

# TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

## UNIFORM GRADING POLICY

**3.301**

T.C.A. § 49-6-407 authorizes the State Board of Education to develop a uniform grading system for students in grades 9-12 to establish consistent grade reporting for the purposes of application for postsecondary financial assistance administered by the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation. Except where otherwise indicated, the changes outlined in this version of the policy shall become effective for students in the 2018 graduation cohort.

### POLICY SECTIONS

- (1) Uniform Grading System
- (2) Honors Courses and Early Postsecondary Opportunities
- (3) Locally Approved Grading System
- (4) Implementation and Guidance

#### **(1) UNIFORM GRADING SYSTEM**

- (a) Local Education Agencies (LEAs) shall use the uniform grading system for students enrolled in grades nine through twelve (9-12) for purposes of application for postsecondary financial assistance administered by the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation:

<b>Uniform Grading System – <i>Weighting for Advanced Coursework</i></b>					
Grade	Percentage Range		Honors Courses	Local and Statewide Dual Credit Courses, Capstone Industry Certification-Aligned Courses, and Dual Enrollment Courses	Advanced Placement, Cambridge International, College Level Exam Program (CLEP), and International Baccalaureate Courses
<b>A</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100</b>	Shall include the addition of 3 <b>percentage points</b> to the grades used to calculate the semester average.	Shall include the addition of 4 <b>percentage points</b> to the grades used to calculate the semester average.	Shall include the addition of 5 <b>percentage points</b> to the grades used to calculate the semester average.
<b>B</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>92</b>			
<b>C</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>84</b>			
<b>D</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>74</b>			
<b>F</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>69</b>			

- (b) Assigning additional quality points above 4.0 for honors courses, Advanced Placement (AP), College Level Exam Program (CLEP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge International, dual credit, dual enrollment, and Capstone Industry Certification-aligned

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courses is not allowed for the purpose of determining eligibility for the lottery scholarships.

- (c) LEAs must utilize the Uniform Grading System to calculate eligibility for financial assistance administered by the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation. However, LEAs may adopt an additional grading scale(s) for other purposes. See section 3 of this policy for requirements regarding locally adopted grading scales.
- (d) LEAs may adopt the Uniform Grading System for grades pre-K through eight (8) or they may adopt a local grading scale for those grades.

**(2) HONORS COURSES AND EARLY POSTSECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES**

LEAs may elect to offer honors courses and early postsecondary opportunities (EPSO) for all students to better prepare them for postsecondary and career. LEAs electing to offer early postsecondary opportunities and honors courses shall ensure that the offerings provide opportunities for students to earn postsecondary credits, obtain recognized capstone industry certifications, and/or substantially exceed existing content standards of high school courses as approved by the State Board of Education and as listed in State Board Policy 3.205 Approved High School Courses.

LEAs electing to offer these courses shall adopt policies providing for additional weighting for these courses, as outlined by the Uniform Grading System in 1.a. above. LEAs may award additional weighting to the grades of students who have completed an AP, Cambridge International, or IB course, or a course aligned with an Industry Certification or CLEP exam, prior to sitting for the culminating exam. If the additional weighting is awarded prior to participation in the culminating exam, the LEA shall have a policy to remove the additional weighting if the student does not participate in the culminating exam by the end of the school year in which the course was completed. LEAs shall annually approve the list of such courses and shall provide this information readily to the public.

- (a) **Honors Courses.** Honors courses are high school courses that provide additional rigor and substantially exceed the academic standards approved by the State Board of Education. Teachers of honors courses will model instructional approaches that facilitate maximum interchange of ideas among students: independent study, self-directed research and learning, and appropriate use of technology. All honors courses shall include multiple assessments exemplifying coursework (such as short answer, constructed-response prompts, performance-based tasks, open-ended questions, essays, original or creative interpretations, authentic products, portfolios, and analytical writing). An honors course shall also include a minimum of five (5) of the following components:

1. Extended reading assignments that connect with the specified curriculum.
2. Research-based writing assignments that address and extend the course curriculum.

