



**Title: #VI-10A. Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Standards for Financial Aid Applicants**

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**A. Statutory Guidance**

Federal regulations, HEA Sec. 484(c), 34 CFR 668.16 and 34 CFR 668.34 require schools offering Federal Student Aid to monitor the academic progress of students who apply for and/or receive financial aid. The State of West Virginia uses the same requirements as federal aid for purposes of determining whether Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards are met for state financial aid programs. Satisfactory Academic Progress standards for financial aid applicants differ from institutional standards related to “Academic Standing,” as explained in WVUP Answer Book [#VI-10](#), *Academic Standing*.

**B. Satisfactory Academic Progress Definitions**

- 1. Academic Plan** – An Academic Plan is a tool used to ensure that the student is able to meet WVUP’s SAP standards by a specific point in time. An Academic Plan is developed by either the student and their advisor, or by a financial aid counselor as part of the SAP or maximum timeframe appeal process. Academic Plans for GPA and/or completion rate percentage may be for one to three payment periods. Timeframe Recalculations for students exceeding the maximum timeframe may extend beyond three terms and include an attempted hour recalculation. These plans must be tailored to address the specific student’s progress toward compliance with SAP in their current degree program. Students who fail to comply with the agreed upon Academic Plan will immediately be placed on Financial Aid Suspension status.
- 2. Appeal** – A process by which a student who is not meeting SAP standards petitions the school for reconsideration of their eligibility for financial aid funds.
- 3. Financial Aid Probation** – A status the school assigns to a student who is failing to make satisfactory academic progress and who successfully appeals. Eligibility for aid may be reinstated as a result of a successful grade point average and/or completion rate appeal for one to three payment periods under the terms of an approved Academic Plan. If a student completes a successful maximum timeframe appeal, the student is monitored for the duration of the academic program for which the appeal was granted with a Timeframe Recalculation.
- 4. Financial Aid Suspension** – Students on Suspension status have not met SAP standards and cannot receive financial aid until they have fulfilled the necessary steps to regain eligibility for financial aid as outlined in this policy.

5. **Financial Aid Warning** – A status the school assigns to a student who is failing to make satisfactory academic progress, but could make satisfactory academic progress within three semesters or less. Students on Warning can receive financial aid for one payment period and may do so without a student appeal. Students with a cumulative grade point average of 0.00 and a cumulative completion rate of 0.00 percent are not eligible for a Warning semester.
6. **Maximum Timeframe** – For an undergraduate program, this is a period no longer than 150 percent of the published length of the program.

### **C. Satisfactory Academic Progress**

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards describe the academic standards that students must maintain while completing their certificate, associate, or baccalaureate degree to maintain eligibility for financial aid. These standards consist of completing a quantitative (time-based) and qualitative (grade-based) measure, and a maximum timeframe measure (150%), which is reviewed at the end of each academic semester. Students will be notified of their SAP status by WVUP e-mail at the end of each academic semester, and the notification will include information about any further requirements/actions that are necessary.

### **D. Federal Student Aid Programs Monitored by these Regulations**

- Federal Direct Subsidized Student Loan
- Federal Direct Unsubsidized Student Loan
- Federal Direct Parent Plus Loan (PLUS)
- Federal Pell Grant
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)
- Federal Work-Study (CWS)
- Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant

### **E. West Virginia Student Aid Programs Monitored by these Regulations**

- WV Higher Education Grant
- WV Promise Scholarship
- WV HEAPS Grant (part-time component)
- WV Nursing Scholarship Program
- WV Invests Grant (Title 135, Series 8)
- Underwood-Smith Teaching Scholarship
- WV STEM Scholarship

### **F. Minimum SAP Standards**

The Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards for WVUP students consist of three parts and are defined as follows:

1. Quantitative Standard - Pace

Pace is the rate at which a student is progressing toward program completion. Satisfactory academic progress requires all students receiving financial aid to maintain a 67% completion rate. This means a student must complete 67% of all credit hours attempted, as scheduled after the close of registration, with passing grades of A, B, C, D or P. Grades that will be counted toward hours attempted also include failed coursework (F), withdrawals (W), FIW, and Repeat coursework. A grade of I for incomplete coursework is treated as a failing grade unless and until it is changed to a passing grade of A, B, C, D, or P. Financial Aid runs a report of all incomplete grades at the end of each semester, and the applicable students' records are reevaluated once the incomplete grades have been updated to reflect a permanent grade. Audited courses that result in a grade of X are excluded from completion rate calculations. All courses must be counted in the calculation of grade point average and completion rate percentage, whether financial aid was used to pay for the courses or not. The credit hours of courses for which the grades were waived through the grade forgiveness process are not excluded from the completion rate calculation.

