

What is the Graduation Success Rate?

The NCAA Graduation Success Rate (GSR) is designed to show the proportion of student-athletes on any given team who earn a college degree. The NCAA has imposed a new set of academic standards that seeks to hold teams and institutions accountable for how well a student-athlete progresses toward a degree.

The GSR was developed in response to colleges and universities who asked for an alternative rate that more accurately reflects the movement among college student-athletes. The GSR takes into account incoming transfers who graduate from a different institution than the one they started at and transfers who leave an institution in good standing.

How does it differ from the Federal Graduation Rate?

The Federal Graduation Rate (FGR) is compiled by the U.S. Department of Education and is used as an indicator of academic success for college student-athletes. FGR measures the percentage of first-time, full-time freshman who graduate within six years of entering their original four-year institution.

The NCAA developed its GSR in response to criticism that the FGR understates the academic success of athletes because the FGR method does not take into account two important factors in college athletics:

- When student-athletes transfer from an institution before graduating and is in good academic standing (perhaps to transfer to another institution for more playing time, different major, or to go pro); and
- Those student-athletes who transfer to an institution (e.g. from a community college or another 4-year college) and earn a degree.

The FGR treats transfers as nongraduates for the original institution the student-athlete attended, even if that student-athlete later graduates from another institution. Also, the FGR does not include that student-athlete in the graduation rates at the new institution where he/she does graduate. Therefore, once a student-athlete transfers to another school he/she is no longer recognized in the calculated graduation rate. The GSR takes into accounts both factors and gives credit to institutions for successful transfers, whether they are leaving or entering an institution.

How is GSR the calculated?

The GSR, like the FGR, starts with all freshmen who enter college in a given year. The GSR is different in that it excludes from the denominator those athletes who leave the institution in good academic standing and includes in the numerator those who transfer into the institution and go on to graduate. The GSR better accounts for the high mobility of student-athletes.

Reading the GSR and FGR:

The GSR report shows a breakdown of each team sponsored by the institution and that team's graduation success rate over a four year period. Also listed is the federal graduation rate, which shows lower percentages because of the difference in the calculation methods of the two separate reports.

There are no consequences or penalties for teams with low graduation rates. Rather the GSR serves as an information tool for prospective student-athletes and a comparison of each sports success between institutions.