CIAC Academic Eligibility Draft Proposed Policy

This policy explains the academic requirements for student-athletes in grades 9 through 12 and the support available when a student falls behind. It applies to all CIAC member schools and levels of competition after formal adoption beginning July 1, 2027.

Common language and definitions

Term	Meaning in this policy
Academic eligibility	Meeting the academic requirements to play in school athletic contests. An ineligible student cannot play in contests.
Marking period	A school's official grading period. This policy uses quarters, which divide the year into four parts, or trimesters, which divide it into three.
Graduation credit	Credit the school awards for successfully completing a course. Earned credits are credits already awarded, not credits a student expects to receive.
Credit equivalent	The part of a course's graduation credit counted for one marking period. A one credit course taught over four quarters counts as 0.25 each quarter.
Course load or carry	The courses a student is currently taking, measured in credit equivalents. Carrying a course does not mean the student has passed it.
Passing or failing grade	A grade that meets or does not meet the school's published passing standard. A passing grade does not necessarily produce a 2.0 GPA.
Incomplete	A temporary grade showing that required work remains unfinished. It does not count as a passing grade until the school replaces it with one.
Grade point average or GPA	An average of course grades expressed on an unweighted 4.0 scale. Unweighted means no bonus points for honors, Advanced Placement, or other advanced courses.
Academic probation	One marking period when a student may practice and play in contests while following an approved academic support plan.
Academic support plan	A written plan stating what the student must do, what help the school will provide, and when progress will be reviewed.
Engagement	Completing the assignments, meetings, and support activities required by the academic support plan.
Credit recovery	School approved work that allows a student to earn credit for a course in which credit was not awarded. The same credit cannot be counted twice.
Principal or designee	The principal or a school staff member the principal assigns to oversee academic eligibility and student support.
Withdrawal	A withdrawal (W) is not a failing grade and earns no credit.
Withdrawal Fail (WF)	A withdrawal fail (WF) counts as a failing grade for eligibility purposes and earns no credit.

Academic requirements and probation

CIAC Student-Athlete Academic Eligibility Requirements

Except during approved probation or under an approved individualized academic equivalency, a student must:

- Take a minimum 1.5 credit equivalents in the current marking period. Schools may assign seniors who are on track for graduation less than 1.5 credit equivalents with the approval of the principal and parent/guardian provided such schedule includes all requirements for the student-athlete to graduate at the conclusion of his/her fourth (4th) year in high school.
- Pass at least 1.5 credit equivalents in the previous marking period, or all courses in an approved schedule for a senior taking less than 1.5 credit equivalents.
- Schools shall set a course passing standard that allows for no more than one (1) failing grade per marking period and no more than one (1) failing grade for course-end grades. Schools shall set a GPA requirement between the range of 1.7 to 2.0, for the previous marking period.

*The failure rule applies to every course that carries credit, including courses beyond the minimum load. Fall eligibility and first-time ninth graders follow Section 4.

*Withdrawals**:** A withdrawal fail (WF) counts as a failing grade for eligibility purposes and earns no credit. A withdrawal (W) is not a failing grade and earns no credit.

Counting credits and calculating GPA

Schools must publish their weighted and/or unweighted GPA formula used in determining athletic eligibility in its student-athlete handbook.

For equal marking periods, divide the course's total graduation credit by the number of periods it covers. These credit equivalents measure course load and passing progress; the school awards actual credit when the course is completed. Study halls, noncredit activities, and previously earned credits do not count toward a new credit requirement.

Academic probation

> **Start.** Each school must offer probation when a student first falls below the passing credit, grade, or GPA requirement at a scheduled eligibility checkpoint. Probation may address one or several failed courses, an incomplete, or a low GPA. It cannot excuse an insufficient current course load or missing annual earned credits.
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> **Plan and review.** Before the student plays, the principal or designee must approve a written support plan, share it with the student and parent or guardian, and arrange a documented progress check at least weekly. A signature acknowledges receipt; it is not a separate eligibility requirement.
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> **Participation.** The student may practice and play while meeting the plan's requirements. Probation period eligibility may be suspended if the student does not engage in the support program, as determined by the principal (or designee).
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> **End.** At the next official grade review, the student must meet all academic requirements and complete required recovery work. Otherwise, the student becomes ineligible for contests. A different failed course or a continued low GPA still counts as an unmet requirement. Eligibility decisions and school responsibilities

Schools may set a standard of only one probation period per school year or permit more than one probationary period per year provided that the probation periods are not consecutive. Year end probation may continue into

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the next year's first marking period and counts as that year's (first) opportunity. School transfers do not erase an unresolved deficiency or restart probation. A student who transfers while on probation from his/her sending school shall remain on probation at the receiving school. The transfer student's receiving school may revise the probation plan to align with its curricular structure.

