

NCAA Division III New Member Process Frequently Asked Questions

I. Definitions.

Question No. 1: What is the exploratory year?

Answer: The exploratory year represents an opportunity for an institution to learn about the NCAA and Division III and to determine if Division III membership is appropriate for the institution and if the campus is prepared to begin the provisional or reclassifying membership process.

Question No. 2: What is a provisional member institution?

Answer: A provisional member institution is a four-year college or university, or a two-year upper-level collegiate institution accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting agency and that has applied for active membership in the NCAA (NCAA Constitution 3.02.3.2).

If your institution fits this description, please scroll to [Section III \(Division III Provisional Member Institution\)](#).

Question No. 3: What is a reclassifying member institution?

Answer: A reclassifying member institution is an active NCAA Division I or Division II member institution that has applied for active membership in Division III.

If your institution fits this description, please scroll to [Section IV \(Division III Reclassifying Member Institution\)](#).

II. Division III Exploratory Year.

Question No. 1: How long is the entire process to join Division III?

Answer: Typically five years. An institution must serve an exploratory year (Constitution 3.6.3.1) and then four years in the provisional or reclassifying membership process (NCAA Bylaw 20.3.3).

Question No. 2: What is the timeline for the exploratory year?

Answer: See [Appendix A](#) for a timeline of the exploratory year.

Question No. 3: When is the exploratory year application due?

Answer: For an institution intending to explore Division III during the upcoming academic year, the exploratory year application is due not later than January 15. The application for the exploratory year may be found on the NCAA Division III Membership webpage in the “Division III Membership Links” section.

Question No. 4: Is there a cost associated with the exploratory year?

Answer: A \$1,000 nonrefundable fee must be submitted with the exploratory year application.

Question No. 5: Is an institution automatically accepted to participate in the exploratory year when it submits an application?

Answer: No. Although most applicant institutions are invited to participate in the exploratory year, none are automatically accepted.

Question No. 6: When is an institution notified of its status to participate in the exploratory year?

Answer: An institution is notified of its status to participate in the exploratory year process following the NCAA Division III Membership Committee’s in-person meeting held every February.

Question No. 7: When does an institution officially begin the exploratory year?

Answer: September 1 of the academic year in which the institution serves its exploratory year. *For example, if an institution serves its exploratory year during the 2019-20 academic year, September 1, 2019, is when the exploratory year officially begins.*

Question No. 8: Is an institution required to publicly announce its participation in the Division III exploratory year? If so, when?

Answer: The NCAA Division III Presidents Council requests (but does not require) an institution to publicly announce its decision to explore Division III to provide transparency for all institutional stakeholders, and to ensure all prospective and current student-athletes are aware of potential athletically related financial aid implications if the institution ultimately decides to apply for Division III provisional or reclassifying membership status. Public announcements may be issued once an institution’s application for the exploratory year has been accepted by the Division III Membership Committee.

Question No. 9: Is an institution considered a Division III member during the exploratory year?

Answer: No. An institution is not considered a Division III member in any regard during the exploratory year. Therefore, if an institution is a member of another athletics association (e.g., NAIA) or another NCAA division, the institution should continue to adhere to the rules and regulations of the association or NCAA division to which it belongs.

Question No. 10: Must an institution adhere to Division III legislation during the exploratory year?

Answer: No.

Question No. 11: What is an institution required to do and/or attend during the exploratory year?

Answer: During an institution's exploratory year, an institution is required to either:

1. Send the chancellor or president and director of athletics (other institutional guests are welcome) to an all-day new member orientation at the NCAA national office in Indianapolis, typically in September or October; or
2. Host a representative of the Division III Membership Committee and NCAA staff during an all-day visit to the institution's campus, typically in September or October.

The Division III Membership Committee shall determine whether an institution must attend the new member orientation at the national office or host a campus visit based on whether the institution's exploratory application demonstrates a commitment to the Division III philosophy and evidence of the resources necessary to conduct a viable Division III athletics program. If the institution's exploratory application does not demonstrate a commitment to the Division III philosophy and evidence of the resources necessary to conduct a viable Division III athletics program, the Membership Committee may wish to conduct a visit to the institution's campus.

