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Title IV Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

Background

In order to receive and remain eligible for Federal Title IV financial aid, students must progress towards the completion of their program of study at a rate that will ensure graduation in a reasonable length of time. Federal Title IV financial aid includes, but is not limited to, Pell grant, TEACH grant, Direct Stafford student loans, Nursing Loan and PLUS.

Policy Statement

Students must meet satisfactory academic progress (SAP) in order to receive and remain eligible for Federal Title IV financial aid. Any student who does not meet the satisfactory academic progress requirement is notified and has the option to appeal. The submission of an appeal form does not guarantee the reinstatement of cancelled aid.

Policy Framework: Satisfactory Academic Progress Requirement

West Chester University (WCU)'s satisfactory academic progress requirement includes both *qualitative* (grade-based) and *quantitative* (time-based) measures as required by the U.S. Department of Education

Regulatory requirements are outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations: 34 CFR§668.34.

Qualitative Measure:

The qualitative measure is the student cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA). To maintain financial aid eligibility:

- Undergraduate students
 - Students in undergraduate programs must achieve a 2.0 cumulative GPA by the end of the second year and maintain a cumulative 2.0 GPA at each evaluation point thereafter. See Process and Evaluation Frequency section below.
- Graduate students
 - Students in a program of 1 year or less must achieve at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA by the end of the first semester of attendance and maintain a cumulative 3.0 GPA at each evaluation point thereafter.
 - Students in other graduate programs must achieve a 3.0 cumulative GPA by the end of the second year and maintain a cumulative 3.0 GPA at each evaluation point thereafter. (also see [Academic Standing](#) in the Graduate Catalog)



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Quantitative Measure:

SAP policy also has 2 quantitative measures which includes *Maximum Timeframe* and *Pace*.

For programs 1 year or less in length, quantitative measures are evaluated at the end of each semester. For all other programs, quantitative measures are evaluated at the end of each spring semester.

1. *Maximum timeframe* – All students, undergraduate and graduate, must complete their academic program within 150% of the published number of required credit hours for their program(s). Credit hours included as part-time and full-time attendance are included in the maximum timeframe calculation. Transfer credit hours, that apply to degree requirements, as well as credit hours attempted at WCU are included for all academic terms even if the student did not receive federal financial aid for specific semesters. A student becomes ineligible for federal student aid when it becomes mathematically impossible for the student to complete their academic program within the maximum timeframe.

For example:

Undergraduate majors requiring 120 credit hours will not be eligible for financial aid after exceeding 180 attempted credit hours ($120 \times 1.5 = 180$).

Another undergraduate example: Student has attempted 100 credit hours and decides to change academic program before completing the first one. The new program requires 120 credit hours and 30 hours of the previous coursework applies to the new program. The student now needs to successfully complete 90 credit hours to graduate. Since he has attempted 100 and needs 90, it is mathematically impossible to complete within the required 150% maximum timeframe. In this case, the student lost Title IV eligibility after attempting only 100 credit hours.

Graduate majors requiring 48 credit hours will not be eligible for financial aid after exceeding 72 attempted credit hours ($48 \times 1.5 = 72$).

2. *Pace* – Students must successfully complete at least 67% of all credit hours attempted. Pace is calculated by dividing the cumulative number of credit hours the student has successfully completed by the cumulative number of credit hours the student has attempted. Pace is measured at each SAP evaluation point. Transfer credit hours are included as credit hours both attempted and earned.

Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on Satisfactory Academic Progress.

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, WCU implemented an alternative grading policy for students whose studies were impacted. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) authorized institutions to exclude from the quantitative component of the SAP calculation any attempted credits that were not completed by the student without requiring an appeal by the student.



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- Any SAP calculation that includes Spring 2020 will be excluded from the Pace calculation credits attempted for that semester.

Process and Evaluation Frequency

Satisfactory Academic Progress varies according to the student's academic program. For programs of 1 year or less in length, SAP is evaluated at the end of each semester. For all other programs SAP is evaluated at the end of each Spring semester after spring grades are authenticated and recorded on the student record. Student must complete four terms (full-time or part-time) before being evaluated for the qualitative measure (GPA) of Satisfactory Academic Progress.

