

Competitive Experience – Evaluative Criteria

The following criteria shall determine whether non-collegiate participation is considered “elite-level competition” for purposes of determining seasons of competition under NAIA Bylaws Article V, Section B, Item 18b. Any reference to “league” refers to a league, club, association or organization.

These criteria shall be applied to all Eligibility Center determinations and on-campus competitive experience reviews, beginning with the 2015 fall term.

Competition as a member of a team:

Competition shall be considered elite-level if any two or more of the following criteria are met:

1. **At least 10% of competitors are current professionals.**ⁱ This criterion is met if any one of the following describes the experience:
 - a. At least 10% of competitors in the league are individuals considered professional at the time of participation in the league.
 - b. For teams that do not play in a league structure: at least 10% of competitors on the team are individuals considered professional at the time of participation on the team.
 - c. There is regular, non-league competition against professional teams or teams with at least 10% of individuals considered professional at the time of participation in the league.
2. **At least 50% of competitors are current intercollegiate players.**ⁱⁱ This criterion is met if any one of the following describes the experience:
 - a. At least 50% of the competitors in the league are individuals who participated in intercollegiate athletics.
 - b. For teams that do not play in a league structure: at least 50% of competitors on the team are individuals who currently participate in intercollegiate athletics.
 - c. There is regular non-league competition against teams with at least 50% of individuals who currently participate in intercollegiate athletics.
3. **Contracts are used to outline an exchange of commitment between participants and the league/team.**ⁱⁱⁱ
4. **Specific participants are reimbursed for travel, meals and/or lodging expenses.**
5. **Participation is part of a national team or an Olympic-level team.**^{iv}
6. **Participation is selective based on performance.**^v
7. **The number of regularly scheduled contests or dates of competition for the league/team is equivalent to or greater than 80% of NAIA contest limitations.**^{vi}

“U-19” Exception

A league considered “U19” shall not be considered “elite-level” competition, and is not subject to competitive experience criteria, provided:

- Participants competing in the league are age 19 or younger, and
- Competition in the league does not regularly include contests against teams with 50% or more current college players or teams with 10% or more current professionals.

ⁱ Professionals, for the purpose of competitive experience, are defined as those who have:

- a) played in a league that has self-declared as professional or semi-professional;
- b) received expense reimbursement beyond meals, travel and lodging in any league; and/or
- c) signed a professional (or semi-professional) contract(s) in any league.

Note: The NAIA Eligibility Center does not make determinations of amateur status. Member institutions should refer to NAIA Bylaw Article VII for complete details related to a student’s amateur standing

ⁱⁱ Current intercollegiate players are defined as individuals who participated in intercollegiate athletics at U.S. colleges or universities during the corresponding academic year. Equivalent systems outside the U.S. are counted in the same manner. This includes any member of an intercollegiate team roster, regardless of playing time.

ⁱⁱⁱ Commitments may include, but are not limited to, the following: financial/reimbursement obligations to the player, practice and/or game participation requirements, transfer restrictions, penalties upon breach of contract, etc. Waivers, basic registration forms and insurance liability forms are not considered contracts for the purpose of this criterion.

^{iv} Defined as an athlete’s selection and appearance in international competition by a national or world governing body. Refer to NAIA Bylaw Article II, Section B for approved exceptions.

^v Player participation is restricted based on the evaluation of skill level (e.g., tryouts, showcases, preseason evaluation or other recruitment activities including, but not limited to, use of funds for recruiting); not open enrollment. Non-performance-based selectivity criteria (e.g., geography, entry deadlines, first-come-first-served, etc.) are not considered in a league’s evaluation.

^{vi} Postseason schedules are not considered in the total number of league contests. Contests are examined at the league/team level; this does not refer to the number of contests in which an individual participates.

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A student participating as an individual shall be charged a season of competition for participating in at least three elite-level events in a 12-month window. Any reference to an “event” references a meet, tournament, or other single competition. When a competition includes heats, or multiple races at a single meet, the meet as a whole is one event.

These criteria shall be applied to all Eligibility Center determinations and on campus competitive experience reviews beginning with the 2015 fall term.

Individual competition in cross country, golf, swimming and diving, tennis, track and field, wrestling.

An event shall be considered “elite-level competition” if any one of the following criteria is met:

1. Event regularly includes individuals considered professionalⁱ at the time of participation in the event.

Professional criterion is met if one of the following is present:

- a. the event self-declares as professional or semi-professional; or
- b. the event offers prize money; or
- c. 10% or more of competitors have received expense reimbursement beyond meals, travel and lodging in any league; or
- d. 10% or more of competitors have signed professional (or semi-professional) contracts in any league.

2. Event regularly includes at least 50% of individuals who participated in intercollegiate athletics at U.S. colleges or universities during the corresponding academic year.ⁱⁱ

3. Event uses contracts to outline an exchange of commitment between some participants and the event.ⁱⁱⁱ

4. Event includes specific participants who are reimbursed for travel, meals and/or lodging expenses.^{iv}

5. Event uses performance-based selectivity to determine field.^v

“U-19” Exception

An event considered “U19” shall not be considered “elite-level” competition, and is not subject to competitive experience criteria, provided:

- Participants competing in the event are age 19 or younger, and
- The competitive field in the event does not regularly consist of 50% or more current college players or 10% or more current professionals.

ⁱ Professionals, for the purpose of competitive experience, are defined as those who have:

- a) played in a league that has self-declared as professional or semi-professional;
- b) received expense reimbursement beyond meals, travel and lodging in any league; and/or



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- c) signed a professional (or semi-professional) contract(s) in any league.

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- ii Current intercollegiate players are defined as individuals who participated in intercollegiate athletics at U.S. colleges or universities during the corresponding academic year. Equivalent systems outside the U.S. are counted in the same manner. This includes any member of an intercollegiate team roster, regardless of playing time.
- iii Commitments may include, but are not limited to, the following: financial/reimbursement obligations to the player, practice and/or game participation requirements, transfer restrictions, penalties upon breach of contract, etc. Waivers, basic registration forms and insurance liability forms are not considered contracts for the purpose of this criterion.
- iv Participants in an event/competition are considered professional if they receive reimbursement above the actual cost of meals, lodging and travel. When such reimbursement is part of an event format, the event is reviewed as outlined in criterion 1.
- v Performance-based selectivity criteria includes, but is not limited to, tryouts, time standards, distance, handicap, and ranking. Selectivity based on Non-performance related criteria (geography, entry deadlines, first-come-first-served, etc.) will not cause an event to meet the performance-based selectivity standard.