

Frequently Asked Questions

Football Bowl Subdivision -- Membership Requirements

This document should be used as a quick reference for Football Bowl Subdivision membership requirements. The information below may not capture the full scope of all legislation to a Football Bowl Subdivision member as such, users are encouraged to review the full bylaw in the NCAA Division I Manual. Because of the dynamic nature of the NCAA legislative process, the most current information on these and any new legislations should be obtained through the institution's athletics compliance staff or by contacting NCAA membership services at 317/917-6003.

Football Bowl Subdivision Requirements

An institution classified in Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) shall meet all the Division I membership requirements set forth in NCAA Division I Bylaws 20.9.1 through 20.9.5 and in addition, shall:

1. Sponsor a minimum of 16 varsity intercollegiate sports, including football, based on the minimum sports sponsorship and scheduling requirements set forth in Bylaw 20. Sponsorship shall include a minimum six sports involving all male teams or mixed teams (males and females), and a minimum of eight varsity intercollegiate teams involving all female teams. Institutions may use up to two emerging sports to satisfy the required eight varsity intercollegiate sports involving all female teams. [Bylaw 20.9.7.1]
2. Schedule and play at least 60 percent of its football contests against members of Football Bowl Subdivision. Institutions shall schedule and play at least five regular season home contests against FBS opponents. [Bylaw 20.9.7.2]
3. Average at least 15,000 in actual or paid attendance for all home football contests over a rolling two-year period. [Bylaw 20.9.7.3]
4. Provide an average of at least 90 percent of the permissible maximum number of overall football grants-in-aid per year over a rolling two-year period. [Bylaw 20.9.7.4-(a)]
5. Annually offer a minimum of 200 athletics grants-in-aid or expend at least four million dollars on grants-in-aid to student-athletes in athletics programs. [Bylaw 20.9.7.4-(b)]

Sports Sponsorship Requirements

- Q. What standard must an institution satisfy in order to count a sport as one of its 16 varsity intercollegiate sports?
- A. An institution may use a sport in meeting the minimum of 16 varsity intercollegiate sports, provided the institution has satisfied the minimum contest and participant requirements for

sports sponsorship in the applicable sport as set forth in Bylaw 20.9.4.3 and applicable scheduling requirements set forth in Bylaws 20.9.5 and/or 20.9.6. The sport of football must be included in one of the 16 varsity intercollegiate sports. [Bylaw 20.9.7.1]

- Q. If an institution fails to satisfy the FBS minimum sports sponsorship requirements, may the institution remain classified in Division I in all other sports?
- A. Yes. An institution that fails to sponsor the minimum of 16 varsity intercollegiate sports (based on the minimum sports sponsorship and scheduling requirements set forth in Bylaw 20), shall remain classified in Division I in all other sports, provided the institution sponsors the minimum of 14 varsity intercollegiate sports, with a minimum of six sports involving all males or mixed teams of males and females and a minimum of seven sports involving all female teams (of which a maximum of two emerging sports may be used). [Bylaw 20.9.4]

Scheduling Requirements

- Q. For purposes of satisfying the scheduling requirement, what criteria must be met in order to consider a contest as a home contest?
- A. A contest shall be considered a home contest if it is played in the stadium in which an institution conducts at least 50 percent of its home contests. [Bylaw 20.9.7.2]
- Q. Is it permissible for an institution to use a home contest played in a stadium in which an institution does not conduct at least 50 percent of its home contests to satisfy the scheduling requirement?
- A. An institution may use one home contest against a Football Bowl Subdivision member conducted at a neutral site to satisfy the home-game requirement. [Bylaw 20.9.7.2]
- Q. Is it permissible for both institutions who participate in a competition at a neutral site to count the contest as a home contest?
- A. Only one team (but not both teams) may count a contest at a neutral site as a home contest official interpretation [reference: 10/21/03, Item No. 14-d-(3)].
- Q. Is it permissible to count a contest against a NCAA Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) opponent to satisfy the football scheduling requirement specified in Bylaw 20.9.7.2?
- A. Each year, a FBS institution may count one contest against a FCS opponent to satisfy the football scheduling requirement, provided the Football Championship Subdivision opponent has averaged 90 percent of the permissible maximum number of grant-in-aids per year in the FCS over a rolling two-year period. [Bylaws 20.9.7.2 and 20.9.7.2.1]