Question No. 12: Is an institution required to attend the NCAA national convention during the exploratory year?

Answer: Yes. An institution is required to attend the NCAA national convention as a non-Division III member.

Question No. 13: Is an institution required to attend the NCAA Regional Rules Seminars during the exploratory year?

Answer: No. However, an institution is welcome to attend the NCAA Regional Rules Seminars as a non-Division III member.

Question No. 14: Is there a way for an institution to waive the Division III exploratory year?

Answer: Yes. An institution may apply for a waiver of the exploratory year not later than May 15 following the submission of the exploratory year application. The Division III Membership Committee may grant waivers of the exploratory year based on a determination that the institution demonstrates a commitment to the Division III philosophy and evidence of the resources necessary to conduct a viable Division III athletics program. See Bylaw 20.3.1.1.3 for specific application criteria.

Question No. 15: If an institution is accepted to participate in the exploratory year, but ultimately changes course, may the institution defer its exploratory year?

Answer: No. If an institution prefers to participate in a subsequent exploratory year, the institution must reapply, including an additional \$500 nonrefundable fee.

Question No. 16: If an institution applies for a second exploratory year, does it negatively impact the institution's chances of being accepted to participate in the provisional or reclassifying membership process?

Answer: No. There is no consequence (good or bad) for an institution that participates in multiple exploratory years. The Division III Membership Committee recognizes the philosophical, political, fiscal, and operational complexities of joining Division III, and encourages institutions to explore Division III at their own pace.

III. Division III Provisional Membership Process.

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Question No. 1: How long is the entire process to join Division III?

Answer: Typically five years. An institution must serve an exploratory year (NCAA Constitution 3.6.3.1) and then four years in the provisional membership process.

Question No. 2: When is the application for provisional membership due?

Answer: For an institution intending to be a provisional member for the upcoming academic year, the provisional membership application is due not later than January 15. The application for provisional membership may be found on the Division III Membership webpage in the “Provisional and Reclassifying Resources” section.

Question No. 3: Is there a cost associated with the provisional membership process?

Answer: A provisional member institution must pay a nonrefundable fee of \$40,000 for the provisional/reclassifying member education program. At the time of approval of the application for the exploratory year, the institution will be invoiced a \$1,000 nonrefundable fee and given 30 days to pay it. The remaining \$39,000 fee is due by September 1 of the first year of the provisional membership process. This educational fee covers travel and other expenses for NCAA staff and Division III Membership Committee members. It also funds staff time and material costs associated with the provisional/reclassifying membership program. It is important to note a provisional member institution must also pay NCAA annual dues during each year of the provisional membership process (Constitutions 3.6.3.1.1 and 3.7).

Question No. 4: How many institutions are accepted as provisional or reclassifying members each year?

Answer: There is a maximum of four institutions admitted to the provisional/reclassifying membership process in any one year, and a maximum of 12 provisional or reclassifying institutions participating in the program in total. (NCAA Bylaw 20.3.2).

Question No. 5: When is an institution notified of its status to participate in the provisional membership process?

Answer: An institution is notified of its status to participate in the provisional membership process following the Division III Membership Committee's in-person meeting held every February.

Question No. 6: When does an institution officially begin the provisional membership process?

Answer: September 1 following acceptance by the Membership Committee into the provisional membership process. *For example, if the Membership Committee accepts an institution into the provisional membership process in February 2019, the institution's official start date of the provisional membership process is September 1, 2019.*

Question No. 7: Is an institution required to publicly announce its participation in the provisional membership process? If so, when?

Answer: The Presidents Council requests (but does not require) an institution to publicly announce its provisional membership to provide transparency for all institutional stakeholders, and to ensure all prospective and current student-athletes are aware of potential athletically related financial aid implications. Public announcements may be issued once an institution is accepted by the Division III Membership Committee to participate in the provisional membership process.

Question No. 8: Is an institution in the provisional membership process considered a Division III member institution?

