Financial Aid Policy

Title: Satisfactory Academic Progress for Financial Aid Recipients

Source: Financial Aid & Scholarships Office
Effective Date: August 1, 2017
Effective: 2017-2018 Academic Year

To be eligible for financial aid, federal, state and institutional regulations and policies require students to meet certain financial aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards. The purpose of SAP standards is to ensure academic success and graduation. Students who are receiving financial aid, or who intend to receive aid in the future, must comply with these standards.

All coursework taken in the same career (undergraduate/graduate), including periods when a student is not receiving Title IV aid, all courses taken for any current or previous major(s), courses taken for pursuit of a second degree, and all courses taken in summer terms are included when evaluating SAP standards.

Definitions of Commonly Used Terms

**Good standing (Meets SAP):** Students meeting financial aid SAP standards are considered in good standing and are eligible to receive financial aid.

**Warning:** Students who have failed to meet SAP standards after being in good standing may be placed on warning status and are eligible to receive financial aid for one term. Students who are on warning status have one term to come back into compliance with the SAP requirements and return to good standing. Students who fail to meet SAP standards while on warning status are placed on financial aid suspension.

**Suspension:** Students who fail to meet SAP standards while on warning status, or who have attempted more than 150% of the hours required for their degree, are placed on financial aid suspension and are not eligible for any aid until they meet the standards or successfully appeal.

**Appeal:** A SAP appeal is a process by which a student who is not meeting the institution’s SAP standards petitions the institution for reconsideration of the student’s federal student aid eligibility. A SAP appeal must contain an explanation of the extenuating circumstances that prevented the student from meeting the SAP standards, and what has changed in the student’s situation that will allow the student to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress at the next evaluation.

**Probation:** Students who successfully appeal their financial aid suspension are placed on financial aid probation. While a student is on financial aid probation, the student may be required to fulfill specific terms and conditions such as taking a reduced course load or enrolling in specific courses. Students on probation will receive aid for one term while attempting to meet SAP standards in order to return to good standing. Failure to meet SAP standards at the end of a probation term results in the student returning to financial aid suspension status. A student who cannot meet the minimum standards by the next evaluation period is placed on a SAP academic plan.

**Academic Plan:** The academic plan is designed to allow the student to meet minimum standards within a specified number of evaluation periods (terms). Progress is monitored and evaluated based
on the conditions of the plan. If a student fails to meet the requirements of the plan, the student will become ineligible for financial aid. If a student meets minimum standards at any time while on an academic plan their financial aid status will be updated to eligible.

**Term:** A term is one semester (Fall, Spring or Summer). Maymester is counted as part of the Summer semester.

**Financial Aid:**
Financial aid includes the following programs:
- Federal aid (Pell Grant, FSEOG, TEACH, federal work-study, Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans, Perkins Loan, Parent PLUS Loan, Grad PLUS Loan)
- State aid (Colorado Student Grant, Colorado Graduate Grant, CO Work-study, CO TEACH Grant)
- Institutional need-based aid
- Most institutional scholarships
- Most outside scholarships
- Most alternative student loans

**How is SAP Evaluated?**

There are **three components** evaluated in determining SAP status. Each component is listed below along with the appropriate standard.

**Grade Point Average (GPA)**
- Undergraduate students must maintain a minimum cumulative University GPA of 2.0.
- Graduate (Masters and PhD) students must maintain a minimum cumulative University GPA of 3.0.
- Masters of Physician Assistant students must maintain a minimum cumulative University GPA of 2.8.
- Dental students must maintain between a 2.0 and 3.0 cumulative GPA depending on their program requirements.
- Pharmacy students must maintain a 2.0 minimum cumulative GPA.
- Medical students must maintain at least a passing cumulative grade.

Grades with a notation of Incomplete, or withdrawal have no bearing on the calculation of the cumulative GPA. Once an Incomplete (I) is changed to a final grade, that grade will count in the calculation of the GPA. Credit-hours that are transferred into the University do not count towards the GPA. Grades from remedial courses are not included in GPA calculations.

Courses taken as pass/fail may or may not impact the GPA. Grades of “Pass” do not impact GPA as they do not earn GPA points. A grade of “Fail” is treated the same as if the student were on the letter grading scheme and failed the course.

Federal regulation allows students to receive Title IV aid to retake a passed course one time only. A passing grade is a grade higher than an “F”. However, both grades for the class will be calculated in the cumulative GPA and will be evaluated for GPA standard.

Students with a cumulative GPA below the standard will be placed on **warning**. If the cumulative GPA is still below the standard at the end of the next term of enrollment, the student is placed on
financial aid suspension and is ineligible for financial aid until he or she meets all SAP standards unless an appeal of the suspension is successful.

**Course Completion Rate (Pace)**

Pace is calculated by dividing the total number of hours successfully completed by the total number of hours attempted. Accepted transfer credits count toward both hours attempted and hours completed. Remedial coursework, however, counts towards attempted hours but not hours completed even though the remedial hours are included when calculating enrollment status. Non-passing grades will count as attempted credit hours, but do not count as completed credits. The following grades are considered non-passing: F (Failing), I (Incomplete), IW (Incomplete Withdrawals) and W (Withdrawal). Repeated courses will always be treated as attempted hours.

