



Ohio High School Athletic Association  
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Guidance for 2020-2021–High School Principals and Athletic Administrators

#### **Bylaw 4-4 - Scholarship**

##### **Overview – High School**

Fundamental to the privilege of participation in interscholastic athletics is the notion that students are to be scholars first and athletes second. Thus, the members have adopted a series of bylaws that reinforce a minimum level of scholastic achievement that is required for a student to be eligible to participate in contests, **which are defined as any game, meet, competition, preview or scrimmage**. Practices and training are exempt from this prohibition, and schools **may** choose to allow students who are academically ineligible to continue to practice with their teams.

This section of the student eligibility bylaw represents the only required OHSAA academic standard. The required grade point average standard (G.P.A.) is mandated by state law for all schools in Ohio. The G.P.A. is established by the local Board of Education or governing board in a non-public school and is overseen exclusively by the member school. In addition, member schools may adopt more stringent standards and may review them more frequently; however, a student who is not compliant with this bylaw may not have his or her eligibility restored except at the beginning of the next grading period as stipulated in Bylaw 4-4-3.

**Please note that students who are not enrolled in the member school are still required to fulfill these scholarship requirements. That includes students who are home educated. Despite what some may contend, interscholastic athletics is a privilege to be accorded to those who meet the eligibility standards. Refusal to comply with this scholarship standard shall render the student ineligible.**

The intent of this series on the Scholarship Bylaw is to provide guidance as to the purpose behind each bylaw and any action required in support of adopted exceptions.

This document will focus on **Bylaw 4-4-1 – High School Scholastic Standard**. [This bylaw reads as follows:](#)

*In order to be eligible in grades 9-12, a student must be currently enrolled and must have been enrolled in school the immediately preceding grading period. For the purpose of this Bylaw 4, Section 4, the term “grading period” is defined as the school’s Board-adopted calendar (e.g., six-week, nine-week, 12 week or semester) and does not mean an interim marking period. Furthermore, **at the conclusion of** the preceding grading period, the student must have received passing grades in a minimum of five (5) one-credit courses or the equivalent, each of which counts toward graduation. For the purpose of this bylaw, the term “immediately preceding grading period” refers to the grading period of the school which immediately precedes the grading period in question.*

Bylaw 4-4-1 is the standard high school eligibility rule. It is based on a school’s grading period and requires a student to have received, when that grading period is concluded (think of this as a “snapshot” of the student’s academic performance up to that time), passing grades (not necessarily a traditional letter) in subjects that are worth an equivalent of five one credit courses. See the guidance here for some formulas to help compute equivalencies <http://www.ohsaa.org/Portals/0/Eligibility/EligibilityGuidelinesGuidanceCounselors.pdf>

### A Note on Educational Options

Please be advised that it is necessary to verify compliance with this bylaw at the end of each grading period regardless of the educational option the student-athlete has selected. Whether the student is home-schooled; is attending a Community, STEM or non-public school as a non-enrolled student; taking an online credit recovery course; is attending the Career Center, is enrolled in College Credit Plus; is taking Credit flex courses; or any of the other myriad options for students, the school administrator must receive a written accounting of the grades received or evidence of passing the requisite five one credit courses or the equivalent when the grading period of the member school at which the student is seeking eligibility ends. **The OHSAA has developed a collection form for your use in obtaining these grades from the individual instructor(s) who are responsible for the student's education. Click here to retrieve that form: <http://www.ohsaa.org/Portals/0/Eligibility/OtherEligibilityDocs/CCP.Non-EnrolledStudentGradeSheet.pdf>**

On occasion, the OHSAA is asked to provide guidance on how to evaluate completion of a course requirement that is being taken in one of these non-traditional offerings. The Board of Education or governing board of each member school is essentially tasked with that responsibility, but as educators we can provide suggestions. Some school districts set standards for completion, particularly with online or credit flex courses, which require a student to complete a specific percentage of the course at the end of each grading period in order to receive a satisfactory grade. This process keeps students engaged throughout the duration of that course work and deters a student from failing to complete any work during a specific grading period. To assist with these options, we do need to know the duration of the course and the credit to be awarded. When supplied with that information along with the delivery mechanism, we may be able to help you with this determination. Please feel free to consult us if you have any questions.

The bylaw has three exceptions, each of which is explained and includes the information needed to waive the bylaw in accordance with each exception.

**Exception 1:** The Executive Director's office may waive this requirement for a student in her/his 12th and final year of school who (a) has accumulated sufficient credit hours to have graduated in the preceding semester; (b) maintains a grade point average in the top ten percent of the student's class; and (c) can demonstrate that the underlying purposes of this bylaw have been otherwise fulfilled by the student.

