



**NCAA Initial-Eligibility Core-Course Requirements:
General Guidelines for
Credit Recovery, Online Courses and
Other Nontraditional Educational Opportunities**

This document provides NCAA Divisions I and II prospective student-athletes with information regarding nontraditional courses, such as online courses, credit recovery/retrieval courses or correspondence courses that are acceptable for NCAA core-course credit.

This document does NOT serve as an endorsement of any particular course provider, and following these guidelines does NOT guarantee that a prospective student-athlete will be eligible to participate in athletics at an NCAA Division I or II institution. Prospective student-athletes should consult with their high school guidance counselor, college compliance office or the NCAA Eligibility Center for additional information.

1. Nontraditional Courses.

- a. When considering an online, distance learning, correspondence or credit recovery program, there are several things to keep in mind:
 - There is no substitute for working hard academically.
 - NCAA rules require that all core courses are academic, four-year college-preparatory courses. Courses taken through distance learning, online, or for credit recovery need to compare in length, content and rigor to courses taught in a traditional classroom.
 - All courses must include ongoing access between the instructor and student, as well as regular interaction for purposes of teaching, evaluating and providing assistance. This may include e-mails between the student and teacher, feedback on assignments, and the opportunity for the teacher to provide individual instruction to the student.
 - Any course must have a defined time period for completion. It should be clear whether the course is meant to be taken for an entire semester or during a more condensed time frame, such as six weeks.
 - Nontraditional course titles should be listed on the high school transcript and should be clearly identified as such.

- b. Credit Recovery Courses. If a high school offers credit recovery courses to enable students to receive credit or new grades for courses they took previously, the following conditions should be met:
 - The school must follow its credit recovery policies, whether the student is an athlete or not. The Eligibility Center may request the policy if necessary.

- The credit recovery course **must** be comparable to the regular course. Just as the original course taken by the student should have been rigorous and college preparatory, the credit recovery course must be rigorous and college preparatory.
- The credit recovery course must meet the NCAA legislated definition of a core course.
- The credit recovery course titles should be clearly identified as such on the high school transcript.

2. How can a student find an appropriate program?

When researching to find the appropriate nontraditional educational program (e.g., credit recovery, online, correspondence or some other format), consider a school or program that:

- Offers courses that are four-year college preparatory. Courses should have significant rigor, and content and assessments that challenge the student to engage, to think and write critically, and to learn. Courses with content and concepts that would have been taught and mastered in primary or middle school do not fit this description.
- Requires regular and ongoing student/teacher interaction for purposes of teaching, evaluating and providing assistance. This may include e-mails between the student and teacher, feedback on assignments, and individual instruction provided by the teacher.
- Includes actual instruction, not just the student doing work on their own. There should be feedback, conversations and questions between the two parties.
- Has certified and qualified teachers.
- Uses a combination of assessments. This would include assignments, quizzes, papers, exams, required chats or virtual participation.
- Meets high school policy. School policy should clearly indicate whether such courses are accepted (and for whom), how they are placed on the transcript and how they are given credit. High school policy must be followed for all students.
- Uses security measures. There should be a means through which the school or program can verify the student's identify.
- Uses certified proctors. If the school or program uses proctors, there should be:
 - A process by which those proctors are selected;
 - A means to ensure proctors are qualified to perform their assigned duties; and
 - Clear policies on who should or should not be a proctor. For example, generally, a high school or college coach or athletics director should not serve as a proctor.

3. What types of nontraditional programs may not be accepted by the NCAA?

Not all nontraditional educational programs meet NCAA core-course requirements. When it comes to online, correspondence, credit recovery or another type of nontraditional course, exercise caution with schools or programs that:

- Do not have teacher-based instruction.
- Do not require regular and ongoing interaction between the student and the teacher.
- Do not have certified or qualified teachers.
- Only require students to do part of a class (e.g., the student only has to complete a portion of a course if they pre-test out of certain sections).
- Are less rigorous. Courses should have the same rigor as a college-preparatory course and should contain the same content.
- Do not have security measures to verify student identity.
- Allow students to complete courses in a short period of time (e.g., two weeks for a full-year course).
- Allow students to take numerous courses at the same time, especially courses in the same subject area, or that are sequential in nature (e.g., Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II at the same time).
- Have no formal assessments or limited assessments.
- Have no official student-grade records (e.g., transcript, grade report, student-course activity information).

