

# USA Ultimate College Eligibility Guidelines (2024)

If you are unclear about your eligibility situation, email [coll\\_elig\\_comm@usultimate.org](mailto:coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org). Inquiries are handled on the following timeline:

- *Sept. 15, 2023 - February 28, 2024 -- Players may submit general eligibility inquiries and should receive acknowledgement within two business days. Within one week they will receive an answer if their inquiry was elevated to be an official case. Players will receive case decisions within three weeks (two for committee research/discussion, one for voting) of their inquiry being an official case*
- *March 1, 2024 - Sept. 14, 2025 -- Players may submit general eligibility inquiries and should receive an answer within a reasonable amount of time, or the notification that their inquiry was elevated to be an official case. If the inquiry is elevated to be an official case, then the case will be on hold until Sept. 15. At that point, the case will be treated as if it were first submitted on Sept. 15.*

If you have any questions about your academic eligibility, please contact your school's registrar. Academic eligibility decisions are made by your school, not USA Ultimate.

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- **ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY**
  - Applicability
  - Degree-Seeking Enrollment
  - Half-Time Status
  - Academic Eligibility Exceptions
  - Non-Degree Seeking Exceptions
  - Light-Load Exception
- **PARTICIPATION ELIGIBILITY**
  - Definition of Participation
  - Definition of Start Date Events
  - Initial Participation
  - High School Participation
  - Youth Participation In Start Date Events
  - Review of Start Date Events
  - Participation Eligibility Exceptions
  - Military service Exemptions
  - Domestic Exchange Students
  - Foreign Exchange Students
- **TEAM ELIGIBILITY**
- **CLARIFICATIONS**
- **CONSORTIUMS**

## Prologue

The intent of these rules can be summed up in two parts: to have schools represented by teams whose players are all current, legitimate students, and to limit the players in the College Series to less than five (5) years of post-high school ultimate experience. To be eligible to compete in any event of the USA Ultimate College Championship Series (Conference Championships, Regionals and Nationals) or official games during the 2024 USA Ultimate College Regular Season, a PLAYER must meet ALL of the following academic and participation requirements:

*Note: **Academic Eligibility** and **Participation Eligibility** are different.* Players must satisfy BOTH academic eligibility and participation eligibility requirements in order to be eligible to participate in the 2024 College Regular Season and 2024 College Series.

## Academic Eligibility

If you have any questions about your academic eligibility, please contact your school's registrar. Academic eligibility decisions are made by your school, not USA Ultimate.

**Applicability:** The following registration requirements, including exceptions, must be applicable throughout the entire spring semester at a school on a semester system. For quarter system schools, the registration requirements must be applicable throughout **two of three quarters (any combination of fall, winter and spring)**. Students must be enrolled in at least one course **required** for graduation in the last semester or quarter used to determine their eligibility.

**Degree Seeking Enrollment:** Students must be both accepted and enrolled in a regularly matriculated degree program at the school for which eligibility is to apply. Programs that culminate in only the awarding of a certificate are not considered "degree seeking" (see [non-degree seeking exceptions](#)).

**Half-time Status:** Students must be considered at least a half-time student by their school registrar (two (2) full time classes or equivalent as defined by the registrar).

1. Graduate students engaged in research, teaching or thesis production that will lead towards the awarding of a degree qualify under this rule.
2. Courses taken through a "Continuing Education" or "Extension" program may not be used to fulfill the above requirements, unless approved through the USA Ultimate Coursework Validation process. Email [coll\\_elig\\_comm@usultimate.org](mailto:coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org) for information on this process.
3. Students seeking a second Bachelor's Degree or Associate's Degree must have full-time status to be eligible, unless the **Light load exception** is to be invoked, in which case this requirement is waived.
4. USA Ultimate, at its discretion, may also require approval of internet courses through the USA Ultimate Coursework Validation process.

## **Academic Eligibility Exceptions**

**Non-degree seeking exception (spring semester):** A student taking classes full-time in a non-degree seeking program at the school for which eligibility is to apply may have the degree seeking requirement waived, provided the student does the following:

1. They must furnish proof of confirmed acceptance (e.g. Letter of Acceptance, Deposit for Enrollment) in a regularly matriculated degree program for the summer or fall semester at that same school.
2. The program in which they are accepted and enrolled for the summer or fall does not extend offers of admission for the spring semester.
3. The spring semester classes taken will be credited towards the degree program in which they are enrolled for the upcoming summer or fall semester.
4. The student submits an Eligibility Inquiry to [coll\\_elig\\_comm@usultimate.org](mailto:coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org) providing documentation from school officials confirming the above facts.

**Non-degree seeking exception (fall or winter quarter):** A student taking classes full-time in a non-degree seeking program at the school for which eligibility is to apply may have the degree-seeking requirement waived, provided the student does the following:

1. They are accepted and enrolled in a regularly matriculated degree program for the spring quarter at that same school.
2. The program in which they are accepted and enrolled does not extend offers of admission for the quarter in which they are taking full-time classes.
3. The fall or winter quarter classes taken will be credited towards the degree program in which they are enrolled for the upcoming spring quarter.
4. The student submits an Eligibility Inquiry to [coll\\_elig\\_comm@usultimate.org](mailto:coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org) providing documentation from school officials confirming the above facts.

