

NCAA Coaches Guide to Academics

Since the inception of the NCAA's academic reform initiative, the academic success of student-athletes has become a more integral part of a coach's responsibilities. Whether preparing to discuss the academic performance of a coach's current team or interviewing for a new position, a coach must have an understanding of the academic performance of his/her team and the expectations of the institution.

This document is designed to assist coaches in identifying and discussing academic issues and provides information and resources that are useful for assessing the academic climate at your current institution or when preparing for an interview at a future institution.

Understanding Academic Performance Metrics.

The NCAA has developed several measurements of student-athlete and team academic performance and graduation. These metrics have become points of discussion on campus and in the media; therefore, it is important for you to understand these academic metrics. This section will direct you to the key academic indicators that will provide you insight into the academic performance of a team and/or institution. It may also assist coaches as they prepare for questions an institution may ask during the interview process.

NCAA Division I Academic Performance Program.

It is vital that you have a good understanding of the NCAA Division I Academic Performance Program (APP), specifically the NCAA Division I Academic Performance Rate (APR) and the NCAA Division I APP Penalty Structure. Understanding the APP will allow you to better understand a team's academic situation and the issues affecting the team's academic performance.

If a coach is unfamiliar with the basics of the APP the "academics" web page on the NCAA public website (www.ncaa.org) provides a number of resources that can help coaches gain an understanding of the program. The attached resource page also provides links to specific materials meant to assist individuals in learning more about the APP.

Team and institutional academic information.

Understanding the team's APR will help a coach identify a team's academic strengths and weaknesses. The information referenced in this section highlights the most beneficial APP/APR information for a coach to review. When a coach is considering a new position, this information should be reviewed for both the current and new institution. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list but will provide a good basis for preparing for an interview that may include a discussion on APR.

1. Team's multiyear APR (including multiyear eligibility and retention rates).
2. Team's recent single-year APRs (including single-year eligibility and retention rates).

3. Multiyear APRs for other teams at the institution.
4. What, if any, APP penalties the team is, or has been, subject to.
5. What, if any, APP penalties other teams at the institution have been subject to.

If a coach is preparing for an interview and discovers that the team's APR (multiyear or single-year) is below the penalty benchmark, significantly lower than other teams at the institution or the team has been or is subject to APP penalties, the coach should develop questions to explore the reasons for the team's low performance, initiatives the institution has implemented or will implement to address the team's academic performance and consider potential strategies to address the team's academic performance. If a coach finds that his/her current team's APR is low or that the team is subject to penalties, the coach should prepare in anticipation of questions from the search committee at the new institution.

In addition to the APR information, a coach will want to review other academic information concerning the team(s). It is important to review this information for current and future teams if preparing for an interview. This information, in combination with the above mentioned APR information, will help a potential coach form a picture of the academic status of the team at the new institution as well as the overall academic success of the athletics department.

1. Team's Graduation Success Rate (GSR).
2. GSR for all teams at the institution.
3. Team's Federal Graduation Rate.
4. Federal Graduation Rate for all teams at the institution.
5. Federal Graduation Rate for the student-body.
6. The composition of the team for the last four years (note amount of turnover, number of transfers on the roster, number of student-athletes graduated).

If there are concerns with the collected information above (e.g., GSR for team is below all team GSR for institution, low number of graduates when compared to amount of student-athletes on the team in the past four years) a more thorough review should be completed. This review may include additional information regarding the academic performance of specific student-athletes which will point to trends affecting the academic outcomes for the team.

Questions that may be asked during the interview process.

A coach preparing for an interview should be able to answer academic related questions when meeting with institutional representatives. Providing appropriate and informed answers to academic questions will demonstrate the coach's commitment to the academic success of the student-athletes. The following list of questions is meant to help coaches prepare for the types of questions that may be asked during the interview process.

1. What is your academic philosophy for your team?
2. How do you expect to structure the academics of your team? Will you handle academic issues (or an assistant coach)?
3. What is your vision on how you will work with the academic support staff?
4. What is your philosophy on evaluating prospective student-athlete's academics during the recruiting process? Explain an experience with academics at your current/prior institution(s).
5. Provide an example of turning a student-athlete around after poor academic performance/behavior.
6. Discuss your prior institution's APR/GSR.
 - a. How did you contribute? What were your responsibilities with academics?
 - b. What could you improve on/bring to the table at the institution you are applying?

Questions to Consider.

The questions below are meant to assist coaches in understanding the academic climate at institutions. These questions can and should be adapted based on the information received while reviewing the academic issues of the current or future institution.

Admissions Standards.

1. What are the institution's admissions standards?
2. How selective is the institution?
3. What is the process for admitting student-athletes that do not meet the general admissions standards?

