

Want To Play At The Next Level?

Deciding whether to participate in intercollegiate athletics can be confusing. Knowing the proper steps and questions to ask can help you stay on the right track.

By
Christine
Jackson

In order to practice, play and get a scholarship at an NCAA institution, athletes must complete several academic requirements, according to the NCAA Eligibility Center. Those requirements include:

1. Graduate from high school
2. Complete a minimum of 16 (for Division I) or 14 (for Division II) core courses
3. Present the required grade-point average
4. Present a qualifying test score on either the ACT or SAT
5. Request final amateurism certification (beginning April 1 for fall enrollees or beginning October 1 for spring enrollees)

Students should register with the NCAA Eligibility Center at the beginning of their junior year in high school. The nonrefundable registration fee for U.S. students is \$65.

At the end of the student's junior year, a transcript, including six semesters of grades, should be sent to the NCAA Eligibility Center from the high school. Additionally, students should have their SAT or ACT scores forwarded directly to the NCAA Eligibility Center (by using code "9999") whenever they take the exam.

Now that you have registered with the NCAA, it is time to make your official visits to the universities or colleges that you are interested in, or those that have shown interest in you. When you are on your visit, you should meet with an athletic academic advisor to find out about the services offered for student-athletes at that institution. Below are some suggestions of questions to ask that advisor.

Former Bellarmine University women's basketball student-athlete, Stephanie Overberg suggests:

- Would there be academic support and how often would I meet with the tutors?
- What is the teacher/student ratio and how many students are in a typical class?
- What other ways can student-athletes be involved in on-campus activities? Is it even possible to be involved on campus outside of your sport?

Former University of Louisville football student-athlete, Stefan LaFors offers these questions:

- What are my top three choices for potential majors?
- How quickly can I graduate?
- Do I have access to tutors?

As an athletic academic advisor who works with incoming freshmen, I would also recommend:

- How many hours of study hall will I have to do as a freshman?
- How often will I meet with my athletic academic counselor?
- If I get good grades my first term, will I still be required to do study hall?
- How will I get to pick my classes?
- Besides tutors, what other resources will I have to help me succeed?

I know this seems like a lot of information to take in, but these resources and tools will help you get ready for the next level. If you still have questions, talk to your high school counselor or coach, or contact the NCAA Eligibility Center at www.eligibilitycenter.org or 877-262-1492.

The N4A is an educational service and professional organization dedicated to promoting academic advisement and counseling. Christine Jackson is a past president of N4A and is the Director of Football Student-Athlete Development at the University of Louisville.