- Q. For purposes of satisfying the FBS scheduling requirements, is it permissible for an institution to count an opponent that is in the process of reclassifying its football program to FBS?
- A. In determining whether an institution meets the FBS institution scheduling criteria, each opponent shall be counted as it was classified on September 1 of the academic year involved; however, it is permissible to count an institution reclassifying its program to the FBS as a FBS opponent during the year in which the reclassifying institution must comply with Football Bowl Subdivision scheduling requirements (i.e., year two of the reclassification process). [Bylaws 20.9.7.2.2 and 20.9.7.2.2.1]
- Q. Is it permissible for an institution to count an opponent in satisfying the FBS scheduling requirements, if the opponent no longer satisfies the FBS requirements at the time of the competition?
- A. An institution is permitted to satisfy scheduling requirements by counting any contest against an opponent that subsequently fails to satisfy the FBS membership requirements, provided the contest was scheduled while the opponent was classified as a FBS institution and occurs within four years of the opponents reclassification official interpretation [reference: 4/08/02, Item No. 10-ff. (1)].

Attendance Requirements

- Q. Is the minimum attendance requirement based on all home football contests or only on the minimum number of home football contests necessary to satisfy the scheduling requirements?
- A. An institution annually shall average at least 15,000 in attendance for all home football contests. [Bylaw 20.9.7.3]
- Q. How does a FBS institution satisfy the 15,000 attendance requirement for all home games?
- A. A FBS institution shall average at least 15,000 in actual OR paid attendance for all home football contests over a rolling two-year period. [Bylaw 20.9.7.3]
- Q. For purposes of computing actual attendance figures, what criteria must be satisfied to count an individual as an attendee?

- A. An individual may be counted in the actual attendance figures if any one of the following conditions apply:
1. Attendees are issued tickets that are collected on admission to the game and retained;
 2. Attendees enter through and are counted by a turnstile that is monitored by a representative of the department of athletics who verifies in writing the accuracy of the count on a per contest basis; or
 3. Attendees enter through a gate at which a representative of the department of athletics counts them individually with a manual counter (or electronic scanner), and the representative provides a written statement verifying the accuracy of the count on a per contest basis. [Bylaw 20.9.7.3.1.1]
- Q. For purposes of computing paid attendance figures, what criteria must be satisfied to count an individual as an attendee?
- A. Tickets must be sold for at least one-third of the highest regular established ticket price as established prior to the season, regardless of whether they are used for admission in order to be used in calculating paid attendance figures. Tickets sold at less than one-third of the highest regular established price may be counted as paid attendance only if they are used for admission. Student attendance may be counted as paid attendance if the student pays at least one-third of the highest regular established ticket price or, if the student actually attends the game and any one of the following conditions applies:
1. The student paid an athletics fee;
 2. The student paid an institutional fee of which a certain portion was allocated to the department of athletics; or
 3. The student paid no athletics fee, but the institution allocated to the department of athletics a certain portion of tuition income or general operating funds as the equivalent of a student athletics fee. [Bylaw 20.9.7.3.1.2]
- Q. Is it permissible for an institution to satisfy the paid attendance requirement by allocating an amount of student fees equal to or greater than one-third of the institution's highest established ticket price, regardless of whether the student tickets are used for admission?
- A. No. Such tickets may be used to meet the paid attendance requirement only if the student actually attends the contest. [NCAA Division I Management Council Membership Subcommittee 10/16/06]

Q. How is student attendance verified?

A. Student attendance must be verified through one of the following methods:

1. Such students are issued tickets that are collected at the time of admission to the game and retained;
2. Such students enter through and are counted by a turnstile (which is not used by others in attendance) that is monitored by a representative of the department of athletics who verifies in writing the accuracy of the count on a per game basis; or
3. Such students enter through a gate (that is not used by others in attendance) at which a representative of the department of athletics counts them individually with a manual counter, and the representative provides a written statement verifying the accuracy of the count on a per-game basis. [Bylaw 20.9.7.3.1.2.1]

Q. Is it permissible to include attendees (e.g., players, cheerleaders) who are participants in the contest in satisfying the 15,000 attendance requirement?

