



NCAA DIVISION III EXPLORATORY MEMBER PROCESS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I. Definitions.

Question No. 1: What is the exploratory year?

Answer: The exploratory year represents an opportunity for an institution to learn about the NCAA and Division III. This period also allows the Division III membership committee and the institution to determine whether Division III membership is appropriate for the institution and if the campus is prepared to begin the provisional membership process.

II. Division III Membership Application Process.

Question No. 2: How does an institution apply for membership?

Answer: An institution shall submit an application for membership to the national office. The form shall be received in the national office not later than February 1.

Question No. 3: What is the process for becoming a member?

Answer: Following submission of the application, the NCAA Division III Membership Committee will determine if an institution is accepted into the provisional membership process or the exploratory year.

Question No. 4: What are the standards that an institution must meet with their application for membership?

Answer: An institution must satisfy all the following at the time of application:

1. Participation in an exploratory year unless the institution:
 - a. Meets the minimum sport-sponsorship requirements in the year preceding the first year of provisional membership; and
 - b. The institution attests that in the first provisional year, that it will not award athletically related financial aid to any student that participates in athletics. The institution may honor previously awarded athletically related financial aid to students that choose not to participate in athletics.
2. Receipt of a bona fide invitation for membership from an active Division III multisport conference. A conference affiliation shall be maintained during the Division III membership process.

3. Satisfactory completion of a viability statement describing the institution's commitment to the Division III philosophy statement. The Membership Committee shall make available the viability statement form as part of the provisional member application.
4. Sponsorship by an active Division III member, including the establishment of a good faith mentoring relationship and submission of a letter of recommendation signed by the sponsoring institution's chancellor or president, athletics director, senior woman administrator and faculty athletics representative; and
5. Demonstration of a functioning compliance system. The Membership Committee shall make available the athletics department profile as part of the provisional member application.

Question No. 5: How long is the entire process to join Division III?

Answer: If an institution does not meet Bylaw 20.10.2.1.3-(a)(1-2) the institution may participate in an exploratory year; and then once accepted, complete three years in the provisional membership process (NCAA Bylaw 20.10.4.). Institutions reclassifying from Divisions I or II are not required to serve an exploratory year.

III. Division III Exploratory Year.

Question No. 6: What is the timeline for the exploratory year?

Answer: See Appendix A for a timeline of the exploratory year.

Question No. 7: When is the application due?

Answer: For an institution intending to become a Division III member during the upcoming academic year, they will submit a provisional membership application which is due not later than February¹. The application may be requested on the NCAA Division III Membership webpage in the "Division III Membership Links" section. Following submission of the application, the NCAA Division III Membership Committee will determine if an institution is accepted into the provisional membership process or the exploratory year.

Question No. 8: Is there a cost associated with the application?

Answer: A \$1,000 nonrefundable fee must be submitted with the application.

Question No. 9: Does an institution applying require an offer of conference membership?

Answer: Upon submission of a provisional application, the Membership Committee will determine if an institution is accepted into the provisional membership process or the exploratory year. As part of the application for provisional membership an institution will need a bona fide invitation from an active Division III multisport conference.

For additional information regarding the conference membership requirement, see Appendix B.

Question No. 10: Is an institution automatically accepted to participate in the exploratory year when it applies?

Answer: No. Upon submission of a provisional application, the Membership Committee will determine if an institution is accepted into the provisional membership process or the exploratory year. No institutions are automatically accepted into the process.

Question No. 11: When is an institution notified of its status to participate in the exploratory year?

Answer: An institution is notified of its status to participate in the exploratory year process following the NCAA Division III Membership Committee's meeting held every February.

Question No. 12: When does an institution officially begin the exploratory year?

Answer: September 1 of the academic year in which the institution serves its exploratory year. For example, if an institution serves its exploratory year during the 2025-26 academic year, September 1, 2025, is when the exploratory year officially begins.

Question No. 13: Is an institution required to publicly announce its participation in the Division III exploratory year? If so, when?

Answer: The NCAA Division III Presidents Council requests (but does not require) an institution to publicly announce its decision to explore NCAA Division III to provide transparency for all institutional stakeholders, and to ensure all prospective and current student-athletes are aware of potential athletically related financial aid implications if the institution ultimately decides to apply for Division III provisional membership status. Public announcements may be issued once an institution's application for the exploratory year has been accepted by the Division III Membership Committee.

Question No. 14: Is an institution considered a Division III member during the exploratory year?

Answer: No. An institution is not considered a Division III member in any regard during the exploratory year. Therefore, if an institution is a member of another athletics association (e.g., NAIA), the institution should continue to adhere to the rules and regulations of the association to which it belongs.

Question No. 15: Must an institution adhere to Division III legislation during the exploratory year?

Answer: No.

Question No. 16: What is an institution required to do and/or attend during the exploratory year?

