

Seasons of Competition – Division I

A student-athlete uses a season of competition for a given academic year as soon as he/she participates in a competition against an outside team (i.e., any team that includes individuals who are not on the institution's team during that academic year). Any competition during a season, regardless of the amount of time spent, counts as one season of competition in that sport. For example, one minute in a basketball game or one at bat in a softball counts as a season of competition, just as competing in every swimming meet or lacrosse game during a season counts.

NCAA Bylaw 14.2.3.1, Criteria for Determining Season of Eligibility – Minimum Amount of Competition, states that any competition, regardless of time, during a season in an intercollegiate sport shall be counted as a season of competition in that sport, except as provided in Bylaws [14.2.3.1.1](#), [14.2.3.1.2](#), [14.2.3.1.3](#) and 14.2.3.1.4. This provision is applicable to intercollegiate athletics competition conducted by a two-year or four-year collegiate institution at the varsity or subvarsity level.

NCAA Bylaw 14.2.3.1.2, Exception – Women's Volleyball, Soccer and Men's Water Polo, permits a student-athlete to engage in outside competition during the segment of the playing season that does not conclude with the NCAA championship without using a season of competition, provided the student-athlete was academically eligible during the segment that concludes with the NCAA championship.

NCAA Bylaw 14.2.3.1.3, Preseason Exhibitions/Preseason Practice Scrimmages During Initial Year, permits a student-athlete during his/her initial year of enrollment at the certifying institution to compete in preseason exhibition contests and preseason practice scrimmages (as permitted in the particular sport per Bylaw 17) without counting such competition as a season of competition.

In addition, NCAA Bylaw 14.2.3.1.4, Alumni Game, Fundraising Activity or Celebrity Sports Activity, permits a student-athlete to engage in outside competition in either one alumni game, one fundraising activity or one celebrity sports activity during a season without counting such competition as a season of competition, provided the event is exempted from the institution's maximum number of contests or dates of competition as permitted in the particular sport per Bylaw [17](#).

Number of Seasons of Competition

A student-athlete who is considered a "qualifier" by the NCAA Eligibility Center is permitted four (4) seasons of competition. Non-qualifiers are permitted three (3) seasons of competition. A non-qualifier may earn a fourth season of competition provided that at the beginning of the fifth academic year following the student-athlete's initial, full-time collegiate enrollment, the student-athlete has completed at least 80 percent of his/her designated degree program.. Non-qualifiers may not compete during their first year of collegiate enrollment at a Division I institution.

Delayed Enrollment

14.2.3.2 Tennis, Swimming & Diving and Women's Volleyball

A student-athlete who does not enroll in a collegiate institution as a full-time student in a regular academic term during a one-year time period after his or her high school graduation date or the graduation date of his or her class (as determined by the first year of high school enrollment or the international equivalent as specified in the NCAA Guide to International Academic Standards for Athletics Eligibility and based on the prescribed educational path in the student-athlete's country), whichever occurs earlier, shall be subject to the following:

- a) The student-athlete shall be charged with a season of intercollegiate eligibility for each calendar year after the one-year time period (the next opportunity to enroll after one calendar year has

elapsed) and prior to full-time collegiate enrollment during which the student-athlete has participated in organized events per Bylaw 14.2.3.5.3.

- b) After the one-year time period, if the student-athlete has engaged in organized events per Bylaw 14.02.9, on matriculation at the certifying institution, the student-athlete must fulfill an academic year in residence before being eligible to represent the institution in intercollegiate competition.

14.2.3.2.1 Matriculation After 20th Birthday – Tennis

In tennis, a student who is eligible under Bylaw 14.2.3.2, but who participates in organized tennis events after his or her 20th birthday and before full-time enrollment at the certifying institution shall be subject to the following:

- a) The student will be charged with one season of intercollegiate tennis competition for each calendar year subsequent to his or her 20th birthday and prior to full-time enrollment at the certifying institution during which the student-athlete has participated in organized tennis events per Bylaw 14.2.3.5.3. [Note: This includes participation in intercollegiate tennis while enrolled full-time in another two-year or four-year institution; however, this provision replaces the season of competition counted in Bylaw 14.2 (i.e., only one season is used in any one year).]
- b) Upon matriculation at the certifying institution, the student-athlete must fulfill an academic year in residence before being eligible to represent the institution in intercollegiate tennis, unless the student transfers to the certifying institution with a minimum of 24 semester hours (or equivalent) of transferable degree credit. [Note: All other NCAA transfer and academic eligibility requirements apply.]

