

# Making Your Career in Basketball

A guide to the Australian Basketball Pathway  
(with up to date information on scholarships to both  
Australian and US Universities)



## Using this Guide

This guide provides general information on the pathway for young athletes in Australian basketball, with a particular focus options to combine playing basketball with studying at university.

The importance of developing skills for a career outside of basketball cannot be overstated, as the life of any professional athlete is relatively short. Few athletes, in any sport, make enough money purely from playing to last the rest of their life.

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- The various athletes who have provided case studies

The section on scholarships that are available in the USA has been prepared from the most up to date information available to Basketball Australia at the time of preparing the guide. However, the rules and regulations that apply to college sports are complex and you should not rely upon the information in this guide being comprehensive nor up to date.

This guide may be reproduced, copied and distributed for the purposes of providing information to young athletes, coaches and parents, however should not be relied upon. Each athlete should seek independent advice.

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## Can you have a career in basketball?

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Basketball is one of the most popular games in the world and is played in 213 countries, with some of the most recognizable athletes in the world. Lauren Jackson is arguably the best female player in the world, although fellow Australian Penny Taylor was the MVP at the 2006 World Championships. Both make their living as basketball athletes. As does Andrew Bogut, Nathan Jawai (both playing in the NBA) and a number of other players playing in the WNBA or Europe.

Within Australia, NBL players are full time athletes, although any player earning the minimum salary (\$32,000 per season) may need other income. The average salary in the league is approximately \$74,000 per season, however, the average career spans approximately 5 seasons, so players need another business or job once they have finished playing. In the WNBL, the average player payment is \$5,000 – \$10,000 and only a small number of players in the league are full time basketballers. The WNBL though has been the springboard for a number of players to play professionally overseas.

Currently, there are a number of Australian players who play professionally overseas, including:

Andrew Bogut (NBA)	Lauren Jackson (WNBA & Europe)
Nathan Jawai (NBA)	Penny Taylor (WNBA & Europe)
Matt Nielsen (Europe)	Erin Phillips (WNBA)
David Anderson (Europe/NBA)	Kristi Harrower (WNBA & Europe)
Brad Newley (Europe)	Belinda Snell (WNBA & Europe)

Of these athletes, only Andrew Bogut did not play in the NBL/WNBL before going overseas, and he had come to international attention playing for the Australian U19 team that won the world championship in 2003 and then went onto play for the Boomers at the Athens Olympics.

In summary:

Can you have a career as a basketball athlete?	<b>Yes</b>
Will you need another full time job at some stage?	<b>Most players do</b>
Can basketball help me get an education?	<b>Yes</b>
Can a basketball career help you in another career?	<b>Definitely</b>

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## Part 1 – The Australian Basketball Pathway

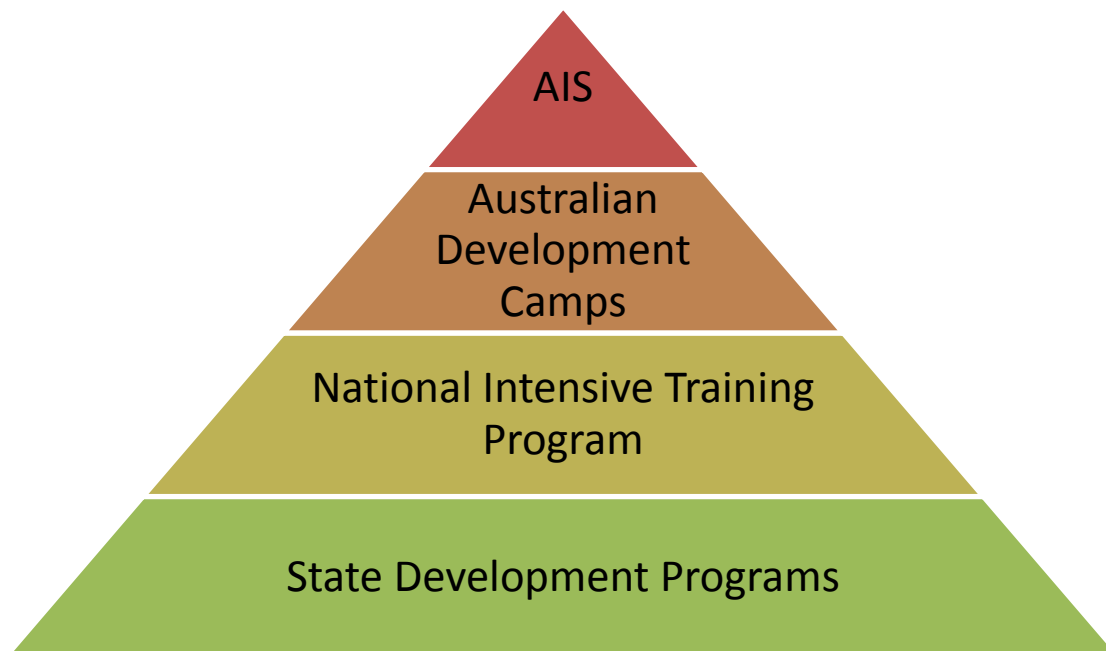
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Basketball is one of the largest international sports, played in 213 countries and is literally watched by millions of people throughout the world. It is an Olympic and Paralympic (for wheelchair basketball) sport and is also included in the World University Games.

Australia is currently ranked as the 2<sup>nd</sup> nation in the world and is the only nation to have all national teams (and there are currently 13 national teams) ranked in the top 8 in the world at the one time. Australia has won world championships at U19 (Men and Women), U21 (Men and Women), World University Games (Women), Senior (Women), Paralympics (Men) and for athletes with intellectual disabilities (Women).

This success is a phenomenal feat from a country with a relatively small population and is testament to the strength of the development programs and pathway in Australia. This pathway includes the ability to play in a range of competitions, which is not necessarily available in other countries.

The core elements of the development pathway are:





### Pathways for athletes with disabilities

Since 1995, Basketball Australia has conducted the Ivor Burge championship for athletes with an intellectual disability and from here the national teams were selected. In 2008, Basketball Australia conducted the Kevin Coombes Cup, for wheelchair athletes, that complements the junior championships conducted by Wheelchair Sports Australia and the two wheelchair national leagues.

Basketball Australia is working closely with a range of stakeholders to strengthen the development pathways for athletes with disabilities. Further information can be obtained from Basketball Australia's website ([www.basketball.net.au](http://www.basketball.net.au)).

### Competition Opportunities

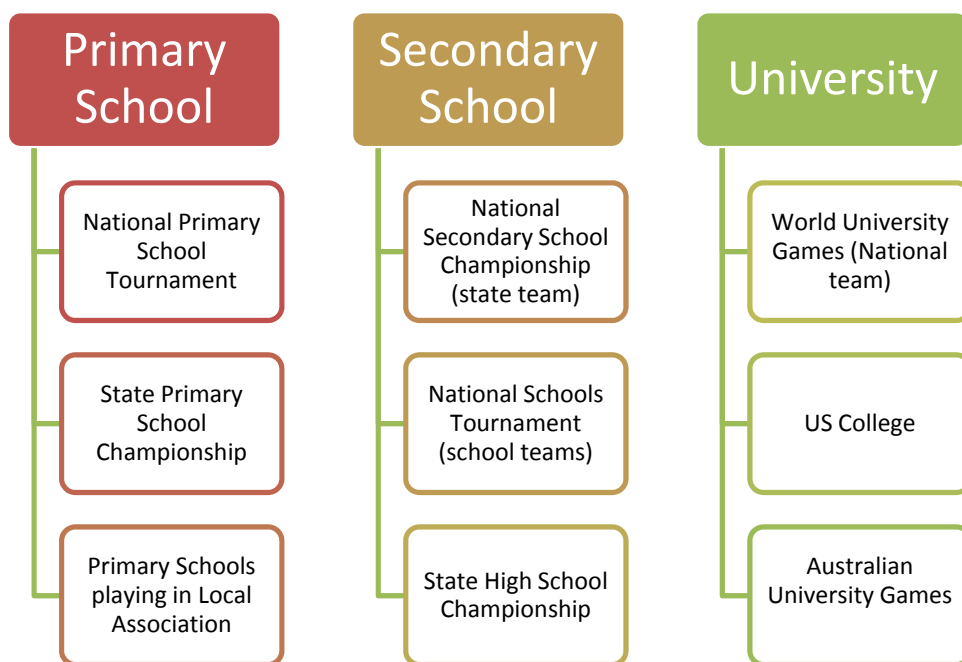
The international nature of the sport, and Australia's strong reputation internationally, means that there are many opportunities to play both in Australia and overseas. No step on the pathway is essential to making the next step and, for example, Andrew Bogut did not represent Victoria at either U16 or U18 level. However, Lauren Jackson did represent NSW at both U16 and U18! The pathway provides opportunities from association to international level.



