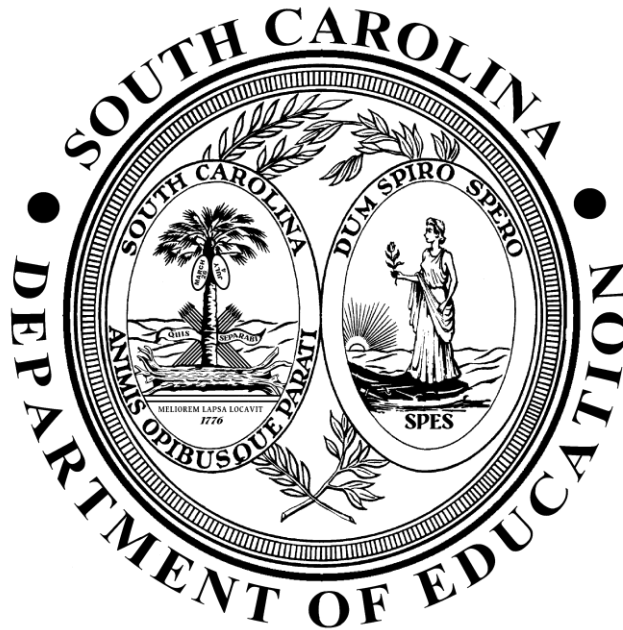


STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN  
*STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION*



## South Carolina Uniform Grading Policy

South Carolina State Board of Education

May 14, 2019

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## **The Legislative Mandate**

S.C. Code Ann. § 59-5-68 (2004) reads as follows:

The General Assembly finds that given the fact the State provides substantial financial academic assistance to students of the State based on cumulative grade point averages and districts currently use a variety of grading scales, it is in the best interest of the students of South Carolina for a uniform grading scale to be developed and adopted by the State Board of Education to be implemented in all public schools of the State. Therefore, the State Board of Education is directed to establish a task force comprised of superintendents, principals, teachers, and representatives of school boards and higher education no later than June 30, 1999. The task force shall make recommendations to the board including, but not limited to, the following: consistent numerical breaks for letter grades; consideration of standards to define an honors course; appropriate weighting of courses; and determination of courses and weightings to be used in the calculation of class rank. The task force shall report its findings to the State Board of Education no later than December 1, 1999. The State Board of Education shall then adopt and school districts of the State shall begin using the adopted grading scale no later than the 2000–2001 school year.

The State Board of Education (SBE) adopted a Uniform Grading Policy (UGP) for South Carolina’s public schools in December 1999. That policy, which applied to all students who first enrolled in the ninth grade in the 2000–01 school year, was revised in 2007, 2016 (ten-point scale), and 2017. The particulars of the state’s revised Uniform Grading Policy are set forth in the pages that follow here.

The SBE authorizes the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) to amend the UGP administrative procedures, as the SCDE deems appropriate.

## Letter Grade Equivalents

\*After 2016, the SC Grading Scale is as follows:

A= 90-100

B= 80-89

C= 70-79

D= 60-69

F= 0-59

WF= 50

FA= 50

P= no value

WP= no value

AU= no value

NP= no value

\*Prior to 2016, the SC Grading Scale was as follows:

A= 93-100

B= 85-92

C= 77-84

D= 70-76

F= 0-69

FA= 61

WF= 61

WP= no value

Please see the UGP Administrative Procedures for tables converting numerical average and letter grades to College Prep, Honors, and Extended Quality Point weightings.

### Courses Carrying High School Units of Credit

The uniform grading scale and the system for calculating GPAs and class rank will apply to all courses carrying high school units of credit; including units earned at the middle or junior high school levels.