14.2.3.2.1 Sports Other Than Men's Ice Hockey and Skiing [Effective August 1, 2011]

In sports other than men's ice hockey and skiing, a student-athlete who does not enroll in a collegiate institution as a full-time student in a regular academic term during a one-year time period after his or her high school graduation date or the graduation date of his or her class (as determined by the first year of high school enrollment or the international equivalent as specified in the NCAA Guide to International Academic Standards for Athletics Eligibility and based on the prescribed educational path in the student-athlete's country), whichever occurs earlier, shall be subject to the following: (*Adopted: 1/9/96 effective 8/1/97, Revised: 4/29/04 effective 8/1/04 for competition occurring on or after 8/1/04, 4/20/09, 4/29/10 effective 8/1/11; applicable to student-athletes who initially enroll full time in a collegiate institution on or after 8/1/11*)

- a) The student-athlete shall be charged with a season of intercollegiate eligibility for each calendar year after the one-year time period (the next opportunity to enroll after one calendar year has elapsed) and prior to full-time collegiate enrollment during which the student-athlete has participated in organized competition per Bylaw 14.02.9. (*Revised: 4/29/04 effective 8/1/04 for competition occurring on or after 8/1/04*)
- b) After the one-year time period, if the student-athlete has engaged in competition per Bylaw 14.02.9, on matriculation at the certifying institution, the student-athlete must fulfill an academic year in residence before being eligible to represent the institution in intercollegiate competition.

14.2.3.2.1.1 Track and Field and Cross Country [Effective August 1, 2011]

A student-athlete who has participated in organized competition after the one-year time period (the next opportunity to enroll after one calendar year has elapsed) and prior to full-time collegiate enrollment during a cross country, indoor track and field or outdoor track and field season (as opposed to general road racing events) shall be charged with a season of competition in the sport in which the student has participated for each calendar year after the one-year time period in which he or she participated in organized competition. (*Adopted: 4/13/10 effective 8/1/11; applicable to student-athletes who initially enroll full time in a collegiate institution on or after 8/1/11*)

14.2.3.2.1.2 Road Racing [Effective August 1, 2011]

A student-athlete who has participated in road racing activities after the one-year time period (the next opportunity to enroll after one calendar year has elapsed) and prior to full-time collegiate enrollment shall be charged with a season of competition in each of the sports of cross country, indoor track and field and outdoor track and field for each calendar year after the one-year time period in which he or she participate in organized competition. (*Adopted: 4/13/10 effective 8/1/11; applicable to student-athletes who initially enroll full time in a collegiate institution on or after 8/1/11*)

14.2.3.2.1 Sports Other Than Men's Ice Hockey, Skiing and Tennis [Effective August 1, 2012]

In sports other than men's ice hockey, skiing and tennis, a student-athlete who does not enroll in a collegiate institution as a full-time student in a regular academic term during a one-year time period after his or her high school graduation date or the graduation date of his or her class (as determined by the first year of high school enrollment or the international equivalent as specified in the NCAA Guide to International Academic Standards for Athletics Eligibility and based on the prescribed educational path in the student-athlete's country), whichever occurs earlier, shall be subject to the following (*Adopted: 1/9/96 effective 8/1/97, Revised: 4/29/04 effective 8/1/04 for competition occurring on or after 8/1/04, 4/20/09, 4/29/10 effective 8/1/12; applicable to student-athletes who initially enroll full time in a collegiate institution on or after 8/1/12*):

- a) The student-athlete shall be charged with a season of intercollegiate eligibility for each calendar year after the one-year time period (the next opportunity to enroll after one calendar year has elapsed) and prior to full-time collegiate enrollment during which the student-athlete has participated in organized competition per Bylaw 14.02.9.
- b) After the one-year time period, if the student-athlete has engaged in competition per Bylaw 14.02.9, on matriculation at the certifying institution, the student-athlete must fulfill an academic year in residence before being eligible to represent the institution in intercollegiate competition.

