

Oversight Committee for Athletic Academic Affairs (OCAAA) University of Southern California

I. OVERVIEW

The *Oversight Committee for Athletic Academic Affairs* (OCAAA) was created by the Provost's Office at USC to provide faculty evaluation and guidance of the University's academic policies and programs related to student-athletes. As an oversight committee, OCAAA is chaired by a full-time faculty member and is entirely independent of the Department of Athletics. The committee is further comprised of faculty, staff and senior administrators from a variety of academic units, USC's Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR) to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), as well as student-athletes from a variety of teams. The Committee is charged with these responsibilities:

- Review and advise on programs, operations, and policies of the *Student Athlete Academic Service* (SAAS) office, which is a part of the Athletic Department.
- Review and advise on policies and practices designed to assure integrity in all academic-related matters for student-athletes.
- Review and advise on policies and practices designed to ensure compliance with NCAA and Pac-12 academic regulations.
- Review the academic performance of student-athletes, including grading patterns, and progress to degree and graduation rates.

II. FACULTY GUIDELINES

Faculty members often do not know what to do when a student-athlete approaches them to ask for permission to miss classes, or to take exams at different times other than those scheduled because of team events. The guidelines below have been established to address these issues.

A. Faculty Guidelines for Issues Relevant to Student-Athletes

The University strongly endorses the principle that student-athletes should be integrated into the general student body as fully as possible. USC expects that most interactions between faculty and student-athletes will be no different in nature or purpose than those with all other students. Student athletes do have a set of expectations imposed on them by the Athletic Department – staff and coaches – and the NCAA, which are different than those experienced by other students. These include mandatory practices and participating at home and away competitions – the latter involving travel time. Such events are very time

consuming and as a result, the academic progress of student-athletes is monitored differently and the demands of athletic competition and practice schedules may create unusual conflicts with student-athletes' academic responsibilities. This section is designed to identify and discuss some of the issues that may arise because of a student's participation in intercollegiate athletics, and how they may be handled. Refer to TAB 1 for

TAB 1

Summary of NCAA Rules for Student-Athletes Relevant to Faculty at USC

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is the national organization that governs participation in intercollegiate athletic competition. The NCAA has established academic standards that student-athletes must meet in order to be eligible for practice, athletics financial aid and intercollegiate competition. In addition, the NCAA has rules concerning the amount of time that student-athletes may be required to practice and any benefits student-athletes may receive.

The NCAA's Eligibility Center determines the initial academic and amateurism qualifications of prospective student-athletes. Academically, to be eligible for practice, athletics financial aid and intercollegiate competition, a prospective student-athlete must complete 16 "core" courses in high school and be deemed by the Eligibility Center a "final academic qualifier" or an "academic redshirt." The 16 core courses are:

- English – 4 years;
- Mathematics – 3 years;
- Natural or Physical Science (including at least 1 laboratory course) – 2 years;
- Social Science – 2 years;
- 1 additional year of either English, Math or Science; and
- 4 additional years of other academic courses which may include English, Math, Science, Foreign Language, Computer Science, Philosophy or non-doctrinal Religion.

Final qualifiers are eligible for financial aid, to practice and to compete in their first year. To be a final qualifier, they must receive at least a 2.3 GPA in the above core courses and achieve the minimum SAT (composite verbal and math scores) or ACT (sum scores) established by the Initial-Eligibility Index:

Academic redshirts are eligible to receive financial aid and may practice with the team; however, they may not compete the team. Academic redshirts are those with a 2.0-2.29 and otherwise meet the Initial Eligibility Index.

Note, SAT scores for tests taken on or after March 1, 2016 are evaluated based on the concordance established by the College Board.

Finally, the NCAA Eligibility Center will review a prospective student-athlete's amateur status in each sport the prospect selects. Only those certified as amateur or certified with conditions will be eligible to compete in a particular sport.

Visit eligibilitycenter.org for more information.

Also note, the initial eligibility rules for transfer student-athletes differ slightly. Contact the Office of Athletic Compliance for assistance.

