

USA Ultimate College Eligibility Guidelines (2026)

If you are unclear about your eligibility situation, email coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org. Inquiries are handled on the following timeline:

- *Sept. 1, 2025 - February 28, 2026 -- general eligibility inquiries should receive acknowledgement within two business days.*
- *March 1, 2026 - Sept. 1, 2026 -- players may submit general eligibility inquiries and should receive an answer within a reasonable amount of time. Inquiries about future seasons may not be fully addressed until the summer, after the college eligibility guidelines have been updated for the next season.*

Last Revision: October 2025

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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 2026 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 2026 College Regular Season and 2026 College Series.

Academic Eligibility

If you have any questions about your academic eligibility, please contact your school's registrar. Enrollment status determinations 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.

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 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.

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", but may be deemed equivalent if granted a non-degree seeking exception).

Academic Eligibility Exceptions

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.

Non-degree seeking exception (grad school accepted): a student taking classes at least half-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 can establish:

- they can furnish proof of acceptance in a regularly matriculated graduate degree program which starts by the next fall term, or are taking prerequisites required for conditional acceptance in an upcoming grad school program
- all the coursework taken in the spring semester (or quarter system equivalent) is required by, and will be credited towards the upcoming graduate degree program
- they provide documentation confirming the above facts to coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org

Non-degree seeking exception (certificate/post-bacc): a student in a non-degree seeking post-baccalaureate certificate program at the school for which eligibility is to apply may have the degree-seeking requirement waived, provided the student can establish:

- they are enrolled full-time, unless the program's mandated schedule disallows full-time
- the certificate is required for upcoming academic/professional pathway contingent on the completion of the program
- they provide documentation confirming the above facts to coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org

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.

If one's inclusion on a roster can be established to have been in error, the refuted participation should be brought to the attention of coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org.

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.

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 postseason as a club division team.

Everyone's USAU account should have an accurate, updated participation eligibility status (through June 1, 2024) 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 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 to have your current eligibility reviewed by the eligibility committee.

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. To apply for an exemption, contact coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org and provide your service documentation (DD FORM 214).

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.

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 registrar-certified season roster. Each team seeking to play in the postseason must meet the registration requirements outlined in the college guidelines.

Membership Status

1. each player must be a USA Ultimate member in good standing at all times
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. team organizers (or the player in question) may submit an inquiry to coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org which includes the **name** and **USAU ID number** of the player in question.
2. 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.

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.

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). Please note that this program is the **ONLY** way students can play on 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 (academically/athletically), and apply for and be granted a USA Ultimate consortium.

Applying for a consortium

To apply, schools must submit a single, unified consortium application via email to coll_elig_comm@usultimate.org by December 31 of the year prior to the year in which the schools wish to compete under single-team status (ex: December 31, 2025 for the 2026 College Regular Season and Series).

The application should detail the following :

- name of schools (*w/ links to correct school on [NCES db](#)*)
 - # of active ultimate players from each school, currently
 - gender match breakdown (# of MMPs/WMPs)
- evidence of current academic collaboration between the schools (*ex: links to program details, or letters from school officials outlining the relationship*)
- history of athletic collaboration between the schools (*club sports/IM/competitions, esp. other than ultimate*)
- history of shared athletic facilities or ongoing student services access arrangements

Merely meeting many of these does not guarantee that the consortium will be approved.

	Strong relationship	Less strong	n/a
Academic collaboration	• dual shared degrees • cross-enrollment arrangements	• pathway/transfer programs	
Athletic collaboration	• history of athletic collaboration (between athletics other than ultimate)	• permission from club sports department from all schools involved	• school has no athletics department or club sports
Shared facilities	• history of use of athletic facilities for competition • shared practice spaces	• student services/facilities arrangements	• school has no in person facilities

Misc considerations:

- *if a school has no athletic department or club sports, the lack of athletic collaboration may be discounted depending on the strength of the academic collaboration or other formal relationships.*
- *enrollment size for the involved schools (**the enrollment count for all schools in the consortium will be totaled for determining the enrollment count for determining D-III Conference eligibility.**)*
- *viability for separate programs, historical strength of programs*

Minimally, there needs to be a current, formal academic relationship between the schools.

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.

Consortium types

Depending on the extent and strength of the relationship between the schools, following types of consortiums could be granted:

- standing consortiums
 - long established consortiums may be reclassified by USA Ultimate as a standing consortium, not subject to reapplication (*ex: Haverford/Bryn Mawr, Claremont Colleges*)
 - current consortiums seeking reclassification should resubmit an updated consortium application by the conclusion of their term
 - the status of standing consortiums are subject to review if academic/athletic relationships between the schools change significantly
- term consortiums
 - approved consortiums are typically granted for a term of two years. Upon expiration, the schools must reapply for renewal.
 - additional academic requirements may be placed on the additional school being named to the consortium (*full time enrollment minimums, or enrollment in a specific pathway program related to the academic collaboration*)
- growth consortiums
 - growth-based consortium may be granted for schools not likely to meet standards for a standing consortium in efforts to jump start development (*primarily in the women's division or new program development*)
 - may be granted on a term basis with the goal to create viable separate teams; strength of the programs, and the impact on overall competition will be a consideration
 - conditions may be placed on the growth consortium (*ex: program milestones like starting a women's and/or developmental division team, efforts to grow the # of WMPs in the ultimate program*).

USA Ultimate may require written support from all involved club sports departments as a condition of granting the consortium.

Consortiums 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.

Withdrawing a consortium

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.