

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 sets forth the SAP standards for students receiving financial aid at the University.

2. Policy

a. SAP Standards

- i. In addition to meeting the academic standards for registration at the University, students must also meet the requirements of the financial aid SAP standards to be considered eligible to receive federal financial aid and some state, private, and need-based institutional financial aid assistance.
- ii. The University reviews SAP for students who are receiving federal financial aid and those who are not receiving federal financial aid. With the exception of high school students enrolled in dual credit, the University reviews SAP for non-degree seeking students at the end of the academic year. The University does not review SAP for high school students taking dual credit. However, if those students enroll at the University after high school, any courses taken as dual credit will be included in the SAP review.
- iii. Timing of SAP review:
 1. Students in aid eligible academic programs of up to one Academic Year are evaluated at the end of each academic term.
 2. Students enrolled in degree-seeking financial aid eligible programs longer than one year in length are evaluated at the end of the academic year.
 3. Students enrolled in programs that are more than two years in length are reviewed for qualitative component (i.e., grade point average) of SAP at the end of the student’s second year of enrollment. When the end of the

second year of enrollment coincides with the end of the academic year, this review is conducted as part of the end of academic year review.

- iv. For students enrolled in undergraduate degree-eligible programs, the SAP review will be based on the cumulative credits the student has attempted at the undergraduate level including undergraduate transfer credits. For students enrolled in graduate level degree-eligible programs, the review will be based on the cumulative credits the student has attempted at the graduate level including graduate transfer credits.
- v. If students are working on two different Title IV eligible degree credentials (such as a bachelor's degree and a master's degree) at the same time, SAP will be reviewed for both degrees.
- vi. If a student receives academic amnesty for some or all courses, those courses are included in the student's SAP review.
- vii. If a grade is changed or entered after the SAP review has been completed, the grade change will be reflected in the SAP review at the end of the next scheduled review. Students who are suspended due to grades that are changed, updated, or corrected after the SAP review may submit an appeal request to the Financial Aid Office.
- viii. A student must meet the following standards of academic progress to maintain financial aid eligibility:
 1. Minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA)
 - a. University students receiving financial aid must maintain the cumulative GPA as set forth in this section. The cumulative GPA includes credits earned at all SDBOR institutions and transfer credits.
 - b. Undergraduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or above.
 - c. Master's degree and doctoral degree students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above.
 - d. Students enrolled in the professional Pharmacy program must maintain a GPA of 2.0 or above.
 - e. The most recent grade will be counted in the GPA calculation when a student repeats a course.
 - f. Classes taken as Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory including audited courses do not factor into the GPA calculation.
 - g. Incompletes do not factor into the GPA calculation.
 - h. Courses that a student dropped after the course's census date and that are listed as a W or WD on the transcript do not factor into the GPA calculation. Courses that were dropped after the course's census date and that are listed as a WFL on the transcript are counted as failed courses in the GPA calculation. Students can receive six WD grades before courses dropped after census are recorded as WFL.

2. Minimum cumulative pace of progression (PACE)
 - a. 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.
 - b. Credits completed include all coursework where credit is earned with a passing grade including but not limited to grades of A, B, C, D, P, RS, S, NG, or EX. Courses including remedial courses taken as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (Pass/Fail) that are completed satisfactorily are included as credits earned.
 - d. Credits attempted include all coursework where credits were completed in addition to all coursework with grades indicating that credit was not earned for the course including but not limited to grades of F, I, IP, NP, TR, LR, CR, NP, NR, RI, RU, SP, U, W, WD, WW, or WFL. Credits for coursework that results in an incomplete grade at the time of the SAP review are included in the attempted credits. Credits for remedial coursework and coursework attempted as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (Pass/Fail) are included in credits attempted. Audited courses do not count as credits attempted or completed. Courses that were dropped after the course's census date are counted as credits attempted.
 - c. Federal regulations limit the number of times a student may repeat a course and receive financial aid for that course.
 - i. If a student withdraws from or receives a failing grade in a course, that student is allowed to repeat the course and receive financial aid (assuming they are meeting SAP standards) until the student receives a 'D-' grade or better. Once the student has received a 'D-' grade or better, the student can repeat the course one additional time and still receive financial aid for the course.
 - ii. When a course is repeated, all of the credit hours for each attempt of the course will be counted as hours attempted when reviewing SAP completion rate and maximum time frame. Only those credit hours that count as earned credits per the stipulations of 2.e.ii.2 above will be included as credits earned in the PACE review.
3. Maximum credits attempted to complete degree program
 - a. University students, both undergraduate and graduate, 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 credits is calculated by multiplying the minimum credits required for the academic program by 150%. 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.