A. No. Attendees (e.g., players, cheerleaders) or students performing services at the stadium (e.g., concessionaires, ticket takers, parking lot attendants, ushers, groundskeepers) who are participating in the contest in any manner shall not be included in determining if the institution has satisfied the 15,000 attendance requirement. [Bylaw 20.9.7.3.1.2.1.1]

Q. Is it permissible to include band members when calculating attendance?

A. Yes. Band members performing at the event may be included in the count for actual or paid attendance figures provided attendance is verified in the same manner as any other student. [NCAA Division I Management Council Membership Subcommittee 10/16/05]

Q. May an institution use both the actual and paid methods when calculating attendance in the same academic year?

A. No. An institution must use the same calculating method (i.e., actual or paid) for the entire academic year; however, an institution is permitted to use the actual attendance calculating method during one academic year and the paid attendance calculating method in a subsequent academic year (or vice versa) in order to meet the FBS attendance requirement.

Q. How does an institution verify compliance with the football attendance requirements?

A. An institution must undertake an annual certified audit verifying its football attendance. It is not necessary for the audit to be conducted by an auditing firm outside of the institution.

The audited football attendance figures must be received in the NCAA national office not later than February 15 following completion of the football season and the national office shall verify compliance with all FBS attendance requirements. The certified audited materials (including the ticket manifest) must be available for inspection for a four-year period. [Bylaw 20.9.7.3.2]

- Q. Is the certified audit requirement necessary for certifying both actual or paid attendance?
- A. Yes. A certified audit is required to verify football attendance for the purpose of meeting Football Bowl Subdivision football membership requirements regardless of whether the paid or actual attendance method of computing attendance figures is used. [Bylaw 20.9.7.32]

Financial Aid Requirements

- Q. Is it permissible for an institution to use all countable aid in satisfying the additional financial aid requirements set forth in Bylaw 20.9.7.4 (i.e., annually offer a minimum of 200 athletics grants-in-aid or spend at least four million dollars on grants-in-aid to student-athletes in athletics programs)?
- A. No. An institution shall count only athletically related financial aid (as opposed to all countable aid) awarded to counters (as defined in Bylaw 15.02.3). [Bylaw 20.9.7.4.1]
- Q. When must an institution satisfy the requirement that it annually offer a minimum of 200 athletics grants-in-aid?
- A. An institution is required to offer valid, signed financial aid agreements at the beginning of the academic year that total 200 equivalencies in order to satisfy the requirement that it offer annually a minimum of 200 athletics grants-in-aid. Further an institution is not permitted to count scholarship offers in any one sport that exceed the number of athletics grants-in-aid permitted in that sport set forth in Bylaw 15 official interpretation [reference: 4/15/03, Item No. 15-c-(6)].
- Q. Is it permissible for an institution to satisfy the additional financial requirements set forth in Bylaw 20.9.7.4 by awarding athletically related aid to student-athletes who will no longer be participating squad members of a team?
- A. No. Only athletically related financial aid awarded to actual counters shall be included when determining whether an institution satisfies the additional FBS financial aid requirement set forth in Bylaw 20.9.7.4. Athletically related aid awarded to student-athletes who have exhausted athletics eligibility and/or student-athletes who remain on financial aid after suffering a career ending injury shall not be used to satisfy the

additional financial aid requirements, official interpretation [reference: 10/21/03, Item No. 14-d-(2)]. [Bylaw 20.9.7.4.1]

