



# ACADEMICS GUIDE



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY

**Q: What kind of grades do I need to play college hockey?**

A: In order for a prospective student-athlete to be academically eligible to play in NCAA Division I he must have graduated from high school, fulfilled a core curriculum of at least 16 courses, and met a minimum index score that combines standardized tests scores (SAT, ACT) and GPA at an approved high school. Potential student athletes must also satisfy 10 core courses in the first 7 semesters of high school, known as the 10/7 progression requirement. A prospective student-athlete should regularly meet with a college counselor, provided by their high school, in order to ensure they meet these requirements. All certified high school college counselors should be familiar with the necessary steps and minimum requirements set forth by the NCAA. While the NCAA sets a minimum eligibility standard, individual institutions may set higher standards for admission. More information can be found at the NCAA Eligibility Center.

**Q: What requirements do I need to be able to practice, play and get a scholarship at an NCAA Division I college or university?**

A: You need to complete the following to be certified by the NCAA Eligibility Center:

- Graduate from high school:
- Complete a minimum of 16 (for Division I) core courses that meet subject area requirements.
- These core courses must meet the 10/7 progression requirement (above).
- Present the required grade-point average (GPA).
- Request final amateurism certification from the Eligibility Center (beginning April 1 for fall enrollees or beginning October 1 for spring enrollees).

*Note: The NCAA Eligibility Center is not requiring an ACT or SAT score for Initial Eligibility Certification due to COVID-19 flexibility. However, a potential student athlete is wise to still take one of the tests as many universities will still require a test score for admission.*

**Q: How do I know if the courses I am taking will count as core courses?**

A: You need to look at your high school's list of NCAA courses. Follow these steps:

- Go to the NCAA Eligibility Center website at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org);
- Click on the "High School Admin" link to enter.
- Click on "Resources".
- Click on the appropriate link for "U.S. Students" or "International Students".
- Click on "List of NCAA Courses".



- Input your high school's CEEB code (if you know it) or search by your high school's name and state or province.
- Review the list.

*\*Very important:* If a core course you took is not on the list, it will not be used in your eligibility determination. Courses that appear on your transcript must exactly match what is on the list.

**Q: What do I do if a core course I took is not on the list?**

A: See your high school counselor immediately. Someone at your high school is responsible for keeping your high school's list updated. It is important your high school does this each year to make sure the core courses you are taking appear on the list.

**Q: What is the lowest grade that will be used for a course to count as a core course?**

A: Follow your high school's policy regarding its lowest passing grade. If the NCAA Eligibility Center does not have this policy, the lowest passing grade that will be used is D.

**Q: Will credit-by-exam courses meet core-course requirements?**

A: No. Courses completed through credit-by-exam will not be used.

**Q: Are vocational courses acceptable?**

A: No. Traditional vocational courses (e.g., typing, auto mechanics, driver's education and health) are not acceptable as core courses.

**Q: Do pass/fail grades count?**

A: These grades may satisfy your core-course requirements. The NCAA Eligibility Center will assign your high school's lowest passing grade for a pass/fail class so long as the course receives credit toward graduation.

**Q: May courses taken in the eighth grade that are high school core courses (e.g., Algebra I, Spanish 1, Freshman Composition) be used to meet the core-course requirement?**

A: A high school course taken in the eighth grade may be used if the course is on the high school transcript with a grade and credit and if the course is on the high school's list of NCAA courses.

**Q: May Independent-Study, Internet and Correspondence courses count as core courses?**

A: Yes, if the following four conditions are met:

- 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.
- 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. 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.

- Nontraditional courses should be clearly identified as such on the high school transcript. It is important to remember that all courses need to be rigorous and 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.

**Q: May college courses count as core courses?**

A: College courses may be used to satisfy core-curriculum requirements if the courses are accepted and awarded credit by the high school for any student and meet all other requirements for core courses. For NCAA Division I only, such courses must be placed on the student's high school transcript. Courses taken at a college will NOT appear on the high school's list of NCAA courses. The high school's list of NCAA courses will include only those courses taught/offered by the high school.

