



Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy 2019-2020 – Graduate Program Financial Aid Office

Satisfactory Academic Progress standards for financial aid eligibility effective July 1, 2019 for all full-time and part-time graduate degree candidates

Overview

For purposes of determining student eligibility for financial assistance under Title IV, HEA programs, the College establishes, publishes, and applies Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards that meet all federal requirements. To be eligible to receive federal financial aid, a student is required to maintain satisfactory academic progress in his or her course of study according to the College's published standards. SAP standards are based on cumulative measures of a student's progress toward degree completion. The Financial Aid Office is responsible for ensuring that all students who receive financial aid meet these standards.

It is important to note that SAP standards are separate from, and in addition to, the Academic Standing policy established by the Graduate Office of the College. The Graduate Office is responsible for ensuring that all graduate degree candidates meet the College's academic standing requirements. For additional information regarding academic standing requirements, students should refer to the General Degree Requirements section of the *Graduate Studies* booklet.

Sections included in this policy are:

- Overview
- SAP Standards
- Definitions
- Appeals
- Regaining Eligibility

A printed copy of this SAP policy will be provided upon request.

SAP Standards

Federal regulations require that the College's SAP policy contain reasonable standards for measuring whether an otherwise eligible financial aid student is maintaining satisfactory progress in his or her educational program. An institution's standards are considered to be reasonable if the standards:

1. are the same as or stricter than the institution's standards for a student enrolled in the educational program who is not receiving assistance under a Title IV, HEA program; and
2. include the following elements:
 - a. **Qualitative Standard:** the College measures a student's progression toward degree completion using a fixed grade point standard on a 4.0 grade point average scale.

To be eligible to receive federal financial assistance, a student is required to maintain a cumulative 2.667 GPA.

Minimum Cumulative GPA = 2.667

- b. **Quantitative Standard:** the College also measures a student's progression toward degree completion based on a quantitative scale that consists of a maximum timeframe in which a student must complete his or her degree. The quantitative standard includes:
 - 1) Maximum Timeframe: the College defines the maximum timeframe to complete a Graduate Program of study as 6 years.

Maximum Timeframe = 6 years from the initial enrollment

To be eligible to receive federal financial assistance, a student is required to complete his or her degree requirements within the maximum timeframe of 6 years.

- 2) Increments: College policy divides the maximum timeframe into equal periods of enrollment known as semesters or terms.
- 3) Pace: the College has established a schedule designating the minimum percentage of work, known as Pace, that a student must successfully complete at the end of each academic year to complete his or her degree within the maximum timeframe. Pace is calculated by dividing the cumulative number of credits that the student has successfully completed by the cumulative number of credits that the student has attempted.

Pace =
$$\frac{\text{Cumulative Number of Credits Successfully Completed}}{\text{Cumulative Number of Credits Attempted}}$$

To be eligible to receive federal financial assistance, a student is required to successfully complete a minimum of 67% of all attempted credits.

Minimum Pace = 67%

Definitions

As defined above, a student's Pace is calculated by dividing the cumulative number of credits successfully completed by the cumulative number of credits attempted. College Graduate policy defines the following terms for the calculation of Pace and review of credits counted toward the maximum timeframe of 6 years:

Credits Successfully Completed

Credits successfully completed include all courses for which a student earns a passing grade or otherwise receives credit for a course including all transfer credit and credit received for a pass/fail class.

Credits Attempted

Credits attempted include all courses for which a student receives a grade of C- or better, pass, low pass, incomplete, "D", "W", "F", or "NGR". In addition, all transfer credits are counted as credits attempted. All credits attempted must be counted toward the maximum timeframe.

Incompletes

All courses for which a student receives a provisional designation of "incomplete" must be counted toward the maximum timeframe and included in the calculation of a student's Pace.

Withdrawals

All courses for which a student receives a "W" on the permanent record must be counted toward the maximum timeframe and included in the calculation of a student's Pace.

Repeated Courses

All repeated courses must be counted toward the maximum timeframe and included in the calculation of a student's Pace. Repeated courses for which a student receives additional credit (e.g., topics, independent studies, etc.) are counted both in the cumulative number of successfully completed and attempted credits. Repeated courses for which a student does not receive additional credit are not counted in the cumulative number of successfully completed but are counted in the cumulative number of attempted credits.

Transfer Credits

All pre-matriculation and post-matriculation transfer credits must be counted toward the maximum timeframe and included in the calculation of a student's Pace. Transfer credits are counted in both the cumulative number of successfully completed and attempted credits.

Transfer credits are not counted in the calculation of a student's GPA.

SAP Reviews

SAP is reviewed once annually at the end of the spring semester, normally within two to four weeks of grade posting. The record of each financial aid applicant enrolled in that academic year is reviewed to determine if he or she is making satisfactory academic progress toward degree completion. The review includes a determination as to whether the student has met the cumulative qualitative and quantitative standards set forth in the College's Graduate SAP policy. Specifically included in the review is a measurement of the student's Pace to ensure that the student will complete the program within the maximum timeframe of 6 years. The Senior Associate Director of Financial Aid is responsible for all reviews of Graduate SAP standards.

