

University of California, Berkeley - Student-Athlete Admissions Policy
(effective for admissions starting in academic year 2023-24)

Introduction

This policy was originally developed by the Admissions, Enrollment, and Preparatory Education (AEPE) Committee of the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate, which conducted its own research and took into account recommendations and analytic information offered by the Chancellor’s Task Force on Athletics and Academics in the fall of 2014. This document supersedes all previous such documents.

AEPE reaffirms its belief that the system of holistic review, where all prospective students are evaluated using multiple measures of achievement and promise, is sufficiently robust to encompass the admission of the vast majority of recruited student-athletes through the normal First Year and Transfer admissions processes. AEPE believes that holistic review can achieve this, with a level of predictability and confidence that will satisfy all demands for academic accountability without compromising the ability to recruit and retain competitive athletic talent.

This document acknowledges the myriad reports done on campus on the topic of intercollegiate athletics, including an especially influential one written by a 1991 committee chaired by Neil Smelser, professor of sociology. That committee called upon Cal to compete “across the board at the top levels” of the then Pacific 10 Conference. “This implies,” the report continued, “frequent appearances in post-season play and national championship events.” Significantly, the committee noted, as we reaffirm, “The academic expectations—including those concerning graduation rates—for student-athletes should not differ from those for students in general.”

Guiding Principles

1. Student-athletes who compete on varsity sports teams for the University of California, Berkeley, are *students first, athletes second*. Every student-athlete who is admitted to Berkeley is expected to be committed to obtaining a high-quality education and to graduating in a timely manner.
2. The admission of student-athletes shall be governed by the same general policies and procedures used in the evaluation and selection of applicants from the general admissions pool.
3. The standard of admission for student-athletes shall be uniform across all varsity sports. Student-athletes must be UC-eligible (a requirement that includes a 3.0 high school grade-point average) to be accepted, with rare exceptions¹

¹ See the section on Admission for our specific interpretation of what is meant by “rare exceptions.”

(<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/freshman/requirements/> or <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/transfer/index.html>).

Each student-athlete shall be judged individually and comprehensively, as stipulated by Berkeley's first-year or transfer admissions criteria, as applicable. This process, called holistic review, includes the following factors:

- The applicant's level of academic preparation and accomplishment.
 - The context in which the applicant learned and lived, as well as the opportunities available to the applicant and how he or she responded to challenges.
 - Evidence of the applicant's commitment to pursue college studies to graduation.
4. Admission shall be granted only to student-athlete applicants whose level of academic preparation is deemed sufficient to warrant strong confidence in their ability to graduate from Berkeley. The campus aspires to have the same high graduation rate for student athletes as for all other students.
5. The number of student-athletes admitted by exception shall be very limited and highly regulated. The following factors shall play a crucial role in determining the admissibility of exceptions:
- The historic academic success rate of similarly prepared applicants on the teams that nominate them.
 - The availability of academic support resources for any applicant admitted by exception.

Procedures

Overview

This policy gives the faculty and specially trained admissions staff a central role in recruiting and admitting student-athletes.

It recognizes that the recruitment of student-athletes in many sports occurs on a different time scale than normal admissions, beginning as early as the sophomore year of high school in some cases. As a result, while the same holistic criteria will govern the admission of both student athletes and applicants from the general admission pool, these criteria will be applied on an earlier and on-going basis for student-athletes.

This policy is part of a fully integrated approach that takes recruiting, admission, and academic support as comprising parts of a single system for educating and graduating students who compete for Berkeley in intercollegiate sports. Before a student can be recruited as an athlete, that person must be certified as someone who is likely to succeed academically at Cal and

graduate in a timely manner.

Student-Athlete Admissions Committee (SAAC)

SAAC is in charge of monitoring recruitment and the nomination for admission of student athletes. SAAC monitors academic support and is the final arbiter of whether academic support is sufficient for those admitted in exceptional cases.

