PLAYNAIA
THE NAIA ELIGIBILITY CENTER

Membership Guide to the NAIA Eligibility Center

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PLAYNAIA
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1. INTRODUCTION

1A. OVERVIEW

NAIA ELIGIBILITY CENTER PURPOSE

The purpose of the NAIA Eligibility Center is to provide independent and objective determinations of initial eligibility for all students wishing to participate in NAIA athletics for the first time. Determinations are made based on both academic and competitive experience standards.

NAIA ELIGIBILITY CENTER ROLE

The NAIA Eligibility Center is responsible for determining the eligibility of first-time NAIA student-athletes. Eligibility for any student-athlete playing NAIA sports for the first time in the fall of 2011 and beyond must be determined by the NAIA Eligibility Center, and all NAIA member schools are bound by the center's eligibility decisions.

Eligibility determinations are based primarily on information provided by the individual registrant, academic records sent directly to the NAIA Eligibility Center by high schools or colleges the student attended, and standardized test-score results transmitted directly by a national testing agency.

NAIA MEMBER INSTITUTION ROLE

As part of an eligibility review for a given prospective student-athlete, the NAIA Eligibility Center may contact institutions recruiting that individual and request that the institution(s) provide information that could have a bearing on the center's eligibility determination. The request will be forwarded to the institution's faculty athletics representative, director of athletics and head coach. To the extent the institution has information that could affect the center's eligibility determination, the institution is obligated to provide the information upon request.

POTENTIAL STUDENT-ATHLETE ROLE

It is the responsibility of the potential student-athlete to provide accurate and truthful information to the NAIA eligibility center.

1B. COMMITTEES

Five committees are associated with the NAIA Eligibility Center: the NAIA Council of Presidents Committee on the NAIA Eligibility Center, NAIA National Eligibility Committee, NAIA Competitive Experience Committee, International Student Records Advisory Committee and NAIA Home School Committee. These committees provide direction and oversight to the NAIA Eligibility Center.

NAIA COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS COMMITTEE ON THE NAIA ELIGIBILITY CENTER

The charge of the committee initially was to provide general oversight of the NAIA Eligibility Center during the initial period of the center's establishment. The committee currently consults with the NAIA National Office and NAIA Eligibility Center staff members regarding the center's business plan and financial structure, and works in concert with the National Eligibility Committee and Committee on Competitive Experience related to policy and procedural matters.

NAIA NATIONAL ELIGIBILITY COMMITTEE

The NAIA National Eligibility Committee operates under NAIA policy and works in the disposition of all eligibility cases, problems or interpretations. This committee acts as the interpreting body of NAIA Bylaws and initiates changes in NAIA standards and policies it feels are in the best interest of the organization and makes recommendations for consideration of the membership. The responsibilities of the committee include academic eligibility matters related to operations of the NAIA Eligibility Center.

NAIA COMPETITIVE EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

The charge of the committee is to provide oversight of the NAIA Eligibility Center related to competitive experience operations, to develop policies, including definitions and determinations of elite-level competition, and to review appeals submitted by member institutions related to competitive experience eligibility for individual student-athletes.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECORDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The committee is recognized as having specialized expertise in the area of international student credentials. The committee serves as an advisory group assisting with development of general policies related to the review of international student records.

HOME SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The standing committee is appointed by and reports to the Council of Faculty Athletics Representatives. It is charged with reviewing proposed changes to the NAIA home school waiver policies along with researching applicable state regulations on home school education. The Home School Committee reviews and acts upon all home school waiver requests from student athletes throughout each school year.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The NAIA Eligibility Center, campus staff and administrators, and conference eligibility chairs work in concert to ensure accurate initial-eligibility decisions for NAIA student-athletes.

2A. NAIA ELIGIBILITY CENTER

The NAIA Eligibility Center is responsible for making an initial determination of a student's eligibility, based primarily on information supplied by the student, official academic records and test scores, and information related to the student's competitive experience.

After a complete review of information available for a given student, the NAIA Eligibility Center notifies the student and institutions that have included the student on their Short Lists of the NAIA Eligibility Center's determination. The NAIA Eligibility Center's

communication summarizes the basis for its decision and also informs the student and institutions of their affirmative responsibility to provide any additional information that could potentially affect the student's eligibility status. Students or institutions having information that could affect a student's eligibility are obligated to provide the information without delay.

