	<b>University of Arkansas – Fort Smith</b>	
	<b>Satisfactory Academic Progress</b>	
	Responsible Office: Financial Aid	Policy Number: FA2023.12
Effective Award Year: 2023-24	Revision Date: 07/20/2023	Policy Version: 2023.02
Published: FA Policy & Procedures Manual, UAFS Website	Disclosure:	Reference: 34 CFR 668.34 GEN-23-46 Sunset of COVID Waivers

## POLICY

The University of Arkansas – Fort Smith is required by the U.S. Department of Education to apply an objective set of standards to determine if a student is making progress towards the completion of a degree or certificate program. These standards, referred to as Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), include a qualitative and quantitative measure of success as well as a maximum time frame. To ensure all potential applicants for federal student aid know their eligibility status, all students will be assessed regardless of whether they are applying for federal student aid at the time of evaluation. Violation of any section of this policy will result in the loss of federal student aid eligibility.

## PROCEDURE

### Same As or Stricter Than

This policy is the same as the university’s academic policy for students enrolled in the same educational program of study and are not receiving federal student aid. The Academic progress policy is managed and monitored by the UAFS Registrar.

The UAFS Financial Aid & Veteran Benefits Office SAP policy differs from the university’s Academic Progress policy managed by the Registrar’s Office. The two offices have separate policies, procedures, and appeal processes.

### Categories of Students

All undergraduate students will be measured using the same objective set of standards, GPA, PACE, and maximum timeframe. The same SAP standards must be met by all students regardless of enrollment status, i.e., full time, part time or less than half time. This is true for all categories of undergraduate students; concurrent, consortium, and UAF engineering consortium.

All graduate students will be measured using the same objective set of standards, GPA, PACE, and maximum timeframe. The same SAP standards must be met by all students regardless of enrollment status, i.e., full time, part time or less than half time.

### Evaluation Periods

The financial aid office will evaluate SAP for all enrolled students at the end of each payment period, fall, spring and summer, to ensure students are meeting qualitative and quantitative standards as well as maximum time frame. The official grades on record with the Registrar’s Office will be used in the SAP calculations.

### Requirements for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP):


Title IV federal student aid recipients are required to meet the following standards at the end of each payment period, fall, spring and summer:

#### *Qualitative Progress Requirement*

- Undergraduate: 2.00 cumulative GPA
- Graduate: 3.00 cumulative GPA

#### *Quantitative Progress Requirement*

- PACE at which a student must progress through his or her educational program to ensure completion within the maximum time frame: complete at least 67% of the total number of credit hours attempted. PACE is calculated by dividing the cumulative number of hours the student has completed by the

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cumulative number of hours the student has attempted. Rounding is not used to determine PACE. This applies to both undergraduate and graduate students.

#### *Maximum Time Frame Requirement*

- Complete a program of study within a maximum time frame of 150% of the hours required for the degree being pursued.
  - Associate Degree = 90 attempted credit hours
  - Bachelor’s Degree = 180 attempted credit hours
  - Master of Education = 45 attempted credit hours
  - Master of Healthcare Administration = 60 attempted credit hours

#### **Transfer Course Work**

Students are required to have official transcripts from all prior accredited institutions of higher learning on file with the UAFS Registrar’s Office. All course work accepted for credit by UAFS will be considered in the quantitative (PACE) and maximum time frame requirements of SAP including repeated course work.


#### **Repeated Courses**

When a *previously non-passed course* is repeated, both grades will remain on the permanent record and both grades will be used to compute the cumulative GPA in the calculation of a student’s Satisfactory Academic Progress status. Each repetition will count towards the attempted hours.

When a *previously passed course* is repeated, both grades will remain on the permanent record and both grades will be used to compute the cumulative GPA in the calculation of a student’s Satisfactory Academic Progress status. Each repetition will count towards the attempted hours; however, the course will only count toward completed hours once.