SAAC is made up of at least six voting members, all of whom are members of the Academic Senate:

- The Chair of AEPE, serving as Co-Chair of SAAC
- An additional member of AEPE as selected by AEPE
- The Dean of the Undergraduate Division in the College of Letters and Science, or a tenured member of the Academic Senate in Letters and Science appointed by that dean as his or her representative
- The Faculty Athletic Representative
- A member of the Academic Senate Faculty Athletics Council (FACL)
- The Associate Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management and Dean of Undergraduate Admissions serving as Co-Chair of SAAC
- Up to two additional Academic Senate at-large members appointed by COMS if necessary for ethnic and gender diversity on SAAC and to reflect the range of faculty who teach student-athletes.

A quorum is 2/3 voting members. A case must receive 2/3 of the votes to advance.

Recruiting

Once coaches identify prospective student-athletes of interest, they must indicate this at the earliest possible time to designated staff in Intercollegiate Athletics (IA). IA will work collaboratively with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions (OUA) to track the progress of the prospects through their high school or junior college careers to determine whether they are likely to be admitted.

OUA will work with the Recruitment Coordinator in IA to make a preliminary determination of the viability of the recruit, taking into account these factors:

1. Is the prospect likely to be UC-eligible (a requirement that includes a 3.0 grade point average) at high school graduation?
2. Does the prospect's current level of academic accomplishment and proposed study list suggest that he or she can succeed at Berkeley?
3. What is the level of academic engagement of the prospect?

OUA will give IA feedback on adjustments to high school curriculum and levels of performance in the classroom (and in standardized tests of English as a foreign language if applicable) that would enhance the prospective student-athlete's chances of admission to Berkeley. Since

admissions decisions depend on holistic evaluation, non-cognitive factors such as leadership, commitment, the ability to overcome adversity and the like, will also play a significant role in reviewing the cases of student-athletes.

The qualities most of interest to OUA for high-performing high school athletes are academic engagement and accomplishment. As an essential aspect of recruiting, coaches will be expected to make clear that Berkeley places high value on academic engagement and accomplishment, and enrollment at Berkeley constitutes a strong commitment to earning a degree. All coaches are expected to be energetic advocates of academic success in their programs and should communicate this attitude to their recruits.

In order to assess a candidate's qualifications against the general applicant pool, as well as to determine the types of academic support an individual student may need upon enrollment, each recruit is expected to meet in person with the senior leadership of OUA and the Athletic Study Center (ASC), or their representatives, during the recruitment process.

If the recruits' performance in their final semesters makes clear to OUA that they are likely to be admitted, admission by exception and borderline cases will be referred to SAAC, which will further assess the cases for impact on the ASC's carrying capacity—its ability to provide adequate academic support services. (All admitted recruited athletes will have access to the ASC's support services for their entire tenure at Cal, even if they discontinue participation in intercollegiate athletics.) SAAC will attend particularly to the following criteria:

1. The history of academic success for student-athletes whose profiles were similar to the prospects'.
2. The academic resources available to support the prospects, should they be admitted.
3. The proportion of SAAC cases (excluding those not counted against carrying capacity) already on the roster of the proposed student-athlete's team, or who would have been on the roster had they not left the team and/or university.

OUA in collaboration with SAAC will be responsible for seeing that recruits facing academic challenges do not get clustered on a small number of varsity teams.

Whenever the UC Intercollegiate Athletics Department announces the successful recruitment of a student-athlete, the announcement should note that the recruitment is subject to NCAA rules and to academic admission to the University.

[Note: Language subject to revision]

Admission

Student-athletes must be UC-eligible, with rare exceptions.²

The process of admitting student-athletes shall consist of the following steps:

² We intend "exception" to be understood in the general sense, meaning that they have academic profiles significantly different from the average admit. These offers can total no more than 0.25% of all offers in an admissions cycle.

