

**National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A)**  
**Best Practices for Promoting and Maintaining a Culture of Student-Athlete Success,  
Accountability, and Academic Integrity**

It is the expectation of the N4A that student-athletes will make academic progress in a manner consistent with other students in accordance with institutional academic codes of conduct. Ideally, student-athletes should engage in academic pursuits based upon their personal passions and career interests and compete with character in the classroom. This document has been developed to provide a template so that individual institutions may create policies and practices that fit their unique needs, yet adhere to the core values of student engagement, personal development, academic rigor, and integrity. The policies and practices herein are not a prescriptive list of specific instructions; rather, they are meant to serve as structural support for this philosophical foundation, and take into account wide arrays of resource allocation and institutional differences. When building policies from the base provided, institutions should take great care to include representatives from their campus communities and align with existing policies that may already exist. While various constituent groups (coaches, faculty, athletics personnel, etc.) are mentioned throughout the document, more than any other group, student-athletes themselves must be educated and trained to understand, accept, and value a culture of independent learning that places a premium on their well-being and holistic development.

**NON-TRADITIONAL COURSES**

The recent proliferation of nontraditional courses has created an additional complexity for academic support units for student-athletes in monitoring these courses. The N4A recommends each campus create a broad-based campus committee (including athletics and non-athletics department personnel) to define non-traditional courses on their campus, identify existing, campus-wide policies and procedures regarding non-traditional courses and wherever possible, align with these campus policies and procedures. Issues of concern for committees to address include, but are not limited to:

- enrollment guidelines and restrictions for student-athletes
- academic support strategies for non-traditional courses (i.e., tutorial)
- proctoring of online exams and assignments
- access/completion of online assignments and exams in athletic facilities
- restrictions on non-academic athletics department personnel (i.e., coaches, operations staff, etc.)
- evaluation of academic outcomes for student-athletes in non-traditional courses as compared to overall student body
- education and training for students and staff
- syllabus collection
- annual reporting structures
- off-campus testing procedures
- general security standards
- educate staff in recognizing questionable activities and how to report/document violations

## **ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTERS / COMPUTER LABS**

As academic support programs have developed, so have the growth of academic support centers. While not all centers are stand-alone facilities, the N4A defines any location where student-athletes are assigned to complete study hall/tutorial assignments as an area the following practices should be considered. Though not an exhausted list, the N4A recommends each campus consider the following practices for oversight of academic support centers:

- clearly defined schedule for supervision of the facility/center
- clearly defined restrictions regarding non-academic athletics department personnel
- clearly defined parameters regarding individuals and activities in each space
- education and training for students and staff to include reporting of questionable activities
- regular evaluation for all personnel engaged in providing academic support (e.g., advising, tutoring, mentoring)
- policy regarding services available to former student-athletes
- documented policies and procedures to report any violation of institutional or NCAA policy
- safety issue should be addressed when academic centers are open late at night (i.e., locked doors, student-athletes unable to leave the academic center alone after a specific time, etc.)
- a clear plan of action of any emergencies or harmful situations should be established

## **ACADEMIC SUPPORT PERSONNEL**

Regardless of title or employment status, personnel hired specifically to provide academic support services to student-athletes (i.e., tutors, mentors, learning specialists) must take great care to foster a student-driven environment with clearly defined expectations and limitations. These employees must be committed to the highest levels of academic integrity, and have a strong conviction to uphold the mission of the institution. Though not an exhaustive list, the N4A recommends each campus consider the following practices related to personnel hired specifically to provide academic assistance to student-athletes:

- required participation in comprehensive training program
- policy to encourage and clearly outline reporting of suspicious or questionable activity
- personnel records with documentation of any previous issues, warnings, and/or violations of institutional policy
- monitoring and supervision of adherence to all policies
- well-established hiring policies and practices
- policy related to non-work related communication with student-athletes, staff, and coaches (i.e., social media communication)
- ongoing training and evaluation of personnel
- policies regarding access to online student records and accounts
- required exit interviews of all personnel
- policies outlining tutorial relationships based on relevant factors (e.g., prior relationships with student-athletes, sport)
- communication with University staff about changes/trends in University code of conduct policy

## **CAMPUS COMMUNICATION**

The campus community including faculty, staff, and students are critically important in fostering and promoting an environment of academic integrity. Given the complexities surrounding a student-athlete's collegiate experience, the N4A recommends each campus consider the following practices regarding communication with campus constituents:

- clearly defined role and responsibility of the Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) communicated broadly to campus
- communicate expectation that student-athletes not be granted special treatment from faculty because of their participation in intercollegiate athletics
- policy developed regarding appropriate communication between faculty and athletics personnel (e.g., faculty and coaches, staff and coaches, admissions personnel)
- documentation practices to define on-campus recruiting rules and restrictions
- Support campus policy for proper identification and communication of academic misconduct and educate coaches and athletics department personnel
- communicate with faculty of nontraditional courses to determine what they consider appropriate academic support (i.e. tutorial) for their assignments

## **ACADEMIC ADVISING / COUNSELING**

Student-athletes must be encouraged to explore and actively seek their own individual academic interests. Policies and practices should reflect this philosophy so that with regard to course enrollment and major selection, their experience as a group is indistinguishable from that of the general student body on any given campus. The N4A recommends each campus develop policies and practices that encourage student-athletes to actively engage in the process of course and major selection, and to consider the following practices related to specific course enrollment and matriculation of majors:

- ongoing collaboration with campus units to educate student-athletes on major and course options, and other academic opportunities
- review by semester the student-athlete course enrollment compared to overall campus student enrollment
- annual review of distribution of student-athletes across majors on campus
- documented procedures for academic advising of student-athletes
- ongoing education for academic support staff in academic programs on campus
- efforts to facilitate communication between academic support personnel and campus advisors
- efforts to connect student-athletes with major and college advisors regularly
- outreach efforts with campus career services and student-athlete development office to connect major selection with career objectives and job placement
- active involvement of student-athletes in all academic advising conversations

## SUMMARY

The National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A) is a group of professionals committed to the holistic development of the collegiate student-athlete with an emphasis on academic opportunity, development, and success. Understanding the complexities of the student-athlete experience and the pressures associated with the drive for athletic achievement, the core of our work is the empowerment of the student-athlete throughout the matriculation process and making an effective transition to life beyond intercollegiate athletics. Central to this mission is an unyielding commitment to academic integrity. As academic and student-athlete development professionals we are committed to helping create and uphold a culture of integrity that emphasizes student-athlete engagement and academic rigor. At every turn, student-athletes should be given opportunities to make choices that challenge themselves and increase their odds of being successful after graduation and away from their field of competition.