

2024–25 Eligibility Guidelines

School Participation

The California Academic Decathlon (CAD) program is a rigorous academic competition that challenges high school students in ten different academic disciplines. To participate, schools must form official teams that adhere to specific eligibility requirements.

Schools may participate in California Academic Decathlon's (CAD) program with as few as one (1) full-time enrolled high school student if the region the school is affiliated with allows them. Schools that do not have an official team may participate in Regional Academic Decathlon activities (i.e., scrimmages, workshops and other special events open to participating schools).

Participating schools that do not have an official team will not be qualified to advance to the state online competitions (Octathlon and Heptathlon) but not the Academic Decathlon championship. Team eligibility requirements ensure consistency in competition.

Teams that advance to the state championship, either by winning their regional competition or scoring high enough to receive an invitation by CAD, will not be disqualified if their team number drops below the minimum required to compete as a team following the regional competition. This rule allows for unforeseen circumstances that may cause a decathlete to withdraw following the regional competition and before the commencement of the state championship.

Team Participation

An official CAD team consists of six to nine full-time high school students from the same school, ranging from ninth to twelfth grade. Each school is uniquely identified by a County-District-School (CDS) code registered with the California Department of Education. To qualify as a full-time student, a student must be enrolled in at least four class periods per day.

In order to ensure a balanced representation of students with varying academic abilities, each team must be composed of two to three decathletes in each of the following categories: Honor, Scholastic, and Varsity. These categories are determined based on a student's grade point average (GPA). Students with a GPA between 0.00 and 3.19 are classified as Varsity, those with a GPA between 3.20 and 3.79 are classified as Scholastic, and those with a GPA between 3.80 and 4.00 are classified as Honor.

Varsity: 0.00 – 3.19 GPA **Scholastic:** 3.20 – 3.79 GPA **Honor:** 3.80 – 4.00 GPA

One of the unique features of the CAD program is that decathletes have the flexibility to compete in a higher division than their own GPA category, but not in a lower division. This allows students to challenge themselves and compete at a higher level, even if their GPA does not strictly qualify them for that division.

The structure of CAD teams is designed to promote academic excellence, teamwork, and diversity. By requiring teams to have a mix of students from different academic backgrounds, the program ensures that all students have an opportunity to participate and contribute to their team's success. Additionally, the requirement that students compete in teams fosters a sense of camaraderie and cooperation, as students work together to achieve their goals.

Each team member participates in all ten events, and individual medals can be earned in each event. However, the final team standing is determined by the combined scores of the top six team members.

Standardized Scoring.

The scoring system ensures that teams of varying abilities have a fair chance to compete. Only the top two Honor scores, the top two Scholastic scores, and the top two Varsity scores are counted toward the team's final score. This means that even if a team has a few weaker performers, their overall score can be significantly boosted by the strong performances of their top students.

Standardized GPA Calculation – Determining A Student's Category.

To determine a student's category (Honor, Scholastic, or Varsity), their GPA is calculated based on a specific timeframe. For ninth-grade students, only grades earned in the eighth grade and the summer between eighth and ninth grade are considered. For tenth, eleventh, and twelfth-grade students, the "focus semesters" for GPA computation go back two years prior to the current grade level. This ensures that students are placed in the appropriate division based on their recent academic performance.

The CAD program also has specific guidelines for which courses are included in GPA calculations. Grades for courses that focus primarily on understanding ideas, concepts, and theories of a specific discipline, and that use objective assessments, are included in GPA calculations. Courses that directly relate to the theoretical content covered in the Academic Decathlon curriculum are also considered. However, grades for courses that are focused specifically on the Academic Decathlon competition itself are not included in GPA calculations.

Most courses that are hands-on, performance-based, skills-oriented, or lab-based, or that involve significant service learning or internships, are not included in GPA calculations. These courses tend to focus more on technical or vocational skills, and the majority of a student's grade in these courses is subjective in nature. Contact the CAD office to request a current copy of the Acceptable/Unacceptable Course List.

Inquiries regarding borderline courses should be referred to the CAD office, 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 CAD office about which course grades are applied to the Academic Decathlon GPA tabulation is final. This helps to prevent discrepancies and ensures that all students are evaluated on a level playing field.

