

## **STUDENT AFFAIRS OP 91.150: Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy**

**Date: February 1, 1998/Revised February 5, 2001/Updated August 2004/May 2005/April 2006/May 2007/August 2011**

### Purpose

To define reasonable standards for measuring academic progress in order for students to remain eligible for financial aid under Title IV.

### Policy

Mississippi State University, as required by federal regulations, monitors minimum standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as it relates to each student's eligibility to receive federal student aid funds, including grants, loans and work-study, and the Summers Grant program funds.

In general, schools must measure students' progress by using the following criteria.

Qualitative Standard:

1. Minimum grade point average (GPA)

Quantitative standards: (PACE)

1. the maximum time frame a student has to complete a degree,
2. a minimum percentage of courses attempted must be passed and
3. a maximum number of courses from which a student is allowed to withdraw or drop.

Even though some aspects of this SAP Policy are similar to the MSU Academic Standing Policy governing Academic Probation, Suspension and Dismissal, the SAP policy should not be confused with that Academic Standing Policy. The specific criteria a student must meet in order to be considered making satisfactory academic progress toward a degree for the purpose of receiving student aid funds are listed below.

Any student who loses eligibility for student aid funds based upon these SAP Policy standards has the right to appeal. Please refer to the [Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Process](#) listed below.

### Procedure

[Undergraduate Students Enrolled in a First Baccalaureate Degree Program](#)

[Undergraduate Students Enrolled in a Subsequent Bachelor's Degree Program](#)

[Graduate Students \(Masters Degree\)](#)

[Graduate Students \(Doctoral Degree\)](#)

Course Repetition, Withdrawals, Incompletes, Transfer Credits, Changes in Major

Warning Term information

[Probation Term information](#)

[Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Process](#)

Academic Plan & Statement of Understanding information

Satisfactory Academic Progress Terminology

Satisfactory Academic Progress Flowchart

**Undergraduate Students Enrolled in a First Baccalaureate Degree Program**

## I. Qualitative Standard

Students must maintain a minimum GPA on courses taken at Mississippi State University as listed below:

The MSU Grade Point Average Guidelines listed below apply to students who were enrolled at MSU prior to Fall 2004.

<u>Class</u>	<u>MSU GPA</u>
Freshman	1.0
Sophomore	1.3
Junior	1.7
Senior, fewer than 128 hours completed	1.9
Senior, 128 hours or more completed	2.0

The MSU Grade Point Average Guidelines listed below apply to first-time entering students Fall 2004 (i.e. students who have not established a Mississippi State University GPA prior to Fall 2004) and to all students who enroll thereafter. By Fall Semester 2008, this will apply to all students at Mississippi State University regardless of the semester they enrolled.

<u>Class</u>	<u>Earned Hours</u>	<u>MSU GPA</u>
Freshman	29 or fewer semester hours	1.6
Sophomore	30-59 semester hours	1.8
Junior	60-89 semester hours	2.0
Senior	90 or more semester hours	2.0

Class and MSU GPA requirements are determined by the University Registrar and the Division of Academic Affairs at MSU and are subject to change. Class (Freshman, Sophomore, etc.) is currently determined by using all GPA hours completed by each student, including transfer work. The MSU GPA calculation does not use course work transferred in from other institutions or MSU remedial/developmental courses, courses graded in a pass/fail mode, etc.

If all other eligibility criteria have been met, students can regain eligibility for student aid funds once the MSU GPA requirements have been met. However, the removal of an Academic "Hold" or a decision based upon an academic forgiveness policy or appeal in which a student, who is otherwise Suspended or Dismissed, is allowed by MSU to register for classes does not imply the reinstatement of student aid eligibility. In calculating a student's academic progress for federal aid eligibility, schools are not allowed to ignore earned grades from previously enrolled periods. Schools must factor in all courses that have been attempted and completed. Please refer to the [Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Process](#) listed below.

## II. Quantitative Standards

- A. Maximum Time Frame: Students are expected to complete the requirements for a degree within a reasonable time frame. For this standard, the allowable time is based upon the number of hours each student attempts.

The maximum number of hours a student is allowed to attempt for a first bachelor degree program is 150% of the minimum number of hours required to graduate in a specific major. For example: If 120 hours of course work is required to complete the degree, then a student can attempt a maximum of 180 hours (120 X 150%). This includes all course work attempted at MSU, including credit courses, remedial/developmental courses, pass/fail courses, and all transfer work from other institutions that is accepted by MSU.

