

HANDBOOK

2008-09 NCAA[®] DIVISION I



2008-09
NCAA[®] Division I
Athletics Certification
Handbook

The NCAA Athletics Certification Handbook is designed to assist NCAA member institutions participating in the Division I athletics certification program and members of peer-review teams who will be conducting campus evaluation visits. The handbook was developed by the NCAA Division I Committee on Athletics Certification and has been organized in a format that permits easy access for individuals with only modest familiarity concerning athletics certification. It is not meant to answer every question related to athletics certification; rather, it provides a foundation on which to increase understanding of the self-study process.

The handbook follows a sequential order that conforms to the sequence of events related to athletics certification and describes the responsibilities and activities of the institution, the peer-review team and the Committee on Athletics Certification. Throughout the handbook, external peer reviewers are referred to as “the peer-review team.” When referring to the Committee on Athletics Certification, the handbook uses either the formal title or refers only to “the committee.”

To ensure that the handbook is a useful and up-to-date resource guide, the NCAA revises it annually and distributes it each year to institutions and peer reviewers involved in the certification process for the upcoming academic year.

Contained within this handbook is a document referred to as the glossary of terms. The glossary of terms document provides a brief explanation of key terms the institution will need to be familiar with throughout the athletics certification process.

We hope that the handbook is useful and that it contributes to the successful completion of campus self-studies and to the fair evaluation of those self-study efforts by members of peer-review teams.

Users of the handbook are encouraged to submit questions or suggestions regarding the use of the publication to:

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Information regarding the athletics certification program can be obtained via the Internet at www.NCAA.org.

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1 Introduction

The NCAA and its legislative process

The National Collegiate Athletic Association is a voluntary organization devoted to the sound administration of intercollegiate athletics. The Association's active members are separated into three membership divisions. Member institutions choose their membership division based on the relative emphasis and support they wish to devote to athletics within the academic context.

NCAA members regulate their athletics programs through cabinets and committees. These groups, made up of campus and conference representatives, may suggest changes in NCAA rules, but the full membership has the final authority. In Division I, that authority is exercised initially through a representative governance structure, consisting of a Legislative Council (athletics administrators and faculty members) and a Board of Directors (campus chancellors or presidents). The members of those bodies are selected by the conferences they represent. Division I institutions can call for an override vote, in which all schools and conferences participate, on any legislative action taken by the Legislative Council and/or Board of Directors.

Origin and history of athletics certification

Athletics certification was approved for Division I institutions at the 1993 NCAA Convention as a key part of the NCAA reform agenda. Certification was originally introduced in 1989 and tested in a two-year pilot program. Participants generally agreed that the pilot program was valuable but could be improved by limiting the scope of the self-study. After a special committee reworked the idea during the next year, the NCAA Presidents Commission, the NCAA Council and the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics supported a revised version of the program.

Athletics certification began its second cycle in 1999. Since 1999, the program has been reviewed annually, and in 2004, the NCAA Board of Directors supported a revised version of certification that reduced the number of operating principles to seven. The third cycle begins in fall 2008.

The program's purpose

Athletics certification is meant to ensure the NCAA's fundamental commitment to integrity in intercollegiate athletics.

The program is structured to achieve its goal in several ways:

1. By opening the affairs of athletics to the university community and the public.

- Key campus constituent groups must be meaningfully involved in the development of the institution's self-study and may be asked to review the institution's self-study report after it has been drafted.

- Self-study reports are evaluated by teams of peer reviewers from other institutions and conference offices.
 - Decisions of the NCAA Division I Committee on Athletics Certification related to an institution's status are announced publicly.
- 2. By setting standards (called operating principles) for the operation of Division I athletics programs.** These operating principles originally were adopted overwhelmingly at the 1993 NCAA Convention. They cover three basic areas — governance and commitment to rules compliance; academic integrity; and gender/diversity issues and student-athlete well-being.
 - 3. By putting tough sanctions in place for institutions that fail to conduct a comprehensive self-study or to correct problems.** Athletics certification is intended to help an institution. For this reason, the program allows ample time for an institution to consider its programs, to identify problems and to correct them. Institutions that fail to make an honest effort face serious consequences — ineligibility for NCAA championships and, eventually, removal from active membership in the Association.

Benefits of self-study

The core of athletics certification is the institution's self-study, in which broad-based campus participation is critical.

An effective self-study benefits the institution by providing:

- 1. Self-awareness.** The self-study offers a unique opportunity to educate individuals across the campus about the athletics program's goals and purposes, the many challenges facing athletics and the ways in which athletics supports the institution's mission.
- 2. Affirmation.** Athletics certification is couched in the affirmative and the self-study process will reveal many aspects of the athletics program worthy of praise.
- 3. Opportunities to improve.** Even an outstanding program can be better, and issues will be identified routinely as part of any institution's self-study. As these issues come to light, the self-study process will offer a forum for suggestions from individuals with a wide range of experience.

There are also benefits for the Association:

1. The self-study provides a framework for the Division I membership to show its continuing commitment to institutional control of intercollegiate athletics within the academic setting.
2. Increased public confidence.

3. The athletics certification program serves as a means to ensure that all Division I member institutions are meeting the standards adopted by the membership.

Committee on Athletics Certification

The NCAA Division I Committee on Athletics Certification is responsible for the administration of the athletics certification program. All members are employed at Division I institutions or conferences, and they include college chancellors or presidents, athletics administrators, faculty athletics representatives, and conference administrators. The committee initially reviews self-study reports of institutions to identify issues, and receives the written evaluations of peer-review team reports and the institution's responses. This information becomes the basis for determining the certification status for each Division I member institution.

Philosophy statement of the Committee on Athletics Certification

The Committee on Athletics Certification is charged by the NCAA Division I membership with assisting institutions in identifying mechanisms that ensure intercollegiate athletics programs are operating in accordance with the high standards and core values of Division I. An institution is expected to conduct an accurate self-study that involves broad-based campus participation. The committee, and a visiting peer-review team, will provide an objective evaluation of the institution's program based on legislated operating principles adopted by the membership. Further, the committee expects institutions to routinely monitor and implement its plans for improvement to ensure these plans are completed on time. The certification program is designed to help an institution improve and make continual progress toward its stated objectives and build on previous certification reviews. The committee will allow ample time for an institution to consider its programs, identify deficiencies and take steps to correct them. If the self-study reveals deficiencies in the intercollegiate athletics program, the committee will work collaboratively with the institution to achieve those corrective actions or will withhold certification if the institution fails to remedy its deficiencies. Through its actions, the committee will monitor the effectiveness of the certification program to ensure that the NCAA's fundamental commitment to integrity in intercollegiate athletics is supported and that the program continues to emphasize applicable principles of the Association.

External peer-review teams

External peer-review teams, selected and assigned by the Committee on Athletics Certification, are composed of experienced educational and athletics personnel.

Peer-review teams are responsible for:

1. Verifying that the institution's self-study was accurate and complete.
2. Confirming that the self-study was developed through a process that involved broad-based campus participation.
3. Evaluating the self-study and committee-identified issues in terms of the operating principles that have been approved for all Division I members.

A typical peer-review team will consist of three or four members. Whenever possible, a chancellor or president will serve as chair.

The certification cycle

The first certification cycle required each Division I institution to complete a self-study of athletics in the first five years of the program. The Division I membership voted at the 1997 NCAA Convention to change the frequency of athletics certification from once every five years to once every 10 years.

For the third cycle of the certification program:

1. An institution's placement in the first and second athletics certification cycles has been taken into consideration for its placement in the third cycle.
2. Conferences had input regarding a schedule for their member institutions.
3. Institutions from the same conference have been evenly scheduled to reduce the burden on the conference office.
4. Placement was in conjunction with the institution's regional accreditation, insofar as possible, for those institutions that so desired.

General timeline for the athletics certification process

Step 1: August 15-October 31, 2008

Orientation videoconference occurs.

Step 2: August 15, 2008-April 2009

Institution develops the self-study report.

Step 3: May 1, 2009

Deadline to submit institution's self-study report via the Athletics Certification System (ACS).