#### **Treatment of Grades**

Grade	Effect of Grade
<b>A, B, C, and D</b>	Letter grades used to indicate successful completion of a course. All passing grades are considered in the qualitative (GPA), quantitative (PACE) and maximum time frame requirements of SAP including repeated course work.
<b>F</b>	Letter grade used to indicate unsuccessful completion of a course. All non-passing grades are considered in the qualitative (GPA), quantitative (PACE) and maximum time frame requirements of SAP including repeated course work.
<b>W</b>	Grade used to indicate that a student has officially withdrawn from a course. This grade is considered non-passing and will count in the quantitative (PACE) and maximum time frame requirements of SAP including repeated course work. This grade is GPA neutral.
<b>IP</b>	Grade used to indicate the student has not completed all course requirements to earn credit. This grade is considered non-passing and will count in the quantitative (PACE) and maximum time frame requirements of SAP including repeated course work. This grade is GPA neutral.
<b>AU</b>	Grade used to indicate the student has audited a course and is not seeking course credit. This grade will not have any effect on the qualitative (GPA), quantitative (PACE) or maximum time frame requirements of SAP. Any aid received for audited courses will be returned to the appropriate program and the student will be responsible for repayment to UAFS.

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<b>WC</b>	Grade used to indicate that a student has officially withdrawn from a course due to COVID19. This grade will not have any effect on the qualitative (GPA), quantitative (PACE) or maximum time frame requirements of SAP. This grade was used beginning March 13, 2020 through May 11, 2023 during the COVID19 pandemic. Beginning May 11, 2023 there are no longer flexibilities for SAP relating to COVID19.
<b>CR</b>	Grade used to indicate that a student has earned credit though AP or other exams. This grade will not have any effect on the qualitative (GPA), quantitative (PACE) or maximum time frame requirements of SAP.

### **Academic Amnesty/Renewal/Bankruptcy**

The university's academic policy on amnesty, renewal, bankruptcy, second chance is not applicable to the financial aid satisfactory academic progress policy. The FSA program regulations make no provision for the concept of academic amnesty, renewal, etc. All grades appearing on a student's transcript and/or accepted as credit from another institution of higher learning will be factored into the qualitative (GPA), quantitative (PACE) and maximum timeframe for satisfactory academic progress as described in this policy.

### **Recalculations**

The Financial Aid Office will not recalculate SAP due to grade changes or program of study changes. Additionally, SAP will not be recalculated for incomplete grades (I) changed to a letter grade. The updated grade will be a part of the next regular end of term evaluation.

### **Financial Aid Warning**

Students who fail to meet either the PACE component, GPA component, or both, will be placed on financial aid warning for one payment period. Students on financial aid warning remain eligible to receive Title IV funds and should work to improve his or her GPA and PACE. Failure to meet all SAP standards at the end of the warning period will result in financial aid suspension and the loss of Title IV federal student aid eligibility. There is no warning period once a student reaches his/her maximum time frame.

### **Financial Aid Academic Plan**


If a student successfully files a SAP appeal they will be placed on an academic plan. Students on an academic plan will remain on academic plan until the student completes the academic plan, at which time they must meet all the minimum qualitative and quantitative standards. Failure to successfully complete or comply with the provisions of the academic plan will result in financial aid suspension and the loss of Title IV federal student aid eligibility.

### **Suspension of Aid**

Students who fail to meet the requirements of this policy will be suspended from Title IV federal student aid. Funds affected by this policy include all applicable federal student aid funds including but not limited to Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (SEOG), Federal Direct Loans, Federal Direct PLUS (Parent) Loans, Federal Grad PLUS loans, and Federal Work Study.

### **Appeals**

Students on financial aid suspension have the right to appeal. A student may appeal the suspension of financial aid due to extenuating circumstance. Exceptional circumstances may include but are not limited to illness, death of an immediate family member, or traumatic events in the student's life.