Post-Enrollment Academic Standards

The NCAA also has adopted minimum academic standards that must be met in order for a student-athlete to be eligible for competition after his or her freshman year. These requirements are intended to support the academic development of student-athletes and raise their graduation rates. To be eligible for practice, a student-athlete must be enrolled full-time, which at USC is 12 units for undergraduate degree programs. To be eligible for competition, the basic academic requirements are as follows:

- a. Pass at least 6 units each term;
- b. Pass 24 units prior to starting the sophomore year (18 of which must be from the regular academic year); pass 18 units prior to the start of each following year;
- c. Must maintain the minimum grade-point average requirement, which at USC is as follows:
 - i. Fulfill at least an overall 1.8 GPA after the first year
 - ii. Fulfill at least an overall 1.9 GPA after the second year
 - iii. Fulfill and maintain an overall 2.0 GPA as of the third year and after
- d. Must declare a major by the third year and must meet progress towards that degree:
 - i. Complete 40% of the degree by the start of the third year;
 - ii. Complete 60% of the degree by the start of the fourth year; and
 - iii. Complete 80% of the degree by the start of the fifth year.

At USC, it is the responsibility of the Registrar's Office to certify whether each student-athlete is in compliance with these academic requirements for continuing eligibility.

The above rules also apply to transfer student-athletes. However, the rules differ slightly for student-athletes who are in graduate school.

In addition to these NCAA standards, student-athletes are subject to the same USC rules with respect to probation and academic dismissal as apply to any member of the student body. For example, any student whose cumulative GPA falls below 2.0 is considered to be on academic probation.

Practice Rules

NCAA rules also limit the amount of time that student-athletes may be required to participate in athletic practice activities. The purpose of these rules is to ensure that student-athletes are not subjected to unreasonable time demands made by the athletic staff, and that they have adequate time to devote to academic activities. The basic rules are:

- During the declared playing season (period from date of initial practice through date of final competition – bowl game or NCAA championship and the designated nonchampionship segment for applicable sports), practice may be required for no more than 4 hours per day, 20 hours per week and 6 days per week.
- Outside of the playing season in sports other than football, only 8 hours of required athletically-related activities per week may be required, with not more than 2 hours spent on skill instruction. There must also be at least two days off per week. In football during declared weeks, only 8 hours of athletically-related activities may be required, with no more than 2 hours spent on film review. There must also be at least two days off per week.
- Student-athletes may not miss class for practice activities except those associated with an away-from-home contest.

Benefits

The NCAA rules allow each academic institution to provide certain specified benefits to student-athletes. These include financial assistance (tuition, fees, books, room and board), four complimentary admissions to home and away contests in their sport, competition-related benefits (uniforms, equipment, travel/meals/lodging for away contests), medical treatment related to athletics participation, and academic support services.

The NCAA rules prohibit student-athletes from receiving other benefits from the University and outside individuals unless the benefit is available to all students or to the public in general. This prohibition applies to benefits provided by USC faculty, staff, and administration, and to any individual who supports USC's athletic activities (financially or with goods or services). Extra benefits can include a free lunch, free cup of coffee or free photocopy as well as a free stereo, an unsecured automobile loan, or free legal services. The basic question for determining whether the extra benefits rule would be violated is: Is this a benefit that I provide to all my students? If the answer is "yes," then providing the benefit to a student-athlete would not violate the NCAA rules. If it is "no," the benefit should not be provided because it would constitute a violation of the NCAA rules. If there is an item or service you would like to provide to a student-athlete and are unsure whether it would trigger an impermissible benefit or preferential treatment, contact the Office of Athletic Compliance.

Recruiting

The NCAA has strict regulations when it comes to recruiting prospective student-athletes. Generally, a prospective student-athlete is anyone who has entered the 9th grade. The NCAA imposes strict rules as it relates to who can recruit, where they can recruit and when. So when it comes to recruiting prospects from an athletics perspective, leave it to the coaches!

If a prospective student-athlete is on campus or reaches out unrelated to athletics, it is permissible for USC faculty and staff to communicate with him or her. Otherwise, faculty, staff and individuals associated with the athletics program (“boosters”), are prohibited from having any written, electronic or in-person off-campus recruiting conversations or contacts with a recruit or his or her parents/legal guardians.