#### *Middle Level and Junior High Schools*

S.C. Regulation 43-232.I.B permits high school credit for middle school students as follows:

When approved by the principal and the parents, a student promoted to the seventh or eighth grade may take units of ninth grade or higher work for high school credit. The high school courses offered must be limited to courses that are currently in the 9–12 section of the *Activity Coding System for the Student Information System*, with the exception of physical education and health education courses. It is expected that students taking courses for high school credit have been taught and have mastered the middle

school level standards prior to taking the courses for high school credit. The number of high school credits permitted at the middle school or junior high school level must be determined by the local school district.

Courses receiving high school credit must be legitimate high school courses from the state *Activity Coding System* manual and must reflect full coverage of the standards associated with the high school course. A middle school may not use middle school courses with middle school standards to count for high school credit. It is expected that students taking courses for high school credit have been taught and have mastered the middle school level standards prior to taking the courses for high school credit. All courses for which a middle school student has received high school credit from an accredited public school (both in and out of district), will transfer with the student and must be transcribed to conform with the South Carolina UGP.

## **Honors Courses**

Honors courses, which extend and deepen the opportunities provided by courses at the high school level, are designed for students exhibiting superior abilities in the particular content area. The honors curriculum places emphasis on critical and analytical thinking, rational decision-making and inductive and deductive reasoning. The goal of the UGP as to honors courses is to be rigorous and uniform while allowing for local decision-making.

### *Determining Honors Weighting*

Beginning in 2017–18, all new courses that are assigned honors, weighting must meet the criteria in the *SC Honors Framework*. Previous courses approved for honors weighting before 2017–18 may be re-examined with the *SC Honors Framework* criteria per local decision. The district should retain evidence that all honors courses meet the criteria of the *SC Honors Framework* and provide such evidence as requested by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE). No Physical Education 1 course or course that can be substituted for PE 1 (including Marching Band, ROTC, or any other course that may be approved in the future for PE 1) is eligible to receive honors weight.

Students taking courses for high school credit in the middle school or junior high school grade levels may receive honors weighting when calculating the high school GPA. If so, evidence must be retained by the district and presented to the SCDE upon request that these courses meet the criteria of the *SC Honors Framework* to ensure rigor and comparability across the state.

To receive honors weighting, local-board-approved honors courses must be developed and evaluated using the *SC Honors Framework*. It is the role of the local board to ensure that all elements in the framework are adhered to when the course is taken for initial board approval. The district should retain evidence that the honors course framework was applied to the development of the course. Courses (and supporting evidence) may be audited by the SCDE in the desk audit and full accreditation audit cycles.

School districts may designate honors courses and give the assigned weighting under the following conditions:

- A. There must be evidence that the honors-level course represents extension, acceleration, and enrichment of the South Carolina College Preparatory (CP) level course study. Curriculum should indicate depth in rigor, complexity, challenges, and creativity beyond the CP level course as outlined in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*.
- B. There must be evidence of appropriate differentiation in instructional practices for advanced learners that will enhance the delivery of instruction while strengthening the components outlined in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*.
- C. There must be evidence that purposeful assessment practices align with the honors level curriculum and instructional best practices, to include pre-assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment.

These conditions are further described in the *SC Honors Framework*, Appendix A. One half of a quality point (.5) is added to the CP weighting for honors courses that have evidence of meeting the three criteria listed above.

These criteria apply to all honors courses, including those offered online and in nontraditional settings.

#### *Transferring Courses with Honors Weight*

All courses receiving honors weight from in-state and out-of-state schools (accredited under the regulations of the board of education of that state or the appropriate regional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education) must be transcribed at honors weight even if the same honors course is not offered at the receiving school.

Students transferring from schools not accredited under the regulations of the appropriate board of education or by the U.S. Department of Education, including, but not limited to home school, private school, or out-of-state non-public charter school, shall have the opportunity to provide evidence of work to be considered for honors weighting when transferring to a public school. The district shall have the right to evaluate evidence provided by the parent or student before transcribing the course(s) at honors weight. The receiving school may use the *SC Honors Framework* criteria to evaluate such evidence. The receiving school makes the final decision on whether to award the honors weighting. The SCDE advises districts to adopt a policy for accepting units of credit from home school, private school, or out-of-state non-public charter school for consistency. Refer to Regulation 43-273.

