

# Brandeis University

## Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences

MS 120

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MEMORANDUM

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To: Arts and Sciences Faculty  
Student Athletes  
Athletic Coaches

From: Adam B. Jaffe, Dean of Arts and Sciences

Re: Guidelines for Management of Conflicts Between Coursework and Intercollegiate Athletic Competition

Date: September 2, 2005

Last year, in consultation with the Faculty Senate, I established a committee (Paul Jankowski (History), Chair; Sheryl Sousa (Physical Education), David Jacobson (Anthropology) and Jacob Cohen (American Studies), members) to investigate the problem of conflicts between student athletes' commitments for competitions and their coursework, and to make suggestions as to how such situations should be handled. Their report will be posted on the DAS website. The committee concluded that problems are not infrequent, and that the lack of any kind of consistent approach to their resolution is a source of frustration to students, faculty and coaches.

Approximately 10% of Brandeis undergraduates take part in intercollegiate athletic competition. Brandeis recruits and admits them in part on that basis, and they arrive with the understanding that the University expects and encourages this activity on their part. At the same time, our student athletes in general have the same commitment to their studies as other students, and should be held to the same standards. Since students have no control over the schedule of competition, and their control over their class schedules is limited, managing the conflicts that will inevitably arise between competitions and class assignments requires flexibility and good will on the part of students, faculty and coaches. It is also helpful for all involved to have an established set of groundrules, and it is to that end that I suggest the following guidelines. The committee also suggested the establishment of an ongoing committee on student athletics. I intend to re-establish such a committee, and ask it to review these guidelines and suggest amendments as necessary based on experience with their implementation.

1. Student athletes need to miss classes, and may need to reschedule other course assignments, to accommodate intercollegiate competition. At the same time,

- student athletes are entitled to, and should be expected to live up to, overall course requirements that are approximately equivalent to those of other students. In the vast majority of cases, with planning and consultation in advance, it should be possible to achieve both of these objectives.
2. Student athletes who anticipate a need for accommodation should present the instructor, at the beginning of the semester, with a letter from the Athletic Director verifying their participation in a varsity sport, and containing the schedule for the team. Students should not expect accommodation for practices; coaches should accept the responsibility to schedule practices to minimize conflict with classes and accommodate missed practices if necessary for class attendance.
  3. The instructor and the student athlete should then work out a plan for compensating for classes or other assignments that will be missed. The goal should be that athletes satisfy approximately the same overall obligations, and enjoy approximately the same overall learning opportunities, as non-athletes. How such equalization might be achieved will vary depending on the nature of the course, but might include written summaries or responses to readings assigned for missed classes; meetings during office hours, or other pedagogically appropriate measures. If absences require missing exams, instructors should explore whether the exam could be provided to the coach and administered in the same time frame as the scheduled exam. For other assignments, student athletes could be asked to turn the assignment in before a trip, fax or email it to the instructor by the deadline, or permitted to turn it in after, depending on the nature of the assignment and the timing.
  4. Although the number of absences should be approximately determinable in advance, the scheduling of games is subject to change, and instructors should be reasonably flexible to accommodate such changes. Conversely, if scheduled games are cancelled or postponed, students should attend class even if an accommodation had previously been arranged for missing the class.
  5. If the instructor believes that the number and timing of necessary absences is such that it is not possible to devise reasonable accommodation that satisfies the equalization criterion, s/he should promptly so inform the student, in writing or by email. Students should consult their coaches to determine if the number of needed absences can be reduced. If students feel that reasonable accommodation is being denied, they should discuss the issue with the relevant Department Chair.
  6. Student athletes should, to the extent feasible, design their schedules to minimize conflicts, by taking courses for which class attendance is crucial during semesters when they are not competing, and by choosing course sections to minimize the necessary number of absences.