The Standardized Grading System.

All alpha grades are converted to numerical values: A's are 4.0, B's are 3.0, C's are 2.0, and D's are 1.0. Grades below D are awarded 0 points. If a school uses numerical grades, they must be converted to alpha grades using the official conversion scale outlined in the school's transcript or profile.

Failed courses are included in GPA calculations, even if they do not earn credit. If a course is failed before the focus period but repeated within that period, only the repeat grade is counted. However, if a course is failed and repeated during the focus semesters, both grades are included in the GPA.

The classification of a course (advanced placement, honors, regular, or remedial) does not affect the grade's value. All final grades are counted at face value, without any weighting for honors classes. For

example, an "A" is always worth four points, regardless of whether it's considered an honors grade within the local district.

Plus and minus modifiers do not impact the letter grade used for GPA calculation. The state director may establish specific eligibility standards for decathletes from schools with non-traditional grading systems. These standards must be approved by the USAD before the state competition.

To calculate a student's GPA, the total points earned are divided by the total credits completed during the focus terms. Points are calculated by multiplying the alpha grade point by the credits completed for each course. Unless a school's curriculum specifies otherwise, full-year courses are typically worth 10.00 credits, half-year courses are worth 5.00 credits, trimester courses are worth 3.33 credits, and quarter-year courses are worth 2.25 credits.

The California Academic Decathlon's scoring system and eligibility requirements are designed to promote fair competition and ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed. By considering both individual and team performance, and by carefully calculating GPAs based on specific criteria, the CAD program strives to create a level playing field for all participants.

Incomplete, CR/NC, Or P/NP Grades

Incomplete, Credit/No Credit, or Pass/No Pass grades are not included in computing the GPA unless the decathlete received a letter grade that appears on the transcript. Once a grade is given to remove an incomplete, that grade must be used to determine the decathlete's GPA.

To change an incomplete, CR/NC, or P/NP to a grade, a coach "must" obtain proper verification and present findings to the regional coordinator for review. Proper verification must include approval from the school site administration and school district(s). The regional coordinator may assist the coach in obtaining the proper verification. The regional coordinator will present the findings to the state director for review. If approved, the state director will present the proposal to the United States Academic Decathlon Testing Director for review.

College Courses

College courses are included in the GPA only if high school credit is given, the course is listed on the official high school transcript and the course is an Academic Decathlon acceptable course. Credits completed are reported just like any other course credits completed within a GPA calculation period, using the number of credit hours completed as listed on the high school transcript.

Home-Schooled Students And Teams

USAD guidelines generally do not permit home-schooled teams to advance to the National Finals. However, home-schooled students may participate in the USAD if their school district allows home-schooled students to engage in extracurricular activities. Such students must participate through the high school they would attend if they were not home-schooled. Their GPA classification is determined by state laws governing home-schooled students. The State Academic Decathlon organization or state director has the final authority on home-schooled student participation and classification, and their decision is binding. In California, home-schooled students can participate as a team by joining the Independent Study Charter Region or their local high school if their district allows. Home-schooled students and their families should verify the specific requirements and eligibility criteria for their state's Academic Decathlon program.

Foreign Exchange Students

Foreign exchange students are eligible to participate in the Academic Decathlon. A foreign student who does not possess a valid transcript may participate in the Honor category of the high school they are currently enrolled in. If a coach wishes to qualify a foreign student for the Scholastic or Varsity category, the coach must provide adequate evidence that the student performed at a relative B or C status within the foreign system during the GPA calculation period prior to participation in the Decathlon. The state director has final authority regarding the participation and classification of foreign decathletes.

Changing Grades – Transcript Modification

If a district, school, or a teacher has a policy of changing grades on a transcript, the new grade must be used for the computation of the Decathlon GPA. A grade adjustment must be reported immediately to the regional coordinator and state director to review the transcript and determine the new category for the decathlete before the next level of competition (round) begins. If a change to a transcript is not reported and the state finds out about the change, the decathlete and school risk disqualification for the remainder of the year and suspension from participating in future years.

