

Compliance 101, Session 3: Extensions of the Five-Year Clock

Compliance 101: Your source for learning the ins and outs of NCAA and Big 12 rules.

An application for an extension of his five-year clock is much rarer and more difficult to attain. For an extension request to be successful, the institution requesting it on behalf of the student-athlete must prove that the student-athlete was deprived of more than one season of competition for reasons beyond his or her control. For example, a student-athlete could have been forced to withdraw from school for two years to help support his family or to care for an ailing parent. More commonly, the basis for an extension request is incapacitating injury. In cases of injury, the institution must show that the student-athlete suffered injuries or illnesses that prevented him or her from competing for two seasons. An example of a successful application of a football student-athlete's five-year clock would be as follows:

Academic Year	Season of Competition/Situation	Outcome
1999-2000	Competed in the third and fifth contest before suffering a season ending injury.	Medical hardship granted by conference office. Still has four season of eligibility remaining, Year #1
2000-2001	Competed for entire season	Season #1, Year number 2
2001-2002	Competed for entire season	Season #2, Year number 3
2002-2003	Competed in first two contests before suffering a season ending injury	Medical hardship granted by conference office. Still has two season of eligibility remaining but only one year left on five-year clock.
2003-2004	Competed	Season #3, Year number 5
2004-2005	Sixth season of eligibility granted by the NCAA based on missing the equivalent of two seasons of competition for reasons beyond the student-athlete's and the institution's control.	

An example of an unsuccessful application for an extension of a football student-athlete's five-year clock would be as follows:

Academic Year	Season of Competition/Situation	Outcome
1999-2000	Injured in preseason but cleared to play medically after the second game of the season. However, the student-athlete does not compete and utilizes the year as a "redshirt."	Year number one for the five-year clock but still has four seasons of eligibility remaining.
2000-2001	Competed for entire season	Season #1, Year number 2
2001-2002	Competed for entire season	Season #2, Year number 3
2002-2003	Missed two games because of injury but competed in remainder of contests.	Season #3, Year number 4

2003-2004	Competed in first two contests before suffering a season ending injury.	Season #4, Year number 5
2004-2005	Sixth season of eligibility would be denied under this set of facts because the student-athlete has only missed one season (2003-04) for reasons beyond the student-athlete's and the institution's control. By legislation, a "redshirt" year is listed as specifically being within a student-athlete's and institution's control.	

In some cases a year listed as a "redshirt" is not actually within the institution's or student-athlete's control because, for example, the student-athlete may have been injured for a portion of the season that eventually was used as a "redshirt" year. In such cases, the NCAA will review all documentation to determine whether a student-athlete had the opportunity to participate when he or she could have competed in limited competition at some point during the season before or after the injury occurred. In determining if a student-athlete had the opportunity to participate, the NCAA committee will apply a similar analysis to that utilized under the medical hardship provisions. For example, a student-athlete had a participation opportunity if he or she could have competed in two contests or more than 20 percent of the institution's completed contests (whichever is greater). Consider the NCAA's method of analysis in the context of the unsuccessful case above. The institution had indicated that the student-athlete was able to return to competition after the second contest and, therefore, would not meet the NCAA threshold. If the student-athlete was not able to return until the 10th game of an 11 game season then the extension could be granted.

Annually, each NCAA member institution will file numerous requests for medical hardships for its student-athletes and conferences will approve the majority of them because institutions know the circumstances and evidence that requisite for success. Institutions maintain meticulous records related to medical treatment and competition and, therefore, when a student-athlete presents circumstances that merit a medical hardship or an extension, institutions will most assuredly apply for them.

If you wish to review the NCAA Manual on today's subject (Bylaw 15.5.5.3) or others, please click here for a searchable, PDF-version of the NCAA Manual.

If you have any questions on this subject or have a topic you would like to see presented, please contact Athletic Compliance at compliance@athletics.tamu.edu, 845-1904 or 1-800-615-5317.

Gig 'em.