# UNIVERSITY POLICIES

**Title:** Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy
**Effective Date:** March 25, 2024
**Issuing Authority:** Executive Vice President
**Policy Contact:** Associate Vice President for Student Financial Planning
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## Purpose

Mercer's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy is used to determine if an enrolled student is making satisfactory academic progress in his or her educational program, regardless of whether or not he or she is receiving Title IV aid. The SAP policy provides a consistent application of standards to all students, ensuring both the quality of academic work and the completion of a student's program within the maximum time frame.

## Scope

This policy applies to all students at Mercer University.

## Exclusions

None

## Policy Statement

A student's academic performance **will be evaluated at the end of each semester.**

The SAP policy measures:

1. Qualitative Standard – Cumulative GPA a student must achieve at each evaluation checkpoint
2. Quantitative Standard – Pace of progression to ensure graduation within the maximum time frame

**Qualitative Standard**

**Undergraduate Students**
The qualitative standard is a graduated standard based on a cumulative GPA. A student must meet the following grade point average (GPA) at each evaluation:

| Total Hours Earned | Minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| 0-16 | 1.4 |
| 17-32 | 1.7 |
| 33-48 | 1.8 |
| 49-63 | 1.9 |
| 64 and above | 2.0 |

A student with a cumulative GPA below those listed in the above table will be put on Financial Aid Warning for the next term and must meet the cumulative GPA standard at the end of the Financial Aid Warning payment period. Remedial coursework is not included in GPA, but it is reviewed for progress. Students may receive multiple warning periods throughout their academic career.

**Graduate Students**
Graduate students' qualitative measure is set by each graduate academic program. Each graduate program has the qualitative measure required in the program requirements listed in the University catalog.

**Eligibility to Appeal**
If the student had mitigating circumstances (e.g. death of a relative, injury or illness of student, or other special circumstance) that prevented the student from meeting the 2.0 GPA requirement at the end of the second academic year, the student may **appeal** to the Office of Student Financial Planning for a review of the circumstances as related to academic standing. Students are provided the opportunity to appeal each semester. All appeals must be submitted, in writing, to the Office of Student Financial Planning within 10 calendar days of receiving the denial letter.

**Quantitative Standard**
There are two components to the quantitative standard:

1. Maximum time frame allowed for program
2. Cumulative completion percentage

Both standards will be checked at the end of each payment period.

**Maximum Time Frame**
Students may receive aid for a maximum of 150% of the published length of the educational program. The measurement is cumulative, including all periods with or without Title IV assistance and all accepted transfer hours.

**Maximum time frame** is defined in semester credit hours. For example, a degree program requiring 120 credit hours to complete will have the following maximum time frame:

120 X 150% = 180 hours (maximum time frame)

A student is ineligible at the evaluation point where it is determined he or she will exceed the 150% timeframe, not at the point they actually reach the 150% timeframe. A student may NOT receive Title IV aid after attempting 150% of the program length. However, if a student feels there are mitigating circumstances, such as illness, injury, family death etc. that prevented him or her from completing the program within the 150% time frame, that student may review the appeal process included in this SAP policy and appeal in writing to the Office of Student Financial Planning. The appeal must document the student's plan to progress to graduation and detail what will change to allow them to succeed. A student has the opportunity to appeal each semester.

Only those hours included in the student's program will be included in the 150% program length. The student can change programs up to three times without appeal; however, an appeal is required after three program changes.

**Completion Percentage**
Students must earn at least 67% of all hours attempted (cumulatively for the program) at the end of each semester. The completion percentage will be checked at the end of each payment period. The completion percentage will be rounded up to the nearest whole percentage (e.g., 66.5% would be rounded up to 67%).

- Transfer hours accepted into a student's program will count as both hours attempted and hours earned. Transfer hours received in the middle of the semester will be included in the next review point at the end of the semester.

- Remedial coursework is not included in quantitative measures.

- Withdrawals will count as hours attempted ONLY.

- Incompletes will count as hours attempted, only until the course is completed. A passing grade will count as hours earned; a failing grade will remain as hours attempted only.

- Repeat courses:
  - Repeat courses are counted for previously failed classes.
  - A repeat of previously passed courses is counted ONE TIME only.

o   Cannot count repeat of previously passed courses at all IF the repeat of the course is due to the failing of another course in a prior period.

**Quantitative Graduate Standard**
The Office of Student Financial Planning defines maximum program length based on 150% of the program length defined in the catalog unless otherwise defined by the program of study, whichever is shorter.

**Evaluation Points**
If a student does **NOT** meet SAP standards at the evaluation point:

The student will be automatically placed on Financial Aid Warning for ONE payment period.

- o   No appeal is necessary by the student at this point in order to receive one Financial Aid Warning period.
- o   The student must be meeting SAP requirements once the Financial Aid Warning semester is completed.
- o   If a student does **NOT** meet the SAP quantitative standard at the end of the Financial Aid Warning period, the student is no longer eligible for Title IV aid. The student may submit an appeal in writing to be considered for financial aid probation.

**Appeal Process to be Placed on Probation**
If a student loses Title IV eligibility and feels they have mitigating circumstances (i.e., death of a relative, injury or illness to the student, or other special circumstance) that prevented the student from meeting SAP standards, the student may provide a written appeal to the Office of Student Financial Planning. This appeal must be a complete summary of the student's circumstances and must include all supporting documentation, such as a death certificate, referrals from doctors, medical bills, etc. The appeal must detail what will change to allow them to succeed. A student has the opportunity to appeal each semester. The Financial Planning Appeals Committee will review the appeal and determine if the circumstances warrant a waiver of the loss of Title IV aid and an additional probationary period. When put on probation, the student is expected to meet SAP standards by the end of the probationary term or meet an academic plan designed to ensure the student will meet SAP standards by a specific point in time stated in the plan. A student's academic plan will be included in his or her appeal response.

If the appeal is not approved, the student will no longer be eligible for federal or state aid until the student meets SAP standards.

**Financial Aid Probation**

Under Financial Aid Probation, a student may receive Title IV funds for ONE semester only.

A student may not receive Title IV funds for any subsequent payment period unless:

1. The student is making SAP; or
2. Financial Planning Committee determines student met the SAP requirement specified by the Committee. A student reinstated to eligibility under an academic plan and making progress under the plan is considered to be eligible.

To begin the appeal process, complete the SAP Appeal Form in MyMercer.

## History

Revised July 1, 2023
Revised March 25, 2024