- Q. If an FBS institution offers an athletics grant-in-aid to a prospective student-athlete who ultimately is not certified by the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse (i.e., the student-athlete is a nonqualifier), is it permissible for the institution to include the award in satisfying the additional financial aid requirements set forth in Bylaw 20.9.7.4?
- A. No. A nonqualifier is not entitled to receive an athletically related grant-in-aid during the first academic year in residence and would not be included in the institution's financial aid limitations as a counter. Thus, such a student-athlete may not be included in determining if the institution satisfies the additional financial aid requirements. An institution should plan scholarship offers to account for any "at risk" student-athletes who have the potential of not satisfying the initial-eligibility standards. [NCAA Division I Management Council Membership Subcommittee 4/18/04]
- Q. If the FBS institution offers a full athletics grant-in-aid to a prospective student-athlete who is a qualifier, but who ultimately elects not to attend the institution, may the institution count that award in satisfying the additional financial aid requirements set forth in Bylaw 20.9.7.4?
- A. Yes. An institution is not required to redistribute the grant to another student-athlete during the current academic year for purposes of meeting the additional financial aid requirements. [NCAA Division I Management Council Membership Subcommittee 4/18/04]
- Q. If an FBS institution offers a student-athlete a full athletics grant-in-aid for a academic year and the student-athlete withdraws from the institution at midyear, is it permissible for the institution to count that award as a full athletics grant-in-aid for purposes of satisfying the additional financial aid requirements set forth in Bylaw 20.9.7.4?
- A. Yes. The institution is not required to redistribute the grant to other student-athletes during the current academic year for purposes of meeting the additional financial aid requirements. [NCAA Division I Management Council Membership Subcommittee 4/18/04]
- Q. If an FBS institution offers a student-athlete a full athletics grant-in-aid and such an award is reduced as the result of the student-athlete receiving other nonathletically related institutional aid or outside aid, is it permissible for the institution to count the total amount of the award as a full grant for purposes of satisfying the additional financial aid requirements set forth in Bylaw 20.9.7.4?
- A. No. An institution is not permitted to include nonathletically related financial aid in determining whether it satisfies the additional financial aid requirements set forth in Bylaw 20.9.7.4. Thus, if a student-athlete's athletically related financial aid is reduced to account

for other nonathletically related institutional aid or outside aid for which the student-athlete has qualified, the institution may only count the athletically related aid in meeting the additional financial aid requirements. [Bylaw 20.9.7.4.1]

- Q. If a student-athlete receives a nonathletically related tuition waiver to cover the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition expenses, is it permissible for an FBS institution to count the value of the waiver for purposes of satisfying the additional financial aid requirements set forth in Bylaw 20.9.7.4?
- A. No. An institution may not include nonathletically related aid in meeting the additional financial aid requirements. Thus, the value of the tuition waiver may not be included in determining if the institution has satisfied such requirements. [Bylaw 20.9.7.4.1]

Waivers/Penalties

- Q. Is it permissible for a FBS institution to request a waiver of any of the FBS membership requirements set forth in Bylaws 20.9.7.1 through 20.9.7.4?
- A. No. There shall be no waivers to the FBS membership requirements set forth in Bylaws 20.9.7.1 through 20.9.7.4. [Bylaw 20.9.7.6]
- Q. What is the penalty for noncompliance with any of the FBS membership requirements?
- A. An institution that fails to satisfy any of the FBS membership requirements set forth in Bylaws 20.9.7.1 through 20.9.7.4 shall receive notice of such noncompliance. After receiving notice, any further noncompliance with the FBS requirements within a 10-year period shall cause the institution to be placed in restrictive membership. While in restricted membership, an institution shall not be eligible for post season football competition. At the conclusion of the one-year period, the institution shall be granted membership in its preferred division, provided the institution complies with the division's criteria. If the member does not meet the criteria of any division at the conclusion of the restricted membership period, the institution may continue to be classified as a Division I member in sports other than football, provided the institution satisfies the Division I membership requirements set forth in Bylaws 20.9.1 through 20.9.5. A Division I member that loses FBS status must comply with the multidivision classification requirements (a two-year process) set forth in Bylaw 20.4 to regain such status. [Bylaws 20.9.7.5.1 and 20.9.7.5.2]