

Guidance on Grading and Transcript Notations in the AMCAS Application

The disruption of school terms because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) has compelled many academic institutions to implement alternative grading policies. Working with the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), the AAMC has identified the following three common policies academic institutions are implementing:

- Maintaining their current letter grade system with no change
- Offering opt-in alternative grading
- Offering mandatory alternative grading

Grading and the AMCAS GPA

In the AMCAS application, all courses with credit hours and letter grades **are** calculated into the AMCAS GPA, regardless of whether the credit is counted towards a degree or has been counted towards a school-calculated GPA.

Binary non-qualitative grades (e.g., pass/fail, credit/no credit, and satisfactory/unsatisfactory) do not have value or weight on the AMCAS GPA. These classes are counted as Supplemental Hours in the application *unless* a school provides an alpha letter grade conversion. Alternative grading policies are school-specific. Courses graded on a pass/fail basis are usually indicated by special transcript grades and/or symbols designating pass and fail.

How are grades reflected in the AMCAS GPA?

Scenario 1

Figure 1 shows the sample coursework entry for an applicant who received standard letter grades during the second semester of their senior year.

STAT	CLASS	YEAR	TERM	NAME	NUM	TYPE	LAB/LEC	OT GRD	OT HRS	SEM HRS	SUPP HRS	AM GRD
SR	BIOL €	2018	S2	INTR BIOL ANTHRO	201		LEC	A £	4	4		A
SR	BIOL	2018	S2	PLANTS IN HUMAN AFFAIRS	112		LEC	A	3	3		A ¥
SR	ARTS	2018	S2	THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL ON MASS CULTURE & FILM	200		LEC	A	3	3		A
SR	BIOL	2018	S2	CRIT ANALYSIS BIO RES	211		LEC	A	2	2		A

Figure 1

The applicant took four courses, three of those courses were classified as Biology (€). These courses are included in the Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Math (BCPM) GPA. The applicant received official transcript (£) grades of A for all their courses. Their total credit hours earned for this semester was 12. Their AMCAS grades (¥) are converted to A for all their courses this semester.

Figure 2 is the applicant's grading history that an admissions officer will receive from AMCAS.

	BCPM GPA	BCPM Hours	AO GPA	AO Hours	Total GPA	Total Hours
High School						
Freshman	3.87	21.00	3.67	9.00	3.81	30.00
Sophomore	3.12	17.00	3.25	12.00	3.17	29.00
Junior	3.71	17.00	3.71	21.00	3.71	38.00
Senior	4.00 €	17.00 £	3.40 ¥	15.00 §	3.72 ß	32.00 8
Postbaccalaureate Undergraduate						
Cumulative Undergraduate	3.68	72.00	3.53	57.00	3.61	129.00 f
Graduate						
Supplemental Hours						
Pass/Fail - Pass						
Pass/Fail - Failed						
Advanced Placement						
CLEP						
Other						

Figure 2

The applicant's grading history shows a 4.0 BCPM GPA in their senior year (€). The calculated BCPM hours for their senior year is 17 (£). The coursework entry (Figure 1) shows 12 of those hours were received in their senior year second semester. The applicant's GPA for all other (AO) courses is 3.40 (¥) where 3 of the 15 awarded credit hours (§) are from the second semester art course. The applicant received an AMCAS GPA of 3.72 (ß) with 32 credit hours (8) earned for their senior year. The cumulative undergraduate AMCAS calculated GPA report is row (f).

Scenario 2

Figure 3 shows the sample coursework entry for an applicant who received pass/fail grades during the second semester of their senior year.