Answer: Yes. Provisional membership is a class of Division III membership (Constitution 3.01.1).

Question No. 9: Must a provisional member institution adhere to Division III legislation? If so, when?

Answer: Yes. Beginning September 1 of the first year of provisional membership and thereafter, a provisional member institution must administer its athletics program in accordance with the constitution, bylaws and other legislation of the NCAA and of Division III (Bylaw 20.3.4).

Question No. 10: When must a provisional member institution stop honoring athletics scholarships?

Answer: A provisional member institution shall not award athletically related financial aid to incoming students (e.g., first-year; transfer) beginning with the first year of the provisional membership process and thereafter (Bylaw 20.3.4.1). Following the completion of year two, a provisional member institution may no longer award athletically related financial aid to any student and must comply with all financial aid requirements set forth in Bylaw 15.4. There is a “Financial Aid Transition Breakdown” chart available on the Division III Membership webpage under the “Provisional and Reclassifying Resources” section.

Question No. 11: When must a provisional institution submit the Division III annual electronic financial aid report?

Answer: During the second year of provisional membership (and each subsequent year), a provisional member institution must complete the Division III financial aid annual electronic reporting process (Bylaws 15.4.1.1 and 20.3.4.1). The data submitted in the fall of year two describes the financial aid packages awarded during year one of provisional membership.

Question No. 12: May a provisional member institution use the registered marks of the NCAA (i.e., the NCAA name, logo or other insignia)?

Answer: Yes (Constitution 3.6.2.2).

Question No. 13: Is a provisional member institution required to attend the NCAA national convention and/or NCAA Regional Rules Seminars each year?

Answer: Yes. A provisional member institution’s chancellor or president and director of athletics (other institutional guests are welcome) are required to attend the NCAA national convention each year. A provisional member institution’s director of athletics (other institutional guests are welcome) is required to attend the NCAA Regional Rules Seminars each year.

Question No. 14: May a provisional member institution vote at the NCAA Division III business session at convention?

Answer: No. Only active Division III member institutions may vote at the NCAA Division III business session at convention.

Question No. 15: When is a provisional member institution eligible for Division III grant programs?

Answer: Provisional member institutions in years three and four may participate in the Student-Athlete Regional Leadership Conference within their respective region and are eligible to receive NCAA funding to attend the conference. The decision of whether provisional member institutions may receive access to conference grant funding is left to the discretion of their conferences. Provisional member institutions are not considered in the determination of the allocation of conference grant funds to each conference; however, conferences that have provisional member institutions may choose to share grant resources with those member institutions.

Question No. 16: Does a provisional member institution count as a Division III opponent for championships selection purposes?

Answer: Yes (Bylaw 31.3.2.2). Please see the “Championship Selection Criteria for Reclassifying and Provisional Institutions” chart found on the Division III Membership page under the “Provisional and Reclassifying Resources” section for further details.

Question No. 17: Is a provisional member institution eligible for NCAA championships?

Answer: No.

Question No. 18: If a provisional member institution is a member of a conference, may the institution compete in the conference championship?

Answer: It depends on the rules and policies of the particular conference.

Question No. 19: Is a provisional member institution eligible for NCAA catastrophic-injury insurance?

Answer: A provisional member institution is not eligible for NCAA catastrophic-injury insurance. However, a provisional member institution must certify insurance coverage for medical expenses resulting from athletically related injuries sustained by a student-athlete participating in a covered event in an intercollegiate sport as recognized by the participating institution. Covered benefits are described in Constitution 3.2.4.8.3 and include such events as team travel, competition, practice and conditioning sessions. Such insurance coverage must be of equal or greater value than the \$90,000 deductible of the NCAA catastrophic-injury insurance and may be provided through the participant’s personal insurance coverage or the institution’s insurance program.

Question No. 20: May athletics department staff or student-athletes at a provisional member institution serve on a Division III committee?

Answer: No.

Question No. 21: May a provisional member institution maintain membership in other athletics associations?

