



Title: #VI-10B. Financial Aid Appeal for Students Not in Compliance with Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Standards

Date: May 13, 2024 (replaces version dated June 15, 2023)

Statutory Guidance

Federal regulations, HEA Sec. 484(c), 34 CFR 668.16 and 34 CFR 668.34 and state policies require schools to establish written appeal procedures to be followed when a student fails to meet the minimum standard of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). West Virginia University Parkersburg (WVUP) allows students to appeal for eligibility reinstatement after failing to achieve the Standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress as outlined in Answer Book Policy #VI-10A.. Appeal criteria, requirements, and documentation expectations are defined below.

Appeal Submission Deadlines

- **July 15** – Deadline to submit SAP appeal to receive aid for the fall semester
- **December 31** – Deadline to submit SAP appeal to receive aid for the spring semester
- Students on financial aid suspension for grade point average and/or completion rate deficiencies at the end of the spring term cannot appeal to attend summer courses due to their condensed structure. The student may elect to attend summer courses if they pay all costs with funds other than financial aid funds. Additionally, the student may appeal to be reinstated for financial aid in the fall term. Only maximum timeframe appeals are accepted for the summer term.

Appeal Process Step 1: Complete the Appeal Request Form (completed by the student)

[A Financial Aid Suspension Appeal Form](#) is available on the college's Financial Aid webpage. Completion of this form is the first step in the financial aid appeal process, and notifies the Financial Aid Office that the student wishes to file a SAP appeal. The student's request will be reviewed by Financial Aid, and if an appeal is necessary for the student to receive financial aid, then a SAP appeal will be created for the student in their WVUP StudentForms account (wvup.studentforms.com). The student will then receive a notification via WVUP email that their appeal is ready to be completed, with detailed instructions for how to do so.

Appeal Process Step 2: File the SAP Appeal (completed by the student)

1. **Appeal Type 1: GPA and/or Completion Rate Appeal (available in fall and spring semesters only)**

For GPA/completion rate appeals, students must:

- Explain why they failed to make SAP. The student needs to explain their circumstances in a reasonable amount of detail and provide the timeframe when those circumstances existed for them, causing them to be unsuccessful in college.
- Have a plan to succeed. The student needs to explain how the circumstances in their life have improved to allow them to succeed, and what their plan is to be successful and meet the SAP standards moving forward if the appeal is approved.
- Provide sufficient documentation to support the appeal. In most cases, students must provide documentation that shows evidence of the circumstances in their appeal statement.

2. **Appeal Type 2: Maximum Timeframe Appeal (available in fall, spring, and summer semesters)**

For Maximum Timeframe appeals, students must:

- Explain why they have failed to complete their degree program within the required 150% maximum timeframe. In most cases this is due to unusable transfer credits or changes of major/career path.
- Provide supporting documentation, if applicable to the appeal. For maximum timeframe appeals, in many cases supporting documents are not necessary.

Appeal Process Step 3: Review of the Appeal by the Financial Aid Office

All students who have their financial aid eligibility suspended due to failure to meet one or more of the three SAP components may appeal to the Financial Aid Office to have their financial aid eligibility reinstated.. All students who have an approved appeal are placed on an academic plan. Failure to comply with an academic plan is automatic grounds for suspension, but an appeal may be filed if there are new extenuating circumstances. An appeal must be based on serious and extenuating circumstances, or a situation that either prevented the student from completing/passing their courses or required they withdraw from classes. Examples of serious and extenuating circumstances include but are not limited to:

- Serious illness or injury of the student
- Serious illness, injury, or death of a family member
- Natural disasters (floods, fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.)
- Serious motor vehicle accidents
- Criminal acts inflicted on the student or student's family
- Other significant trauma that impaired the student's mental, emotional, or physical health
- Legal complications and entanglements (divorce, child custody, extended jury duty, bankruptcy)

Examples of acceptable supporting documentation for an appeal include but are not limited to:

- Signed letters on letterhead from applicable professionals (therapist, doctor, etc)
- Birth certificates
- Death certificates
- Newspaper articles to document events student included in an appeal
- Insurance claims
- Police reports

The appeal should include:

- A detailed explanation made by the student of the extenuating circumstances that occurred during the specific semester(s) in which the student failed to meet the SAP standards.
- All necessary supporting documentation to support the existence of the circumstances described and evidence either that the circumstances have been resolved or that the student has a clear plan to resolve them in order to be successful in school.
- Incomplete appeals will not be reviewed. If additional information is required for the appeal to be processed, an email will be sent to the student's WVUP email account. After an appeal is incomplete for 30 days, the appeal may be denied.
- All documents received with the appeal form become the property of the Financial Aid Office. Students are advised not to submit originals.
- Once all required documentation is submitted, students will be notified electronically of the outcome of their appeal.
- All appeal decisions are final.

