

# BLACK HILLS STATE UNIVERSITY

## Policy and Procedures Manual

SUBJECT: Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards

NUMBER: 3:10

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Office: Office of Enrollment Management

Source: [U.S. Department of Education Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy, 34 CFR 668.34](#)

Associated Forms: [Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Form](#)

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### 1. Purpose

Federal Regulations require the University to define and evaluate Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) for federal student financial aid applicants to ensure that the federal aid given to a student is used in a constructive manner and that the student is maintaining satisfactory advancement toward achieving a degree. This policy and its procedures set forth the SAP standards for students receiving financial aid at the University.

### 2. Policy

- a. In addition to meeting the academic standards for registering at the University, students must also meet the requirements of the financial aid SAP standards in order to be considered eligible to receive federal, state, and need-based institutional financial aid assistance.
- b. The University evaluates SAP at the end of each academic year for all students including those who did not receive federal financial aid during that academic year. If there are late posted grades or grade changes, the SAP stats will be recalculated once notification is received from the Registrar's Office of the student and the updates or late grades have been updated in the student information system.
- c. In order for a student to maintain their financial aid, the student must meet the following standards of academic progress:

- i. Minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA)
  1. All University students receiving financial aid must maintain their cumulative GPA as set forth in this section. The cumulative GPA includes credits earned at all SDBOR institutions and transfer credits.
  2. Undergraduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or above.
  3. Graduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above or the minimum GPA required for the program.
- ii. Minimum pace of progression (PACE)
  1. All University students receiving federal financial aid must successfully complete a minimum of 67% of cumulative credits attempted. PACE is calculated by dividing the total number of cumulative credits completed by the total number of cumulative credits attempted.
  2. Credits completed include all coursework where credit is earned with a grade of A, B, C, D, Rs, S, or EX.
  3. Students are required to achieve a grade of at least a “C” or equivalent average at the end of the second year.
  4. Credits attempted include all coursework where credits were completed in addition to all coursework with a grade of F, I, IP, NP, TR, LR, CR, NG, NR, RI, RU, SP, AU, U, WD, WW, WFL.
  5. Federal regulations limit the number of times a student may repeat a course and receive financial aid for that course.
    - a. If a student gets a ‘W’ or an ‘F’ grade in a course, that student is allowed to repeat the course and receive financial aid (assuming they are meeting SAP standards) until they receive a ‘D’-grade or better. Once the student has received a ‘D’-grade or better, they can repeat the course one (1) additional time and still receive financial aid.

- b. When a course is repeated, the most recent final grade will be used to determine eligibility. The prior grade is no longer calculated in the GPA at the University; however, the previous hours attempted will be counted as hours attempted when reviewing SAP completion rate and maximum time frame.
- iii. Maximum credits attempted to complete degree program
  - 1. All University students receiving financial aid must complete their degree program with credits attempted that are not greater than 150% of the number of credits required to earn a degree. The maximum attempted units is calculated by multiplying the minimum units required for the academic program by 150%.
    - a. Ex: most undergraduate degrees require a minimum of 120 credits, so that students can attempt a maximum of 180 credit hours before being suspended from financial aid ( $120 \times 150\% = 180$ ). A graduate program that requires 48 credits would allow for a maximum of 72 credits before the student would be suspended from financial aid ( $48 \times 150\% = 72$ ).
  - 2. Students can pursue additional academic objectives and receive financial aid as long as they do so within the units allowed for in their primary major.
  - 3. If students are unable to fulfill the requirements for their degree before reaching the maximum attempted units, they will be suspended from receiving financial aid.
- d. There are several academic circumstances that may affect a student's eligibility status of which students must be aware:
  - i. Change in major, double majors, or minors may cause students to reach their maximum attempted hours or lose their eligibility before earning their degree.

- ii. Incomplete grades, missing grades, failing grades, and course withdrawal all reduce a student's completion ratio because they are counted as attempted, but not earned, credits. They also count against a student's maximum attempted hours.
  - iii. Repeated courses count as attempted credit hours each time a student registers for them. They also count against a student's maximum attempted hours. This can reduce a student's completion ratio because repeated credits count as earned credits only once. In addition, the most recent course attempt, whether the grade is higher or lower than a previous attempt, is what will be used in the student's GPA calculation.
  - iv. Transfer credits or credits taken while cross-registered, enrolled in study abroad or transient study count toward a student's maximum attempted credits and their completion ratio.
  - v. Remedial courses count as attempted and earned credits but are not included in the student's GPA calculation.
  - vi. ESL courses are considered remedial courses and will count as attempted and earned credits but are not included in the student's GPA calculation.
  - vii. All credit hours attempted and completed in summer terms are treated as any other semester hours determining SAP status.
  - viii. Students who are pursuing dual degrees are subject to the maximum timeframe rules but may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the University Financial Aid Office. Maximum timeframe for transfer students may also be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to exclude attempted credits that would not have counted towards the BHSU degree program.
  - ix. All credits appearing on student transcripts will be counted in calculations for determining SAP status, including those that may have been during terms in which a student was not receiving Title IV Aid.
- e. Students who are suspended academically or who choose not to attend the University because of failure to maintain SAP standards will not be automatically

eligible for financial aid upon their return to the University. Students must meet both qualitative and quantitative standards of SAP.

