

Satisfactory Academic Progress

TG's Industry webinar Series

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Higher Education Act (HEA) on student eligibility

In order to receive any Title IV grant, loan, or work assistance, a student must be maintaining satisfactory progress in his or her course of study.

Source: HEA Sec. 484(a)(2) and (c)

Course outline

- Quantitative standard
- Qualitative standard
- Other requirements
- Special situations
- Regaining eligibility
- Resources

Why must a school have a SAP policy?

- A SAP policy encourages a student to progress in a successful and timely manner toward completion of the program of study for which the student is receiving federal financial aid.
- To be considered "administratively capable," a school must have a SAP policy.

SAP policy requirements

A school must have a SAP policy that, for an FSA recipient, is the same as or more strict than the school's standards for a student enrolled in the same educational program who is not receiving assistance under an FSA program.

A student must meet both SAP standards

- Quantitative standard
- Qualitative standard

Sources: 2009-10 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 2-125 and 34 CFR 668.16(e)

Quantitative standard

The quantitative standard tracks the *amount* of coursework attempted and completed, including:

- Maximum timeframe
- Progression toward degree or certificate

Source: 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 1-10

Maximum timeframe

- For an undergraduate program, cannot exceed 150% of the published length of the program.

Example:

Academic program length is 120 credit hours

Maximum timeframe = 150% of 120 credit hours;
or $1.5 \times 120 = 180$ credit hours

- For a graduate program, the 150% rule does not apply, but the school
 - Must develop a policy for students in those programs, and
 - Disseminate and consistently apply that policy

Source: 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, pages 1-10 and 2-126

Progression toward degree or certificate

- Divide the program into equal increments
 - No longer than half the program or one academic year, whichever is less

Examples:

- 700-clock-hour program: no more than 350 clock hours per increment
- 2,000-clock-hour program (when the academic year is defined as 900 clock hours): no more than 900 clock hours per increment
- Establish a *minimum amount of work* that a student must complete at the end of each increment
 - Sufficient to allow completion of the program within the maximum timeframe

Minimum amount of work

Examples:

- Fixed number of hours or credits that must be complete by the end of each increment
- Percentage: Student must complete 75% of coursework attempted during the increment; or
- Graduated: Student must complete a lower percentage as a freshman, then a gradually higher percentage in subsequent years

Source: 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 2-126

Qualitative standard

The qualitative standard tracks the *quality* of performance — by the end of the second academic year (regardless of how many credits the student has accrued), the student must have:

- A “C” average or its equivalent, or
- An academic standing consistent with the requirement for graduation from the program

Sources: HEA Sec. 484(c) and 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 1-10

Graduated qualitative standard permitted

Example:

Using a 4-point scale, a student must have 2.0 GPA to graduate, but may have a lower average earlier in academic career

- Under a graduated qualitative standard, the school must document that a student’s below “C” average is consistent with the academic standard required for graduation

Source: 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, pages 1-10 and 2-126

Other requirements

Frequency

At minimum, SAP must be evaluated the lesser of

- Once every academic year (AY)
- Half the length of the program

Sources: 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 1-8 and *Shoptalk Online*, edition 428, <http://www.tgslc.org/shoptalk/2007/st428/st42804.cfm>

Periods to include

Must evaluate all periods the student is enrolled at the school, regardless of whether the student received Federal Student Aid

Consistency

SAP standards must be consistent for all students within categories such as:

- Enrollment status (full time, part time)
- Academic level (undergrad, grad)
- Educational program

Source: 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 2-127

SAP information dissemination

Must provide public information that

- Describes SAP policy
- Explains how to re-establish eligibility
- Is available to enrolled and prospective students

Sources: 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 1-8; 34 CFR 668.16(e); and 668.42(c)

Special situations

Transfer students

- May count all work from a previous school, or
- May choose to count only those transfer credits that apply toward the student's current program

Changing majors

- May choose not to count grades earned and credits attempted in the old major, but
- Must, at least, include any courses that apply to the student's new program

Completed program, but no degree

- May have policy to refuse aid
- May not simply establish a limit on coursework completed
- Must apply only to students who have actually completed the academic requirements for the degree or certificate they are pursuing

Source: 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 2-127

Academic amnesty

- No provision for academic amnesty or academic renewal
- Must always include courses applicable to a student's major (whenever taken) in evaluating SAP

Source: 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 2-130

Class completion issues

- Incompletes
 - Each time a course is taken counts as an attempt, and only the first time a passing grade is received is counted as a completion.