Appeal Process Step 4: Academic Plan/Timeframe Recalculation Submission and Approval (for approved appeals only)

Academic Plans: GPA/Completion rate deficiencies only

Academic Plans for students with GPA or completion rate deficiencies are created by a team that consists of the student, the student's academic advisor, and a financial aid staff member. The financial aid staff member will calculate the parameters of the plan – how many hours the student should take and what minimum GPA the student must earn while on the plan. The student and the academic advisor then work together to select classes to fit the parameters that the financial aid staff member has defined. Once all three parties are satisfied with the academic plan, it is signed and scanned into the student's record. The academic plan may only be adjusted with the approval of the financial aid office.

Timeframe Recalculation: Exceeding the Maximum Timeframe Allowable

For students whose cumulative hours have exceeded the maximum timeframe allowable, the financial aid office creates the "Timeframe Recalculation" based on the student's current declared major. We evaluate the student's SAP based on all courses applicable to their current declared major, excluding courses taken in any previous major(s) prior to declaration of the current major that are not applicable to the current major. If a student has taken non-applicable courses since declaring the current major, though, those hours must be counted in the recalculation. If, after non-applicable courses taken prior to declaration of the current major have been excluded, it is found that the student can complete their current major within the required 150% timeframe, then the appeal can be approved. If it is found that the student will still exceed the number of credits allowed, then the appeal will be denied.

Academic Plan Submission

All students must follow either an academic plan or a timeframe recalculation as part of their approved SAP appeal. Students with a grade point average or completion rate deficiency will

develop their academic plan with the help of their academic advisor (described above). Timeframe Recalculations for students with a maximum timeframe issue will be developed by the Financial Aid Office. The academic plan should include information printed from MyDegree and must only include the courses needed to graduate with a degree in the student's current program of study. The academic plan requires the student to list their registered courses for the semester and agree to completion of those courses (no withdrawals, incompletes, or failing grades). A minimum grade of C or better must be listed as the goal for each course on the academic plan. A review of the academic plan will be conducted by a financial aid staff member at the end of each semester. If the student is adhering to the plan and making successful progress, their eligibility will remain intact. A student who earns a grade of "D" in a course listed in the academic plan but is in overall compliance with the SAP 2.00 GPA requirement will be deemed to have successfully completed their academic plan, as long as a grade of "C" is not required by the student's program to pass the course.. A type 1 academic plan can include no more than three semesters, but it is possible for an academic plan to be approved for fewer than three semesters. A type two academic plan is actually a recalculation of the student's maximum timeframe, and not a traditional academic plan. A student may not have a timeframe recalculation if they do not meet the GPA and completion rate components of SAP.

Appeal Decisions/Timeline

Students should allow up to 3 weeks for a decision to be received on their appeal. The appeal will be communicated via email with a status of either *Denied*, *or Approved for Financial Aid Probation with a requirement to submit Academic Plan*.

- An appeal is good for a period of one to three probationary semesters only, which means that the student is eligible to receive one to three semesters of funding while on the Academic Plan.
- If the student is not enrolled in the semester for which the Financial Aid Probation with a requirement to submit an Academic Plan was assigned, when the student returns they must develop a new Academic Plan and meet with a financial aid counselor before financial eligibility will be restored.
- If a student receives approval for an appeal based on exceeding the maximum number of credit hours in their program, the approval will allow them to receive aid under the terms of the Timeframe Recalculation developed by the Financial Aid Office.
- At the financial aid counselor's discretion, the number of hours in which a student is permitted to enroll may be reduced.
- An appeal may be approved only if the school has determined that the student will be able to meet the minimum SAP standards after successful compliance with an approved Academic Plan or Timeframe Recalculation. Approval of financial aid based on appeal is normally approved one time during a student's academic career at WVUP. However, additional appeals may be allowed if new extenuating circumstances are present and will be evaluated on a case-by-case, facts and circumstances basis. If a student has not achieved the minimum SAP standards after the completion of the Academic Plan period, the student will be placed on suspension and ineligible for aid until the minimum SAP standards are met.
- During the evaluation of the student's appeal the financial aid counselor may, at their discretion, use professional judgment to consider on a case-by-case basis the length of time since the student last attended a higher education institution and/or their pattern of

recent academic performance. If a student has not attended WVUP for more than two academic years but can demonstrate consistent work experience to establish that they possess a minimum level of reliability and commitment and/or demonstrate improved academic performance it may serve as evidence that the student has refocused and recommitted to finishing their degree program.

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