

## ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES 2025–2026

### The Team

A team consists of nine full-time students from the ninth through twelfth grades of the same high school; or, if there is no ninth grade, a team consists of nine full-time students from the tenth through twelfth grades of the same high school. A full-time student is defined as a student who is enrolled in four or more class periods per day. Each team is made up of three Honor students, three Scholastic students, and three Varsity students in accordance with the following grade point average definitions:

Honor: 3.80 – 4.00 GPA

Scholastic: 3.20 – 3.799 GPA

Varsity: 0.00 – 3.199 GPA

Contestants may compete in a higher division than their own grade point average category but not in a lower division.

Each team member competes in all ten events of the Decathlon and is eligible for individual medals in all ten events. Only six scores count for the final team standing in the competition—the top two Honor scores, the top two Scholastic scores, and the top two Varsity scores. Therefore, schools may enter with fewer than nine members and still be eligible for team awards as long as there are at least two Honor, two Scholastic, and two Varsity members.

Home-schooled students can participate in the United States Academic Decathlon<sup>®</sup> if their school district allows home-schooled students to participate in other extracurricular activities. Home-schooled students can only participate in the United States Academic Decathlon program at the high school they would attend if they were not home-schooled. The GPA classification of home-schooled students will be made in accordance with state law pertaining to home-schooled students. The State Academic Decathlon organization and/or the State Director have final authority regarding the participation and classification of home-schooled students, and the decision of the State Academic Decathlon association and/or the State Director will be final.

Within each state, the determination of the composition of each team is made by the State Academic Decathlon organization and/or the State Director, and the decision of the State Academic Decathlon organization and/or the State Director is final. The state championship team that attends the National Finals, however, must be comprised according to the guidelines stated previously. The nine students who attend the National Finals must be the same nine students who participated in and won the state competition. No different or additional team members may be included except in the event of a student's death, medical emergencies, or other extenuating circumstances and only with the express prior approval of USAD.

The State Academic Decathlon organization has the full authority to declare the first-place team

ineligible to attend the National Finals in accordance with the rules and practices of its state organization and may send the second-place team to represent its state. In such cases, the decision of the State Academic Decathlon organization and/or the State Director is final. However, the United States Academic Decathlon should be notified promptly of such an occurrence.

### **Computation of Grade Point Averages**

GPA calculations for ninth-grade students include only their grades earned while in the eighth grade and in the summer session between eighth and ninth grade. The “focus semesters” for GPA computation for tenth, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade students go back two years prior to the present grade level of the contestant. If the contestant is a twelfth grader in September of the competition year, then the semesters that are used for GPA computation are all of the tenth grade, all of the eleventh grade, and the summer sessions between tenth and eleventh grades and between eleventh and twelfth grades. Likewise, if the contestant is in eleventh grade in the fall, the focus period for GPA computations includes the entire ninth grade, the entire tenth grade, and the summer sessions between ninth and tenth grades and between tenth and eleventh grades. If the contestant is in tenth grade in the fall, the focus period for GPA computations includes the entire eighth grade, all of the ninth grade, and the summer sessions between eighth and ninth grades and between ninth and tenth grades. Regardless of the system used to determine a GPA locally, these criteria must be followed to ensure uniformity and equity among all participants in the United States Academic Decathlon.

Grades for courses shall be used in GPA computations for United States Academic Decathlon competition purposes if the courses focus more than 50% of the time on understanding ideas, concepts, and theories of a specific discipline and the assessments are objective in nature. Grades for courses that directly deal with the theoretical content covered in the United States Academic Decathlon curriculum and competitive events should be included in GPA computations. However, a grade for a course focused specifically on the United States Academic Decathlon should NOT be included in GPA computations.

Grades for courses shall NOT be used in GPA computations for United States Academic Decathlon competition purposes if they are hands-on, performance-based, skills type, lab-based, or more than 50% of course time is spent in service learning or internship. The skills that are developed in these courses tend to be more technical/vocational, and the majority of a student’s grade in these courses is subjective in nature. Please refer to the United States Academic Decathlon’s current [Acceptable/Unacceptable document](#).