1. Accommodations for Missed Classes

For many instructors, the first time they may be aware that they have a student-athlete in class occurs when the student makes a request to miss a class and/or quizzes and examinations because of an athletic competition.

To reduce the amount of lost class time, the NCAA has established rules about the maximum number of competition dates permitted in each sport. In addition, the Pac-12 Conference and the University have scheduling rules designed to minimize missed class time and reduce final exam interruptions. Nevertheless, some competitions will conflict with class attendance.

The number of missed classes will vary by sport. For example, football games are often played on Saturdays (and other days) and only result in missed class time when the team must travel to an away game that requires departure typically earlier than midday on Friday. Basketball competitions typically are scheduled on Thursday and Saturday evenings; this involves very little lost class time for home contests, but may cause classes to be missed from Wednesday through Friday for away games. Golf is generally played during the day and mid-week, when the team has access to the golf course; this can produce frequent class conflicts. Further, more successful players in individual sports (such as golf or tennis) may stay at a tournament longer than less successful players, or may be invited to more tournaments.

2. USC’s Policy for Missed Classes Due to University-Sanctioned Events Including Intercollegiate Athletic Competition

The University’s policy states that student-athletes should not be penalized when University-sanctioned competitions are scheduled at times that conflict with course activities or examinations. When a class will be missed because of a competition, it is the student-athlete’s responsibility to approach the instructor in advance. If an assignment is due on the date when class is missed, it would be reasonable for the instructor to require that it be turned in either before the class that will be missed, or at the first class meeting after the student returns. If a test has been scheduled for the date when class is missed, reasonable options include: arranging with SAAS to have the test administered by proctor (at the hosting institution) during the trip or for the student to take the test when he or she returns to campus. *Instructors are not permitted to deny student-athletes the opportunity to*

make up their course work or exams.

Most instructors specify a make-up policy in their course syllabus. If a student-athlete foresees any problems with the policy, it is his or her responsibility to discuss the matter with the instructor at the beginning of the semester.

One week prior to a competition, it is the Student-Athlete's responsibility to print out the appropriate **Excused Absence Letter** for each class he/she will be missing due to competition and to present it to the instructor. The purpose of the excuse letter is to make the instructor aware of any absences that may occur due to University-sponsored athletic events.

A sample letter developed by Student-Athlete Academic Services (SAAS) is shown at this address:

<https://saas.usc.edu/academic-support-services/travel/excused-absence-letter/>

Practice should never interfere with class attendance. Student-athletes should take practice schedules into account when enrolling in classes. For a limited number of student-athletes, SAAS may solicit information from instructors concerning class attendance. If some special circumstance arises (e.g., a course for the major with a lab that conflicts with practice) it would be appropriate to expect the coach to make efforts to adjust that student's practice schedule.

If a student-athlete misses class for reasons other than competition, any form of special treatment with respect to grading could violate both USC principles of academic integrity and NCAA rules.

3. Special academic reporting procedures

The NCAA requires member institutions to provide supplemental academic support to those student-athletes who need it. To identify those students who may be having difficulty in a particular course and, thus, be in a position to provide appropriate additional academic support, Student-Athlete Academic Services (SAAS) has developed procedures for monitoring the student's progress during the semester. Although this information could be obtained directly from the students, it is critical that information concerning progress accurately reflect the instructor's viewpoint. The information obtained is discussed with students and becomes part of a grade report that SAAS generates and distributes to coaches. Refer to Tab 2 for the SAAS Mission Statement.

TAB 2

The SAAS Mission Statement

The USC Student-Athlete Academic Services (SAAS) Program is committed to providing the necessary support to assist all student-athletes in reaching their full potential academically, personally, and professionally. The SAAS Program is fully integrated with the University. Our program includes academic advising, career development, community service, tutorial programs, and learning specialists, which are all aimed at promoting a philosophy of individual responsibility so as to encourage each student-athlete to value their educational experience. In providing such services, student-athletes will be afforded the opportunity to develop the skills needed to persist towards graduation, become leaders within the community, and lead successful and productive lives.