Students identified as not meeting SAP requirements are notified via email message of their non-compliance and that they are not eligible for Federal Student Aid. This communication also informs the student that as long as they are academically eligible, they may still register for classes, but must pay tuition with non-federal financial aid funds.

The student is referred to the SAP requirements and their right to appeal the determination. The Appeal Form is available in the financial aid office and on the aid office's website, until a specified deadline that is stated on the appeal form. Students that elect to exercise their right to appeal must do so in compliance with the deadlines and guidelines set forth in the form. Failure to do so will result in the automatic Denial/Rejection of the appeal.

Appeals Process and Procedures

Students identified as not meeting SAP requirements are notified via email message of their non-compliance, that they are not eligible for Federal Student Aid, and that as long as they are academically eligible, they may still register for classes, but must pay tuition with non-financial aid funds. The process runs regularly as student grades are received and reflected on their record. The student is referred to the SAP requirements and their right to appeal the determination. The Appeal Form is available in the financial aid office and on the aid office's website, for a brief window of time.

Students that elect to exercise their right to appeal must do so in compliance with the deadlines and guidelines set forth in the form. Failure to do so will result in the automatic Denial/Rejection of the appeal.

The Submission of the Appeal Form

The form is submitted directly to the financial aid office. The form must be complete and be submitted by the student. A complete form must contain the following items.

1. Letter of circumstance written by the student to explain why satisfactory academic progress standards were not met.
2. A statement indicating what has occurred to ensure that the circumstance is fully resolved and will no longer impede satisfactory academic progress

3. Documentation to support claims made in the letter of circumstance or a letter from at least one third party.

The student must schedule a virtual, phone, or in-person appointment with a financial aid counselor to develop a plan of how the student will bring the academic record into compliance within a specified timeframe.

Initial Prep Review of the Appeal Form

The receipt and status of the SAP Form is recorded in the appropriate systems, and an alert is initiated in order to notify the student. Incomplete forms will not be released for committee review.

- Student is notified of the incomplete status and the cause of the rejection.
- The status of the appeal is updated in the student information system.
 - Incomplete Appeal Form- Missing information SAP appeal form retained by the financial aid office.
 - Rejected Form-Late SAP- The form is retained but the appeal is denied. (Internal deadline Drop/Add period)
- The Appeal log is updated and the form is scanned and archived in the appropriate systems.

Appeal Form Procedures

The appeal form and any supporting documentation is scanned into the appropriate systems. If a student has a transcript, it is provided by the registrar's office or the student to assist in the SAP determination. Before obtaining the transcript the SAP status should be checked again for possible updates. The financial aid office reviews to ensure the form and documentation are complete. If complete the financial aid office schedules an appointment with the student.

Committee Review and Determination

There are three members of the SAP committee. Two members are from the Office of Financial Aid and the third is a representative from University College or Graduate School, as appropriate. The committee is charged with reviewing Appeal Forms as soon as they are made aware of the form within a 14 calendar day period.

The 14 calendar day window begins with the notification, to the committee, that appeals are available for review. If a committee member suspects that they know the identity of an applicant, financial aid office staff will confirm and if it is the student in question the member will abstain from making a decision on the appeal. Member decisions are recorded, and tallies prepared by the support staff member.

The Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Form will be processed as follows:

Approved Appeals-

Based on majority or unanimous consensus of the committee.

1. Appeal log is updated

2. The Student Information System is updated to “Meets SAP” on the Review Fin Aid Status screen.
3. The student is packaged for one (1) payment period. Summer sessions represent 1 payment period.
4. The student is notified of their Financial Aid Probationary status and the terms of that status.
5. The student's original appeal form, and all committee documentation are archived in the appropriate systems.

Approved Appeals – students granted an appeal are placed on financial aid probation and will be subject to a review of their SAP upon completion of the financial aid probationary period.

