

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this manual is to familiarize student athletes with the policies and procedures of the Athletic Department, which is assumed to operate under and in accordance with the institutional guidelines and procedures of the Mount Mercy University. Questions not answered in this Operating Manual should be directed to the Athletic Director.

The Mount Mercy Athletic Department is a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics as well as the Midwest Collegiate Conference. The Department and its members will follow the guidelines set forth by these organizations as well as Mount Mercy policies and procedures.

I. STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Mission of Mount Mercy

Mount Mercy is a Catholic University providing student-focused baccalaureate and graduate education in the spirit of the Sisters of Mercy.

As a Catholic college founded and sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, Mount Mercy University welcomes women and men of all beliefs to join our community in the pursuit of baccalaureate and graduate education and service to those in need.

Mount Mercy University promotes reflective judgment, strategic communication, the common good and purposeful living through a core curriculum, liberal arts and professional majors and student development programs.

We strive for excellence in accomplishing our mission through our four interdependent goals:

Using reflective judgment

The abilities to think clearly and carefully, argue coherently and evaluate competing truth claims critically are fundamental to a college education.¹ Reflective judgment requires a knowledge of basic fact, examination and evaluation of assumptions, adequate justification for drawing a conclusion and understanding implications of drawing that conclusion. With these skills, individuals can solve problems creatively and integrate knowledge across disciplines.

Engaging in strategic communication

Strategic communication requires selecting from a range of options in order to accomplish a chosen goal in an ethical manner.² These options include construction and interpretation of messages in the written, oral and aesthetic forms using appropriate technology.

Serving the common good

The common good is at the heart of Catholic social teaching. Because persons are social by nature, every individual's good relates necessarily to the common good, the sum of social conditions that allows all people to reach their human potential more fully.³ It includes respect for and ethical interaction with every person and the natural environment and, in the spirit of the Sisters of Mercy, service for the wellbeing of all humanity and action in the cause of justice in the world.

Promoting purposeful living

A liberal education enables persons to achieve a greater degree of freedom upon which to act purposefully. Since development of purpose entails planning for life based on a set of priorities,⁴ Mount Mercy University provides opportunities for spiritual growth, intellectual engagement, vocational clarity, social development, physical well-being, emotional maturity and responsible community leadership.

Department Vision

The Mount Mercy Athletic Department strives to sponsor regionally and nationally competitive sports using Mount Mercy's Mission as a foundation. The coaches will use the characteristics in the NAIA's Champions of Character program as tools for the education and development of their student-athletes. They will teach players the essential skills of teamwork, perseverance, and hard work to succeed at sport and at life. Fundamentally, the department will help each athlete become the best they can be, both academically and athletically.

By establishing the following set of goals, each coach will be committed to helping student athletes achieve to the best of his or her ability:

A. Intellectual

1. To maintain good academic standing in progressing toward a Mount Mercy degree.
2. To seek help from faculty/advisors/tutors when needed.
3. To strive for a semester GPA of 3.0 or better.
4. To gain knowledge in your sport.

B. Physical

1. To improve in skill level from the beginning of the season to the end.
2. To begin the season at a healthy fitness level, to be maintained throughout the season.
3. To acknowledge and seek timely help for treatment of injury.

C. Personal

1. To grow in knowledge about yourself.
2. To develop skills of teamwork and leadership, and to transfer these skills to other aspects of your life.
3. To gain confidence in yourself as an individual.

D. Sport

1. To win the Midwest Collegiate Conference Championship.
2. To achieve a regional and national rankings.
3. To receive invitations to NAIA National Competitions.

National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics is to promote the education and development of students through intercollegiate athletic participation. Member institutions, although varied and diverse, share a common commitment to high standards and the principle that athletics serve as an integral part of education.

The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics embraces the concept of the student-athlete and recognized the importance of the individuality of each member institution, the value of the conference structure, and the benefits of membership in a national association.

To achieve its purpose, the NAIA pursues the following goals for student-athletes, member Institutions, and the Association,

- I. The Student-athlete, as the central focus of intercollegiate athletics, shall:
 - A. Accept the responsibility to become an effective contributing member of society.
 - B. Perform as a positive role model on the campus and in the wider community.
 - C. Fulfill academic responsibilities while progressing steadily toward meeting the requirements for a degree.
 - D. Maintain eligibility for participation in every athletic contest.

