

Office/Contact: Office of Student Affairs

Source: U.S. Department of Education Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy, 34 CFR 668.34

Link: <https://ifap.ed.gov/fsa-assessments/02-27-2019-satisfactory-academic-progress>

Associated Forms: [Financial Aid Satisfactory Progress Appeal Form](#)

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
Policy and Procedure Manual

SUBJECT: Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards

NUMBER: 3:5

1. Purpose

Federal regulations require the University to define and evaluate Satisfactory Academic Progress (“SAP”) for federal student financial aid applicants to ensure that the federal aid given to a student is used in a constructive manner and that the student is maintaining satisfactory advancement toward achieving a degree. This policy and its procedures set forth the SAP standards for students receiving financial aid at the University.

2. Policy

- a. In addition to meeting the academic standards for registration at the University, students must also meet the requirements of the financial aid SAP standards in order to be considered eligible to receive federal, state, and need-based institutional financial aid assistance.
- b. The University evaluates SAP at the end of each academic term. If there are late posted grades or grade changes, the SAP status will be recalculated once notification is received from the Registrar's Office of grade changes.
- c. In order for a student to maintain their financial aid, the student must meet the following standards of academic progress:
 - i. Minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA)
 1. All University students receiving financial aid must maintain their cumulative GPA as set forth in this section. The cumulative GPA includes credits earned at all SDBOR institutions and transfer credits.
 2. Undergraduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or above.
 3. Graduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above.
 - ii. Minimum pace of progression (PACE)
 1. All University students receiving financial aid must successfully complete a minimum of 67% of cumulative credits attempted. PACE is calculated by dividing the total number of cumulative credits completed by the total number of cumulative credits attempted.
 2. Credits completed include all coursework where credit is earned with a grade of A, B, C, D, RS, S, or EX.

3. Credits attempted include all coursework where credits were completed in addition to all coursework with a grade of F, I, IP, NP, TR, LR, CR, NG, NR, RI, RU, SP, AU, U, WD, WW, or WFL.
 4. Federal regulations limit the number of times a student may repeat a course and receive financial aid for that course.
 - a. If a student gets a 'W' or an 'F' grade in a course, that student is allowed to repeat the course and receive financial aid (assuming they are meeting SAP standards) until they receive a 'D-' grade or better. Once the student has received a 'D-' grade or better, they can repeat the course one (1) additional time and still receive financial aid.
 - b. When a course is repeated, the most recent final grade will be used to determine eligibility. The prior grade is no longer calculated into the GPA at the University; however, the previous hours attempted will be counted as hours attempted when reviewing SAP completion rate and maximum time frame.
- iii. Maximum credits attempted to complete degree program
1. All University students receiving financial aid must complete their degree program with credits attempted that are no greater than 150% of the number of credits required to earn the degree. The maximum attempted units is calculated by multiplying the minimum units required for the academic program by 150%. For example, most undergraduate degrees require a minimum of 120 credits, so that student can attempt a maximum of 180 credit hours before being suspended from financial aid ($120 \times 150\% = 180$). A graduate program that requires 48 credits would allow for a maximum of 72 credits before the student would be suspended from financial aid ($48 \times 150\% = 72$). Students can pursue additional academic objectives and receive financial aid as long as they do so within the units allowed for in their primary major.
 2. If students are unable to fulfill the requirements for their degree before reaching this maximum timeframe, they will be suspended from receiving financial aid.
 3. Doctoral students are expected to complete the requirements for their degree in a reasonable length of time, as monitored by the Dean of the Graduate School, successor, or designee.
- d. Students who do not meet SAP standards will initially be issued a warning, allowing financial aid to continue for one (1) academic term. If the standards of SAP are not met in that following academic term the student will be suspended from receiving financial aid. Suspended students may appeal to have financial aid eligibility reinstated and, if the appeal is approved, that student will be placed on financial aid probation for the following academic term. The student then has one (1) term in which to meet the standards and regain eligibility for financial aid.
- e. There are several academic circumstances that may affect a student's eligibility status and of which students must be aware:
- i. Changes in major, double majors, or minors may cause students to reach their maximum attempted hours or lose their eligibility before earning a degree.

