



Policy #SE-019: Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Federal Student Aid

Recommended for Approval by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Bloom".

Executive Director Financial Aid

Approved by:

President Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson, PennWest Executive Cabinet
(Signature required above)

Effective Date: 07/1/2022

A. Intent

To ensure Pennsylvania Western University's Title IV Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy is regulatory compliant with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education requirements for students to progress satisfactorily toward completion of their degree.

- [U.S. Code, Title 20—Education Chapter 28—Higher Education Resources and Student Assistance Subchapter IV—Student Assistance > Part F—General Provisions Relating to Student Assistance Programs § 1091\(c\) Student eligibility \[HEA § 484\(c\)\]](#)
- [U.S. Code, Title 20—Education Chapter 28—Higher Education Resources and Student Assistance Subchapter IV—Student Assistance > Part H—Program Integrity, Subpart 3—Eligibility and Certification Procedures § 1099c Eligibility and certification procedures \[HEA § 498\]](#)
 - [34 CFR 668.16\(e\)](#)
 - [34 CFR 668.32\(f\)](#)
 - [34 CFR 668.34](#)

Federal aid programs affected by SAP are:

Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG), Federal Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant, Federal TEACH Grant, Federal Work-Study Program, Federal Subsidized and Unsubsidized Direct Loans, Federal PLUS loans.

This policy describes the Financial Aid SAP requirements and is in addition to and operates separately from the Academic Satisfactory Progress requirements.

B. Definition(s)

- Qualitative Measurement – cumulative GPA
- Quantitative Measurements
Pace of Completion (Pace) – cumulative credit hours completed/cumulative credit hours attempted.
Maximum Time Frame (MFT) – 150% of published length of program.

C. Policy

The SAP policy for Pennsylvania Western University of PA students receiving Federal Title IV aid is the same as or stricter than the university's standards for students enrolled in the same educational program who are not receiving Federal Title IV financial aid. It is applied consistently to all educational programs and to all students within categories, e.g., full-time, part-time, undergraduate, and graduate students.

Pennsylvania Western University of PA Federal Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Standards:

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) for **federal** financial aid purposes has two components, both of which must be met by the student.

1. Qualitative (GPA)
 - a. *Undergraduate students* must maintain at least a 2.00 cumulative grade point (QPA) average to remain in good academic standing.
 - b. *Graduate students* must maintain at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point (QPA) average to remain in good academic standing.

Grading scales/system can be found on the Academic Policies webpage at pennwest.edu/academics/policies.

GPA's are truncated. We do not round up. Anything below the exact minimum requirement is not rounded up in order to meet the minimum standards. For example, an undergraduate student with QPA of 1.9999 or graduate student with 2.9999, do not meet the minimum QPA requirement.

2. Quantitative (Pace of Completion & Maximum Time Frame)
 - a. All students must complete 67% of the cumulative credits attempted to maintain a good pace of completion and be considered making Satisfactory Academic Progress. The completed percentage is determined by dividing cumulative credits earned by the number of cumulative credits attempted.

Percentages are rounded up. For example, if the number of credits earned divided by the number of credits attempted equates to .6666667, the percentage is 67% and the student does meet the minimum pace of completion requirements.

- b. Maximum Time frame is defined as the required length of time it will take a student to complete his/her degree. A student will remain eligible for federal aid for up to a maximum 150% total attempted credits of the published length of the education program. All credits transferred to the university and attempted credits will count

towards the Maximum Time Frame requirement for Satisfactory Academic Progress. Once a student exceeds the credit hours allowed for their program of study, or it is determined that a student cannot complete their degree within the 150% limit (statistically not possible), the student will be considered in violation of the Maximum Time Frame and will no longer qualify for federal financial aid.

Unless the program is approved for additional credits or a Maximum Time Frame appeal has been approved by the student's Academic Advisor, Department Chair or Dean of College, the student is not eligible for federal financial aid. The Max time Frame appeal Form can be found at <https://my.pennwest.edu/registrar/forms>.