Example

- Fall incomplete completed following spring
 - Spring credit hours do not count toward enrollment status
 - Fall and spring count as attempts (2)
 - If student passes in spring, counts as one completion
- Withdrawals
 - Do not include courses dropped during "Add/Drop" period
 - After the "Add/Drop" period closes, include all grades and credits attempted
- Noncredit/remedial courses
 - Must define ESL and remedial courses' effect on both qualitative and maximum timeframe components of SAP policy

- Repeat/delete
 - *Qualitative* standard may allow for
 - Counting only the most recent grade, or
 - Counting only the highest grade, or
 - Deleting both credits and grades from previous attempts.
 - Count all credits attempted for *quantitative* standard.

Source: 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, pages 2-127 and 4-54

Regaining eligibility

- School's policy must include specific procedures to re-establish that student is meeting standards.
- Student may regain federal student aid eligibility when
 - School determines she is again meeting SAP, or
 - She successfully appeals.

A student cannot regain eligibility by:

- Paying for his or her own classes
- Sitting out a semester/year/term

How can a student regain eligibility?

- Improve performance to meet the school's standards
- Successfully appeal a determination that he or she was not making SAP

Source: 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, pages 1-10 and 2-130

Appeals

May consider an appeal due to

- The death of a relative
- Personal injury or illness of the student
- Special circumstances as determined by the school

Document!

Sources: 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, pages 2-127 and 2-130 and 34 CFR 668.34(c)

Awarding aid when a student regains eligibility

A student may receive Pell or campus-based aid for the payment period in which she regains SAP.

A student may receive Stafford or PLUS loans for the entire period of enrollment (which is usually the entire academic year) once she regains eligibility, unless school policy provides for reinstatement of eligibility at a later point.

Example

Amy is ineligible at the beginning of the fall term but regains eligibility in the middle of the spring term.

She may receive Pell and campus-based aid for the spring term, but not the fall term.

In addition, she may receive Stafford or PLUS loans for both the fall and spring terms.

Source: 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 1-10

Resources

All of these resources are available for free download on TG's Web site at www.tgslc.org. Roll your mouse over the School's tab, then select Policies & Regulations from the drop down menu (The URL is <http://www.tgslc.org/policy/index.cfm>). Download a copy from *TG Online*, by right clicking on the link and selecting "Save Target As."

Higher Education Act (HEA)

- 484(a) and (c) Student Eligibility

34 CFR

- 668.14 Program participation agreement
- 668.16(e) Standards of administrative capability
- 668.32 Student eligibility
- 668.34 Satisfactory progress
- 668.42(c) Financial assistance information
- 682.603(f) Certification [of] a loan application

2009-2010 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*

- Volume 2, pages 2-70, 2-95, 2-106, and 2-125

2008-2009 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*

- Volume 1, pages 1-8 through 1-10
- Volume 2, pages 2-121 through 2-126
- Volume 4, page 4-54

Updates to these and other resources are announced through TG's free, weekly e-newsletter, *Shoptalk Online*. TG's home page provides a quick link to *Shoptalk Online's* subscription form. Archived editions are searchable at <http://www.tgslc.org/shoptalk/index.cfm>.

It may also be helpful to review ED's FSA Coach at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/fsacoach/index.html>. Specifically, see lessons

- 5-04 Satisfactory Academic Progress Policies and
- 8-01 School Responsibilities: Satisfactory Academic Progress.

In addition, ED offers an FSA Assessment on SAP at <http://ifap.ed.gov/qahome/fsaassessment.html>.

Questions?

As always, TG strives to be your "premier source of information," so if you have a question please call (800) 845-6267,

or send an e-mail message to cust.assist@tgslc.org,

or visit TG's online database of frequently asked questions at tg.custhelp.com.