## Making Your Career In Basketball

Australian athletes also have a number of opportunities to combine their passion for playing basketball with studying, from primary school level through to university – both in Australia and overseas.

For student athletes playing at college or university, there is also the opportunity to represent Australia at the World University Games, which is one of the premier events on the international basketball schedule.



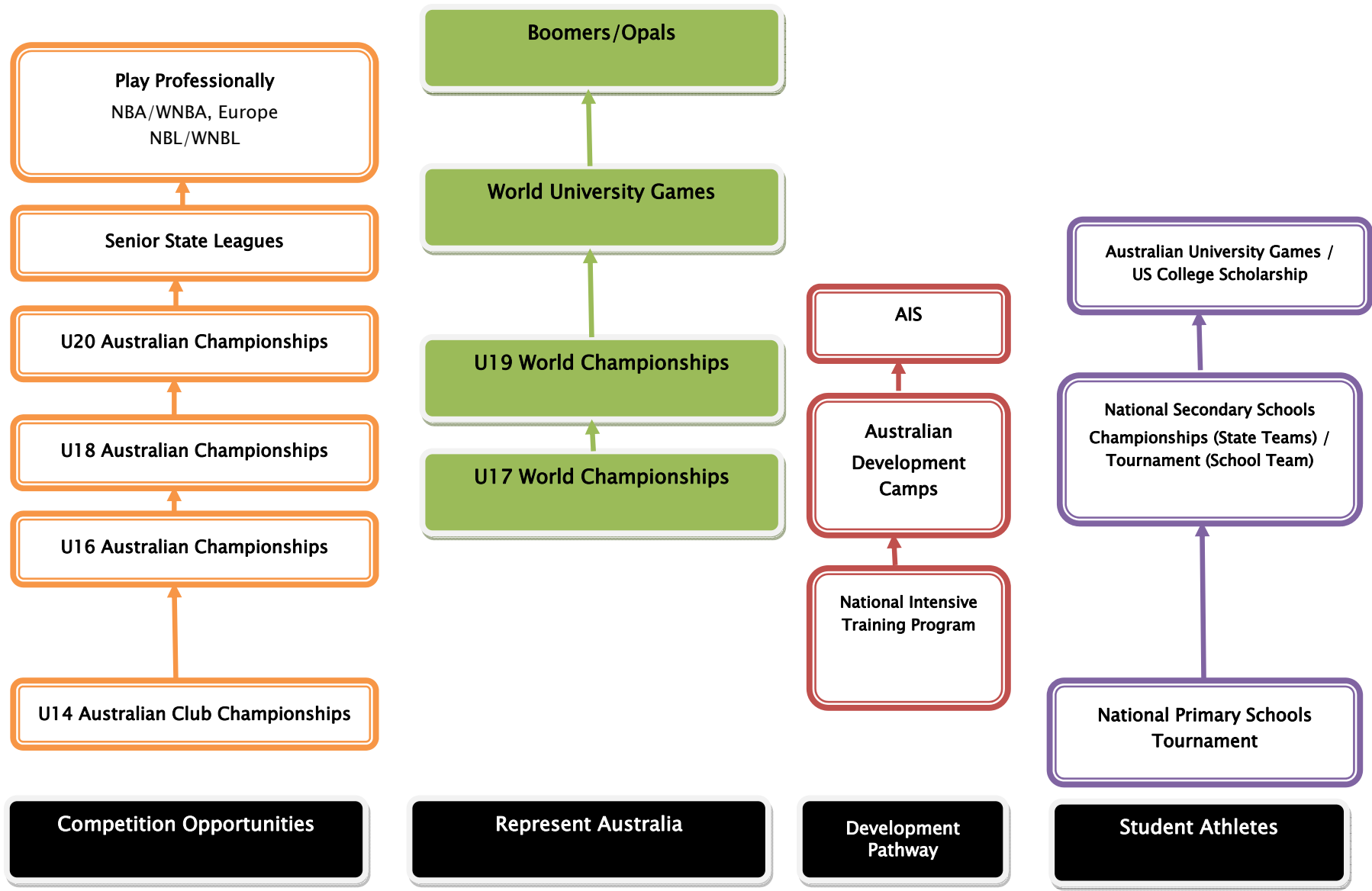
If that is not enough, Basketball Australia currently has thirteen national teams and has won ten gold medals at World Championship or Olympic/Paralympic level and twenty six bronze or silver medals.

### Pathway for Coaches and Officials

Australia's coaches and officials are highly regarded throughout the world and although there is limited opportunity to coach or referee as a full time job, the pathway to international representation is just as rewarding. More information can be found on the BA website ([www.basketball.net.au](http://www.basketball.net.au)).

# Making Your Career In Basketball

# The Pathway to the Boomers/Opals



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## Part 2 – Studying in Australia and Playing Basketball

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It can be hard when you are a teenager to either know what you want to do with the rest of your life, or how to go about! No doubt you are passionate about your basketball and hope that basketball can be a big part of what you do in the future.

Here we try to answer some of the common questions:

### Australian University Scholarships

Whilst the option of pursuing a basketball scholarship at a US College is well known in Australia, the option to play basketball and to study in Australia are perhaps less well known, but can be just as attractive.

The best known university basketball program may be the Sydney University Flames, which compete in the WNBL, however many Australian universities provide support to elite student athletes to help them gain an education whilst pursuing their chosen sport.

Whilst some universities have specific basketball programs, a number of universities across Australia offer sport scholarships for student-athletes and most are members of the *Elite Athlete Friendly Universities Network*, which is an initiative of the Australian Sports Commission's National Athlete and Coach Education program.

Unlike the US College system, there is no restriction on the scholarship benefits that an Australian university provides. Different universities have different scholarships available, and you should contact the particular universities that you are interested in.

Benefits that may be provided include:

- Financial assistance toward cost of tuition, accommodation or costs (text books etc);
- Academic assistance or tutoring;
- Including additional UAI points in determining acceptance into courses;
- Provision of a flexible environment throughout the student's studies with a range of support services including accommodation, time management and flexibility in the completion of assessment tasks.
- Some universities also reserve places in courses for scholarship holders.

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### *What is the Elite Athlete Friendly Universities network?*

The *Elite Athlete Friendly University* network was established by the Australian Sports Commission as a network of universities that adopt common principles to support Australia's elite athletes achieve academic excellence while pursuing their sport to the highest level.

Under these principles, the universities are committed to providing:

#### 1. Nominated Staff Contact

Each university has a specific contact person, to support elite athletes within the university.

The position provides the following support:

- Advice and guidance on academic planning;
- Support in negotiating necessary flexibility meeting academic requirements and in implementing cross institutional study or credit transfer (recognition by one university of study at another university).

#### 2. Flexible Study Options

Student athletes must display the same competencies as any other student in order to pass units, and this is not compromised simply because the student is a talented athlete. However, the universities acknowledge that assistance may be needed, such as:

- Varying assessment deadlines based on sporting related travel;
- Allowing students to sit exams externally (eg while travelling with sport);
- Waive requirements for minimum attendance at lectures, tutorials and practical sessions, where sporting commitments make attendance difficult;
- Tailoring academic study load to integrate with sporting commitments (in each year of study) and negotiate timetables to accommodate sporting commitments;
- Extending the minimum time to complete courses and allow several leaves of absence;
- Providing summer study alternatives and/or ability to swap between distance education and "on campus" depending upon sporting commitments;
- Providing distance education materials and/or class notes for missed lectures.

### *Who are "elite athletes" and which are the Elite Athlete Friendly Universities?*

For a basketball athlete to access services of an Elite Athlete Friendly University they must be a national senior squad member or on scholarship with the AIS or a state institute or academy of sport. **However**, many universities have scholarships or provide similar service to other athletes. For example, Sydney University is not a member of the network, but provides all of these benefits.

Further information can be obtained from each university.

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The participating universities are:

ACT	SA	Qld	NT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian National University</li> <li>• University of Canberra</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Adelaide</li> <li>• University of SA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qld University of Technology</li> <li>• University of Qld</li> <li>• University of Southern Qld</li> <li>• Central Queensland University</li> <li>• Bond University</li> <li>• Griffith University</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charles Sturt University</li> </ul>
VIC	NSW	WA	TAS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian Catholic University</li> <li>• Latrobe University</li> <li>• Monash University</li> <li>• Victoria University</li> <li>• RMIT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Macquarie University</li> <li>• Charles Darwin University</li> <li>• Southern Cross Uni</li> <li>• University of New England</li> <li>• University of Technology Sydney</li> <li>• University of Western Sydney</li> <li>• University of Newcastle</li> <li>• University of NSW</li> <li>• University of Wollongong</li> <li>• University of the Sunshine Coast</li> <li>• Australian College of Physical Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curtin University</li> <li>• Edith Cowan University</li> <li>• Murdoch University</li> <li>• University of WA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Tasmania</li> </ul>

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*Will my basketball improve in an Australian University's program?*

Basketball programs at Australian universities are generally not intensive training environments (Sydney University Flames is an obvious exception), although through the university you may be able to access strength and conditioning facilities and coaching. In most situations your basketball development will come from involvement in other programs.