#### **Dual Credit Courses**

Dual credit courses—whether they are taken at the school where the student is enrolled or at a postsecondary institution—are those courses for which the student has been granted permission by his or her home school to earn both high school units of credit and college credit. One quality point may be added to the CP weighting for dual credit courses that are applicable to baccalaureate degrees, associate degrees, or certification programs that lead to an industry credential offered by accredited institutions per established district articulation agreements (see SBE Regulation 43-234, Defined Program, Grades 9–12, and Regulation 43-259, Graduation

Requirements).

### *Dual Credit Agreements*

To award dual credit, districts must develop detailed agreements with partner institutions of higher education (IHEs), whether two-year or four-year colleges or technical colleges, that clearly outline the specific courses and associated procedures allowed. Students may not take college courses on their own time at an institution of higher education with the expectations that the course would be transcribed back to the high school transcript without first consulting the district to determine if the course is a part of the agreement between the high school and IHE.

### *Grade Reporting*

Permission must be granted by the student's home high school prior to the student's enrollment in a dual credit course to earn both a unit for high school credit and college credit. Students taking dual credit courses are building two transcripts: the IHE transcript and the high school transcript. For example, if a student receives a final numeric grade of 92 in a dual credit course, the final numerical average should be transcribed on the high school transcript and correlated to the high school GPA quality points associated with that numerical average. The IHE GPA quality points for the college transcript may be different for the same numerical grade in the course when the IHE rules regarding quality points on the college transcript differ.

The IHE shall provide documentation of the final grade to the high school in the form of an official/secure grade report. When possible, a numerical average of zero to 100 should be provided to the high school for the purpose of recording a final grade for the high school transcript. If the numeric grade is not possible, the UGP conversion rule for other grades will be applied. (Please see the Administrative Procedures for the UGP.)

College remediation and orientation courses may not be awarded the additional quality point above CP weighting (i.e., dual credit weight). Districts also have authority in their agreement to define other courses offered by a college that may not be articulated back to the high school transcript above CP weighting.

### *Transferring Dual Credit Courses*

Dual credit courses taken in South Carolina may earn 1.0 quality point weighting above CP pending the district's agreement with the institution of higher education. All dual credit courses earned in South Carolina should be transcribed with the 1.0 quality point weight when the student transfers to a new school. Dual credit courses earned out of state may or may not carry quality point weightings. When a student transfers, the weight applied at the sending institution according to that state's regulations will be applied on the transcript in the receiving South Carolina high school. A high school should NOT change the weight of a dual credit course to match South Carolina's process when they transcribe the course.

## **State Board Approved Advanced Learning Opportunities**

(e.g., Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate Courses, and Advanced International Certificate of Education Courses)

The following criteria apply to all approved Advanced Learning Opportunity (ALO) courses,  
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including those offered online and in other nontraditional settings and those recorded on a transcript from an out-of-state school that is accredited under the regulations of the board of education of that state or the appropriate regional accrediting agency (as specified in SBE Regulation 43-273, Transfers and Withdrawals).

1. Only ALO courses may be awarded a full quality point above the CP weighting. Seminar or support courses for ALOs may be weighted as honors but not as ALO courses. Quality points awarded to ALO courses cannot be changed based on participation or non-participation in an ALO standardized final examination (i.e., AP examination).
2. An approved ALO course that requires a minimum of 120 hours of instruction may receive one quality point of weighting per course. An ALO course that requires a minimum of 240 hours of instruction may receive one quality point of weighting per course (i.e., two weighted credits).

