

**NCAA Initial-Eligibility Core-Course Requirements:  
General Guidelines for  
Software-Based 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, software-based 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 software-based credit recovery program, there are several things to keep in mind when determining whether such a course may be used for NCAA initial-eligibility purposes:
  - There is no substitute for working hard academically.
  - NCAA rules require that 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.
  - To be considered, core courses must require 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.
  - To be considered, core courses 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. **Software-Based Credit Recovery Courses.** If a high school offers software-based credit recovery courses to enable students to receive credit or new grades for courses taken previously, the following conditions should be met:
  - The school follows its credit recovery policies, whether the student is an athlete or not. The NCAA 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 nontraditional educational programs (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 are 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 working 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 includes assignments, quizzes, papers, exams, required chats or virtual classroom participation.
- Requires students to complete the course in its entirety.
- 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 other types of nontraditional courses, NCAA legislation may not be satisfied by 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 or is exempt from parts 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 meet NCAA initial-eligibility requirements. 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 participate in intercollegiate athletics immediately when they enroll in 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 list of NCAA courses located on the NCAA Eligibility Center's Web site at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://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 877/262-1492.
- 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 877/262-1492, or a college admissions or compliance office.
- Get tutoring or other study help. Consider meeting with a teacher before or after school or consider getting a tutor.
- Stay on track and take a full schedule of college-preparatory courses during the academic year. Try not to overload.
- 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 877/262-1492 or the compliance officer at the college that the student has been recruited to attend.
- Try to avoid 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.
- Try to avoid taking a full schedule of courses at high school during the day, and another full schedule through an alternative school or program simultaneously. This could result in academic overload and could trigger extra review of an academic record.
- Keep coursework. If an academic record contains irregularities (e.g., high number of courses in a given term, dramatic increase in GPA over a given term or terms), the NCAA may request to review the work (e.g., exams, papers and assignments).
- Follow the high school's policies. The best thing to do is work within the rules.