- II. The Member Institutions shall:
 - A. Ensure that intercollegiate athletics is an integral part of the total educational offering, under the control of those responsible for the administration of the institution.

- III. The Association shall:
 - A. Assist the membership in the development of programs of intercollegiate athletics consistent with the purpose of the Association.
 - B. Establish, through the membership, rules and standards for the conduct of intercollegiate athletics.
 - C. Respect institutional diversity and individuality as strengths.
 - D. Provide opportunities for post-season intercollegiate competition.
 - E. Provide national recognition for the membership and the association.
 - F. Provide opportunities for the development of leadership at district and national levels.
 - G. Ensure fiscal accountability and responsibility.
 - H. Conduct an advancement program to include marketing, fund-raising, and membership development.

II. ORGANIZATION

The Athletic Department falls under the jurisdiction of the Enrollment and Student Services Division. The Director of Athletics is accountable to the Vice President of Enrollment and Student Services who, in turn, reports to the President. The Athletic Director and the Vice President meet periodically to discuss the current status of the athletics program and any concerns relative to the operation of the department. The head coaching staff reports directly to the Director of Athletics. The assistant coaches report to their respective head coaches. The Sports Information Director/ Facilities Manager, trainer, the department administrative assistant, and student workers provide support to the coaching staff and report to the Director of Athletics.

Responsibilities of Coaching Staff

Coaches represent the institution and therefore are expected to:

- 1) Place the highest emphasis on the safety and welfare of the student-athlete.
- 2) Be aware of the academic progress of each team member (including class enrollment, attendance, and grades) and encourage the highest possible level of academic achievement.
- 3) Conduct their programs in accordance with NAIA and MCC regulations and to self-report any suspected violations; and to abide by College sanctioned codes of ethical and professional behavior, including those principles proscribed by the Mount Mercy Athletics Code of Conduct.
- 4) Provide an atmosphere that promotes a sense of fairness, organization, respect, commitment, responsibility, self-motivation, improvement and accomplishment.
- 5) Stay current of rule changes, training techniques and contest strategies in their respective sport programs.
- 6) Bear the final responsibility for the behavior of the team and coaching staff during practices, contests and any other team-related activities.
- 7) Actively recruit student-athletes.
- 9) Maintain a balanced budget.
- 8) Carry out the policies and procedures listed in this manual and in the college personnel handbook.

A detailed description of coaching responsibilities are outlined in the coach's job description which is issued initially at the time of contract. College personnel handbooks are given at the time of hire, and updated as needed.

Responsibilities of Student-Athletes

Student-athletes are representatives of the college and should conduct themselves accordingly. As proscribed in the Mount Mercy Athletics Code of Conduct (Appendix I) this includes:

- 1) Understanding the overall philosophy of the athletic program.
- 2) Providing medical clearance to participate.
- 3) Maintaining good academic standing.
- 4) Exhibiting sportsmanship and ethical conduct.
- 5) Making a commitment to practice and compete in accordance with team rules.
- 6) Accepting responsibility for all equipment and supplies issued.
- 7) Treating coaches, teammates, visiting team members and officials with respect.

Team Sponsorship

Mount Mercy currently supports 15 sports at the intercollegiate level: baseball, basketball (M/W), bowling (M/W), cross country (M/W), golf (M/W), soccer (M/W), softball, track and field (M/W), and volleyball.

Athletic teams may be added to the athletic program if there is:

- 1) sufficient student interest;
- 2) adequate funding;
- 3) opportunities to develop a viable and competitive schedule;
- 4) the necessary facilities.

Teams may be dropped from the program or placed on a one-year probation if any one of the above four conditions no longer exists. Whenever the status of a team is of such a nature that its discontinuance is indicated, the Athletic Director shall prepare the recommendation with the reasons for the proposed action. This recommendation shall be presented to the Vice President of Enrollment and Student Services. The President and the Board of Trustees will have the final decision-making authority.

Probationary teams shall be subject to all the rules of varsity player eligibility during the season of competition. A newly organized team is considered on probation until:

- 1) The team has played through one season of competition.
- 2) The team has planned its next season and has arranged its schedule with the Athletic Director.

