

CA Student Aid Commission  
FAQs: Impact of COVID-19 on Commission Programs

The California Student Aid Commission releases the following FAQs to provide additional guidance and support to our high school and higher education partners.

**Cal Grant GPA**

**1. Have the Cal Grant GPA calculation instructions changed given the impact of COVID-19?**

No. The GPA calculation instructions have remained the same for all GPA types (i.e. high school, re-established, Community College, College).

**2. Are non-letter grades (i.e. Pass/No Pass, Credit/No Credit, etc.) counted in the calculation of a Cal Grant GPA?**

No, only letter grades can be used to calculate a Cal Grant GPA.

**3. Will switching to a non-letter grading system (i.e. P/NP, C/NC etc.) for any terms impacted by COVID-19 negatively impact my students from qualifying for a Cal Grant?**

Given that non-letter grades are not used to calculate a Cal Grant GPA, it will neither negatively nor positively impact students from qualifying for a Cal Grant award.

**4. NEW [04/09/2021] A student retakes a course which grants non-letter grades (i.e. CR/NC or P/NP). Can the previous letter grade be replaced?**

Non letter grades cannot be converted to a 4.00 GPA grading scale and are thus excluded. However, a previous letter grade can be excluded from the Cal Grant GPA calculation if the following occurs:

- Student received a failing letter grade (i.e. "F"), and
- Retake is completed with a passing non-letter grade (i.e. CR or P).

Even though the non-letter grade cannot be used in the calculation of Cal Grant GPA, it does allow for the failing letter grade to be excluded from the Cal Grant GPA calculation and thus, prevents the GPA from being negatively impacted by the inclusion of such failing grade.

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**5. I am still concerned that my students will be negatively impacted by the grading system changes brought on by COVID-19. What can my high school/college do to maximize the likelihood my students qualify for a Cal Grant?**

High schools should consider re-submitting Cal Grant GPAs for their current senior class a second time, the year following their high school graduation (unless the student has previously [Opted-Out](#)). High school students have a 2-year window to qualify for a [Cal Grant High School Entitlement Award](#) – during their senior year and one-year after high school graduation. Any student who did not qualify for a Cal Grant using the GPA that was submitted during their senior year in high school, will have a second opportunity to qualify for a Cal Grant award. Make sure GPAs for your last year grads are submitted prior to the March 2<sup>nd</sup> deadline for consideration in the subsequent award year.

Colleges should continue to submit GPAs according to their normal processes and timelines.

**6. Is senior year coursework included in the calculation of a high school GPA when re-submitting Cal Grant GPAs for last year's graduates?**

Yes. For students who are out of high school, the GPA must be calculated from high school coursework earned from 10<sup>th</sup> grade onward (including summer terms), regardless of whether the student has graduated. In some instances, this will help reduce the impact of moving towards a non-letter grading system (i.e. P/NP, C/NC etc.), given that you are including letter grades from coursework outside of the normal 10<sup>th</sup>– 11<sup>th</sup> grade calculation that is used when submitting grades for your current senior class. All other rules for calculating Cal Grant GPAs still apply. For complete Cal Grant calculation instructions, visit: <https://www.csac.ca.gov/post/high-school-gpa-calculation>

**7. Will re-submitting high school GPAs for my last year graduates cause the Cal Grant award to be withdrawn for any of my students who were previously awarded a Cal Grant?**

No. Students who were awarded a Cal Grant using the high school GPA that was submitted during senior year will retain their Cal Grant award. Re-submitting GPAs for last year's graduates will benefit those students who did not qualify for a Cal Grant using the GPA that was submitted last year during senior year.

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**8. What are the minimum GPA requirements for Cal Grants?**

High School Entitlement and Competitive Cal Grant Awards

- Cal Grant A = 3.00 or above
- Cal Grant B = 2.00 or above

Transfer Entitlement Awards

- Minimum 2.40 Community College GPA

Cal Grant C

- GPA not required.

Keep in mind that in addition to GPA, students must also meet all other [qualifying criteria](#) to be eligible for a Cal Grant award. Should you need a refresher, the Commission offers free, live webinars every month for high school and college staff on a variety of topics. To see a list of upcoming webinars, please visit:

<https://www.csac.ca.gov/trainings-0> (For College Staff)

<https://www.csac.ca.gov/trainings> (For High School Staff)

**9. Will any changes need to be made to our Student Information Systems (SIS) to ensure Cal Grant GPAs are calculated correctly to account for non-letter grade policies?**

Maybe. If your school or college has opted to assign non-letter grades (i.e. P/NP, C/NC etc.), please verify if your SIS systems are programmed to exclude these grades from the calculation of a Cal Grant GPA. Please work with your SIS administrator or contact your SIS company to ensure these changes are implemented prior to the submission of future Cal Grant GPAs. Manual calculation of a Cal Grant GPA may be needed in some instances.