**Q: How are courses taken over two years counted?**

A: A one-year course that is spread over a longer period of time is considered one course and will receive a maximum of one core-course credit. (Example: Algebra 1, spread over two years, would receive one unit of credit.)

**Q: May my study in a foreign country help me meet core-course requirements?**

A: If you attended a secondary school outside the United States for all or part of grades nine through 12, different evaluation procedures will be applied to your international education documents. You must submit original-language documents with certified translations for NCAA Eligibility Center evaluation.

**Q: How is my core course GPA calculated?**

A: Your core-course GPA is the average of your best grades achieved for all required core courses. If you have taken extra core courses, those courses will be used in your GPA, only if they improve your GPA.

**Q: Can weighted grades for honors or advanced-placement courses be factored into the calculation of the student's core GPA?**

A: A school's normal practice of weighting honors or advanced courses may be used, as long as the weighting is used for computing GPAs. Weighting cannot be used if the high school weights grades for the purpose of determining class rank. Additionally, in no instance may the student



receive greater than 1.000 additional quality point for purposes of calculating the GPA for initial eligibility.

**Q: How is the NCAA core GPA different from a student’s overall GPA?**

A: The NCAA core-course GPA is calculated using only NCAA-approved core courses in the required number of core units. High school GPAs generally include the grades from most or all courses attempted in grades nine through 12.

**Q: Will courses taken after my senior year meet core-course requirements?**

A: For Division I, maybe. Only courses completed in grades nine through 12 will qualify as core courses for Division I. If you graduate from high school on time (in eight semesters) with your incoming ninth grade class, you may use one core course completed in the year after graduation (summer or academic year) prior to full-time collegiate enrollment. You may complete the core course at a location other than the high school from which you graduated and may initially enroll full time at a collegiate institution at any time after completion of the core course.

For students with diagnosed disabilities:

- For Division I only, a student must graduate “on time” in order to use up to three (3) additional approved core courses taken before full-time enrollment in college.
- For Division II only, students may use any approved core courses taken before full-time enrollment in college.
- For Divisions I and II, students may use courses for students with education-impacting disabilities that are designated on the high school’s list of NCAA courses.

**Q: If I enroll in university courses while playing junior hockey, would that impact my NCAA eligibility?**

A: Many future NCAA hockey players will take university courses prior to enrollment; this can help them stay academically sharp and those credits may transfer into their future NCAA school. It is important, however, not to enroll full-time in a post-secondary institution. NCAA athletes have five seasons to complete their four seasons of athletic eligibility, and that five-year “clock” starts upon full-time enrollment at any post-secondary school, with the definition of full-time being determined by that institution. (One exception to this is the 21-year-old rule, addressed on later in this document.)



**Q: I need to take the SAT/ACT test. Where can I find more information about them?**

A: The SAT is a standardized test used by colleges and the NCAA to help determine college admission and eligibility. Visit the College Board web site at [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org](http://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org) for more information on the SAT, including test dates, registration and study guides. Many companies offer customized tutoring or instructional books to help students prepare to take the SATs.

Some schools also accept the ACT, another form of standardized test. For more information on the ACT please visit [www.act.org](http://www.act.org). You do not have to take both the SAT and ACT.

*Note: The NCAA Eligibility Center is not requiring an ACT or SAT score for Initial Eligibility Certification due to COVID-19 flexibility. However, a potential student athlete is wise to still take one of the tests as many universities will still require a test score for admission.*

**Q: May a nonstandard SAT/ACT exam be used for initial eligibility?**

A: Yes. Students with diagnosed education-impacting disabilities may take a nonstandard ACT or SAT exam. The test score must be provided to the NCAA Eligibility Center from the testing agency, just as any other test score.



## **NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER**

**Q: What is the NCAA Eligibility Center?**

A: The NCAA Eligibility Center, often referred to as the "Clearinghouse", certifies the academic and amateur credentials of all college-bound student-athletes who wish to compete in NCAA Division I or II athletics. Prospective student-athletes should register at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org) by 11th grade to help ensure that they are on the right path to qualify academically.