If these two qualifications have been met, the Athletic Director and the Vice President of Enrollment and Student Services will make a final recommendation about whether or not the team will fall under the jurisdiction of the policies, rules, and regulations governing intercollegiate athletes. The President and the Board of Trustees will have the final decision-making authority.

III. CODE OF CONDUCT/ DISCIPLINE

Alcohol Consumption

Consumption of alcoholic beverages is not permitted either by coaches or players while representing Mount Mercy during practice, games, or anytime during road trips.

Code of Conduct

All athletes and coaches are expected to abide by the Mount Mercy Athletics Code of Conduct. Control of the members of an athletic team (which includes student-athletes as well as assistant coaches) during the season with respect to their membership on the squad, their participation or non-participation in any part of any contest or scrimmage, scheduled or otherwise, and with respect to any other matter usually associated with such an athletic activity, shall be entirely the responsibility of the head coach of the sport. The coach will be responsible for the atmosphere created on and off the practice/contest site and must set the example for team members to follow.

Discipline

If it is determined that the conduct of members of a team is detrimental to the University in any way, the Coach shall have the authority to suspend the offending player(s) from the team, or the entire team from further play. Mount Mercy player or coach ejected from a contest is required to notify the Athletic Director within 24 hours after the contest to review the circumstances of the ejection. Depending on the results of the review, disciplinary action may range from a warning to suspension. Sport specific rules stipulating a penalty (e.g., in soccer, an ejection automatically leads to a one-game suspension) will also be invoked.

Disciplinary Process (quoted from the Good Book)

A. **Violations** As a general rule, violations of Mount Mercy policies and behavioral standards will be referred to the following:

- Residential – Violations of residential policies or of institutional standards of conduct committed in the residence halls or by residential students will generally be referred to the Residence Hall Director of the hall the student resides in.
- Athletic – Violations of athletic department or team policies or behavioral expectations will be referred to the Head Coach of the student's sport. (*Please note:* sport regulations governed by NAIA are not college regulated; therefore, the college may not set them aside or change their outcome. Ex: red cards in Soccer)

- Academics – Please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy (p. 25)
- Other – Violations of college standards of conduct occurring at campus events or committed by non-residential students will be referred to the Vice President for Enrollment and Student Life or referred by the VPESL to an appropriate staff member of her/his choice.

B. **Hearings** A hearing will be called by the staff member listed above, designated by the VPESL. The purpose(s) of such hearings will be to determine:

1. Were policies, standards, or behavioral expectations (i.e. team rules), or legal statutes violated?
2. If it is determined that a violation of the above occurred, the hearing(s) will seek to ascertain who is responsible for the violation(s).
3. Once responsibility is determined, appropriate sanctions, in keeping with the violation(s), will be applied.

At the hearing, the individual student(s) will be given the opportunity to provide testimony or evidence regarding the incident/event. Students who fail to schedule or attend a hearing by the deadline indicated will waive their right to such a hearing, and a decision may be made without that student(s)' testimony. All decisions made as a result of the hearing(s) will be communicated in writing.

C. **Right to Appeal** Students may appeal findings and/or sanctions on the following grounds:

1. If there is new evidence not considered in the original hearing.
2. If the sanction(s) applied do not reasonably fit the violation.

Generally, appeals will be heard by:

- Residential – Director of Residence Life
- Athletics – Director of Athletics
- Academics – Refer to the Academic Integrity Policy
- Other – VPESL

In order to file an appeal, the student must:

- a. Submit the appeal in writing. A complete appeal will include the date(s)/time(s) of the original incident, the finding(s) and/or sanction(s) being appealed, and the grounds on which the appeal is being made (see list above of the three grounds for appeals).
- b. If multiple individuals were found in violation and/or sanctioned and wish to appeal, each individual must submit a separate appeal letter.

