

# Elizabethtown College

## Standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress for SCPS and Traditional Graduate Students

The Financial Aid Office has established the following policies and procedures for the Graduate student populations in the SCPS and Traditional programs, stated to fulfill the requirements expressed in the Higher Education Act (HEA) as revised effective July 1, 2011. The Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policies and procedures of Elizabethtown College are reviewed when changes at the federal or institutional level require review to ensure compliance with Federal Regulations. All Elizabethtown College students applying for Title IV federal aid must meet the stated criteria regardless of whether or not they previously received aid. **Policy Requirements** – The HEA revised section 668 contains updated regulations concerning Satisfactory Academic Progress. Section 668 requires that an institution establish, publish and apply reasonable standards for measuring a student’s ability to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress. Such standards must meet the following qualifications:

1. Contain standards that are the same as or stricter than the institution’s standards for a student enrolled in the same educational program who is not receiving assistance under a Title IV, HEA program.
2. Include both a qualitative (grade-based) element and a quantitative (time-based) element.
3. Evaluate student progress in both elements a minimum of annually, every term if using warnings.
4. Provide specific procedures under which a student may appeal a determination that the student is not making satisfactory progress including documentation of extenuating circumstances.
5. Provide specific procedures for a student to re-establish that he or she is maintaining “satisfactory progress.”
6. Describe the pace at which a student must progress toward a degree to complete degree requirements within the allowed timeframe providing measurement at each evaluation.
7. Describe how GPA and pace of completion are affected by transfer credit.
8. Require that if the student is not making satisfactory academic progress, the student is no longer eligible to receive aid.
9. Notify students of the results of an evaluation that impacts the student’s eligibility for Title IV funds.
10. Define terms used in discussing the evaluation of satisfactory academic progress including the terms appeal, probation, academic plan, and maximum timeframe.
11. Provide for consistent application of standards to all students within categories of students, e.g., full-time, part-time.

The federal programs governed by these regulations for this policy include the Federal Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loan and the Federal Direct Graduate PLUS Loan.

Satisfactory Academic Progress standards include three components:

1. Maximum time frame within which a degree must be granted
2. Minimum completion percentage
3. Minimum cumulative grade point average

### *SAP Components*

*The following provides detailed information regarding the evaluation of the three components required in the review of SAP.*

#### Maximum Time Frame (MTF)

Maximum Time Frame (MTF) is defined as the required length of time it will take a student to complete a degree program based on the appropriate enrollment status. A student may be eligible to receive federal aid up to 150% of the time that it would normally take to complete the degree. MTF is calculated for all aid applicants regardless of whether or not they previously received aid. All course credits in which a student enrolls or transfers to the College are included in the MTF calculation. All hours are considered when determining the MTF calculation for a degree. Grades that are considered course credit hours attempted and completed in the calculation of maximum time frame include: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F, I, P, NP, TR, W, WF. Withdrawal from classes or a class during the “withdraw-without-record” period will not affect maximum time frame.

### **SCPS Program**

For an SCPS Graduate student, the number of credits required to receive a Master's degree could be 36, 39, or 42 depending on what enrollment track they are placed on upon admission to the program. This is determined by SCPS and is based on if certain prerequisites were met by the student upon matriculation. The MTF of 150% of the course credit hours that it would normally take to complete these different credit completion tracks are:

$$\begin{aligned} 36 \text{ credits} \times 150\% &= 54 \text{ credit hour maximum timeframe} \\ 39 \text{ credits} \times 150\% &= 58.5 \text{ credit hour maximum timeframe} \\ 42 \text{ credits} \times 150\% &= 63 \text{ credit hour maximum timeframe} \end{aligned}$$

For each credit hour maximum timeframe scenario listed above, if the course credit hours maximum time frame limit is exceeded while pursuing a degree(s), a student is no longer eligible for federal financial aid. If a student is unaware of what credit completion track they are on, they should contact their SCPS academic advisor.

SCPS Graduate students are offered the opportunity to pursue both a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) and a Master's in Strategic Leadership (MSL). Students accepted into this track are required to complete 18 credits more than the above listed credit requirements (36, 39, 42). Therefore, these students will be subject to the following credit hour maximum timeframes which again depend on their initial enrollment track upon matriculation:

$$\begin{aligned} 54 \text{ credits} \times 150\% &= 81 \text{ credit hour maximum timeframe} \\ 57 \text{ credits} \times 150\% &= 85.5 \text{ credit hour maximum timeframe} \\ 60 \text{ credits} \times 150\% &= 90 \text{ credit hour maximum timeframe} \end{aligned}$$

For each credit hour maximum timeframe scenario listed above, if the course credit hours maximum time frame limit is exceeded while pursuing a degree(s) a student is no longer eligible for federal financial aid. If a student is unaware of what credit completion track they are on, they should contact their SCPS academic advisor.

If a student has a question regarding their allowable maximum timeframe, they should contact their Financial Aid Counselor.