- b. If students are unable to fulfill the requirements for their degree before reaching this maximum timeframe, they will be suspended from receiving financial aid.
- ix. There are several academic circumstances that may affect a student's eligibility status and of which students must be aware:
 - 1. Changes in major, double majors, or minors may cause students to reach their maximum attempted hours or lose their eligibility before earning a degree.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. Repeated courses count as attempted credit hours each time a student attempts the credits. 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.
 - 4. Transfer credits or credits taken while cross-registered, enrolled in study abroad, as part of a consortium or contractual agreement, or transient study count toward a student's maximum attempted credits and their completion ratio.
 - 5. Remedial courses count as attempted and earned credits but are not included in the student's GPA calculation. ESL courses are considered remedial courses and will count as attempted and earned credits but are not included in the student's GPA calculation.
 - 6. All credit hours attempted and completed in summer terms are treated as any other semester hours in determining SAP status.
 - 7. Generally, 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.
 - 8. For students who meet the SAP completion rate and GPA requirements and who are nearing max timeframe due to working on a second degree and/or transferring in credits that do not count toward the University program of study, the Financial Aid Office may on a case-by-case basis at the request of the student or academic department review a student's SAP (GPA, PACE, and maximum timeframe) based on just those credits attempted that count towards the degree.
- x. 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 and cannot regain eligibility by not attending for one or more terms.

1. If a student is below the SAP standards, they must successfully appeal or use financial means other than financial aid for educational expenses.
2. It is the student's responsibility to be knowledgeable of their SAP standards when returning to the University after dismissal.

b. Failure to Meet SAP Standards

- i. If at the point of the SAP review, the student does not meet any of the SAP standards, the student will be ineligible to receive federal financial aid for subsequent terms. If at any time, the Financial Aid Office determines that a student cannot complete the program of study within the maximum timeframe, the student will be ineligible to receive federal financial aid for subsequent terms.
 1. Students will receive notification of their financial aid ineligibility through their University student email accounts.
 2. Appeal Process
 - a. 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.
 - b. To appeal a financial aid suspension, a student must submit a completed SAP appeal form to the University Financial Aid Office. The student must explain the mitigating circumstance that caused the student to fail to meet the SAP standards and must describe what has changed in the student's situation that will allow the student to meet SAP standards by the next evaluation period.
 - c. Students may submit appeals prior to or during the semester for which they are requesting financial aid. Students are encouraged to submit appeals prior to the start of the term or as early in the term as possible. The Financial Aid Office will attempt to review all appeals received for a term prior to the end of that term, however, appeals should be submitted at least six weeks prior to the end of the term to ensure the Financial Aid Office has time to review and process the appeal and for financial aid to be awarded for approved appeals. Students awaiting the outcome of their appeals are not eligible for Financial Aid Holds to prevent late fees for past-due balances. Students cannot appeal financial aid suspension for a term that has already ended or that they are no longer attending.