STAT	CLASS	YEAR	TERM	NAME	NUM	TYPE	LAB/LEC	OT GRD	OT HRS	SEM HRS	SUPP HRS	AM GRD
SR	BIOL €	2020	S2	INTR BIOL ANTHRO	201	PF	LEC	P £	4		4	P
SR	BIOL	2020	S2	PLANTS IN HUMAN AFFAIRS	112	PF	LEC	P	3		3	P ¥
SR	ARTS	2020	S2	THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL ON MASS CULTURE & FILM	200	PF	LEC	P	3		3	P
SR	BIOL	2020	S2	CRIT ANALYSIS BIO RES	211	PF	LEC	P	2		2	P

Figure 3

The applicant took four courses, three of those courses were classified as Biology (€). These courses are not included in the BCPM GPA. The applicant received official transcript (£) grades of P for all courses. The total credit hours earned for this semester was 12. Their AMCAS grades (¥) are converted to P for all courses this semester.

Figure 4 is the applicant’s grading history an admissions officer will receive from AMCAS.

	BCPM GPA	BCPM Hours	AO GPA	AO Hours	Total GPA	Total Hours
High School						
Freshman	3.87	21.00	3.67	9.00	3.81	30.00
Sophomore	3.12	17.00	3.25	12.00	3.17	29.00
Junior	3.71	17.00	3.71	21.00	3.71	38.00
Senior	4.00 €	8.00 £	3.25 ¥	12.00 §	3.55 β	20.00 ♂
Postbaccalaureate Undergraduate						
Cumulative Undergraduate	3.64	63.00	3.50	54.00	3.57	117.00 ₣
Graduate						
Supplemental Hours						
Pass/Fail - Pass	12.00 ¤					
Pass/Fail - Failed						
Advanced Placement						
CLEP						
Other						

Figure 4

The applicant’s grading history shows a 4.0 BCPM GPA (€) in their senior year. The calculated BCPM hours for their senior year was 8 (£). They received 9 hours from the second semester biology courses which, is counted under Supplemental Hours (¤). The applicant’s AO GPA for courses was 3.25 (¥). Three of the 12 (§) awarded credit hours are from the second semester art coursework and counted in the Supplemental Hours (¤). The applicant received an AMCAS GPA of 3.55 (β) with 20 credit hours (♂) earned for their senior year. All pass/fail credits are recorded in Supplemental Hours (¤). The applicant earned 12 pass/fail hours in their second semester. The cumulative undergraduate AMCAS GPA is represented here (₣).

How do standard grades compare to pass/fail in the AMCAS GPA?

Credit hours for standard grading scales are calculated in both quality points and the GPA.

1. AMCAS Weight x Semester Hours = Quality Points
2. Total Quality Points / Total Semester Hours = GPA

		BCPM GPA	BCPM Hours	AO GPA	AO Hours	Total GPA	Total Hours
Scenario 1	Standard Grading Calculation	3.68	72.00	3.53	57.00	3.61	129.00
Scenario 2	Pass/Fail Grading Calculation	3.64	63.00	3.50	54.00	3.57	117.00
	Supplemental Hours	12.00					

Figure 5

Figure 5 includes the cumulative undergraduate history for both scenarios. In Scenario 1, the applicant’s performance of all As would have increased their senior year and cumulative GPAs. In Scenario 2,



pass/fail credit hours are counted as Supplemental Hours and not included in the GPA and hour totals. As a result, the applicant from Scenario 2 has 12 fewer total semester hours calculated in their GPA compared to the applicant in Scenario 1. This scenario would result in the applicant's senior year and cumulative GPAs remaining the same as they were when the spring semester began.

How should medical schools review pass/fail or alternative grades?

When evaluating applications, review the courses that received supplemental hours to determine if the prerequisites were met. As you assess an applicant's course history, consider the circumstances of the grading designation. It is difficult to determine how an applicant's grades may be impacted during these unprecedented times. The AMCAS Advisory Committee has encouraged schools to take these challenges into consideration when reviewing applications this cycle and factor them into their admissions process when reconsidering GPA screening requirements.

We have advised applicants to review their school-specific grading policies to understand how they are reported and use [the AMCAS Application Grade Conversion Guide](#) to estimate their cumulative and AMCAS GPAs. Applicants are also encouraged to use the [MSAR Advisor Reports](#) and reference school-specific grading requirements for the most current information on medical school admissions.