1. OUA initially assesses which athletic prospects are recruitable on academic grounds.
2. OUA evaluates these applicants in the same way as applicants from the general admissions pool (letters of recommendations are only required of students coming before SAAC; not all student-athletes).
3. Those student-athletes not selected through normal review will receive a review by the senior leadership of OUA as is the case with other special talent applicants who were not selected initially. This Director's review will involve consultation with the Director of the Athletic Study Center to determine if there is sufficient academic support to aid the student.
4. If the senior leadership of OUA decides the applicant is admissible, the case is referred to SAAC for a final up-or-down decision.
5. The senior leadership of OUA may refer any student-athlete applicant to SAAC for consultation or advice.
6. SAAC is authorized to determine whether a given admitted student-athlete has been referred and discussed only for purposes of consultation and advice, and should not count towards the team's cap on SAAC admits. A determination should be made at the time of the admission decision.

For the football, men's basketball, and women's basketball:

- at least 60% of athletic admissions will be realized through normal review, with a minimum high school grade-point average of 3.0. The remaining may be admitted by SAAC. This pilot policy will be reviewed by AEPE in 2025 after a review of academic achievement data.

For the remaining teams:

- a 4-year average of 80% of athletic admissions by varsity sport and across all sports (except football, and men's and women's basketball) will be realized through normal review, with a minimum high school grade-point average of 3.0. The remaining may be admitted by SAAC.

SAAC can also impose conditions on the admission of any student-athlete, including, but not limited to, mandating Summer Bridge³ and/or first-year academic redshirt⁴.

Special Application Conditions

All prospective student-athletes who are reviewed by SAAC will be required to provide a letter of recommendation from a teacher in a core academic subject taken in either the junior or senior year. For transfer applicants, the letter should come from an instructor who has taught the recruit in a UC-transferrable course.

³ Summer Bridge is a six-week rigorous academic residential program that facilitates the transition of students from high school to the University.

⁴ First-year academic redshirt is when student-athletes may practice and receive athletics aid during the initial year of full-time collegiate enrollment, but may not compete in their first year of full-time collegiate enrollment.

In addition, at matriculation all recruited student athletes will be asked to sign a letter of commitment to graduate as a condition of admission.

Transfers

Applicants must submit high school transcripts and transcripts from all colleges attended as well as work in progress regardless of graduation or course completion. They must complete a full UC application including the personal insight questions. A letter of support from a College instructor in a UC-transferable course is also required for any student-athlete referred to SAAC. Applicants must have at least a 2.8 cumulative GPA from all transferable coursework to be admitted by OUA; all others must be admitted by exception.

Junior Transfer Applicants

Applicants must have at least 60 transferable units to be considered as junior transfer applicants. Junior transfer athlete applicants are subject to the same kinds of conditions, oversight, and consideration as first year athlete applicants. That is, that they must be transfer eligible, and, if they are, and are approved by OUA, they receive a Director's review and admission.

California Community College transfer applicants must meet the UC seven-course pattern.

Out-of-state community college and transfer applicants from a four-year institution must have completed the UC seven-course pattern.

Lower Division Transfer applicants

In this instance, review will rely heavily on the student's high school record. Applicants must have less than 60 transferable units, and transfer from a 2-year or 4-year institution. Sophomore level transfers must have made adequate progress toward fulfilling UC seven-course pattern with reasonable consideration depending on unit count. These applicants may be asked to interview with an advisor from the Athletic Study Center to ensure transfer success.

First year transfers must meet first year eligibility standards and have completed at least one breadth requirement.

International Students

International students will be admitted through the same processes as domestic students, but OUA are required to ascertain that the English proficiency of the international applicant is fully adequate for study at Berkeley.

All international students who attend an international institution where the language of instruction is not English, will need to demonstrate English proficiency in any of the following ways; *Duolingo* English Test with a score of 115, the *Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)* exam with a score of 80 or better, or the *International English Language Testing System (IELTS)* with a score of 6.5. Should English proficiency not be met, it will be an

admission-by-exception for which the application is referred to SAAC for a final decision. International students must also complete a UC application and submit a letter of support from a current or former instructor from the institution last attended.

International students with a GPA below 3.0 may be admitted by OUA without counting toward the carrying capacity at the discretion of OUA.