SAAS staff performs much of the academic monitoring. To ensure that the legitimate informational needs of SAAS are met, and that faculty members are not exposed to any undue influence from Athletic Department staff concerning the academic performance of student-athletes, the Provost has adopted the following guidelines. These guidelines include the special grade-reporting procedures described above and expressly prohibit contact between coaches and faculty concerning the academic progress of a student-athlete.

Currently, this monitoring is accomplished via a computer-generated progress report that is sent to each faculty member regarding all students in any undergraduate (100-400 level) class. The report, which is sent during the sixth week of the semester is open through the 8th week and identifies the student, course, and instructor, and it requests information concerning current attendance and academic performance in the course for all USC students who have specific levels of academic risk. Following the initial request for information, those professors who have not responded are contacted by SAAS directly through email to complete the progress report for all academically at-risk students.

SAAS also needs to obtain information about each student-athlete's final course grades as soon as possible after final exams so that students facing academic eligibility problems can be advised properly about the number of units they need to take during the next semester or summer school. SAAS staff maintains communication with the office of degree progress to receive early grades. Occasionally, SAAS will also communicate with individual instructors to receive more immediate grade information for the purpose of ascertaining the academic standing of students in unique academic situations.

SAAS also provides academic enrichment programs for all student-athletes through an intensive Directed Studies program and through individual or group tutorial. Both of these programs are designed, managed, and operated by the Academic Support staff at SAAS. The Directed Studies program employs 7 full time learning specialists and 8-10 part time graduate student Assistant Learning Specialists to work with the department's most academically at-risk student athletes while the tutorial program employs some 70-80 undergraduate and graduate tutors. The purpose of tutoring is to help the student achieve competence in a subject area, develop insight into the learning process, and provide training in the development and application of effective study skills.

3. Guidelines for Contact between Faculty and Athletic Department Staff Relating to Academic Concerns

A. Authorized Contact with SAAS Staff or Athletic Department

i. Mid-term Monitoring of Academic Progress

The SAAS Director may make written and oral requests for information concerning student-athlete mid-term academic status/progress for Academic and Support Services and SAAS Academic Counselors.

ii. Tutor Consultations

Personal consultations between SAAS tutors and instructors are permitted, but the student-athlete should be primarily responsible for discussing coursework and his or her progress with the teacher. Instructors who have concerns about a student-athlete's progress are encouraged to discuss them with the student as well as with the tutor, SAAS Counselors, or the Tutorial Coordinator for SAAS.

iii. Verification of Final Grades

The Director of SAAS or one of the SAAS Counselors may make written and oral requests for information concerning student-athlete final grades through the Registrar's Office. In some cases, SAAS may contact faculty members directly.

iv. Exam Proctoring Requests

Requests for assistance in arranging for exams to be administered during away travel should be directed to the Director of SAAS or an SAAS Counselor.

v. Excused Absence Letter

One week prior to a competition, it is the Student-Athlete's responsibility to print off the appropriate Excused Absence Letter for each class he/she will be missing due to competition. The purpose of the excuse letter is to make the instructor aware of any absences that may occur due to University-sponsored athletic events. See IIA.2. for the sample letter.

vi. Accommodations for Disability

Student-athletes requiring accommodation for disability must be registered with USC's Disability Services and Programs (DSP) office. Academic accommodations are to be arranged between DSP, the student-athlete and the course instructor. All arrangements and disability support services will be coordinated and delivered at the DSP office. The Director of DSP will supervise all services for athletes with disabilities.

B. Prohibited Contact with SAAS Staff or Athletic Department

i. Except for the contact described above (1–5), no Athletic Department or SAAS staff member may communicate with an instructor concerning the academic affairs of a student-athlete.

ii. No coach may communicate with a faculty member concerning the academic affairs of a student-athlete.

iii. No Athletic Department or SAAS staff member may communicate with an instructor concerning student-athlete grade appeals.

III. WHO TO CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

If you have a question concerning the information presented here, or concerning any matter involving a student-athlete, we suggest the following contacts.

