



**Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference
Fall Semester Suspension Q&A
Updated: 7/14/2020**

Effective: 7/14/2020

The Board of Directors of the PSAC have suspended all mandated conference athletic events and championships through the Fall semester in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PSAC staff has compiled this document to help student-athletes, coaches, and administrators answer questions that may arise. This document will be updated regularly to address additional questions or issues as well as when additional guidance is received from NCAA staff.

It is important to note this document is intended to answer questions pertaining to PSAC and NCAA policies. Institutions may have more restrictive rules and/or policies than what is referenced below.

We encourage coaches to remain in frequent contact with their student-athletes related to academic and well-being issues.

All PSAC personnel and student-athletes are strongly encouraged to follow CDC guidelines for physical distancing, frequent hand washing, and wearing a mask.

How this decision was reached:

Since the conclusion of the Spring 2020 semester, the PSAC athletics administrators have been meeting on a weekly basis, while also meeting weekly in four separate taskforces to address issues involving return to play. The presidents of the member institutions (Board of Directors) have been meeting bi-weekly to discuss issues and take actions, as needed.

Among the actions taken was the adoption of guiding principles for decision making. First and foremost, of those principles, the health and safety of our student-athletes. Additionally, a plan for resocialization and gradual increase of activities for student-athletes had been adopted with help from our sports medicine and strength and conditioning staffs.

In recent weeks through this process, based upon the ever-changing public health concerns, it became apparent that a decision to discontinue sports during the Fall semester was evolving into a probability. The presidents asked the athletics administrators and conference office to develop a draft of conducting all sports competition in the Spring 2021 semester. While admittedly difficult to accomplish, the athletics administrators have made a commitment to make all accommodations necessary to provide for such a plan.

On July 14, the Board of Directors adopted a recommendation forwarded by the Commissioner to suspend all mandated competition and championships during the Fall 2020 semester.

PSAC Fall Semester Suspension Q&A

Bylaw 17 – Playing and Practice Seasons:

Question 1: Will the PSAC conduct **fall** championship sports during the spring semester?

Answer: The PSAC and its member institutions have undertaken a full review of the ability to shift fall sport seasons and championships to the Spring semester and all are optimistic that we can provide a regular season schedule and conference championship experience for our student-athletes.

This includes the sports of men's and women's cross country, field hockey, football, men's and women's golf, men's and women's soccer, and volleyball.

Question 2: When will **fall** championship sports be able to start participating in countable athletically related activities?

Answer: Prior to September 1, the PSAC and its member institutions will develop guidelines on a phased approach to countable athletically related activities to allow for meaningful interaction among student-athletes and coaches, if public health conditions permit. However, the decision to allow countable athletically related activities will be determined and defined on an institutional basis depending on institutional, local, and state public health guidelines. All applicable NCAA playing and practice season rules shall be followed.

This includes the sports of men's and women's cross country, field hockey, football, men's and women's soccer, and volleyball.

Question 3: When will **winter** championship sports be able to start participating in countable athletically related activities?

Answer: Prior to September 1, the PSAC and its member institutions will develop guidelines on a phased approach to countable athletically related activities to allow for meaningful interaction among student-athletes and coaches, if public health conditions permit. However, the decision to allow countable athletically related activities will be determined and defined on an institutional basis depending on institutional, local, and state public health guidelines. All applicable NCAA playing and practice season rules shall be followed.

This includes the sports of men's and women's basketball, men's and women's swimming, men's and women's indoor track and field, and wrestling.

Question 4: Will **spring** championship sports be able to participate in countable athletically related activities in the fall semester?

Answer: Prior to September 1, the PSAC and its member institutions will develop guidelines on a phased approach to countable athletically related activities to allow for meaningful interaction among student-athletes and coaches, if public health conditions permit. However, the decision to allow countable athletically related activities will be determined and defined on an institutional basis depending on institutional, local, and state public health guidelines. All applicable NCAA playing and practice season rules shall be followed.

This includes the sports of baseball, men's and women's golf, women's lacrosse, softball, men's and women's tennis, and men's and women's outdoor track and field.

Question 5: Will the NCAA move fall sport championships to the spring semester?

Answer: At this point, the NCAA has made no decisions regarding the movement of its championship dates or cancellation of fall championships. Conversations among all conferences and the NCAA are ongoing. The PSAC will work with other Division II Conferences and the NCAA to determine if Fall championships can be moved to the spring.

