

Competitive Experience & Chargeable Competition – FAQs

What exactly is the competitive experience rule?

The competitive experience rule helps make sure students in the NAIA are competing against other students with similar levels of competitive experience. Athletes who compete outside the traditional college setting can gain an unfair advantage. The rule says that competition outside the college setting counts, just like it does for students competing in college.

How do I know if the rule is going to affect me?

Most students won't be affected. If you graduate from high school, enroll in college the next term and continue to play college sports, the rule won't apply to you. Amateur competition during high school and the Post- Secondary Amateur Year (PSAY), following high school graduation, does *not* count.

There are three main situations when the rule *can* apply:

1. Students who take more than one year off between high school and college and compete in non-collegiate athletics.
2. Students who go to college but don't play college sports for one or more years while enrolled and compete in non-collegiate athletics.
3. Students who leave college for one or more semesters after first enrolling and compete in non-collegiate athletics.

How does the rule work?

The rule is based on participation in "chargeable" competition. If a student does not play college sports *and* participates in "chargeable" competition *after* his or her PSAY, the student can be charged one of the four allowable seasons of competition.

How is "Chargeable" defined?

The NAIA Competitive Experience Committee — made up of NAIA athletic directors, faculty representatives and conference commissioners — defines "chargeable" competition as competition at the same level or above that which is available to student-athletes at NAIA schools.

What is the Post-Secondary Amateur Year or PSAY?

The PSAY is the one year window between the date of high school graduation and the date when a student-athlete becomes subject to the Competitive Experience Rule. During this window, the student will not be charged a season of competition for amateur participation in non-collegiate sports.

How is the level of competition outside the college setting measured?

The Competitive Experience Committee created the *NAIA evaluative criteria* to measure competitive leagues and events occurring outside the college setting. Click [here](#) to view the NAIA updated evaluative criteria.

Which competitive experiences in a particular sport are "chargeable"?

The NAIA Eligibility Center staff — on behalf of the committee — is conducting additional research to determine which leagues or levels of competition are chargeable in particular sports. The Center is conducting research in the United States and in countries around the world where NAIA coaches most actively recruit. Research results are published for NAIA member school staff in PlayNAIA Manager in a "Directory of Competition."

How do you decide, for example, whether a particular volleyball league in Brazil is chargeable?

First, the researcher develops credible sources of information. Typical sources include representatives of the governing association for the sport in that country, information published by the governing association or league, independent third-party rankings, current or former coaches, and former student-athletes.

Second, the researcher uses specific guidelines developed by the Competitive Experience Committee to evaluate the league.

The committee has determined that the presence of two or more of these indicators makes the competition chargeable:

- National-team or Olympic-level competition
- Competition with or against 10% or more current professionals
- Competition that regularly includes 50% current collegiate athletes
- Use of player contracts
- Reimbursement of players for travel lodging and/or meal expenses
- Selectivity or minimum qualifying standards (as opposed to open enrollment)
- Numbers of contests at or above 80% of NAIA contest limits

Can the status of a particular type of competitive experience change in the Directory or Competition?

Yes. As circumstances in a particular type of competitive experience change over time, or new information comes to light from a credible source, the status can be revised.

Changes in a given type of competitive experience would apply to any student whose eligibility determination had not yet been finalized by the NAIA Eligibility Center.

What are the updated evaluative criteria and who do they affect?

The updated evaluative criteria are the newest set of measurements used to decide whether a league or event is considered chargeable. The updated evaluative criteria affect all NAIA student-athletes enrolling in the *Fall 2015 or later*.

NOTE: The updated evaluative criteria are not applied retroactively.

What are the differences between the original evaluative criteria and the updated evaluative criteria?

Descriptions of criteria concepts have been added for further clarification. The updated criteria define who is a professional or collegiate student-athlete, and what reimbursement, contracts and selectivity are.

In the updated criteria, the number of *former* professional and college athlete participants within a league is irrelevant. Also, the percentage of professional participants within a league is set at 10% and the percentage of college athlete participants is raised to 50%. Lastly, the number of games per season triggering a potential charged season has been raised to 80% of NAIA contest limits.

Why were the evaluative criteria changed?

The Competitive Experience Committee drafted the original evaluative criteria in 2010 to measure competitive leagues and events. From 2012-2014, the committee conducted a study to gauge whether the original criteria captured the right levels of competition. Based on the study, changes were made to allow the evaluative criteria to more accurately define competitions that are NAIA-level or above.