

# Academic Eligibility Requirements for Student-Athletes

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Academic eligibility might be a least favorite recruiting topic, but it's one of the most important parts of the process. Some of the best athletes have had to forfeit their ability to compete in college because they weren't academically eligible.

You should start thinking about your academic eligibility when you are going into your freshman year of high school, especially if you're interested in being an NCAA Division 1 or Division 2 athlete. By focusing on your eligibility early, you can ensure that you're on track to complete all core courses in time and you are maintaining the grade point average (GPA) requirements.

We've outlined the main eligibility requirements you need to meet to be eligible for NCAA, NAIA and JUCO schools, respectively. The best way to approach eligibility is to first set academic goals for yourself based on the requirements of the schools on your target list as if you were a normal student. Then, stay on track to meet the NCAA D1 and D2 requirements. If you can meet those standards, you will be eligible at all other division levels. If you're struggling to stay caught up academically, review the standards for the specific division level you're targeting to ensure you're eligible for schools at that level.

**Insider tip:** Just because you meet the minimum academic eligibility requirements to compete at that division level, doesn't mean you meet a school's entrance requirements. For example, if you're interested in a school that requires all students to have at least a 3.0 GPA and 25 ACT, then you need to consider if you qualify when you're creating your list of target schools.

For the complete breakdown of NCAA eligibility requirements, visit our [NCAA Eligibility Center](#).

## How to become NCAA eligible

If you're getting recruited by NCAA D1 or D2 schools, you'll need to create an NCAA Certification Account. Through this account, the NCAA will assess your NCAA eligibility. The Certification Account is \$90 for athletes in the U.S., U.S. territories and Canada. For international athletes, the cost is \$150. If you are unable to pay this fee, the NCAA does have fee waiver options available. Here are the main components that determine D1 and D2 NCAA eligibility:

- **Core Course Requirement**—All athletes are required to pass 16 core courses in high school. There are a specific number of English, math, natural/physical science and social science classes that every athlete needs to take, and each high school has a list of approved NCAA Core Courses. Talk to your guidance counselor to ensure that your classes meet the core course requirement. While there is a slight variation in the requirements for D1 and D2 schools, if you meet the D1 core course requirements, you will also be eligible at the D2 level. You also must complete 10 of your core courses by the end of your junior year. View our full breakdown of the NCAA Core Course requirements.
- **Core Course GPA**—When determining if your GPA meets NCAA eligibility requirements, the NCAA only looks at the GPA for core courses—that's it! If you failed a ceramics class somewhere down the line, you're in the clear. But you really can't afford to fail a core course. The core course GPA minimum is 2.3 on a 4.0 scale. For Division 2, the minimum is a 2.0. The NCAA provides a core course worksheet, but you should also meet with your guidance counselor. Learn more about how to determine your core course GPA.

- **ACT/SAT Scores**—Generally speaking, the minimum ACT or SAT scores for D1 NCAA eligibility or D2 NCAA eligibility depends on your core course GPA. Student-athletes must earn a minimum SAT or ACT score that matches their core-course GPA on the D1 or D2 sliding scale.
- **NCAA Sliding Scale**—The NCAA uses a combination of your GPA, SAT or ACT scores in determining your eligibility. Athletes with a lower GPA can still be NCAA eligible if they meet the ACT/SAT score requirement outlined on the sliding scale. Learn more about the sliding scale to get a sense for what GPA and test scores you will need.

Division 3 schools are responsible for setting their own academic eligibility rules. If you are going to a D3 school, there is no reason to create a Certification Account with the NCAA, as they will not be reviewing your academic eligibility. If you are unsure what division level you will be competing at, start with a free NCAA Profile Page and you can easily transition to a Certification Account later if necessary.

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## Your path to NAIA eligibility

NAIA eligibility is much more straightforward than NCAA D1 or D2 eligibility. There are two main requirements every future NAIA athlete must meet:

- You must be a graduate of an accredited high school
- You must be accepted as a regular student in good standing. In other words, you need to meet the regular entrance requirements of the NAIA school.

In addition to these requirements, you must meet two of the three following criteria:

- A minimum score of an 18 on your ACT or an 860 on your SAT (only in critical reading and math sections)
- A high school GPA of at least 2.0 on a 4.0 scale
- Rank in the top 50% of your graduating class

For the NAIA to check your eligibility, you need to register by creating a Student-Athlete Profile within the NAIA Eligibility Center.

Learn more about the NAIA Eligibility Center.

## Junior college eligibility requirements

Junior colleges simply require that a student-athlete be a high school graduate, earning an approved standard academic diploma. Student-athletes can also be eligible if they've completed an approved high school equivalency test, like the GED. Learn more about junior college eligibility on their website. Many athletes who aren't able to meet the NCAA or NAIA eligibility requirements will gain eligibility by competing at a junior college for two years. Or, sometimes, athletes who unsure of their major, will attend a junior college while they decide what their four-year course of study will be.