However, the university can support your basketball commitments, making it easier for you to balance studying and playing. You may also be able to access court facilities, meaning that you can get some practice in when it suits your study timetable, without having to travel to your association court.

*Are the Australian University Games an important event?*

The Australian University Games are played annually and are a week long multi-sport event. In 2007, the competition was divided into two divisions. The first division has 8 teams and there is provision for relegation to second division for the bottom team.

There are many players at the Australian University Games with national league or ABA experience, although the standard of play is probably below the u20 National Championships.

*Do I have to play at the Australian University Games to be selected for the World University Games?*

The World University Games (played every two years) is a significant event and is the third highest tournament in world basketball (behind Olympics and Senior World Championships). Australia has a proud history at the World University Games, with the womens team winning bronze medals in 2005 and 2009 and a gold medal in 2007

Due to the high number of Australian athletes studying at US Colleges (who are also eligible for selection to the Australian team), you do not have to play at the Australian University Games to be selected in the Australian team.

## Part 3 – Studying in the USA and Playing Basketball

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### US College Scholarships

College sport in the USA is very serious business! It is the main pathway for American athletes in many sports. College basketball programs offer an intensive training environment and play from November to March.

Many US colleges are interested in recruiting Australian athletes and there are usually a number of scouts at each national junior championship. There are many reasons why an athlete may accept a scholarship to the US, such as:

- To get a good education;
- To play and train in an intense environment;
- To have a great “life experience”;
- It is an opportunity to live and travel in another country.

Certainly, studying and playing basketball in a US college or university can be a rewarding experience, however there are a number of Australians who have come back home after only one year. It is important that you make an informed decision about studying in the USA.

#### *Are US courses recognized in Australia?*

Many courses and qualifications from the US are recognized in Australia but it is best to check in Australia whether or not the particular course you are considering will be recognized. Further information about what recognition is given to qualifications from the US is available at <http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/QualificationsRecognition/Default.htm>.

Individual subjects that you study in the US may count towards a degree at an Australian university, but this depends upon the individual subjects and the universities (both in Australia and the USA).

#### *Where can I get general information about US Colleges?*

There are over 3,000 accredited post secondary education institutions in the US. The term “College” is a generic term to describe all of them, but there are several categories:

Community Colleges: award associated degrees at the completion of two years of full time study;

Colleges: award a bachelor’s degree at the completion of four years of full time study;

Liberal Arts Colleges: typically privately controlled and offer studies in humanities, social sciences, maths and natural sciences, rather than technical or professional subjects;



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Universities: generally offer a broad range of both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. There are both public and private and there is no distinction in quality between the two. Private institutions usually charge higher tuition fees.

For more information on the US higher education system see [www.EducationUSA.state.gov](http://www.EducationUSA.state.gov).

There are EducationUSA advisers at the US Embassy in Canberra and the US consulates in Sydney, Perth and Melbourne. These advisers have expertise in all aspects of US education, and have SAT and ACT examination information (including test preparation books for sale) and large reference libraries.

The advisers have extensive knowledge of American colleges and universities and can help you to understand the admissions process, the visa process, the NCAA clearinghouse process etc. For adviser contact details, and lots of useful information about studying in the US, see <http://usembassy-australia.state.gov>.

### *How long is a US College course?*

A Bachelor Degree course requires 4 years of study in the USA. The first 2 years of study are general years and the remaining two years focus on your major area of study. In Australia, many Bachelor degrees can be obtained in 3 years.

US Junior (or Community) Colleges provide only the first two years of college education, after which you will need to transfer to a "4 year school" to complete your degree. You may also be able to transfer your studies to an Australian university. More information about Community Colleges can be found at [www.aacc.nche.edu](http://www.aacc.nche.edu).

### *How can I find out which US colleges have a basketball program?*

You can find information using the "Find a College" search engine at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) or [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com). These search engines allow you to enter a number of variables that you might be interested in, such as:

- 2 or 4 year colleges;
- Sports
- Athletics scholarships;
- Areas of study

A list of schools will be created based on the variables you enter. From this list you can go directly to the website of each of the institutions on the list.

You can also use reference books and materials at the EducationUSA centres in Canberra, Perth, Sydney and Melbourne (<http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/education>). You can get lists of schools and the

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sports offered on [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org), [www.njcaa.org](http://www.njcaa.org) or [www.naia.org](http://www.naia.org). Each of these websites lists the schools that are involved in their competitions. The lists allow you to go directly to the athletics information of each school.

### *What is the difference between NCAA, NAIA and NJCAA*

There are 3 different bodies involved in the organization of College sport and each has its own set of rules and regulations:

- NCAA;
- NAIA;
- NJCAA.

### National College Athletic Association (“NCAA”) ([www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org))

The NCAA governs “4 year” college and university members’ sporting programs.

This is the premier college competition in the USA, with millions of people watching the finals competition, universally known as “March Madness”. There are three NCAA divisions – Division I being the most prestigious. Both Division I and Division II schools can offer athletic scholarships, however Division III cannot offer athletic scholarships. Division III schools can, however, offer other forms of financial assistance.

The emphasis of the NCAA is very much on student-athletes – being a student comes first! They have strict criteria regarding academic eligibility and also have criteria for academic progress while you are studying. Individual schools often have additional or more rigorous requirements (eg they may require you to achieve more than the “minimum” score accepted by the NCAA).

Some of most prestigious colleges in the USA participate in the NCAA, such as Stanford, Harvard, Duke and UCLA, and whilst an athletic scholarship can assist with the cost of attending the school, a student-athlete must first meet the academic requirements of the college.

An athlete interested in studying and playing in an NCAA Division I or II college must register with the NCAA Clearing House.

### National Junior College Athletic Association (“NJCAA”) – [www.njcaa.org](http://www.njcaa.org)

Junior or Community Colleges offer 2 year courses and their competition is governed by the NJCAA. NJCAA Colleges compete in one of three divisions, and each division has regulations about what scholarships they can offer:

Div I – may offer full athletic scholarships

## Making Your Career In Basketball

Div II – limited to awarding tuition, fees and books

Div III – cannot provide athletically related financial assistance

There are 510 institutions that are members with the NJCAA and the website has a search function that allows you to find a college.

If you enter as a student-athlete you must stay at the school for two years. After transferring you may be eligible to play two more years at a 4 year institution. If you enter an NJCAA school as an academic student (ie not on an athletic scholarship) you can transfer after 1 year, which means you can have 3 years left of NCAA eligibility.

### National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (“NAIA”) – [www.naia.org](http://www.naia.org)

Approximately 300 colleges compete in NAIA competition, which has fewer recruiting restrictions and an easier application process. NAIA schools are “4 year” schools and there are two divisions. More than 90% of NAIA colleges offer athletic scholarships.

The NAIA website lists each of the colleges that compete in the competition.

### *How long can I play NCAA Division I College basketball?*

Each student athlete can play up to four seasons of competition in a sport and generally this must be completed within five years.

### What is a “Redshirt” Year

The term “redshirt” is used to describe a student-athlete that does not participate in competition in a sport for an entire academic year. This year is then not counted as a season of competition. So, for example, if you “redshirt” your first year at university, you still have four years of eligibility.

A “redshirt” can practice with a team but cannot play against outside competition. This is a common practice where a player suffers a serious injury. Even if you only play one game it will be counted as a complete season.

### Transferring Universities

If you transfer from an Australian institution or a US 4 year school to another school in the US, this can reduce the number of years you can play. The general rule for a transferring student is that they must spend one academic year at the new school **before** they are eligible to play. Effectively this means that transferring students often miss a year of competition. More information can be found at [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org).

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If you transfer from a 2 year school after completing a course at a “2 year” US school you may not have to sit out a year, provided that you successfully complete a full time study load prior to transferring. This requirement is usually not a factor for Australian students because to be in the USA on a student visa you must have full time student status.

If you transfer from a “2 year” school after your first year, whether or not you have to miss a year will also depend upon if you were on a scholarship. If you were on an athletic scholarship at the 2 year school, you will have to miss a year before playing at your new school. However, if you were on an academic scholarship (or not on scholarship at all) then you can usually play immediately.

If you studied part time in Australia before going to the US this does not affect how long you are eligible to play. However, if the subjects you studied in Australia are recognized in your US studies this may mean you finish in less than 4 years and often you can't play once you've finished.

