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## **Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy**

Postsecondary education institutions are required by title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, amended (HEA), to establish, publish, and consistently apply reasonable satisfactory academic progress standards to students. An institution's standards are considered reasonable if they are in accordance with the satisfactory academic progress federal regulations. Failure to comply with those rules can bar a school and its students from receiving federal financial aid funds. New federal regulations (34 CFR 668.34) stipulate nationally consistent terminology and tighter controls for measuring the satisfactory academic progress (SAP) for the eligibility of students to receive federal financial aid.

All students at Morton College (MC) who receive federal financial aid must make Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward completion of their degrees/certificates at the end of each period of enrollment.

This policy applies to the Federal Pell Grant, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG), Work Study, Direct Loans, Stafford Loan, Parent Plus Loans, Illinois Monetary Award Program (MAP), and military Veterans' benefits. *(Please note: State Military Programs are subjected to the GPA portion of this policy)*

The U.S. Department of Education requires a policy to use both the qualitative (GPA) and quantitative (Completion Percentage) criteria when measuring SAP.


MC reviews SAP at the end of each payment period and has approved the following standards defining SAP in accordance with regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Education.

### **SAP Standards:**

1. Cumulative GPA is a minimum 2.00 or higher and;
2. Cumulative completion rate is a minimum 67% or higher and;
3. Completion of program within 150 percent maximum timeframe allowed.

### **SAP Statuses**

The following are various types of SAP statuses assigned to students applying and receiving Title IV funding. All courses earned at MC and transferred into a student's program are used when determining SAP statuses, including credits earned while not receiving Title IV funding.



### **Eligible SAP Statuses:**

1. Satisfactory is assigned to students who are meeting the following criteria:
  - a) Cumulative GPA is a minimum 2.00 or higher and;
  - b) Cumulative completion rate is a minimum of 67% or higher and;
  - c) Completion of program within 150 percent maximum timeframe allowed.
  
2. Warning -When students do not meet the cumulative GPA and/or completion percentage requirement(s) portions of SAP standards, they are placed on warning and notified accordingly. Students remain on warning until the next time SAP is reviewed; which is the next payment period. During the warning period, students remain eligible for federal financial aid for one payment period only.

### **Eligible SAP Statuses with Conditions:**

1. Probation - Assigned to students who are within one term of meeting SAP standards. Students, who have appealed and are approved, and placed on probation, and are eligible for Title IV funds, must meet SAP standards at the end of the subsequent payment period.
  
2. Academic Plans - Are developed for students that, if followed, will ensure the students are able to meet SAP standards by a specific time period. Plans are created to address students who are affected by GPA, rate of completion, or both. Students who agree and continue to meet plan requirements are eligible for Title IV funds. If at any time while on the plan, the students do not meet the conditions at the end of a payment period, they return to the termination status (ineligible status).

Students who are approved and recommended for academic plans are notified via email and mail to come in and review plan conditions.

- a. GPA Plans - To qualify, students must have a completion rate of 67% and have a cumulative GPA less than a 2.00. This plan is structured to assist students with raising their cumulative GPA to a minimum of a 2.00 while maintaining their completion rate of 67%.
  
- b. Pace Plans - To qualify, students must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.00 and have a completion rate less than 67%. This plan is structured to assist students with raising their completion rate while maintaining a cumulative GPA of 2.00.

- c. Pace/GPA Plans - To qualify, students must have a completion rate less than 67% and a cumulative GPA less than 2.00. This plan is structured to assist students with raising their completion rate and cumulative GPA of 2.00 to meet SAP standards.

Examples of elements a school may consider in a student's academic plan include, but are not limited to:

- Registering for fewer credit hours during each enrollment period under the plan;
- Stipulating enrollment in only certain courses and demonstrating academic success in each of those courses toward degree completion;
- A mathematical calculation specifying the percentage of coursework the student must complete;
- Achieving a minimum GPA at the conclusion of the probationary periods (such as a term-specific GPA that would at least indicate an upward movement from a very low cumulative GPA); or
- Achieving minimum grades (not just GPA, but course-specific grades) during each payment period under the plan.

