



Understanding GPA

What is it?

The Grade Point Average (GPA) is the average of all your grades throughout your four years of high school. It is used as a tool to determine how successful you were overall in your academic venture. At Chaminade, the GPA is reported each grading period, however, the only grades that go on the transcript are the final semester grades. Keep in mind however; it is only one of many tools that Colleges use to determine eligibility for admission.

How is the GPA calculated?

The method for calculating a GPA is a universal one. Each traditional grade is assigned a certain amount of points as follows: A = 4; B = 3; C = 2; D = 1; F = 0. Each of these points is added up for a total that is then divided by the number of courses taken.

Here is a sample report card and GPA calculation:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Religion: A | (= 4 points) |
| 2. English: B | (= 3 points) |
| 3. Science: B | (= 3 points) |
| 4. Math: C | (= 2 points) |
| 5. Social Studies: A | (= 4 points) |
| 6. Fine Arts: D | (= 1 point) |
| 7. Foreign Language: A | (= 4 points) |

Total points = 21

$$21 \div 7 = 3.0 \text{ GPA}$$

Some schools will attribute a different point value to grades with + or -, for example, a B+ may be worth 3.85 points while a B- is worth only 2.85. At Chaminade, we do not calculate + and - grades. The main reason for this is that we choose to align ourselves with the same methods of GPA calculation as most Colleges and Universities - who typically do not calculate these either.

What is the point bump?

In honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses, the points attributed to certain grades are higher. This is referred to as a *point bump*. The grade points in these courses look like this: A = 5; B = 4; C = 3; D = 1; F = 0. Note that you need a C or better in an honors or AP course to receive the bump. Let's look the same sample report card as above, using the same grades, but this time with honors and AP courses included:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Religion: A | (= 4 points) |
| 2. <i>Honors</i> English: B | (= 4 points) |
| 3. <i>AP</i> Science: B | (= 4 points) |
| 4. <i>Honors</i> Math: C | (= 3 points) |
| 5. Social Studies: A | (= 4 points) |
| 6. Fine Arts: D | (= 1 point) |
| 7. Foreign Language: A | (= 4 points) |

Total points = 24

$$24 \div 7 = 3.42 \text{ GPA}$$

What is the CUM?

The cumulative GPA (CUM), is the average of each semester grading period's individual GPA. While Chaminade issues three progress reports per semester, a student's GPA is calculated using only semester grades. This means that the final cumulative GPA for a Chaminade graduate is based upon 8 semester grading periods.

Often students are frustrated by the "slow" growth of their cumulative GPA. For example, a student may have maintained a solid 3.5 GPA for 5 semesters and then, in the second semester of junior year, he or she gets a 4.0! As admirable as this is, it may not have a huge effect on his or her cum. Look at the example below:

9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade
semester 1 = 3.429	semester 1 = 3.529	semester 1 = 3.500
semester 2 = 3.714	semester 2 = 3.657	semester 2 = 4.000
CUM = 3.571	CUM = 3.582	CUM = 3.638

It is advantageous, therefore, to start off with a high cumulative GPA right in the 9th grade. Students should not make the mistake of thinking they have time to turn it on later.

How do Colleges calculate my GPA?

Most colleges and Universities will re-calculate a student's GPA prior to considering them for admission. Furthermore, they will pick and choose as to which high school courses they want to include in the calculation. The UC system, for example, has something called the A-G Course List. This list categorizes the number of semester grades they will consider in each discipline. (The A category, for example, is History. The UC requires four semesters of History, and so on). The UC course list for Chaminade is available online at <<<http://www.ucop.edu/doorways/>>>. It is recommended that UC bound students refer to this list early, so as to prepare more fully for UC.

Do Colleges Honor Point Bumps?

Virtually every College or University will honor the point bump for any course taken throughout high school. The AP and honors courses, however, are a different story. Again, using the UC as an example, they will calculate an honors point bump only for honors courses that are the most advanced level offered. For example, I may take Honors Lit. and Comp. as a Freshman; Honors American Lit. and Comp. as a Sophomore; Honors British Lit. and Comp. as a Junior; and AP English as a Senior. While your Chaminade cum will be calculated with the point bump for all courses, the UC will calculate only the AP and the Honors British Lit. and Comp. Because English is a B requirement where 8 – semesters are required, the ninth and tenth grade honors courses will not be granted a point bump.

If the colleges do not calculate all my point bumps, then why take honors courses?

Here are three good reasons why a student should include honors coursework throughout their four years:

1. The point bumps are still calculated in the Chaminade cum. This will serve as an advantage when it comes time for decile ranking (i.e. where you place in the class by percentage ranking).
2. Colleges and Universities like to see that you challenged yourself throughout your four years.
3. The advanced coursework will better prepare you for a rigorous University environment.