



## LINFIELD CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

### Frequently Asked Questions about the new Plus/Minus Grading System

In January this year, Linfield's Board of Trustees and Administration approved a change in grading system at the high school from a whole letter grading system to a plus/minus grading system for implementation beginning with the 9<sup>th</sup> grade class of 2014-15. The current letter grades of A, B, C, D and F, with corresponding grade points of 4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0, and 0 consecutively, will be expanded to A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D- and F.

Point and percentage values for the new plus/minus grades will be as follows:

A+	4.0	97-100%
A	4.0	93-96%
A-	3.7	90-92%
B+	3.3	87-89%
B	3.0	83-86%
B-	2.7	80-82%
C+	2.3	77-79%
C	2.0	73-76%
C-	1.7	70-72%
D+	1.3	67-69%
D	1.0	63-66%
D-	0.7	60-62%
F	0	Below 60%

#### **Why are we making a change to a plus/minus grading system?**

Several years ago, the Academic Review Committee began to research implementation of a plus/minus grading system as a means to reduce the size of certain grade inequities that result with a system using only whole letter grades, provide more precise feedback that accurately reflects student achievement, and recognize student effort to improve a grade that falls short of a full letter grade.

Furthermore, as a college prep institution intent on providing our students with the best preparation for the rigors and expectations of colleges and universities, a shift to a plus/minus grading system corresponds with a growing trend in higher education

institutions to adopt a plus/minus grading system. The UC and CSU systems, as well as many prominent universities across the country use the plus/minus grading system.

The spirit of the new plus/minus grading system is to provide an environment that rewards academic excellence. The plus and minus grading system reflects student achievement more accurately and provides precise feedback to students so they might learn how to improve their performances. The plus/minus grading system promotes fairness and honesty in the assessment of student performance by reducing the size of the differences between neighboring grades. The new system rewards hard work through tangible incentives at all levels across the grade scale.

### **Will the change to plus/minus grading affect a student's GPA?**

It depends on the level of a student's performance in his/her courses. For instance, students who have mostly plus grades will have slightly higher GPAs; those who have mostly minus grades will have slightly lower GPAs, and those who perform in the mid-range will have unchanged GPAs. Increased precision in grading may especially benefit students on grade borderlines as the plus/minus system will differentiate between students at the very top of the class, with As, and those near the top, with A-s.

To determine how this change in grading system would change Linfield students' overall GPAs, we recalculated the GPAs of the top 10%, mid 10% and bottom 10% for previous graduating classes. The average difference between the GPA calculations was .033, statistically insignificant.

### **Will plus/minus grading be used to determine academic honors?**

Yes. Research shows that as the number of marking categories increases, the reliability of the grades also increases. Enhancing the reliability helps in cases such as determining the correct students for valedictorian/salutatorian, the differentiations for honor rolls, and acceptance into honor societies.

### **Will the plus/minus grading system negatively affect college acceptance?**

No. The GPA on a student's transcript is rarely the GPA that is used by colleges to determine admission. When a student applies to college, that admissions office recalculates his/her GPA according to that college's criteria. Schools like UC and CSU will not factor the plus/minus into the student's GPA. Highly selective schools prefer to have the fine distinction between grades that a plus/minus provides. In every case, all transcripts are accompanied by a school profile so that the college can review that student in the context of Linfield.

Additionally, it is always part of our counselor's job to be in relationships with college counselors so that they can educate college representatives on the rigor of Linfield and advocate for our students.

### **How does plus/minus grading affect eligibility for financial scholarships?**

We will continue to calculate a student's "UC GPA," which is also known as an academic GPA. This GPA is necessary for submission for Cal Grants and colleges for financial aid consideration. In addition, Financial Calculators on most college websites factor in both the GPA and a standardized test score.

### **How will the transcript be changed to reflect Plus/Minus grading?**

The LCHS transcript will include any plus/minus grades that the student earns beginning with the class of 2018 (i.e., incoming 2014-15 9<sup>th</sup> graders).

### **How does the plus/minus grading system affect current high school students?**

Only incoming 2014-15 9<sup>th</sup> grade students will be graded under the new system. Other students will continue under the current system until graduation.