4. What systems are in place to support the student-athletes that are admitted via this process?

Academic Support.

1. How is the academic support structure at the institution? Is the academic support reporting line inside or outside of athletics?
2. Is there any academic support personnel specifically assigned to the student-athletes on the team?
3. What type of specific support does the athletics department or institution have for at-risk student-athletes (e.g., student-athletes with disabilities, at-risk as defined by the institution)?
4. What procedures are in place to identify at-risk student-athletes?
5. What type of input does the coaching staff have in the creation and implementation of the APR Improvement Plan?
6. Is there a culture of support from nonathletics entities for student-athletes (e.g., positive working relationship with student affairs, residence life, academic advising).

Academic Policies.

1. Do student-athletes receive priority registration?
2. What policies and procedures does the athletics department and/or institution have regarding missed class time due to participation in athletics?
3. What are the procedures in place regarding interactions with departments (e.g., faculty, deans, financial aid and student life) outside of athletics?

Coaches Responsibilities.

1. Who has the responsibility to ensure that student-athletes are attending class, taking advantage of study hall, tutoring or other academic services?
2. Is it the responsibility of the coach or administration to set policies and procedures for academic work (e.g., study hall, tutoring) while the team is traveling?

Questions to ask if you found low APR, GSR or other academic issues in your research.

1. What are the issues that have led to the poor academic performance of the team?
2. What type of institutional involvement (i.e., outside of athletics) is there in the improvement efforts?
3. Are there initiatives in the APR Improvement Plan that are specifically targeted to the team?
4. Who is responsible for ensuring these initiatives are implemented successfully?
5. Based on the institutions projections, how long will it take for the institution to get out of penalties?
6. What is the institution's resource commitment to improving APR and graduation (e.g., summer bridge, summer school, exhausted eligibility aid)?
7. What is the academic profile of incoming student-athletes (e.g., freshmen and two-year college transfers, core course grade-point average test scores)? Is consideration of a change in the academic profile of incoming student-athletes required due to academic issues of the team? If so, what are the academic profiles of student-athletes who have or have not succeeded? What can be learned and what change would be required? If a change to the academic profile is not needed, what other kinds of academic support changes would be necessary to help those student-athletes become successful when others with similar academic profiles have not been successful?

Assessment of Academic Climate at the Institution.

As you review the academic information above and/or prepare for interviews, the following areas will assist you in assessing the institution's commitment to supporting the academic pursuits of its student-athletes.

Institution's Support and Commitment.

1. During the interview process, did the institution ask questions regarding academics?
2. Was the institution responsive to your questions regarding the area of academics (grade-point average, APR, incoming academic profile, academic support budget)?

Academic Support.

1. Based on your expectations is there an adequate academic support and monitoring structure?
2. Does the institution have policies that support the academic success of student-athletes (e.g., priority registration, missed class policies for competition).
3. Is the institution structured in a way that identifies and supports at-risk student-athletes (e.g., student-athletes with disabilities, at-risk as defined by the institution)?
4. Is the staffing and resources for academics adequate for the student-athletes at this institution (e.g., number of student-athletes, amount of at-risk student-athletes, etc.)?

Coaches Responsibilities.

1. Based on the level of academic support and the academic profile of incoming student-athletes, are the institution's expectations of the coach (athletically, academically) realistic?
2. Where does the responsibility for enforcing academic accountability rest? On the coaching staff, the administration, or both?

NCAA Coaches Guide to Academics Resources Page

The NCAA Division I Academic Performance Program General Information.

How the NCAA Division I Academic Performance Program (APR) is calculated:

<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/NCAA/Academics/Division+I/How+is+APR+calculated>

Description of academic measures used by the NCAA (Graduation Success Rates (GSR), APR, Federal Graduation Rates):

<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/NCAA/Academics/How+academic+reform+is+measured>

Article on Academic Reform:

https://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal!/ut/p/c4/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3gjX29XJydDRwP_wGBDA08Df3Nzd1dXQwMDA_2CbEdFALxFcuk!/?WCM_PORTLET=PC_7_2MKEB B1A0OQS10I0O77GEE10G3000000_WCM&WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/wps/wcm/connect/public/NCAA/Resources/Behind+the+Blue+Disk/Behind+the+Blue+Disk+-+Division+I+Academic+Reform

Academic and Membership Affairs On Demand video regarding APR:

<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/ncaa/NCAA/Legislation+and+Governance/Rules+and+Bylaws/Lsdbi/AMA+Education+On+Demand/Division+I+Videos+2011>

Specific academic information:

Specific institutional rates (APR, GSR, Federal Graduation Rates, NCAA Division I Head Coach APR):

<http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/newmedia/public/rates/index.html>

APR penalties list:

<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/NCAA/Academics/Division+I/APR+penalties+list>