Decathlete Assistance

Without a copy of a decathlete's IEP and history of how the decathlete has been accommodated in previous competitions, decathletes are not allowed to bring any other materials or aides to assist them in testing other than approved calculators for math and wrist watches (timers) that produce no noise, into the testing room.

If a decathlete wishes to use words or phrases from a foreign language in his/her speech or interview, then they are responsible for translating those words and/or phrases into English, and this must be done within the given time limit. Foreign language interpreters are prohibited.

Verification Of Eligibility

Each high school will submit official transcripts to verify eligibility of team members to the regional coordinator at the local competition the team is entering. The school certification of transcripts will be the final indication of a decathlete's eligibility and GPA category. The regional coordinator shall check the GPA computation in accordance with the above guidelines and verify the eligibility of each team member. It is the responsibility of the coach and student to ensure they are placed in the correct category. In California, GPAs must be calculated using CAD's GPA Calculation Excel Worksheet which will automatically calculate a decathlete's GPA and identify the lowest division in which a decathlete may compete.

Teams Advancing To The State Competitions

The California Academic Decathlon (CAD) offers a diverse range of state competitions, catering to the varied needs and preferences of participating schools and individuals. These competitions include the Decathlon, the Octathlon, and the Heptathlon, each with its distinct format, eligibility requirements, and award structure.

The Decathlon is an in-person team competition that requires attendance at the designated host hotel. Teams participate in a welcome event, compete in all ten events, engage in the Super Quiz, and attend an in-person awards ceremony. Awards are recognized for both the overall highest-scoring teams and individual top scores in each category of each division.

The Octathlon is a virtual team competition held on a Saturday, excluding the practice portion. This competition is open to all schools that participated in the regional round 2 competition, provided they have an eligible team, and their decathletes are not competing in the Decathlon or Heptathlon. Teams compete in the seven written tests and the Essay. Awards are given to both overall top teams and individuals in each category and subject.

The Heptathlon, also a virtual competition, is designed for individual decathletes who wish to participate at the state level but are not part of a Decathlon or Octathlon team. Decathletes must represent a registered school participating in the CAD program for the current school year. Awards are given to overall individual top scores in each subject area along with overall top scores.

To be eligible to advance to the state competition, a decathlete must participate in all 10 individual subjects (Art, Economics, Essay, Interview, Literature, Mathematics, Music, Science, Social Science, and Speech) in Round 2 (regional competition), unless a valid, written statement explaining the circumstances is provided by the regional coordinator and approved by the state director. Additionally, each decathlete must be a full-time student at the high school they represent at the time of competition and must compete in the appropriate category (Honor, Scholastic, or Varsity) of Academic Decathlon.

The CAD offers a variety of state competitions to accommodate the diverse needs and preferences of participating schools and individuals. The Decathlon, Octathlon, and Heptathlon each provide unique opportunities for recognition and achievement, while ensuring a level playing field through standardized eligibility requirements.

Teams Advancing To The National Finals

The California Academic Decathlon (CAD) has established stringent guidelines for teams advancing to the National Finals. To qualify, teams must adhere to the USAD's prescribed composition, ensuring that the decathletes who attend the National Finals are the same individuals who participated in and won the state competition. Exceptions are only permitted in medical emergencies or other extenuating circumstances and must be approved in advance by both CAD and USAD.

The CAD organization retains the authority to disqualify a team from attending the National Finals if they do not comply with the established rules and practices. In such cases, another team may be selected to represent the state. The decision of the CAD organization is final, although they will promptly notify USAD of any such occurrences.

Following the completion of the National Finals, California teams, including online teams and individual participants, may be required to submit officially signed, stamped, and sealed high school transcripts for all decathletes who participated. These transcripts must be dated after April 1 and received by the CAD office by May 31. Failure to comply with this request will result in ineligibility for participation in both the state and national competitions the following year.

46th ANNUAL CALIFORNIA ACADEMIC DECATHLON

The Academic Decathlon is open to all decathletes, regardless of their race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, disability, or handicap. Participation in the program is voluntary and inclusive.

Questions regarding eligibility should be addressed to CAD at info@academicdecathlon.org or 707-330-3276.