

Satisfactory Academic Progress



Schools currently have flexibility to establish satisfactory academic progress policies to meet the needs of their students. Effective July 1, 2011, new rules require that, at a minimum, the school's policy accomplish each of the following:

- ♦ Define the pace (quantitative standard) at which the student must complete the program to ensure the student does not exceed the program's maximum time frame. The school must measure the pace at each SAP evaluation.
- ♦ Specify the grade point average (qualitative standard) that the student must achieve at each SAP evaluation. If the school does not measure GPA, the policy must explain the use of a comparable assessment measure.
- ♦ Describe how the student's GPA — or comparable measurement — and pace of completion are affected by factors such as incomplete courses, withdrawals, repeated courses and transfer credits.
 - If school policy accepts transfer hours toward a student's degree, those hours must count in the SAP measurement as both attempted hours and completed hours when determining the student's pace.
- ♦ Require that the student earn a GPA of at least a "C" or its equivalent, or an academic standing consistent with the school's requirement for graduation not later than the end of the second academic year, if the student's program is at least two years in length.

SAP Evaluation — Frequency and Content

At the following minimum regular intervals, schools must evaluate SAP for each student receiving Title IV assistance:

- ♦ For programs of study that are one academic year or less in length, at the end of each payment period.
- ♦ For programs that are longer than one academic year, at the end of each payment period or at least annually.
- ♦ For clock-hour programs, at the end of each payment period using any one of the following options:
 - At the point the student's scheduled clock hours for the payment period have elapsed.
 - At the point the student has attended the scheduled clock hours.
 - At the point the student successfully completed the scheduled clock hours for the payment period.
- ♦ If the school places a student on an academic plan as a result of the student's appeal, at the end of the first payment period and, thereafter, at the intervals specified in the academic plan.
- ♦ If the school places the student on probation, at the end of the probationary payment period.
- ♦ At the end of any summer term, if the student is enrolled in the summer term.

The school must conduct an evaluation at the end of each payment period for its students to qualify for a financial aid warning status. The school must evaluate both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the student's progress for an evaluation to be considered "complete."

- ♦ If a school does not review both aspects of SAP on a payment period basis, for instance, if it assesses pace annually and the GPA each payment period, then it is not considered to have completed an evaluation "on a payment period" basis and its students are not eligible for financial aid warning status.

Facts About Warning and Probation:

- ♦ **Schools that evaluate each payment period.**
 - If a school chooses to evaluate SAP at the end of each payment period, and the student does not meet the school's academic progress standards, the school may place the student on financial aid warning for not more than one payment period. At the end of that warning period, the student must meet the school's SAP standards. If the student fails to meet SAP standards, the student may appeal the loss of Title IV eligibility, if the school's policy permits an appeal process.
 - If the school approves the student's appeal, the school places the student on financial aid probation for one subsequent payment period and the student is eligible for additional Title IV funds for that period. Probation may take the form either of a single payment period without an academic plan or an academic plan to get the student back to SAP. If, based on the school's evaluation, the student cannot regain SAP by the end of a single payment period, the school must implement an academic plan if it chooses to permit the student to continue to receive Title IV assistance. If the student fails to successfully complete the necessary requirements to return to satisfactory academic standing, then the student becomes ineligible for additional Title IV assistance.

♦ Schools that evaluate less frequently than each payment period.

- If the school chooses to evaluate SAP less frequently than at the end of each payment period, then the school may — if the school's policies allow — permit a student to appeal the loss of Title IV eligibility and place a student on financial aid probation for one payment period following the school's finding that the student has failed to make SAP. The school may not use a financial aid warning period for its students. If, based on the school's evaluation, the student cannot regain SAP by the end of a single payment period, the school must implement an academic plan if it chooses to permit the student to continue to receive Title IV assistance. If the student fails to successfully complete the necessary requirements to return to satisfactory academic standing, then the student becomes ineligible for additional Title IV assistance.

Facts About Appeals

- ♦ A school is not required to offer students the opportunity for an appeal as part of the school's SAP policies. If a school chooses not to have an appeal process, it must explain in its SAP-related publications how a student may regain Title IV eligibility.
- ♦ When a school that permits appeals does not approve a student's appeal, or the student chooses not to appeal under the school's process, the student becomes ineligible for Title IV aid.
- ♦ When a school that permits appeals approves a student's appeal, it must determine that the student will be able to meet SAP standards by the end of the next payment period or must place the student on an academic plan that ensures the student will be able to meet the school's SAP standards within a specific period of time.
- ♦ A student may, over the course of an academic career, repeat the financial aid warning status and probation provided the school's own SAP policies permit repetitions. However, the school may not grant two successive financial aid warning statuses.
- ♦ The school may not approve an appeal and move a student to a probationary status if it is aware that the student cannot achieve SAP by the end of the probationary payment period. The school may, however, if its campus policies permit, implement an academic plan for the student.

Glossary

A school must use these federally defined terms and definitions in its own SAP policies:

- ♦ **Academic Plan:** An option the school may use to prescribe a series of measures by which the student will regain SAP status within a specified period of time. The student must agree to the plan, and the school must monitor the student's compliance with the plan. The student is considered eligible for Title IV funds while meeting the terms of the plan.
- ♦ **Financial Aid Probation:** Status assigned to a student who fails to make SAP but who successfully has appealed the school's determination that he is not meeting the school's academic progress standards. This probation period is generally limited to one payment period.
- ♦ **Financial Aid Warning:** Status assigned to a student who fails to make SAP if that school evaluates SAP at the end of each payment period. This warning period generally is limited to one payment period.
- ♦ **Maximum Time Frame:** Regulations that define each program's completion as one of the following:
 - For undergraduate students enrolled in credit-hour programs, not more than 150 percent of the published length of the academic program.
 - For undergraduate students enrolled in clock-hour programs, not more than 150 percent of the published length of the program as measured by the cumulative number of clock hours the student is required to complete expressed in calendar time (weeks).
 - For graduate students, a period defined by the school, based on the length of the program in which the student is enrolled.
 - A student may appeal the maximum time frame.
- ♦ **Pace:** Rate necessary to complete each program within its specified maximum time frame. The school must measure each student's pace toward completion at each SAP evaluation.
 - To calculate pace, divide the number of cumulative hours the student successfully completed by the number of cumulative hours the student attempted through the end of the payment period or period of enrollment, as applicable.
 - A school's policy may exclude remedial course work when determining pace.