### Losing my Amateur Status

College sport is strictly amateur and the NCAA has very specific rules about what is an amateur athlete. Simply put, any athlete that plays in a professional team jeopardizes their eligibility in relation to the NCAA – even if that player is not a professional. You can get complete information from the NCAA website ([www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)).

The NCAA defines a professional team as “a team that declares itself as professional or one where **any** player is paid more than actual and necessary expenses for participation on the team.”

Actual and necessary expenses are limited to:

- Meals and lodging directly tied to competition and practice held in preparation for competition;
- Apparel, equipment and supplies;
- Coaching and instruction;
- Health/medical insurance;
- Transportation (ie expenses to and from practice or competition);
- Medical treatment and physical therapy;
- Facility usage;
- Entry Fees
- Other reasonable expenses incidental to participation.

Whilst the last category seems broad, it is closely monitored by the NCAA. You should not assume what would be allowed under this and should seek further information.

What's the situation with Australian teams?

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The NBL and each individual NBL team is a professional team. Any athlete who plays in an NBL team, or signs a contract with an NBL team, is ineligible for participation in NCAA competition. You could train with a team, but not if you have signed an agreement, including a Development Player agreement.

The WNBL and each WNBL team is professional if **ANY** athlete on the individual WNBL team receives a salary or payment. Once a player signs a WNBL player agreement, if that team is a “professional team”, the player’s eligibility to play NCAA is affected. You can train with a team and could play pre-season or practice games, provided that you have not signed an agreement.

Teams in the various senior state leagues and SEABL are classified individually because the leagues themselves are not professional. If a team has an import player, who is on a sports visa, that team would be classified as professional. However, there are a number of visa classes that allow a non-Australian to play in a senior state league or SEABL (for example a number of Americans are in Australia for work and want to play basketball).

If any player on the team receives payment for playing, which is more than their “reasonable and necessary expenses” the team will be regarded as professional.

The NCAA does not regard the AIS programs as professional, and playing with the AIS does not affect eligibility.

If you are considering going to College, you may hear stories of players who played in ABA with “professional” teams but who did not have any problem with NCAA eligibility. Such players should be considered lucky. The NCAA is very strict in the application of its rules and you should expect that playing on a team which they deem professional will affect your eligibility.

As a general rule, any player that has an agreement (written or oral) with an agent for the purpose of marketing the athlete’s athletics ability or reputation in the sport is not eligible to play in NCAA Division I.

*Can I play Senior State League (or “ABA”) once I’ve started college?*

The NCAA prohibits student-athletes at Division I schools from playing in the off-season unless it is with national teams or in a sanctioned league. Senior State Leagues (including SEABL) are **NOT** sanctioned leagues. Therefore, any Division I player cannot play a senior state league until they finish College. Even though, they may have played in a non-professional league team before going to College.

Division II and III players can play in a senior state league during the summer holidays, provided that:

- They have approval from their College Athletic Director/Coach;

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- No one on the team is receiving payment or has a contract;
- The student-athlete does not sign a contract and does not receive money to play.

NJCAA (Junior College) players are eligible to play ABA, provided they have permission from their College.

### *Differences in eligibility for NCAA Division II or III*

The biggest difference with eligibility for Division II or III is that you can have played on a professional team, provided that you weren't professional. This means that you must not have been paid anything more than necessary and actual expenses. You also must not have signed a contract to play with the team, as any player signing a contract with a professional team is regarded as professional.

If you tried to transfer to a Division I team and had played on a professional team, you would not be eligible.

Division II and III also have a "seasons of competition rule", which means that if you play in a professional competition prior to your initial full time enrolment in College (if, for example, you had a "gap year" and played ABA) you will lose one season of competition for every year you played before going to college and you must be at the college for a year before you can play (ie you lose 2 years of playing eligibility). This is similar to when you transfer between schools.

This "seasons of competition rule" can also apply if you train with a professional team.

### *What scholarships can be offered?*

US Colleges may offer a range of scholarships, which include athletic scholarships, academic scholarships and scholarships based upon financial hardship. The NCAA restricts what benefits can be offered as part of a scholarship (for a student athlete) and a Division III NCAA school cannot offer athletic scholarships at all.

### Athletic Scholarships

The costs that can be covered by an athletic scholarship are:

- Tuition fees;
- Books;
- Meals;
- Accommodation.

A College may offer a full or partial scholarship and you should give detail from any College about exactly what they are providing.

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The following costs are **not** covered by an athletic scholarship:

- Travel from home to college and return (international and domestic flights);
- Insurance (travel and/or health);
- Application for admission;
- Application for accommodation;
- Personal expenses such as laundry, telephone calls;
- Entertainment costs such as movies, restaurants, holiday travel;
- Passport and visa fees.

Occasionally US colleges can also pay for you to make one “official” visit to the university, while they are recruiting you, and this may include an airfare from Australia to the USA. An athlete can only go on five official visits (paid for by colleges), however they can go on as many unofficial visits (self funded) as they wish. If possible, it is a good idea to visit the institution before making a commitment.

### Other Scholarships

Most universities in the US and Australia also have other scholarships available. Often these are based on academic merit or financial hardship. Some universities have scholarships specifically for foreign students, for which an Australian may be eligible.

It is definitely worthwhile asking a college whether there are other forms of financial assistance available. A student athlete may be eligible to receive a half athletic scholarship and additional assistance in the form of an academic scholarship. Most of these other scholarships are probably awarded to US students, but it is always worth asking!

Australian universities also have a range of scholarships.

### *Do I need a clearance to play in a US College?*

All athletes who accept a scholarship or enroll in a US College or US High School and intends to play basketball whilst at the school, must complete a *Basketball Australia Education Release Form*. This will ensure that Basketball Australia is aware of where you are playing and can advise national league clubs who are looking for players.

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### Academic Eligibility Requirements

#### *The NCAA Eligibility Centre*

The NCAA has strict academic requirements for every student athlete. The NCAA Eligibility Centre (often referred to as the “NCAA Clearinghouse”) is responsible for certifying that a prospective student athlete meets those academic requirements. You cannot practice or compete with a Division I or Division II school until you have been certified by the Eligibility Centre. Most schools will not offer scholarships until you have been certified.

The Eligibility Centre does not assist you to find a school – it simply provides the certification information to any school that requests it.

#### *When can I register with the NCAA Eligibility Centre?*

You can register anytime after you have complete Year 11. There is no specific deadline, however until you have been certified you cannot practice/play.

#### *How do I register?*

Australian students need to complete the *International Student Release Form*, which is available from the NCAA website ([www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)). You can submit your registration online or by mail, and if you are under the age of 18 it needs to be signed by a parent.

There is a non-refundable registration fee (currently US\$75) which you must pay.

#### *What are the eligibility requirements*

Generally, to be eligible to play at NCAA you must:

- Graduate from High School;
- Successfully complete a specified “core courses”;
- Earn a minimum grade point average (GPA) in the specified core courses
- Achieve a minimum score on either the Scholastic Aptitude Test (“SATs”) or American College Test (“ACTs”).

Further detail on each of these is given below.

### Supporting Documents

You will need to provide the following documentation to support your application:

- Certified copies of your Yr 9 – Yr 12 Academic record (including exact English translation if necessary);
- Year 12 certificate (as proof of graduation and final semester grades);



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- Scores on either the SAT or ACT – this can be done automatically when you undertake the test by nominating the Eligibility Centre on the form (code = 9999).

A particular college may also require:

- Letters of recommendation;
- Application essays (up to 3).

### Graduating with your High School Class

The NCAA requires that you graduate from high school after complete Years 9 – 12 in 8 semesters (4 years). Provided that you do this, you can include one core course complete after graduation (eg in “summer school”).

### What are the core course requirements for Division I?

Your eligibility depends upon the subjects that you studied from Years 9 – 12, which is different to Australian universities that only consider your High School graduation marks.

The 16 core courses that are required for Division I colleges are:

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of Math
- 2 years of Natural or Physical Science
- 2 years of Social Science
- 1 extra year of English, Math or Science
- 4 years of additional core courses (from any of the categories above, or a foreign language, philosophy or non-denominational religion).

### What are the core course requirements for Division II?

Up until (and including) 2012, if you are considering Division II colleges you only need to complete 14 core courses. This requires:

- 3 years of English
- 2 years of Math
- 2 years of Natural or Physical Science
- 2 years of Social Science
- 2 additional years of English, Math or Science
- 3 years of additional core courses (from any of the categories above, or a foreign language, philosophy or non-denominational religion).

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From 2013, you must complete 16 core courses for Division II, although there is a little more flexibility about what those courses are:

- 3 years of English
- 2 years of Math
- 2 years of Science
- 2 years of Social Science
- 3 extra years of English, Math or Science
- 4 years of additional core courses (from any of the categories above, or a foreign language, philosophy or non-denominational religion).

