

NCAA Rule of the Month

April 2012

Military Exception to the 5-Year Clock

All NCAA student-athletes have five consecutive years to complete their four years of eligibility. This is often referred to as the “5-year clock.” There are some exceptions to that rule, however, and one is the military exception. This exception stops the 5-year clock when a student-athlete enters military service. Here are some other important things to remember about the military exception.

Concurrent Enrollment: The military exception does not apply when a student-athlete is enrolled in the minimum hours for a full-time course load and is also on active military duty.

Foreign Military Service: Many countries have mandatory military service, and that type of service could stop a student-athlete’s clock. Therefore, foreign transfer student-athletes might be eligible for this exception.

Peace Corps: The military exception does apply to service in the U.S. Peace Corps or other recognized foreign aid services of the U.S. Government. However, per NCAA rules, this does not apply to foreign aid services of other nations.

Academy Prep Schools: Some of the U.S. service academies, such as the Air Force Academy, have prep schools where student-athletes attend for the year between high school and full-time enrollment in the academy. A student-athlete’s clock does not start if they enroll in the academy prep school directly out of high school. However, if a student-athlete enrolls at a four-year or two-year institution and then transfers to the academy prep school, the clock does not stop during the year at the prep school.

Re-enrollment after service: The military exception only stops the clock from the beginning of active military duty until the next opportunity to enroll full-time, once that service is finished. Therefore, a student-athlete whose service ends in the spring or summer should re-enroll during the ensuing fall semester.

*Bylaws we are referencing: 14.2.1.2; 14.2.1.2.1; 14.2.1.2.2.