Step 4: May 1-June 30, 2009

NCAA staff liaison reviews the institution's report for preliminary issues.

Step 5: July 15-August 15, 2009

Committee on Athletics Certification (CAC) reviews the self-study report and finalizes the issues.

Step 6: Until two weeks before the evaluation visit

Institution may respond to the CAC analysis via the ACS.

Step 7: September 15-November 30, 2009

Peer-review team (PRT) conducts the institution's campus visit and writes the report.

Step 8: Within two weeks after campus visit

PRT report is sent to the institution's chancellor or president for response on the ACS.

Step 9: December 18, 2009

Institution's response to the report is due.

Step 10: February 2010

CAC deliberates a final decision.

Step 11: Spring 2010

CAC final decision announced publicly.

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Preparing for the Self-Study

The certification process allows the institution approximately seven to nine months to conduct its self-study. An orientation videoconference conducted by a member of the NCAA staff signals the beginning of the self-study process.

Whenever possible, the NCAA staff member who conducts the orientation videoconference also will receive the institution's self-study report, work with the institution to make arrangements for the peer-review team's visit and accompany the peer-review team on the visit. The institution should consider the NCAA staff member the primary source of information and should feel free to contact the individual directly with questions. If the institution has questions before a specific staff liaison is assigned, the institution should contact the membership services staff at the national office.

Responsibilities of the chancellor or president

Throughout the self-study process, the chancellor or president must make it clear, by word and action, that the self-study is a priority and that the entire institution — not just the department of athletics — is responsible for its completion.

In preparing for the self-study, the chancellor's or president's specific responsibilities include:

1. Appointing the chair of the self-study steering committee. Neither the chancellor or president, nor any person with direct oversight for athletics (e.g., the director of athletics, the vice president to whom athletics reports, the faculty athletics representative), may chair the steering committee. The chair should be appointed from among the institution's senior-management team.

The chair should be provided clear authority from and ready access to the chancellor or president. By doing so, the chancellor or president communicates the importance that the institution attaches to the self-study and encourages other self-study participants to take the process seriously.

However, given the unique organizational structures and reporting lines at some institutions, each chancellor or president is permitted flexibility in appointing a chair. The institution must document that the chair has clear authority from and ready access to the chancellor or president in situations in which the institution cannot state definitively that the chair is a member of the institution's senior-management team.

2. Selecting the members of the self-study steering committee. The chancellor or president is responsible for ensuring effective representation of key campus constituent groups on the steering committee. The goal should be a balance between athletics department staff members and other key individuals and groups on campus.

- 3. Making the charge to the steering committee clear.**
- 4. Giving the steering committee the proper authority to complete its work.**

Forming the self-study steering committee

Required members of the steering committee:

1. Chancellor or president.
2. Faculty athletics representative.
3. Director of athletics.
4. Senior woman administrator.
5. Student-athlete representative(s).
6. Athletics certification liaison.

The chancellor's or president's involvement as a full-fledged member of the steering committee is critical to ensuring the process is conducted with the necessary authority and seriousness of purpose. The chancellor or president may designate an individual to replace him or her at steering committee meetings that he or she cannot attend.

In addition to the required positions listed above, the membership of the rest of the steering committee is left to the discretion of the chancellor or president, keeping in mind the importance of broad-based participation. The number of members will vary from campus to campus. Institutions with separate men's and women's athletics departments, for example, may find it necessary to make special provisions in their self-studies to allow for a proper evaluation of separate organizations or services, and the self-study steering committees of those institutions could be structured differently as a result.

In appointing steering committee members, the chancellor or president should consider the differing perspectives, range of expertise and access to information that may be offered by representatives of the following groups:

1. Governing board.
2. Administration external to athletics, including, but not limited to, academic affairs, fiscal affairs, student affairs, multicultural or diversity affairs, admissions, registrar, financial aid and human resources.
3. Faculty.

4. Student body.
5. Alumni or representatives of the institution's athletics interests.
6. Athletics board or committee members.

Forming the subcommittees

The steering committee should establish as many subcommittees as it considers necessary to complete the major topic areas of the self-study. Subcommittees should be organized in ways that best suit the institution's needs and the requirements of the self-study. Subcommittee membership should be reflective of the broad constituent interests of the institution, including faculty, administrators (internal and external to athletics), students and student-athletes.

The chair of each subcommittee should be a member of the steering committee. Also, athletics department staff members should not serve as subcommittee chairs, although they can be included as subcommittee members.

Some athletics department staff members (e.g., athletics academic advisor, compliance coordinator) may serve as ex officio members of subcommittees as appropriate to facilitate data collection and analysis.

Subcommittees are accountable to the steering committee and should be actively involved through regular communication, periodic meetings and timely reports.

The steering committee is required to identify methods (e.g., appointment to subcommittees, interviews, student-athlete forums, student-athlete advisory committee) of involving student-athletes in the self-study process.

Key individuals

- 1. Campus Contact:** This individual is responsible for fielding questions from institutional personnel and forwarding them to the NCAA staff member, and is responsible for coordinating preparations for the evaluation visit, including lodging and travel for peer-review team members, scheduling interviews and organizing any work-related needs for peer reviewers (e.g., computer resources, meeting rooms).
- 2. Report Coordinator:** This individual is responsible for serving as the institution's contact for the athletics certification system (ACS). He or she is charged with entering the self-study report into the ACS.

3. Athletics Certification Liaison: The Committee on Athletics Certification requires each Division I institution to designate an individual to serve as its athletics certification liaison (hereafter referred to as “liaison”). The liaison is the individual on the institution’s campus who is responsible for monitoring the progress of the institution’s plans for improvement developed during the second cycle of the athletics certification process.

Involvement of the conference office

Conference offices’ involvement in athletics certification is optional, but is encouraged by the committee. The role of an institution’s conference office is determined by the institution. The conference office’s role may include:

1. Participating in the orientation videoconference process.
2. Ensuring that the institution develops, implements and reports corrective actions identified as a normal part of the certification process.
3. Serving as an ex officio member of the institution’s steering committee.
4. Reviewing drafts of the institution’s self-study report.
5. Participating in the introductory and exit meetings of the evaluation visit. Please note, the conference representative involved in an evaluation visit will not be permitted to attend interviews or meetings of the peer-review team.

If the regular, ongoing role of the conference office includes a review of the institution’s rules-compliance efforts or help in developing and maintaining compliance initiatives, the institution should be prepared to provide a record of those efforts to the peer-review team.

Conference offices should treat institutional self-study reports as confidential. To the extent that conference personnel become aware of violations during the certification process, the conference is obligated to help ensure that conference members self-report those violations.

Use of outside individuals or agencies

Some institutions may wish to involve individuals or agencies not otherwise employed by the institution in one or more aspects of the self-study process. These outside individuals or agencies may perform related functions that are different from the conference office responsibilities. In such cases, institutional personnel are responsible for generating the substance of the self-study report and

peer-review teams will be evaluating institutions on their roles in developing the content of self-study reports.

NCAA rules recognize the institution's responsibility not only for determining what role (if any) individuals outside the institution might play in the certification process, but also for ensuring that outside individuals or agencies are appropriately involved. In no way should the balance of responsibility for the self-study process shift from internal to external personnel.

In addition, before individuals or agencies outside the institution may be used, the institution must receive prior written approval of the committee. The institution's chancellor or president must request in writing from the committee approval for outside involvement and the request should include a full explanation of the specific services that will be rendered.

Any anticipated involvement by outside individuals or agencies also must be clearly defined in the institution's written plan for completing the self-study process.

Please note, current committee members may not engage in any consulting arrangements with institutions (other than their own or, for conference office personnel, institutions within their respective conferences) involved in the self-study process.

Preparing a tentative written plan for completing the self-study

Before the orientation videoconference, each institution must develop its tentative written plan, or roadmap, that will assist in the development of the institution's self-study report. The steering committee must consult with the institution's governing board and/or its chancellor or president, before writing the plan, regarding plans and commitments that may affect the future of the institution and its athletics program (e.g., composition of the student body, organization of the athletics program, sports sponsorship, conference or NCAA divisional membership). The tentative written plan should be submitted to the institution's NCAA staff liaison two to three weeks before the institution's orientation videoconference.

