

USAD Eligibility Guidelines (2026-2027)

Questions about GPA calculations or student eligibility should be directed to the appropriate [State Director](#) or USAD (714-585-1259 | daniele@usad.org).

Participation and Eligibility

Participation in the United States Academic Decathlon is voluntary and open to all eligible students without discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

Students must be enrolled full time at the school they represent. A full-time student is enrolled in at least four classes per day and is in one of grades 9-12.

Team Composition and Scoring

A full team consists of nine students from the same high school: three Honor students, three Scholastic students, and three Varsity students. A team with fewer than nine students is considered a partial team. Student GPA categories are:

Honor	3.85 - 4.00
Scholastic	3.50 - 3.8499
Varsity	0.00 - 3.499

A student may compete in a more academically competitive GPA category (e.g. Honor vs. Scholastic).

Each team member competes in all ten events and is eligible for individual medals. Team standings are based on six scores: the top two Honor, the top two Scholastic, and the top two Varsity scores. A partial team remains eligible for team awards if it includes at least two students in each GPA category.

Each State Academic Decathlon organization or State Director determines team composition within the state.

A state organization may declare its first-place team ineligible for the National Competition under applicable state rules and designate another eligible team to represent the state. USAD must be notified promptly of any such decision.

GPA Classification and Calculation

USAD assigns students to Honor, Scholastic, or Varsity categories based on the unweighted cumulative GPA shown on the student's official high school transcript or district record.

The GPA must include all eligible coursework completed before the current academic year, including classes completed during the summer immediately preceding it. Only letter-graded classes are included; Pass/Fail and Credit/No Credit classes are excluded.

GPA eligibility is determined as follows:

- **9th Grade:** Eighth-grade coursework and eligible summer classes completed before ninth grade.

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- **10th Grade:** Ninth-grade coursework and eligible summer classes completed before ninth and tenth grades.
- **11th Grade:** Ninth- and tenth-grade coursework and eligible summer classes completed before ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades.
- **12th Grade:** Ninth- through eleventh-grade coursework and eligible summer classes completed before ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades.

Summer grades are included only if they appear on the official transcript or district record. College-level classes are included only when the student receives high school credit and the class appears on the official high school transcript.

Weighted GPAs are not used. Additional points assigned for Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), honors, or similar classes must be excluded. Plus and minus modifiers are included only if the school uses them in calculating its official unweighted cumulative GPA. The [USAD Unweighted GPA Calculation Worksheet](#), should be used only when an official unweighted GPA is unavailable.

If a school changes a grade after receiving AP (or other) exam results, the revised grade must be used to calculate the student's GPA. The State Academic Decathlon organization or State Director establishes the deadline for grade adjustments.

Verification of Eligibility

Each school must submit official transcripts to the competition manager to verify each team member's eligibility and GPA category. The competition manager will review the transcripts, confirm each student's classification under these guidelines, and notify the team coach of any discrepancies. The school's certified transcript or district record is the official documentation used to determine eligibility.

Students Without Standard School Transcripts

International and/or home-schooled students may participate in the United States Academic Decathlon, subject to applicable eligibility, documentation, and competition requirements.

- **International Students:** An international student without a valid transcript may compete in the Honor category. To qualify for the Scholastic or Varsity category, the coach must provide sufficient evidence that the student performed at the corresponding academic level within the foreign grading system during the year preceding participation.
- **Home-Schooled Students:** A home-schooled student who is eligible to participate through the local public high school must compete on the team of the school the student would otherwise attend. If participation through the local public high school is unavailable, the student may request approval to compete individually through a pathway established by the State Academic Decathlon organization.

An approved individual contestant must register directly with the State Academic Decathlon organization and may compete for individual awards, including at the national level, if eligible. The

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student's GPA category must be determined in accordance with applicable USAD and state requirements.

National Competition Team Requirements

A team advancing to the National Competition must meet all USAD team-composition requirements. The team may only include students who competed on that team at the state competition. Substitutions are permitted only in the event of a medical emergency or other extenuating circumstance and require USAD's prior approval.

Each State Academic Decathlon organization or State Director must certify that teams attending the National Competition consist only of students who competed at the state competition and that each student is eligible for the listed GPA category.

Official transcripts must accompany the certification. USAD may also request transcripts directly from the school for verification.

State Authority

Except where these guidelines specifically require USAD approval or review, the State Academic Decathlon organization or State Director has final authority over student eligibility, GPA classification, team composition, participation, documentation, and certification within the state.