**Q: Is there a fee to register?**

A: Yes. The registration fee for a Certification Account is \$100 for U.S., U.S. territories and Canadian students. For students who attended an international school after age 11, the international fee is \$160. The registration fee for DIII amateur certification for international students is \$70. (Canadian schools, Department of Defense schools and international schools with American diplomas are not considered international schools.)

**Q: Is this fee refundable?**

A: All fees are nonrefundable after successful registration. No refunds will be given due to nonparticipation or disinterest at an NCAA Division I or II college or university. In the event a duplicate registration was completed and duplicate payment was processed, you may be eligible for a refund of the duplicate registration fee(s).

**Q: How are students prioritized for processing at the NCAA Eligibility Center?**

A: Students who have their status requested by an NCAA college or university are prioritized by the NCAA Eligibility Center for processing. If a student's eligibility status is never requested by a college or university, the NCAA Eligibility Center may not process such a student's certification.



## Registering with the Eligibility Center

An important step for any prospective Division I or II student-athlete is registering with the NCAA Eligibility Center at [eligibilitycenter.org](http://eligibilitycenter.org).

Here are 10 things you need to know about

**1. Creating a profile page is free.** Prospective student-athletes (PSAs) can create a profile page at any time, even prior to enrolling in high school. Creating a profile page gives you an NCAA ID number and makes it easy for the Eligibility Center to communicate directly with you.

**2. Division I prospects and DIII international prospects eventually will need to transition to a certification account.** Before a prospective student-athlete (PSA) can make an official visit to a Division I or II school, sign a National Letter of Intent, or play at that level, they will need to have a certification account at the NCAA Eligibility Center. PSAs with a profile page can easily transition that to a certification account. Note that Division III student-athletes do not need to register with the Eligibility Center.

**3. There is a fee to create a certification account.** Creating a certification account costs \$100 for U.S. or Canadian PSAs, or \$160 for international students. Certification is now required for DIII international students as well, and the fee is \$70.

**4. When you create an account can vary.** College Hockey Inc. recommends creating a certification account prior to 11th grade, though one can be created earlier or later. PSAs will need a certification account to make an official visit, which can occur as early as Aug. 1 prior to 11th grade. Setting up a profile page and familiarizing yourself with the Eligibility Center can be a benefit early in your high school career as you plan which courses to take.

**5. The Eligibility Center evaluates a PSA's amateurism and academics.** To be eligible to play Division I or II you must maintain your amateur status and achieve minimum academic requirements. To evaluate these, the Eligibility Center will ask about your hockey experiences, particularly any interactions with major junior or professional teams. You will also need to submit all high school transcripts and ACT/SAT scores.

*Note: The NCAA Eligibility Center is not requiring an ACT or SAT score for Initial Eligibility Certification due to COVID-19 flexibility. However, a potential student athlete is wise to still take one of the tests as many universities will still require a test score for admission.*



**6. You have to take 16 “core courses” in high school.** The grade-point average considered by the NCAA only includes what are considered "core courses" – and all prospective students must

have taken 16 of these core courses, including 10 prior to the seventh semester of high school. The NCAA Eligibility Center includes important details on those requirements, plus lists of approved core courses at specific high schools or in each Canadian province.

**7. Requirements can vary by country.** Academic requirements can vary by country; international students can find more information at [CollegeHockeyInc.com](http://CollegeHockeyInc.com). Any transcripts need to be translated to English before being submitted to the NCAA Eligibility Center.

**8. There are no other organizations you need to register with.** You must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center to play NCAA Division I hockey or if you are a Division III international potential student athlete, but there are no other outside organizations that you are required to register with. That includes College Hockey Inc. or recruiting services like NCSA, Captain U, etc.

**9. A school must request your final certification.** The NCAA Eligibility Center cannot process your final certification and deem you eligible to play Division I or II until a school requests your final certification. This typically happens in the months and sometimes weeks prior to your freshman season. Schools make this request by adding the PSA to their institutional request list (IRL).

**10. The NCAA has answers to many other questions in its FAQ.** Visit [eligibilitycenter.org](http://eligibilitycenter.org) to learn more about the Eligibility Center and the certification process.