### What are accepted Social Science courses?

“Social Sciences” is not necessarily given the same meaning as in Australia. For NCAA purposes it includes, psychology, sociology, history, government, geography, international relations, economics and legal studies.

### Are all Australian subjects approved as NCAA Core Courses?

The simple answer is **NO**.

Core courses must be “Tertiary Entry” subjects (eg OP courses in Qld, ENTER courses in Victoria). And not all courses that meet high school/year 12 graduation requirements in Australia, are recognized as core courses in the USA.

For example, the following courses are **not** considered as core courses:

- Information Technology (IT) - unless taught in math department;
- Business;
- Performing & Visual Arts;
- Technology classes of any kind (eg Wood, Metal);
- Physical Education of any kind (eg Human Movement, PD/H/PE);
- Home Economics;
- ESL

### How is my Grade Point Average calculated?

For international students, your “Grade Point Average” is calculated on the NCAA approved core courses that you have studied in Years 11 & 12. You must achieve an average grade of 2.000 or higher to be eligible. A particular school may require you to have a higher GPA to be eligible for that school.

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Grade points are allocated:

- A (4points)
- B (3 points)
- C (2 points)
- D (1 point)

You will need certified copies of your Years 9 – 12 school reports and your Year 12 Graduation Certificate. For each year you need to get a grade summary sheet printed by your school that lists your school, Terms/Semesters, subjects and grades. This must be on an A4 page, with high school letterhead and signed and dated by the school Principal. Many schools do not provide results in this format and you will need to explain how and why you need it.

Many Australian schools do not use a grade assessment system and instead your report lists competencies and “ticks” or “crosses” depending on whether you have achieved it. You will need to ask the Principal or Curriculum Coordinator to change these “ticks” to letter grades for each subject.

### Scholastic Aptitude Tests (“SATs”)

There are two tests within the SATs – the SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Tests. The reasoning test is a measure of your critical thinking skills and analyses how well you analyse and solve problems. There are three sections to complete in the SAT and each section is scored on a scale of 200 – 800, so your final score ranges from 600 – 2,400.

The SAT includes Critical Reading, Math and Writing sections, although only some USA colleges use the writing section as a college entry requirement and the Eligibility Centre does not take writing test scores into consideration.

The duration of the SAT is 3 hours and 45 minutes and you can sit it as many times as you wish. The test is available in many Australian cities up to 6 times a year and you can register online. There is a registration cost each time you take the test. It is advisable to go through practice SAT exams and to then take the exam before you graduate from high school. Your SAT score is valid for 5 years.

You need to have your scores sent directly to the NCAA Clearinghouse by writing in code 9999 at item 11.

The SAT reasoning test is the most common admission test and is similar to the Queensland Core Skills Test (QCST). SAT subject tests and would only be taken if you are trying to display knowledge in a particular area or an institution you were interested in required it. The subject tests are designed to

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measure knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge in specific subject areas. You can sit the SAT reasoning test or up to three SAT subject tests on any given test day.

Further information can be obtained from [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

It is preferable that you pre-register to sit a test however you can take the test on a “stand by” basis. There is an additional fee if you do this.

### American College Test (ACT)

The ACT is a national college admission examination that consists of four sections: English, Maths, Reading and Science. There is an additional writing section which some universities require for eligibility.

The test includes 215 multiple choice questions and takes approximately 3½ hours to complete. The questions are directly related to what you have learnt in your high school courses in English, Maths and Science.

As with the SATs, you can sit the ACT as many times as you want but each time will have to pay the registration cost. You cannot sit the ACT on a stand by basis and must register beforehand.

You have your scores sent directly to the NCAA Clearinghouse by writing in code 9999 on the form. For more information on the ACT, go to [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).

### Which test should I do?

Whichever test you do it is *highly recommended* that you take the test while you are studying as much of the knowledge you learn in high school goes quickly once you finish!

Test scores are valid for 5 years however a particular institution may require that you have a score that was obtained within the last two years.

The ACT test is probably the best to do if you have a good science knowledge and it is best to do some practice for the test. Practice papers are available through Education USA.

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Below is a table comparing the two tests.

SAT ( <a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">www.collegeboard.com</a> )	ACT ( <a href="http://www.actstudent.org">www.actstudent.org</a> )
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aptitude test – testing reasoning and verbal abilities</li> <li>• Includes Critical Reading, Math and Writing</li> <li>• Maths makes up approximately 50% of SAT score</li> <li>• Duration is 3 hours and 45 minutes</li> <li>• Marks are taken off for wrong answers</li>   <li>• Cost is approximately US\$68</li> <li>• Can sit the SAT as many times as you like</li> <li>• Stand by testing is available</li> <li>• You need to have your scores sent directly to the Eligibility Centre (9999) and the institutions to which you are applying (up to 4 can be nominated)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement test – measuring what you have learnt in school</li> <li>• Includes English, Maths and Science</li> <li>• Maths makes up 33% of ACT score</li> <li>• Duration is 3½ hours</li> <li>• Score is based on number of correct answers (no deduction for wrong answers)</li> <li>• Cost is approximately US\$52</li> <li>• Can sit test as many times as you like</li> <li>• Stand by testing not available</li> <li>• You need to have your scores sent directly to the Eligibility Centre (9999) and the institutions to which you are applying</li> </ul>

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### What score do I need on the SAT or ACT?

For admission to a Div II college you need an SAT score of at least 820 or an ACT score of 68.

For admission to a Div I college, the score you need depends upon your Grade Point Average. For example:

Core Subject Grade Point Average	SAT (sum score)	ACT (sum score)
3.550	400	37
3.000	620	52
2.750	720	59
2.500	820	68
2.250	920	77
2.000	1010	86

### *How do I apply for admission to US College?*

You must first register with the Eligibility Centre.

You then need to apply separately to each college that you are considering attending (and perhaps they are chasing you!). Applications may be due as early as November/December in the year prior to going.

Once you have accepted the college, and have been certified as eligible by the Eligibility Centre, you need to obtain a visa that enables you to study. The relevant visa is an F Visa, and your college will send you the necessary form (I-20, I-20M or DS-2019). The form must be issued by the college.

### Applying for the Visa

You will require a student visa to be able to study in the US. You can get a visa up to 120 days before you arrive in the US and part of the process for getting a visa is that you will need to have an appointment at a US consulate. It can take up to six weeks to get an appointment, so don't leave it until the last minute! You can apply for the visa earlier than 120 days before you arrive in the states.

Full details on how to apply for the visa can be found at

<http://canberra.usembassy.gov/consular/niv.html>.

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The requirements do change quite often so the website is the best place to make sure you have up to date information. It is also worthwhile to get a copy of *Know Before You Go: Pre-Departure*, which is a guide produced by the US Embassy. You can obtain that from the Canberra USA Embassy Education Adviser.

The general process is:

### Step 1 – Complete I-20 Form

Once you have accepted an offer from your chosen college, you need them to send you an I-20 form. This form:

- Is prepared by your college;
- State that you have a student-athlete scholarship;
- States the amount that the college is paying for your scholarship;
- States the date that you must arrive at college.

You **cannot** get a student visa without an I-20.

### Step 2 – SEVIS Fee

Once you have your I-20 you need to pay a SEVIS fee (Student Exchange Visitor Information System) and apply for your visa. You need the information on the I-20 to complete the SEVIS process.

The SEVIS fee (approximately US\$100) must be paid either online ([www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com)) or at Australia Post. If paying at Australia Post you need to download a form at [www.ice.gov/sevis/i901](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901) and take it with you when you pay.

Sometimes that institution that has offered you a scholarship will pay the SEVIS fee for you. Before you pay the fee, check to see if they have already paid it. If they have, you will need them to provide you with a receipt.

### Step 3 – General Visa Information

Detailed information on Student Visas can be found at

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types\\_1268.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html) or

<http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/consular/visastudy.html>.

You should read this information **VERY** carefully before doing anything else.

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A list of the US Consulates that can issue visas can be found at <http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/consular>.

### Step 4 – Visa Appointment

First time student visa applicants are required to go to a US Consulate for an interview before the visa will be issued. June, July and August are the busiest months so it will take a month or more to get your appointment.

You make appointments online at <http://aus.us-visaservices.com/Forms/Default.aspx>. The first step is to purchase a Visa Info Service Pin Number (approximately AUD\$14). Once you have a PIN, you can access the website to schedule an appointment.

### Step 5 – Non-Immigrant Application Form

Once you have an appointment scheduled you need to complete a Non-Immigrant Application Form (Form DS-156) which can be downloaded at <http://evisaforms.state.gov/ds156.asp>. There is a visa application fee of approximately AUD\$150, which you can pay at any Australia Post office.

You need to take the DS-156 form to the post office and then take both the form and your receipt to the appointment at the US Consulate.

A male applicant must also complete the Supplemental Application Form (Form DS-157) that can be downloaded at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/79964.pdf>.

