



Ohio High School Athletic Association
4080 Roselea Place, Columbus, Ohio 43214
Ph: 614-267-2502, www.ohsaa.org

**Information required to evaluate requests for exceptions for
Students with disabilities or Students retained in grades K-3
2020-2021**

- **Bylaws 4-2-1 (High School) exception 1 and 4-2-2 (Grades 7-8), exceptions 1 and 2 – AGE**
- **Bylaw 4-3-3 – exception 2 – EIGHT SEMESTERS (High School)**
- **Bylaw 4-3-4 – exception – FOUR SEMESTERS (Grades 7-8)**

The “age rule” is predicated on the notion that a student who has reached the 20th birthday, or 15th birthday in accordance with Bylaw 4-2-2, possesses certain advantages (such as physical and/or athletic maturity, life and/or sport experiences, knowledge of her/his sport, additional training and coaching, size and speed) over his/her younger competition that would be unfair, inequitable and, in some cases, unsafe. The “age rule” is also grounded in the idea that the younger athletes who follow the 20-year-old, or the 15-year-old, in the program have limited opportunities to participate as it is, and that these opportunities become even more limited sitting behind an older student-athlete.

The “semester rule” is predicated on the notion that once a student begins his/her freshman year of high school, or the 7th grade in middle school, she/he should complete his or her education in four or two years, respectively. The rule also reinforces the notion that education supersedes athletics and that students should not be held back for athletic reasons.

Notwithstanding these fundamental principles of the “age rule” and the “semester rule,” the member schools have identified scenarios under which the age or semester limitations might be waived. However, as one Ohio court noted, “the exception to the age rule [is] intended to allow for the participation of a young person with a disability who would not impact the outcome of an event and probably under most circumstances would not be allowed to compete. It is a rule of compassion but was not intended to give the top athletes another year of eligibility”. The same can be said of the semester rule exception.

For the Executive Director’s Office to consider one of these exceptions, the principal or other senior administrator must supply the following in a narrative format:

**For applications concerning Students with A Disability who do not meet the AGE standard:
Bylaw 4-2-1 – Exception 1 – High School
Bylaw 4-2-2 – Exception 1 – Grades 7-8**

1. **A clear definition of the student’s disability** in accordance with the **Ohio Operating Standards for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Part B of the Federal IDEIA requirements.**
2. **A statement that clearly represents that the student’s diagnosis was contemporaneous with the events which caused the student to be unable to meet the requirements of this bylaw; and confirmation that the student’s disability is the PRIMARY reason for the student’s inability to meet the requirements of this bylaw.**
3. **A copy of the student’s ETR (Evaluation Team Report),** which includes information pertinent to the disability.
4. **A copy of the most recent IEP.**

5. **A narrative in a cover letter, which includes the date of birth**, that describes specifically how the student meets each one of the four criteria expressed in the bylaw. It is not acceptable to simply repeat each criterion and respond with a “yes” or a “no” to each item. A summary with definitions of terms and examples of each of those items is provided for your reference. Please see the *Handbook* for the complete text of each criterion.
 - a. **Safety risk to self or others** - This item means that the student is not of the size, physical and/or developmental maturity that might predispose him or her to place others at risk or him or herself at risk if an additional year of participation were granted. Please include information about the student’s physical characteristics including height and weight when addressing this issue.
 - b. **Advantage as to physical, mental or athletic maturity** – It is not the intention of this exception to grant additional eligibility to student’s who have enjoyed significant participation at the varsity or middle school level, have earned school, league, district or state honors for athletic accomplishments, or have been varsity letter winners. Physical, mental and athletic maturity relates to students who have achieved full development as athletes and who have shown prowess and impact in their selected sport or sports.
 - c. **Impact on outcome/meaningful participation** – This concept refers to the notion of keeping the playing field as even as possible by preventing students who have had an additional year of experience in a sport or who have had the advantage of age and maturity from participating against students who have had neither of those advantages. The student approved under this exception would not likely participate in any meaningful way and would certainly not have an effect on the outcome of any contests in which the student did participate. The OHSAA will not grant exceptions to students whose past performance in a sport or sports has been of such a caliber that further eligibility would be unfair to the opponents of the member school the student in question attends. To this end, the applicant shall provide **statistical information about the student’s playing time, honors achieved, places in competition earned and varsity letters earned in each sport.**
 - d. **Red shirting** – “Red shirting” refers to a deliberate attempt to retain a student in a grade for the purpose of gaining an extra year of eligibility and thus obtaining an athletic advantage. Students who are identified as a “child with a disability” during their last year of eligibility at the high school or 7-8th grade level will most likely not qualify for this waiver.