Most undergraduate degrees require a minimum of 120 credits which means 150% equates to 180 maximum credits including transfer credits.

A list of undergraduate programs approved below or beyond 120 credits may be found at <https://www.pennwest.edu/academics/undergraduate-programs>.

3. Additional Factors

The following factors are considered when evaluating a student's Federal Satisfactory Academic Progress:

- **Audited (AU) Courses:** Audited classes are not considered credits attempted or earned. A student may audit a course with the understanding that he or she will receive neither a grade nor credit for the course.
- **Change of Major:** If a student changes majors, the hours attempted under all courses of study are included in the calculation of attempted and earned hours.
- **CLEP/Life Experience/Advanced Placement/ Challenge Examinations:**
- **Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) Courses:** Grades of CR or NC will count as courses attempted for the evaluating for the evaluating of SAP. It won't affect the minimum GPA requirement because no grade is assigned, but it will count toward the pace of completion and the maximum timeframe rules.
- **Dual Degrees/Double Major/Continuous Enrollment:** Students seeking to earn two degrees or two majors will be eligible for federal financial aid until they reach the maximum number of attempted/earned credits (150% of the published length of the primary degree program, or 180 credits for most students in a bachelor's degree program. Students with mitigating circumstances may appeal.
- **Dual Enrollment:** Credits attempted/earned by students who previously attended as a dual enrollment student are included in the calculation of attempted and earned hours.
- **Fresh Start/Grade Forgiveness:** Students who request Fresh Start/Grade Forgiveness for previous enrollment are still required to follow the SAP policy. All previously attempted courses are considered when evaluating SAP.
- **Incomplete and Not Reported (I/IP/NR) Courses:** An incomplete or non-reported grade does not earn credit or influence the grade point average in the semester in which the course work was taken. However, an incomplete or non-reported grade will count towards your total credits attempted. Once the incomplete grade has been resolved and a passing grade has been earned, the credits and the grade will then be counted towards satisfying the minimum credit hours and the grade point average requirements.
- **Military Courses:** In most cases, military training and/or service school experience credits can be counted towards the total credit hours earned by a student for satisfying

the minimum credit hours requirement for SAP. However, these credits will only be used during the student's first year of attendance.

- **New Degree Level of Study:** When your degree level changes from undergraduate to graduate, SAP calculations are based upon the credits attempted as a graduate student. There is no additional undergraduate eligibility if you change from a graduate degree to a lower level degree, your SAP status must be reviewed to determine your eligibility.
- **Pass/Fail Courses:** Passing credits for pass/fail courses are considered attempted and earned credits; failing grades in pass/fail courses are considered attempted but not earned.
- **Remedial Courses:** These courses are treated like any other course with the exception that the credits do not count towards graduation. However, each time a student registers for a course, those credits are counted towards the student's Maximum Time Frame requirements.
- **Repeated Courses:** The last grade earned will be used in calculating the student's grade point average. However, each time a student registers for a course, those credits are counted towards the student's attempted and maximum time frame credits. A student is allowed to repeat a previously passed course only once. Any additional repeats of a previously passed course the credits will not count towards financial aid eligibility.
- **Second Degree:** Students who have earned a bachelor's degree at a regionally accredited college or university, and who are now enrolled for a second bachelor degree are only eligible for federal direct student loans (not federal and state grants). All credits accepted into the new degree program will be counted as both attempted and earned credits. Second degree candidates must meet both the qualitative and quantitative SAP standards.

Students who have earned an associate's degree and who then return to earn a second associates are eligible for federal financial aid (grants and loans) as long as they meet the quantitative and qualitative SAP requirements and have not exceeded the maximum time frame for the second degree, including all prior credits counted toward the second associate degree.