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3. Projects that apply course curriculum to relevant or real-world situations. These may include oral presentations, power point, or other modes of sharing findings. Connection of the project to the community is encouraged.
4. Open-ended investigations in which the student selects the questions and designs the research.
5. Writing assignments that demonstrate a variety of modes, purposes, and styles.
  - (i) Examples of mode include narrative, descriptive, persuasive, expository, and expressive.
  - (ii) Examples of purpose include to inform, to entertain, and to persuade.
  - (iii) Examples of style include formal, informal, literary, analytical, and technical.
6. Integration of appropriate technology into the course of study.
7. Deeper exploration of the culture, values, and history of the discipline.
8. Extensive opportunities for problem solving experiences through imagination, critical analysis, and application.
9. Job shadowing experiences with presentations which connect class study to the world of work.

All course types, which meet the above framework, will be classified as honors and will be eligible for additional percentage point weighting.

- (b) **Capstone Industry Certification Aligned Courses.** Career and technical education courses that are aligned to a capstone industry certification recognized by the Tennessee Department of Education are eligible for additional percentage point weighting for students who sit for the identified industry certification exam.
- (c) **Statewide Dual Credit Courses.** A statewide dual credit course is a high school course that incorporates postsecondary learning objectives and is aligned with an approved dual credit challenge exam. Students who pass these challenge exams will earn college credit accepted by all Tennessee public postsecondary institutions. LEAs must ensure all statewide dual credit courses incorporate the postsecondary learning objectives and that all students enrolled in an identified statewide dual credit course sit for the challenge exam. LEAs must also ensure that statewide dual credit teachers receive appropriate professional development and support to provide the rigorous level of instruction necessary for the course. All statewide dual credit courses are eligible for additional percentage point weighting for students who sit for the identified statewide dual credit challenge exam.
- (d) **Local Dual Credit Courses.** A local dual credit course is a high school course that incorporates postsecondary learning objectives and is aligned with a challenge exam that is approved by a local postsecondary institution through an articulation agreement with an LEA. Students who pass a local dual credit challenge exam will earn college credit at the specific postsecondary institution(s) participating in the articulation agreement. Local

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dual credit courses are eligible for additional percentage point weighting for students who sit for the identified local dual credit challenge exam.

- (e) **Dual Enrollment Courses.** A dual enrollment course is a course taught by postsecondary faculty for postsecondary credit that is also recognized by an LEA for high school credit. Dual enrollment courses may be taught at a postsecondary institution, at a high school, or virtually. Dual enrollment courses that are recognized for high school credit are eligible for additional percentage point weighting for students who pass the dual enrollment course.
  
- (f) **Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge International, and International Baccalaureate (IB) and College Level Exam Program (CLEP) Courses.** LEAs may elect to offer Advanced Placement, Cambridge International, or International Baccalaureate courses, or align their existing courses to College Level Exam Program (CLEP) exams. LEAs will ensure that these courses incorporate the learning objectives and course descriptions as defined by the College Board, Cambridge International, or International Baccalaureate, respectively, and prepare students for culminating national exams that, if passed, may be accepted for postsecondary credit by postsecondary institutions. AP, Cambridge International, and IB courses, and CLEP are eligible for additional percentage point weighting for students who sit for the aligned culminating exam.

**(3) LOCALLY APPROVED GRADING SYSTEM**

T.C.A. § 49-6-407 set forth requirements for locally adopted grading systems. An LEA that uses the uniform grading system as required for purposes of student application for postsecondary financial assistance administered by the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, but adopts another grading system based on quality points for other purposes, shall assign additional quality points in the other grading system for the completion of honors and early postsecondary courses, including, but are not limited to, national industry certification, statewide dual credit, Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge, International Baccalaureate (IB), and dual enrollment courses as follows (beginning with the 2018-19 school year freshman class):

- (a) One-half (1/2) quality point shall be added to the numerical quality point value corresponding to the letter grade received for the course in an honors course.
  
- (b) One (1) quality point shall be added to the numerical quality point value corresponding to the letter grade received in an early postsecondary courses.
  
- (c) In accordance with guidance issued by the Department of Education, LEAs may, at their discretion, retroactively adjust the preceding point weights, if needed, to ensure uniformity of weighting for the same courses taken for all students in a graduating cohort.
  
