

Important Changes Regarding Nontraditional Courses

The rules regarding software-based credit recovery, virtual, online, independent study and correspondence courses have changed. These types of courses, which are identified by the NCAA Eligibility Center as nontraditional courses, must meet new guidelines in order to be used for college-bound student-athletes who are planning to attend an NCAA Division I or II college or university.

The rule change was enacted to ensure that acceptable nontraditional courses provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their work was completed in a manner consistent with the intent and design of the core-course curriculum requirements. This legislation will allow the NCAA Eligibility Center to determine which courses and institutions are acceptable to satisfy initial-eligibility standards with the ultimate goal of ensuring that prospective student-athletes are enrolled in quality courses that satisfy the intent of the core-curriculum requirements and prepare prospective student-athlete for four-year college academic work.

What Are the Changes?

Nontraditional courses must meet the following:

1. Courses that are taught through distance learning, online, credit recovery, etc. need to be comparable in length, content and rigor to courses taught in a traditional classroom setting. Students may not skip lessons or test out of modules. The course must be four-year college preparatory.
2. All courses must include ongoing access between the instructor and student, as well as regular interaction for purposes of teaching, evaluating and providing assistance. This may include, for example, exchanging of e-mails between the student and teacher, feedback on assignments, and the opportunity for the teacher to engage the student in individual instruction.
3. Any course taken must have a defined time period for completion. For example, it should be clear whether the course is meant to be taken for an entire semester or during a more condensed time frame, such as six weeks, etc.
4. Nontraditional courses should be clearly identified as such on the high school transcript.

When Does this Rule Take Effect?

Division I

The rule applies to courses completed on or after August 1, 2010, for students first entering an NCAA Division I college or university on or after August 1, 2010. Nontraditional courses completed prior to August 1, 2010, will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Division II

The rule applies for students first entering an NCAA Division II college or university on or after August 1, 2011, regardless of when the nontraditional course was completed.

The text of the new rule appears below.

14.3.1.2.2 Nontraditional Courses.

Courses taught via the Internet, distance learning, independent study, individualized instruction, correspondence, and courses taught by similar means may be used to satisfy NCAA core-course requirements if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

- (a) The course meets all requirements for a core course as defined in Bylaw 14.3.1.2;
- (b) The instructor and the student have ongoing access to one another for purposes of teaching, evaluating and providing assistance to the student throughout the duration of the course;
- (c) The instructor and the student have regular interaction with one another for purposes of teaching, evaluating and providing assistance to the student throughout the duration of the course;
- (d) The student's work (e.g., exams, papers, assignments) is available for evaluation and validation;
- (e) Evaluation of the student's work is conducted by the appropriate academic authorities in accordance with the high school's established academic policies;
- (f) The course includes a defined time period for completion; and
- (g) The course is acceptable for any student and is placed on the high school transcript.