

NSIC Fall Competition and Championships Cancellation: Suspension of All Outside Competition Through December 31 Q&A

In light of the NCAA Board of Governors' decision to direct all institutions and conferences to meet specific requirements to conduct fall sports and the NCAA Division II Presidents Council's announcement that all NCAA Division II fall championships are canceled, the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference's Board of Directors canceled all NSIC fall competition and championships, and suspended all outside competition through December 31, 2020. The NSIC compiled this document to assist student-athletes, coaches, and administrators to answer questions that may arise as student-athletes make decisions about their athletics participation options for the 2020-21 academic year. This document will be updated as additional questions or issues arise and as additional guidance is received from NCAA staff. Please consult with campus Athletic Department leadership for additional details.

Why was this decision made?

The health and safety of our student-athletes, athletics personnel and greater campus communities is paramount. Given the information from the medical and scientific community, the number of uncertainties and limitations in providing a safe environment for our student-athletes to compete in, the NCAA Board of Governors' requirements to conduct fall sports and the NCAA Division II Presidents Council's decision to cancel NCAA fall championships, it has become evident that it is not feasible to support a safe, quality student-athlete competitive experience during the fall semester. Current recommendations for testing, exposure, and quarantine make it very difficult for a season to be successfully completed at an institution or across the conference without severe disruptions. Therefore, we believe the most responsible course of action is to make an informed decision to cancel all competition through December 31, 2020 and to do so before student-athletes return for preseason practice and classes. Our student-athletes deserve a competitive experience that provides a greater degree of safety and certainty than current conditions would allow.

Why was this decision made now?

Our initial decision to delay the start of fall sports was made with the rationale to allow our campuses the ability to focus solely on reopening safely for their broader university communities. In light of the recent decisions made by the NCAA Board of Governors to direct all institutions and conferences to meet specific requirements to conduct fall sports, it is no longer feasible to conduct outside competition this fall semester. We believe now is the right time to provide clarity to our student-athletes so we can turn our efforts towards helping institutions reopen and ensuring all our student-athletes safely return to campus to start the academic year.

Did NCAA Championships factor into the decision-making process?

We recognize the value an NCAA championship experience provides for student-athletes and that was a factor in the analysis. However, health and safety concerns prevailed in our decision. As it presently stands, NCAA fall championships have been canceled while NCAA winter championships remain as scheduled. The suspension of winter competition through December 31, 2020 allows our member institutions to continue to have the opportunity to be selected for NCAA championships as we remain hopeful that remedies to manage the virus and minimize spread will improve over time to provide a more consistent season and positive experience for our student-athletes. Additionally, we recognize competition is an integral part of the student-athlete experience, therefore the membership is committed to exploring meaningful opportunities and experiences for fall student-athletes in the spring, if this can be done reasonably and safely.

Are student-athletes allowed to opt out of participation?

Yes. All student-athletes are allowed to opt out per [NCAA Board of Governors direction](#) due to concerns about contracting COVID-19. If a student-athlete chooses to opt out, that individual's athletics scholarship commitment for the 2020-21 academic year must be honored by the college or university. Specific eligibility accommodations for those student-athletes who choose to opt out will be determined by Division II by August 21st.

Will this affect the athletics aid agreement for student-athletes?

No. A reduction or cancellation of athletics aid must follow NCAA Bylaw 15.5.4.1 and your institutional policy. However, any student-athlete who chooses to not enroll, or enrolls part-time, cannot receive athletics aid during that semester.

How will this affect any NCAA eligibility matters?

Since no competition will occur in the fall, student-athletes are not using a season of eligibility and only would if competition occurs in the spring. Additional clarification will be provided by August 21st from the NCAA. *Please see additional Q&A for detailed compliance questions at www.northernsun.org/CCFAQ.*

How will the conference and its members support student-athletes impacted by this decision?

We recognize the impact this decision will have on our student-athletes, particularly on their mental health. We will work with our members to ensure we are providing appropriate support to our student-athletes in this regard. As we often do, we will also utilize our conference Student-Athlete Advisory Committee as a sounding board and solicit direct feedback from them on resources that could help. Our Green Bandana initiative prioritizes the mental health of Northern Sun student-athletes and that will certainly continue to be the case through these difficult times.

When will student-athletes arrive on campus?

Student-athletes will report to campus on a timeline consistent with the rest of the student body at their respective institution. Student-athletes may continue to participate in permissible voluntary workouts at each institution's discretion. Please contact your athletic department for specific dates.

Are institutions allowed to engage in non-NSIC sponsored competition?

The intent of suspending all outside competition through December 31, 2020 is to provide a safe environment for student-athletes and to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. No outside competition, even non-NSIC sponsored competition, will be allowed through December 31, 2020 for any sports. This includes no outside competition for spring sports during their non-championship segment through December 31, 2020.

Countable Athletic Related Activity (CARA) Questions:

Decisions on CARA will be made at the institutional level and any such activity must adhere to institutional, state and NCAA Sport Science Institute guidance around health and safety. Please consult your Director of Compliance for institutional specifics.

When may fall sport student-athletes engage in CARA? [Cross Country, Football, Soccer, Volleyball]

During the fall semester, fall sport student-athletes may engage in CARA under out-of-season legislation (Bylaw 17.1.6.3.1/17.1.6.3.2) beginning on September 7 or the fourth day of class, whichever is earlier. Institutions have been granted the flexibility to declare alternate championship/non-championship segments during the academic year at their discretion. Specific requirements for alternate championship/non-championship segments may be found here: https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/compliance/d2/2020-21D2Comp_StartDateChartCOVID-19.pdf.

When may winter sport student-athletes engage in CARA? [Basketball, Swimming & Diving, Indoor Track & Field, Wrestling]

Winter sport student-athletes may engage in CARA under out-of-season legislation (Bylaw 17.1.6.3.1) beginning on September 7 or the fourth day of class, whichever is earlier. To align with the delayed start of competition for winter sports, institutions are permitted to begin their championship segment on November 27, 2020. All championship segment CARA restrictions as guided in Bylaw 17 apply.

When may spring sport student-athletes engage in CARA? [Baseball, Golf, Softball, Tennis, Outdoor Track & Field]

Spring sport student-athletes may engage in CARA under out-of-season legislation (Bylaw 17.1.6.3.1) beginning on September 7 or the fourth day of class, whichever is earlier. Institutions are permitted to begin their non-championship segments as prescribed in their respective Bylaw 17 requirements. However, spring sports may not engage in outside competition during their non-championship fall segment. The decision to not allow outside competition during the fall semester is to provide a safe environment for student-athletes and to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Institutions are to follow Bylaw 17 for all spring sport student-athlete CARA during the spring semester.

What might a competition schedule for winter sports look like in the spring?

There are many factors that will contribute to the development of competitive schedules, including the evolving conditions of the pandemic and the ongoing health and safety considerations. In collaboration with our membership, we will develop plans and models that would establish a quality, competitive experience of conference competition for the traditional winter sports (Basketball, Swimming & Diving, Indoor Track & Field, and Wrestling) to begin after December 31, 2020, which would meet the current NCAA championships selection and sport sponsorship requirements.

How will spring sports be affected if fall and/or winter sports competition is delayed into the spring semester?

We will work collaboratively with our membership to gain a full understanding of challenges that may arise from adding more competition to the spring semester. Our objective is to explore creative schedules and operations that would mitigate those concerns. We acknowledge that our spring sport student-athletes experienced an abrupt end to their season only a few months ago and will be mindful of that in our work.