An appeal hearing will be scheduled. Student(s) should arrive at the hearing prepared to share testimony or evidence supporting their appeal. Once a decision on the appeal is made, it will be communicated in writing. Every effort will be made to conclude the appeals process in a timely fashion. ***As a general rule, the status and/or participation in sport or other college activities will not be altered until a decision is made. This may not be true in cases in which a student's continued presence constitutes an immediate threat or potential injury to himself/herself or others and/or could disrupt the orderly functioning of Mount Mercy.***

D. **Summary Decision or Referral to a Disciplinary Hearing Board**

- If the student is still not satisfied with the outcome of the first appeal, they may ask for a summary judgment from the VPESL (or from the President, in appeals originally heard by the VPESL).
- Students must submit a request, in writing, for a review of all documents pertinent to the case. This request should be submitted to the VPESL.
- The VPESL will review the materials pertaining to the case, and:
 1. Call witnesses if desired/necessary to render a decision; OR

2. Determine that the case has been adequately investigated and the appeal appropriately decided.

- In either of the two cases above, the VPESL will make a final judgment and communicate that in writing to the student.
- The VPESL reserves the right to refer cases to a Disciplinary Hearing Board when the issues are judged by her/him to be of a substantive nature and/or would best be resolved by the action of a Board. The Disciplinary Hearing Board may be convened at any point in the process outlined above, beginning with the initial disciplinary investigation/hearings.

E. Disciplinary Hearing Board Process

1. If the VPESL has referred the case to the Disciplinary Hearing Board as part of an appeal decision, all documents, notes, etc. associated with the investigation and previous hearings will be forwarded to the Board.
2. If the case has not been heard (by Residence Life, Athletics, or other designated authority), the student will be given notice in writing that it has been referred to the Disciplinary Hearing Board. The specific allegation(s) and the nature of the evidence on which disciplinary charges are made will be included in this communication.
3. In both instances above, the student will be given a hearing before the Disciplinary Board membership. If the issue has not been heard by another campus authority prior to Board referral, the student may choose to plead guilty of the charges, and must state so in writing to the VPESL prior to or at the hearing.
4. A decision shall be made based on the evidence presented at the hearing.
5. If a student does not appear at the hearing, or if a student pleads guilty, the student waives all rights of appeal. Also, the Disciplinary Hearing Board will be the final step of appeal in the event that the student was referred upon an appeal to the VPESL.
6. A student who has appeared at the hearing, has not plead guilty, and is not already before the Board on appeal, may appeal the Board's decision to the Appeal Board of the Student Development Committee. The appeal must be made in writing to the VPESL within 48 hours after the Disciplinary Board decision. The Appeal Board will review the Disciplinary Board decision and submit its findings in a timely fashion to the VPESL.
7. As a general rule, the status of a student should not be altered until the case has been settled. This, however, is not true in cases in which a student's continued presence on the campus constitutes an immediate threat or potential injury to himself/herself or others and could disrupt the orderly functioning of Mount Mercy.
8. A record of the Disciplinary Board hearing proceedings will be kept and this will be considered confidential except in cases where it is deemed necessary by the Disciplinary Board that prepared statements be released to protect the welfare of persons or Mount Mercy.
9. With the agreement of the student and Mount Mercy, a settlement may be reached at any time during the process.

Hazing

Any activity or act causing any situation, which recklessly or intentionally subjects a student to the risk of serious bodily injury for the purpose of initiation into an athletic team, is strictly prohibited.

Coaches are to be alert to student interaction of this type, and coaches are expected to stop any such activity immediately. Consultation with the Athletic Director or the Dean of Students may be in order depending on the nature of the actions.

Personal Relationships

Personal relationships between coaches or staff with students will not be permitted.

IV. MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS/TREATMENT

A certified athletic trainer will be on site for home contests. For away contests, he/she will prearrange for medical treatment to be provided our athletes by the host institution's training staff. In addition, every team must travel with a first aid kit prepared by the trainer as well as copies of each player's insurance card (which should be kept in the kit).

An injured athlete may not return to practice or competition without the approval of the trainer. The trainer will update the coaches verbally on as needed basis.

Medical Clearance

All student-athletes must have medical clearance to participate in varsity athletics, regardless of whether the season is traditional or non-traditional. The student must have an approved medical exam from his/her family physician, a signed participation liability waiver, and provide proof of medical insurance to be kept on file with the athletic trainer. The University may also require a student-athlete to sign a waiver in the event of a pre-existing medical condition. It is the coach's responsibility to withhold a student-athlete from practice and competition until all of these completed medical forms have been submitted.