Answer: Yes, if the other athletics association allows it. However, a provisional member institution must ensure compliance with Division III legislation.

Question No. 22: Is there any information that a provisional member institution must provide to the national office statistics staff?

Answer: Provisional member institutions must submit score reporting to the national office statistics staff during each of the four years of provisional membership. The NCAA statistics staff contacts institutions via email at the beginning of each season and outlines which requirements are expected of all institutions.

Question No. 23: Is there a way for an institution to reduce the four-year provisional membership process?

Answer: Yes. At the completion of year two of the provisional membership process, an institution may apply to waive one year of the four-year provisional membership process. The Division III Membership Committee may grant waivers of the four-year process based on compelling evidence that the institution has satisfied several requirements. See Bylaw 20.3.3.1.1 for specific application criteria.

IV. Division III Reclassifying Membership Process.

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Question No. 1: How long is the entire process to join Division III?

Answer: Typically five years. An institution must serve an exploratory year (Constitution 3.6.3.1) and then four years in the reclassifying membership process.

Question No. 2: When is the application for reclassifying membership due?

Answer: For an institution intending to be a reclassifying member for the upcoming academic year, the reclassifying membership application is due not later than January 15. The application for reclassifying membership may be found on the Division III Membership webpage in the “Provisional and Reclassifying Resources” section.

Question No. 3: Is there a cost associated with the reclassifying membership process?

Answer: A reclassifying member institution must pay a nonrefundable fee of \$40,000 for the provisional/reclassifying member education program. At the time of application for the exploratory year, a \$1,000 nonrefundable fee is due. The remaining \$39,000 fee is due by September 1 of the first year of the reclassifying membership process. This educational fee covers travel and other expenses for NCAA staff and Division III Membership Committee members. It also funds staff time and material costs associated with the provisional/reclassifying membership program. It is important to note a reclassifying member institution must also pay Division III annual dues during each year of the reclassifying membership process (Constitutions 3.6.3.1.1 and 3.7).

Question No. 4: How many institutions are accepted as provisional or reclassifying members each year?

Answer: There is a maximum of four institutions admitted to the provisional/reclassifying membership process in any one year, and a maximum of 12 provisional or reclassifying institutions participating in the program in total. (Bylaw 20.3.2).

Question No. 5: When is an institution notified of its status to participate in the reclassifying membership process?

Answer: An institution is notified of its status to participate in the reclassifying membership process following the Division III Membership Committee’s in-person meeting held every February.

Question No. 6: When does an institution officially begin the reclassifying membership process?

Answer: September 1 following acceptance by the Membership Committee into the reclassifying membership process. *For example, if the Membership Committee accepts an institution into the reclassifying membership process*

in February 2019, the institution's official start date of the reclassifying membership process is September 1, 2019.

Question No. 7: Is an institution required to publicly announce its participation in the reclassifying membership process? If so, when?

Answer: The Presidents Council requests (but does not require) an institution to publicly announce its reclassifying membership to provide transparency for all institutional stakeholders, and to ensure all prospective and current student-athletes are aware of potential athletically related financial aid implications. Public announcements may be issued once an institution is accepted by the Division III Membership Committee to participate in the reclassifying membership process.

Question No. 8: Is an institution in the reclassifying membership process considered a Division III member institution?

Answer: Yes. Reclassifying membership is a class of Division III membership (Constitution 3.01.1).

Question No. 9: Must a reclassifying member institution adhere to Division III legislation? If so, when?

Answer: Yes. Beginning September 1 of the first year of reclassifying membership and thereafter, a reclassifying member institution must administer its athletics program in accordance with the constitution, bylaws and other legislation of the NCAA and of Division III (Bylaw 20.6.5).

Question No. 10: When must a reclassifying member institution stop honoring athletics scholarships?

Answer: A reclassifying member institution shall not award athletically related financial aid to incoming students (e.g., first-year; transfer) beginning with the first year of the reclassifying membership process and thereafter (Bylaw 20.6.5.1). Following the completion of year two, a reclassifying member institution may no longer award athletically related financial aid to any student and must comply with all financial aid requirements set forth in Bylaw 15.4.

