

# Satisfactory Academic Progress for Financial Aid Recipients

**Original Implementation:** September, 1985

**Last Revision:** January 29, 2019

Federal regulations mandate minimum standards of satisfactory progress for students receiving financial assistance. Satisfactory academic progress (SAP) is the term used to denote a student's successful completion of coursework toward a certificate or degree. These standards apply to the student's entire academic history, whether financial aid was received or not, and to all types of aid: grants, loans, and work-study. The standards for determining progress for continued financial aid at the university are composed of three separate measurements: grade point average (GPA), pace of completion, and maximum hours allowed for a degree level. All students must be enrolled in a degree or certificate program to be eligible to receive state or federal financial aid.

Satisfactory academic progress will be evaluated after each fall, spring and summer terms. Although summer terms include Maymester, Summer I and Summer II, the summer SAP evaluation will only occur at the end of Summer II. Students who fall behind in their coursework or fail to achieve minimum standards for grade point average and completion of classes may lose their eligibility for all types of federal, state and university aid. Students will be notified of their financial aid eligibility via university email. Students can find their SAP status within the financial aid menu on the university student portal.

Students who are admitted to Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) as non-degree, provisional, transient, career interest or self-improvement, course audit, or concurrent enrollment shall NOT be eligible to receive state or federal financial aid. When the student is admitted to a degree program or special student status has changed, a student may then be considered for financial assistance. The U.S. Department of Education does not recognize academic fresh start and requires an institution to count courses applicable to a student's major (regardless of whether or not financial aid was received) in evaluating a student's SAP.

Financial aid probation/suspension is different from academic probation/suspension. Students on academic suspension who are allowed by their academic dean to attend may receive financial aid only if they meet the financial aid satisfactory academic requirements.

SAP standards apply to all federal, state, and institutional financial assistance programs with exceptions as defined by applicable law.

## **GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)**

For financial aid purposes, an undergraduate student must maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0,

and graduate or doctoral students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0. Grade point averages are verified at the end of each semester.

## **PACE OF COMPLETION**

For financial aid purposes, students must complete 67% of the cumulative hours attempted at SFA, including accepted transferred hours. Pace of completion is measured at the end of each semester.

Grades of A, B, C, D, RA, RB, RC, RP or P denote satisfactorily completed credit hours. Repeated and remedial courses are counted in the calculation of pace of completion. Grades of F, W, WH, WF, WP, RD, RF, RWH, RWP, RWF, RW, or QF are not satisfactory.

## **MAXIMUM HOURS ALLOWED FOR DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE**

For financial aid purposes, the maximum number of hours allowed is one-and-a-half times the minimum program length for all degree programs and allowable certificate programs. A student's entire academic record is used in calculating maximum hours allowed. Maximum hours allowed are verified at the end of each semester and students exceeding the allowable number of hours will be denied further financial aid and will not be eligible for a warning period.

## **WARNINGS**

Students will be given a warning semester when the required GPA or pace of completion is not met. At the end of the warning semester, students not in compliance are not eligible for financial aid. Students who have reached the maximum hours allowed are not eligible for a warning semester.

## **APPEALS**

Students who are not making satisfactory academic progress and have had a warning semester may file an appeal with the financial aid office within thirty (30) days after the first class day of the semester. Appeals should state why the student failed to meet satisfactory academic progress and what has changed that would allow the student to fulfill the requirements at the end of the next semester.

Appeals will only be accepted in the case of extenuating circumstances, such as death in the family, illness or injury to the student or immediate family member, or mitigating circumstances beyond the student's control. Appeals based solely on financial and/or emotional needs without sufficient explanation or documentation will not be approved. Appeals must include documentation to support extenuating circumstances. All decisions on appeals are final. Students will be notified of the disposition of their appeal in writing. A student who filed a financial aid

appeal must be prepared to pay registration costs regardless of any pending appeal status. If an appeal is granted, and the student can regain eligibility in one semester, the student is placed on financial aid probation. A student who is placed on financial aid probation may receive financial aid for one subsequent semester. If an appeal is denied or is not submitted the student must meet the minimum SAP standards at the end of the next evaluation period in order to regain financial aid eligibility.

## **ACADEMIC PLAN**

Students may be given an academic plan if they cannot meet the minimum SAP requirements at the end of the next evaluation period. The plan will specify the number of hours that must be completed and/or the grade point average that will be necessary to bring the record back into compliance. Failure to meet the standards established in the academic plan will result in the loss of future financial aid eligibility.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **Audited Courses**

Students may audit regular academic courses; however, these courses are not eligible for financial aid. Audited courses will not impact a student's SAP eligibility.

### **Change of Major**

Students are allowed to make changes in their course of study and major for purposes of this policy; however, all changes will count in a student's SAP calculation. Change of major can result in a possible overage of attempted credit hours which would impact the maximum time frame component.

### **Conflicting Information**

All conflicting information is reviewed for SAP monitoring. For example, late posted grades or grade changes will not automatically change current status. Students may request that the SAP status be recalculated after they have confirmed with the registrar that the grade change has been posted to their academic record.

### **Evaluation**

Loss of Title IV eligibility occurs immediately if SAP is not met. If the student's appeal is successful, the student is placed on financial aid probation and Title IV funds are disbursed for the next payment period only. The student must meet SAP at the end of each fall, spring or summer

term or comply with the requirements of the academic plan designed to ensure the student will make SAP by a specified point in time.

### **Incompletes**

Incompletes (grade of WH) do not affect a student's cumulative GPA for SAP, but count as credit hours attempted toward both pace and maximum time frame. Students with a grade of incomplete are encouraged to contact the financial aid office for further evaluation.

### **Pass/Fail Courses**

In some classes students receive a grade of either pass or fail. A passing grade will be included in the student's pace of completion and maximum time frame calculations. A grade of F will be included in the student's GPA, pace of completion and maximum time frame calculations.

### **Financial Aid Probation**

If an appeal is granted, the student is placed on financial aid probation. A student who is placed on financial aid probation may receive financial aid for one semester. At the conclusion of the financial aid probation period, the student must meet the SAP standards or will no longer be eligible for financial aid.

### **Developmental Courses**

Students are eligible to receive financial aid for developmental courses. These courses are counted in the calculation of both attempted and earned hours for determining satisfactory progress.

### **Repeated Coursework**

Students are allowed to repeat a course and, if passed, have it count toward enrollment for financial aid eligibility once. Each course attempt will count toward a student's pace of completion and all prior attempts with lower grades will count as unsuccessful credit hours attempted.

### **Transfer Credits**

Transfer credit grades will not count toward a student's cumulative GPA; however, these will count as both attempted and earned hours toward both pace of completion and maximum time frame for SAP.

## **Withdrawals**

Withdrawals do not affect a student's cumulative GPA for SAP, but count as credit hours attempted toward both pace of completion and maximum time frame. A withdrawal (grade of W) is different from a course which is dropped (no grade and no record of attempt). Students who withdraw prior to the first class date will not be penalized for SAP purposes. Should a student withdraw after the first class date, those hours will count towards a student's pace of completion and time frame calculation.

## **Financial Aid Warning**

Students will be given a warning semester when the required GPA or pace of completion is not met. At the end of the warning semester, students not in compliance are not eligible for financial aid. Students who have reached the maximum hours allowed are not eligible for a warning semester.

**Cross Reference:** 20 U.S.C. 1091(a)(2), (c); 34 CFR 668.16(e), 668.32(f), 668.34; Military Service Activation (6.14)

**Responsible for Implementation:** Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Contact for Revision:** Director of Financial Aid; Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Forms:** None

**Board Committee Assignment:** Academic and Student Affairs