### Step 6 – Visa Interview

You **must** take the following documents with you to the visa interview:

- Form I-20;
- SEVIS Receipt;
- Valid Passport (valid for at least 6 months after your proposed date of entry into the US);
- A passport photo;
- MRV receipt (for payment of visa application fee);
- Non-Immigrant Application Form (DS-156);
- Supplemental Application Form (DS-157) – male applicants only.

You should also be prepared to show the following information at the interview:

- Academic Transcripts;
- SAT / ACT results;
- Financial evidence to show that you (or your parents) have sufficient funds to cover any expenses that are not covered by scholarships or other financial assistance that you are

*everyone's game*



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receiving. Some documents that may prove this are copies of your parents' bank account statements, letter from people you are living with, return airfare etc

### Step 7 – Visa Issuance Fee

If you are granted a student visa you will need to pay a fee of approximately AUD\$126 at the interview. Fees do change from time to time, so before the interview check out the current fees at

<http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/consular/fees/niv.html>.

### Does the Visa allow you to work?

Students may only work in certain situation. For example, on –campus employment provided by the school is generally allowed but cannot exceed twenty hours a week during school term. Students may be allowed to work full time during periods where there are no classes (eg term breaks, summer holidays). However, students are expected to prove they have the financial means (whether from scholarships or other income) to complete full time study without working in the US.

### **What will it cost to go to a US College?**

To obtain a student visa, you must establish that you have the means to complete full time study without working in the US. The visa does allow you to do some work however your study and basketball workload may make that difficult.

An athletic scholarship can cover part or all of the following costs:

- Tuition fees (US\$4,000 – US\$ 15,000);
- Books (US\$2,000);
- Meals (US\$4,000);
- Accommodation (US\$15,000).

It is difficult to accurately assess how much it will cost, but assuming that you have a scholarship that pays for accommodation, tuition and meals, your costs could be:

- Spending money AUD\$80 – AUD\$100 per week
- Airfare (travel to/from Australia) AUD\$2,500+
- Travel & Health Insurance\* US\$850+ for 9 months (Aug – May)
- Visa Application and Issuance Fees US\$360 (each time you change schools)
- Passport Application AUD\$200

\* students must have insurance to be able to study in the US.

There is some useful information on the likely costs of attending college in the US at

[www.collegeboard.com/parents/csearch/know-the-options/21385.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/parents/csearch/know-the-options/21385.html)

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### How does a US College find out about me?

There are a number of different ways that you can get in contact with a US College:

- Identification by Talent Scouts/Coaches;
- College Placement Services;
- US and Australian Scouting Services;
- Making contact with College Coach.

The case studies that are included in *Making Your Career in Basketball – Case Studies*, detail how the various athletes obtained their scholarship. The majority did from them contacting the coach.

#### *Identification by Talent Scouts/Coaches*

A number of US Colleges have coaches or representatives attend Australian Junior Championships to identify potential recruits. During this period it is against NCAA rules for the coaches to contact athletes or their parents, however they may watch games.

The coaches must register with Basketball Australia and Basketball Australia will advise the NCAA of any coach that it believes may be breaching the NCAA rules.

Following the championships they will identify a large number of athletes that are of interest to them and the next step is usually to write to those athletes asking them to indicate if they have any interest in pursuing a scholarship. Colleges that do not attend the championships may “watch” the championships through the statistics that are available on the internet.

A number of Australian school and association teams participate on tours to play in the US. It is unlikely that a college coach would be at these games (unless they were interested in one of the American players), as there are limits on the number of times that a coach can observe a potential recruit play.

College coaches may also contact coaches at the AIS or the Head Coaches in the National Intensive Training Centre Program to seek information about players. They will not give out any information unless you have indicated that you are interested in going to college.

#### *College Placement Services*

There are a number of college placement services that offer to match a potential student-athlete with a college that offers sports scholarships. Remember, that there are 3,000 colleges in the US and these services are likely to place student-athletes with smaller, lower profile, institutions.

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Before using such a service, you should be aware that it is possible to undertake the entire process without their services. Placement services charge a fee. If you are interested in exploring a placement service you can get further information at:

- College Prospects of America: [www.cpoa.com](http://www.cpoa.com)
- College Athletic Placement Service: [www.caps1971.com](http://www.caps1971.com)

### *US and Australian Scouting Services*

Many US Colleges that are interested in Australian athletes do not send coaches to Australia to recruit but instead use scouting services. Some scouts charge the athletes, similar to a College Placement Agency, whilst others charge universities to provide information about prospective athletes.

If you are interested in using such a service you should find out which US Colleges they have relationships with – the list may be quite small and you should make sure that they are universities that you are interested in attending!

The NCAA has very strict conditions about who can act on behalf of an athlete and the services that a scouting service can provide to you are limited. You could do it yourself particularly with assistance from EducationUSA advisers in Australia (see <http://usembassy.state.gov/education> for details).

### *Making contact with College Coach*

You can simply make contact with the College that you are interested in, although this will probably not be successful with the more prominent schools. You should make contact 12–18 months before your intended date of enrolment.

You will need to provide detailed information to the coach of you as a basketball, such as:

- Your performances at tournaments (such as National Junior Championships);
- Teams played for;
- Championships you have participated in;
- Videotape of you playing (coaches generally prefer full games rather than edited highlights);
- Letters of reference from your coach.

If you send them video of you playing, remember to write on the video tape which player you are in each game (eg #13 green). There are differences in format between video in USA and in Australia. A DVD is better as it can be watched on a computer anywhere.

### **What should I find out about the College?**

Studying at a US institution is a life experience – it is living in a different country! And as much as you may have seen of America on TV actually living there is a different thing. Many US Colleges are in towns that revolve around the college itself. Others are in big cities, whilst others are in small country towns. Before you decide to attend the college there are things that you need to find out about the College itself.

Below are the types of information that you should find out about. Most of it you can find on the internet (every US college and university has a website), some you may be able to ask the coaches recruiting you.

#### *General Questions About the College*

- How many students are at the college?
- Is it a State run college or a private institution?
- How many international students are at the college?
- What is the socio-economic mix of students at the college?

#### *About the city where the College is*

- What is the average temperature?
- How far away is the nearest “big” city?
- What are the largest cultural groups in the city?

#### *About Studying at the College*

- Does the college offer a course that I want to study?
- Is the qualification from the college recognized in Australia?
- What academic support programs are available to student-athletes?
- How many credit hours should I take in season and out of season?
- Is summer school available? If I need to take summer school will it be paid for by the college? (It is common because of the demands of training for athletes to have to take some summer school units)
- Are there restrictions in scheduling classes around practice? (NCAA rules prevent you from missing class for practice)

#### *About College Life*

- What is the typical day for a student athlete (how many class hours, how many practice hours)
- How many students share a room in the residence hall? (many of the residence halls are dormitories and you will have a room mate!)

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- Are the halls of residence co-ed (male and female)?
- Do the halls of residence have study rooms?
- Do the halls of residence have shared bathrooms and laundry?
- Do most student-athletes live on campus?

### What questions should I ask a coach that is recruiting me?

Whenever you are talking to a coach that is trying to recruit you, remember that you are not the only athlete that they are speaking with and that their goal is to persuade you to choose their program over any other that you are considering. You may want to consider asking them the following questions:

#### *About playing on the team*

- What positions will I play on your team?
- What other players are on your roster that may be competing for the same position?
- How much playing time do you expect me to have? {Be wary of the coach that “guarantees” you a starting spot}
- Will I be redshirted in my first (ie not play)? {Note: Some colleges do this routinely}
- What expectations do you have for training and conditioning?
- How many athletes graduate from your program? {This will be an indicator of how much emphasis the coach places on studying}
- Does the team use any particular system or pattern or play?
- Can I play in Australia during the College off-season?
- What opportunities are there for me to return to Australia? {Often the breaks for players to go “home” are very short}

#### *About the coach*

- How would you describe your coaching style?
- When does the head coach’s contract end and how long do they intend to stay?
- What is the policy for “walk ons”? {Walk on are students at the university who do not have a sporting scholarship but are selected for the team (often through trials)}
- If I am seriously injured while competing, who is responsible for my medical expenses?
- What happens if I want to transfer to another school? {Note: You cannot transfer without the school’s permission. You may particularly want to ask how often the coach grants a request to transfer and to give an example of when they haven’t}

#### *About the Scholarship*

- What sort of scholarship is being offered – full, partial, sport, academic?
- What does the scholarship include – board, tuition, meals, apparel, shoes, other?

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- Who is responsible for transport between Australia and the USA?
- How do I break the scholarship if I am homesick or unhappy at the College? In particular, is there any commitment to repay the scholarship?
- What academics (SAT/ACT scores and Grade Point Average) do I need to be admitted to the College?
- What Grade Point Average do I need to maintain to stay on scholarship?
- Is the scholarship for four years or is it awarded annually?

