Initial-Eligibility Waiver Best Practices

This resource is intended to help institutions submit thorough initial-eligibility waivers that enable efficient processing and put the student-athlete in the best position to receive a favorable result.

Before submitting an IEW, ask:

- Can the SA reasonably rectify the deficiency before full-time enrollment?
  - If yes, exhaust all options (e.g., complete an additional core course) to rectify the deficiency.
  - If no, advise the SA to meet academic-redshirt or partial-qualifier requirements, if possible, and/or minimize the deficiency.

- Has the NCAA Eligibility Center released the SA’s final academic certification?
  - If yes, consider whether to submit an IEW.
  - If no, wait until the final certification is released before submitting an IEW.

- Why is the SA deficient in meeting initial-eligibility requirements?
  - Mitigation must be (a) documented and (b) outside the SA’s control to be persuasive.

What documentation is required?

When preparing an IEW, submit the following required documents via RSRO:

- SA statement addressing the mitigating circumstances, including the impact on his/her ability to meet requirements.
- Institutional letter explaining the facts and mitigating circumstances, including a detailed timeline that addresses recruiting/advising history and mitigation, noting specific dates.
- Documentation of all mitigating circumstances asserted (contemporaneous, when available).
- Educational ladder of all high schools and programs, noting academic year, grade level, dates of attendance.
- Academic support plan if the SA’s core GPA for competition is below 2.300.
- If an education-impacting disability is being asserted as mitigation, additional documentation is required (see page two).

How are IEWs analyzed/decided?

The IEW Directive (reviewed and approved annually by the D-I Committee on Academics and D-II Academic Requirements Committee) is applied. The deficiency is weighed against the overall academic record and mitigating circumstances asserted for failing to meet requirements. The larger the deficiency, the more significant and compelling the mitigation must be to provide IEW relief.

What academic criteria is considered?

- Considered: all core courses completed before full-time enrollment, trending of academic performance, ACT and SAT scores (including NCAA conversion scores for 2017 graduates who attempted the redesigned SAT).
- Not considered: performance in courses that have been denied, invalidated, or not yet reviewed; courses/exams completed after full-time enrollment or while receiving athletics aid; raw SAT scores on redesigned tests (except pre-2017 graduates).

What are the possible outcomes?

- Approval (athletics aid, practice and compete in the first year of full-time enrollment).
- D-I Partial Approval – Athletics Aid (First Year) and Practice (First Term).
  - SA may earn practice in the next term by passing nine semester/eight quarter hours in the preceding term.
- D-II Partial Approval – Athletics Aid and Practice.
- Partial Approval – Athletics Aid.
  - SA may receive athletics aid in the first year of full-time enrollment.
  - D-I SAs may earn practice in the next term by passing nine semester/eight quarter hours in the preceding term.
- Denial. Nonqualifiers may not receive athletics aid, practice or compete in the first year. Academic redshirts and partial qualifiers may not compete in the first year.

What if the IEW is not approved?

- Reconsideration: An institution may request reconsideration based on new information that was not reasonably available at the time of the decision. Reconsideration may not be based on performance after full-time enrollment (i.e., fall 2017 grades).
- Appeal: Must be submitted via RSRO within 30 calendar days of receiving written notice of the decision; must include a letter signed by the athletics director and senior compliance administrator explaining why additional relief is warranted.
| **Core-course deficiency.** | • Did the SA fail any core courses? If so, identify and document any mitigation for such failures.  
• Was the SA recruited? Was a preliminary evaluation conducted? What advising was provided?  
• Did the SA repeat an academic term or year? If so, provide explanation for reclassification.  

**Note:** Lack of or late recruitment, standing alone, may not warrant full relief. |
| **GPA/sliding-scale deficiency.** | • Are there notable year-to-year performance trends?  
• Are there documented mitigating circumstances that tie directly to performance?  

**Note:** Misadvisement/lack of advisement is not persuasive mitigation for academic performance. |
| **ACT/SAT scores.** | • Did the testing agency cancel the SA’s test score?  
  o If the SA has a different score that has not been canceled and presents a GPA deficiency, focus on mitigation for that deficiency (see GPA/sliding-scale deficiency section above).  
  o If the SA attempted a re-test as a part of testing agency’s review process, submit all related documentation.  
• Did the SA attempt his/her first test after enrolling full-time at a collegiate institution that did not require an ACT or SAT score for admission? Submit the official score to the EC.  

**Note:** Since fall 2013, staff has not waived a D-II test-score deficiency based on mitigation. |
| **Education-impacting disability.** | If the SA presents a documented EID, provide ALL the following:  
• Current, signed documentation of the diagnosis (including test data) or recommendations from medical professionals treating the SA.  
• Statement from the SA about the EID’s impact on academic performance.  
• Current copy of the IEP or Section 504 Plan. If the high school did not provide one, it must submit documents describing accommodations available to the SA or explain why accommodations were not provided.  
• If the SA voluntarily disclosed his/her EID documentation to the institution’s Office of Disability Services, a letter on letterhead specifying the approved accommodations.  
• If the SA took an accommodated ACT or SAT, provide dates, scores and a letter from the testing agency describing the accommodations.  
• Academic support plan describing the services the institution will provide during the SA’s first year (signed by the SA and the staff member with academic oversight).  

**Note:** Timing of the diagnosis, availability and use of accommodations, performance with and without accommodations, and subject-area and/or course-level progression will be considered. |
| **International SAs and split files (multiple countries).** | • **Old model:** Did the deficiency arise due to performance on leaving exams? If so, focus on mitigation for that performance.  
• **New model:** Identify year-to-year trends in performance or failures that caused deficiencies.  
• Does the SA lack core courses?  
  o Did the SA fail any tests/exams?  
  o Did the SA’s country not require all subjects needed to meet core-curriculum standards?  
  o Did the SA switch educational systems and/or repeat a term or academic year?  

Consult customer service to confirm old and new model certifications/deficiencies.  
Staff will consider both in the IEW process. |
| **Misadvisement/lack of advisement.** | • Was the SA misadvised regarding courses that are not included in the certification?  
• Did the SA take denied courses due to performance (e.g., failures) in approved courses? If so, focus on mitigation for performance in the approved courses.  

The institution may be required to submit an advisement process plan that provides an overview of current advisement procedures and specifies corrective measures to prevent similar situations.  
*Failure to follow a previously-submitted plan will not be viewed favorably in subsequent IEWs.* |