Question 6: If countable athletically related activities are permitted, will there be any practice and/or fitness training conditions placed on student-athletes, such as number of hours per week?

Answer: This is yet to be determined. There will be guidelines on resocialization in small groups under recommendations for social distancing. We expect Conference guidelines to be finalized prior to September 1.

Returning Students Not Enrolling Full Time in an Academic Semester:

Question 1: Would a decision to not enroll or enroll part time impact a student-athletes future eligibility?

Answer: Possibly. Questions pertaining to progress toward degree and eligibility requirements should be directed to your institution's compliance office.

Question 2: May returning student-athletes who are not enrolled (or enrolled less than full time) in a semester participate in practice or other countable athletically related activities during that semester?

Answer: No. NCAA rules require student-athletes be enrolled full time to participate in practice or competition.

Question 3: May returning student-athletes who are not enrolled (or enrolled less than full time) in a semester participate in voluntary athletically related activities with their coaches at their own request during that semester?

Answer: No. A coach's presence would cause the activity to become countable, which is not permitted during a semester in which a student-athlete is not enrolled full-time.

Question 4: If a returning student-athlete elects to not enroll in the Fall 2020 (or any subsequent) semester, are they permitted to participate in outside athletic competition during that semester?

Answer: Participation in outside athletic competition will limit a student-athlete's ability to take advantage of the missed term exception regarding NCAA academic eligibility standards. Additionally, outside competition may have amateurism implications. Student-athletes should consult with their institution's compliance office before participating in any outside athletic activities.

Bylaw 14 – Eligibility, Season of Competition, and Outside Competition:

Generally, Division II student-athletes are allowed to participate in four seasons of competition in their sport within ten full time semesters.

Question 1: What happens if the Fall 2020 semester is a student-athletes 10th semester? Will he/she be able to participate in the spring?

Answer: By enrolling full-time and attending class (either in-person or virtually), a student-athlete will use a semester under the ten-semester rule. It has yet to be determined if there will be any blanket relief granted by the NCAA under this rule to extend eligibility. Student-athletes would have the option to file for a waiver opportunity.

Question 2: If a student-athlete participates in outside intercollegiate competition in Spring 2021 during a modified championship sport season, do they use a season of competition?

Answer: Yes. Current NCAA rules specify that student-athletes use a season if they represent an institution in intercollegiate athletics. This applies if a student-athlete competes in all contests or enters a competition for only a few minutes. If PSAC competition in fall sports is moved to the Spring 2021 semester, these sports would then have their championship segment and participation would count as a season of competition.

Question 3: If a student-athlete does not compete against outside competition (another collegiate institution), during the 2020-2021 academic year, does that student-athlete use a season of competition?

Answer: No. NCAA rules state a student-athlete must participate against outside competition in order to utilize a season of competition. A student-athlete who is enrolled full time, may participate in practice and strength and conditioning activities without using a season of competition.

Question 4: Can a student-athlete who is enrolled full-time and receiving athletics aid compete as a member of a non-collegiate amateur team during the institutions season in that sport? For example, competing on a local club team while taking classes virtually and residing at their home residence.

Answer: No. Student-athletes become ineligible for intercollegiate competition in their sport if they compete on an outside team during the institution's season in the sport. Additionally, outside competition may have amateurism implications. Student-athletes should consult with their institution's compliance office regarding all questions related to outside teams and competition.

Question 5: If an incoming student-athlete defers their initial full-time enrollment beyond Fall 2020, may they continue to participate in practice or competition in their sport with an outside team?

Answer: Incoming student-athletes are allowed to participate in organized competition for a one-year time period following high school graduation without impacting eligibility. After this initial one-year "gap" year, continued participation would impact eligibility. Student-athletes should consult with their institution's compliance office for guidance on individual circumstances.

Bylaw 15 – Athletics Aid

Questions pertaining to athletic aid should be directed to your institution's compliance office. Please note, if a student-athlete chooses not to enroll or enroll part time, he or she cannot receive athletics aid during that semester.

Bylaw 12 – Amateurism and Bylaw 16 – Awards & Benefits

Question 1: Will NCAA rules surrounding amateurism and awards/benefits apply to student-athletes if they choose to not enroll full time at an institution?

Answer: Yes. Student-athletes who intend to return to any NCAA member institution and participate in intercollegiate athletics should continue to comply with all NCAA rules while not enrolled or enrolled part time at their institution.

Please contact your institution's compliance office with any additional questions.