### **What do I do if a scout/coach contacts me?**

First, you should feel good that you have been identified as someone that the program might want to recruit. However, that does not mean you have to even consider it! Players like Adam Gibson, Brad Newley and Joe Ingles had no interest in attending a US College and left the AIS to join NBL teams. If you do not wish to go to College then don't feel you have to – simply tell the coach that you are not interested.

It is ok to answer questions and to provide information to the coach about the teams you have played with etc. However, do not sign anything without discussing it with your parents and a coach that can help you decide what is best for your basketball.

Do not make any commitment without finding out all the information that you need.

You should never give another athlete's contact details to a coach or scout. If a coach asks you to do so, tell them that they can write to the state basketball association who can pass the letter on.

### **Will my basketball improve in a college program?**

College can be a good way to develop your game.

Most College programs involve daily training from the date of official basketball practice (early November) to the end of the season (March). The NCAA places restrictions on the contact coaches can have with players both during the season and in the off-season. During the off-season you may not get much coaching.

The head coach of a college basketball program are usually full time and are under considerable pressure to produce winning teams. This results in some coaches not focusing on the overall development of the athletes, but instead focusing exclusively on trying to win. Many college coaches play very strict "systems" that give players particular (and sometimes quite limited) roles. Not all coaches do this but those that do are probably not going to develop your basketball game very much.

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College basketball also vary from some FIBA rules (eg longer shot clock (35 seconds), closer 3pt line) and it is probably best for your development to play FIBA rules.

### **How can I find out what is best for my basketball?**

Before deciding upon a college you should get some advice from someone impartial (don't just listen to the coach recruiting you). There are many reasons to accept a scholarship in the US and not all are related to basketball (eg the life experience) so don't let anyone tell you what you **must** do.

However, it is worthwhile speaking to a coach that can comment on what is best for your basketball. The head coaches of the National ITC Program are a good place to start!

### **When do I start College?**

The US College year starts in August or September each year. It is possible to start "mid-year" (ie in January) although this is unusual. If you did start in January, the basketball season is half way through so you would not be able to play until the following season (which begins in November).

### **How do I let Australian teams know what I'm doing at College**

Prior to going to the USA you must complete a transfer and lodge it with Basketball Australia. This means that you will be placed on a list that is provided to NBL/WNBL coaches of athletes in the US. If you transfer you should update your contact details with Basketball Australia.

Every two years, Basketball Australia participates in the World University Games, which is the third most important tournament in world basketball (behind Olympics and Senior World Championships). By keeping your details up to date with Basketball Australia, you will be considered for selection to these teams and can be kept up to date on the selection process.

Basketball Australia's technology partner (Sporting Pulse) has developed MySport, which is similar to Facebook and My Space. It is free to join and through this site you can keep people up to date with how you are playing, what your stats are etc. For more information go to [www.mysportingpulse.com](http://www.mysportingpulse.com).

## 10 Essential Things You Need To Know if You're Considering US College

1. Similar educational support and opportunities are available for elite athletes at Australian universities;
2. College coaches/recruiters write to thousands of potential athletes every year;
3. The subjects you studied from Year 9 are relevant and some subjects (such as IT or business) that you can do in Australia are **not** recognized by the NCAA;
4. The higher your Year 11/12 Grade Point Average, the lower the score you need on the SAT/ACT if you wish to go to a Division I College;
5. Don't rush to make a commitment (verbal or written) with a college;
6. Signing a contract with a NBL/WNBL team or playing on an ABA/WA State League team that has ANY player that is paid, will classify you as a professional athlete and ineligible for Division I Colleges;
7. Knowing the socio-economic demographic of the college and city you are considering is important because it will affect your enjoyment of living there;
8. Not all courses or qualifications from the USA will be recognized in Australia;
9. On the SAT exam they take points off for a wrong answer but they don't on the ACT exam. Practice whichever exam you are going to do!
10. You must lodge a clearance with Basketball Australia before going to College (and keep your contact details up to date so that you can be kept informed of the selection process for World University Games teams).

## Travelling to the US for college

### *Things to do before leaving Australia*

There are a number of things that you can do before leaving, to make the trip to the US as easy as possible:

- Before leaving Australia make sure that your passport and are still valid and are valid for at least six months after you think you will return to Australia;
- Check that your visa correctly states your visa classification and that if it names the institution you will be attending that it names it correctly. If there is any discrepancy contact the US Consulate that issued the visa;
- When you get your visa your immigration documents will be sealed in an envelope and attached to your passport. Do not open them – they will be opened by the customs officer when you arrive in the US;
- Remember, you can only enter the US up to 30 days prior to when your college wants you to start;
- Pack the following in your hand luggage (not checked luggage):



## Making Your Career In Basketball

- Passport, including the attached immigration documents;
- Copies of all forms you completed in your visa application;
- Receipt for your visa and SEVIS fee;
- Evidence of financial resources (that you had at the visa interview);
- Evidence of your student status (letter from college, transcripts etc);
- Name and contact information for your “designated school official”, including 24-hour emergency contact number at the school.

You should always carry a black ballpoint pen.

### *Arriving in the US*

When you arrive you must complete a Customs Declaration Form and an Arrival-Departure Record, which one of the flight attendants will give you before landing. Ask them for help if there is anything on the form you do not understand.

On your form you will be asked your reason for visiting the US and it is important to tell the customs officer that you will be a student. The customs officer will then stamp your passport and return it to you.

You must report to your school within 30 days of the date on the I-20 form to register for courses.

### *Maintaining your student status*

While you are enjoying your time in the US, it is very important to comply with all requirements of your visa to ensure that you do not jeopardize your immigration status.

You should have registered with SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) in applying for your visa and it is important that you keep your data up to date. Your school officials can help you with this.

Your visa has a number of conditions and if you violate them you may jeopardize your ability to remain in the US. Examples of violations include:

- Failing to enrol by the date specified by your school;
- Undertaking unauthorized work during your stay;
- Failing to leave the US once you have completed your course;
- Failing to maintain a full time course load without prior authorization for a reduction from your designated school official.

This is not a complete list of potential violations and your school official can help you if you have any questions.

## Making Your Career In Basketball

### US High Schools

*Should I go to a US High School or Prep School?*

There are an increasing number of US High Schools or Preparatory Schools that are trying to recruit Australian players. As with US Colleges there are many reasons that you might decide to go to high school in the USA. However, recruiters for these high schools often claim that your chances increase of “making it” to a College, if you are already in “the USA system”. This is **not** the case.

Each year there are approximately 200 Australians playing in US Colleges and almost all of them went to high school in Australia. Indeed, some of them did not even play at National Junior Championships.

Other things that you should consider before going to a high school are:

- Australian universities may not recognize the subjects that you study in the USA high school;
- Most high schools do not have full time basketball coaches and it is often a PE teacher or parent who coaches the team;
- The high school basketball season is very short, lasting a couple of months. You may not play or train much basketball in the long off-season. The USA does not have the same level of community (association) basketball that we have in Australia;
- The environment in the US high school may be very different to the school that you are at in Australia;
- If you are at high school in the US you would not be able to attend the Australian Development Camps that are conducted at various times through the year.

## Part 4 – Playing Professionally

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### What are my playing options in Australia?

#### *NBL and WNBL*

The NBL and WNBL provide opportunities for Australian players to train in an intensive environment and play in a league of world class standard. Although WNBL players are generally not full time athletes, most clubs do have a daily training environment, including team sessions and individuals/small group sessions. Most clubs also have strength and conditioning training.

Similarly, NBL clubs train daily and in addition to contracted players there are developmental players, who may play in home games and train daily with the team. Australian based NBL Clubs must have at least three players under the age of 23 contracted and at least one of these must be in their playing roster of ten players.

The national leagues have been the springboard of many players who have gone on to play overseas, such as:

Matt Neilsen (Europe)	Lauren Jackson (Europe/WNBA)
David Andersen (Europe/NBA)	Penny Taylor (Europe/WNBA)
Brad Newley (Europe)	Belinda Snell (Europe/WNBA)
Nathan Jawai (NBA)	Jenni Screen (Europe)

#### *Senior State Leagues and SEABL*

There are senior state leagues in Queensland, NSW, Victoria, SA and WA and teams from the ACT compete in the NSW league. The AIS Men and teams from Queensland, ACT, Tasmania and Victoria also compete in SEABL, which is a senior league.

Most teams in these leagues train a couple of times a week (at most) and rarely do they have strength and conditioning programs. There are some very good coaches in the various leagues, however most are not full time coaches. This lack of a “daily training environment” has been the main criticism of the leagues by players.

However, the leagues should not be discounted as a development opportunity and a number of players have gone onto the national league from their state league (such as Julian Khazzouh who played in the NSW Waratah League).