2B. NAIA INSTITUTIONS

Coaches, faculty athletics representatives, compliance and other campus administrators share responsibility to educate prospective student-athletes about NAIA rules and explore issues that will contribute to an accurate eligibility determination. Should any representative of the institution have information that could affect the student's eligibility or have reason to believe the center's determination is in error, the individual and institution have an affirmative responsibility to provide that information to the NAIA Eligibility Center without delay. Failure to do so will jeopardize the student's eligibility status, trigger contest forfeitures and be addressed by the NAIA Conduct and Ethics Committee as a violation of NAIA rules.

The institution administrators are responsible for performing various tasks regarding each student's eligibility.

The faculty athletics representative is also responsible for completion of NAIA eligibility forms (including signatures of coaches and campus administrators) and submission of the applicable forms to the conference eligibility chair prior to the first competition.

A student's amateur status is outside the scope of the eligibility center's charge. It is the responsibility of NAIA member institution to examine the amateur standing of students on their campuses.

2C. NAIA CONFERENCES

Conference eligibility chairs serve as an additional safeguard in ensuring the accuracy and integrity of eligibility decisions for student-athletes participating in NAIA conference and postseason competition. Specifically, conference eligibility chairs are responsible for:

- Assisting in rules education for conference and campus student-athletes, coaches, faculty and administrators.
- Reviewing required forms and information submitted by campus faculty athletics representatives related to the eligibility of individual student-athletes.
- Serving as chairs for conference reviews of eligibility cases and appeals for individual student-athletes, including preparation of conference recommendations regarding an individual student-athlete's eligibility status, consequences for violations of eligibility rules, and communication of conference eligibility recommendations to the NAIA National Office.

During the performance of his or her duties, should a conference eligibility chair identify information that could affect the student's eligibility or have reason to believe the center's determination is in error, the chair has an affirmative responsibility to provide that information to the NAIA Eligibility Center and institution without delay.

3. PROSPECTIVE STUDENT ATHLETE PROCESS

3A. ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTATION

NAIA Eligibility Center determinations are based primarily on information from three sources: the student (through information provided on his/her online registration and phone or email communications), academic information (through transcripts, communications with institutions and official websites or policy information, academic databases and official standardized test scores), and competitive experience information (from previous league/team contacts, coaches, websites and databases).

ONLINE REGISTRATION

Each student is required to register at the NAIA Eligibility Center Website: www.PlayNAIA.org. The student provides information in three primary areas: personal information, academic information, and information about playing experience both inside and outside the traditional collegiate setting after high school graduation.

TRANSCRIPTS

All registrants are required to submit official, final transcripts from all previous institution(s). Official transcripts must be submitted directly by the issuing institution via an accepted method.

HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPTS

High schools transcripts must be submitted to the eligibility center via the NAIA High School Portal.

Please note that U.S. high school students who are eligible for an early decision are required to submit only a complete junior year or senior mid-year transcript and a final high school transcript is not required.

CLASS RANK

Per NAIA Bylaws, Article V, Section C, Item 2.c, class rank must be taken off a student's official academic record, or if the official record does not include class rank, through the NAIA High School Portal.

As an exception, a class rank letter may be submitted on the following occasions:

1. An international secondary school, which does not have access to the NAIA High School Portal.
2. Technology impediments that cannot be fixed in a reasonably timely manner as determined by the eligibility center. Governing committees will be included in this decision making, as needed.
3. Natural disasters that inhibit the submission of academic records and/or information via the NAIA High School Portal in a reasonably timely manner as determined by the eligibility center. Governing committees will be included in this decision making, as needed.

INTERNATIONAL RECORDS

International students are required to purchase an InCred Evaluation for eligibility decisions. International transcripts that are sent directly to the eligibility center will be forwarded to InCred for handling. Only records

submitted to and verified by InCred, as well as the official InCred credential evaluation, will be used to apply NAIA eligibility rules.

POST-SECONDARY TRANSCRIPTS

Official transcripts from all previous U.S. post-secondary institutions must be submitted directly by the issuing institution to the eligibility center. The preferred method of receiving transcripts is through the NAIA Registrar Portal. Alternatively, U.S. college transcripts may be sent via one of the accepted electronic transcript services: National Student Clearinghouse (the official electronic transcript service of the NAIA) or Parchment. Transcripts may also be sent through the mail.

In the event that a student's enrollment history indicates attendance at an institution where the student does not have a transcript, an enrollment verification is required.

TEST SCORES

SAT and/or ACT scores must be sent directly from the testing agency to the NAIA Eligibility Center electronically. The NAIA Eligibility Center code for both SAT and ACT is 9876.

MILITARY DISCHARGE PAPERS

Students who wish to use the military service exception (NAIA Bylaws Article V, Section 1) will be asked to submit discharge papers (U.S., DD-214) via their PlayNAIA.org account to confirm service details.