- d. If a student has successfully completed six (6) college level credits since being suspended, the student should document this in the appeal to support that changes have occurred that allow the student to succeed.
- e. The student must include documentation to verify the mitigating circumstance that prevented the student from meeting the SAP standards during the terms the student attended but did not meet standards. Required documentation includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - i. 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;
 - ii. 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;
 - iii. 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.).
 - iv. Circumstances that occurred during the spring 2020 term related to COVID-19 such as illness of a student or family member, compliance with quarantine, or general disruption resulting from a COVID-19 outbreak such as difficulty with transition to online courses may be considered mitigating circumstances. If a student's SAP appeal indicates that the student's failure to meet SAP standards was due to circumstances related to COVID-19 during the spring 2020 term, the student may appeal suspension based on the COVID-19 related circumstance. If the student is not able to meet the GPA or PACE requirements before graduation as a result of credits earned during that term due to the reasons listed above, the appeal can be approved as long as the students would meet the requirements if the credits from the impacted terms were removed from the calculations. If U.S. Department of Education regulations allow, this policy will be extended to terms beyond spring 2020.
- f. The Financial Aid Office will review and approve or deny the appeal. The Financial Aid Office may contact the student for additional documentation. Appeals are reviewed by financial aid

administrators who have been designated by the Director of the office to review appeals. Appeals are reviewed and decisions to approve or deny appeals are made by designated Financial Aid Office personnel.

- g. The student will be notified by letter or University email of the outcome. If the appeal was denied, the notification will include the reason the appeal was denied and contact information for the person/office the student should contact if the student has questions about the denial.
- h. The appeal and the outcome must be documented in the student's file. The documentation must include:
 - the date the decision was made, who made the decision, why the decision was made including any applicable references to institutional policy, that the student was notified of the outcome, copies of the student's appeal and all correspondence related to the appeal including the written notice to the student of the outcome.
- i. If a student's appeal is approved, the student will be placed on either financial aid probation or an academic plan. This means that the student will be awarded financial aid for the current or subsequent academic term, contingent upon the student meeting the conditions specified in the approval letter. The University does not grant appeals for prior terms.
- j. Students who are expected to meet SAP standards by the end of the one academic term will be placed on probation.
- k. Students who the Financial Aid Office determines are unlikely to meet the standards by the end of the term will be placed on a student academic plan that specifies what the student needs to do to meet standards at a specific point in time.
- i. For students who were suspended due to GPA or completion rate, the academic plan will include the number of credits a student must successfully complete and/or the GPA the student must achieve each term of the plan. For students who are suspended because they cannot complete their programs of study before reaching maximum timeframe, the academic plan will include the specific courses the student will take to complete the program of study.
- j. Students must submit an additional appeal to change the terms of the academic plan.
- k. A SAP review is conducted at the end of each term attended for all students on probation or an academic plan.
- l. Students on probation who succeed at meeting the SAP standards at the end of the probationary academic term will be reinstated to full financial aid eligibility.
- m. Students on academic plan who meet the requirements of the plan for that term will be allowed to receive financial aid for the subsequent term attended.

- n. If at any time during the academic plan the student meets all of the SAP standards, the student will be removed from the plan and reinstated to full financial aid eligibility.
- o. Students who, at the end of the probationary term, continue to fail to meet the SAP standards will be suspended from financial aid eligibility.
- p. Students on an academic plan will be suspended from financial aid at the end of any term where they fail to meet any of the requirements of the plan.
- q. Students who are suspended at the end of the probationary term or for not meeting the term requirements of the academic plan may submit a new appeal to the Financial Aid Office. The student must, however, document a different reason than the reason listed in the prior appeal(s).

3. Reinstatement of Eligibility

- a. Suspended students who subsequently meet all three (3) of the SAP standards and are in good standing regain their eligibility for financial aid.
- b. Students whose appeals are denied may consider non-federal sources of student financial aid.
- c. A student whose appeal is denied may submit subsequent appeals covering the same mitigating circumstance as long as the new appeal includes additional documentation that was not provided in a prior denied appeal. A student may also submit subsequent appeals based on different mitigating circumstances. Once a student is no longer able to meet the SAP Standards relating to GPA and pace (see 2.a.viii.1 and 2 above) before completing the program of study, the student is not eligible to receive financial aid for that program of study. Consequently, the Financial Aid Office will not review subsequent appeals for a student who cannot meet the standards before completing the program of study.
- d. The Financial Aid Office reviews and makes determinations on all appeals. Students do not have the option to appeal financial aid suspension to any other entity including the U.S. Department of Education or any other University office.

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.
Revised; Approved by President on 10/19/2020; Revised; Approved by President on 04/28/2021.