

California State University, Long Beach

NCAA DIVISION I ATHLETICS CERTIFICATION PROGRAM OUTLINE

I. History

- A. In 1989, former NCAA Executive Director Richard D. Schultz initially introduced the athletics certification concepts, and a two-year pilot program of 34 Division I institutions began in 1990.
- B. A special committee studied the results of the pilot program over the following year and a streamlined version of the program was formulated and supported by the NCAA Presidents Commission, the NCAA Council and the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics.
- C. Athletics certification was approved by Division I institutions at the 1993 convention as a key part of the NCAA's reform agenda.
- D. The NCAA Committee on Athletics Certification, comprised of 15 administrators (CEOs, FARs, ADs, SWAs, commissioners) from member institutions and conference offices, was appointed in 1993 to administer the program and determine the certification status of each Division I member institution.
- E. Every institution suggested its preference for placement in the initial athletics certification cycle. Generally, the respective conference offices coordinated such efforts. The committee considered other scheduling principles such as coordination with an institution's regional accreditation (if so desired) and preferences of the pilot program participants before finalizing the five-year schedule.
- F. Institutions that participated in the two-year pilot program generally agreed that the program was valuable but could be improved by limiting the scope of the self-study. After a special committee reworked the process, the NCAA Presidents Commission, the NCAA Council and the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics supported a revised version of the program. A second cycle of athletics certification began in 1999.

II. Purpose

Athletics certification is meant to ensure the NCAA's fundamental commitment to integrity in intercollegiate athletics by:

- A. Opening the affairs of athletics to the university community and to the public.
- B. Setting standards (called operating principles) for the operation of Division I athletics programs. They cover four basic areas: commitment to rules compliance, academic integrity, fiscal integrity, and commitment to equity.
- C. Putting tough sanctions in place for institutions that fail to conduct a comprehensive self-study or to correct problems over a reasonable period of time.

III. Benefits of Self-Study

The core of athletics certification is the institution's self-study in which campus-wide participation is critical. Such benefits include:

- A. Self-awareness. The self-study offers a unique opportunity to educate individuals across the campus about the athletics program's goal and purposes, the many challenges facing athletics and the ways in which athletics supports the institution's overall mission.
- B. Affirmation. Athletics certification is couched in the affirmative – its aim, after all, is to certify – and the self-study process will reveal many aspects of the athletics program worthy of praise.
- C. Opportunities to improve. Even an outstanding program can be better, and problems will be identified routinely as part of any institution's self-study. As these problems come to light, the self-study process will offer a forum for suggestions from individuals with a wide range of experience.

There are benefits for the NCAA as well. These include:

- D. To provide a framework for the Division I membership to show its continuing commitment to institutional control of intercollegiate athletics within the academic setting.
- E. To increase public confidence in the NCAA. During the second cycle, institutions will be asked to report specifically on the opportunities that were provided to various individuals or groups in the broad-campus community to offer input into the self-study report early in the process and review the self-study report after it was drafted.

IV. Overview

The NCAA Certification Process requires that all member institutions undergo a comprehensive examination of its athletics program every five years. The process focuses institutional attention on its athletics program for the purpose of determining the structure and adequacy of departmental and institutional compliance. Not only does the process focus on compliance with NCAA rules; it also causes the institution to review the department's compliance with its institutional responsibilities.

A. The Process

The certification process consists of the following steps:

1. Interaction occurs between the Chief Executive Officer and NCAA Compliance Services.
2. President appoints senior executive as chair of the NCAA Certification Steering Committee.
3. President appoints NCAA Certification Steering Committee.
4. Orientation visit from the NCAA staff.
5. Committee conducts and prepares an institutional self-study.

6. An on-site visit is made by the members of the NCAA Peer Review Team.
7. Exchange of information and responses to questions and concerns takes place between the university's NCAA Certification Steering Committee and the NCAA's Peer Review Team.
8. The finding of the NCAA is provided which may take one of three forms:
 - a. unconditional certification
 - b. conditional certification
 - c. denial of certification

B. Areas of Certification

According to the NCAA's Certification Handbook, the Certification Process will examine four basic areas:

1. Governance and Commitment to Rules Compliance

This section will guide the institution through a comparative study in the areas of governance structure, departmental structure, administrative functions, lines of communication, oversight delegation and internal and external controls. This section also helps the institution determine its level of compliance commitment by exploring the institution's system for rules education, documentation of compliance and oversight functions and staffing and resources devoted to the compliance effort.

2. Academic Integrity

A thorough comparative analysis of admissions policies, academic support and academic success will be completed in this section. Self-study questions are framed to ensure careful thought in relating the actual policies and practices of the department of athletics to the educational mission of the institution.