## **RECRUITMENT**

**Q: I am a 16-year-old sophomore in high school and have written numerous emails to college coaches – why haven't any of them written back to me?**

A: Division I men's college hockey coaches are not allowed to have recruiting conversations with prospective student-athletes until January 1 of their sophomore year (grade 10) in high school. That means they cannot reply to emails, text messages, or return phone calls prior to that date.

This prohibition also includes in-person conversations and phone calls initiated by prospects. If a prospect does come in contact with a coach prior to January 1 of their sophomore year, NCAA rules require that the coach not engage in a recruiting conversation.

**Q: Is there a way for me to speak with a college coach prior to January 1 of my grade 10 year?**

A: No, all recruiting conversations with prospects and their families, coaches and advisors are prohibited prior to January 1 of the prospect's sophomore year.

**Q: Can a college coach talk to my coach or advisor prior to January 1 of my grade 10 year?**

A: A college coach may have an evaluative conversation with a third party such as a coach or advisor at any time but may not use these conversations to send recruiting messages (verbal offers, etc.) to prospective student-athletes prior to January 1 of their sophomore (grade 10) year. Prospects may not listen to evaluative conversations between NCAA coaches and third parties until January 1 of their sophomore (grade 10) year.

**Q: What is the difference between an official college visit and an unofficial visit?**

A: NCAA rule changes in 2018 and 2019 impact when prospective student-athletes may visit with college coaches on their campuses.

An official college visit is a 48-hour, expense-paid visit. An official visit cannot be taken until August 1 of the prospective student-athlete's 11th-grade year in high school. A student-athlete is allowed (5) five total official visits but only (1) one per school.

An unofficial visit is paid for by the student-athlete, can last any length of time and there is no limit to the number of unofficial visits a student can take. Unofficial visits may not take place until January 1 of the prospective student-athlete's 10th-grade year in high school. During an unofficial visit the coaching staff may meet with a prospective student-athlete and provide him with a tour of the campus and facilities.

Prospective student-athletes may visit college campuses at any time, but prior to January 1 of their 10th-grade year they may not have recruiting conversations with college coaches during their visit.



**Q: What's the 21-year-old rule?**

A: If you play a junior game after your 21st birthday you will lose one year of NCAA athletic eligibility, leaving you with three years remaining (this rule applies only to Division I competition).

Student-athletes can retain their four years of NCAA eligibility and play a game after turning 21 if they enroll full-time in a post-secondary institution. While this starts a student-athlete's five-year eligibility "clock," they could use their full four years of eligibility provided that they enroll at the NCAA Division I school the following fall. The institution in this case may not be an online only school. It also cannot field a varsity hockey program (in the U.S. or Canada) or the student-athlete would be subject to NCAA transfer rules.

**Q: Please outline the recruiting process for me?**

A: The average age of NCAA commitment is 18.9 years old. Players will likely play one or two years of college eligible junior hockey before they play NCAA Hockey. Players that participate in the CHL (OHL, WHL, and QMJHL) are deemed ineligible by the NCAA.

**Q: How do you reach someone at the NCAA Eligibility Center to help with additional questions?**

A: If you have additional questions or need further assistance, please contact the NCAA Customer Service Center at (877) 262-1492. For international academic questions please contact [ec-international@ncaa.org](mailto:ec-international@ncaa.org).



## AMATEURISM AND NCAA ELIGIBILITY

### **Q: What is amateurism, and how is it maintained?**

A: NCAA student-athletes are amateurs and cannot have played for a professional sports team prior to enrollment. In hockey, specifically, this means that anyone who signs a contract with or plays for a team in the Canadian Hockey League (OHL, QMJHL or WHL) forfeits their NCAA eligibility.

The NCAA Eligibility Center will certify each prospective student-athlete's amateur status prior to clearing them for competition at the Division I level or for DIII international students.

#### What You Need to Do:

- Do not accept payment or gifts based upon your ability as a hockey player.
- Do not sign a contract or play a game (even an exhibition game) for a professional team, including those in the CHL.
- You may attend a camp with a professional team for up to 48 hours if they are covering expenses, you may participate for longer if you cover all expenses.
- Junior, prep or high school teams may cover some or all of your costs to play for them, as long as they are actual and necessary expenses.