If the school determines at any time that the student is not following the academic plan, the student is immediately ineligible for Title IV aid. To remain eligible, such a student would need to submit another appeal and have it approved based on the student's updated circumstances. Some possible reasons an academic plan could be voided by a school include:

- A student changes their major, at which point the previous plan is voided since it pertained to the major at the time of the appeal;
- If a student violates the academic plan as defined and agreed upon for any reason; or
- If a student doesn't not enroll for the payment period the academic plan was designed to cover.

### **Ineligible SAP Statuses**

1. Termination – The second term following Warning status that students did not meet one/all of the criteria below, they are ineligible for federal financial aid, and are notified accordingly. Students have the option to appeal their termination status.
  - a. Cumulative GPA is less than 2.00 and/or;
  - b. Cumulative completion rate is less than 67%
2. Maximum Timeframe Completion - Each payment period SAP will be calculated to see if it is mathematically possible for students to complete their program and

graduate within the maximum timeframe allowed. If at any point it is determined that the students cannot complete their program (i.e. graduate) within the maximum timeframe, that students become ineligible for Title IV aid. No warning or probation period is allowed.

The maximum timeframe for the completion of a degree/certificate program is defined as no more than 150 percent of the normal timeframe required to complete the degree program. For an undergraduate program, this is measured in credit hours. For example, a normal two-year degree program requires 62 credits to complete (graduate). Students must complete the degree within 93 hours in order to remain eligible for Title IV funding.

*Please Note: Coursework that transfers into an eligible program will be included in a student's credit hours attempted and completed.*

Students can appeal maximum timeframe.

Students who previously were on Warning, Probation, Termination, or an Academic Plan status will return back to a SATISFACTORY status if the following conditions are met:

1. Cumulative GPA equals 2.00 or higher and;
2. Cumulative Completion Rate equals 67% or higher and;
3. Completion of program within 150 percent maximum timeframe allowed.

### **The Following Categories Will Be Calculated as Follows:**

#### **Course Repeats**

1. Students are only allowed to repeat courses to replace previously passed courses one (1) time and receive Title IV funds. When evaluating SAP, the highest attempt will be calculated in the student's GPA. All attempts will be considered for PACE and are included in the attempted and completed (if applicable) credits. This repeat policy applies to all courses whether or not financial aid was utilized.
2. Students may be paid for repeatedly failing the same course (normal SAP policy still applies to such cases). If students withdraw before completing the course that they are being paid Title IV funds for retaking, the course is not counted as their one allowed retake for that course. However, if students passed a class once and are repaid for retaking it but fail the second time, the failure counts as their paid retake and they may not be paid for retaking the class a third time.

#### **Courses That Were Academically Forgiven**

Schools are not allowed to ignore hours attempted, hours completed or earned grades on coursework applicable to the student's program of study from previously enrolled

periods. All courses will be included in the GPA, attempted, and completed SAP calculations.

### **Incomplete Grades**

When students do not complete all course requirements by the end of their enrollment payment periods, some instructors may assign a temporary grade of (I) for incomplete. In these cases, instructors assign traditional grades after the students complete the course requirements. Incomplete grades may inaccurately reflect a students' GPA and/or pace.

Incomplete grades are not considered passing grades and will be counted in SAP calculations for attempted credits as unsuccessful completion; however, these grades will not affect students' GPA until the final grade is recorded. The students' SAP will be updated and recalculated to include the new grade. Should the new calculation make the students ineligible for Title IV funds and aid has been disbursed; the students will be responsible for all aid and balances incurred. All future disbursements will be cancelled.

### **Transfer Credits**

Transfer credits accepted toward the students' program from another institution will be counted in both attempted and completed in a student's SAP evaluation.

### **Grade Changes**

When a grade change occurs, the Registrar will notify the Financial Aid office of such change. The students' SAP will be updated and recalculated to reflect the changed grade for that term. Should the new calculation make the students ineligible for financial aid and aid has been disbursed; the students will be responsible for all aid and balances incurred. All future disbursements will be cancelled.

### **Audit Courses**

Audited classes are not considered "financial aid eligible"; therefore, they count neither as hours attempted or completed.

