

## SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS (SAP) POLICY

### *Graduate Degrees*

#### Overview

Federal regulations require that students receiving federal financial aid make regular progress toward earning their degree within a specific period of time. To meet this federal requirement, the University of Southern Maine maintains a Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy for financial aid eligibility.

Students can lose eligibility for financial aid for the following reasons:

- Low Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)
- Pattern of not completing courses successfully
- High number of attempted credits without a completed degree

Satisfactory Academic Progress is measured once per year, generally after the spring grades have been posted. If at that time a student is not making satisfactory progress, they will be notified that they have been placed on Financial Aid Suspension. This review is separate from the academic suspension process.

All students have the right to appeal financial aid suspension if special circumstances have impacted their academic progress.

#### The Three Requirements of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

##### 1. Qualitative Measurement

Students must have academic standing consistent with the cumulative grade point average (GPA) as defined in the University catalog. In accordance with this requirement, the **minimum cumulative GPA for SAP is 3.0**. Failure to meet this requirement will result in financial aid suspension.

##### 2. Quantitative Measurement:

Matriculated students are required to successfully complete a percentage of credits attempted. The University uses the following criteria for graduate students:

<u>Credits Attempted</u>	<u>Required Percentage Completed</u>
0-90	67% or above

Letter grades of "A" through "D" and "H" and "P" and "LP" shall be considered as completed. All other grades including F, L, W, AUD, INC, MG, I, and non credit courses will not be considered completed.

Most courses may only count once toward degree requirements. If a course is taken multiple times, all the instances count toward attempted credits; typically only one passed attempt will count toward completed credits.

##### 3. Maximum Time Frame:

Federal regulations require that the University set a maximum time frame for successful completion of degree programs. For a graduate degree, the University has set the maximum number of attempted credits as 90.

- **Attempted Credits:**  
Passed classes, audited classes, withdrawn classes, deferred grades, incomplete grades, missing grades, developmental classes, repeated classes and failed classes
- **Completed Credits:**  
Passed credit hours that apply toward degree requirements

- **Transfer Credits:**

All attempted credits from previous institution(s) which are recorded on your University of Southern Maine transcript will be included in both the quantitative measurement and maximum time frame tests.

## **Financial Aid Suspension**

At the end of each academic year, each financial aid applicant's academic standing will be reviewed to determine if the minimum SAP requirements have been met. If all the requirements have not been met, the student's financial aid eligibility will be suspended. Any financial aid for upcoming terms will be canceled. **Students who are suspended are no longer eligible to receive financial aid.**

## **Appealing Financial Aid Suspension**

Any student placed on Financial Aid Suspension may submit a written appeal and supporting documentation to the Financial Aid Appeals Committee.

Appeals should be submitted as soon as possible and prior to the start of the semester. The SAP appeals committee will do everything possible to preserve original aid packages when appeals are received within 30 days of the SAP notification and prior to the start of the semester. Students appealing after this timeframe will have awards reinstated on a funds available basis if the appeal is granted. Any appeal submitted after the first five (5) days of the semester will not be considered unless there are extreme extenuating circumstances. Students must also observe all other normal application procedures and deadlines for financial aid consideration.

The appeal must be in writing and must be accompanied by third party documentation (i.e. physician, advisor, therapist, etc). The appeal should explain the extenuating circumstances that made it difficult to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress. It must also include what has changed to resolve or mitigate the extenuating circumstances to allow for successful progress in future semesters. The appeal should further address the possibility of the circumstances recurring if applicable.

The Financial Aid Appeals Committee will respond to complete appeals within 30 days of receipt. If the committee does not approve the SAP appeal, the student is responsible to make alternative arrangements to finance educational expenses.

## **TITLE IX DISCLOSURE**

The University of Southern Maine is committed to making our campuses safer places for students. Because of this commitment, and our federal obligations, Financial Aid Staff are considered mandated reporters when it comes to experiences of interpersonal violence (sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking). Disclosures of interpersonal violence must be passed along to the University's Deputy Title IX Coordinator who can help provide support and academic remedies for students who have been impacted. More information can be found online at <http://usm.maine.edu/titleix> or by contacting Sarah E. Holmes at [USM.TitleIX@maine.edu](mailto:USM.TitleIX@maine.edu) or 207-780-5767.

If students want to speak with someone confidentially, the following resources are available on and off campus: University Counseling Services (207-780-4050); 24 Hour Sexual Assault Hotline (1-800-871-7741); 24 Hour Domestic Violence Hotline (1-866-834-4357).

## **If an appeal has been granted**

When an appeal is granted, the appeals committee may offer a semester of probation or a semester progress plan with defined expectations for the next semester.

Student Financial Services will do everything possible to preserve original aid packages when appeals are received within the 30 day timeline. Students appealing after the above stated timeline will have awards reinstated on a funds available basis if the appeal is granted.

Students must contact their financial aid counselor after all grades have been posted in the semester for which the appeal was approved. Incomplete grades must be fully resolved. At that time, students not meeting the minimum SAP policy requirements or progress plan requirements will be suspended from further eligibility and any financial aid offered for future semesters will be canceled.