

Requests for an Exceptional Ruling Based on a Learning Disability

Overview

The NAIA member institution of a student-athlete who fails to meet NAIA eligibility requirements may request an exceptional ruling to a standard rule based on the limitation of the major life activity of learning if the student qualified, or continues to qualify, for either or both of the following:

- a. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; and/or
- b. A 504 plan under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Council of Faculty Athletics Representatives established a policy outlining the criteria by which such requests are reviewed ([CFAR Policy III](#)). The seven criteria considered in each case include the student's academic record, demonstrated capacity to manage the learning disability, and accommodations available to the student at the NAIA member institution. The requesting institution should demonstrate the student has the capacity to succeed in college-level coursework and has learned to successfully manage the disability. Previously completed college coursework is important to this determination and transcripts should be provided in the request packet.

Although most requests relate to freshman eligibility requirements, exceptions may be requested for students with continuing or previous collegiate identification.

The Process

An institution must submit an informational packet containing evidence that supports the request for an exceptional ruling. Request packets must be submitted to the applicable conference eligibility committee for a recommendation. The request packet and the recommendation will be forwarded the Learning Disability Advisory Committee for review and the National Eligibility Committee for a final decision.

Creating an Exception Request

The National Eligibility Committee will only consider information submitted with the request packet. Therefore, it is an institution's responsibility to paint a clear, thorough picture of the circumstances and why the exception is warranted.

Required Items:

- NAIA Exception to Standard Rule Form
 - For Freshman Eligibility requirements, the bylaw in question [Article V, Section C, Item 2](#)
- All transcripts for any students involved (Unofficial transcripts are acceptable.)
- **Documentation of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and/or 504 plan under the Americans with Disabilities Act**
 - **Documentation that verifies central details such as medical records showing the learning disability diagnosis.**
- Description of accommodations the institution commits to provide for the particular student based on his/her demonstrated areas of weakness, and the extent to which the accommodations are mandatory.
 - The committees would like to see this letter be written from the office who oversees accommodations for students with disabilities on campus.
- All ACT/SAT test scores, including subsection scores- if student used accommodations on tests, please indicate in this in case documents.
- Narrative written by the student-athlete.
- Class schedule for the current academic term and/or upcoming academic term at the NAIA institution.
- Documents showing the accommodations the student used in high school.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the process, how it works, or what information may be necessary for a particular exception request, please contact NAIA Legislative Services. 816-595-8180, legislative@naia.org