Answer: During an institution's exploratory year, an institution is required either to:

1. Send the chancellor or president and director of athletics (other institutional guests are welcome) to an all-day New Member Orientation at the NCAA national office in Indianapolis, typically in September or October; or
2. Host a representative of the Division III Membership Committee and NCAA staff during an all-day visit to the institution's campus, typically in September or October.

The Membership Committee shall determine whether an institution must attend the New Member Orientation at the national office or host a campus visit based on whether the institution's exploratory application demonstrates a commitment to the Division III philosophy and evidence of the resources necessary to conduct a viable Division III athletics program. If the institution's exploratory application does not demonstrate a commitment to the Division III philosophy and evidence of the resources necessary to conduct a viable Division III athletics program, the Membership Committee may wish to conduct a visit to the institution's campus.

Question No. 17: Is an institution required to attend the NCAA Convention during the exploratory year?

Answer: No. An institution is not required to attend the NCAA Convention as a non-Division III member. If an exploratory member institution's chancellor or president and director of athletics (other institutional guests are welcome) are interested they may attend the following Convention sessions:

Division III New Member Session, the Division III Issues Forum and the Division III Business Session.

Question No. 18: Is an institution required to attend the NCAA Regional Rules Seminars during the exploratory year?

Answer: No. However, an institution is welcome to attend the NCAA Regional Rules Seminars as a non-Division III member.

Question No. 19: Is there a way for an institution to waive the Division III exploratory year?

Answer: No. Acceptance into the exploratory year or provisional membership is determined by the Membership Committee based on the established Division III standards as set forth in Bylaw 20.10.2.1.3. (See Bylaw 20.10.2.1.3 for specific application criteria.)

Question No. 20: If an institution is accepted to participate in the exploratory year, but ultimately changes course, may the institution defer its exploratory year?

Answer: No. If an institution prefers to participate in a subsequent exploratory year, the institution must reapply, including an additional \$2,000 nonrefundable fee.

Question No. 21: If an institution applies for a second time, does it negatively impact the institution's chances of being accepted to participate in the provisional membership process?

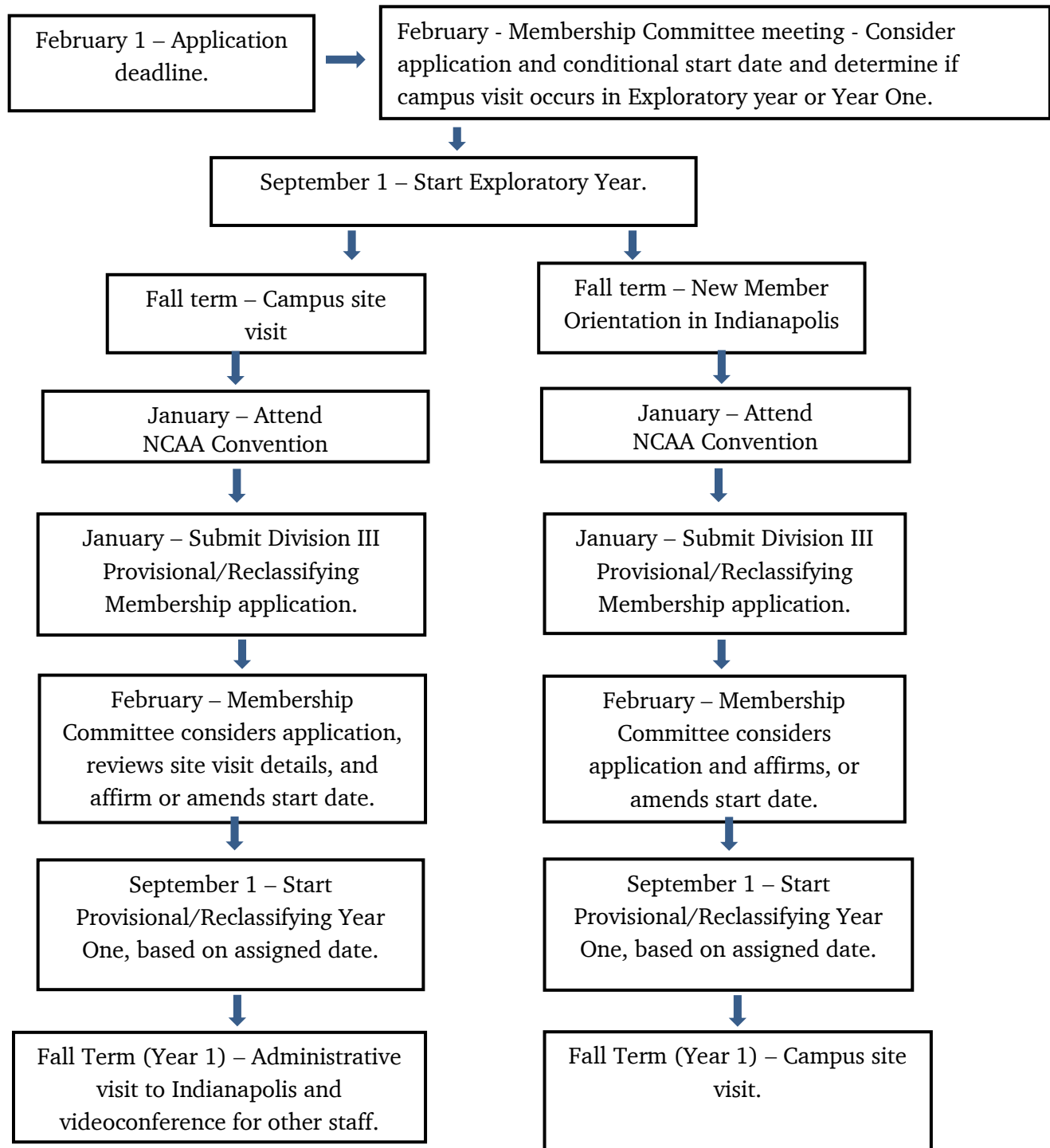
Answer: No. There is no consequence (good or bad) for an institution that applies in multiple years. The Membership Committee recognizes the philosophical, political, fiscal, and operational complexities of joining Division III and encourages institutions to explore Division III at their own pace.