- B. Completion Rate or Pace: Students must also pass a minimum percentage of course work attempted. For this standard students must pass a minimum of 67% of all hours attempted that are counted in the calculation of the Grade Point Average (GPA). Students who lose student aid eligibility due to this standard can regain aid eligibility once the 67% minimum has been achieved.
- C. Withdrawals: Excessive withdrawals and/or dropped courses indicate a lack of progression toward a degree. Students must not exceed a total of 30 hours of MSU course work in which grades of "W" are received.
- D. Enrollment Hours: Many student aid programs require a student to enroll at least half-time (6 hours) for each semester the award is received. Students who enroll for the minimum number of hours and receive a federal student aid disbursement that requires a minimum of half-time enrollment must not drop below the 6 credit hour minimum prior to the last day to register (during the add/drop period) for both the Fall and Spring terms of the school year.

In accordance with federal regulations, students must successfully make satisfactory academic progress towards a degree in order to receive financial aid. The qualitative and quantitative SAP standards will be checked at the end of each semester, including summer. Students in good standing not already on Financial Aid Suspension or Financial Aid Probation who fail to meet any SAP standard at that time will be placed on Financial Aid Warning for the term immediately following the end of the semester in which the SAP requirements were not met. If all other eligibility criteria have been met, students may be eligible to receive student aid funds during the Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Probationary terms. Please review the [Financial Aid Probation Term information](#) and Financial Aid Warning Term information sections below to determine the procedures to receive financial aid funds during the Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Probation Term.

Students who fail to meet the minimum requirements at the end of the Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Probationary term will be placed on Financial Aid Suspension and will lose eligibility for financial aid until such time that the minimum SAP requirements have been met. All students placed on Financial Aid Suspension as a result of the failure to meet these SAP standards have the right to appeal. Please refer to the [Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Process](#) listed below.

## **Undergraduate Students Enrolled in a Subsequent Bachelor's Degree Program**

### **I. Qualitative Standard**

Students must maintain a minimum 2.0 Cumulative GPA on course work taken at MSU. The MSU GPA requirements are determined by the University Registrar and the Division of Academic Affairs at MSU and are subject to change. The MSU GPA calculation does not use coursework transferred in from another institution or MSU remedial/developmental courses, courses taken in a pass/fail mode, etc.

If all other eligibility criteria have been met, students can regain eligibility for student aid funds once the MSU GPA requirements have been met. However, the removal of an Academic "Hold" or a decision based upon an academic forgiveness policy or appeal in which a student, who is otherwise Suspended or Dismissed, is allowed by MSU to register for classes does not imply the reinstatement of student aid eligibility. In calculating a student's academic progress for federal aid eligibility, schools are not allowed to ignore earned grades from previously enrolled periods. Schools must factor in all courses that have been attempted and completed. Please refer to the [Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Process](#) listed below.

### **II. Quantitative Standards**

- A. **Maximum Time Frame:** Students are expected to complete the requirements for the degree program within a reasonable time frame. Each student will be allowed two calendar years to complete the subsequent Bachelor's degree program from the date the student was admitted into the degree program. Students enrolled in a five year program (Architecture or International Business) will be allowed three years to complete the program.
- B. **Completion Rate or Pace:** Students must also pass a minimum percentage of coursework attempted. For this standard, students must pass a minimum of 67% of all hours attempted that are counted in the calculation of the Grade Point Average (GPA). Students who lose student aid eligibility due to this standard can regain aid eligibility once the 67% minimum has been achieved.
- C. **Withdrawals:** Excessive withdrawals and/or dropped courses indicate a lack of progression toward a degree. Students must not exceed a total of 15 hours of coursework in which grades of "W" are received.
- D. **Enrollment Hours:** Many student aid programs require a student to enroll at least half-time (6 hours) for each semester the award is received. Students who enroll for the minimum number of hours and receive a federal student aid disbursement that requires a minimum of half-time enrollment must not drop below the 6 credit hour minimum prior to the last day to register (during the add/drop period) for both the Fall and Spring terms of the school year.

