



# **Satisfactory Academic Progress Overview and Best Practices**

**Presented by  
Jordan Pulido/FIU Financial Aid Officer**



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# **Evaluating Satisfactory Academic Progress**



## What Is Satisfactory Academic Progress?

- Satisfactory academic progress (SAP) is the progress required of a financial aid recipient in academic studies to successfully complete the educational program within a specified period.



## **“As Strict or Stricter” Policy Requirement**

- A school's satisfactory academic progress (SAP) policy must be as strict or stricter as its academic standards for a student enrolled in the same program who is not receiving assistance under an FSA program for all categories of students



## Consumer Information Requirements

Prospective Students	Currently Enrolled Students
Readily available in paper or electronic format	
Accessible to the public	Easily accessible to students
Describe standards for maintaining and re-establishing Title IV aid eligibility	
Not via restricted Intranet	If online, provide exact URL
	Annual notice of SAP policy
	SAP evaluation results, if eligibility is affected



## Evaluation Frequency and Timing



Several factors can influence a school's decision on the frequency of its evaluation of SAP, including:

Academic calendar  
Appeals process (if any)  
Capabilities of financial aid management system  
Resources



A school's evaluation of a student's academic progress is based on the payment period and program length:

$\leq 1$  year = every payment period.  
 $> 1$  year = either every payment period or annually.



## Clock-Hour Program Evaluation Timing

- For clock-hour programs, the school may evaluate progress at various points:
  - Upon the completion of scheduled clock hours for the payment period, regardless of attendance.
  - After the student attends the scheduled clock hours.
  - When the student successfully completes the scheduled clock hours for that payment period.





# Nonterm Credit-Hour Programs Evaluation Timing

- For nonterm credit-hour programs, a school may evaluate progress:
  - On the date the student was scheduled to earn the credit hours; or
  - When the student successfully earns the credit hours.



## Qualitative Component: Academic Standing

Quality of the student's work

- Grade Point Average
- Comparable Qualitative Measure
- Graduated Standard

Equivalent of a "C" or better



## Quantitative Component: PACE

Cumulative Credit Hours Earned

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Cumulative Credit Hours Attempted

Credits Required by Specific Date

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Maximum Timeframe

## Quantitative Component: PACE Cont.



Graduated quantitative standard (optional)



Transfer students

Accepted transfer credits count as both earned and attempted hours



## Quantitative Component: Timeframe

- Undergraduate Programs: Maximum Timeframe is 150% of published length of a program in credits or calendar time
- Graduate Programs: Maximum Timeframe is defined by the school, based on length of program
- Unlike with PACE, maximum timeframe cannot be rounded.
- Maximum timeframe for standard and nonstandard credit-hour programs can be expressed in either credit hours or calendar time.



## Quantitative Component: Timeframe Cont.

- If it is determined that it is mathematically impossible for a student to complete their program within 150% of its length, for undergraduate and graduate programs, the student becomes ineligible for financial aid.



## Additional General SAP Policy Requirements

- An institution's SAP policy must define how the following elements impacts GPA and pace standards:
  - Withdrawal and incomplete grades
  - Grade changes
  - Repeated coursework
  - Transfer hours
  - Audited Courses
  - Pass-or-Fail Courses



## **Additional General SAP Policy Requirements Cont.**

- An institution's SAP policy must also define how the following elements impacts GPA and pace standards:
  - Remedial Coursework
  - English as a Second Language
  - Continuing Education or Enrichment Courses
  - Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs
  - Subscription-Based Programs





# **SAP Appeals, Probation, and Academic Plans**



# Consequences of Not Meeting SAP Standards

Failure to make SAP results in immediate loss of aid eligibility

Eligibility may be regained if:

- Pay for classes without federal financial aid
- Successfully appeal, if an institution has an appeal process

# SAP Appeals



## Conditions and Circumstances

Define valid reasons to appeal  
No regulatory limits on appeals



## Documentation

Student's unforeseen circumstances  
Actions taken to improve academic progress



## Processing SAP Appeals

Define appeal procedure  
Define who and how appeal decisions are made



## Financial Aid Probation

- Financial aid probation may be granted only after a successful appeal
- This status may follow or replace financial aid warning
- A school may choose to limit number of times
- It is applicable for only one payment period.
  - The student must have the potential to meet SAP by the end of the payment period
  - If the student is still failing, they are ineligible for aid unless a subsequent appeal results in an academic plan.



## Academic Plans

- An Academic plan is a long-term plan for success
  - Tailored to the student's unique needs
  - Includes appropriate checkpoints and milestones
  - Specifies a specific point in time for meeting SAP standards
    - It may extend beyond 150% maximum timeframe
- This plan may be granted only after successful appeal
- It may follow or replace financial aid warning or probation



## Academic Plans Cont.

- A school reviews the student's SAP after the first payment period.
- Subsequent reviews may align with the school's SAP review cycle or occur more frequently.
- Failure to adhere to the plan and failure to meet SAP standards result in the loss of Title IV eligibility.



## Re-Establishing Eligibility

- SAP policy must describe how to re-establish eligibility
  - Financial aid warning
  - Appeal, if available
  - Attend without Title IV aid
- Students must be notified
  - School policies and procedures
  - Consequences of failure
  - How to re-establish eligibility



# Best Practices





## Individualized Support

- Connect students to Campus Support Services, such as academic advising, tutoring, or counseling services, with a focus on early intervention.
  - Points of intervention could include:
    - SAP notices and communications
    - Student interactions
    - Appeal sessions



## Collaborative Partnerships

- Share student SAP data with support services for early identification and intervention.
- Ensure advisors and success coaches are well-informed on SAP policy and procedures through training and regular updates.
- Collaborate with other Enrollment Services departments to improve administrative capabilities to streamline processes.



## Accessibility & Transparency

- Simplify language and avoid jargon in SAP policies and procedures to improve understanding.
- Centralize SAP information on a dedicated webpage or portal.
- Ensure transparency in appeal decision-making.
- Remove bureaucratic barriers to the appeal process.



## Evaluations and Appeals

- Evaluate SAP at the end of each term instead of at the end of the academic year.
- Consider implementing a probationary period.
- Develop personalized academic plans.
- Allow for the submission of multiple SAP appeals.
- Utilize virtual modalities for appeal review.



**Thank you for attending!**