14.2.3.2.2 Tennis [Effective August 1, 2012]

In tennis, a student-athlete who does not enroll in a collegiate institution as a full-time student in a regular academic term within six months (or the first opportunity to enroll after six months have elapsed) after his or her high school graduation date or the graduation date of his or her class (as determined by the first year of high school enrollment or the international equivalent as specified in the NCAA Guide to International Academic Standards for Athletics Eligibility and based on the prescribed educational path in the student-athlete's country), whichever occurs earlier, shall be subject to the following: (*Adopted: 4/29/10 effective 8/1/12; applicable to student-athletes who initially enroll full time in a collegiate institution on or after 8/1/12*)

- a) The student-athlete shall be charged with a season of intercollegiate eligibility for each calendar year after the six-month period has elapsed (or the next opportunity to enroll) and prior to full-time collegiate enrollment during which the student-athlete has participated in organized competition per Bylaw 14.02.9.
- b) After the six-months period, if the student-athlete has engaged in organized competition per Bylaw 14.02.9, on matriculation at the certifying institution, the student-athlete must fulfill an academic year in residence for each calendar year after the six-month period has elapsed (or the next opportunity to enroll) and prior to full-time collegiate enrollment during which the student-athlete has participated in such competition before being eligible to represent the institution in intercollegiate competition.

21-Year Age Rule

There is no age limit on who can participate as a student-athlete, however, a student-athlete in sports other than tennis, swimming & diving and women's volleyball who has turned 21 years old and has never attended a college or university as a full-time student will utilize a season of competition during each 12-month period after the student's 21st birthday in which he/she participates in organized competition in

his/her sport while not being enrolled as a full-time student. Participation in organized competition during time spent in the U.S. armed services is excepted.

Five-Year Clock (“Five to Play Four”)

Each student-athlete must utilize all seasons of competition within five (5) years of initially enrolling full-time at a college or university (two or four-year).

Red Shirting

Red shirting is not an official NCAA term, but the term is used when a student-athlete does not participate in any competition during a particular academic year (i.e., neither in the championship nor the non-championship segment of the playing season). A student-athlete may be red-shirted at any point in his/her athletic career.

A “medical red shirt” is not an official NCAA term either, but the term is used when a student-athlete is injured after participating in a limited amount of competition during a particular academic year and then qualifies for a Medical Hardship Waiver. More detailed information regarding Medical Hardship Waivers is included below.

Medical Hardship Waiver

If a student-athlete suffers a season-ending injury or illness after competing in a limited amount of competition during a particular academic year, he/she may qualify for a medical hardship waiver which would allow him/her an additional season of competition during the five-year period of eligibility. To qualify for a medical hardship:

- The incapacitating injury or illness occurs in one of the four seasons of intercollegiate competition at any two-year or four-year collegiate institutions or occurs after the first day of classes in the student-athlete's senior year in high school;
- The injury or illness occurs prior to the first competition of the second half of the playing season that concludes with the NCAA championship in that sport (see Bylaw 14.2.4.3.4) and results in incapacity to compete for the remainder of that playing season;
- In team sports, the injury or illness occurs when the student-athlete has not participated in more than three contests or dates of competition (whichever is applicable to that sport) or 30 percent (whichever number is greater) of the institution's scheduled or completed contests or dates of competition in his or her sport. Only scheduled or completed competition against outside participants during the playing season that concludes with the NCAA championship, or, if so designated, during the official NCAA championship playing season in that sport (e.g., spring baseball, fall soccer), shall be countable under this limitation in calculating both the number of contests or dates of competition in which the student-athlete has participated and the number of scheduled or completed contests or dates of competition during that season in the sport. Dates of competition that are exempted (e.g., alumni contests, foreign team in U.S.) from the maximum permissible number of contests or dates of competition shall count toward the number of contests or dates in which the student-athlete has participated and the number of scheduled or completed contests or dates of competition in the season, except for scrimmages and exhibition contests that are specifically identified as such in the sport's Bylaw 17 playing and practice season regulations. Scrimmages and exhibition contests that are not exempted from the maximum permissible number of contests or dates of competition may be excluded from the calculation only if they are identified as such by in the sport's Bylaw 17 playing and practice season regulations; and
- In individual sports, the injury or illness occurs when the student-athlete has not participated in more than three dates of competition or 30 percent (whichever number is greater) of the maximum permissible number of dates of competition as set forth in Bylaw 17 plus one date for a conference championship (e.g., gymnastics: 13+1=14, wrestling: 16+1=17), regardless of

whether the team participates in the conference championship, provided the institution is a member of a conference and the conference holds a championship event in the applicable sport. Dates of competition that are exempted per Bylaw 17 (e.g., alumni contests, foreign team in U.S.) from the maximum permissible number of dates of competition do not count toward the number of dates in which the student-athlete has participated.

GW student-athletes should note that medical hardship waivers are not automatic and, therefore, the student-athlete should consult with his/her head coach along with the GW Head Athletic Trainer and Athletics Compliance Office.