- **Study Abroad:** The University cannot ascertain your academic progress and release your financial aid until we have received your grades from the host institution.
- **Transfer Courses:** All credits transferred to the University will be counted towards the Maximum Time Frame requirement for SAP. These courses will also be counted towards satisfying the minimum earned credit hours standard.
- **UW (Unofficial Withdrawal) Courses:** A grade awarded to students who did not officially withdraw from the course. It occurs when the student initially attends class, and at some point stops attending. The instructor will report a last date of attendance and the student will receive an "F" grade for the class. These credits will count towards your total attempted credits and could possibly affect the Maximum Time Frame requirement. Please refer to the course withdrawal policy found at <https://www.pennwest.edu/academics/policies>.
- **Withdrawal (W) Courses:** A grade assigned when a course is removed from a student's schedule after the current term's Add/Drop period. All withdrawal categories do not earn credit towards graduation or towards satisfying the minimum credit hours requirement of the federal SAP policy. However, these credits will count towards your total attempted credits and could possibly affect the Maximum Time Frame requirement. Please refer to the course withdrawal policy found at <https://www.pennwest.edu/academics/policies>.

Failure to Make Satisfactory Academic Progress: Status, Sequence, and Explanation:

- **Financial Aid Warning (WARN):**
Student is eligible for federal financial aid.

Financial Aid Warning is a status assigned to a student who fails to make Satisfactory Academic Progress at a school that evaluates progress at the end of each payment period (term) and chooses to allow students who fail its progress standards to continue to receive aid. While on Warning status students will be eligible for federal financial aid. However, if at the end of the semester the student is not meeting the minimum (2.0 undergraduate, 3.0 graduate Cumulative GPA, 67% pace of completion, or maximum time frame), Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements, the student will be put on Financial Aid Suspension.

- **Financial Aid Suspension (FAIL):**
Student is not eligible for federal financial aid. Student must appeal to be eligible for federal financial aid.

Financial Aid Suspension is a status assigned to a student who fails to achieve Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) while on the “Financial Aid Warning” status. If after the warning period the student is still not meeting the minimum (2.0 undergraduate/3.0 graduate QPA and 67% pace of completion) Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements, the student is not eligible for federal financial aid. In order to regain federal financial aid eligibility, the student must complete the SAP Financial Aid Appeal Form. This form can be found at <https://pennwest.studentforms.com>.

To Regain Eligibility if SAP Eligibility is Lost:

Readmission to PennWest University after **Academic** suspension or approval of an **Academic** suspension appeal does not automatically reinstate **financial aid** eligibility after **financial aid eligibility is lost due to not meeting SAP requirements**. Reinstatement of aid eligibility is not retroactive and will only affect current or future enrollment periods.

Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Process:

Students may submit a completed SAP Appeal form at <https://pennwest.studentforms.com>. The appeal will be reviewed. If the appeal is accepted, SAP eligibility will be reinstated.

A SAP Appeal requires the following forms and documentations:

- SAP Appeal form
- Documentation to back up claims to justify reasons for failing to meet SAP.
- Documentation for extenuating circumstances due to a death in the family, hospitalization, car accident, incarceration, difficulties in pregnancy and others too numerous to list.
- Corrective measures implemented to achieve and maintain SAP.

If the SAP appeal is approved, then the student will be assigned a SAP Status of Probation (PROB) or placed on an Academic Plan (PLANFA).

Failure to Make Satisfactory Academic Progress Status, Sequence, and Explanation:

- **Financial Aid Probation (PROB):**
Student is eligible for federal financial aid after student submits a SAP appeal and Appeal is approved.

Financial Aid Probation is a status assigned after the student completes the SAP appeal process, the appeal is approved, and it is determined the student can meet progress within

one semester. The student is eligible for federal financial aid for the current term only. If at the end of the term the student is not meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements, (2.0 undergraduate/3.0 graduate QPA and 67% pace of completion and maximum time frame) the student will be put on Permanent Financial Aid Suspension status. Student will not be eligible for federal financial aid until the student meets the SAP requirements minimum (2.0 undergraduate/3.0 graduate QPA and 67% pace and 150% maximum time frame). Students may appeal due to extenuating circumstances.

