport unless it can be demonstrated that steady growth has occurred during that time. (Adopted: 4/15/97)

**18.2.4 Minimum Sponsorship for Championships.**

**18.2.4.1 Men's Sports.** A National Collegiate Championship or a division championship may be established in a men's sport if at least 50 institutions sponsor the sport. (Adopted: 1/11/94 effective 8/1/94, Revised: 1/17/09)

**18.2.4.2 Women's Sports.** A National Collegiate Championship or a division championship may be established in a women's sport if at least 40 institutions sponsor the sport. (Adopted: 1/11/94 effective 8/1/94, Revised: 4/22/98 effective 8/1/98, 4/25/02 effective 8/1/02, 1/17/09)

## **Division II Legislation**

### **20.03 Emerging Sports for Women.**

**20.03.1 Definition of Emerging Sports for Women.** The following shall be considered emerging sports for women (see Bylaw 20.10.3.2): (Adopted: 1/11/94 effective 9/1/94, Revised: 1/13/03, 1/17/09 effective 8/1/10, 7/23/13)

**(a) Team Sports:** rugby; and (Revised: 1/13/98, 1/13/03 effective 8/1/03, 1/17/09 effective 8/1/09, 1/17/09 effective 8/1/10, 1/17/15 effective 8/1/15)

**(b) Individual Sports:** equestrian and triathlon. (Revised: 1/12/99, 1/13/03 effective 8/1/03, 1/17/09 effective 8/1/09, 1/15/11 effective 8/1/11, 1/18/14 effective 8/1/14)

**20.03.1.1 Removal of Emerging Sports.** A sport shall no longer be considered an emerging sport once the sport has been established as a championship sport. Further, an emerging sport is limited to a 10-year time period to become a championship sport unless it can be demonstrated that steady growth has occurred during that time. (Adopted: 1/13/98, Revised: 7/23/13)

### **18.2.4 Minimum Sponsorship for Championships.**

**18.2.4.1 Men's Sports.** A National Collegiate Championship or a division championship may be established in a men's sport if at least 50 institutions sponsor the sport. (Adopted: 1/11/94 effective 8/1/94, Revised: 10/21/08)

**18.2.4.2 Women’s Sports.** A National Collegiate Championship or a division championship may be established in a women’s sport if at least 40 institutions sponsor the sport. (Adopted: 1/11/94 effective 8/1/94, Revised: 1/13/98 effective 8/1/98, 1/13/03, 10/21/08)

## **Division III Legislation**

**20.02.6 Emerging Sports for Women.** The following shall be considered emerging sports for women: (Adopted: 1/11/94 effective 9/1/94)

**(a) Team Sports.** Rugby; and (Revised: 1/13/98, 1/13/03 effective 8/1/03, 1/17/09 effective 8/1/09)

**(b) Individual Sports.** Triathlon. (Revised: 1/12/99, 1/13/03 effective 8/1/03, 1/17/09 effective 8/1/09, 10/19/10 effective 8/1/11, 1/18/14 effective 8/1/14)

**20.02.6.1 Removal of Emerging Sports.** A sport shall no longer be considered an emerging sport once the sport has been established as a championship sport. Further, an emerging sport is limited to a 10-year time period to become a championship sport unless it can be demonstrated that steady growth has occurred during that time. (Adopted: 1/13/98)

### **18.2.4 Minimum Sponsorship for Championships.**

**18.2.4.1 Men’s Sports.** A National Collegiate Championship or a division championship may be established in a men’s sport if at least 50 institutions sponsor the sport. (Adopted: 1/11/94 effective 8/1/94, Revised: 10/20/08)

**18.2.4.2 Women’s Sports.** A National Collegiate Championship or a division championship may be established in a women’s sport if at least 40 institutions sponsor the sport. (Adopted: 1/11/94 effective 8/1/94, Revised: 1/13/98 effective 8/1/98, 1/12/99, 1/13/03, 10/20/08)

**18.2.4.2.1 Exception — Establishment of Championship.** A championship in an emerging women’s team sport may be sponsored if at least 28 institutions sponsor the sport. (Adopted: 1/8/01 effective 8/1/01)

# NCAA National Office Contacts

Contact NCAA national office staff with questions about the Emerging Sports for Women program.

## General Inquiries and the Application Process

- Amy Wilson ([awilson@ncaa.org](mailto:awilson@ncaa.org))
- Jean Merrill ([jmerrill@ncaa.org](mailto:jmerrill@ncaa.org))

## Legislative and Interpretive Inquiries

- Jean Merrill ([jmerrill@ncaa.org](mailto:jmerrill@ncaa.org))

## Branding and Publicity

- Gail Dent ([gdent@ncaa.org](mailto:gdent@ncaa.org))
- [NCAA Content Request Form](#)