## 2. Qualitative Standard – GPA

All students receiving financial aid must maintain a minimum of a 2.00 grade point average on a 4.00 scale. Earned transfer credit will also be calculated into the GPA. Some academic programs may have individual standards for program participation that are higher than the general requirement of maintaining a GPA of at least 2.0. Students should check the WVUP catalog or speak to their academic advisor about GPA requirements for their specific program of study. A recalculated grade point average that results from either the grade forgiveness or D/F repeat grading policy cannot be recognized as the student's official grade point average for the SAP calculation of a financial aid applicant. Federal Student Aid regulations make no provision for the concept of grade forgiveness or grade point average recalculation.

## 3. Quantitative Standard - Maximum Time Frame

Students are limited to the number of credit hours for which they can receive financial aid. A student must complete their studies within the maximum period for completion that would be limited to no more than 150% of the published length of their program. All attempted and transfer coursework is included in the calculation. A student is ineligible to receive further financial aid when it becomes mathematically impossible to complete the program within 150% of the length of the program. Financial aid eligibility may be reinstated for maximum timeframe issues **only** with an approved appeal. Students who have exceeded maximum timeframe requirements do not qualify for a Warning semester. Also, students who have a maximum timeframe issue, but also have a GPA or completion rate deficiency, do not qualify to file a financial aid appeal. Maximum timeframe students **MUST** have a 2.00 cumulative GPA **and** a 67% completion rate percentage to file a financial aid appeal.

The 150% timeframe standards are listed below:

### a. **One-Year Degree Certificates**

Students must complete their program within 45 attempted credit hours.

### b. **Two-Year Degrees (associate level)**

Students must complete their program within 90 attempted credit hours.

**c. Four-Year Degrees (bachelor level)**

Students must complete their program within 180 attempted credit hours.

**G. 150% Timeframe for Second Degree-Seeking Students**

Students enrolled at WVUP who already possess an undergraduate degree, may qualify for additional federal and/or state financial aid. Students seeking second degrees are monitored like any other student and are expected to complete their programs within the maximum allowable timeframes listed above. A student pursuing a second undergraduate degree at WVUP may be eligible to receive federal and state aid for a maximum of 150% of the hours required for the second degree minus any hours attempted for courses previously taken that count toward the new degree. Transfer hours not needed for the new degree do not count toward the 150% timeframe requirement, as long as they were taken before the new degree was declared.

Example: Assume a student previously received an associate of applied science degree in business and has now enrolled to complete an associate of applied science in nursing. Both degrees have a maximum 150% timeframe for completion of 90 hours. While completing the associate of applied science in business, the student transferred in 40 hours of general education and elective credits that apply toward the Associate of Applied Science in Nursing. The maximum timeframe would be calculated as follows:

150% maximum timeframe for nursing degree	90 attempted hours
Credits transferred from prior degree program	<u>(40) attempted hours</u>
Maximum timeframe to complete nursing degree	<u>50 more attempted hours</u>

**H. Dual Degrees**

For students simultaneously pursuing two or more degrees, the measurement of their minimum 67% pace of completion and 2.0 GPA requirement are still based on their total attempted hours. Their maximum timeframe requirement for total attempted hours will be calculated using the degree with the greater number of required hours.

**I. Review of Progress**

All students will be subject to a review of their compliance with SAP standards at the end of each semester, shortly after grades for the semester are posted. Completion of a FAFSA is the trigger for the student's first SAP review. The quantitative and qualitative standards used to judge academic progress will be cumulative and will include all periods of the student's enrollment, including enrollment periods at other institutions and even periods in which the student did not receive financial aid funds.

Following are the detailed steps of the SAP standards review process:

1. A review will be done at the time of the student's initial application and FAFSA completion, and then again at the end of each semester/payment period. The evaluation period will be based on attendance in all prior semester(s) and will include all classes attempted (and transfer work) whether federal aid was received or not.
2. After the first time the student does not meet the minimum SAP standards for GPA and completion percentage, the student is placed on Warning status, unless the student has a 0.00 grade point average and 0.00% completion rate. (In this case the student is ineligible for Warning status and is placed on Suspension.) Financial aid Warning status means that the student CAN receive federal financial aid for the next semester of enrollment. \*Students who exceed maximum timeframe requirements do not qualify for Warning.\*
3. If, after the Warning semester, the student has failed to meet the minimum SAP standards, the student is then placed on Financial Aid Suspension status, and is eligible to appeal to go on Probation with an approved Academic Plan. The student is NOT eligible for any financial aid programs that require SAP compliance for the next semester unless they appeal and the appeal is approved, and they can meet SAP within three semesters by entering into an approved Academic Plan. Students may appeal only if they have extenuating circumstances.
4. A student who does not appeal, submits an unsuccessful appeal, fails to meet the SAP standards after a successful appeal, or fails to fulfill the terms of an approved Academic Plan will remain on or return to the financial aid status of Suspension. Students on Suspension status cannot receive federal or state financial aid unless they re-establish eligibility as outlined below.
5. A student not meeting the 150% maximum timeframe is automatically required to submit an appeal to be considered for financial aid. There is no Warning period, and there are no steps other than an appeal to regain eligibility while the student remains in the same degree program.

## **J. Repeated Courses**

Students may be permitted to repeat a course for which they received a grade of D or F if they originally took the class within their first 60 credit hours of study. Repeating courses must be in accordance with Answer Book [#VI-5B](#), *Repeating Courses and Grade Forgiveness*. The grade achieved in the repeated course is recorded on the academic record; however, the original grade also remains on the academic record. The course with the highest grade is used in determining cumulative credit earned and in computing the GPA. All repeated courses are included in hours attempted, even if the grades are excluded from the GPA calculation by the Records Office. A recalculated grade point average that results from either the grade forgiveness or D/F repeat grading policy cannot be recognized as the student's official grade point average for the SAP calculation of a financial aid applicant. Federal Student Aid regulations make no provision for the concept of grade forgiveness or grade point average recalculation.

A student may continue to repeat a failed course (grades of F, FIW) and receive financial aid for it until it is passed. A student is eligible to receive financial aid for one repeat attempt when

repeating a previously passed course (grade of D or higher) to obtain a higher grade. ([34 CFR 668.2](#)) For financial aid, D is considered a passing grade, even if the student's individual academic program requires a grade of C to progress in the program. ([Program Integrity Rules, Repeat Coursework](#))

#### **K. Financial Aid Warning**

Students who fail to meet the GPA and/or completion rate percentage standards are placed on financial aid warning during the following semester. In the first semester that a student does not meet SAP, they will be notified via their WVUP email account of their failure to meet SAP, and placed on Warning status for the next semester, as long as their GPA and completion rate are greater than 0.

Students on Warning status are eligible to receive any aid that they meet the eligibility requirements to receive without limitations due to the Warning status. Financial aid Warning status does not initiate any differences in disbursement from the rest of the student population. Students on Warning status are expected to attend and successfully complete all courses in which they are enrolled. Academic performance and completion percentage while on financial aid warning status will be considered during the evaluation of a student appeal.

#### **L. Financial Aid Suspension**

A student loses financial aid eligibility by failing to adhere to one or more of the SAP components, or by exceeding the enrolled program's maximum timeframe limit. A student who does not appeal, submits an unsuccessful appeal, fails to meet the SAP standards after a successful appeal, or fails to fulfill the terms of an approved Academic Plan are placed on the financial aid status of Suspension. Students on financial aid Suspension cannot receive any financial aid subject to SAP compliance unless they take steps to re-establish eligibility. (Section N.)

Students will be sent an email via the WVUP email system notifying them that they have been placed on Suspension status because of their failure to meet SAP standards, and notified of their right to appeal in accordance with the process described in WVUP Answer Book [#VI-10B](#), *Financial Aid Appeal for Students not in Compliance with Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Standards*.

#### **M. Probation Status Requiring an Academic Plan**

As permitted by 34 CFR 668.34, 8 ii, a student on financial aid probation with an academic plan may receive Title IV, federal program funds upon the successful completion of an SAP appeal and execution of an approved Academic Plan. While the student is on financial aid probation with an Academic Plan, the student must develop an Academic Plan that ensures they will comply with SAP within a period of one (1) but not more than three (3) semesters. The required Academic Plan worksheet must be completed and then agreed to by the student, their academic advisor, and the Financial Aid office. All courses listed in the Academic Plan must be required for completion of the degree for which the student is enrolled. A current MyDegree evaluation is required as part of the appeal process.