The tentative written plan should be concise and must include:

1. Stated goals for the process.
2. Identification of all institutional plans from the second-cycle self-study and all Committee on Athletics Certification conditions for certification from the second cycle.
3. The function (e.g., role in drafting report, developing plan for improvement) and composition of the steering committee and subcommittees, with the names and titles of steering committee and subcommittee members.

4. The identification of the institution's campus contact.
5. The identification of the report coordinator.
6. An outline and schedule for completing the self-study, including the process for reviewing subcommittee and steering committee draft reports.
7. Plans for involving the conference office or other individuals or agencies outside the institution. [Note: Outside involvement requires prior written approval of the Committee on Athletics Certification.]
8. Institutional guidelines for writing and editing the self-study report. These should address the work-related needs of self-study participants (e.g., meeting rooms, computer resources, clerical assistance, copies).
9. The process for developing the final self-study report, including evaluation of self-study responses against the operating principles and development of the institution's plans for improvement.
10. Plans for communicating the work of the steering committee to the institutional community. Also, the institution should consider what plans, if any, it has for communicating the work of the steering committee to the media and general public.

The tentative written plan outline is included in this instrument as Appendix C.

Preparing for the orientation videoconference

To prepare for the orientation videoconference, the institution (and the steering committee in particular) is expected to:

1. Review the certification handbook and the self-study instrument.
2. Prepare its tentative written plan.
3. Determine the role of the conference office in the self-study and peer-review process.
4. Review institutional compliance policies and procedures.
5. Identify potential dates for the institution's evaluation visit.

Orientation videoconference

An NCAA staff member will conduct the orientation videoconference for the institution approximately 12 to 14 months before the evaluation visit. The purpose of the orientation videoconference is to review:

1. The purpose and format of the certification program.
2. The institution's activities that have been conducted in preparation for the orientation.
3. The self-study instrument (with members of the steering committee and subcommittees).
4. Preparations for the evaluation visit.
5. Projected dates for the evaluation visit.

The orientation videoconference is intended for the benefit of those individuals who will be involved in the self-study.

Modification of schedule

An institution may apply to the Committee on Athletics Certification for modification of its place in the certification schedule upon a showing of special need. The committee shall, at its discretion, revise the schedule if practicable, and use its authority to ensure that the self-studies do not extend beyond 10 years unless extenuating circumstances are present.

Once an institution begins its self-study, a request for modification to delay the process will be granted by the committee only in unusual circumstances that significantly affect the institution's ability to complete its self-study. The institution must make its request for any modification in writing from the institution's chancellor or president to the committee. When the committee approves a modification of the schedule, the committee will determine whether more current data will have to be collected by an institution when it resumes the self-study.

For institutions that fail to submit an adequate self-study sufficiently in advance of a peer-review team's visit, a written request to delay the visit should be sent from the institution to the committee, which will consider such requests on a case-by-case basis.

Institutions that receive a notice of allegation(s) or inquiry from the NCAA enforcement staff are requested to notify the chair of the committee if the institution is currently engaged in the athletics certification process or is scheduled to begin the process in the near future.

After receiving a notice of allegation(s) or inquiry, an institution may continue with the self-study process on campus (e.g., conduct orientation videoconference, host evaluation visit); however, the committee will postpone any further certification-related deliberations until the enforcement process has concluded and the NCAA Division I Committee on Infractions has issued its public report. At no time will the committee render any decision regarding a particular institution's certification status until such time as all enforcement activity at the institution is resolved.

For institutions pursuing an appeal of an infractions case or penalties, the chair of the Committee on Athletics Certification will determine on a case-by-case basis whether it is necessary to continue postponement of the institution's certification decision.

3

Conducting the Self-Study

The athletics certification program allows each institution approximately seven to nine months to conduct its self-study. During this period, an institution must gather and analyze data, and report the findings in a self-study report.

General responsibilities of the self-study steering committee

1. Collecting and organizing pertinent data.

The institution should gather data by making use of the individuals most appropriate to the specific area. For example, staff members in the offices of admissions and registrar will be able to report on the demographics, and the academic preparation and performance of the general student body. Similarly, athletics department staff members (e.g., compliance coordinators, academic advisors) may serve as key sources of information regarding student-athletes.

2. Coordinating activities of the subcommittees and monitoring progress of the self-study.

The steering committee is expected to help ensure that subcommittee and steering committee reports are developed with:

- Opportunities for input from appropriate campus constituent groups.
- Appropriate involvement of all members of the steering committee or of a given subcommittee in the preparation of particular reports.

3. Reviewing previous self-study documents.

A review of previous institutional reports and plans for improvement along with documents from the Committee on Athletics Certification and peer-review team will help the institution evaluate its progress in addressing past issues. This review will assist the institution in preparing its response to specific requests of the third-cycle self-study that reference second-cycle issues.

4. Reviewing the reports of the steering committee and the various subcommittees.

5. Maintaining a written record of:

- Dates on which subcommittee and steering committee meetings were conducted, and the individuals in attendance at those meetings.
- Individual(s) responsible for writing each section of the self-study report.
- Invitations extended to members of the subcommittees and steering committee to comment on subcommittee and steering committee draft reports, including the approximate dates on which those invitations were extended.

The peer-review team will consider these records as part of its evaluation of the institution's self-study process and the extent to which that process reflected broad-based campus participation.

In their review of the institution's self-study process, peer-review teams and the Committee on Athletics Certification will be guided more by the opportunities provided for comment and the quality of discussion than by the number of meetings.

6. Producing and publicizing the final self-study report.

Preparing the self-study report

The Committee on Athletics Certification has established a specific format for organizing each institution's self-study report for the following reasons:

1. To make the institution's preparation of the report as straightforward as possible.
2. To make the reports easier for the peer-review team and members of the committee to read and understand.
3. To ensure greater consistency in the material being reviewed.

Further, the committee expects that the institution will:

1. Ensure that institutional responses address each aspect of all self-study items in a thorough but concise manner.
2. Prepare responses to each specific self-study item so that they can be read individually, rather than as part of a general narrative.
3. Ensure that institutional responses meet the expectations of the committee by reviewing the measurable standards documents and using the self-study report checklist.

Beyond the information requested in specific self-study items, the self-study instrument also refers to documents or materials that are "to be available" to the peer-review team.

The notation "to be available" denotes that the material should remain on campus and be available to the peer-review team either before or during its campus visit.

Athletics Certification System

The athletics certification system (ACS) is a Web-based software program for the submission and

storage of institutional self-studies, committee-identified issues, peer-review team reports, committee actions and committee precedent. The system allows institutions, peer-review teams, the Committee on Athletics Certification and the NCAA staff to view an institution's self-study report via the Web. Institutions are required to submit their self-study via the Web-based system. A user manual for the ACS may be found on the NCAA Web site at www.NCAA.org, along with helpful training videos.

The report's organizational format

The institution's self-study report will be presented in three sections, consistent with the certification program's three basic topic areas (governance and commitment to rules compliance; academic integrity; and gender/diversity issues and student-athlete well-being). The information in each section will be divided into parts:

1. The first part of each section provides an opportunity for the institution to report its progress since the second-cycle self-study.
2. The second part of each section is reserved for the institution's responses to self-study items.
3. The third part of each section is for: (a) The institution's conclusions regarding conformity with each element of the operating principle and with the operating principle as a whole, and (b) statements of the institution's plans for improvement, related to the operating principles.

Expectations for the report

The Committee on Athletics Certification will review an institution's self-study report to ensure that:

1. The report's conclusions are based on data or records that are available and reliable.
2. The conclusions reached are reasonable based on the available data.
3. The institution has provided thorough responses to all the self-study items.
4. All existing concerns have been identified by the institution and plans for improvement have been established to address those concerns.
5. Where the institution has concluded that plans to correct issues in one area may affect existing programs in other areas, plans have been established to maintain the current level of quality of all programs.