4. A high school student-athlete is behind. What should he/she do?

If a student-athlete has not performed well in high school academics, he/she may not have enough core courses or a grade-point average high enough to become an NCAA student-athlete. Here are some suggestions about what to do to improve that situation and some pitfalls to avoid:

- Accept the consequences of poor academic performance. If academics are not taken seriously for most of high school, a student may need to accept the fact that he/she may not be able to play right away when they get to college.
- Sign up for four-year college-preparatory courses. Work on taking the required courses early, and do not get behind. There is no substitution for hard work.
- The courses should meet the high school's graduation requirements and should be on the high school's core-course list located on the NCAA Eligibility Center's Web site at www.eligibilitycenter.org. If there are questions about this, a student should meet with his/her guidance counselor or contact the NCAA Eligibility Center at 800/262-1492.
- See a counselor for guidance. Students should not try to do this on their own, or take advice from an authority who is not involved in their educational planning. Call the NCAA Eligibility Center at 800/262-1492, or a college admissions or compliance office.

- Get tutoring or other study help. Students should ask a teacher to meet with them before or after school. A high school may have tutoring they offer free of charge, or students may need to hire someone to help them understand the concepts being taught in their courses.
- Consider district-approved summer school for the summers after ninth, tenth or eleventh grades. Make sure the summer school program meets the high school's requirements.
- Stay on track and take a full schedule of college-preparatory courses during the academic year. Do not overload, though, and try to do too much.
- Graduate on time. This will best position a student, if necessary, to take one course after high school graduation to use in Division I certification.
- Whenever questions arise, call the NCAA Eligibility Center at 800/262-1492 or the compliance officer at the college that the student has been recruited to attend.
- DO NOT try a "quick fix" through credit recovery or other short cuts. These courses may not be accepted and could trigger extra review of an academic record.
- DO NOT try to take a full schedule of courses at high school during the day, and another full schedule through an alternative school or program at night. This could result in academic overload and may jeopardize NCAA initial-eligibility status.
- KEEP coursework. If an academic record contains an irregularly high number of courses at the end of a high school career, the NCAA may request to review the work (e.g., exams, papers and assignments).
- DO NOT go around a high school's policy, and do not take the advice of anyone who suggests that direction. The best thing to do is work within the rules.

Important New Changes for Division I

The rules regarding software-based credit recovery, virtual, online, independent study and correspondence courses have changed. These types of courses, which are identified by the NCAA Eligibility Center as nontraditional courses, must meet new guidelines in order to be used for college-bound student-athletes who are planning to attend an NCAA Division I college or university.

The rule change was enacted to ensure that acceptable nontraditional courses provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their work was completed in a manner consistent with the intent and design of the core-course curriculum requirements. This legislation will allow the NCAA Eligibility Center to determine which courses and institutions are acceptable to satisfy initial-eligibility standards with the ultimate goal of ensuring that prospective student-athletes are enrolled in quality courses that satisfy the intent of the core-curriculum requirements and prepare prospective student-athlete for college academic work.

What Are the Changes?

Nontraditional courses must meet the following:

1. Courses that are taught through distance learning, online, credit recovery, etc. need to be comparable in length, content and rigor to courses taught in a traditional classroom setting. Students may not skip lessons or test out of modules. The course must be four-year college preparatory.
2. All courses must include ongoing access between the instructor and student, as well as regular interaction for purposes of teaching, evaluating and providing assistance. This may include, for example, exchanging of e-mails between the student and teacher, feedback on assignments, and the opportunity for the teacher to engage the student in individual instruction.
3. Any course taken must have a defined time period for completion. For example, it should be clear whether the course is meant to be taken for an entire semester or during a more condensed time frame, such as six weeks, etc.
4. Nontraditional courses should be clearly identified as such on the high school transcript.

When Does this Rule Take Effect?

The rule applies to courses completed on or after August 1, 2010, for students first entering an NCAA Division I college or university on or after August 1, 2010. Nontraditional courses completed prior to August 1, 2010, will be reviewed under current NCAA standards.

It is important to remember that all courses need to be rigorous, four-year college preparatory in nature. Students should be encouraged to take courses that are quantitatively and qualitatively the same as courses offered through traditional means, and to take courses that

will prepare them for the academic rigors they will face at a four-year college or university.

The text of the new rule appears below.

14.3.1.2.2 Nontraditional Courses.

Courses taught via the Internet, distance learning, independent study, individualized instruction, correspondence, and courses taught by similar means may be used to satisfy NCAA core-course requirements if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

- (a) The course meets all requirements for a core course as defined in Bylaw 14.3.1.2;
- (b) The instructor and the student have ongoing access to one another for purposes of teaching, evaluating and providing assistance to the student throughout the duration of the course;
- (c) The instructor and the student have regular interaction with one another for purposes of teaching, evaluating and providing assistance to the student throughout the duration of the course;
- (d) The student's work (e.g., exams, papers, assignments) is available for evaluation and validation;
- (e) Evaluation of the student's work is conducted by the appropriate academic authorities in accordance with the high school's established academic policies;
- (f) The course includes a defined time period for completion; and
- (g) The course is acceptable for any student and is placed on the high school transcript.