- **Academic Plan (PLANFA)**

Student is eligible for federal financial aid after student submits a SAP appeal and Appeal is approved.

An Academic Plan is a status assigned after the student completes the SAP appeal process, the appeal is approved, and it is determined the student cannot meet progress within one semester. The student will be required to submit an Academic Plan, approved by the student's advisor, to financial aid to be eligible for federal financial aid for the current term only with the understanding the student cannot add/drop or withdraw from a class without the permission of Financial Aid. The Financial Aid Office will review the student's enrollment after add/drop for the term to assure the student is enrolled in the courses in the approved Academic Plan submitted before federal aid will be disbursed.

At the end of each term, the Financial Aid Office will review each student with an approved Academic Plan to determine if the student has met all specified criteria in the Academic Plan. As long as the student continues to meet the Academic Plan criteria and still does not meet SAP for the same initial reason, the appeal was submitted, the student will be automatically approved for aid for the next semester with the submission of an approved Academic Plan for the semester. No new SAP appeal needs to be submitted.

If at the end of the term the student is not meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements, (2.0 undergraduate/3.0 graduate QPA and 67% pace of completion and maximum time frame) the student will be put on Permanent Financial Aid Suspension status. Student will not be eligible for federal financial until the student meets the SAP requirements minimum (2.0 undergraduate/3.0 graduate QPA and 67% pace and 150% maximum time frame). Students may appeal due to extenuating circumstances.

- **Permanent Financial Aid Suspension (FAIL-A):**

You are not eligible for federal financial aid.

If the student fails their Academic Plan for the approved term and does not meet the overall qualitative or quantitative measures mentioned above then the student will not be eligible for another SAP Appeal or Academic Plan. The student is placed on Permanent Financial Aid Suspension. In order to regain financial aid eligibility, a student must successfully meet all requirements for Satisfactory Academic Progress. Students may use any term(s) of the academic year to eliminate his/her deficiency. However, he/she is financially responsible for all expenses incurred during the time it takes to regain eligibility. Course work taken at another college or university may be used to resolve the minimum credit hours earned requirement. The only possible exception to the strict guideline would be if the student was impacted due to health reasons or hospitalization. Such an exception requires extensive documentation proving the medical emergency impacted the current semester academic achievements. Students can apply for Private Alternative Loans but they are not eligible for

Federal Title IV financial aid until they achieve the minimum SAP requirements and are considered to be in good standing. We will consider Financial Aid Suspension for previous non-borrowers only if the previous term the student earned a minimum of 2.0 GPA and 100% attempted credits.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Students that exited the university not in “good academic standing” are potentially subjected to bypassing the Financial Aid Warning status and immediately progressing to the Financial Aid Suspension status. The Financial Aid Office reserves the right (at any time for all students: newly admitted, readmitted and continuing) to progress the status sequence as deemed necessary (including but not limited to) as per academic performance, inconsistent enrollment, excessive unofficial and official withdrawal, grading assignments and signs or concerns of fraudulent activity.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Financial Aid Academic Appeal Process:

Students are strongly encouraged to complete the SAP Academic Appeal Process. If you submitted a previous Academic Plan and passed, you must complete an Academic Plan for each term and pass the Academic Plan requirements in order to retain federal financial aid. Students will not be eligible for federal financial aid until all document requirements for Satisfactory Academic Progress have been achieved and submitted accordingly.

If you are on Financial Aid Suspension, you are eligible to complete the SAP Financial Aid Academic Plan Appeal Process in order to be eligible for federal financial aid for the current term.