3B. ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION PROCESS

Eligibility determinations are based on the student's academic achievement, (as applicable) the student's status as a transfer student, collegiate competition, and competition outside the traditional collegiate setting after high school graduation.

ACADEMICS

Academic achievement and (as applicable) status as a transfer student are evaluated in a manner consistent with current NAIA rules.

COMPETITIVE EXPERIENCE

Students who delay college enrollment after high school graduation, withdraw from college for one or more terms after initial college enrollment, or do not participate in collegiate competition for one or more years while enrolled in college are subject to a competitive experience review per NAIA Bylaws.

Students in these circumstances are required to submit all competitive experiences to the NAIA Eligibility Center during the registration process. The student's competition outside the traditional collegiate setting is evaluated by the NAIA Eligibility Center, and a determination is made regarding the student's remaining NAIA eligibility.

AMATEUR STATUS

The NAIA Eligibility Center will notify relevant parties in situations where information becomes available which brings into question the amateur status of a particular student. However, determinations regarding a student's amateur status are not made by the NAIA Eligibility Center. Thus, it remains the responsibility of each NAIA institution to ensure that each student-athlete representing the institution in NAIA competition is in full compliance with NAIA amateurism guidelines.

EARLY DECISIONS

Incoming U.S. freshman student-athletes are eligible for an early decision in accordance with NAIA Bylaws Article V, Section C, Item 2.

The NAIA Eligibility Center accepts completed transcripts submitted directly by the student's high school for an early decision either after completion of the student's junior year or after completion of the 7th semester, depending on which elevated GPA the student meets.

Homeschooled, GED and international students are not eligible to receive an early decision.

UNAVAILABLE INFORMATION

In the circumstance that information regarding a student's academic history or competitive experience is either not available to the NAIA Eligibility Center or key parties are uncooperative, it is the responsibility of the student to provide all relevant information to the NAIA Eligibility Center. Failure to do so will result in the student being ruled ineligible until such time as the necessary information is produced.

3C. NOTIFICATION OF INTERESTED PARTIES AFTER DETERMINATION

When a decision is made regarding a registered student's eligibility, the NAIA Eligibility Center notifies the student and each institution that has included that student on its Short List via the student's online profile at www.PlayNAIA.org.

STUDENT

The student's online status is updated to reflect the determination made by the NAIA Eligibility Center.

NAIA INSTITUTION

Each institution that has the student currently listed on its Short List receives email communication from the NAIA Eligibility Center to notify them of the student's status. Those institutions are able to view the student's updated status online as well.

3D. REAPPLICATION OF STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

Reapplication is the process that institutions and students use to have the NAIA Eligibility Center provide an eligibility determination for a new term. If a student registered with the eligibility center in a previous term and the following describes that student's situation, then the NAIA school and the student-athlete will need to take steps to reapply.

1. Currently **not eligible**: A currently enrolled student previously received an eligibility center decision of 'Not Eligible' and has made up the academic work necessary to become eligible for a subsequent term.

2. **Never received a decision**: A student never received an eligibility center decision for a variety of reasons, including not having provided all required information.
3. **Eligible but never enrolled**: A student received an eligible determination, never enrolled at an NAIA institution (OR has not maintained continuous identification at the same NAIA institution), never competed and now plans to compete.

Please refer to the Situation Analysis for additional descriptions of when students need to reapply.

3E. FEES

The NAIA Eligibility Center registration fee is a non-refundable fee. To review information about current registration fees, visit the Resources page on your PlayNAIA dashboard under "Costs."

Note: NAIA Institutions are not allowed to pay this fee on behalf of a student-athlete.

FEE WAIVERS

Since registration fees are non-refundable, if a student pays the fee prior to submitting the required fee waiver information, a fee waiver cannot be used.

Registration fee waivers are available based on demonstrated need for U.S. students only. U.S. students who receive(ed) a waiver of SAT or ACT fees or received the federal free or reduced-priced school lunch program are eligible for a registration fee waiver. The student must be registered and the student's high school must submit the fee waiver confirmation through the NAIA High School Portal. The primary user of the High School Portal account must verify that the student meets one of the available criteria for a fee waiver to be approved.

Due to policies enacted by the Department of Education, transfer students must receive a fee waiver from their high school, as financial aid information can no longer be shared directly with the NAIA Eligibility Center.