Students will either:

- Meet the requirement, and aid will be awarded for the next semester,
- Not meet the requirement and lack evidence of successfully executing the quantitative within the recovery plan. The student will be ineligible for aid for the next semester.
- Not meet the requirement but demonstrate successful execution of the quantitative measure of their recovery plan. The student will be eligible for an extension of financial aid eligibility.

Students will be notified of their status and provided with their options at that time.

Pending Appeals-Insufficient information

Members of the committee may request additional information from the student. The requested information is noted in the student information system and the appeal review documentation.

- Member records notes on their page.
- Any pertinent comments will be added to the appeal review documentation.
- SAP status will not be changed.
- If additional information is needed, it will be communicated to the student.

Once materials are received committee member(s) notified.

Denied-

Based on a majority or unanimous consensus of the committee

- The appeal review documentation is updated.
- SAP status will not be changed.
- The student is notified.
- The original form and committee documentation are archived in the appropriate system
 - A student denied an appeal by the committee may request an appointment with the Assistant Director to discuss the outcome of the appeal. If during the appointment the student presents-
 - Substantial documentation not previously provided.

- Testimony and or a strong rationale not previously provided.
- The student may be given the opportunity to present the additional information within the deadline period, to the committee for reconsideration. The opportunity to do so does not suggest or imply that the committee's decisions will change.

Students that were placed on Financial Aid Probation and received their Title IV Federal funds will have their academic progress status determined at the end of the probationary period.

- Students who meet all SAP requirements will have their aid packaged for the next enrolled payment period. The student will be notified of the status.
- Students who still do not meet all SAP requirements at the end of their probationary term will be reviewed for an extension and notified of their status and options.
 - If the terms of the plan are met, aid is packaged for the next enrolled semester.
 - If the student failed to meet the terms of the plan, aid is denied until the student is in full SAP compliance or has another approved appeal. If a student is submitting a subsequent appeal it does go directly to committee for review.
 - Subsequent appeals must be for circumstances different from those provided on the previous appeals.

Other related Federal Guidance in determining SAP:

Different grades, enrollment actions, and types of courses have varying effects on the Cumulative GPA, Pace percentage, and Maximum Timeframe calculations.

- Earned letter grades of A, B, C, D positively impact a student's Pace percentage and bring the student closer to completing his or her program within the Maximum Timeframe of the program if the earned grade is the student's first graded attempt. Although a D letter grade may not negatively impact a student's Pace percentage, it contributes to lowering the student's GPA to below the required 2.0 CUM-GPA (and or 3.0) standard.
- Grades of E, P, and S positively impact a student's Pace percentage and Maximum Timeframe, but do not impact the GPA.
- A grade of N negatively impacts Pace and Maximum Timeframe, but has no impact on the GPA.
- Earning an F or Z letter grade negatively impacts the student's GPA, Pace percentage and Maximum Timeframe determination.
- IP (In Progress) and NG (No Grade) are not included in the cumulative GPA calculation unless they are later converted to an earned letter grade. However, IP and NG are counted as credits attempted but not earned, and therefore lower the student's Pace percentage until they are changed to an earned letter grade.



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- W (Withdrawal) Student-initiated withdrawals are not included in the cumulative GPA calculation. However, Ws do lower the student's Pace percentage and are included in the Maximum Timeframe calculation unless the student withdraws prior to the date after which the class appears on a student's transcript.
- M (Military Withdrawal) The Military Withdrawal grade is non-punitive and is not included in any SAP calculations.
- Y (Administrative Withdrawal) Administrative Withdrawals are not included in the cumulative GPA calculation. However, Ys do lower the student's Pace percentage and are included in the Maximum Timeframe calculation.
- AU (Audited) Audited courses are not included in the GPA, Pace percentage, or Maximum Timeframe calculations.
- Repeated courses - Each time a student is enrolled in a course past the drop/add period, it counts as credit hours attempted. However, credit for a passing grade is only earned one time.
 - Remedial (Q) Courses: Remedial courses that are at least the secondary (high school) school level are included in the GPA, Pace and Maximum Timeframe calculations.
 - Courses that are below the high school level are not eligible to be included in determining financial aid eligibility, with the exception of ESL courses.