Institutional plans for improvement

Institutional plans for improvement are required when an institution is not in conformity with a specific operating principle. Additionally, plans for improvement are required for the gender-issues and diversity-issues operating principles.

Written institutional plans communicate an institution's current commitment, provide benchmarks to assess progress and also serve as records that ensure an institution's continued commitment.

Institutional plans must include the following requirements:

- 1. Issues/Problems.** Each plan must identify issues or problems confronting the institution.
- 2. Measurable Goals.** Each plan must include the specific measurable goals the institution intends to achieve to address issues or problems.
- 3. Steps to Achieve the Goals.** Each plan must include the specific steps the institution will take to achieve the goals.
- 4. Individuals/Offices Responsible for Carrying Out the Specific Actions.** Each plan must identify the individuals and/or offices responsible for carrying out the actions identified by the institution.
- 5. Specific Timetable(s).** Each plan must include specific timetables for completing the work.

Further, institutional plans for improvement must meet the following requirements:

- 1. Stand-Alone and in Writing.** Each plan shall be committed to paper and shall be a stand-alone document.
- 2. Broad-Based Campus Participation.** Each plan shall be developed with opportunities for significant input from appropriate constituent groups inside and outside athletics.
- 3. Institution Approval.** Each plan must be adopted formally by the institution's final authority (e.g., chancellor or president, or governing board) in such matters to ensure that it carries the commitment and support of the entire institution.

A sample format for plans for improvement can be found in the Athletics Certification Self-Study Instrument.

Gender-issues and diversity-issues plans

In addition to the requirements listed above, plans for improvement to address gender issues and diversity issues in the intercollegiate athletics program must extend at least five years into the future, and institutions must maintain an active written plan at all times. If a plan concludes before the commencement of the institution's next self-study, the institution is expected to create a new five-year plan for improvement, even if each of the actions in the institution's original plan were ongoing in nature. The institution must develop a new five-year plan that will maintain conformity with the operating principle. Further, the gender-issues plan must address all 17 program areas for gender issues, and the diversity-issues plan must address all nine program areas for diversity issues. All of the previously mentioned program areas can be found in the self-study instrument.

An institution-wide affirmative action plan is acceptable only if it:

1. Specifically references, in the plan or in a separate document, the intercollegiate athletics program.
2. Addresses diversity issues and needs (e.g., special programming, services of multicultural offices, general well-being issues) for student-athletes and athletics staff.
3. Satisfies the committee's minimum expectations for a plan.

Finally, Operating Principle 3.1-(c) and 3.2-(c) require an institution to maintain a program, or continue progress toward a program, that is equitable for both genders and expands opportunities and support for diverse student-athletes and athletics personnel. Within gender-issues and diversity-issues written plans, specific numerical targets may place an institution at legal risk and are not expected in an institution's written plan, particularly as they relate to hiring practices. In the program area of hiring practices, institutions may submit plans that have broad, flexible non-numeric hiring goals. As they relate to other program areas, including, but not limited to, participation rates and budget increases, specific numerical targets may be appropriate.

Confidentiality of the report

Institutional self-studies shall be treated as confidential by conference offices, the NCAA, peer-review teams and the Committee on Athletics Certification. Institutions, however, are permitted to distribute reports and supporting documentation at their discretion.

4

Preparing for the Evaluation Visit

Responsibilities of the NCAA Division I Committee on Athletics Certification

The Committee on Athletics Certification is responsible for selecting and assigning peer-review teams. The committee takes a number of factors into consideration when making peer-review team assignments:

1. Composition of peer-review teams.

As a general rule, the committee will assign peer-review teams according to the characteristics of the institution (e.g., public/private, size of intercollegiate athletics program), giving specific attention to whether the peer-review team includes:

- An appropriate number of individuals to handle the anticipated workload.
- A range of expertise to cover certification topic areas.
- Appropriate subdivisional representation.
- Appropriate representation of campus constituent groups.
- Appropriate gender and ethnic minority representation.

2. Institutional recommendation.

Approximately nine to 11 months before the scheduled evaluation visit, the NCAA staff will provide the participating institution with a list of potential peer-review team members from the larger pool of qualified peer reviewers.

The institution will review this list and, within approximately one month, may recommend, for legitimate reasons, to the Committee on Athletics Certification that particular individuals included on that list not be assigned as peer-review team members.

The committee will consider such recommendations but reserves the right to make all decisions regarding peer-review team assignments.

3. Notification of peer-review team assignments.

Approximately six months before the evaluation visit, the NCAA staff will notify the institution of the peer-review team chair who has been assigned to that institution.

As circumstances dictate, however, the committee may change the assignment of the peer-review team chair at its discretion.

Before the evaluation visit, the NCAA staff will notify the institution of the members of the peer-review team that have been assigned to visit the institution.

4. Ethical considerations.

The committee relies on the integrity of institutions and of individual peer reviewers to avoid any assignment for which any potential for conflict of interest exists.

Responsibilities of the participating institution

In preparing for the evaluation visit, the participating institution is required to:

1. Submit its completed self-study report by May 1.
2. Make lodging and other arrangements for members of the peer-review team and NCAA staff.
3. Make arrangements to cover peer-review team members' expenses. (See Costs section, page 26.)
4. Establish an itinerary with the NCAA staff for the visit.

The institution's commitment to specific dates carries an assurance that key institutional personnel will be available for interviews, including, but not limited to, the institution's:

1. Chancellor or president.
2. Faculty athletics representative.
3. Director of athletics.
4. Senior woman administrator.
5. Steering committee.
6. Steering committee chair.
7. Subcommittee chairs.
8. Student-athlete representatives.
9. Athletics certification liaison.
10. Coaches.

Peer-review teams will interview selected institutional staff members who participated in the self-study process and others who might offer helpful information regarding self-study issues and the conclusions reached by the institution.

The peer-review team will inform the institution in advance of those individuals that they will want to interview. The peer-review team also may request interviews at the time of the campus visit without prior notice.

Responsibilities of NCAA staff

The NCAA staff member assigned to accompany the peer-review team on its campus visit serves as the liaison between the host institution and the peer-review team.

The NCAA staff liaison verifies that the institution's self-study report is complete. In addition, the NCAA staff liaison will also provide a preliminary analysis regarding the institution's conformity with the operating principles and adherence to the measurable standards.

The NCAA staff liaison also is expected to supply the peer-review team and the Committee on Athletics Certification copies of public infractions reports involving the host institution since its last institutional self-study.

As the date of the campus visit draws near, the NCAA staff liaison will coordinate with the institution's campus contact to confirm arrangements for the peer-review team's visit, including:

1. Hotel reservations for peer-review team members and NCAA staff.
2. Travel for peer-review team members.
3. Local transportation for peer-review team members and NCAA staff.
4. The itinerary and specific time schedule for interviews and other activities of the peer-review team.
5. Availability of campus personnel for scheduled interviews.
6. Involvement of the conference office (if any).
7. Adequate conference rooms and work areas, sufficient computer resources, Internet access, printers, photocopiers, and attention to other work-related needs of the peer-review team.
8. Reimbursement of visit expenses incurred by peer-review team members, including per diem.

Costs

The costs related to athletics certification will be shared by the NCAA and participating institutions.

The institution is responsible for:

1. Expenses of all institutional personnel related to the orientation videoconference.
2. All costs associated with the preparation and completion of the self-study report.
3. Actual expenses of peer reviewers for campus visits, including transportation to the reviewer's local airport, local airport parking, round-trip coach air travel or ground transportation, lodging, local transportation, and per diem of \$50 per day for each day of the visit, including official travel days.
4. Work-related needs (e.g., copiers, meeting rooms, computers, Internet access, printers) of the peer-review team and the NCAA staff member during the evaluation visit.

The NCAA is responsible for:

1. Expenses of NCAA staff members related to the orientation videoconference and the campus evaluation visit.
2. All costs associated with the preparation and distribution of the peer-review report after the evaluation visit.

Please note, member conferences are responsible for all costs incurred by a conference staff member related to that individual's participation in the certification of a conference member institution.

