

# Helping Student-athletes Through NCAA Initial-eligibility Process

**Editor's Note:** This article on the basic requirements of the NCAA initial-eligibility process was written by the National Association for Athletics Compliance (NAAC) Education Subcommittee and outlines some of the basic requirements of the NCAA Initial-Eligibility process and offers information on how high school coaches, guidance counselors and administrators can help guide their student-athletes through this sometimes confusing process.

## NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER

Prospective student-athletes should register with the Eligibility Center at the beginning of their junior year in high school. Registration occurs online at the Eligibility Center Web site: [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org).

**Q:** Is there a cost for registering with the NCAA Eligibility Center?

**A:** Yes. Registration is \$60.

The registration fee may be waived for prospective student-athletes who have received a fee waiver for the ACT or SAT. High school counselors can submit waiver confirmations through the High School Administrators portal of the Eligibility Center Web site.

**Q:** What information must be submitted to the Eligibility Center?

**A:** Official High School Transcript.

A sixth-semester official transcript should be sent to the Eligibility Center upon completion of the junior year. A final official transcript with proof of graduation should be sent after graduation. If a prospective student-athlete has attended more than one high school, an official transcript should be sent to the Eligibility Center from each high school attended.

All transcripts should be mailed or overnight delivered to the Eligibility Center at:

NCAA Eligibility Center  
PO Box 7136  
Indianapolis, IN 46207  
(standard mail)

-OR-

NCAA Eligibility Center  
1802 Alonzo Watford Sr. Drive  
Indianapolis, IN 46202  
(overnight delivery)

## Test Scores (ACT or SAT)

Test scores must be sent directly from the testing agency. The Eligibility Center should be selected as one of the college choices by using Code "9999". Students can also have their test scores sent to the Eligibility Center by visiting [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) or [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org).

**Q:** What requirements must a prospective student-athlete meet to be certified by the Eligibility Center as eligible for practice, competition and athletics aid?

**A:** A prospective student-athlete must:

- Graduate from high school;
- Complete a minimum of 16 core courses;
- Present the required grade-point average on the GPA/test score sliding scale;
- Present a qualifying test score on either the ACT or SAT\*\*;
- Complete the amateurism questionnaire.

\*\*The sum ACT score is calculated by adding together the score for each subsection (English, Math, Reading, Science) of the exam. The Eligibility Center does not use the ACT composite score. The combined SAT score is determined by adding the Critical Reading and Math sections of the exam.

**Q:** What is a Core Course?

**A:** A core course is a class that meets all of the following criteria:

- Any Mathematics course at or above Algebra I;
- It is completed no later than the core-course time limitation (in eight semesters and with the prospective student-athlete's incoming ninth-grade class); and
- It is taken no earlier than the eighth grade.

**Q:** What core courses are required for eligibility?

**A:** 16 core courses must be completed as follows:

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of Mathematics (Algebra 1 or higher)

- 2 years of Natural/Physical Science (including 1 year of a lab if offered by high school)
- 1 additional year of English, Mathematics, or Natural/Physical Science
- 2 years of Social Science
- 4 years of “additional” core courses (foreign language, non-doctrinal religion/philosophy, or any of the above areas).

**Q:** Where can I find the list of approved core courses for our high school?

**A:** Approved course lists can be accessed at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org), by entering the appropriate portal (i.e., Students and Parents, High Schools) and selecting the Resources tab.

**Q:** How can the list of approved core courses be updated?

**A:** High school administrators should use the core course submission section of the Eligibility Center Web site (located within the High School portal) to submit the titles of courses that meet core-course requirements.

**Q:** Will courses taken after a student's senior year meet core-course requirements?

**A:** A prospective student-athlete may use one core course completed during the year after graduation. The course may be completed in summer or during the academic year and may be taken at a location other than the high school from which the prospective student-athlete graduated. This coursework must be completed prior to the prospective student-athlete's initial full-time enrollment at a collegiate institution.

**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 that satisfy the core-course requirements listed above.

**Q:** How is the core-course GPA calculated?

**A:** The core-course GPA is the average of the best grades achieved for all required core courses. To determine the quality points earned for each core course, multiply the points for the grade by the amount of credit earned. Use the following scale unless your high school has a different scale as indicated on the approved core course list:

A = 4 points B = 3 points C = 2 points D = 1 point

Examples of total quality point calculation are:

- An A grade (4 points) for a semester course (0.50 units) = 4 points x 0.5 units = 2 quality points
- An A grade (4 points) for a full-year course (1.00 units) = 4 points x 1.0 units = 4 quality points

Once the total quality points are tallied, divide those points by the total number of core-course units the prospective student-athlete has completed. This calculation helps keep track of the prospective student-athlete's core grade-point average.

Resources to help with these calculations are found by logging onto [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org) and selecting the “Resources” tab, then “U.S. Students”.

**Q:** What role do high school guidance counselors and athletic administrators play in the initial-eligibility process?

**A:** Guidance counselors and athletic administrators should:

- Make sure the list of approved courses is current and accurate;
- Encourage college-bound prospective student-athletes to complete the registration process as early as possible, but not later than the beginning of their junior year;
- Send official transcripts for all prospective student-athletes at the end of their sixth semester and eighth semester, including proof of graduation; and
- Submit registration fee waivers.

**Q:** How can high school guidance counselors and athletic administrators help a student navigate through the initial-eligibility process?

**A:** Guidance counselors and athletic administrators should:

- Know the initial-eligibility requirements;
- Map out an academic track for prospective student-athletes as early as possible, and no later than the start of the senior year, to allow for proper scheduling of core courses prior to graduation;
- Know how to calculate a core-course GPA;
- Understand the special considerations that are given to prospective student-athletes with documented education-impacting disabilities and how to guide individuals with a disability through the NCAA documentation process;
- Create an efficient system to submit information to the Eligibility Center;
- Help students identify colleges that fit their criteria (e.g., academics, size, distance from home, location, etc.);
- Emphasize the importance of academic performance at all grade levels – grade nine counts towards core GPA just as much as grade 12; and
- Ensure that college-bound prospective student-athletes are taking core courses from ninth through 12th grades.



*The National Association for Athletics Compliance is one of 11 affiliate associations of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics and is the only professional organization dedicated to serving NCAA compliance programs at our nation's NCAA Division I, II and III institutions.*