The following information is required before financial aid processing can occur:

- **Appeal Form:**
The Federal Satisfactory Academic Progress Academic Appeal Form can be found at <https://pennwest.studentforms.com>. Students are required to complete all sections of the form. This form explains all requirements and collects informational data and your required signature.
- **SAP Explanation:**
A student may file an appeal if there is an unusual and/or mitigating circumstance that affected their academic progress. Such circumstances may include a severe illness or injury to the student or immediate family member; the death of a student’s relative; activation into military service or other circumstances. Please be specific and provide any supporting documentation that would substantiate your appeal. All information will be strictly confidential. All SAP explanations must also outline the steps you are planning to take to ensure future success at Pennsylvania Western University of Pennsylvania in addition to your Academic Plan. If you passed your plan and are resubmitting the SAP explanation for continued federal financial aid eligibility, you are only required to explain the steps you plan to continue to achieve academic success.
- **Academic Plan:**
An Academic Plan must be completed and signed by the academic advisor, department chair or dean. This plan will help you work to maintain the overall cumulative SAP requirements and assist you with your graduation plan. Students are to contact your advisor, department chair or dean.

Readmitted Students:

Readmission to the University does not reinstate your funding or automatically mean you are eligible for federal financial aid. If you are readmitted to the University you should contact the Financial Aid Office regarding your financial aid eligibility. In order to receive federal financial aid, you must meet the SAP Requirements stated in this policy or by an approved appeal.

The Office of Academic Success offers many services that ensure academic success and assists undergraduate students to graduate in four years. Services are available to graduate students as well. There are staff members tasked to assist you who are dedicated to your success. Services such as Tutoring, Math Lab, Reading Clinic, Writing Center and Academic Assistance Programs to name a few are available to assist you and can help you to permanently achieve the minimum Federal Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements.

Academic University Policies that impact the Federal Satisfactory Academic Policy

It is important that you understand and reference all university policies before deciding to change in your enrollment. All policies that involve grading and adjustments to your schedule after the Add/Drop period will ultimately have an impact on Satisfactory Academic Progress. Below are examples of Academic Policies that can impact your ability to successfully maintain the minimum requirements of the SAP policy. All academic policies can be found at <https://www.pennwest.edu/academics/policies>.

D. Procedure(s)

Federal Satisfactory Academic Progress is conducted at the end of each semester shortly after grades have been posted. GPA evaluation is based on the student's cumulative GPA for all courses taken at the University. If the student is academically suspended for any reason, (academics, code of conduct, etc.) the student is ineligible for financial aid while on suspension. Eligibility will be evaluated at the time of reinstatement from suspension.

Once the SAP review is complete and the student's status is calculated, the student's self-service portal is updated accordingly. The Financial Aid Office sends students an email reminder to their university email address informing them this process is complete and instructs them to sign into their student self-service portal to obtain their status and for further instruction.

E. Forms

<https://pennwest.studentforms.com>

F. Related policies

Course Withdrawal Policy: https://assets-global.website-files.com/61d6fd0e48b8c90ff2b291b8/62b337cce177b4049b13d05a_Course%20Withdrawal%20-%20AC046.pdf

Grading System policy: https://assets-global.website-files.com/61d6fd0e48b8c90ff2b291b8/62b337ccab0710e7d7fbb62f_Grading%20-%20AC019.pdf

University Withdrawal Policy: https://assets-global.website-files.com/61d6fd0e48b8c90ff2b291b8/62b337cf49b5693ab883cc3b_University%20Withdrawal%20-%20AC035.pdf

G. Contact Information

Office/Name	Location	Phone Number
Financial Aid – Sue Bloom	Clarion Campus	814-393-2667
Financial Aid – Kelly Vitelli	Edinboro Campus	814-732-1964
Financial Aid – Traci Necciai	California Campus	724-938-4415

H. Policy Review Schedule

All policies will be reviewed every two years or on an as needed basis if a change in Federal or Pennsylvania law, BOG, or PASSHE would create the need for an immediate change.

I. Notations