- i. If a student is below the SAP standards, they must successfully appeal or use financial means other than financial aid for educational expenses.
  - ii. It is the student's responsibility to be knowledgeable of their SAP standards when returning to the University after dismissal.
- f. The University Financial Aid Office reserves the right to review denied appeal, cumulative GPAs, and completion rates on a case-by-case basis.

### 3. Procedures

- a. Failure to meet either the rate of completion requirement and/or the grade point average requirement will result in the following:
  - i. Financial Aid Ineligibility
    1. Students who fail to meet the SAP standards will be found ineligible to receive financial aid, and their financial aid will be suspended at that time. Students will receive notification of their financial aid suspension through their University student email account.
  - ii. Appeal Process
    1. Federal regulations limit circumstances for which a suspension of financial aid may be appealed to the following: death of a family member; illness or injury to the student; or other special circumstances beyond the student's control.
    2. To appeal a financial aid suspension, a student must submit a completed *Satisfactory Progress Appeal Form* to the University Financial Aid Office. The appeal form must explain why the student failed to meet the SAP standards and what has changed in the student's situation that will allow the student to meet SAP standards by the next evaluation period. If a student has successfully completed six (6) college level courses since being suspended, they should document this in the appeal to support that

changes have occurred that allow the student to succeed. The student must also include documentation to verify the stated circumstances that prevented the student from meeting the SAP standards. Required documentation includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Death of a family member: a photocopy of a death certificate and/or obituary and the name and relationship of the deceased to the student.
- b. Illness or injury to the student: an explanation of the nature of the illness or injury, the dates the student was affected by the illness or injury, and a statement from a physician or health care professional and/or a copy of medical bills or discharge forms.
- c. Other special circumstances: a detailed explanation of the specific traumatic event or unexpected circumstances and what the student has done to overcome the event or circumstance(s) such that they can go on to meet the SAP standards, as well as supporting documentation from a third party (e.g. physician, social worker, counselor, police officer, etc.).
- d. Circumstances that occurred during the spring 2020 term related to COVID-19, such as illness of a student or family member, compliance with quarantine, or general disruption resulting from COVID-19 outbreak such as difficulty with transition to online courses may be considered mitigating circumstances. If a student's SAP appeal indicates that the student's failure to meet SAP standards was due to circumstances related to COVID-19 during the spring 2020 term, then the Office of Financial Aid can manually remove all or some of the spring 2020 credits from the student's SAP calculation and manually calculate a new GPA,

PACE, and maximum timeframe for the student without the credits that were not successfully completed during that term. If the U.S. Department of Education regulations allow, this policy will be extended to terms beyond spring 2020.

3. The Financial Aid Office will review the appeal for and notify the student by letter or University email of the outcome.
  - a. If a student's appeal is approved, the student will be placed on financial aid probation. This means that the student will be awarded financial aid for the subsequent academic term contingent upon the student meeting the conditions specified in the approval letter.
  - b. Students for whom it is determined that circumstances are such that it is unlikely they will be able to meet the standards by the next evaluation period will need to have a student academic plan put into place in order to demonstrate that the student will meet SAP standards by a specific point in time.
  - c. Students who, at the end of the probationary term, continue to fail to meet the SAP standards or the terms of the academic plan (for students on a multi-term plan) will be suspended from financial aid eligibility. Students who are suspended may submit a new appeal form to the Financial Aid Office; however, the new appeal cannot be for the same reason for which any former appeal was granted.

iii. Reinstatement of Eligibility

1. Suspended students who subsequently meet all three (3) of the SAP standards and are in good standing regain their eligibility for financial aid.
2. Students whose appeals are denied may consider non-federal sources of student financial aid.

4. Responsible Administrator

The Vice President for Enrollment Management, or a designee, is responsible for the ad hoc and annual review of this policy and its procedures. The University President is responsible for approval of this policy.

SOURCE: Approved by President Laurie Nichols on 2/8/2021.