

**NCAA Division I Awards, Benefits, Expenses and Financial Aid Cabinet  
Financial Aid Renewals/Nonrenewals and Hearing Opportunities:  
Points to Consider and Suggested Best Practices**

**NCAA Bylaw 15.3.2.4 (Hearing Opportunity) - Points to Consider.**

1. Prior to taking action to reduce or cancel the aid, the student-athlete must be provided with the following documents:
  - a. Written notice of the reduction or cancellation;
  - b. Written notice of an opportunity for a hearing; and
  - c. Copy of the institution's established policies and procedures for conducting the required hearing, including the deadline by which the hearing must be requested.
2. Institutions may conduct hearings via conference call, in-person meeting (with or without the student-athlete present) or in writing. The format of the hearing depends on institutional policy.

**Bylaw 15.3.5.1 (Renewals and Nonrenewals - Institutional Obligation) - Points to Consider.**

1. Institutions may choose to renew or not renew for any reason once the period of the award has concluded.
2. Requirements for renewals/nonrenewals only apply to athletically related aid.
3. The July 1 deadline applies to the date the notification must be postmarked, not actually received. As a best practice, institutions are encouraged to initiate this process as early as possible.
4. Electronically transmitted notification (e.g., e-mail) is permissible.

**Suggested Best Practices.**

The following information related to financial aid hearing opportunities (NCAA Bylaws 15.3.2.4 and 15.3.5.1) is intended to serve as **suggested** processes and procedures. Institutions are not required per NCAA legislation to conduct hearings in accordance with these suggested practices.

1. Suggestions for who should be involved:
  - a. Financial aid office (NOTE: NCAA legislation requires an institution's regular financial aid authority to notify the student-athlete in writing of the opportunity for a hearing).
  - b. Financial aid hearing/appeals committee.
  - c. Athletics department.
  - d. Coach.
  - e. Student-athlete.
  - f. Advocate for the student-athlete (e.g., parent, legal guardian, immediate family member).
  
2. Suggestions for what should be in writing/documented:
  - a. Specific roles of financial aid, athletics department, hearing committee, student-athlete and coach.
  - b. Processes for drafting, issuing, applying, revising and monitoring financial aid agreements for the academic year and the summer term(s); and the roles of individuals involved in those processes.
  - c. Specific steps of the hearing process (e.g., submission of request, process and format for conducting the hearing, process for issuing the decision), including specific deadlines/timelines for each step in the process, identification of individuals who may be involved in the process and identify how and when information will be communicated to coaches and student-athletes.
  - d. Protocol for addressing situations when it is alleged that the established procedures for a hearing were not followed.
  
3. Suggestions for communication and education:

- a. Educate student-athletes, coaches, appropriate athletics department and conference office staff, appropriate financial aid office staff and appeals committee, at least annually, on the following topics:
    - (1) NCAA legislation governing increases and reductions and/or cancellations of athletics aid;
    - (2) NCAA legislation governing renewals and nonrenewals of athletics aid;
    - (3) NCAA legislation governing hearing opportunities;
    - (4) Institutional policies governing increases and reductions and/or cancellations of athletics aid;
    - (5) Institutional policies governing renewals and nonrenewals of athletics aid; and
    - (6) Institutional policies and procedures governing hearing opportunities (including who is involved in the hearing process).
  - b. Include policies and procedures for athletics aid on athletics Web site and in student-athlete handbook, and educate student-athletes and staff on where the policies and procedures are located.
  - c. Communicate and share ideas with other institutions.
4. Suggestions related to notifying the student-athlete of the reduction and/or cancellation:
- a. The final communication that a student-athlete's athletics aid is being cancelled should not be the first time the student-athlete hears that his or her athletics aid is in jeopardy. Regular communication of issues should occur between the coach, athletics department staff and the student-athlete throughout the year.
  - b. Whenever possible, the coach and/or a member of the athletics department should meet in-person to discuss the decision to reduce or cancel athletics aid with the student-athlete before sending the written notification.
  - c. Provide the student-athlete, in writing, a specific deadline by which he or she must request a hearing.

- d. If using an electronic delivery (e.g., e-mail) to notify the student-athlete of the reduction and/or cancellation, have a follow-up process in place to ensure the student-athlete receives the notice.
  - e. Establish a process to maintain current contact information for student-athletes.
  - f. Note: NCAA legislation requires institutions to provide student-athletes with written notice of the renewal/nonrenewal of athletics aid on or before July 1; however, as a best practice, institutions are encouraged to initiate this process as early as possible.
5. Suggestions for correspondence and forms that should be used throughout the process:
- a. Forms for documenting requests for increases or decreases in athletics aid.
  - b. Template for notifying student-athlete of renewal/nonrenewal.
  - c. Template for notifying student-athlete of hearing opportunity, including copies of the institution's established policies and procedures for conducting the hearing and the deadline by which the student-athlete must request the hearing.
  - d. Form for student-athlete to submit appeal request.
  - e. Template for notifying appropriate institutional staff (e.g., coach, compliance office, appeal committee) that a student-athlete has requested a hearing.
  - f. Template for notifying student-athlete of details related to the conduct of the hearing (e.g., time, location, what parties may be present).
  - g. Form documenting student-athletes' voluntary withdrawal from a team.
  - h. Tracking form to verify that established deadlines and processes related to the hearing are followed.
  - i. Template for notifying student-athlete of hearing committee's decision.

6. Suggestions related to the format and process for conducting the hearing:
  - a. Whenever possible, allow the student-athlete the option to request an in-person hearing.
  - b. Consider whether allowing the student-athlete to have an advocate represent him or her during the process is appropriate (e.g., parent, legal guardian, immediate family member). Institutions are encouraged to refer to its financial aid appeals policies and procedures to determine if students in general are permitted to have representation from an advocate.
  
7. Suggestions related to actions and/or steps after the hearing has been conducted:
  - a. Have a specific timeframe for when your institution must notify the student-athlete of the decision after the hearing has been conducted. Specify the format in which the decision will be delivered (e.g., standard mail, e-mail).
  - b. If using electronic notification (e.g., e-mail) to inform the student-athlete of the hearing decision, have a follow-up process in place to ensure the student-athlete received the decision.
  - c. If the result of the hearing is to uphold the athletics department's decision, direct the student-athlete to appropriate institutional staff members to discuss options (e.g., other available sources of financial aid).

*DISCLAIMER: The information contained in this document is provided as a reference to member institutions and does not constitute binding advice on compliance with NCAA rules and bylaws. Any inquiries related to NCAA rules and bylaws should be directed to the NCAA academic and membership affairs staff. The most up-to-date information regarding NCAA Division I rules, bylaws and procedures can be found by accessing the information on the Legislative Services Database (LSDBi).*