Responsibilities of the peer-review team

The peer-review team chair is responsible for:

1. Identifying topic areas to which the team will give special attention, in consultation with the other members of the peer-review team.
2. Assigning sections of the institution's self-study report to particular team members.
3. Contacting the institution's chancellor or president before the evaluation visit for the purpose of understanding special circumstances that might affect the peer-review team's campus visit.
4. Consulting with the other members of the peer-review team to establish a schedule of activities (e.g., reviews of records, facility tours) for the visit, and to identify those individuals on campus who the peer-review team will interview.

5. Consulting with the host institution, the appropriate conference office and the NCAA staff liaison to determine whether a conference administrator will take part in the evaluation visit and, if so, what role that individual will play.
6. Meeting with the institution's chancellor or president to discuss informally the nature of the information to be presented in the exit meeting.
7. Coordinating and leading the exit meeting at the completion of the visit.
8. Ensuring that the peer-review team's report is reflective of the visit's findings.
9. Communicating with the committee regarding the evaluation visit and peer-review team report, including appearing in person, if necessary, before the committee regarding an institution's certification status.
10. Evaluating the performance of the peer reviewers serving on the teams.
11. Ensuring that the team fulfills its responsibilities and the objectives specified for evaluation visits.

In addition, all members of the peer-review team, including the chair, share equally in other preparations for the campus evaluation visit.

Each peer-review team member is expected to review the institution's self-study report and committee issues identified in order to:

1. Understand the organization and operation of the institution's athletics program.
2. Identify areas in the report that may require clarification or additional information.
3. Target specific topic areas as instructed by the committee for special emphasis during the campus visit.

Members of the peer-review team should treat all materials and discussions related to the visit as confidential.

5

The Evaluation Visit

Peer-review team members visit the host institution's campus in order to assess the level of broad-based campus participation in the institution's self-study and to assess the accuracy of the information contained in the institution's self-study report. Experiences gained by the peer-review team during the campus visit help the team to evaluate more fairly the information contained in the institution's self-study report.

By the end of the visit, the peer-review team will have reached tentative conclusions about the nature of the institution's self-study process, the accuracy of the institution's written self-study report and the operation of the athletics program in relation to the certification program's operating principles.

Before leaving campus, the peer-review team will record its conclusions in a report that will be forwarded to the institution and to the Committee on Athletics Certification.

The institution's chancellor or president is afforded an opportunity to hear the peer-review team's general impressions in an exit meeting at the end of the visit.

Length of the evaluation visit

The peer-review team's visit typically takes place during a three-day, two-night period. The chair of the peer-review team is responsible for determining the length of time necessary for the peer-review visit based on a review of the self-study report and the committee-identified issues.

Every effort will be made to establish a schedule in advance that reflects accurately the length of the evaluation visit. Unanticipated events on campus may require changes in the schedule at the time of the visit, however, and the chair is authorized to modify the schedule as necessary within the established period.

The following is a typical schedule for the evaluation visit:

Day 1

Peer-review team travel (morning).

Peer-review team prep session at hotel (afternoon).

Facility tour (afternoon).

Reception/dinner with institution's representatives (early evening).

Day 2

Interviews with chancellor/president and steering committee (morning).

Interviews with other institutional staff/representatives (morning/afternoon).

Peer-review team report writing (afternoon/evening).

Day 3

Exit meeting with chancellor/president and other institutional representatives (morning).

Peer-review team departs campus (afternoon).

Ethical considerations

The following guidelines have been established for evaluation visits in an effort to protect the integrity of the process:

1. All aspects of the evaluation visit are to be treated as confidential. This confidentiality extends to evaluation materials provided by the institution (including the institution's self-study report); issues identified by the committee; peer-review team, conference or NCAA staff files and notes; conversations with institutional, conference or NCAA representatives; and conversations among peer-review team members, institutional personnel, conference administrators and NCAA staff members.
2. Institutions may choose to host a meal or reception on the first day of the visit to give the peer-review team an opportunity to meet key campus personnel. The institution should not feel obligated to host such a function and it should not interfere with the peer-review team's ability to accomplish its work.
3. Institutions should not offer, and peer-review team members or NCAA staff may not accept, gifts or gratuities of any kind.
4. Peer-review team members are required to pay for personal and incidental items.
5. The Committee on Athletics Certification will not tolerate unprofessional or unethical behavior on the part of any individual participating in the evaluation visit on behalf of the committee. Please inform the NCAA staff liaison immediately if there are any questions or concerns.

Peer-review team's basic functions

The peer-review team performs three basic functions:

1. Verifies the accuracy and completeness of the self-study report.

2. Verifies broad-based campus participation in the self-study.
3. Verifies issues that may prevent the institution from establishing conformity with the operating principles as identified by the committee.

The peer-review team begins the evaluation visit by meeting with the institution's chancellor or president and with the steering committee. Members of the peer-review team also conduct interviews, review records and tour campus facilities. Throughout the visit, peer-review team members compare and contrast findings with each other, then adjust their schedules and activities based on these conversations.

Peer-review team interviews

Individuals required to be interviewed during the evaluation visit include the following:

1. Chancellor or president.
2. Member(s) of the institution's governing board (e.g., board of trustees).
3. Member(s) of the institution's athletics committee or board (if one exists).
4. Faculty athletics representative.
5. Director of athletics.
6. Senior woman administrator.
7. Compliance coordinator.
8. Steering committee chair.
9. Steering committee members.
10. Subcommittee chairs.
11. Sampling of student-athletes.
12. Sampling of coaches.

The peer-review team may also request to interview other institutional staff members, including, but not limited to, the admissions director, financial aid director, registrar, human resources director, associate or assistant director(s) of athletics and Title IX coordinator.

Verifying the completeness and accuracy of the self-study report

In evaluating the completeness and accuracy of the institution's self-study report, the peer-review team will consider whether:

1. Institutional responses address each specific aspect of all self-study items.
2. Conclusions are based on data or records that are available and reliable.
3. Conclusions are reasonable in light of the available data.
4. All substantive concerns have been identified by the institution and a plan for improvement, if necessary, has been established to address those concerns.

Verifying broad-based campus participation

The peer-review team will evaluate the institution's level of broad-based campus participation by considering whether appropriate constituencies were:

1. Represented on the steering committee and subcommittees.
2. Involved in the collection and analysis of data used in drawing conclusions and responses to self-study items.
3. Afforded sufficient opportunities to respond to the steering committee's initial observations.
4. Made aware of and provided access to the self-study report.

In addition, the peer-review team will evaluate whether members of particular subcommittees were involved in preparing and evaluating the subcommittees' reports, and whether steering committee members were involved in evaluating subcommittee reports and in preparing and evaluating reports of the steering committee.

In verifying broad-based campus participation, peer-review team members will use the institution's written plan for conducting its self-study, written records of meeting dates and attendees, writing assignments, and opportunities afforded to campus groups to offer comments.

Verifying conformity with the operating principles

The peer-review team evaluates the extent of substantial conformity achieved by the institution with respect to the operating principles identified by the committee. In making these decisions, the peer-review team should make every effort to:

1. Base its decisions on reliable data.
2. Be sensitive to the unique characteristics and circumstances of the institution.
3. Remain free of personal and professional bias.

Preparing the peer-review team's written report

Before leaving campus, the peer-review team must complete its written report to the Committee on Athletics Certification.

Format of the report

The Committee on Athletics Certification has established a standard format for peer-review team reports to promote consistency in the information provided to the committee.

The format approved by the committee for the peer-review team report includes:

1. An evaluation of the institution's self-study process as to openness, thoroughness and breadth of participation and accuracy.
2. Peer-reviewer observations of the institution's status related to the operating principles and committee-identified issues based on the information contained in the institution's self-study report and the team's campus findings (verified through a review of records and other data).
3. Additional issues the peer-review team believes should be addressed before the institution can be fully certified by the committee.
4. Opportunities for enhancement suggested by the peer-review team.

Lists of the individuals interviewed and the institutional records reviewed by the peer-review team are included as appendixes to the peer-review team report.