- ii. Incomplete grades, missing grades, failing grades, and course withdrawals all reduce a student's completion ratio because they are counted as attempted, but not earned credits. They also count against a student's maximum attempted hours.
 - iii. Repeated courses count as attempted credit hours each time a student registers for them. They also count against a student's maximum attempted hours. This can reduce a student's completion ratio because repeated credits count as earned credits only once.
 - iv. Transfer credits or credits taken while cross-registered, enrolled in study abroad, or transient study count toward a student's maximum attempted credits and their completion ratio.
 - v. Remedial courses count as attempted and earned credits, but are not included in the student's GPA calculation.
 - 1. ESL courses are considered remedial courses and will count as attempted and earned credits, but are not included in the student's GPA calculation.
 - vi. All credit hours attempted and completed in summer terms are treated as any other semester hours in determining SAP status. A student's SAP standards will be checked following the summer term as well.
 - vii. Students who are pursuing dual degrees are subject to the maximum timeframe rules but may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the University Financial Aid Office.
 - viii. All credits appearing on student transcripts will be counted in calculations for determining SAP status, including those that may have been during terms in which a student was not receiving Title IV Aid.
- f. Students who are suspended academically or who choose not to attend the University because of failure to maintain SAP standards will not be automatically eligible for financial aid upon their return to the University. Students must meet both qualitative and quantitative standards of SAP.
- i. If a student is below the SAP standards, they must appeal or use financial means other than financial aid for educational expenses.
 - ii. It is the student's responsibility to be knowledgeable of their SAP standards when returning to the University after dismissal.
- g. The University Financial Aid Office reserves the right to review denied appeals, cumulative GPAs, and completion rates on a case-by-case basis.

3. Procedures

- a. Failure to meet either the rate of completion requirement and/or the grade point average requirement will result in the following:

- i. Financial Aid Warning
 1. Students who are not meeting the SAP standards at the end of one (1) term of enrollment will receive a financial aid warning and will be notified of this status through their University student email account.
 2. Financial aid warnings only apply to students who have just completed their first academic term of their program or who were meeting the SAP standards in the prior academic term.
 3. During the term of financial aid warning, students will continue to be eligible for financial aid, allowing the student time to become compliant with the SAP standards.
 4. It is recommended that students who are issued a financial aid warning meet with their advisors in order to re-evaluate their course of study and take advantage of the many student support services available to them at the University.

- ii. Financial Aid Ineligibility
 1. Students who fail to meet the SAP standards in the semester after receiving a financial aid warning will be found ineligible to receive financial aid, and their financial aid will be suspended at that time. Students will receive notification of their financial aid suspension through their University student email account.

- iii. Appeal Process
 1. Federal regulations limit circumstances for which a suspension of financial aid may be appealed to the following: death of a family member; illness or injury to the student; or other special circumstances beyond the student's control.
 2. To appeal a financial aid suspension, a student must submit a completed *Financial Aid Satisfactory Progress Appeal Form* to the University Financial Aid Office. The appeal form must explain why the student failed to meet the SAP standards and what has changed in the student's situation that will allow the student to meet SAP standards by the next evaluation period. The student must also include documentation to verify the stated circumstance that prevented the student from meeting the SAP standards. Required documentation includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - a. Death of a family member: a photocopy of a death certificate and/or obituary and the name and relationship of the deceased to the student;
 - b. Illness or injury to the student: an explanation of the nature of the illness or injury, the dates the student was affected by the illness or injury, and a statement from a physician or health care professional and/or a copy of medical bill or discharge forms;
 - c. Other special circumstance: a detailed explanation of the specific traumatic event or unexpected circumstance and what the student has done to overcome the event or circumstance such that they can go on to meet the SAP standards, as well as supporting documentation from a third party (e.g. physician, social worker, counselor, police, etc.).

3. The Financial Aid Office will review the appeal form and notify the student by letter of the outcome.
 - a. If a student's appeal is approved, the student will be placed on financial aid probation. This means that the student will be awarded financial aid for the subsequent academic term, contingent upon the student meeting the conditions specified in the approval letter.
 - b. Students for whom it is determined that circumstances are such that it is unlikely they will be able to meet the standards by the next evaluation period will need to have a student academic plan put into place in order to demonstrate that the student will meet SAP standards by a specific point in time.
 - c. Students on probationary status who succeed at meeting the SAP standards during the subsequent academic term will be considered fully eligible for financial aid.
 - d. Students who, at the end of the probationary term, continue to fail to meet the SAP standards will be suspended from financial aid eligibility. Students who are suspended may submit a new appeal form to the Financial Aid Office; however, the new appeal cannot be for the same reason any former appeal was granted.

iv. Reinstatement of Eligibility

1. Suspended students who subsequently meet all three (3) of the SAP standards and are in good standing regain their eligibility for financial aid.
2. Students whose appeals are denied may consider non-federal sources of student financial aid.

4. Responsible Administrator

The Vice President for Student Affairs, successor, or designee, is responsible for the annual and ad hoc review of this policy. The University President is responsible for approval of this policy.

SOURCE: Approved by President 02/23/2016. Revised; Approved by President on 10/15/2018.