

FAQ – Grading Scale Changes

1. What will the new grading scale be for grades 9-12 and when will it take effect? [CMS Regulation IKA-R, “Grading/Assessment Systems. Link provided at the end.]

In October 2014, the State Board approved a standard 10-point grading scale to begin the 2015-2016 school year for all high school students. This scale will not include “pluses” or “minuses.” Grades from prior years will not be altered retroactively. Under the new scale, grades and quality point calculations will be applied as follows:

A: 90-100 = 4.0

B: 80-89 = 3.0

C: 70-79 = 2.0

D: 60-69 = 1.0

F: < 59 = 0.0

2. Why did the State Board change the high school grading scale to a 10-point scale?

For high school students, grades and other academic measures become very important as they plan for their future after graduation. Over the past few years, North Carolina parents, students and local superintendents have petitioned the State Board of Education (SBE) to require a statewide standard 10-point grading scale for all high school students. Those advocating for this change in state policy noted that North Carolina school districts differed in their grading scales and that students would benefit from having a standard 10-point scale. This transition to a 10-point scale helps students who move from one district to another and puts North Carolina students in a more competitive position as they apply for admission to out-of-state colleges and universities as the majority of states use a 10-point scale.

3. What will the grading scale be for students in grades K-8? [CMS Regulation IKA-R, “Grading/Assessment Systems.” Link provided at the end.]

The State Board of Education has allowed local boards of education to determine grading systems for elementary and middle schools. In order to maintain consistency, CMS decided to use the standard 10-point scale for grades 3-8 to begin the 2015-2016 school year. Students in grades K-2 will continue to be assessed on the essential goals of learning.

4. How will the new 10-point grading scale affect instruction?

Teachers will adjust assessments to maintain rigor and levels of mastery. For example, if in the 2014-2015 school year, a student earned the highest failing grade possible on a project with the rubric adding up to a 69 (F), the rubric should be adjusted for the 2015-2016 school year so that the student's grade, again, reflects the highest failing grade possible with a 59 (F).

5. What will report cards look like for students in grades 3-12? [CMS Regulation IKA-R, "Grading/Assessment Systems." Link provided at the end.]

Previously, students in grades 3-12 received letter grades on their report cards. Beginning the 2015-2016 school year, students in grades 3-12 will receive numeric grades on their report cards that will be based upon the newly adopted 10-point grading scale. Letter grade legends will be provided on report cards. Plus (+) and minus (-) signs will not be used.

A: 90-100 = 4.0

B: 80-89 = 3.0

C: 70-79 = 2.0

D: 60-69 = 1.0

F: < 59 = 0.0

6. What will transcripts look like for high school students?

Previously, high school students received letter grades on their transcripts. Beginning the 2015-2016 school year, high school students will receive numeric grades on their transcripts that will be based upon the newly adopted 10-point grading scale.

A: 90-100 = 4.0

B: 80-89 = 3.0

C: 70-79 = 2.0

D: 60-69 = 1.0

F: < 59 = 0.0

Grades from prior years will not be altered retroactively. For example, a CMS transcript for a 2015-2016 rising senior will have letter grades for the student's freshman, sophomore, and junior years but will have numeric grades for the student's senior year.

7. Will the method used to determine class rank, valedictorian, and salutatorian change? [CMS Regulation IKC-R, "Grade Point Average/Class Ranking." Link provided at the end.]

No, the method used to determine class rank, valedictorian, and salutatorian will not change. Quality points (weighted or unweighted) and letter grades are the only factors used to calculate grade point average values and class rank. Numeric grades are not factored into the calculation. In accordance with North Carolina General Statute 116-11 (10a), grade point average values and class rank must be calculated by a standard method devised by the University of North Carolina and NC Community College systems. For example, if two seniors took the same courses and the first senior earned a 94% (A) on all courses, and the second senior earned a 99% (A) on all courses, they would still have the same grade point average and class rank. If these same seniors were competing for valedictorian, they would tie.

8. What grade will be used to indicate mastery? [CMS Regulation IKA-R "Grading/Assessment Systems." Link provided at the end.]