### **Minimum Completion Percentage (MCP)**

The Minimum Completion Percentage (MCP) is the percentage of coursework that a student must earn (pass) during enrollment. This component requires Graduate students to earn passing grades in at least **67%** of their cumulative course credit hours attempted.

### **Minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)**

Graduate students must satisfy the qualitative portion of Satisfactory Academic Progress regulations by maintaining a minimum cumulative grade point average of **3.0**.

Classes that are dropped without record will not affect the cumulative grade point average. Incomplete courses do not earn credit or influence the grade point average in the semester in which the course is incomplete; however, they are counted once they are completed.

**Basic Requirement:** Federal Regulations require students applying for or receiving federal financial aid to maintain satisfactory academic progress toward their degree. To measure progress, the Financial Aid Office evaluates a student's academic record at the completion of each semester, reviewing both the quantitative (the maximum time frame and completion rate) and qualitative (cumulative grade point average) as a student pursues his/her degree. Failure to meet these standards will result in the suspension of federal financial aid eligibility.

**Repeated Coursework:** Students may repeat a previously passed course one time and maintain financial eligibility, assuming all other academic progress requirements have been met. Repeated course work counts toward the 150% completion time frame.

## ***Consequences of not maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress*** ***The following statuses refer to Financial Aid Warning and Probation, not Academic Probation.***

### **Financial Aid Warning:**

The first time a student fails to meet the SAP standards as defined above, the student will be placed on financial aid warning. The student will remain eligible for financial aid during the warning period.

### **Financial Aid Suspension:**

If, after being placed on financial aid warning status, the student fails to maintain the standards of SAP as defined above, the student will be placed in a suspension status and will immediately lose financial aid eligibility.

**Maximum Time Frame Suspension:**

If the student fails to meet the maximum time frame standards as defined above, the student will be placed in a suspension status and will immediately lose financial aid eligibility.

**Summer Semester:**

Credit hours attempted during the summer semester will be included in the calculation of SAP standards just as any other period of enrollment. If a student is in a warning status after the spring semester, then the summer will count as the warning period and the student will lose eligibility for the fall semester if standards are not met by the end of the summer term.

## *SAP Appeal*

*Federal regulations do not require that a school allow students an opportunity to appeal an unsatisfactory status. Elizabethtown College has chosen to exercise the ability to use professional judgment and entertain appeals for reinstatement of aid for no more than one term of probation.*

**Appeal Process:**

The SAP Appeal process is a process by which a student who is not meeting SAP standards petitions the SAP Appeal Committee for reconsideration of their eligibility. Students are evaluated at the close of each semester. At this time, any student not meeting any of the SAP components will be placed into a warning status for the next semester. Students already in a warning semester who are still not meeting the College's standards will be ineligible for any further federal financial aid.

Students may submit an appeal to be considered for reinstatement on a probationary status of no more than one semester to resolve all deficiencies. Per Federal Regulations, Elizabethtown College can only consider appeals based on a serious illness of the student, the death or serious illness of an immediate family member, or other special circumstance. As part of the appeal process, the student must provide information about why he/she failed to maintain SAP standards, and what has changed in the student's situation that will allow him/her to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress at the next evaluation.

**Please note that a successful appeal of academic suspension is unrelated to financial aid suspension and does not result in reinstatement of a student's financial aid eligibility.**

**How to Appeal:**

A student may appeal his/her failure to maintain SAP standards for financial aid if extenuating or mitigating circumstances exist. Appeals will be considered for circumstances that include but are not limited to, death or illness of immediate family member, medical condition, hospitalization, documented emotional distress, or other severe situation beyond the student's control. All appeals must be in written format and include the following information:

- Name, student ID and program of study.
- Details of the situation resulting in the financial aid suspension
- Documentation supporting the details of the letter (e.g. death certificate, doctor's note, hospital bill, police report, letter from academic advisor or 3<sup>rd</sup> party)
- Plans for next term of enrollment to resolve situation that led to progress problem (e.g. number or credits, change of major, academic improvement plan details, etc)

If an appeal is not submitted for acceptable reasons, it will automatically be denied and will not be heard by the SAP Appeal Committee. If the appeal is submitted based on an approved circumstance, but does not provide documentation of said circumstance(s), the financial aid counselor will contact the student and request the documentation. If the appeal is complete and all necessary documentation is provided, the financial aid counselor will prepare to present the appeal to the SAP Appeal Committee.

Students should make payment arrangements while waiting on the Committee's decision if necessary. The student will be notified of the Committee's decision in writing. The decision of the Committee is final. There is no secondary or director appeal process. If an appeal is denied, students can only be reinstated for aid eligibility if they satisfy all deficiencies. If an appeal is approved and the student does not fulfill the conditions of his or her probation or academic plan, the student will not be eligible for aid for any future semesters during their academic career unless the student satisfies all academic deficiencies. If feasible, a petition may be made to the financial aid director only when a student has failed to perform well during the period of probation due to specific, extreme circumstances that differ from the reason for the initial appeal. No petition to the financial aid director will be considered on the basis of a denied appeal decided by the SAP Appeal Committee.