Inquiries regarding borderline courses should be referred to the State Director, who will make the determination based on the academic nature of the course, and who will then implement the decision uniformly throughout the state. The decision of the State Academic Decathlon organization and/or the State Director with regard to which course grades are applied to the United States Academic Decathlon GPA tabulation is final.

For all alpha grades, all A's will count as 4.0, all B's will count as 3.0, all C's will count as 2.0, and all D's will count as 1.0. Anything below D will count as 0 points. When numerical grades appear on the transcript in place of alpha grades, they shall be converted to alpha grades according to the official conversion scale that appears on the school's official transcript or in the school's official profile.

The GPA for each student shall be calculated by dividing total points by total credits hours for the focus semesters. The total points shall include the alpha grade points multiplied by the credit hours. Unless a school's curriculum defines the specific credit hours earned by a course, credit hours should be determined as 1.00 credit hours for a full-year grade, 0.50 credit hours for a half year grade, 1/3 credit hours for a trimester grade, and 0.25 credit hours for a quarter-year grade.

If a student receives a Fail in any academic course, the F is counted in averaging the student's grades even though no credit is given. When a course has been failed prior to the focus period for which the GPA is being computed but repeated during that period, only the repeat grade is counted. When a course is failed and repeated during the focus semesters, both grades will be counted in the GPA.

Incomplete or pass/fail grades are not included in computing the GPA unless the student received an F that appears on the transcript. Once a grade is given to remove an incomplete, that grade must be used to determine the Decathlon GPA. If only pass/fail grades are assigned, the State Director will determine an evaluation scale in concert with the United States Academic Decathlon Testing Director.

Community college or other college courses are included in the GPA only if high school credit is given and the course is listed on the official school transcript.

A grade, regardless of whether it is advanced placement, honors, regular, or remedial classification, will count the face value of the final grade as reflected on the official transcript. No weighting of grades for honors classes will be included, even if this is the local district policy. An "A" grade, therefore, will count 4 points for Decathlon computation even if it counts 5 points within the local system. Under no circumstances may an "A" grade count three points. The letter grade shown on the transcript will be used in computing GPA regardless of any plus or minus. State Directors may determine standards for eligibility for students from schools with non-traditional grading systems. Such standards should be communicated to the United States Academic Decathlon for approval prior to the state competition.

If a school or a teacher has a policy of changing grades subsequent to receipt of advanced placement test scores, the new grade must be used for the computation of the Decathlon GPA. The deadline for the adjustment of AP grades is established by the State Academic Decathlon organization and/or State Director, and the decision of the State Academic Decathlon organization and/or State Director will be final.

## **Verification of Eligibility**

Each high school will submit official transcripts to verify eligibility of team members to the manager of the competition the team is entering. The school certification of transcripts will be the final indication of a student's eligibility and GPA category. The competition manager shall check the GPA computation in accordance with the above guidelines and verify eligibility of each team member. It is recommended that GPAs are calculated using the United States Academic Decathlon's [GPA Calculation Excel Worksheet](#), which can automatically calculate a student's GPA and identify the lowest division in which a student may compete. The team coach shall be notified of any discrepancies.

Foreign students are eligible to participate in the United States Academic Decathlon. A foreign student who does not possess a valid transcript may participate in the Honor category. If a coach wishes to qualify a foreign student for the Scholastic or Varsity categories, the coach must provide adequate evidence that the student performed at a relative B or C status within the foreign system during the one year prior to participation in the Decathlon. The State Academic Decathlon organization and/or the State Director have final authority regarding the participation and classification of foreign students, and the decision of the State Academic Decathlon association and/or the State Director will be final.

For the National Finals, each State Director must file a team certification guaranteeing that this is the same team that won the State Championship and that all team members are eligible for the categories as indicated. Official transcripts must accompany this form. In addition, the United States Academic Decathlon may request transcripts directly from the high school in order to verify eligibility. The decision of the State Academic Decathlon organization and/or the State Director regarding the certification of the State Championship Team will be final.

Participation in the United States Academic Decathlon is voluntary and is open to all students regardless of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, disability or handicap.

Questions regarding computing the Decathlon GPA or eligibility of students should be addressed to the State Director or to the United States Academic Decathlon® at 714-585-1259 or e-mail: [daniele@usad.org](mailto:daniele@usad.org).