Previously, CMS used a grade of 84% to indicate mastery learning. Beginning the 2015-2016 school year, a grade of 79% will indicate mastery learning. Additional practice will be provided for students who do not achieve initial mastery of 79% or higher on formal assessments. Following additional practice, new opportunities shall be provided to measure student mastery. A maximum score of 79% can be earned.

9. How will high school final course grades be calculated? [CMS Regulation IKA-R, "Grading/Assessment Systems" and Regulation IKAA-R, "Tests and Examinations." Links provided at the end.]

Beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, the final grade of a yearlong course shall be based on the formula: Semester 1 (40%) + Semester 2 (40%) + Final Exam (20%) = Final Grade. The examination grade is the numeric score on the EOC, end of course assessment, or the teacher-provided comprehensive examination.

The final grade of a semester course shall be based on the formula: Quarter 1 (40%) + Quarter 2 (40%) + Final Exam (20%) = Final Grade. The examination grade is the numeric score on the EOC, end of course assessment, or the teacher-provided comprehensive examination.

In an Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate course in which a student takes the AP or IB exam, the final grade shall be based on the formula: Semester 1 (50%) + Semester 2 (50%) = Final Grade. Regulation IKAA-R requires students enrolled in AP or IB courses to take the corresponding AP or IB exam. If a student fails to take the AP or IB exam, the student must take a teacher-provided exam. In this case, the student's final grade shall be determined based on the formula: Semester 1 (40%) + Semester 2 (40%) + Final Exam (20%) = Final Grade.

10. What are the new quality point weights and who do they affect? [CMS Regulation IKC-R, "Grade Point Average/Class Ranking." Link provided at the end.]

The new quality point weights **only** affect first time ninth graders in the fall of 2015-2016 and all students entering high school after that year. This change does **NOT** affect students who will be in grades 10, 11, or 12 or freshmen who were retained in 2015-2016. The new quality point weights will provide incoming freshmen with an additional .5 quality point to Honors courses and 1.0 quality point to Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, community college courses, or four-year university or college courses taken in high school. For example, a rising freshman who earns an A in an AP course would receive a weighted 5.0 grade for that particular course. A rising freshman who earns an A in an Honors course would receive a weighted 4.5 grade.

Students in grades 10, 11, or 12 in 2015-2016 will continue to earn an additional 1.0 quality point for Honors courses, community college courses, or four-year university or college courses taken in high school and an additional 2.0 quality points for Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) courses for the remaining years of their high school careers.

11. Why did the State Board change the quality point standards?

The new standards are the outcome of a study directed by the NC General Assembly and subsequent actions by the UNC Board of Governors and the State Board of Community Colleges. The changes in quality points better align North Carolina students with those around the nation.

12. How is it fair if a junior earns an A in an Advanced Placement (AP) class and receives two additional quality points, but a freshman who earns an A in that same Advanced Placement (AP) class only receives one additional quality point?

Juniors are only competing with other juniors for class rank, eventual scholarships, and college acceptance. They are not competing with any other grade levels. The same is true with the freshman class of 2015-2016: they will only be competing against each other for class rank, eventual scholarships, and college acceptance. Under no circumstances would that junior and that freshman be competing against one another or compared to each other in regards to GPA or class rank.

Links to referenced CMS Regulations:

Regulation IKA-R, "Grading/Assessment Systems"

http://policy.microscribepub.com/cgi-bin/om_isapi.dll?clientID=1324190490&depth=2&infobase=charmeck.nfo&record={123A}&softpage=PL_frame

Regulation IKC-R, "Grade Point Average/Class Ranking"

http://policy.microscribepub.com/cgi-bin/om_isapi.dll?clientID=1324190490&depth=2&infobase=charmeck.nfo&record={12FC}&softpage=PL_frame

Regulation IKA-R "Tests and Examinations"

http://policy.microscribepub.com/cgi-bin/om_isapi.dll?clientID=1324190490&depth=2&infobase=charmeck.nfo&record={128F}&softpage=PL_frame