**Light load exception:** The half-time requirement is waived for students who are BOTH:

1. taking at least the minimum course load required to graduate, where "minimum course load" is at least one class; and
2. on track to graduate at the conclusion of the winter or spring term in the current academic year.

*Note: Students qualifying under the above are not eligible for subsequent College Series competitions before graduating with the degree to which this "light load" status was applied.*

## Participation Eligibility

**Definition of Participation:** Participation, as it pertains to the college eligibility rules, is defined as a player playing at an event or a player being included on an official roster for an event.

### **Definition of Start Date Events:**

1. For events prior to June 1, 2013 -

Start Date Events include all events sanctioned by a national governing body, and excludes the following events classified as "Insured Play" -- Practice/Tryout; Scrimmage; Skills Clinic; Hat Tournaments that took place after June 1, 2012; and Skills Camps.

2. For events on or after June 1, 2013 -

Start Date Events include all Championship Series level events, all Club Regular Season events, all college level events sanctioned by USA Ultimate, select team WFDF World Championship events in the under-24 age group and higher, or any equivalent events sanctioned by a national governing body other than USA Ultimate.

**Initial Participation:** If more than five (5) years have elapsed between initial participation in any Start Date Event and June 1 of the current year, the player is not eligible. See [Military Service Exemptions](#).

*For example, if your first Start Date Event was any time between June 1, 2021 and May 31, 2022, you would be eligible to participate in the following college seasons: 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026.*

The above notwithstanding, the Initial Participation rule for the Spring 2024 College Series is adjusted to account for the extensions granted to all eligible players in [2021](#). Examples of the application of this extensions is below:

#### [General 2021 Extension](#)

Eligibility was extended by one year for all players who were within their five-year eligibility window in the spring of 2021.

*Example: If your first Start Date Event was any time between June 1, 2018 and May 31, 2019, you are eligible to participate in the following college seasons: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024\*.*

*\* indicates extension season*

**High School Participation** – Initial Participation excludes participation in sanctioned events while in school prior to high school graduation.

**Youth Participation in Start Date Events:** Participation in a Start Date Event as a member of a Youth Club team shall be excluded from Initial Participation, unless such a team participates in the club championship series.

Everyone's USAU account should have an accurate, updated participation eligibility status (through June 1, 2023) based on the extension above. After reading the above and checking your USAU account, if you feel your participation eligibility is in error, please contact [coll\\_elig\\_comm@usultimate.org](mailto:coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org) with your name and **USAU ID#**.

**Review of Start Date Events:** If you participated in a sanctioned event that started your eligibility clock after June 1, 2013, and it is not included in Start Date Events, you may submit an inquiry to [coll\\_elig\\_comm@usultimate.org](mailto:coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org) to have your current eligibility reviewed by the eligibility committee.

### **Participation Eligibility Exceptions**

All participation eligibility exception reviews are handled on a case-by-case basis and are not an establishment of precedent.

**Military Service Exemptions:** Exemptions may be in place for players if their U.S. military service directly prevented their USA Ultimate College participation. For each college season that a player is granted this exemption, they will receive a one-season eligibility extension. Requests for Military Exemptions must be submitted to and approved by the USA Ultimate College Eligibility Committee. Contact [coll\\_elig\\_comm@usultimate.org](mailto:coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org) and provide your service documentation (DD FORM 214) to apply for an exemption.

**Domestic Exchange Students:** Domestic exchange students must apply to have their situation reviewed, but may only be eligible to play at the institution from which they are receiving their degree.

**Foreign Exchange Students:** Foreign exchange students may also apply to have their situation reviewed, but may not take advantage of any of the Academic Eligibility exceptions. They must be full-time, degree seeking students and must submit all required documentation in English. Foreign exchange students must provide evidence of initial participation from the governing body for Ultimate of their home country.

### **Reminder of Changes made before the 2022 College Season (there are no additional changes for 2024):**

***Internet and Correspondence Courses*** -- The rule requiring correspondence and internet courses to be reviewed by the college eligibility committee has been removed. A registrar can now verify those courses to count towards eligibility. USA Ultimate reserves the right to require additional approval, if deemed necessary.

***Participation Eligibility*** -- The participation rules have been redrafted to change which events will start a player's eligibility clock. In addition, extensions have been granted to all eligible players in [2021](#) and are described in more detail above.

## Team Eligibility

**School Composition:** Each player's eligibility must apply at the same college or university (or schools in a current USA Ultimate approved consortium). If the school has multiple branches or locations, all players must be attending the same branch or location.

**Team Registration:** Each team must have a designated Team Organizer who will be responsible for the integrity, completeness and timeliness of the team's Roster. Before playing in any Series event, each team must meet the registration requirements outlined in the series guidelines.