To receive a ruling, please provide the following:

1. A cover letter from the principal or athletic administrator stipulating that the student:
  - a. Is a senior;
  - b. Has accumulated a sufficient number of credit hours (not necessarily the exact courses required) to be declared a graduate in the preceding semester (this would be semester six for a first semester senior or semester seven for a second semester senior)
  - c. Has a G.P.A. that places him or her in the top 10% of the senior class AND
  - d. Can make the case that the purpose of this bylaw is being upheld. This means that the student has not failed a course, has not willfully dropped courses or failed to schedule enough courses so he or she can arrive late to or leave school early, etc. but has been a student in good standing and the inability to meet the standard has not been a direct result of the student's own actions.
2. A student transcript which shows the student's academic rank.

**Exception 2:** The Executive Director's office may waive the requirements of this bylaw provided the student has been **physically** withdrawn or removed from school because of circumstances due to personal accident, illness or family hardship. An appeal for such a waiver must come from the principal of the school and be in writing. The appeal for waiver shall contain documents with school and medical supporting evidence.

This exception recognizes that students who cannot attend school during a grading period or who must take a reduced course load should be provided relief from this scholarship requirement, and thus the standard of passing five one credit courses (or the equivalent), when the reasons for that inability to meet that standard can be verified,

should be waived. **Please note that in order for the Executive Director's Office to consider application of this exception, this supporting evidence must be contemporaneous with the decision to withdraw the student from school or reduce the student's course load. Evidence obtained "after the fact" will not be accepted.**

To receive a ruling, please provide the following:

1. A cover letter from the principal or athletic administrator stipulating:
  - a. The circumstances causing the student to be withdrawn totally or removed partially from school. Please describe in detail the accident, illness or family hardship that has contributed to the withdrawal or removal, and include the dates when your school took this action to withdraw or remove the student.
  - b. Any contemporaneous medical or other documentation with the cover letter to support the request for an exception.
2. A student transcript that reflects attendance history for the grading period.

**Exception 3:** If a student's failure to meet the requirements of this bylaw are due to an "incomplete" given in one or more courses which the student was taking during the grading period in question, the student may have his/her eligibility restored by the Executive Director's office once the "incomplete" has been changed to a passing letter grade provided:

- a) the failure to complete the required coursework during the grading period was due to calamity day(s), family tragedy, or illness or accident as verified by a physician **contemporaneous at the time of the incident**; and
- b) the "incomplete" was given in accordance with Board of Education/other governing board adopted policies and procedures and is applicable to all students in the school; and
- c) the previously scheduled work and/or exams is/are completed within the time period provided in Board policy for completing work required to convert an "incomplete" into a letter grade; and
- d) there is no evidence that the "incomplete" was given in order to afford the student extended time in order to provide the student tutoring or other educational services simply to avoid a failing grade.

Note: This exception only applies where an "incomplete" has been issued and not a letter grade that is subsequently changed because of the extended time/additional work. **If a high school district/system does NOT have a Board Policy on the Restoration of an Incomplete to a Grade or did not have a policy when this exception was requested, the student shall not be able to avail him or herself of this exception.**

To receive a ruling, please provide the following, and note that this exception only applies when a student has received an Incomplete in one or more courses, not a letter grade:

1. Verification that the student was unable to complete work due to calamity days, illness or accident that is **contemporaneously confirmed** by a physician or a severe family tragedy;
2. Verification that the Incomplete was given in accordance with **Board policy** and available to all students
3. Confirmation that the work has been made up in accordance with Board policy and that grades have been recorded for all incomplete work.
4. Verification that the Incomplete was not given to avoid a failing grade and that no extended time was afforded the student in order to avoid the failing grade.
5. Please provide the student's preceding grading period grade card.

#### **NOTE ON ADMINISTRATIVE ERROR:**

Please note that the concept of "substantively eligible," as expressed in Bylaw 4-1-1, Administrative Error, is NOT applicable to this high school scholarship standard. **Requests for appeal citing this bylaw shall be denied.** Bylaw 4-4-1 reads as follows:

**Students who have not met the high school or middle school scholarship requirement are not "substantively eligible;" and a student who fails to register for enough credit hours, fails a class(es) or drops a class that lowers the student below the requisite number of credits, always has a shared responsibility for this shortcoming thus disqualifying such shortcoming from the "due solely to an administrative error" category. Therefore; this Bylaw shall never be used to waive the standards found in Bylaws 4-4-1 or 4-4-5.**

4/3/2020

**Please feel free to contact Deborah Moore or Roxanne Price if you have any questions!**