Question No. 22: Following the exploratory year will the institution need to reapply to move into provisional membership?

Answer: Yes. If the institution enters into an exploratory year the institution would need to reapply by February 1 for provisional membership during the exploratory year.



TIMELINE FOR EXPLORATORY YEAR



Type: Educational Column

Title: Proposal No. 2023-9 Division Membership -- Provisional Membership -- Application Process -- Application for Membership -- Require Conference Membership

Division: III

Date Issued: January 14, 2023

Date Published: January 18, 2023

Item Ref No: 9

Text:

Effective Date: For institutions, whose provisional or reclassifying membership process will begin during or after the 2024-25 academic year.

Source: NCAA Division III Presidents Council [Management Council (Membership Committee)].

Intent: To require an institution to have a bona fide invitation from an active Division III conference before applying for Division III membership and maintain a conference affiliation during the Division III membership process.

General Application.

Question No. 1: How does this proposal change the current rule?

Answer: This is a new requirement. It would require an institution to have a bona fide invitation from an active Division III multi-sport conference before applying for Division III membership. The institution must maintain a conference affiliation during the Division III membership process.

Question No. 2: Can an institution without a Division III conference invitation apply for Division III membership?

Answer: No. The bona fide invitation from a conference is part of the application process.

Question No. 3: What is considered a bona fide invitation from a conference?

Answer: To satisfy this requirement, the institution may use a memorandum, signed by the chair of the chancellors and presidents' group or appropriate designee of the conference, as evidence of the active member conference's offer to become a full member upon the institution becoming an active Division III members.

Question No. 4: Does the provisional or reclassifying member have to maintain an affiliation with the same conference during the Division III membership process?

Answer: No. The institution may change their conference affiliation during the membership process.

Question No. 5: If an institution loses their conference affiliation, can the institution move forward through the provisional or reclassifying membership process?

Answer: Yes. However, failure to maintain a conference affiliation throughout the duration of the membership process could result in the institution being required to repeat a year of the three-year membership process per Bylaw 20.10.8.3. If the failure to maintain a conference affiliation is due to circumstances beyond the control of the institution, the committee may consider those circumstances during its review of the institution's annual report. Finally, the institution must receive a new invitation from a conference to be eligible to apply for active membership.

Question No. 6: Do institutions applying for the exploratory year require a bona fide invitation from a conference?

Answer: No. Exploratory institutions will not need a conference invitation. However, it will be a requirement as part of the application to be a provisional member, so any exploratory institutions wanting to transition to provisional membership will need a bona fide invitation.

Question No. 7: Would this proposal allow an institution to become an active Division III member as an independent institution?

Answer: No. An institution without conference affiliation will not be invited into active Division III membership.

Question No. 8: Would this proposal affect current Division III independent institutions?

Answer: No.

Question No. 9: Do institutions currently in the membership process need a bona fide invitation from a conference?

Answer: No. The proposal, if adopted, would become effective for institutions starting the Division III provisional/reclassifying process in the 2024-25 academic year. Institutions that are currently provisional or reclassifying members would not need a conference affiliation to move forward with the membership process.

Notice about Educational Columns and Hot Topics: *Educational columns and hot topics are not official or staff interpretations. They are intended to assist the membership by providing examples, scenarios and reminders related to legislation and interpretations at the time of publication. Member institutions are reminded to review the referenced bylaws and interpretations to ensure correct application of current rules and regulations.*

Legislative References

Legislative Cite	Title
20.10.2.1.3	Standards for Application for Membership.