Question No. 11: When must a reclassifying institution submit the Division III annual electronic financial aid report? There is a "Financial Aid Transition Breakdown" chart available on the Division III Membership webpage under the "Provisional and Reclassifying Resources" section.

Answer: During the second year of reclassifying membership (and each subsequent year), a reclassifying member institution must complete the Division III financial aid annual electronic reporting process (Bylaws 15.4.1.1 and 20.6.5.1). The data submitted in the fall of year two describes the financial aid packages awarded during year one of reclassifying membership.

Question No. 12: May a reclassifying member institution use the registered marks of the NCAA (i.e., the NCAA name, logo or other insignia)?

Answer: Yes (Constitution 3.6.2.2).

Question No. 13: Is a reclassifying member institution required to attend the NCAA national convention and/or NCAA Regional Rules Seminars each year?

Answer: Yes. A reclassifying member institution's chancellor or president and director of athletics (other institutional guests are welcome) are required to attend the NCAA national convention each year. A reclassifying member institution's director of athletics (other institutional guests are welcome) is required to attend the NCAA Regional Rules Seminars each year.

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Answer: No. Only active Division III member institutions may vote at the NCAA Division III business session at convention.

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Answer: Reclassifying member institutions in years three and four may participate in the Student-Athlete Regional Leadership Conference within their respective region and are eligible to receive NCAA funding to attend the conference. The decision of whether reclassifying member institutions can receive access to conference grant funding is left to the discretion of their conference. Reclassifying members are not taken into account in the determination of the allocation of conference grant funds to each conference; however, conferences that have reclassifying members may choose to share grant resources with those member institutions.

Question No. 16: Does a reclassifying member institution count as a Division III opponent for championships selection purposes?

Answer: Yes, (Bylaw 31.3.2.2). Please see the “Championship Selection Criteria for Reclassifying and Provisional Institutions” chart found on the Division III Membership page under the “Provisional and Reclassifying Resources” section for further details.

Question No. 17: Is a reclassifying member institution eligible for NCAA championships?

Answer: No. A reclassifying member institution is not eligible to participate in Division III championships, and is no longer eligible to participate in any Division I or Division II championships.

Question No. 18: If a reclassifying member institution is a member of a conference, may the institution compete in the conference championship?

Answer: It depends on the rules and policies of the particular conference.

Question No. 19: Is a reclassifying member institution eligible for NCAA catastrophic-injury insurance?

Answer: Yes. Reclassifying member institutions maintain their eligibility for catastrophic-injury insurance.

Question No. 20: May athletics department staff or student-athletes at a reclassifying member institution serve on a Division III committee?

Answer: No. Reclassifying member institutions may not be represented on Division III committees, and may not serve on any Division I or Division II committees.

Question No. 21: Is there any information that a reclassifying member institution must provide to the national office statistics staff?

Answer: Reclassifying member institutions must submit score reporting to the national office statistics staff during each of the four years of reclassifying membership. The NCAA statistics staff contacts institutions via email at the beginning of each season and lays out which requirements are expected of all institutions.

Question No. 22: An institution reclassifying from Division II to Division III does not retain Division II privileges, even if the institution continues to meet all Division II requirements. What if an institution is reclassifying from Division I to Division III? What should an institution be aware of?

Answer: A Division I institution that meets Division I requirements, retains all Division I privileges, including voting and championships access. Realistically, this adherence to Division I legislation is difficult because the Division III reclassifying membership process requires institutions to follow Division III legislation, which often contradicts Division I legislation.

Question No. 23: Is there a way for an institution to reduce the four-year reclassifying membership process?

Answer: Yes. At the completion of year two of the reclassifying membership process, an institution may apply to waive one year of the four-year reclassifying membership process. The Division III Membership Committee may grant waivers of the four-year process based on compelling evidence that the institution has satisfied several requirements. See Bylaw 20.3.3.1.1 for specific application criteria.

APPENDIX A: TIMELINE FOR EXPLORATORY YEAR

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