## Making Your Career In Basketball

If you are playing in a senior state league and want to develop your basketball outside of the team training sessions, some things to consider are:

- Organize to shoot or train outside of team practices with other team mates;
- Speak to the National ITC Head Coach in your state as there may be opportunities to train with athletes/coaches from the program, which will be a particularly good way to work on your individual skills;
- Contact NBL/WNBL coaches to see if there are any opportunities to train with them either during national league off season or in the national pre-season.

### **What are my playing options overseas?**

#### *Playing in Europe*

European countries are traditionally very strong in basketball and whilst the game may have been “invented” in North America, particularly in the men’s game, the “European” style is a dominant style of play. For example, whilst the the USA Men’s team won the Olympic gold medal in 2000 and 2008, Serbia (2002), Argentina (2004) and Spain (2006) have won the other major championships played this century.

There are strong leagues in many European countries as well as inter-country leagues such as the Baltic League or the EuroLeague. Even the second division leagues in some countries provide good opportunities for development.

However, just as in Australia, many European leagues have rules restricting the number of “import” players. This means that Australian players are competing against Americans (in particular) for the small number of spots on each team. The teams, therefore, often wish to recruit established players and performance in the NBL/WNBL can be a launching pad to playing overseas. Brad Newley, Matthew Neilson and Emma Randall are players that have done that.

Any player who has citizenship of a country in the European Union, can play in any of the European leagues and is not regarded as an import. David Andersen, Damian Ryan and Steven Markovic are three Australian players who have dual passports (Australian citizens and citizens of a European country), and are playing in Europe. All three had played in the NBL prior to playing in Europe and Andersen and Markovic also represented Australia at junior level, prior to going to Europe.

If you do wish to play in Europe you should read *On The Road* by Andrew Gaze, which sets out some of the pitfalls of playing in countries where you don’t speak the language! Particularly if you are an “import” player there is significant pressure on you to perform and often the “imports” are blamed if a team is not doing well.

## Making Your Career In Basketball

Some common issues Australian players have had playing in Europe:

- Language barriers (and home sickness);
- Pressure to perform immediately – if a team is losing the “solution” is often to sack the import players;
- Problems with getting paid (this is rare but has happened);
- Standard of accommodation;
- Standard of medical treatment available (both due to language difficulties and lack of attention by clubs).

You should also note that the European playing season conflicts with the Australian national leagues, so it is not possible to play in both.

### *Playing in the USA*

The NBA and the WNBA are arguably the best leagues in the world. They are certainly truly international leagues now with many non-American players being superstars in each league. Indeed, Michele Timms was the first international player drafted to the WNBA and Andrew Bogut was the first non-American to be the number 1 draft pick in the NBA.

Playing in US College is often seen as the “best” way of being identified by an NBA/WNBA team and being drafted. Both Andrew Bogut and Luc Longley were drafted from college, although both had already had played for Australia at the Olympics (Bogut in 2004 and Longley in 1988). However, Nathan Jawai and David Anderson are both on NBA rosters, and were drafted from the NBL (Jawai) and Europe (Anderson). Jawai did play one year of college basketball prior to returning to the NBL, however did not wish to continue in college. Shane Heal (now an assistant coach with the Boomers) also played in the NBL without having played in college.

Other players have been drafted from college, but have not yet been able to establish careers in the NBA (Luke Schensher, Patrick Mills and Marita Payne for example).

The majority of Australians who have played in the NBA and WNBA were established players, having played in either the NBL or WNBL for many years and have represented Australia at either junior or senior level. Similarly, many of the European and South American players who have played in the NBA or WNBA have not gone to College but instead were established international players.

There are also Summer Leagues or Development Leagues in the USA and players do get selected to the NBA/WNBA from these leagues. Luke Schensher for example has recently secured a number of short term contracts in the NBA whilst playing in the development league.

## Making Your Career In Basketball

However, it is clear that NBA/WNBA clubs do take notice of international leagues. Brad Newley was drafted after a number of seasons with the Townsville Crocodiles as was Belinda Snell after playing with the AIS and Sydney in the WNBL.

### **Do I need an Agent?**

#### *Player Agents*

Broadly speaking a “player agent” can do two things for you:

- Negotiate with teams on your behalf;
- Promote you to media/sponsors in an effort to raise your profile and get endorsements.

Realistically, (b) will only happen once you are a superstar and at this stage in your career it is sensible to have assistance in managing the business side of your career.

#### Negotiating with teams in Australia

There are standard player contracts in both the NBL and the WNBL, so it may not be necessary to have an agent if you are speaking with teams in these leagues. Yes, you have an opportunity to negotiate how much you get paid, however you should remember that:

- WNBL clubs have limited budgets and few, if any, players are full time;
- NBL clubs are subject to an overall salary cap and the bargaining agreement with players ensures that minimum salary and conditions are in place.

Speaking to experienced players in the league can be a good way to find out if you are getting a “fair” deal from the team. You should always ask the team to write you a letter that sets out the conditions that they are offering and do not sign any contract without taking some time to think about it.

Some players prefer not to get involved with the negotiations with the team as an important aspect of a negotiation can be saying “no” and demanding “more”, and some players prefer not to do that. That may be a reason to have an “agent” act on your behalf, however your mum or dad may be able to do it just as well.

#### Negotiating with Overseas teams

Once you are “established” yourself as a player you may be interested in playing overseas. An agent may have contacts with overseas teams, which can assist you to get a position. However, your coaches may also have contacts that could help.

## Making Your Career In Basketball

Contracts with overseas teams are more complex than in Australia. Some laws are different and the leagues may not have standard agreements. You also need medical insurance and should strongly consider having “income protection” insurance, to pay you a wage if you are unable to play (some contracts don’t pay you if you can’t play). An agent can be very helpful in these negotiations.

### Your contract with the Player Agent

You should have a written contract with a player agent and do not let them “represent” you in any way before you have that agreement. The agreement should include:

- What services they will provide;
- How they are paid;
- What insurance they have (if they make a mistake you still need to be covered);
- How long they will act on your behalf (make it a specific term – you can always enter another contract with them if you are happy).

Make sure you read carefully whatever contract the agent has. You may even want to get a lawyer to look at it, to make sure that it adequately protects you.

### FIBA Accreditation

FIBA (the international basketball body) has now introduced an accreditation system for Player Agents and you should make sure that any agent you deal with has been accredited.

### *Using Scouting Services*

Scouting services promote you to teams in Australia, but mostly to overseas teams. They are similar to agents, however they do not negotiate on your behalf but instead put you and the team in contact with each other. They will approach teams with details of you as a player to see if they are interested. And some teams (particularly US Colleges) may approach them.

Most scouting services charge the teams, so may not be looking to place you with the team that is best for you, but simply with teams that they have agreements with.

Your coaches may also have contacts with overseas teams that would be just as successful in them getting interest in you.

US College teams will be interested in your performance at National Junior Championships and perhaps senior state league (provided it is not with a professional team!);

Senior teams will be interested in your performance in national leagues and Australian junior teams.

## Making Your Career In Basketball

Scouting services can make it a little easier to put together the information to send to teams, however you should realize that scouting services do not do anything that you can't do yourself!

If you choose to use a scouting service, make sure you have something in writing that sets out what services they will provide. You should ask what teams they have relationships with (as these are the teams that they are likely to send information to) and how they will promote you to teams.



## Part 5 – Making the Decision!

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### What's best for my basketball?

Going overseas either to a US College or to a European team can be very good for your basketball development – however not every team will be! You also need to think about what options you have within Australia as being an established player in the NBL/WNBL makes you attractive to some overseas teams! You also need to consider what it will do to your availability for national squads and development camps

If you are interested in playing overseas you should discuss it with your coach. The head coaches of the National ITC Program in each state are a good contact point and can discuss with you your basketball options.

### Where can I get more information?

#### *About studying in Australia*

- High School Careers Advisors
- ACE Coordinators at State/Territory Institutes
- Contact the Sports Services Unions of the universities you are interested in attending

#### *About studying in USA*

- [www.usembassy-australia.state.gov/education](http://www.usembassy-australia.state.gov/education)
- Judy Freudenberger  
Senior US Educational Adviser  
Australian Country Coordinator  
Office of Public Affairs  
US Embassy  
Tel: 02 6258 1670  
Em: [freuds@bigpond.net.au](mailto:freuds@bigpond.net.au)
- Maureen Spencer-Gardner  
Spencer-Gardner Education Consulting  
Web: [www.collegeeligibility.com.au](http://www.collegeeligibility.com.au)  
Em: [info@collegeeligibility.com.au](mailto:info@collegeeligibility.com.au)  
Ph: 03 9803 2038
- [www.collegboard.com](http://www.collegboard.com) (SAT exam)
- [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) (ACT exam)

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