

## **Credit Flexibility and Athletic Eligibility**

### **Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA)**

The Ohio High School Athletics Association (OHSAA) is the main governing body for interscholastic sports in Ohio, and it establishes rules for athletic eligibility at member schools.

The primary issues students and schools should bear in mind related to credit flexibility and high school sports eligibility are tied to maintaining and monitoring regular attendance and good grades.

Current (January 2010) OHSAA policies do not generally conflict with the provision of “educational options” provided in accordance with school operating standards or with forms of acceleration provided in accordance with state-approved local policies on academic acceleration. Additionally, while OHSAA limits students to a maximum of four years of high school sports eligibility, it does not cap the total number of high school credits a student may earn while maintaining eligibility. Therefore, allowing students to “test out” or otherwise earn credit based on demonstrations of mastery will generally not impact eligibility provided that students are enrolled in at least five courses or educational options that count toward high school graduation requirements while participating in sports.

Schools and student athletes are encouraged to review the OHSAA publication available at [http://www.ohsaa.org/eligibility/eligbulletin\\_09.pdf](http://www.ohsaa.org/eligibility/eligbulletin_09.pdf).

***Please note that, according to the Ohio Department of Education, OHSAA is in the process of reviewing and updating its policies. Therefore, schools should revisit this page or <http://www.ohsaa.org/> in Fall for possible updated guidance and to review the OHSAA handbook and eligibility bulletin.***

### **NCAA Collegiate Athletic Eligibility**

With some planning, it is possible for Ohio high school students aspiring to participate in college-level sports after graduation to maintain their athletic eligibility while taking advantage of credit flexibility opportunities. The desire to participate in collegiate sports need not prevent students from benefiting from non-traditional learning opportunities.

Below are key eligibility concepts students and educators should keep in mind when planning credit flexibility opportunities for student athletes.

- The NCAA requires that students successfully complete 16 “core courses” to participate in NCAA Division I sports and 14 “core courses” to participate in Division II sports. Beginning August 1, 2013, the requirement for Division II will increase to 16 core courses.
- For Division I eligibility, the 16 core courses must include at least four years of approved English courses, three years of approved mathematics courses (Algebra I or higher), two years of natural/physical science (including one year of lab science), two years of approved social science courses, one additional year of English, mathematics or natural/science courses, and at least four years of additional courses from any of the following areas: English, mathematics (Algebra I or higher), natural/physical science, social science, foreign language, philosophy or non-doctrinal religion.
- For Division II eligibility, the 14 core courses must include at least three years of approved English courses, two years of approved mathematics courses (Algebra I or higher), two years of natural/physical science (including one year of lab science), two years of approved social science courses, two additional years of English, mathematics or natural/science courses, and at least three years of additional courses from any of the following areas: English, mathematics (Algebra I or higher), natural/physical science, social science, foreign language, philosophy or non-doctrinal religion. *Please note that the Division II requirements will increase in August, 2013.*
- For a course to be designated as a “core course,” it must be considered “four-year college preparatory” and be at or above the regular high school academic level. (In other words, remedial and

compensatory courses cannot be approved as “core courses.”) Additionally, core course instructors must meet the relevant qualification requirements for the course established by the state.

- Each high school has its own unique set of core courses approved by the NCAA. The NCAA maintains an online database listing each school’s approved core courses. To view a list of your school’s approved core courses, go to [https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/hs/index\\_hs.html](https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/hs/index_hs.html)
- The NCAA has also established minimum grade point average requirements students must attain in “core courses” as well as minimum score requirements students must attain on the ACT or SAT. A downloadable PDF document describing test score and GPA requirements in detail is available [https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/hs/d1\\_standards.pdf](https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/hs/d1_standards.pdf)

### **NCAA Eligibility and “Testing Out”:**

Students should be advised that credits awarded solely through “testing out” may count toward state and local graduation requirements, but may not be acceptable for the purpose of satisfying NCAA requirements. Therefore, for prospective college athletes, it may be safest to use “testing out” options primarily to facilitate access to another higher level “core course” in the same content area. (For example, in a district that has ten English courses approved by the NCAA as “core courses,” a student might test out of the regular 9th grade English course and instead immediately enroll in a higher level course typically taken by sophomores and juniors. She would continue to take approved English courses each year and graduate from high school with *five* credits in English, four of which would count toward the NCAA core course completion requirement.)

### **Online Courses and Supervised “Independent Study” Experiences:**

The NCAA does allow online and “independent study” versions of core courses to be counted toward satisfying eligibility requirements under the following conditions:

1. The course meets all requirements for a “core course” explained above;
2. The instructor and student have access to one another during the duration of the course for teaching, evaluating and providing assistance to the student;
3. Evaluation of the student’s work is conducted by the appropriate academic authorities in accordance with the high school’s established academic policies; and,
4. The course is acceptable for any student and is placed on the high school transcript.

Please note that some online course providers already work with the NCAA to have courses they provide approved as “core courses.” Therefore, students in schools that provide access to online programs taught by non-district teachers may wish to investigate whether any providers available to them offer courses already approved by the NCAA.

### **Students Below 9th Grade Earning High School Credit:**

NCAA-approved core courses successfully completed by students in grades 8 and below count toward satisfying NCAA core course requirements if high school credit is awarded.

### **Pass-Fail Courses:**

While pass/fail courses may count toward core course requirements, the NCAA substitutes the lowest possible passing grade for a “pass” on a student’s transcript (e.g. a “D” in a school that uses an A to F grading system). Therefore, pass/fail courses may negatively and artificially lower the student’s calculated GPA for core courses.

---

***When in doubt about NCAA requirements, ask for help. Your athletic director and guidance counselors are here to help. The NCAA help line for eligibility questions can be reached by phone at (877) 262-1492 on weekdays from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.***