

Educational Column - 1 Educational Column

Title:

Eligibility -- Freshman Academic Requirements -- Core-Curriculum Requirements -- Nontraditional Courses (I)

Item Ref: 1

Date Published: May 11, 2010

Educational Column:

NCAA Division I Proposal No. 2009-64 was adopted in January 2010 and is effective August 1, 2010, for those individuals initially enrolling at a collegiate institution on or after August 1, 2010. Division I institutions should note that this proposal amends the conditions a nontraditional course must meet to be used to satisfy NCAA core-course requirements. More specifically, a nontraditional course must be one in which:

1. The instructor and the student have ongoing access to one another, and regular interaction with one another, for purposes of teaching, evaluating and providing assistance to the student throughout the duration of the course;
2. The student's work (e.g., exams, papers, assignments) is available for review and validation; and
3. A defined time period for completion of the course is identified by the high school or secondary school program.

The recent increase in the prevalence of nontraditional courses has created a number of challenges in the determination of initial eligibility for prospective student-athletes, particularly related to ensuring that courses are academically sound and meet the NCAA definition of a core course. Additional challenges are presented by the emergence of courses that are not regulated by a regional accrediting agency or state educational authority. After consultation with the NCAA Student Records Review Committee and NCAA High School Review Committee, this legislation was developed to help ensure that acceptable nontraditional courses provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their work is completed in a manner consistent with the intent and design of the core-course curriculum requirements. This legislation will allow the NCAA Eligibility Center to determine which high school and secondary school program courses are acceptable and satisfy initial-eligibility standards. The ultimate goal is to ensure that prospective student-athletes are enrolled in quality courses that satisfy the intent of the core-curriculum requirements and prepare individuals for college academic work.

The following questions and answers are designed to assist the Division I membership with the application of this legislation.

Question No. 1: How will nontraditional courses completed prior to August 1, 2010, be considered for initial-eligibility purposes?

Answer: If a nontraditional course is **completed** prior to August 1, 2010, it will be evaluated using the legislative standards in place prior to the adoption of Proposal No. 2009-64 for a nontraditional course. The nontraditional coursework may be subject to the prospective student-athlete review process; however, the coursework does not have to meet the additional guidelines outlined in Proposal No. 2009-64.

If nontraditional coursework is completed on or after August 1, 2010, (even if a prospective student-athlete enrolled in the course prior to August 1, 2010) the requirements of Proposal No. 2009-64 will be applicable to the coursework.

If the nontraditional coursework does not meet the new legislative parameters and the prospective student-athlete has a resulting initial-eligibility deficiency, an institution may request an initial-eligibility waiver on behalf of the prospective student-athlete. However, reliance on such coursework alone may not be sufficient mitigation for relief to be provided through the waiver process.

Question No. 2: What constitutes ongoing access and regular interaction for purposes of teaching, evaluating and providing assistance to the student throughout the duration of the course?

Answer: In order to have a course approved as "core," the high school or secondary school program will need to demonstrate there was ongoing access and regular interaction between the student and the instructor for the entire course. The minimum expectation in this regard is that the course must include instruction from an instructor throughout the duration of the course. Students cannot self-pace or teach themselves a core course. Requiring a course to be taught by an instructor reduces the opportunities for prospective student-athletes to complete courses in a condensed timeframe.

Interaction for the purpose of teaching, evaluating and providing assistance may include, but is not limited to, telephonic communication, electronic mail, instant messaging and other forms of electronic communication between the student and instructor; the provision of feedback on assignments and course assessments by the instructor to the student; and the opportunity for the instructor to provide individual instruction to the student.

Interaction that is condensed into a timeframe shorter than the timeframe identified for completion of the entire course may not satisfy this requirement. Further, student/teacher interaction that is optional or available, but not required, does not satisfy this requirement.

Question No. 3: What if the student doesn't need or request any interaction?

Answer: If the course, as designed, does not require any interaction between the student and the instructor, it will not meet the definition of a core course. If the course is designed with interaction as a requirement but through prospective student-athlete review it is identified that a particular prospective student-athlete did not interact with an instructor throughout the completion of a course, the course will be invalidated.

Question No. 4: Is there a defined minimum period of time for completing a nontraditional course that is considered acceptable? For example, if the defined minimum period is four weeks and the course satisfies all other requirements in the proposal, may the course be used to meet initial-eligibility standards, even if completing the course in four weeks seems ambitious?

Answer: If the high school or secondary school program indicates the nontraditional course may be completed in a condensed timeframe (e.g., four weeks), it may be determined that the course is not four-year college preparatory and, therefore, is not a "core" course. However, if the course meets the definition of "core," it may permissibly be completed in four weeks per the high school or secondary school program's direction.

The completion of a nontraditional course in a timeframe that is not consistent with the timeframe identified by the high school or secondary school program may be invalidated through the prospective student-athlete review process if the completion of the course by an individual student is not academically sound. For example, if an individual completes eight nontraditional courses in a condensed timeframe while also enrolled in a regular school day and participating in secondary school athletics, it may be determined that even though the eight courses were completed within the appropriate timeframe identified by the high school or secondary school program, completion of those courses was not academically sound. In this case, the eight courses would likely be invalidated through the prospective student-athlete review process.

Question No. 5: Will the NCAA publish a list of NCAA courses for a nontraditional high school or program?

Answer: Yes, provided the school's course offerings satisfy the requirements set forth in Proposal No. 2009-64.

Question No. 6: Will nontraditional courses appear on a high school or secondary school program's list of NCAA courses?

Answer: Yes, provided the course in question satisfies the requirements set forth in Proposal No. 2009-64.

The Eligibility Center staff may approve a nontraditional course as a core course when presented by a high school or secondary school program. However, the course as completed by a prospective student-athlete may be different and, as a result, may not fulfill the legislated definition of a core course. For this reason, a course may appear on a list of NCAA core courses, but may not qualify for an individual student-athlete's certification.

Question No. 7: How will a prospective student-athlete or member institution know if courses from a particular nontraditional program may be used for a student's certification?

Answer: If all courses from a particular nontraditional academic school or program are deemed "not core" under the parameters of this legislation, this will be noted under the heading "denied courses" on the program's list of NCAA courses available on the Eligibility Center Web site.

[References: NCAA Division I Bylaws 14.3.1.2 (core-curriculum requirements) and 14.3.1.2.2 (nontraditional courses)]

Notice about Educational Columns: Educational columns and hot topics are intended to assist the membership with the correct application of legislation and/or interpretations by providing clarifications, reminders and examples. They are based on legislation and official and staff interpretations applicable at the time of publication. Therefore, educational columns and hot topics are binding to the extent that the legislation and interpretations on which they are based remain applicable. Educational columns are posted on a regular basis to address a variety of issues and hot topics are posted as necessary in order to address timely issues.

References

Legislative References			Other
Div.	Number	Title	
I	14.3.1.2.2	Nontraditional Courses.	References Educational Columns: 0
I	14.3.1.2	Core-Curriculum Requirements.	Educational Columns: 0
			Proposals: 0