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A student on financial aid suspension may appeal if they do not meet the GPA and/or PACE requirements or have exceeded the maximum timeframe. Students on financial aid suspension may appeal once per semester. The student must complete the steps on the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Appeal Checklist and provide the following:

- Typed statement, explaining the circumstances which prevented the student from maintaining SAP. The typed statement must address the following: Why the student failed to meet SAP standards? What has changed in the student’s circumstances? What the student plans to do differently from the past to meet minimum SAP standards?
- Required documentation that supports the circumstances in the written statement. Acceptable documentation can be, but is not limited to, medical or legal documents, police reports, letters from college staff or faculty, employers, counselors, attorneys, doctors, or other objective persons who are knowledgeable of the student’s circumstances. *Acceptable documentation does not include letters from friends and/or family.*
- An academic plan that was created in collaboration with an Academic Advisor. This includes counseling the student, reviewing their degree audit, program requirements, and academic progress.
- Completed a degree audit. This should be signed by an Academic Advisor and indicate the number of hours remaining to complete the degree (including the current semester).

#### **Academic Plans**

When a student fails to meet SAP standards (GPA, PACE and/or exceeds maximum timeframe) and wishes to submit an appeal to the financial aid office, he or she must also submit an academic plan. Academic plans are developed in collaboration with an Academic Advisor. An academic advisor will counsel the student and review their degree audit, program requirements, and academic progress.

On an individual, case-by-case basis, the academic plan will establish the student’s needed GPA and PACE rate to meet minimum SAP standards.


Upon development of an agreeable academic plan, the student will submit the plan along with other appeal requirements to the financial aid office. Students on an academic plan will be evaluated at the end of each payment period, fall, spring and summer. Failure to successfully complete and/or comply with the provisions of the academic plan will result in financial aid suspension and the loss of Title IV federal student aid eligibility.

#### **College SAP Committee**

UAFS has established a SAP committee made up of 5-8 individuals consisting of staff and faculty. Serving on the committee is a 12–18-month obligation for all members except for the Assistant Director of Financial Aid, Client Services who will serve as the Chairperson. The chairperson is responsible for attending the committee meetings to provide guidance to the committee and to ensure compliance with the regulations. Committee members will review SAP appeals, supporting documentation and academic plans through UAFS’s imaging system. Upon reaching a decision, the committee chairperson will record the decision and subsequently update the student’s record in Banner and send notification to the student.

#### **Committee Decisions**

If an appeal is *approved* by the SAP committee, the student will be placed on academic plan. Students on financial academic plan are eligible for Title IV federal student aid. Students who require more than one payment period to meet the minimum GPA and PACE standards will be placed on an academic plan until the student completes the academic plan, at which time they must meet all the minimum qualitative and quantitative standards. Failure to

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successfully complete and/or comply with the provisions of the academic plan will result in financial aid suspension and the loss of Title IV federal student aid eligibility.

If an appeal is *denied* by the SAP committee, the student will remain on financial aid suspension. Students on financial aid suspension are ineligible for Title IV federal student aid. Students are encouraged to successfully complete at least six credit hours at their own expense at UAFS or attend another accredited institution of higher education and earn at least a 2.0 GPA before submitting another appeal.

### **Regained Eligibility**

Students may re-establish financial aid eligibility by:

1. Successfully completing course work until the minimum standards are met, or
2. Successfully appealing financial aid suspension.

When a student appeals financial aid suspension, there is no guarantee the appeal will be approved. Once suspended, there is no guarantee a student may receive financial aid until he or she is meeting minimum standards again. Upon reaching the minimum standards, the student must notify the financial aid office to have his/her progress to be reviewed.

### **Notification**

Students will be notified by UAFS email of any changes to their satisfactory academic progress status such as Warning, Suspension, or Academic Plan. The email will direct them to their Financial Aid Checklist in the MyUAFS portal where they will see detailed information about their SAP status and notification of their right to appeal. Additionally, if a student has appealed their suspension, they will be notified via UAFS email that the SAP Committee has reached a decision. The email will direct them to their Financial Aid Dashboard in the MyUAFS portal where they will view the decision.