A. When to Contact the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs or the Chair of the Oversight Committee

As the Oversight Committee for Athletic Academic Affairs (OCAAA) is the university committee charged with oversight of academic policy issues with respect to student-athletes, it would be appropriate to contact either the Chair of the Oversight Committee or the Vice Provost's or Provost's office with any concerns about the policies, conduct or role of the SAAS office, either generally or as related to its involvement with a student-athlete in your class. The Oversight Committee is composed of your faculty colleagues, and the Chair is available and eager to discuss any questions, concerns, or dilemmas. A faculty member should contact the Faculty Athletic Representative when concerns specific to a particular student athlete arise.

B. When to Contact the Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR)

The Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) position is mandated at every NCAA institution and provides an essential link between athletics and the academic community. The FAR must be a full-time professor at the university and works very closely with the offices of the President, Provost, General Counsel, Athletic Director and Athletics Compliance in addition to schools, departments and committees throughout USC. One of three university representatives to the PAC-12 Conference and the NCAA, the FAR is also a member of [the Provost's Oversight Committee for Athletic Academic Affairs \(OCAAA\)](#).

The core of the FAR's responsibilities includes working with the appropriate entities in upholding academic integrity and compliance with the policies and rules governing the athletic program and maintaining student-athlete welfare. Specific duties include monitoring student-athlete team travel and working with the [Student-Athlete Academic Services \(SAAS\) Program](#) to monitor academic performance, course enrollment distribution, grades and progress towards graduation. The FAR assists students with questions and concerns about such things as transfer and changes in financial aid, and helps coordinate hearings on these topics when necessary. The FAR is independent of the USC Athletic Department and reports directly to the President. This faculty role is helpful when students, coaches, or staff have concerns that require an academic perspective.

USC President C.L. Max Nikias appointed Alan Green, Ph.D. to this role in July 2017. Professor Green supports student-athletes in all of the 21 NCAA sanctioned sports teams at USC. He holds a faculty appointment in the USC Rossier School of Education and serves as Faculty in Residence in Parkside Residential College.

Understanding the role and responsibilities of the FAR is essential for our student-athletes' academic success and student experience here at USC. For general information about the role of the FAR go to:

<http://www.ncaa.org/themes-topics/faculty-athletics-representatives>.

If you need general information about the NCAA, an interpretation of an NCAA or Pac-12 rule, or if you have questions or information about a matter that you think may be a violation of NCAA or Pac-12 rules, please contact Professor Green:

Alan Green
Faculty Athletic Representative
USC Rossier School of Education
alangree@usc.edu
(213) 740-3255

C. When to Contact SAAS

Contact SAAS (<https://saas.usc.edu>) directly if you would like to discuss questions, complaints, or concerns you may have about the attendance or academic progress of a particular student-athlete in your class, or if you need to make special arrangements for the proctoring of a test to be administered during a trip for away competition.

Magdi El Shahawy
Senior Associate Athletic Director
Student Athletic Academic Services OC
HER B30, MC 0602
(213) 740-0885
melshaha@usc.edu

Denise Kwok
Associate Director
Student Athlete Academic Services
(213) 821-3075
dkwok@usc.edu

D. When to Contact Judicial Affairs

Contact Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (<https://sjacs.usc.edu>) if you have questions or information concerning a possible violation of the University Student Conduct

Code by any student, including student-athletes. In light of the NCAA requirements that student-athletes not be provided with extra benefits, it is important that student-athletes not be treated differently than other students with regard to possible academic integrity and student conduct violations.

Donna Budar-Turner
Director, USC Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (SJACS)
Division of Student Affairs
STU 206, MC 4894
(213) 821-7373
budartur@usc.edu

E. When to Contact Other University Services

Student-athletes have the same access to all university services as other students on campus. These services include Academic Support Services, Disability Services and Programs, the University Counseling Services and the Career Development Center. Faculty may wish to refer student-athletes to these services and facilities, just as they might refer any student in their class.

Denise Kwok
Director, Kortschak Center for Learning and Creativity
dkwok@usc.edu
Student Union, 311
(213) 740-7884
<http://kortschakcenter.usc.edu/denise-kwok/>

Christine Street
Executive Director, American Disabilities Act Compliance & Disabilities Services
(213) 821-4658
street@usc.edu
<https://dsp.usc.edu>

Robert Mendola
Executive Director for Student Mental Health
USC Engemann Student Health Center
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<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

Dr. Varun Soni, Dean of Religious Life
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