Please note: While the University provides a certified athletic trainer on site during home contests and selected practices, the University provides no reimbursement for medical treatment at non-college medical facilities.

A medical exam will be valid for a period of one year from the date it was first obtained. NO athletic equipment, uniforms, or practice gear will be given out without proof of current medical exam and insurance. The athletic trainer will maintain a current list of those athletes on each team medically eligible for participation.

Medical Emergency

If an injury requires greater care than the athletic trainer can provide, or if no athletic trainer is immediately available, call the University's switchboard, who will dispatch a security officer. They will contact 911 if necessary. The athlete should be taken to the emergency room located nearest the area.

From the hospital, or upon return to campus, inform the athletic trainer immediately (call at home, if necessary). In the event of grave injury, the Athletic Director should also be contacted. The student-athlete should be directed to see the trainer the following day.

Excess Insurance Policy

Mount Mercy has excess insurance coverage for any medical claims exceeding what the student's insurance will cover. Once a student has submitted his/her claims to his/her family insurance any excess not covered by his/her family's insurance can be submitted to Mount Mercy's insurance carrier. Mount Mercy's insurance may pay for these excess claims over the student's family insurance. An explanation of benefits form showing payment or denial from the primary insurance company, and an itemized bill must be submitted to the Athletic Office prior to excess coverage review.

V. ELIGIBILITY

Academic Eligibility

Student-athletes are expected to adhere to all guidelines related to academic eligibility as determined by the College and the NAIA. Students must be fully-matriculating degree candidates, carrying a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester and be making "normal progress toward a degree" as defined by the NAIA. The Registrar makes the determination of full-time or part-time status and, with assistance from the Athletic Director, will make the final decision for all eligibility reporting. Part-time students are ineligible to participate in intercollegiate athletics.

NAIA Eligibility

Before the first scheduled contest in a given sport season, the Athletic Director will conduct a mandatory eligibility meeting for all student athletes.

The NAIA requires student-athletes to then complete a form with the rules and regulations for participation listed on them, as well as a drug-testing consent form. All forms must be signed by the Coach and the Athletic Director and kept on file in the Athletic Director's office. The Athletic Director will also review the departmental philosophy responsibilities of both the coaches and the student-athletes, and give an overview of important procedures and policies that directly impact the student-athletes.

VI. TRANSPORTATION/ TEAM TRAVEL

Teams are not permitted to travel without a member of the college staff to accompany them. Student-athletes are required to travel with the team to contests and return with the team back to the college unless they are released to a parent, spouse, or legal guardian. Student-athletes are not to be released to anyone else. If a student wishes to drive separately from the team, he/she is not permitted to transport any other team members and must sign a release. Exceptions must be obtained at least 24 hours in advance from the Athletic Director.

It is the responsibility of the student-athletes to notify their instructors in person at the beginning of the semester of any classes they expect to miss due to contest travel. It is recommended that students remind professors as the dates near. Students missing class because of a game are expected to make up the work as determined by their professors.

Injuries at away contests should be treated in accordance with established medical treatment policies (see "Medical Eligibility").

Staff should attempt to drive vehicles at all times. If it is necessary to have an athlete drive, only athletes over 21 years of age with a good driving record are allowed to drive.

VII. EQUIPMENT/UNIFORMS

Only student-athletes cleared to participate both medically and academically may have equipment issued to them by the coach. The coach is responsible for keeping accurate records of equipment and uniform issuance.

The student-athlete is responsible for all equipment issued to them. If uniforms, practice gear, etc., are lost or stolen, the athlete must pay for the equipment. Coaches are responsible for collecting all equipment that has been issued, regardless of condition. All equipment must be returned within one week of the concluding contest of the season. Student-athletes who fail to return equipment or pay for the loss of equipment will be blocked from registration and/or graduation.

It is the coaches' responsibility to make sure equipment is returned to and locked in the proper storage areas after practices and/or contests.

Laundry Facilities

Varsity athletes, team managers, coaches or athletic trainer may use the washers and dryers located in the varsity equipment room to launder their practice and game uniforms, training room towels, etc. Items left from the previous night will be laundered by department work study.