Subsequent Degree: When a student has completed all requirements for earning their credential, they are no longer eligible for additional financial aid for that program. However, students who complete a certificate or degree may request a SAP reset for a subsequent degree. Only courses from the prior program(s) that apply to the current program will be included in SAP calculations.

Transfer Credit: Although transferring credit hours to WCU will not impact the student's GPA, any credit hours transferred will be included in both "hours attempted" and "hours completed" in the Pace percentage, and Maximum timeframe calculations.

Definitions

Appeal—A process by which a student who is not meeting SAP standards petitions the financial aid office for reconsideration of his or her eligibility for Federal Student Aid funds.

Appeal Form—The document that a student who has not meet SAP standards completes to petition the financial aid office for an exception to their status. The form includes instructions and the process description.

Financial aid probation—A status the WCU financial aid office assigns to a student who is failing to make satisfactory academic progress but successfully appeals.

Maximum timeframe— A period no longer than 150 percent of the published length of an academic program.



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Pace— The measure of a student's course completion rate. Pace is calculated by dividing the cumulative number of credit hours the student has successfully completed by the cumulative number of credit hours the student has attempted.

Successfully completed— refers to courses for which a student has earned a passing grade and earned credit that will appear on the academic transcript.

Transfer Credit Hours— credits earned at another post-secondary institution(s) that are accepted and applied to student's degree requirements.

Title IV Financial Aid— refers to financial aid programs authorized by the US Federal Government under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. This includes programs such as Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Federal Direct Student Loans, and Federal Work-Study.

References

[34 CFR§668.34](#)

[34 CFR§668.16\(e\)](#)

[34 CFR§668.32\(f\)](#)

Q&A: www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2009/sap.html

[2019-2020 Federal Student Aid Handbook Volume1, Chapter 1](#)

[2019-2020 Federal Student Aid Handbook Volume2, Chapter 3](#)

[WCU Academic Standing Policy-Graduate Students](#)

[Maintenance of Academic Standards – Undergraduate Students](#)

Reviewed by: University Registrar; Sr. Associate Vice President for Financial Aid and Campuses

Policy Owner: Daniel McIlhenny, Director of Operations and Compliance (Financial Aid Office)

Approved by: Jeffery L. Osgood, Ph.D., Deputy Provost & VP of Academic Operations

Effective Date: September 18, 2020

Review Date: September 18, 2024

Appendix A: Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Form and Academic Recovery Plan

Schock Financial Aid Office
030 Kershner Student Service Center
25 University Avenue
West Chester, PA 19383



Phone: (610) 436-2627
Fax: (610) 436-2574
E-Mail: finaid@wcupa.edu

Title IV Federal Student Aid **Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal and** **Financial Aid Academic Recovery Plan**

Fall 2020
Deadline: September 11, 2020

Requirements:

In order to receive and remain eligible for Federal Title IV financial aid, students must progress towards the completion of their program of study at a rate that will ensure graduation in a reasonable length of time. Federal Title IV financial aid includes, but is not limited to, Pell grant, TEACH grant, Direct Stafford student loans, Nursing loan and PLUS. West Chester University has established a policy utilizing both qualitative (grade-based) and quantitative (time-based) measures required by the U.S. Department of Education as follows:

- 1. Students must successfully complete at least 67% of all credits attempted when progress is evaluated by the University at the end of each Spring semester**
- 2. Students must earn a minimum cumulative GPA**
 - a. Undergraduate: Must earn a 2.0 GPA by the end of the fourth semester of enrollment and in each subsequent year of enrollment**
 - b. Graduate: Must earn a 3.0 GPA by the end of the second semester of enrollment and in each subsequent year of enrollment**
- 3. Students must not exceed 150% of the published number of credit hours for your program. For example:**
 - a. Undergraduate majors requiring 120 credit hours will not be eligible for financial aid after exceeding 180 attempted credit hours ($120 \times 1.5 = 180$).**
 - b. Graduate majors requiring 48 credit hours will not be eligible for financial aid after exceeding 72 attempted credit hours ($48 \times 1.5 = 72$).**