### **Remedial Courses**

Remedial coursework is considered "financial aid eligible"; therefore, they are counted as attempted and completed hours for Pace of Completion. However, remedial courses are NOT included in the students' GPA whether they are completed successfully or unsuccessfully. They are graded as "Pass" or "Fail" and hold no numeric value.

**Students are limited to 30 credit hours attempted for remedial and prerequisites courses.**

### **Consortium Agreements**

Students coursework earned at MC on a Consortium agreement will be evaluated using this SAP policy.

## **Second Degrees/Certificates (SAP Reset)**

Students seeking consecutive degrees/certificates are monitored like any other students under this policy. A new SAP calculation is performed for the new program of study to determine eligibility. Any credits earned at MC from prior program that meet requirements in the new program will be counted in the students' GPA, attempted and completed credit hours. Any transfer hours that meet requirements in the new program will be treated as transfer credits.

SAP resets are granted to students who have completed a program and are pursuing a new program. *Please Note: Students must change their major with the Office of Admissions and have a transcript evaluation performed to be considered. We encourage students to submit the evaluation request 30 days prior to changing your major.*

## **Appeal Procedures**

Students not meeting SAP requirements have the option to appeal their termination of financial aid. The following categories are appealable: Grade Point Average, Pace of Completion, and Maximum Timeframe.

Appeals are reviewed at least once per month by a committee composed of various employees of the college. It is the responsibility of the students to initiate any appeal. Students must submit their appeal between the dates noted on the appeal form in order to be considered for the appropriate term. Removal of an academic restriction by Admissions, Registration, Counseling & Career Development, or another MC office does not constitute reinstatement of federal aid eligibility. All appeal decisions are final.

Appeals are based on a documentable extenuating circumstance impacting academic performance. Extenuating circumstances are considered to be past events that are no longer barriers to prevent academic progress. The appeal application must support how the students are now in a position to be academically successful. Appeals should include all documentation required to be reviewed. Failing to submit all documents will automatically deny your appeal. You may resubmit your appeal (if within appeal deadline dates) if denied due to missing documents. However, the appeal will not be escalated.

Appeals will not be granted for the repeated circumstances. For example, an appeal can be granted due to a medical issue (back surgery in 2010) placing the students on probation or an academic plan. If students are placed on termination again, the same medical issue (back surgery in 2010) cannot be used as the basis for the appeal. The latter appeal must be based on a reason different from the first appeal.

***Please Note: Sitting out for an enrollment period(s) is not sufficient to re-establish eligibility for Title IV aid. Circumstances related to the typical adjustment to college life such as working while attending school, financial***

***issues related to paying bills and car maintenance/travel to campus are not considered as extenuating for purposes of appealing termination of financial aid.***

**Examples of extenuating circumstances to be considered for appeal:**

1. Serious illness or injury to students or immediate family member that required extended recovery time;
2. Death of an immediate family member;
3. Significant trauma in students' life that impaired the students' emotional and/or physical health;
4. Withdrawal due to military service;
5. Second degree or certificate;
6. Change of major;
7. Other unexpected circumstances beyond the control of the student

For this purpose, immediate family member is defined as (parent, spouse, sibling, and child, grandparent (step or in-law respectively).

Completed appeals should be submitted in the financial aid office, room 232B to the financial aid staff. The appeals will be documented in the system as received, prepared, and routed to the appeals committee.

Students are not contacted during the appeal process. The only communication received will be the final decision notification letter.

**Notifications to Students**

Students receive the following notifications:

**Warning Letter**

Warning letters alert students that although they remain eligible for Title IV funding, they must return back to a satisfactory status at the end of the next payment period enrolled.

**Termination**

Termination letters notify students that they are no longer eligible for Title IV funding as well as offer guidelines how to regain Title IV funding.

**Warning Maximum Time**

Warning maximum timeframe letters warn students who are at or reaching 120 percent maximum timeframe to meet with an academic advisor to determine how many credits remain to complete their program. This notice also alerts students that they must complete their program within 150 percent maximum timeframe.

**Maximum Time**



Maximum timeframe letters notify students that they are no longer eligible to receive Title IV funding because they weren't able to complete their program within 150 percent timeframe allowed.