### Membership Status

1. Each player on the Roster must be a USA Ultimate member in good standing at all times during the Series.
2. Each player must produce a picture ID upon demand of the tournament director or USA Ultimate official at a sanctioned event.

*Violation of these rules may result in disqualification from the current Series and/or disqualification from any or all USA Ultimate sanctioned events for up to one year. This penalty is applicable to any and all players on the violating team at the discretion of USA Ultimate, and may include USA Ultimate events after the graduation of violating players.*

### Clarifications

These rules are designed to be as fair as possible for all of the wide range of schools and players participating in the Series. Experience has shown that there can be cases where these rules do not absolutely determine the eligibility of a particular player.

The following procedure is available for players/teams for whom the rules are not clear:

1. The team Spokesperson or the player in question may submit an inquiry to [coll\\_elig\\_comm@usultimate.org](mailto:coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org) which includes the **name** and **USAU ID number** of the player in question.
2. The inquiry must be made and submitted by March 1 of the year to which the inquiry pertains. Late requests will be considered at the discretion of the Eligibility Committee.
3. If the inquiry is deemed worthy of case consideration, it will be reviewed by the Eligibility Committee (or a proxy approved by the Eligibility Committee), and responses will be emailed.

**Note: This clarification procedure is NOT intended to allow exceptions to the eligibility rules. Rather, it allows accurate and consistent determination of eligibility status WITHIN these rules.**

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## USA Ultimate Consortium Program

USA Ultimate offers a program that allows two or more schools meeting certain requirements to compete as a consortium (single-team from multiple schools) in the USA Ultimate College Series. Please note that this program is the **ONLY** way students can play with a team from a school that they do not attend.

A player cannot simply play with a nearby school just because their school doesn't yet have a team. The schools involved in a consortium must have an established formal relationship both academically and athletically.

All schools in the proposed consortium **must**:

- have a prior academic consortium with a significant formal relationship with each other
- have a history of athletic collaboration (between athletics other than ultimate)
- share the same athletic facilities (between athletics other than ultimate)

Schools in the proposed consortium must, at a minimum, meet the above requirements in order to apply. Merely meeting the requirements does not guarantee that the consortium will be approved. In order to ensure fairness of competition in the college division and minimize the potential for abuse of the rules, consortium applicants will be evaluated against an extremely high standard, and on a case by case basis, in terms of meeting the above requirements. Prior approval of a consortium between two institutions does not guarantee approval on subsequent applications.

To apply, schools must submit a single, unified consortium application in writing to the USA Ultimate College Eligibility Committee by December 31 of the year prior to the year in which the schools wish to compete under single-team status (ex: December 31, 2022 for the 2023 College Regular Season and Series).

The proposal must include:

- a letter describing how all the schools in the proposal meet all of the requirements
- supporting documentation providing evidence that all schools in the proposal meet the requirements *NOTE: USA Ultimate may reject a consortium proposal for insufficient information and/or documentation.*

Consortiums are approved for two (2) years, and upon expiration, the schools may re-apply for approval. The application for re-approval must be received by the Consortium Deadline (December 31). Status may be revoked at any time if any of the schools in the consortium no longer meet the required criteria, or if USA Ultimate deems such action beneficial to the growth of ultimate.

Any school in a consortium may withdraw from the consortium if they make such a request in writing to the USA Ultimate National College Director by February 15 of the year in which they wish to compete separately. The request must include the reason for wishing to withdraw. Schools that withdraw from a consortium cannot apply for another consortium until the following year. Games played during the current season with the consortium in place will not be counted for the teams comprising the consortium if the consortium is dissolved. For teams who played against the team with a consortium

before it was dissolved, the game will count towards the eligible team's 10 game minimum, although the game result won't impact the rankings algorithm.

The withdrawal of one or more schools from a consortium does not dissolve the consortium of the remaining schools.

Without regard to the aforementioned rules, the status of any school (whether a member of a consortium or not) during their Conference Championship tournament in the USA Ultimate College Series will remain the same throughout that year's College Series.

Please email electronic copies of your application, letter and supporting documentation to [coll\\_elig\\_comm@usultimate.org](mailto:coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org) by the December 31 deadline. If hard copies of your application or supporting documentation are requested, please mail to:

USA Ultimate College Division  
Attn: Single-team Consortium  
5825 Delmonico Drive, Suite 350  
Colorado Springs, CO 80919

If you are still unclear about your school's consortium situation, email [coll\\_elig\\_comm@usultimate.org](mailto:coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org).

Consortium Inquiries are fielded on the following timeline:

*Jan. 1st - Sept. 14* -- Consortium inquiries will receive a response within a reasonable amount of time. Consortium applications submitted during this period will not be considered for the current year, and will be considered on September 15 as if they had just been submitted. Players will receive acknowledgement of the receipt of the application within two weeks of applying.

*Sept. 15 - Dec. 31* -- Consortium inquiries will receive a response within the same timeline as general eligibility inquiries. Consortium applications will be pre-screened, and either elevated to the committee for discussion/voting (three weeks total) or rejected outright if the application fails to meet the outlined criteria.