In order to be placed on probation status with an Academic Plan, the student must do the following:

1. File an appeal and prove that either progress towards compliance with SAP occurred during the Financial Aid Warning period; **or** prove with supporting documentation that there were extenuating circumstances that prevented the student from complying with SAP. Progress towards compliance with SAP is demonstrated if the student successfully completed all of the classes in which they enrolled during their Warning semester, and it is mathematically possible for them to comply with SAP at the end of the final Academic Plan period.
2. Strictly adhere to the course schedule agreed to in the Academic Plan without modification. Either the student or the student's academic advisor must file a written appeal if they wish to change or deviate from the agreed-upon Academic Plan. The appeal must explain what has happened to make the change necessary and how the student will be able to make satisfactory academic progress, and the altered plan must be approved by the financial aid office, the advisor, and the student.
3. Maintain the minimum grades required by the Academic Plan to ensure the student will finish their program with an overall GPA of 2.0
4. At the end of each payment period of the Academic Plan, the student will be re-evaluated and must remain mathematically eligible to comply with SAP by the end of the Academic Plan.

At the end of one payment period on financial aid probation, the student must meet WVUP's SAP standards **or** meet the requirements of the Academic Plan created and agreed to by WVUP and the student. If the Academic Plan extends beyond one payment period, an evaluation of the progress towards the plan will be made at the end of each payment period.

If a student fails to meet SAP or comply with the terms of the Academic Plan, they will immediately be placed on Financial Aid Suspension and will NOT be eligible to receive further federal or state financial assistance unless and until they have taken other steps for reestablishing eligibility.

#### **N. Re-establishing Eligibility Due to Insufficient GPA or Completing Pace Deficiencies**

If a student is on Financial Aid Suspension status because of failure to comply with the minimum SAP standards for GPA and pace of completion as described above, they must do the following to re-establish eligibility for financial aid:

1. Regain satisfactory academic progress standing by meeting the required minimum GPA and pace percentage. The student has to self-pay for courses to bring their academic progress up to the published standards. Once the student believes they meet the minimum SAP standards for GPA and pace of completion, the student must request that the financial aid office conduct an eligibility review. Once the financial aid office has confirmed the student has met the eligibility standards, financial aid eligibility will be reinstated.
2. File a financial aid appeal. If the SAP appeal is approved, the student is placed on Probation with an Academic Plan. If an appeal is denied, the student may still attend WVUP, but must do so at their own expense. The financial aid appeal process is outlined in WVUP Answer Book [VI-10B](#) *Financial Aid Appeal for Students not in Compliance with Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Standards*. \* The student may not attend, even at

their own expense, if they have been determined academically ineligible by the Office of Academic Affairs.\*

### **O. Re-establish Eligibility if Maximum Timeframe is Exceeded**

Unless the student changes their program of study, the only method of re-establishing financial aid eligibility once the maximum timeframe is exceeded is for the student to have a successful financial aid appeal, and then follow the Academic Plan they are given as a result of the appeal.

### **P. Additional SAP Policies**

1. *Repeat Courses:* A student may receive financial aid for repeating a previously failed (required) course until the course is passed. A student may not receive financial aid a second time for a course that was passed. For this purpose, passed means any grade higher than an “F”, regardless of any school or program policy requiring a higher grade or measure to have passed the course. Any courses repeated will be used in the student’s pace and 150% calculations.
2. *Incomplete Grades:* Classes in which students are issued Incompletes are considered attempted hours, but not passing hours.
3. *Zero GPA Procedures:*
  - a. A student who has a cumulative GPA and completion percentage rate of 0.0% does not qualify for a Financial Aid Warning semester. The student will be placed directly on financial aid Suspension and be required to file a financial aid appeal to regain financial aid eligibility.
  - b. A student who previously met all SAP standards and then loses eligibility due to withdrawals/failed courses, and who also earned a 0.00 GPA and completed 0.0% of the courses taken in the semester in which they lost eligibility, does not qualify for a financial aid Warning semester. The student will be placed directly on financial aid Suspension and be required to file a financial aid appeal to regain financial aid eligibility.

### **Q. SAP Appeal Notifications**

All notifications will be sent to the student’s WVUP email address. Students must follow all instructions as indicated in the appeal, approval or denial notice. Some appeals may be approved with modifications, such as approval for a reduced number of credit hours for a term in which the student is on financial aid Probation. The student may need to contact their academic advisor or the WVUP Center for Student Services to adjust their schedule.

**Note:** *Financial aid is only available for courses required for degree completion. Students cannot take “filler” classes to be full-time student for federal financial aid purposes or take courses for future degree programs not required for completion of their current degree at WVUP.*

### **R. Changes in Standards**



The standards for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) for financial aid recipients that are in effect at the beginning of the fall semester for each academic year will remain in effect for the remainder of that academic year unless superseded by state or federal authority.

**Responsible Administrator: Director, Financial Aid, 304-424-8310**