**Undergraduate** students must successfully complete at least 67% of all attempted credit hours. Successful course completion requires a grade of D- or higher, or P (passing). Grades of F, W, I, IW, or no grade do not denote satisfactory completion. Grades not submitted by a faculty member by the grading deadline are treated as unsatisfactory completion. If a blank grade impacts your status you must notify the Financial Aid & Scholarships Office when the grade is changed to show satisfactory completion.

**Graduate and Professional** students must successfully complete at least 67% of all attempted credit hours. Successful course completion requires a grade of D- or higher, or P (passing). Grades of F, W, I, IW, or no grade do not denote satisfactory completion. Grades not submitted by a faculty member by the grading deadline are treated as unsatisfactory completion. If a blank grade impacts your status you must notify the Financial Aid & Scholarships Office when the grade is changed to show satisfactory completion.

**Consequences of failure to meet the Pace requirement:** Students in good standing who fail to complete at least 67% of all their attempted courses will be placed on warning for one semester. Failure to earn a minimum of 67% of the courses attempted by the end of the next enrolled semester will result in financial aid suspension until SAP standards are met unless an appeal of the suspension is successful.

**Maximum Timeframe**

**Undergraduate** students must complete their program within 150% of the published length of the program as measured in credit hours. Accepted transferred credits and all attempted credit hours, including repeated credits, will be included in the 150% maximum timeframe calculation. Credit hours from unsatisfactory grades and withdrawn courses are also included, and count as attempted hours that were not earned. Most undergraduate programs require 120 credit hours so the maximum total credits allowed is 180.

**Graduate and Professional** (Dental, Medical, and Pharmacy) students must complete their programs within 150% of the published length of the program. Transferred credits accepted towards the degree and all attempted credit hours, including repeated credits, will be included in the 150% maximum timeframe calculation. Credit hours from unsatisfactory grades and withdrawn courses are also included, and count as attempted hours that were not earned.
Consequences of failure to meet this requirement: Students who reach their total credit hour limit without completing their program will be placed on financial aid suspension and denied further financial aid unless an appeal of the suspension is successful.

How often is SAP Evaluated and how are Students Notified?

SAP will be evaluated at the end of each term. Students who do not meet the SAP standards will be informed of their financial aid SAP status via University e-mail. Students in good standing are not notified unless their status changes to warning or suspension.

What Happens If a Student does not meet the SAP Standards?

For Grade Point Average (GPA) and Course Completion Rate measures, students who fail to meet financial aid SAP standards in one term will receive one subsequent term of aid while in financial aid warning status. At the end of the warning term, a student who still has not met the standards is changed to financial aid suspension status. The student’s eligibility for federal, state, and institutional aid is terminated at this point and is not reinstated unless the student subsequently meets the required standards or unless an appeal of the suspension is successful.

Students must complete their program within the maximum timeframe (150% of the published length of the program). Students who reach the maximum timeframe will be placed on financial aid suspension.

How Do Students Get off Financial Aid Suspension and Reestablish Eligibility?

Students on financial aid suspension have two ways to regain eligibility for financial aid:

1. Meet all the SAP standards while not receiving financial aid, or
2. Successfully appeal the financial aid suspension status if extenuating circumstances interfered with academic progress. Note: The University has a maximum appeal limit of five (5) times during a student’s undergraduate career at the University, and a limit of three (3) appeals during a graduate/professional career.

How Do Students Appeal?

The University recognizes that extenuating circumstances might interfere with students’ satisfactory academic performance. Students who wish to appeal must complete a Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Appeal Form which can be found in the forms section of http://www.ucdenver.edu/finaid.

Students must explain the extenuating circumstances that prevented them from meeting SAP standards, what has changed that will enable them to now meet the standards, and thoroughly document all extenuating circumstances. Examples of extenuating circumstances are illness, injury, or death, but all appeals and mitigating circumstances will be reviewed and evaluated. Documentation must be submitted that is relevant to the circumstances, e.g., physician’s letter for medical reasons, death certificates of close relatives, etc.

All appeals are reviewed by the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeals Committee. Students will be contacted if the committee feels they need more information, which may include the completion of a Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Plan. Students approved for financial aid under an academic plan are expected to complete the courses as outlined on their
plan to remain eligible for financial aid. A student approved on probation status is eligible for aid for one term while on probation but must meet all SAP standards as outlined above at the end of the probation term to remain eligible for financial aid funds.

If a student is denied their appeal for the term, the student can re-appeal to the SAP committee. The decision of the SAP committee is final. If the SAP committee denies the subsequent appeal, a student may regain financial aid eligibility by meeting SAP standards while not receiving financial aid.

If a student violates the terms of their A-Plan, the student will be placed back on suspension and will be ineligible for financial aid funds. A student may appeal with a new statement outlining the extenuating circumstances for not meeting the terms of the A-Plan, third party documentation and an updated A-Plan.

Appeals are considered in the order received and a decision generally will be made within two to four weeks after the appeal is received (and varies depending on the completeness of the appeal submitted). Appeals submitted for consideration in the current term must be received at least 14 days prior to the end of the term. Appeals received within the 14 days at the end of the term will be considered for the following term. Students who appeal will receive an email informing them of the appeal outcome.