

Credit Flexibility Guidance: Athletic Eligibility

Background

The Ohio credit flexibility policy allows high school students can earn credit in three ways, or in a combination of these ways: completing traditional coursework; testing out or otherwise demonstrating mastery of the course content; or pursuing one or more “educational options” (e.g., distance learning, educational travel, independent study, an internship, music, arts, afterschool program, community service or engagement project and sports).

Traditionally, athletic eligibility at the high school and college level has been tied to seat time. However, more and more states are providing new learning opportunities for students that have resulted in modifications to eligibility regulations by state and national athletic associations.

Legal Requirements

The [Ohio High School Athletic Association](#) (OHSAA) is a private, non-profit, membership-based, athletic administration organization that sets and monitors “[bylaws](#) and sports regulations [that] apply to all participants in interscholastic athletic contests involving students in grades seven through twelve and include matters of eligibility, contracts, qualifications, responsibility and behavior of various personnel.” (Bylaw 1-1-1).

The [National Collegiate Athletic Association](#) (NCAA) is a membership-based, “voluntary organization through which the nation's colleges and universities govern their athletics programs...Each NCAA division has a manual containing its own set of rules (bylaws). These manuals are published (updated) prior to each school year.” ([NCAA](#))

Both OHSAA and NCAA **operate independently from the Ohio Department of Education** and each set specific eligibility rules for participation in high school and college sports.

Practical Considerations for Athletic Eligibility Under Credit Flexibility

There are practical considerations for student, parents, and educators related to athletic eligibility and the state’s credit flexibility policy (e.g. showing academic progress, awarding course credit, attendance rules).

The OHSSA [2009-10 Student-Athlete Eligibility Guide](#) provides specific eligibility requirements for participation in interscholastic sports. **Students and parents should discuss OHSAA eligibility requirements with school staff prior to the development of a student’s individual learning plan to ensure compliance with OHSAA rules.**

The NCAA provides information regarding specific eligibility requirements through the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#). In addition, the NCAA has developed a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document for athletic eligibility. **Students and parents should discuss OHSAA eligibility requirements with school staff prior to the development of a student’s individual learning plan to ensure compliance with NCAA rules.**

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. How will the Credit Flex policy impact athletic eligibility under the OHSAA’s regulations?

A1. The scholarship provision (By-Law 4-4-1) of the OHSAA Constitution and By-Laws addresses this issue.

To be eligible, a student must be currently enrolled and must have been enrolled in school in five full credit courses during the immediately preceding grading period (semester, quarter, six-weeks, etc.). A student enrolled in credit flex courses must, at the conclusion of the high school’s grading period, be “passing” their credit flex course in order for this course to be counted toward the five one credit (or equivalent) courses used to establish athletic eligibility. The student may not yet have completed the courses, but it must be determined that the student was “passing” the course(s) at the time the grading period ended. If it is determined that the student is not passing, no credit toward the five credits (or equivalent) required for eligibility can be awarded.

Q2. How will the Credit Flex policy impact athletic eligibility under the NCAA’s regulations?

A2. The NCAA eligibility requirements specifically address the types of learning opportunities available through the credit flexibility policy (e.g. online/distance learning, independent study, one course taught over two years) and the [responsibilities of the school](#) in submitting those opportunities to the NCAA to be included in the List of Approved Core Courses.

The NCAA does not allow “credit by exam” courses to be applied to core course eligibility requirements.

Q3. Where can I find the specific information regarding OHSAA and NCAA eligibility requirements?

A3. For more information about the specific rules and regulations governing participation in high school and college athletics:

OHSAA

- [OHSAA Student-Athlete Eligibility \(website\)](#)

- [Eligibility Guide](#) (for student-athletes/parents)
- [Eligibility Guide](#) (for school staff)
- [Eligibility Checklist](#)

NCAA

- [NCAA Eligibility Center](#)
- [Eligibility FAQs](#)
- [2009-2010 Roadmap to Initial Eligibility](#) (for student-athletes/parents)
- [2009-2010 Roadmap to Initial Eligibility](#) (for school staff)

Q4. What role does the student credit flexibility plan play in determining OHSAA and NCAA eligibility?

- A4. An individual student initiates a request (written or verbal determined locally) to take a course via the Credit Flex option. The school counselor and/or teacher of record should then meet with the student to develop the student credit flexibility plan that is to be signed by the student, by the appropriate school officials and by the student's parents to signify agreement with the plan.

It is within this student credit flexibility plan that students, parents, and school staff should have the discussion regarding athletic eligibility and write into the plan the mechanisms agreed to in order to meet specific OHSAA and/or NCAA eligibility requirements (e.g., access and interaction with instructor, assessment plan). The student credit flexibility plan could also be shared with the OHSAA and/or NCAA to ensure compliance if questions still remain after the completion of the individual learning plan.

Q5. How will the recent NCAA interpretation on nontraditional courses impact Credit Flexibility Plans?

- A5 Recent information sent to schools from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility Center regarding prospective Division I student-athletes and coursework taken in nontraditional classroom settings may impact school district Credit Flexibility Plans. Specifically, schools are advised to counsel prospective Division I student-athletes not to utilize the test-out option of Credit Flexibility and to be certain that any coursework earned via Credit Flexibility be comparable in length, content and rigor as credits earned in a traditional classroom setting. The course also must be four-year, college-preparatory in nature and have a defined time period for completion.

Although the design of the Credit Flexibility Policy calls for including those credits on the student transcript in the same manner as credits earned via traditional classroom settings, the NCAA requires that any credits earned through nontraditional ways (distance learning, online, credit recovery, etc.) must be so designated on the transcripts

of potential Division I student athletes. Schools should note on student transcripts submitted to the NCAA for review which course credits were earned through nontraditional ways or attach an addendum to the student transcript explaining that. **The designation of credits on the transcript applies only for NCAA purposes.** If in doubt, contact the NCAA at <http://www.eligibilitycenter.org> for specific advice on this issue.

This will apply to all student-athletes entering a Division I NCAA college or university on or after **August 1, 2010**.

Athletic Eligibility Contacts:

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