3. Fiscal Integrity

This section will research the policies, procedures and controls governing the financial sources and expenditures of the athletics department.

4. Commitment to Equity, Welfare and Sportsmanship

This section will examine the athletic department's commitment to fair and equitable treatment of both men and women.

V. Preparing for the Self-Study

The NCAA recommends that the Steering Committee establish a self-study implementation plan which should include:

- A. The university's institution-specific objectives related to the self-study. This may include both internal and external goals the institution hopes to accomplish through the self-study (e.g., furthering faculty understanding, improving institutional control, easing community concern, enhancing quality in specific areas of athletics).

- B. A preliminary outline of the major components of the self-study report.
- C. Processes for completing the self-study. This should include a specific timeline encompassing Steering Committee and subcommittee deadlines, meeting dates and times of NCAA visits, formal communication lines and task delegation.
- D. Selection of Subcommittees: The selected subcommittees will be responsible for gathering the information necessary for answering the self-study questions in each area. Each subcommittee should be chaired by an individual who will make evaluative decisions and write the draft report to be submitted to the Self-Study Steering Committee chair.
- E. Direction of Subcommittees: The subcommittees should be given clear direction as to depth of research, format and style of draft reports, approval of specific action plans and other expectations for the section of questions assigned to it.
- F. A listing of existing evaluation processes on campus and other self-study resources.
- G. A determination of resources necessary to complete the self-study, their availability and sources.
- H. A means to inform the appropriate constituencies as to the progress and results of the self-study.

VI. Conducting the Self-Study

- A. The self-study is a series of questions designed to require the institution to review its policies and procedures, to submit those policies and procedures to scrutiny, to determine whether the policies and procedures comply with NCAA requirements, to determine the adequacy of the policies and procedures, to determine institutional compliance with the policies and procedures, to require drafting of policies and procedures where voids are found and to improve the policies and procedures.
- B. The questions used in the self-study are probative and are based on the Constitution and Bylaws of the NCAA related to the four areas of certification.
- C. Great care should be taken in the review, understanding and response of the subcommittees. The questions, although relatively few in number, require substantial effort prior to preparing a response. The analogy would be to an audit plan – simple in form, complex in response.
- D. The self-study shall address first cycle plans for improvement as well as actions required by the NCAA Division I Committee on Athletics Certification.
- E. Each subcommittee shall include information on how data collection was conducted.

VII. The On-Site Visit

A. A Review of Self-Study Report

Upon the completion of the Self-Study Report, the NCAA's Peer Review Team reviews the information provided. They look for completeness of responses, the presence or absence of support for statements made in the report, the appropriateness of the responses to the questions asked and the presence of violations acknowledged in the report.

B. The Site Visit

Thereafter, an on-site evaluation visit is scheduled. The NCAA's Peer Review Team and others as appropriate visit the campus of the institution to review with the Steering Committee and staff the institutional self-study report.

C. Letter of Confirmation and Institutional Reply

Shortly after the site visit concludes, the NCAA's Peer Review Team will prepare and submit to the institution a letter of confirmation. This letter summarizes the areas needing attention or revision in the self-study report. The letter also makes recommendations for institutional improvement.

Upon receipt of the letter of confirmation, the institution is given the opportunity to file a reply. This reply is then reviewed by the NCAA's Peer Review Team and, together with the other available information, forms the basis for the certification finding.

VIII. The Certification Decision

- A. The Committee on Athletics Certification will render its decision based upon materials provided by the institution and the peer review team; an in-person appearance by institutional representatives may be requested by the committee.
- B. The committee is obligated to choose from among three options in determining each institution's certification status.
 1. Certified: Operating in substantial conformity with the operating principles.
 2. Certified with conditions: Operating in substantial conformity with operating principles; problems identified were considered serious enough to cause full certification to be withheld until those problems have been corrected.
 3. Not certified: Operating not in substantial conformity with the operating principles; problems identified were considered to be very serious or pervasive, and action must be taken by the institution before it can even be conditionally certified.
- C. An institution "not certified" can be placed in a restricted membership category (ineligible for NCAA championships) for up to a year for failure to correct problems during a specified time period; and, if problems continue to remain unresolved, the committee may reclassify an institution as a corresponding member (no longer an active member of the NCAA).
- D. Participation in this program is separate from the NCAA's enforcement process; determination of a "certified" status is not an indication that an institution is "infractions free" or exempt from the occurrence of violations of NCAA rules and regulations.
- E. The identification and acknowledgement of problems during the process should not be viewed as a signal of an "unhealthy" program but, rather, as an indication that the institution is committed to the self-study process and to its own improvement.
- F. Once an institution is notified of the certification decision, the committee will announce its decision publicly through a standard press release.