## **Converting Grades on Transcripts**

### *Out-of-State or Non-Public Schools*

When transcripts are received from accredited out-of-state schools (or in state from accredited sources other than the public schools as defined in Regulation 43-273) and numerical averages are provided, those averages must be used in transferring the grades to the student's record. If letter grades with no numerical averages are provided, the conversion scale effective during the year the course was completed will be used. For courses completed during school years 2015–16 and prior, the following conversion will apply: A = 96, B = 88, C = 80, D = 73, F = 61. For courses completed in 2016–17 and after, the following conversion will apply: A = 95, B = 85, C = 75, D = 65, F = 50. If the transcript indicates that the student has earned a passing grade in any course in which he or she had a numerical average lower than 60, the grade will be recorded as a “P” on the transcript and follow the guidelines for entering the “P” on the transcript. See SBE Regulation 43-273 for additional information on transfers and withdrawals. If the transcript indicates that the student has earned a failing grade in any course in which he or she had a numerical average of 60 or above, the grade will be recorded as an “NP” on the transcript and follow the guidelines for entering the “NP” on the transcript.

### *Pass (P)/Fail (F) Grades*

If the transcript shows that the student has earned a grade of P (passing) or F (failing), that grade will be converted to a numerical designation on the basis of information secured from the sending institution as to the appropriate numerical value of the “P” or the “F.”

If no numerical average can be obtained for the “P,” an earned credit will be awarded and follow UGP Administrative Procedures for entering a “P” on the transcript. If no numerical average can be obtained from the sending institution on the “F,” an “NP” will be entered on the transcript. (See Administrative Procedures for other transfer grade issues.)



### *Local Board Approved Courses*

Local board approved courses awarded in a district may be transcribed from the sending school to the receiving school by applying the course code that most closely aligns to the course (i.e., High School 101 from school A could be transcribed as a “social studies elective” in school B). High schools should refer to the *Activity Coding System Manual* for the appropriate transfer course code.

### *Auditing a Course*

Local boards may establish policy to allow a student to audit a course and to receive a grade of AU that will have no impact on the student’s GPA. The decision to audit must be made in advance of taking the course and the student must agree to follow all school and classroom attendance, behavior, participation, and course requirements. The course must be marked for “no credit” and “not included in GPA” at the student level. Districts may develop policy that students auditing an (ALO) course may take the examinations at their own expense since the state only provides funds for students formally enrolled in AP courses. Use the *Activity Coding System manual* for guidance on using course codes for auditing.

### *Non-accredited School Grades (Including Homeschool Grades)*

Students enrolling from non-public schools, which meet the accreditation definition as defined by Regulation 43-273, will have credits accepted. Districts are encouraged to establish local board policy to address a non-accredited school’s transfer grades and credits. Options for validation may include administration of district-approved assessments, examination of student work to include any supporting valid documentation, assignment of the grades “P” or “NP” to the transfer credits, or a combination of local board approved options. The district must also apply the SC Honors Framework to the evidence provided to determine if honors weight can be transferred to the public school transcript. When a course credit coming from a homeschool has no match in the state high school *Activity Coding System manual*, an “elective transfer credit” in the content area may be awarded for that course.

### *International Grades*

The criteria for accepting international transcripts from international students are a local decision based on local policy. Where there are questions about a particular course, districts may attempt to gather as much course information from the sending school including course syllabi, standards, end of course assessment results, etc., to determine the course credits that are the best match. International students may have a course credit that is awarded at honors weight. If so, the district may review supporting evidence to justify the honors weighting. The district may also apply the SC Honors Framework to the evidence provided by the student. When a course credit coming from an international school has no match in the state *Activity Coding System manual*, an “elective transfer credit” in the content area may be awarded for that course. Additional guidance may be obtained from the Office of Federal and State Accountability at the SCDE on an individual basis.

### **Withdrawing from a Course**

With the first day of enrollment in the course as the baseline, students who withdraw from a course within three days in a 45-day course, five days in a 90-day course, or ten days in a 180-day course will do so without penalty.