Integrity of Admissions Process and Audit Compliance

In response to external interests and local and state audits, and building on earlier efforts to improve compliance and accountability in the athletic recruitment process, a number of policies have been implemented to safeguard the integrity of the athletics admission process.

- All incoming student-athletes are required to sign a Student-Athlete Admissions Agreement, acknowledging that they were admitted via the Student-Athlete Admissions Policy and, as such, are required to be an active member of the sport team for a minimum of one academic year.
- Coaches are required to disclose on the Admissions Request Form any pre-existing relationship they have with the prospective student-athlete or family, and any involvement of other university personnel or donors in referring the student to the coach or in promoting the student's recruitment.
- Coaches must also provide the Office of Athletic Compliance an endorsement of the prospective student's athletic talent, as well as supporting documentation (e.g., media articles, awards, athletic performance results, recruiting rankings).
- Coaches and sport staff members are prohibited from soliciting a donation from the family of any prospective student-athlete whom they are recruiting who has not yet enrolled.
- Prior to approving a prospective student (scholarship or non-scholarship) to be designated for admission as a student-athlete, the Athletic Compliance Office conducts a review through the University Development and Alumni Relations (UDAR)'s Cal Advancement Data System (CADS) to determine whether the prospective student-athlete is a relative of any UC Berkeley or Cal Athletics donor.
- Rowing-Specific Requirements: The sport of rowing has a history of developing successful student-athletes in college who have little or no experience competing in the sport prior to college. A policy has been created which requires prospective rowing student-athletes to demonstrate ergometer times that are consistent with student-athletes on the current team. Prospective coxswains are now required to have prior competitive experience as a coxswain. Coaches are required to provide documentation of erg times/team status when submitting an Admission Request Form.
- For cases where the Athletic Compliance Office identifies a greater potential for a conflict of interest, they will present the case to SAAC for an additional layer of review. All cases of student-athletes without prior experience in their sport (or rowers who do not meet the above criteria) will be referred to SAAC for review. All cases of children or relatives of coaches being recruited for the team coached by their parent/relative will be referred to SAAC for review.

- All cases of a sport program wishing to designate a prospective student for admission as a student-athlete after the student was initially denied admission (after having not initially been designated as a student-athlete) will be referred to SAAC to review the vetting of the student's athletic talent. (Such cases are most commonly late-blooming athletes in spring sports like track, who would not have been on a coach's radar in time to designate as a student-athlete in the typical recruiting time-frame.)
- The Student-Athlete Admissions Committee (SAAC) will be provided reports on prospective student-athletes who are relatives of donors or university employees, those with whom coaches have a pre-existing relationship, and prospective students who have been referred to the coach by other university personnel or donors. For donors/donations, the history (with dates), amounts, and unit receiving the donation will be detailed, with the names redacted. SAAC will discuss the reports at least once a year.
- The SAAC co-chairs and will meet annually with the university's Chief Ethics, Risk, and Compliance Officer or designate, and the university's General Council, to update them on the prior year's process.

Allotment

In any one admissions cycle, up to 300 recruited student-athletes may be designated for special talent consideration under this policy.

Monitoring

AEPE will monitor the admissions procedures, assess the outcomes on an ongoing basis, and report annually to the Divisional Council (DIVCO) of the Academic Senate. This report will summarize the admissions statistics for the recently completed cycle and the historical trends of 4- and 6-year graduation rates, timely declaration of major, progress toward degree, as well as average GPAs of student-athletes in each varsity sport. Should particular teams show unsatisfactory academic performance, AEPE will work with OUA and IA to determine if there is a systemic problem that needs to be addressed through a change in policy or practice.

*Approved by the Admissions, Enrollment, and Preparatory Education (AEPE) Committee 05/12/2023.
Revised 6/9/2023 to remove gendered language, in accordance with the Presidential Policy on Gender Recognition and Lived Name (<https://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2700693/GRLN>), which "acknowledges that binary options are not sufficient to recognize gender diversity."*