**For applications concerning a Student in Grades 7-8 who has repeated a Grade(s) from K-3
Bylaws 4-2-2 – Exception 2 - AGE**

1. **A narrative in a cover letter, which includes the date of birth, indicating which grade(s) the student has repeated from Kindergarten through grade 3**
2. **Evidence of the recommendation** of the student’s teachers or other educational professionals for the repetition of said grade(s)
3. **Affirmation** that the repetition of the grade(s) was for purely academic reasons.
4. **A narrative** that describes specifically how the student meets each one of the four criteria expressed in the bylaw. It is not acceptable to simply repeat each criterion and respond with a “yes” or a “no” to each item. A summary with definitions of terms and examples of each of those items is provided for your reference. Please see the *Handbook* for the complete text of each criterion.
 - a. **Safety risk to self or others** - This item means that the student is not of the size, physical and/or developmental maturity that might predispose him or her to place others at risk or him or herself at risk if an additional year of participation were granted. Please

include information about the student’s physical characteristics including height and weight when addressing this issue.

- b. **Advantage as to physical, mental or athletic maturity** – It is not the intention of this exception to grant an additional year of eligibility to student’s who have enjoyed significant participation at the middle school level, have earned school, league, district or state honors for athletic accomplishments, or have been letter winners. Physical, mental and athletic maturity relates to students who have achieved significant development as athletes and who have shown prowess and impact in their selected sport or sports.
- c. **Impact on outcome/meaningful participation**– This concept refers to the notion of keeping the playing field as even as possible by preventing students who have had an additional year of experience in a sport or who have had the advantage of age and maturity from participating against students who have had neither of those advantages. The student approved under this exception would not likely participate in any meaningful way and would certainly not have an effect on the outcome of any contests in which the student did participate. The OHSAA will not grant exceptions to students whose past performance in a sport or sports has been of such a caliber that further eligibility would be unfair to the opponents of the member school the student in question attends. To this end, the applicant shall provide **statistical information about the student’s playing time, honors achieved, places in competition earned and letters/awards earned in each sport.**
- d. **Red shirting** – “Red shirting” refers to a deliberate attempt to retain a student in a grade for the purpose of gaining an extra year of eligibility and thus obtaining an athletic advantage.

For applications concerning **Students with a Disability** who do not meet the **SEMESTER** standards found in:
Bylaw 4-3-3 – Exception 2 – High School – Eight Semesters
Bylaw 4-3-4 – Exception – Grades 7-8 – Four Semesters

1. **A clear definition of the student’s disability** in accordance with the **Ohio Operating Standards for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Part B of the Federal IDEIA requirements.**
2. **A statement that clearly represents that the student’s diagnosis was contemporaneous with the events which caused the student to be unable to meet the requirements of this bylaw; and confirmation that the student’s disability is the PRIMARY reason for the student’s inability to meet the requirements of this bylaw.**
3. **A copy of the student’s ETR (Evaluation Team Report),** which includes information pertinent to the disability.
4. **A copy of the most recent IEP.**
5. **A narrative in a cover letter, including the date of birth,** that describes specifically how the student meets each one of the four criteria expressed in the bylaw. It is not acceptable to simply repeat each criterion and respond with a “yes” or a “no” to each item. A summary with definitions of terms and examples of each of those items is provided for your reference. Please see the *Handbook* for the complete text of each criterion.
 - a. **Safety risk to self or others** - This item means that the student is not of the size, physical and/or developmental maturity that might predispose him or her to place others at risk or him or herself at risk if an additional year of participation were granted. Please include information about the student’s physical characteristics including height and weight when addressing this issue.

- b. Advantage as to physical, mental or athletic maturity** – It is not the intention of this exception to grant additional eligibility to student’s who have enjoyed significant participation at the varsity or middle school level, have earned school, league, district or state honors for athletic accomplishments, or have been varsity letter winners. Physical, mental and athletic maturity relates to students who have achieved full development as athletes and who have shown prowess and impact in their selected sport or sports.
- c. Impact on outcome/meaningful participation**– This concept refers to the notion of keeping the playing field as even as possible by preventing students who have had an additional year of experience in a sport or who have had the advantage of age and maturity from participating against students who have had neither of those advantages. The student approved under this exception would not likely participate in any meaningful way and would certainly not have an effect on the outcome of any contests in which the student did participate. The OHSAA will not grant exceptions to students whose past performance in a sport or sports has been of such a caliber that further eligibility would be unfair to the opponents of the member school the student in question attends. To this end, the applicant shall provide **statistical information about the student’s playing time, honors achieved, places in competition earned and varsity letters earned in each sport.**
- d. Red shirting** – “Red shirting” refers to a deliberate attempt to retain a student in a grade for the purpose of gaining an extra year of eligibility and thus obtaining an athletic advantage. Students who are identified as a “child with a disability” during their last year of eligibility at the high school or 7-8th grade level will most likely not qualify for this waiver.

Please allow 30 days for this process to be completed, and note that not all applicants are granted additional eligibility. The OHSAA staff evaluates each case individually. The OHSAA will not accept incomplete applications. Please forward all materials to one of the contact persons listed below.

Dr. Deborah B. Moore, Senior Director of Compliance and Sports Medicine
Ms. Roxanne Price, Senior Director of Compliance

dmoore@ohsaa.org

rprice@ohsaa.org