Any student who does not meet the satisfactory academic progress requirement is notified and has the option to appeal. The submission of an appeal application does not guarantee the reinstatement of canceled aid. **You are strongly encouraged to make payment arrangements with the Bursar's Office while your appeal is being reviewed, as billing deadlines cannot be adjusted.**

Note: The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) has separate progress requirements and their appeal process is found on the University website and at www.pheaa.org

Instructions:

Complete the entire appeal application as instructed throughout the packet.

Examples of acceptable circumstances that may warrant an appeal include:

1. The death of an immediate family member (parent, spouse, sibling, child)
2. Serious illness of the student that may have necessitated withdrawal from all classes in order to recover, or that may have contributed to the student doing poorly in his/her classes
3. Serious illness or injury of an immediate family member for whom the student was a caregiver
4. Significant trauma in the student's life that impaired his/her health
5. Other documented unexpected circumstances beyond the student's control

NOTE: Documentation from a **third-party** (doctor's note or other on professional letterhead) must accompany the letter of circumstance or the appeal will be returned.

Process:

1. Appeal form can be found at <https://www.wcupa.edu/finaid> under the "Forms" section.
2. Student must make a Zoom appointment to meet with a financial aid counselor to review the completed appeal application, documentation, and academic recovery plan. Consideration for a phone appointment will be taken for students unable to attend a video appointment.
3. If the appeal application is not complete, it will be returned to the student for completion and another appointment with the counselor will be made. Do not submit the appeal without all proper documentation.
4. The financial aid counselor will approve the appeal or defer decision to the Appeal Committee
5. Please allow up to 14 business days if a decision is deferred to the Appeal Committee

Results:

The student is notified in writing regarding the result of the appeal request:

1. If the appeal is approved, then financial aid will be awarded for **one semester or payment period**, which is considered financial aid probation
 - a. academic progress will be reviewed after the appealed semester; financial aid will not be approved for any future semester until progress is met, unless otherwise approved by the counselor after grades are reviewed
2. If the appeal is denied, the student may enroll but is responsible for any balance owed to the University

**Federal Student Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress
Appeal Application and Financial Aid Academic Recovery
Plan
Fall 2020**

***DEADLINE FOR APPOINTMENT AND SUBMISSION:
September 11, 2020***

Name	WCU I.D. Number
Phone #	Email

**Have you ever previously submitted a financial aid appeal? No
If yes, when?**

Section 1: Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Requirements

Satisfactory Academic progress was not met because (Check all that apply):

- I did not complete 67% of the total cumulative attempted and transfer credits, including any credits for which I remained enrolled past the Drop/Add period (attempted credits include credits for which a grade of **W, F, AU, Z or NG** was earned)
- I do not have a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.00 (3.0 for graduate students) at the end of the fourth (4th) term (includes winter and summer sessions)
- I have attempted more than 150% cumulative credits – ***complete sections 1, 3, and 6 only***

Section 2: Circumstance for Appeal

NOTE: *Lack of awareness of the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy is not a sufficient reason to apply for an appeal*

Check the category or categories that pertain(s) to your circumstance:

- The death of an immediate family member (parent, spouse, sibling, child)**
Attach a photocopy of death certificate or notice; state the relationship of the deceased to you in Letter of Circumstance
- The serious illness or injury of the student**
Attach a statement from a physician and or counselor or hospital discharge note; explain the nature and dates of the illness or injury in Letter of Circumstance
- The serious illness or injury of immediate family member**
Attach a statement from a physician or a hospital discharge note; explain the nature and dates of the illness or injury in Letter of Circumstance
- Significant trauma in the student's life that impaired the student's emotional and/or physical health**
Provide documentation from a physician, counselor or third-party professional; details must be fully explained in Letter of Circumstance
- Other unexpected documented circumstances beyond the student's control**
Provide documentation from third-party professional and fully explain situation in Letter of Circumstance. Please note, circumstances beyond the student's control may include COVID-19 related disruptions, but may not be the only reason for appeal. Please keep in mind SAP takes into account the full academic year.