The three-, five-, and ten-day limitations for withdrawing from a course without penalty do not apply to course or course level changes approved by the administration of a school. Students who withdraw from a course with administrative approval will be given a WP for the course. Students who withdraw from a course after the specified time of three days for a 45-day course, five days in a 90-day course, or ten days in a 180-day course without administrative approval, shall be assigned a WF/50. The WF/50 will be calculated in the students overall grade point average. Withdrawal limitations for distance learning, dual credit, and virtual courses will be established by local districts in conjunction with partner institutions of higher education and Virtual SC enrollment and withdrawal deadlines.

Students who drop out of school or are expelled after the allowed period for withdrawal but before the end of the grading period will be assigned grades in accordance with the following policies:

1. The student will receive a WP if he or she was passing the course. The grade of WP will carry no earned units of credit and no quality points to be factored into the student's GPA.
2. The student will receive a WF if he or she was failing the course. The grade of WF will carry no earned units of credit but will be factored into the student's GPA as a 50.

#### *Excessive Absences (Failure due to Absences)*

As noted in Regulation 43-274 VII(B), students with absences may make up work or demonstrate proficiency as determined by the local school district. The local school board shall develop policy on the body of evidence that is acceptable to demonstrate proficiency. If a grade of FA is assigned, it will carry no earned CP units but will be factored into the student's GPA as a 50.

#### **Retaking a Course**

Any student may retake a course at the same level of difficulty if the student has earned a D, P, NP, WP, FA, WF, or an F in that course. If the same level course is not accessible, the course may be retaken at a different level of rigor. Districts may extend the policy to allow students making any grade to retake any course per local board decision. A student who has taken a course for a unit of high school credit prior to the ninth grade year may retake the course at the same difficulty level regardless of the grade he or she has earned. Retaking the course means that the student completes the entire course again (not a subset of the course such as through credit or content recovery). If the course being retaken has an EOCEP, the EOCEP must be retaken. All course attempts from middle and high school will show on the transcript. Only one course attempt and the highest grade earned for the course will be calculated in the GPA.

A student who retakes a high school credit course from middle school must complete it before

the beginning of the second year of high school or before the next sequential course (whichever comes first). A student in grades nine through twelve must retake a course by the end of the next school year or before the next sequential course (whichever comes first).

For all grade levels, all courses will remain on the transcript. However, only the highest grade will be used in figuring the student's GPA.

## **Credit Recovery Courses**

### *Definition*

Credit recovery is defined as a course-specific, skill-based learning opportunity for students who have previously failed to master content or skills required to receive credit. The term "Credit Recovery" refers to a block of instruction that is less than the entirety of the course. Credit Recovery targets specific components or a subset of the standards to address deficiencies necessary for student proficiency in the overall course.

### *Rules and Procedures*

Districts that provide Credit Recovery shall develop and implement a Credit Recovery board policy that includes rules, guidelines, and processes that shall be available to faculty, students, and parents/guardians. At a minimum, district policies must address the following areas:

1. Admission to and removal from the Credit Recovery Program:
  - a. Districts shall establish an application process that requires consent of parent or guardian;
  - b. Districts shall establish minimum criteria to determine eligibility for participation in the Credit Recovery Program;
  - c. Districts shall determine the number of Credit Recovery courses that a student can take at one time, in the course of a school year, or during grades nine through twelve; and
  - d. Districts shall determine the length of time for a Credit Recovery course. In general, the length of a credit recovery course should be based on the content and skills that a student needs to master. Credit Recovery courses taken during semester one or two must be completed within one academic school year. Any students taking Credit Recovery courses in a summer session must complete the coursework and receive a final grade by August 15. Those seniors who take a Credit Recovery course after the school's graduation date for the spring term will be considered summer graduates and must also complete coursework by August 15.
  
2. Instructional methodology used in the Credit Recovery Program:
  - a. Districts shall determine and evaluate the alignment of instructional methodology and materials used for the credit recovery (i.e., online program, VirtualSC, direct instruction, computer assisted instruction, etc.) to the state standards; and
  - b. Districts shall provide professional development for teachers and facilitators involved with the Credit Recovery Program.