EXCEPTION

Non-traditional high school students (GED or home school) and transfers from two- or four-year colleges may request a fee waiver based on the student's qualification for a minimum of $4,500 in Federal Pell Grants during the academic year in which the student registers with the NAIA Eligibility Center if:

- The student is unable to obtain fee waiver confirmation from their high school (confirmed by denial of the waiver via the Portal) or;
- The student's financial circumstances have materially changed since high school graduation.

The student must obtain a hard copy of their financial aid award letter, sealed in an official school envelope, and mail it to the eligibility center. After June 1, transfer students using this exception will need to use award information based on the upcoming academic year.

REAPPLICATION STUDENTS

Registration fees are dependent on the student's "type" upon registration: U.S or Canadian freshman without a break between high school and NAIA enrollment; U.S. or Canadian freshman with a break, U.S. or Canadian transfer or continuing identification student; or international student. Students who are required to submit new information after previously registering and paying the fee may be required to pay the difference if their student type has changed since their initial registration.

4. COMMON BYLAWS & POLICIES

NAIA Bylaws that are commonly applied in initial eligibility include, but are not limited to:

- Eligibility Center Requirement..... Article V, Section C
- Seasons of Competition ..... Article V, Section B, Item 20
  - Post-Secondary Amateur Year.... Article V, Section B, Item 20.b
  - 12-month Window ..... Article V, Section B, Item 20, Note 2
    ..... Article V, Section F, Item 9
- Invitational Sports..... CFAR Policy Article III, Item 5.a
- New NAIA Members ..... CFAR Policy Article III, Item 5.b

Please also utilize The Attic, the NAIA's interpretation library.

4A. EVALUATING COMPETITIVE EXPERIENCE

For the purpose of evaluating competitive experiences to determine whether participation constitutes a season of competition, the NAIA uses the definition of "professional-level" as established in NAIA Bylaws Article V, Section B, Item 20b for both competition as a member of a team and individual competition in individual sports. The definition of "professional-level" is used by the NAIA Eligibility Center, as well as NAIA institutions, in determining whether a particular competitive experience outside of the collegiate setting is chargeable towards a season of competition for a student-athlete. All determinations are subject to review by the NAIA Competitive Experience Committee.

DIRECTORY OF COMPETITION

The Directory of Competition is an evolving database of competitive experiences worldwide. This database indicates whether competitive experiences listed are counted towards seasons of competition. The NAIA Eligibility Center will continually add new experiences to this directory as well as update the status of those already present when new information becomes available. The directory should not be considered all-inclusive.

Reasonable efforts are made to ensure that the information in the Directory of Competition is accurate, however the NAIA and the NAIA Eligibility Center assume no liability for errors or omissions in the content and information provided. The NAIA and the NAIA Eligibility Center reserve the right to update or change any aspect of this document without notice.

HOW TO ACCESS

The Directory of Competition is available to logged-in users of PlayNAIA under the "Directories" tab at the top of the page. Any campus or conference staff

member who has been given permission to access their institution's profile has access to the directory.

STATUS OPTIONS

There are five possible statuses in which competitive experiences can be categorized: pending, submitted for review, intercollegiate, chargeable, and not chargeable.

PENDING
A status of **pending** indicates that a determination has not yet been made OR the competitive experience will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis due to the variability of divisions or teams within the experience.

SUBMITTED FOR REVIEW
A status of **submitted for review** indicates that a student-athlete has submitted this competitive experience during his or her registration, and the NAIA Eligibility Center is currently gathering necessary information to make a determination.

INTERCOLLEGIATE
A status of **intercollegiate** indicates that the competition meets the definition of intercollegiate competition and is comparable to using a season of competition at an NAIA school or other higher education institution with a similar intercollegiate structure.

CHARGEABLE
A status of **chargeable** indicates that the competitive experience is chargeable toward one season of NAIA competition for each season the athlete competed.

NOT CHARGEABLE
A status of **not chargeable** indicates that the competitive experience is not chargeable against a student's NAIA eligibility.

5. NAIA MEMBERSHIP PROCEDURES

5A. NAIAHELP

SET UP ACCESS FOR PLAYNAIA MANAGER USERS ON CAMPUS

Each institution's athletics director is responsible for giving coaches, faculty athletics representatives, admissions personnel and administrators access to PlayNAIA using NAIA Help. Once a staff member has been granted permission and issued a password, he or she logs in on PlayNAIA.org in the upper right "Eligibility Center Login" area. Instructions for athletics directors to use NAIA Help to provide access, or update information, can be found here.

ENSURE THAT STAFF INFORMATION IN NAIAHELP IS CURRENT

The NAIA Eligibility Center uses names and e-mail addresses in NAIA Help to communicate with coaches, faculty athletics representatives, compliance administrators, eligibility center contacts and others on campus regarding eligibility issues. It is important that these records are kept current so correspondence and eligibility decisions can be sent to the proper personnel.