Section 3: Letter of Circumstance Requirements:

- a. The Letter of Circumstance must be typed or written on a separate page and attached to this form
- b. Describe, in detail, how the events in Section 2 impacted your academic performance and prevented you from making satisfactory progress
- c. Describe other responsibilities you have while attending WCU
- d. Describe, in detail, how the circumstance is now resolved and explain the measurable steps you are currently taking to prevent the situation from negatively impacting your academic performance in the future

Section 4: Financial Aid Academic Recovery Plan—Financial Aid Counselor Section

Students seeking financial aid are required, by federal law, to make financial aid satisfactory academic progress (SAP). The West Chester University Financial Aid Office is committed to engage students with appropriate services to help ensure academic success and continued financial assistance.

Note: Section should be completed by the Financial Aid Counselor at the time of meeting with student.

Student Information

Name: _____ ID# _____

To be Completed by Financial Aid Counselor:

1. Student’s current cumulative GPA:
2. Student’s current completion rate:
3. Student’s anticipated graduation date:
4. Semester student began academic difficulty:
5. Is the student currently on academic probation? Not Required

6. What specific goals have the counselor and student made to encourage academic success?

7. Has the student used or plans to use the Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC) or other academic assistance resources (please describe)?

8. Length of time necessary for GPA requirements to be met:
9. Length of time necessary for pace/completion requirements to met:
10. Length of time necessary for graduation:

Additional Comments:

Counselor Signature:

Date:

Section 5--Student Certification—Appeal will not be reviewed until this section is complete

Student must initial each item (appeal will NOT be reviewed until this is complete)

___ I understand that the reason that I am not making SAP is that I either did not successfully meet the 67% cumulative completion rate, or that I did not meet the required cumulative GPA requirement.

___ I certify that all information and documentation in this appeal packet is true, accurate and complete.

___ I understand that providing false, incomplete or inaccurate information is a dishonesty violation of the West Chester University Code of Conduct, and that my appeal will be denied.

___ I understand that the Financial Aid Counselor/Appeal Committee will review financial aid records, academic records and conduct records on file at West Chester University

___ I understand that if approved, I will receive federal financial aid for one semester ONLY

___ I understand that if the appeal is approved, **I must successfully complete 100% of all credits attempted in the appealed semester (grades of F, Z, W, AU and NG are not considered "successfully" completed)**, or I will not receive aid in the next semester after the appealed semester; I further understand that if it is determined that I will need than more than one semester to re-establish SAP, and that my eligibility for aid in the semester after the appealed semester will be determined by the financial aid counselor.

I understand that I may appeal a second time *only* for a reason NOT related to the circumstances of the first appeal. A second appeal will automatically go to the Appeal Committee for review.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Section 6—For Students Exceeding the 150% Credit Limit ONLY:

Financial Aid Counselor Section: Section to be completed by Financial Aid Counselor at time of meeting with student.

Number of credits needed for graduation:

Number of semesters required to complete degree:

Anticipated graduation date:

Has student utilized academic resources to ensure graduation? Please explain:

Student Certification:

I certify that all information and documentation in this application is true, accurate and complete. I understand that submitting false, incomplete or inaccurate information is a dishonesty violation of the West Chester University Code of Conduct and that my appeal will be denied. I agree with the information provided by my academic advisor and will adhere to the schedule of credits taken to complete my degree. I further understand that my academic progress and plan will be reviewed at the end of the appealed semester and a new academic plan must be completed if there is any deviation from the plan or if a grade of F, W, Z, NG or AU is received during the appealed semester. I understand that a financial aid counselor may request an interview to discuss the academic plan or academic progress.

Student Signature:

Date: _____