The exit meeting

The peer-review team will conduct a meeting at the end of the team's campus visit with the institution's chancellor or president and other representatives of the institution. The purpose of the meeting is to offer the team's general impressions of the visit and to share information, including any serious problems that were discovered during the visit, that will be included in the peer-review team's formal written report.

The peer-review team's comments during the exit meeting will address:

1. The institution's self-study process in terms of openness, thoroughness and breadth of participation.
2. Any issues (identified by the committee or peer-review team) that should be addressed before the institution can be fully certified by the Committee on Athletics Certification.

Possible rules violations

The peer-review team will include in its written report any information discovered during the evaluation visit concerning possible violations of NCAA rules. The chair of the peer-review team or the NCAA staff liaison also will remind the institution of its obligation to self-report violations per NCAA Constitution 2.8.1 and that the institution's formal response to these findings can be a factor in the Committee on Athletics Certification's decisions.

The Committee on Infractions also may recommend to the Committee on Athletics Certification that a particular institution's certification status be reviewed as a result of the institution's completed infractions case. The Committee on Athletics Certification may review and alter an institution's certification status on referral from the Committee on Infractions.

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After the Evaluation Visit

Preparing the peer-review team's formal report

After all members of the peer-review team agree that the report is acceptable, the NCAA staff liaison finalizes and submits a copy of the report to the institution's chancellor or president before its submission to the Committee on Athletics Certification. The chancellor or president will be given at least two weeks from receipt of the report to review and respond. Copies of the team's report also will be forwarded to the institution's steering committee chair and the institution's conference office.

Institutional response to the peer-review team's report

After reviewing the peer-review team's report, the institution may submit a written response to the Committee on Athletics Certification. Even though the institution may not have comments to provide, it should indicate this in writing. The institution's response shall be limited to:

1. Corrections of factual errors.
2. Presentation of new, relevant information not considered by the peer-review team.
3. Proposed additional corrective actions for remedying deficiencies (e.g., institutional plans for improvement).

Evaluations

The final task for the peer-review team chair is to complete an evaluation of the performance of other members of the peer-review team. The chair also will be asked to comment on the self-study evaluation process in general. The chair's evaluation and other comments are sent to the Committee on Athletics Certification as soon as possible after completion of the evaluation visit.

The committee also will ask peer-review team members to evaluate the peer-review team chair, the NCAA staff and the self-study evaluation process.

Institutions will be asked by the committee to evaluate the self-study process, and the work of the peer-review team chair, other team members and the NCAA staff.

All of this information will be used by the committee to improve the peer-review process.

7

The Certification Decision

Once the Committee on Athletics Certification receives the institution's self-study report, the written report of the peer-review team and the institution's response to the peer-review team's report, the committee is responsible for determining whether an institution's athletics program should be certified — that is, judged to be in substantial conformity with the certification program's operating principles.

Certification committee members will not participate in determining the certification status for those institutions in which a potential for conflict of interest exists. In considering whether a potential conflict exists, the committee members shall apply the same guidelines approved by the committee for use by potential peer-review team members.

Basis of the certification decision

The committee's decision is a two-step process. First, the committee must decide whether the institution's self-study was adequate. Adequacy is based on whether the report was completed in an appropriate manner; for example, whether the information contained in the report was accurate and whether the self-study was conducted openly with broad-based campus participation. This decision is based both on the institution's self-study report and on the report of the peer-review team.

When the self-study is considered adequate, the committee then works toward a specific certification decision. In both parts of this process, NCAA legislation requires the committee to base its decision on:

1. The institution's self-study report;
2. Issues initially identified by the committee after reviewing the institution's self-study report;
3. The peer-review team's formal written report;
4. Additional written comments that the institution may submit in response to the committee's initial analysis and/or the peer-review team's report; and
5. Additional material and information deemed relevant by the committee.

Further, the committee has the discretion to use any information it deems relevant in reaching a certification decision for an institution from the institution's Web site and any other materials that are available to the general public.

Additionally, the committee will include an institution's public infractions report in its deliberations when such a report is released during the institution's certification process.

Enforcement activity

Institutions that receive a notice of allegation(s) or inquiry from the NCAA enforcement staff are requested to notify the chair of the Committee on Athletics Certification if the institution is currently engaged in the athletics certification process or is scheduled to begin the process.

After receiving a notice of allegation(s) or inquiry, an institution may continue with the self-study process on campus (e.g., conduct orientation videoconference, host evaluation visit); however, the Committee on Athletics Certification will postpone any further certification-related deliberations until the enforcement process has concluded and the Committee on Infractions has issued its public report. The Committee on Athletics Certification will not render any decision regarding a particular institution's certification status until such time as enforcement activity at the institution is resolved.

Certification categories

1. Certified.

An institution that has been "certified" is considered to be operating its athletics program in substantial conformity with all of the operating principles. This classification denotes that (a) any problems identified by the institution in its self-study or by the peer-review team during its evaluation were considered by the Committee on Athletics Certification to be not serious enough to affect the institution's certification status, and (b) the institution demonstrated adequate follow-up to concerns or improvement plans directly related to the operating principles that were identified by the institution or the committee during the institution's previous self-study.

2. Certified with Conditions.

An institution that has been "certified with conditions" is not considered to be operating its athletics program in substantial conformity with all of the operating principles. This classification denotes that (a) problems identified by the institution in its self-study or by the peer-review team during its evaluation were considered by the certification committee to be serious enough to cause it to withhold full certification until those problems have been corrected, or (b) the institution did not demonstrate adequate follow-up to concerns or improvement plans directly related to the operating principles that were identified by the institution or the committee during the institution's previous self-study.

3. Not Certified.

An institution that is "not certified" is not considered to be operating its athletics program in substantial conformity with the operating principles. This classification denotes that (a) problems

identified by the institution in its self-study or by the peer-review team during its evaluation were considered by the certification committee to be very serious or pervasive, or (b) the institution did not demonstrate adequate follow-up to concerns or improvement plans directly related to the operating principles that were identified by the institution or the committee during the institution's previous self-study and action must be taken by the institution before it can be certified.

Institutions classified as “certified with conditions” or “not certified”

If an institution that has been classified as “certified with conditions” or “not certified” fails to make a serious effort to correct problems within the time specified by the Committee on Athletics Certification, the committee may place the institution's athletics program in a restricted membership category for up to one year. As a result, the institution would not be eligible for NCAA championship competition in all sports. NCAA legislation stipulates that an institution placed in restricted membership shall remain in that category for a minimum of one year. However, an institution may request a waiver of such status from the Division I Legislative Council immediately on rectifying deficiencies outlined by the certification committee. Such a waiver shall be submitted to the Legislative Council at least 60 days before the meeting in which the Legislative Council will act on the waiver. The Legislative Council, by a two-thirds majority of its members present and voting, may waive the 60-day deadline due to circumstances beyond an institution's control.

If, at the end of this period of restricted membership, the committee concludes that the institution has not addressed the identified concerns properly, the committee may reclassify the institution as a corresponding member. This means that the institution would no longer be an active member of the Association.

Interim campus visits and additional institutional reports

The Committee on Athletics Certification may require interim campus visits by a peer-review team or additional written communication. Interim campus visits would be conducted by peer reviewer(s) assigned by the committee.

Generally, corrective actions for a certified institution are expected to be completed without interim campus visits or additional communication with the committee. Actions taken by the institution, consistent with the institution's plan for improvement and any requirements of the committee, will be examined in the next regular certification cycle.

Corrective actions for an institution that has been “certified with conditions,” however, may warrant

the need for written confirmation — or an interim campus visit — depending on the nature and severity of the problems, the institution’s apparent ability and willingness to correct those problems, and other factors that may be of concern to the committee.

Institutions that have been classified as “not certified” should expect the committee’s decision to include requirements for additional written reports and/or interim campus visits.

Notification of the certification decision

The committee will communicate its certification decision, including any specific conditions, to the institution’s chancellor or president in writing. After notifying the institution, the committee will announce its decision publicly through a standard press release.

For those institutions that are “certified with conditions,” the institution will generally have a maximum of one year in which to report back to the committee. When the institution responds with additional information regarding its conditions, the committee will deliberate the institution’s materials at its next in-person meeting.