5B. PLAYNAIA INSTITUTION DASHBOARD

Each institution has its own PlayNAIA dashboard in PlayNAIA.org. On your institution dashboard, coaches and others help build the institution's Short List, view the statuses of registered students, upload transcripts, and access resources.

SHORT LIST

An institution's Short List includes the names of prospective students who are considered each coach's recruit list. Students with a break between high school graduation and attendance at an NAIA school are required to be on a Short List to receive an eligibility decision from the NAIA Eligibility Center.

Each institution has a Short List, which is accessible from their PlayNAIA dashboard. This Short List is exclusive to each institution and can only be seen by the institution's designated staff and the NAIA Eligibility Center staff.

ADD STUDENTS TO A SHORT LIST

Only those students who have a paid registration with PlayNAIA.org online can be added to an institution's Short List. Staff members with access to PlayNAIA Manager can locate a registered user by searching the student's NAIA Eligibility Center ID number (ECID). Once a student has been added to an institution's Short List, he or she can be removed at any time.

5C. CERTIFICATION ON CAMPUS

INITIAL ELIGIBILITY

The institution's faculty athletics representative is responsible for confirming that every student-athlete who will be participating in NAIA competition for the first time has:

- Registered with the NAIA Eligibility Center and received a determination of eligible;
- Graduated from high school or been accepted by the certifying NAIA institution as a regular student in good standing;
- Enrolled as a full-time student;
- Completed all NAIA, institutional and conference forms required for NAIA competition;
- Met all other applicable institutional, conference and NAIA requirements for eligibility in NAIA competition, including amateur standing.

The faculty athletics representative also is responsible for completion of NAIA eligibility certification process (ECP), including signatures of coaches and campus administrators, and submission of the applicable certificate packet to the conference eligibility chair prior to the first competition.

FORMS

Establishment of the NAIA Eligibility Center resulted in revisions to the forms required as part of the initial-eligibility process. The following specific actions are intended to eliminate redundancy in the work completed by NAIA Eligibility Center staff and campus representatives:

- The **official eligibility certificate** currently completed by the campus faculty athletics representative (and signed by the head coach, athletics director, FAR and registrar) continues to be used and is available through ECP.
- The **competitive experience form** is used by campus faculty athletics representatives in certifying eligibility for continuing NAIA student-athletes who have a break in enrollment, time at a non-NAIA school, or were identified but not certified as eligible. The competitive experience form must now be completed electronically through the ECP process and included in the certificate packet sent to the eligibility chair.
- The **transfer eligibility statement** is required for all transfer students and is completed by the campus faculty athletics representative. The transfer eligibility statement must now be completed electronically through the ECP process and included in the certificate packet sent to the eligibility chair.
- The **certificate of clearance** completed by the student continues to be used but is no longer required to be submitted to the conference eligibility chair. It should be completed and retained on campus.

Campus personnel can obtain these forms using ECP software in NAIA Help or in the NAIA.org legislative forms page.

CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY

When a student has been issued a determination of eligible by the NAIA Eligibility Center and when the student has participated in NAIA competition, all eligibility matters from that point forward become the responsibility of the institution the student is attending.

When a student has been issued a determination of eligible by the NAIA Eligibility Center and when the student has maintained continuous identification at the same institution, all eligibility matters from that point forward become the responsibility of the institution the student is attending.

All matters relating to the continuing eligibility of NAIA student-athletes are the responsibility of the institution as stated in the Official NAIA Policy Handbook.

6. APPEALS PROCESS

6A. REQUEST FOR REVIEW OR APPEAL OF AN ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

An NAIA member institution may submit a request for review or appeal of a determination by the NAIA Eligibility Center as outlined in CFAR Policy, Article III, Items 3 and 4.

To submit a request for review, go to the students "Decision Details" tab and click "Submit Appellate Request". This button will only appear for Athletic Directors, Faculty

Athletics Representatives, and Compliance Administrators for 45 calendar days after the student's decision.

6B. NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE APPEAL

An institution shall have the right to request a final appeal of an eligibility determination by the National Eligibility Committee or the Competitive Experience Committee to the National Coordinating Committee, per NAIA Bylaws Article IV, Section D, Item 3.

FINAL AUTHORITY

Any and all determinations concerning appeals issued by the National Eligibility Committee, Competitive Experience Committee, and National Coordinating Committee shall be final, binding and conclusive and shall not be subject to further review by any other authority within the NAIA (except as noted in Section 6B above).