**10. How will early high school graduates be impacted if non-letter grades (P/NP, C/NC etc.) are used?**

Although fewer in number compared to students who graduate as seniors, there are students who fulfill the California high school graduation requirements before their senior year. For these students, the calculation of a Cal Grant GPA requires special attention. Below are guidelines for how to calculate Cal Grant GPAs for early high school graduates, considering the impacts due to COVID-19:

Graduating	GPA Calculation Instructions
9 <sup>th</sup> grade	Submit test scores: GED, HiSET, ACT, SAT
10 <sup>th</sup> grade	Submit test scores: GED, HiSET, ACT, SAT
11 <sup>th</sup> grade	Use grades earned in 10 <sup>th</sup> grade (including summer after 10 <sup>th</sup> )

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**11. When can a test score be submitted in lieu of a GPA?**

Test scores from the GED, HiSET, ACT and SAT can be submitted in lieu of a GPA only if:

- No GPA exists
- All coursework taken during 10th – 12th grades cannot be converted to a GPA.
- The high school was unaccredited or did not have a UC approved course list.
- High School GPA is more than 5 years old.

**12. NEW [04/09/2021] What options are available for students who were unable to obtain a qualifying test score for Cal Grant purposes due to the cancelation of all in-person testing due to COVID-19?**

On March 5, 2021, an amendment to Education Code section 69432.9(c)(4)(B) went into effect, which allows CSAC to grant a one-time exception to the test score requirement for those students who do not have a GPA and were unable to submit a qualifying test score due to unavailability of designated testing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students who fall into this category must complete a waiver and email it to [StudentSupport@csac.ca.gov](mailto:StudentSupport@csac.ca.gov) by May 16, 2021. This flexibility is granted only for the 2021-22 award year and the waiver can be found at: <https://www.csac.ca.gov/post/cal-grant-test-score-lieu-gpa-waiver>

**Selective Service**

**1. Will the CA Student Aid Commission be loosening the requirement for male Cal Grant applicants to have registered for Selective Service?**

**CLARIFICATION ADDED [07/10/2020] Verification of Selective Service registration is waived for CA Dream Act applicants only.**

Executive Order N-65-20 signed by Governor Newsom on May 19, 2020 waives the requirement to verify Selective Service registration for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 award years for CA Dream Act applicants only.

Please note, the Executive Order does not waive the requirement to register for Selective Service. Male applicants completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) can register on the FAFSA itself or directly on the Selective Service website. Registration of Male applicants completing the CA Dream Act Application (CADAA) should register by mailing their registration to the Selective Service. Paper registration forms can be found at: <https://www.sss.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Form-1.pdf>

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**2. How can an institution resolve situations where Selective Service is unable to provide a Status Information Letter due to delays in the processing of mail brought on by COVID-19?**

Resolution will depend on which financial aid application the student has completed.

For male CADAA applicants, Executive Order N-65-20 waived the requirements in California Education Sections 69433.9 and 69400 and any accompanying regulations or formal policy to verify Selective Service registration for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 award years. Therefore, the Executive Order allows the requirement to provide a Status Information Letter to be waived for male CADAA applicants.

A FAFSA applicant who failed to register for Selective Service by the age of 26 and who is applying for a benefit for which Selective Service is a requirement, may request a Status Information Letter from Selective Service for review by a Financial Aid Administrator (FAA). Section 462 of the Military Selective Service Act gives the FAA at a college/university the authority to determine if an applicant “knowingly and willfully failed to register” for Selective Service. The FAA may refer to Volume 1, Chapter 5 of the Federal Student Aid Handbook for resolving instances when the Selective Service has not responded to a Status Information Letter request within 30 days.

Link: <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/fsa-handbook>

### **AB-540 Non-Resident Tuition Exemption**

**1. Is there any impact to the California Non-Resident Tuition Exemption requirements due to disruptions caused by COVID-19?**

Currently, there is no perceived impact. Even if schools switch to a non-letter grading system for any terms impacted by COVID-19, the student is still earning credits that can be counted towards meeting the California Non-Resident Tuition Exemption requirements, which can be found at:

<https://www.csac.ca.gov/post/california-nonresident-tuition-exemption>

### **High School Graduation Requirements**

**1. Are High School Entitlement awardees still required to verify high school graduation?**

Yes, verification of high school graduation is still required for high school entitlement awardees. Per California Education Code 69432.92 (b), high schools are to verify the graduation of their Cal Grant awarded students as soon as possible but no later than August 30<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, the Commission is encouraging high school graduates who have been awarded a Cal Grant to self-certify their high school graduation in the event their high school is unable to do so due to school closures because of COVID-19. Students can log onto their WebGrants 4 Students account to certify their high school graduation.