While other information related to the peer-review team’s report or the committee’s actions will be considered confidential between the institution and the NCAA, the institution may release information regarding the committee’s decision at its own discretion. The chair of the committee, the NCAA staff or a member of the committee designated by the chair also is authorized to offer additional comments concerning the committee’s deliberations when an announcement is warranted.

Opportunity for a hearing

An institution may request a hearing related to a certification status or decision from the committee according to the committee’s policies and procedures. The committee shall be obligated to honor an institution’s request for a hearing related to a decision by the committee regarding the institution’s certification status.

Request for appeal

An institution may appeal the decision of the Committee on Athletics Certification to the Division I Legislative Council according to the appeal procedures established by the Legislative Council. Public announcements of decisions of the Committee on Athletics Certification, however, will not be postponed pending appeals.

Glossary of Terms

Athletics Certification Liaison (ACL). The NCAA Division I Committee on Athletics Certification requires each NCAA Division I institution to designate an individual to serve as its athletics certification liaison. The liaison shall be the individual on the institution's campus responsible for monitoring the progress of the institution's plans for improvement developed during the athletics certification process. The institution's chancellor or president has previously identified the ACL who was responsible for monitoring the progress of the institution's plans for improvement developed during the second-cycle athletics certification process. After the evaluation visit and before receiving the certification decision, the NCAA staff liaison will contact the chancellor or president to initiate the submission of the ACL for monitoring third-cycle plans for improvement developed by the institution.

Athletics Certification System (ACS). In order to increase efficiency, reduce costs and add greater consistency, the committee developed the ACS, a Web-based program, for the submission and storage of institutional self-studies, committee-identified issues, peer-review team reports and committee actions. Self-study reports are required to be submitted through the ACS, which is both ID- and password-protected.

Campus Contact. The campus contact is responsible for coordinating preparations for the evaluation visit, including lodging and travel for peer-review team members and NCAA staff, scheduling interviews and organizing any work-related needs for peer reviewers (e.g., computer resources, meeting rooms, documents to be reviewed).

Certified. An institution that has been "certified" is considered to be operating its athletics program in substantial conformity with all operating principles. This classification denotes: (1) Any issues identified by the institution in its self-study or by the peer-review team during its evaluation were considered by the committee not serious enough to affect the institution's certification status, and (2) the institution demonstrated adequate follow-up to concerns/improvement plans directly related to the operating principles that were identified by the institution or the committee during the institution's previous self-study.

Certified with Conditions. An institution that has been "certified with conditions" is not considered to be operating its athletics program in substantial conformity with all operating principles. This classification denotes: (1) Issues identified by the institution in its self-study or by the peer-review team during its evaluation were considered by the committee to be serious enough to cause it to withhold full certification until those issues have been corrected, or (2) the institution did not demonstrate adequate follow-up to concerns/improvement plans directly related to the operating principles that were identified by the institution or the committee during the institution's previous self-study.

Committee Analysis (CAC Analysis). Once the staff analysis is completed, the committee will review the institution's self-study and the staff analysis of the report. The committee will determine the final issues that will be forwarded to the institution and the peer-review team.

Condition. For institutions classified as "certified with conditions" or "not certified," the committee will include any corrective actions, and the timetable for completing each action, specified by the committee. These corrective actions are considered conditions. For those institutions that are certified with conditions, the institution will generally have a one-year time frame in which to report back to the committee to rectify its conditions. Once the institution responds with additional information regarding its conditions, the committee will deliberate the institution's materials at its next in-person meeting.

Conformity. The peer-review team's and committee's most demanding task is to assess the extent of substantial conformity achieved by the institution with respect to the operating principles. This evaluation inevitably involves subjective judgment. In making these decisions, the peer-review team and committee make every effort to base decisions on reliable data; be sensitive to the unique characteristics and circumstances of the institution; and remain free of personal and professional bias.

Evaluation Visit (EV). The EV occurs after the institution has submitted its self-study report, after the staff and committee analyses have been completed and after the institution has had an opportunity to respond to the committee's analysis. The EV is staffed by a peer-review team that will have reached tentative conclusions about the nature of the institution's self-study process, the accuracy of the institution's written report and the operation of the athletics program in relation to the certification program's operating principles. Before leaving campus, the peer-review team is obligated to record its conclusions in a report that eventually will be forwarded to the institution and to the committee. In the meantime, the institution's chancellor or president (and other institutional representatives at the discretion of the chancellor or president) is afforded an opportunity to hear the peer-review team's general impressions in an exit meeting at the end of the EV. The EV can occur anytime between September 15 and November 30.

Measurable Standard (MS). The committee developed MS documents as a means to bring greater consistency to the athletics certification process. These documents are intended to clarify the expectations of the committee for each operating principle.

Not Certified. An institution that is "not certified" is not considered to be operating its athletics program in substantial conformity with the operating principles. This classification denotes: (1) Issues identified by the institution in its self-study or by the peer-review team during its evaluation were considered by the committee to be very serious or pervasive, or (2) the institution did not demonstrate adequate follow-up to concerns/improvement plans directly related to the operating principles that

were identified by the institution or the committee during the institution's previous self-study and action must be taken by the institution before it can be conditionally certified.

Operating Principle (OP). The athletics certification program is made up of seven standards, OPs, that every Division I institution needs to meet. The OPs were originally adopted overwhelmingly at the 1993 NCAA Convention. They address the three basic areas of governance and commitment to rules compliance, academic integrity, and gender/diversity issues and student-athlete well-being. OPs are included as a part of the athletics certification self-study instrument and appear in Bylaw 22 of the NCAA Division I Manual.

Opportunities for Enhancement. As part of its report, the peer-review team will identify any pertinent recommendations for the institution in a section titled, "Opportunities for Enhancement." The institution is not obligated to implement or respond to such recommendations; rather, these should be viewed as helpful suggestions from the institution's peers to improve its athletics program.

Orientation Videoconference (OV). The NCAA staff liaison will conduct an OV for an institution approximately 12 to 14 months before the evaluation visit. The purpose of the OV is to review the purpose and format of the certification program; the institution's activities already conducted in preparation for the orientation; the self-study instrument (with members of the steering committee and subcommittees); preparations for the evaluation visit; and projected dates for the evaluation visit. The OV is intended to benefit campus members who will be involved in the self-study. The OV can occur anytime between August 15 and October 31.

Peer-Review Team (PRT). An external PRT, selected and assigned by the committee, is composed of experienced education and athletics personnel. The PRT is responsible for verifying that the institution's self-study was accurate and complete; confirming that the self-study was developed through a broad-based process that involved campus-wide participation; and evaluating the self-study and committee-identified issues in terms of the OPs that have been approved for all Division I members. Before leaving campus, the PRT must complete its written report to the committee. Ordinarily, each member of the PRT is responsible for writing one or more sections of the report, divided generally according to those sections of the self-study to which members of the PRT were assigned. A typical PRT will consist of a maximum of four members. Whenever possible, a chancellor or president will serve as chair. Each PRT member will receive training, with special emphasis on training for PRT chairs.

Plans for Improvement. Written institutional plans have significant value for every Division I institution. They communicate an institution's current commitment, provide benchmarks to assess progress and also serve as enduring records that help ensure an institution's continued commitment in the future. Institutional plans must meet certain minimum requirements. There are additional requirements for gender and diversity plans.

Report Coordinator. The report coordinator is responsible for entering information, including plans for improvement, into the ACS. The report coordinator submits responses to each specific self-study item so they can be read individually, rather than as part of a general narrative. It is suggested that the report coordinator be well-versed in Internet technology and/or data entry programming.

Self-Study Item (SSI). An SSI is a question contained in the self-study instrument to be researched, studied and answered by an institution during its self-study process. In evaluating the completeness and accuracy of an institution's self-study report, the peer-review team will consider whether institutional responses address each specific aspect of all SSIs identified by the committee.

Staff Analysis. After an institution submits its self-study report via the ACS, the NCAA staff liaison will review the self-study report, verify that all self-study items are completed and ensure that all measurable standards are met. This results in the staff analysis. Once the staff analysis is completed, the committee will review the institution's self-study and the staff analysis of the report. The committee will determine the final issues that will be forwarded to the institution and the peer-review team.