### **Q: Can I attend a testing session with an NHL team and retain my college eligibility?**

A: NCAA regulations allow student-athletes (or prospective student-athletes) to take part in one testing or tryout session per NHL team, at the team's expense, for up to 48 hours. An exception is if a player takes part in the NHL Draft Combine or the NHL Research and Development Camp - those events are considered tryouts for all 32 NHL teams. A player could participate in another tryout beyond those events but would need to pay his own way.

### **Q: Can I attend an NHL team's summer development camp?**

A: NCAA prospects or current student athletes may attend NHL summer development camps, or prospect camps, but must pay their own way (transportation, lodging, food, etc.) and current players may not miss class to do so.

There is an opportunity, similar to the 48-hour rule, to have an NHL team pay a portion of a player's stay at development camp on a one-time-per-team basis. The 48-hour period begins when you arrive at the team's facility and ends exactly 48 hours later. While in attendance the team can supply you with expenses that include travel, hotel, food, equipment, and all costs associated with practice and off-ice training. A player would have to cover all costs after that 48-hour period, including return transportation home.



## ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS

### **Q: What are athletic scholarships?**

A: An athletic scholarship is financial aid from a university or college based in any degree on the athletic ability of the student-athlete. Athletic scholarships are formalized by entering into agreements called "National Letters of Intent," which is a written agreement between the institution and the student-athlete.

### **Q: What is a "National Letter of Intent"?**

A: The National Letter of Intent (NLI) is the name of the document that formalizes an athletic scholarship. It is a binding agreement between a student-athlete and a university in which the university agrees to provide athletic aid in exchange for the student-athlete's agreement to attend the university.

Learn more about the NLI at [www.nationalletter.org](http://www.nationalletter.org)

### **Q: What is a verbal commitment?**

A: A verbal commitment is a non-binding agreement between a prospect and a coach to attend that coach's institution. No verbal commitments can be made before to August 1<sup>st</sup> prior to a student athlete's junior year.

### **Q: What is covered by an athletic scholarship?**

A: Funds for tuition and fees, books, room and board, and certain other expenses. The only required expense that a full athletic scholarship cannot cover is transportation to and from campus.

Not all hockey scholarships are full scholarships - some may cover half or some other portion of expenses.

### **Q: Are scholarships guaranteed for four years?**

A: Scholarship agreements may be made for anywhere from one to five years. Signing a National Letter of Intent, even for a scholarship promised for four years, commits a student-athlete to that school for one year. Even those scholarship agreements made for one season are almost always renewed annually; they are very rarely cancelled and never for on-ice performance.

### **Q: Can athletic scholarships be cancelled if I play poorly or the coach doesn't like me?**

A: Athletic scholarships may not be reduced, or cancelled year-to-year based on your ability or performance, because an injury prevents you from participating or for any other athletic reason.

If you are receiving an athletic scholarship, the scholarship may be reduced or cancelled only if you:



- render yourself ineligible for NCAA competition:
- misrepresented any information on your application, letter of intent or financial aid agreement;
- commit serious misconduct which warrants a substantial disciplinary penalty; or
- voluntarily quit the team for personal reasons.

**Q: Who decides if I get an athletic scholarship?**

A: Coaches. Although admissions offices can refuse the admission of any student, thereby effectively refusing an athletic scholarship, coaches and athletic departments typically have a good sense of what to expect from their admissions office. This allows coaches to scout and recruit players who they can reasonably expect to earn admission.

**Q: Does every student-athlete receive a 100% or “full” scholarship?**

A: Universities are permitted to grant 18 "full" scholarships and typically carry around 26 players, so not all are on full scholarships. In other words, most NCAA teams have some players who receive only a portion of their expenses in athletic scholarship (i.e. partial scholarship) and some players who receive all of their expenses in scholarship (i.e. full scholarship).



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### **CHANGES DUE TO COVID-19**

COVID19 continues to have an Impact on NCAA rules and regulations. For the latest updates pertaining to men's hockey please visit <http://collegehockeyinc.com/articles/2020/08/covid-impact-on-ncaa-rules.php>

You may also visit <https://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/covid-19-coronavirus> for NCAA updates.

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