Students whose appeal is accepted, but for whom it would be mathematically impossible to resolve all deficiencies after one semester of attendance, will be placed on an Academic Plan which gives more flexibility in financial aid reinstatement and with the end goal being to resolve all deficiencies.. An academic plan varies in length and is determined by the SAP committee. It does not have to equate to the exact number of terms it would take a student to resolve all deficiencies. If the student is meeting the criteria identified in the SAP appeal approval at the next review, the student's academic plan may be extended.

**Financial Aid Probation:**

Students who have had an appeal approved will be placed on probation for one semester and will have their financial aid reinstated for the probation semester. If the student fails to maintain the SAP standards at the end of this semester, he/she will lose financial aid eligibility until SAP standards are met. Students who are mathematically unable to achieve good academic standing (for quantitative and/or qualitative standards) may be placed on an academic plan during the probation semester and following terms, if necessary. Students who meet the minimum requirements of the plan but not SAP standards will be financial aid eligible until such time he/she is in good academic standing. If, however, during the terms that a student is following an academic plan it is determined that the student cannot meet the 150% rule or cannot gain a 3.0 GPA by the 150% point, then the student will permanently lose eligibility for federal student aid at Elizabethtown College from that point forward.

**Reinstatement of Eligibility:**

Financial aid eligibility may be reinstated when a student has removed all SAP deficiencies. Reinstatement is not a status granted in regard to an appeal. Students who regain eligibility by completing required coursework must notify the Financial Aid Office in order to have their progress reevaluated, and financial aid reinstated.

## *SAP Notifications*

The following types of correspondence will be sent to students:

**SAP Warning Notice** – This letter is sent to students who are in a warning status based on their performance in the prior semester and are at risk of suspension of aid eligibility after the next term.

**SAP Ineligible** – This letter is sent to students who have failed to meet at least one component of SAP following their warning period, following a probationary period, or following a semester in which the student was on an approved academic plan. Students found to be deficient in GPA, MCP, and/or MTF after review are considered ineligible for all forms of federal financial aid during subsequent terms. Aid can only be reinstated through a successful, documented appeal for probation (only available following a warning term), or by resolving all deficiencies.

**SAP Reinstatement** – Students who were on probation, an approved academic plan, or suspension, but are now found to be meeting all SAP standards (GPA, MCP, and MTF) after the semester review, are considered to be satisfactory.

**SAP Probation** – This letter is sent to students who have formally requested and are approved to receive a probationary semester of aid. This status can only occur for one semester.

**SAP Probation Denial** – This letter is sent to students who were on a probationary status during their prior term of attendance and did not resolve all deficiencies. Students who fail to resolve all deficiencies will be ineligible for financial aid. Students in this situation cannot have federal financial aid reinstated. They have already submitted an appeal during a prior term and, thus, have exhausted their right to appeal. Resolution of all deficiencies is the only mechanism through which a student may again be considered eligible for federal financial aid.

**SAP Academic Plan Approval or Extension** – This letter is sent to students who were on an academic plan during their prior term of attendance and met all requirements of their plan and/or resolved all deficiencies. This status is granted upon specified review of the academic plan or during the annual review. Unless otherwise specified, students must maintain the minimum GPA required for the academic career for the term and must complete, at least, 67% of courses attempted. Students who fail to meet these criteria or those communicated specifically in the SAP correspondence will be ineligible for federal financial aid unless all deficiencies are satisfied.

**SAP Academic Plan Denial** – This letter is sent to students who were on an academic plan during their prior term of attendance and did not meet all requirements of that plan or resolve all SAP deficiencies. Students who fail to meet these criteria or those communicated specifically in the SAP correspondence will be ineligible for federal financial aid. Students in this situation cannot have federal financial aid reinstated. They have already submitted an appeal during a prior term and, thus, have exhausted their right to appeal. Resolution of all academic deficiencies is the only mechanism through which a student may again be considered eligible for federal financial aid.

**Description of Grades and their affect on SAP Standards:**

Letter Grade	Attempted Credits	Earned Credits	Grade Point Average	Maximum Time Frame
A	Y	Y	Y	Y
A-	Y	Y	Y	Y
B+	Y	Y	Y	Y
B	Y	Y	Y	Y
B-	Y	Y	Y	Y
C+	Y	Y	Y	Y
C	Y	Y	Y	Y
C-	Y	Y	Y	Y
D+	Y	Y	Y	Y
D	Y	Y	Y	Y
D-	Y	Y	Y	Y
F	Y	Y	Y	Y
TR	Y	Y	N	Y
P	Y	Y	N	Y
NP	Y	Y	N	Y
I*	Y	N	N	Y
W	Y	Y	N	Y
WF	Y	Y	Y	Y

\*It is the student's responsibility to inform the Financial Aid Office of all grade changes (ex. from "I" to "B") to ensure that his SAP status is reviewed.