- (d) LEAs may award additional quality points to the grades of students who have completed an AP, Cambridge International, or IB course, or a course aligned with an Industry

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Certification or CLEP exam, prior to sitting for the culminating exam. If the additional quality points are awarded prior to participation in the culminating exam, the district shall have a policy to remove the additional quality points if the student does not participate in the culminating exam by the end of the school year in which the course was completed.

### (4) IMPLEMENTATION AND GUIDANCE

To ensure fidelity to the Uniform Grading System in the calculation of the Grade Point Average (GPA) for determination of eligibility for the HOPE Scholarship, the following guidance is given for implementation by each local education agency:

- (a) **Rounding.** When determining the grade to be awarded, numerical averages with a decimal point of .5 or higher shall be rounded up to a whole number and a decimal point of  $.4\bar{9}$  or lower shall not be rounded up. For example, a numerical average in a course of 92.50 shall be rounded up to a 93 and awarded an A for the GPA calculation. Further, a numerical average of 92.49 shall not be rounded up and awarded a 92 or B for the GPA calculation. This methodology shall apply to reporting period grades as well as semester and/or final average grades.
- (b) **Weighting for honors courses and early postsecondary opportunities.** The addition of percentage points to weight these offerings should be made at each reporting period as well as to any semester exam or other grade used to determine the semester average. Do not add to the semester or final average since the points are already in the grade.

Example: An AP class where the semester average is calculated by adding each six (6) weeks grade twice and adding the semester exam grade once and dividing by seven (7):

<u>1<sup>st</sup> Six Weeks</u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup> Six Weeks</u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup> Six Weeks</u>	<u>Sem. Exam</u>	<u>Sem. Avg.</u>
88 + 5 = 93	90 + 5 = 95	85 + 5 = 90	89 + 5 = 94	93

$$93 + 93 + 95 + 95 + 90 + 90 + 94 = 650$$

$$\text{Sem. Avg.} = \frac{650}{7} = 92.8 = 93 = A$$

- (c) **Calculation of the Uniform Grading System GPA.** GPA calculation shall be on a 4.0 scale by assigning the following grade points: A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1 and F = 0. The GPA is the official method for calculating HOPE Scholarship eligibility, and shall be calculated by multiplying the quality points assigned to each course for the semester, trimester, or final course average (for the block schedule) by the credit available for each course and dividing by the total number of credits available. This calculation shall be based on grades at the end of any semester or trimester, not on a grade that spans the entire school year.

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Example: A student's final average GPA based upon a six (6)-period day with five (5) year-long courses and two (2) semester-long courses:

$$\text{GPA} = \frac{\text{Sum of Grade Points for Each Course (per credit)}}{\text{Sum of Credits Available}}$$

$$\text{GPA} = \frac{\text{B+A+A+B+B+B+C}}{1+1+1+1+1+.5+.5} = \frac{3(1)+4(1)+4(1)+3(1)+3(1)+3(.5)+2(.5)}{6}$$

$$\text{GPA} = \frac{19.5}{6} = 3.25 \text{ GPA}$$

- (d) For purposes of the HOPE Scholarship Eligibility Grade Point Average, a student may repeat any failed course, and the failing grade for the first attempt will not be considered in the HOPE Scholarship Eligibility Grade Point Average calculation. The grade of all repeats of the course shall be counted as part of the HOPE Scholarship Eligibility Grade Point Average.
- (e) LEAs may allow students to participate in credit recovery programs as outlined in the State Board of Education's High School Policy 2.103. Students passing credit recovery courses shall receive a grade of seventy percent (70%). The original failing grade shall not be considered in the HOPE Scholarship Eligibility Grade Point Average calculation.
- (f) The GPA shall be reported to the nearest 100<sup>th</sup>. The thousandth digit must be a 5 or higher to round up to the next hundredth. For example, a GPA of 3.296 would round up to 3.30. A GPA of 3.294 $\bar{9}$  would round down to 3.29.
- (g) The GPA used to determine eligibility for the HOPE Scholarship shall be reported on the student's transcript as the "Hope Scholarship GPA."
- (h) The Department of Education will provide guidance for LEAs to ensure this rule is implemented uniformly across Tennessee.
- (i) The Department of Education will monitor the calculation of the HOPE Scholarship GPA as part of the routine LEA audits.