

Guide on grade point average (GPA) for students

What is GPA?

GPA is a measure of achievement, which can be used to indicate progress during your degree studies (cumulative) and/or as the final measure of achievement at the end of your degree (summative).

Grade points are assigned to individual modules (or courses) using a GPA scale. A GPA score is then calculated using the grade points from the modules that contribute to the final award (either at particular stages during a degree and/or at the end of a degree programme).

Why is GPA being introduced?

It is well-recognised that the UK honours degree is an established and highly-valued qualification, but the broad degree categories or 'classes' of the honours degree classification system (e.g. 2i, 2ii) do not sufficiently differentiate student performance. For example, there is a difference in achievement between a student who gains a 'low 2i' (e.g. 60%) and a student who gains a 'high 2i' (e.g. 67%) yet they are likely to both be awarded a 2i degree. Similarly, a student may have gained a 2ii, and whether this was in fact near a 2i class might not be readily recognised by employers.

A national initiative has explored the use of GPA in UK higher education. By working with a representative group of higher education providers, the initiative has looked at how GPA might be used to enhance the reporting of student achievement in the UK. This initiative has identified how GPA offers particular benefits to students:

- Increased clarity in relation to student achievement and performance – a specific grade is determined for each student (e.g. 3.75) rather than a degree class.
- International recognition – GPA is a system that is widely used and understood, an important consideration

in ensuring that UK graduates are best placed in an increasingly global marketplace.

Through using GPA, your degree results would be more readily comparable with those of graduates in other countries.

The national initiative on GPA worked with universities and colleges to develop and propose a commonly-agreed GPA scale, which is similar to the globally recognised North American GPA scale.

A GPA scale for UK higher education

A key recommendation from the national initiative is the adoption of the following common GPA scale by all higher education providers.

The GPA scale for UK higher education		
Grade	Percentage mark	Grade point
A+	≥75	4.25
A	71-74	4.0
A-	67-70	3.75
B+	64-66	3.50
B	61-63	3.25
B-	57-60	3.0
C+	54-56	2.75
C	50-53	2.50
C-	48-49	2.25
D+	43-47	2.0
D	40-42	1.50
D-	38-39	1.0
F+	35-37	0.75
F	30-34	0.50
F-	≤29	0.0

Higher education providers can use this scale to determine grade points for modules and therefore GPA scores for their students. The

scale has been designed so that no student groups are disadvantaged.

Based on the above GPA scale, your institution will be able to provide you with further information on how your final GPA score is obtained (e.g. which modules or courses are 'counted' in calculating your final GPA score).

How will GPA be introduced?

The national GPA initiative recommended that a period of what is termed 'dual running' be introduced in the short to medium term. This is where higher education providers use both the current honours degree classification and GPA as measures of student achievement. During this 'dual running' period, a university or college may decide and plan to use GPA, replacing the honours degree classification system; your institution would provide details to its students about this.

This period of 'dual running' would be valuable because it would mean that:

- There can be more wide-ranging communication and consultation on GPA adoption with students, staff groups, organisations and agencies across and beyond higher education (e.g. employers, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies).
- Further evidence can be gathered to fully evaluate the use of GPA as a measure of achievement.

Within five years, there will be a national review of the adoption of GPA for UK higher education.

How will introducing GPA affect my institution's assessment regulations?

In introducing GPA, your institution will make the necessary changes to assessment regulations and ensure the enhancement of related practices, such as marking. They will, for example, determine the detail on which modules or courses contribute towards a final GPA, and for regulations about re-assessed module grades or extenuating circumstances. Assessment issues, such as extenuating circumstances are handled in different ways by different universities, and the introduction of GPA may lead a university to revise its processes.

What about my degree result?

As with your degree classification, GPA can be included on formal records, such as your degree transcript or Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR).

Your university or college will provide you with further details about their plans for introducing GPA and how your degree results will be issued.

What about my employment or future study?

In applying for jobs or future courses, your achievements, learning, skills and experience gained in higher education can be presented through valuable tools, such as CVs or the HEAR.

Further information

www.heacademy.ac.uk/gpa – provides information on the GPA UK-wide initiative and the final report, with recommendations, on the GPA pilot project 2013-14.

www.hear.ac.uk – offers information, advice and guidance on the implementation of the HEAR in UK higher education.