Staff Liaison. There is an NCAA staff liaison assigned to each institution going through the self-study process. The staff liaison verifies that the institution's self-study report, including any supporting documentation, is complete. In addition, the liaison provides a preliminary assessment regarding the institution's adherence to the measurable standards. The staff liaison accompanies the peer-review team on its campus visit and serves as the liaison between the host institution and the peer-review team.

Peer-Review Team Requirements

Following is a list of the basic qualifications and typical activities of peer-review team members involved in athletics certification.

Placement in the pool of peer reviewers

To be considered for placement in the pool of peer reviewers, an individual must:

1. Be currently employed at a Division I institution or conference office; (Note: An individual who has retired will be considered for selection for up to five years after retirement and can be considered for a longer period if he or she demonstrates continued active involvement in intercollegiate athletics.)
2. Have a substantial knowledge of intercollegiate athletics as evidenced by employment and service history;
3. Hold the position of chancellor or president, faculty athletics representative, director of athletics, or senior woman administrator at a member institution; and
4. Have recognized expertise, skills or experience in at least one of the three areas addressed in the certification program (i.e., expertise in all operating principles related to that area).

In addition to these basic criteria, the Committee on Athletics Certification has established additional guidelines for its selection of peer reviewers:

1. An individual should have five years of campus experience as a full-time employee, including three years in Division I. A conference administrator may be selected, provided the individual has at least three years of conference office experience.
2. An individual employed outside an institution's athletics department should have a direct working relationship with athletics.
3. An individual will not be considered for selection if that individual has been found by the NCAA Committee on Infractions to have committed a major violation of NCAA rules in the last five years.

The Committee on Athletics Certification uses a variety of specific criteria outlined on page 23 in selecting peer reviewers that are subject to periodic revision. In addition, the pool of peer reviewers includes women and members of underrepresented groups to ensure diverse peer-review teams.

The certification committee will, on an ongoing basis, thoroughly evaluate peer reviewers, including chairs, through NCAA staff evaluation of individuals and evaluation of each peer reviewer by his or her fellow team members.

The committee will not knowingly assign an individual to serve as a peer reviewer who:

1. Is or has been an employee at the participating institution.
2. Is employed at an institution in the same primary athletics conference as the participating institution.
3. Is employed at an institution in the state in which the participating institution is located.
4. Is or has been an employee within the past three years, at a conference office in which the participating institution is a member.
5. Is a candidate for employment, or has been a candidate within the past two years, at the participating institution.
6. Has been an appointee, consultant or employee of the participating institution, or has close relatives who are employees at the participating institution.
7. Is an alumnus or alumna of the participating institution.
8. Has previously visited the institution as a peer-review team member or as part of a regional or professional accreditation team that either put the institution on probation or terminated its accreditation.
9. Is or has been associated in any manner with an organization that provides consulting services for athletics certification.

To avoid even the appearance of conflict of interest, no member of the peer-review team may serve as a consultant to an institution to which that individual was assigned as a peer-review team member for a period of one year after the conclusion of the evaluation visit.

Peer-review team members should not encourage staff members at the institutions they visit to seek employment at the peer-review team members' institutions, nor should peer-review team members suggest their own availability as consultants or employees.

Every peer-review team member must review and sign a statement related to potential conflicts of interest at the time that individual agrees to serve as a member of a particular peer-review team.

New peer-review team members attend a day of extensive training at the national office to prepare them for their role as peer reviewers. The training usually occurs mid-June and each new peer-review team member will be contacted by an NCAA staff member regarding attending the training.



Tentative Written Plan Outline

The purpose of this document is to assist the institution in formulating its written plan for conducting the self-study review.

The checklist below covers all required aspects of an institution's written plan and other items of information that the institution may wish to outline in its plan, depending on its particular circumstances.

A draft of the written plan needs to be completed and submitted to your NCAA staff liaison for review two to three weeks before the orientation videoconference. In addition, the written plan should be distributed to the steering committee before or during the orientation videoconference. Finally, a copy of the plan also is to be included in the athletics certification system (ACS) as part of the institution's self-study report.

A. Objectives Related to the Self-Study.

1. Goals.

___ a. Institution's goals for the process are clearly stated.

___ b. Institution's goals are consistent with overall goals of certification.

2. Second-cycle institutional plans for improvement.

___ a. Institution has included all committee-required actions from the second cycle relating to currently legislated operating principles.

___ b. Institution has included identification of all plans from second-cycle self-study, including all appropriate supplemental materials relating to currently legislated operating principles.

B. Major Components of the Self-Study.

1. Appointment of steering committee chair.

- ___ a. The chair is appointed by the chancellor or president.

- ___ b. The chair is considered by the institution to be a member of its senior-management team. If not, there is documentation (e.g., written plan or letter from the chancellor or president) stating that:
 - ___ (1) The chair has clear authority from the chancellor or president.

 - ___ (2) The chair has ready access to the chancellor or president.

2. Appointment of steering committee and subcommittees.

- ___ a. The names and titles of all steering committee and subcommittee members are listed.

- ___ b. The following required individuals have been included on the steering committee:
 - ___ (1) Chancellor or president;
 - ___ (2) Faculty athletics representative;
 - ___ (3) Director of athletics;
 - ___ (4) Senior woman administrator;
 - ___ (5) Student-athlete representative(s); and
 - ___ (6) Athletics certification liaison.

- ___ c. The steering committee and subcommittees have the appropriate composition as listed below:

- ___ (1) The number is adequate to perform duties and responsibilities;
- ___ (2) The composition ensures broad-based campus participation;
- ___ (3) The composition is balanced between staff members inside and outside athletics;
- ___ (4) Composition ensures access to information necessary to conduct the self-study;
- ___ (5) Steering committee and subcommittee members have the time to devote to the self-study;
- ___ (6) Subcommittee chairs are not athletics department staff members; and
- ___ (7) Subcommittee chairs are members of the steering committee.

3. Responsibilities of steering committee and subcommittees.

- ___ a. Steering committee's and subcommittees' general responsibilities are clearly stated.
- ___ b. Collecting and organizing data.
- ___ c. Providing opportunities for input from appropriate campus groups, including student-athletes.
- ___ d. Reviewing draft and final reports.

___ e. Communicating regularly through meetings and reports.

___ f. Maintaining a written record of:

___ (1) Dates of steering committee and subcommittee meetings and individuals in attendance; and

___ (2) Individual(s) responsible for writing subcommittees' reports.

4. Campus contact.

___ a. Name and title of campus contact is listed.

___ b. Contact's general responsibilities are clearly stated.

5. Conference assistance/use of outside individuals or agencies.

___ a. Role of conference office (if any) is defined.

___ b. Roles and responsibilities of any outside consultant(s) are defined.

___ c. Any outside consultant(s) have been approved by the NCAA Division I Committee on Athletics Certification.

6. Outline and schedule.

___ a. The timetable is complete.

___ b. Dates/deadlines and processes have been established for:

___ (1) Dates of steering/subcommittee meetings;

___ (2) Data gathering;

___ (3) Responding to self-study items;

___ (4) Opportunities for campus groups to review reports;

___ (5) Evaluating responses against operating principles;

___ (6) Developing the institution's plans for improvement;

___ (7) Steering committee's/subcommittees' review of report drafts;

___ (8) Preparing final report and submitting to the NCAA;

___ (9) Conducting peer-review team visit;

___ (10) Communicating work of the steering committee to institutional community, and electronic and print media; and

___ (11) Other.

7. Self-study report.

___ a. The name and title of the report coordinator is listed.

___ b. Work-related needs (e.g., computer needs, Internet access, secretarial assistance, reproducing copies) have been identified for collecting data and producing report drafts.

___ c. Specific plans or strategies have been outlined for communicating the work of the steering committee to:

___ (1) Institutional community;

___ (2) Electronic and print media; and

___ (3) The general public.

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380,000 student-athletes
participating in **23 sports** at
more than **1,000** member institutions