Students will be notified in writing of the results of an evaluation that impacts the student's eligibility for federal financial assistance. SAP reviews will result in a student being placed on one of the following statuses:

Good Financial Aid Standing

A student who has met the SAP qualitative and quantitative standards listed above is making satisfactory academic progress toward degree completion. This student is in good financial aid standing with the College and is eligible to receive assistance under federal Title IV financial aid programs during the next academic year of enrollment, providing the student remains in good academic standing with the College and meets all other program requirements.

Financial Aid Suspension

A student has not met all SAP qualitative and quantitative standards by the end of the academic year of enrollment and who does not have an approved appeal on file with the Financial Aid Office is no longer eligible to receive assistance under federal Title IV financial aid programs. This student will be placed on financial aid suspension and will be required to make up all SAP deficiencies to regain eligibility for federal financial aid.

Appeals

As stated above, a student who has not met the SAP standards by the end of the academic year of enrollment is no longer eligible to receive financial aid and will be placed on financial aid suspension. If mitigating circumstances prevented the student from meeting the requirements, a student may appeal to have his or her eligibility reinstated for one semester with an Approved Academic Plan. Such circumstances would include:

1. the death of a relative;
2. an injury of the student;
3. an illness of the student; or
4. other special circumstances.

A student who wishes to appeal his or her financial aid suspension must adhere to the following procedures:

1. complete and sign a SAP appeal form;
2. attach supporting documentation to the SAP appeal form; and
3. submit the SAP appeal form with documentation to the Financial Aid Office, according to the deadline schedule listed on the form.

Submitting a SAP appeal does not guarantee approval or reinstatement of financial aid eligibility.

The Senior Associate Director of Financial Aid will usually review all submitted SAP appeal forms within ten business days of receipt of the appeal. Decisions are made after a careful evaluation of the student's unique circumstances, federal Title IV requirements, and College policy. In some cases, it may be necessary for the Senior Associate Director of Financial Aid to consult with the Graduate Studies Office before appeal decisions can be made. Notification will be sent in writing to the student as to the outcome of the appeal review. SAP appeal reviews will result in one of the following outcomes:

Not Approved

A student whose SAP appeal is not approved will remain on financial aid suspension and will not be eligible to receive financial aid until all SAP deficiencies have been repaired (See *Regaining Eligibility*).

Approved with Probation

A student whose SAP appeal is approved with probation will be placed on financial aid probation and is eligible to receive financial aid during the next semester of enrollment, provided the student remains in good academic standing with the College and meets all other program requirements.

A student on financial aid probation may be required to fulfill specific terms and conditions, such as taking a reduced course load or enrolling in specific courses. A student on financial aid probation must repair all SAP deficiencies during the next term of enrollment in order to remain eligible for financial aid.

Approved with an Academic Plan

In some cases, it may be mathematically impossible for a student to repair his or her SAP deficiencies within one semester of enrollment. In such cases, a student's SAP appeal may be approved with an academic plan to restore SAP deficiencies over more than one semester. The Graduate Studies Office in consultation with the Senior Associate Director of Financial Aid will develop an academic plan with the student that, if followed, will ensure that the student is able to meet the College's SAP standards by a specific point in time. The academic plan may require the student to fulfill specific terms and conditions, such as taking a reduced course load or enrolling in specific courses.

A student on an approved academic plan is eligible to receive financial aid during the next semester of enrollment and each subsequent semester of enrollment, provided the student meets the SAP standards outlined in the student's specific academic plan. The student must remain in good academic standing with the College and meet all other program requirements.

Regaining Eligibility

A student who has been placed on financial aid suspension may reestablish his or her eligibility to receive federal financial assistance by one of the three paths described below:

1. The student successfully appeals the suspension and is approved with an academic plan.
2. The student meets the minimum SAP quantitative and qualitative standards by completing a course(s) at the College without receiving financial assistance. To enroll in a course(s) at the College, all graduate students must meet the academic standing requirements of the College as overseen by the Graduate Studies Office.
3. The student meets the minimum SAP quantitative and qualitative standards by completing a course(s) at another institution without receiving financial assistance. A student who wishes to take a course(s) at another institution must receive prior approval according to College policy. The following explains the impact of transfer credits on SAP standards:
 - a. Impact of transfer credits on SAP quantitative standards:
All transfer credits must be counted toward the maximum timeframe and included in the calculation of a student's Pace. Transfer credits are counted in both the cumulative number of successfully completed and attempted credits.
 - b. Impact of transfer credits on SAP qualitative standard (GPA):
According to College policy, post-matriculation transfer grades will be indicated on the transcript, but will not be included in calculations of grade point average, rank-in-class, or other academic standings. Therefore, a student will not be able to repair the SAP qualitative standard by completing a course(s) at another institution. A student who needs to restore his or her GPA to the minimum SAP standard will need to enroll in a course(s) at Trinity without receiving financial assistance or successfully appeal his or her financial aid suspension. The Senior Associate Director of Financial Aid will, however, consider transfer grades when reviewing and approving SAP appeals.