A student who remains ineligible after probation may return to contests at the next official grade review showing full compliance. A certified grade correction or completed incomplete may restore eligibility earlier. Supervised practice may continue when it fits the student's academic support needs.

For a course still in progress, passing the next marking period and completing the support plan's recovery work may resolve the earlier failure. A failed completed course requires approved credit recovery. Final and last marking period grades from the same reporting cycle do not count as two separate probation events.

Fall eligibility and ninth grade entry

For Fall 2027 and later fall seasons, returning students must have earned a minimum of 1.5 credit equivalents toward graduation in the previous academic year's last marking period, including approved summer recovery. Probation cannot replace missing earned credits.

For the first marking period, returning students must also have no unresolved final course failures or incompletes and meet the school's published GPS standard (1.7 to 2.0) based on the previous year's final grades and course credits, after approved recovery. Probation may address grade or GPA deficiencies under Section 3.

Students entering ninth grade for the first time are exempt from prior grade and credit requirements during their first marking period. They must still meet the current course load requirement.

School responsibilities

The principal (or designee) must confirm eligibility before the first contest, at each official grade review, and after a relevant change. Grades take effect for eligibility when schoolwide grades are released or 14 calendar days after the marking period ends, whichever comes first. Schools must publish their reporting dates and use four quarterly or three trimester reviews. Schools issuing only semester grades must provide quarterly eligibility reviews.

Dropping below the minimum course load makes a student ineligible until the load is restored or an approved equivalency is documented. Schools must verify credits from transfers, online courses, college courses, career programs, and mixed schedules.

Schools must provide written decisions of ineligibility with reasons, effective dates, and review instructions. Students and parents may ask the principal to review a decision. For unresolved eligibility issues, schools can follow the CIAC eligibility appeals process. An appeal alone does not restore eligibility. Grade calculations, plans, progress checks, and decisions must be kept securely.

An individualized academic equivalency is an approved way for a student with a disability to meet the standard through the student's educational program. The principal documents it through the Planning and Placement Team or Section 504 process, consistent with the student's Individualized Education Program or Section 504 plan and CIAC requirements. Having a plan does not automatically waive academic review.

Schools may design academic supports but may not impose a higher GPA, greater course load, or more restrictive probation access than this policy allows. Support must be accessible, and coaches do not decide academic eligibility.

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Schedule examples and decisions before adoption

Credit requirements by schedule

These examples depend on the credit the school awards and the length of each course. All students must also meet the grade and GPA requirements or qualify for probation.

School schedule	Credit equivalent per course	Minimum example
Traditional 7 or 8 periods	One credit annual course over four quarters = 0.25 per quarter.	Six courses × 0.25 = 1.5 each quarter.
A/B block	One credit annual course meeting on alternating days = 0.25 per quarter.	Six courses across both A and B days × 0.25 = 1.5.
4 by 4 block	One credit semester course over two quarterly reviews = 0.50 per quarter.	Three courses × 0.50 = 1.5 each quarter.
Trimesters	A 0.50 credit course completed within one trimester = 0.50.	Four courses × 0.50 = 2.0 each trimester.
Hybrid or mixed schedule	Count each course based on its actual credit and length.	Two courses at 0.25 plus two at 0.50 = 1.5 per quarter.

A longer class meeting does not automatically earn more credit. A yearlong A/B course is not worth 0.50 each quarter simply because it uses a block schedule. A one credit annual course on trimesters counts as one third per trimester; five such courses exceed 1.5, while four do not. Use exact values before rounding any displayed total.

Schools may assign seniors who are on track for graduation less than 1.5 credit equivalents with the approval of the principal and parent/guardian provided such schedule includes all requirements for the student-athlete to graduate at the conclusion of his/her fourth (4th) year in high school.

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