3. Content and Curriculum:
  - a. Credit recovery curriculum shall be based on South Carolina standards for all courses; and
  - b. Credit recovery curriculum shall be aligned across courses within a district.
  - c. Eligible credit recovery courses shall be aligned to South Carolina Standards.

### *Grades*

Districts are responsible for establishing specific procedures for evaluation of student progress and determining grades. For transcribing the final grade in a credit recovery course, the following procedures shall be followed.

1. The original failing grade will remain on the transcript as is.
2. A new course starting with the appropriate activity code, grades scale designation, and unit marker will be entered on the student record (i.e., 3024CRCW English 1-CR.) The new credit recovery course will be marked “CR” at the end of the course title in the student information system.
3. If a student passes the credit recovery course with a 60 or higher, the passing grade is entered as a “P” as the final grade and transcribed to the numerical grade value of “0” as indicated by the addition of the “P” to the grade scale chart. If a student fails the credit recovery course with a grade below a 60, the grade is entered as an “NP” and transcribed to the numerical grade value of “0” as indicated by the addition of “NP” to the grade scale chart. Thus, the credit recovery course does not impact the student’s GPA.
4. A student wishing to modify his or her GPA shall repeat the full course for credit and not seek a credit recovery solution.

### *Cost*

Credit recovery courses taught through VirtualSC may be free to all students. Local board approved credit recovery programs may have a nominal fee that meets the requirements of the South Carolina statute on fees. District must keep in mind the following when making local board policy:

**§59-19-90** The [local] board of trustees shall also:

...

(8) Charge matriculation and incidental fees. Charge and collect matriculation and incidental fees from students; however, regulations or policies adopted by the board regarding charges and collections must take into account the students' ability to pay and must hold the fee to a minimum reasonable amount. Fees may not be charged to students eligible for free lunches and must be reduced pro rata for students eligible for reduced price lunches.

### *Credit Recovery Courses with EOCEPs*

Students who are enrolled in courses requiring state end-of-course examinations must take the examinations and fulfill all requirements outlined in Regulation 43-262. Students will be allowed to take the examination only once, at the end of the regular course duration. Students who participate in credit recovery courses will not retake the end of course examination as part of credit recovery.

## **Content Recovery**

### *Definition*

Content recovery is defined as a course-specific, skill-based learning opportunity for students who are still enrolled in the course with the original teacher of record assigned by the school. Content recovery allows students to retake a subset of the course including a single unit, more than one unit, or supplemental assignments/activities assigned and approved by a certified teacher as needed for student mastery of course content.

### *Rules and Procedures*

Districts that provide content recovery shall develop and implement a Content Recovery Program board policy and processes. The policy and processes shall be available to faculty, students, and parents/guardians. At a minimum, district policies must address the following areas:

1. Admission to and removal from the Content Recovery Program:
  - a. District shall establish minimum criteria to determine eligibility for participation in the Content Recovery Program;
  - b. District shall determine the number of content recovery opportunities that a student can take at one time or in the course of a school year;
  - c. District will communicate content recovery opportunities with faculty, parents, and students; and
  - d. District shall determine the length of time for content recovery. Since this opportunity occurs during the student's enrollment in the course with his/her teacher of record, conclusion of the content recovery units should occur as close to the end of the course as possible.

### *Grades*

Upon satisfactory completion of all assigned work within the time allowed, the certified teacher shall include the recovered work into the final grade to arrive at a new grade for the course based on the district's policy.

### *Cost*

Local board approved content recovery programs may have fees in accordance with state statutory requirements for matriculation and incidental fees (must take into account ability to pay, must be minimum reasonable, must not be charged to students eligible for free lunches, and must be reduced pro rata for students eligible for reduced-price lunches). S.C. Code § 59-19-90(8).