In accordance with federal regulations, students must successfully make satisfactory academic progress towards a degree program in order to receive financial aid. The qualitative and quantitative SAP standards will be checked at the end of each semester, including summer. Students in good standing not already on Financial Aid Suspension or Financial Aid Probation who fail to meet any SAP standard at that time will be placed on Financial Aid Warning for the term immediately following the end of the semester in which the SAP requirements were not met. If all other eligibility criteria have been met, students may be eligible to receive student aid funds during the Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Probationary terms. Please review the [Financial Aid Probation Term information](#) and Financial Aid Warning Term information sections below to determine the procedures to receive financial aid funds during the Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Probation Term.

Students who fail to meet the minimum requirements at the end of the Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Probationary term will be placed on Financial Aid Suspension and will lose eligibility for financial aid until such time that the minimum SAP requirements have been met. All students placed on Financial Aid Suspension as a result of the failure to meet these SAP standards have the right to appeal. Please refer to the [Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Process](#) listed below.

## **Graduate Students (Masters Degree)**

### **I. Qualitative Standard**

Graduate students enrolled in a Masters program must maintain a cumulative MSU grade point average of 3.0. The MSU GPA requirements are determined by the University Registrar and the Division of Academic Affairs at MSU and are subject to change. The MSU GPA calculation does not include coursework transferred in from another institution.

If all other eligibility criteria have been met, students can regain eligibility for student aid funds once the MSU GPA requirements have been met. However, the removal of an Academic "Hold" or a decision based upon an academic forgiveness policy or appeal in which a student, who is otherwise Suspended or Dismissed, is allowed by MSU to register for classes does not imply the reinstatement of student aid eligibility. In calculating a student's academic progress for federal aid eligibility, schools are not allowed to ignore earned grades from previously enrolled periods.

Schools must factor in all courses that have been attempted and completed. Please refer to the [Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Process](#) listed below.

## II. Quantitative Standards

- A. Maximum Time Frame: Graduate students working on a Masters Degree must complete the degree within the time frame allowed by the Graduate School which is currently six years from initial entry.
- B. Withdrawals: Excessive withdrawals and/or dropped courses indicate a lack of progression toward a degree. Students must not exceed a total of 15 hours of coursework taken after admission into the Graduate Masters Program in which grades of "W" are received.
- C. Enrollment Hours: Federal regulations require a student to enroll in a minimum number of credit hours per term in order to receive a federal student aid disbursement. Federal student aid recipients attending MSU in a graduate program must enroll for at least 5 credit hours per term. Students who enroll for the minimum number of hours and receive a federal student aid disbursement that requires a minimum of 5 hours of enrollment must not drop below the 5 credit hour minimum prior to the last day to register (during the add/drop period) for both the Fall and Spring terms of the school year.

In accordance with federal regulations, students must successfully make satisfactory academic progress towards a degree program in order to receive financial aid. The qualitative and quantitative SAP standards will be checked at the end of each semester, including summer. Students in good standing not already on SAP Financial Aid Suspension or Financial Aid Probation who fail to meet any SAP standard at that time will be placed on Financial Aid Warning for the term immediately following the end of the semester in which the SAP requirements were not met. If all other eligibility criteria have been met, students may be eligible to receive student aid funds during the Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Probationary terms. Please review the [Financial Aid Probation Term information](#) and Financial Aid Warning Term information sections below to determine the procedures to receive financial aid funds during the Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Probation Term.

Students who fail to meet the minimum requirements at the end of the Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Probationary term will be placed on Financial Aid Suspension and will lose eligibility for student aid funds until such time that the minimum SAP requirements have been met. All students who have been placed on Financial Aid Suspension as a result of the failure to meet these SAP standards have the right to appeal. Please refer to the [Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Process](#) listed below.

Graduate students who choose to appeal the Financial Aid Suspension status must include a letter in support of the appeal from the Academic Department (Academic Advisor or Major Professor).

## Graduate Students (Doctoral Degree)

### I. Qualitative Standard

Graduate students enrolled in a Doctoral program must maintain a cumulative MSU grade point average of 3.0. The MSU GPA requirements are determined by the University Registrar and the Division of Academic Affairs at MSU and are subject to change. The MSU GPA calculation does not include course work transferred in from another institution.

If all other eligibility criteria have been met, students can regain eligibility for student aid funds once the MSU GPA requirements have been met. However, the removal of an Academic "Hold" or

a decision based upon an academic forgiveness policy or appeal in which a student, who is otherwise Suspended or Dismissed, is allowed by MSU to register for classes does not imply the reinstatement of student aid eligibility. In calculating a student's academic progress for federal aid eligibility, schools are not allowed to ignore earned grades from previously enrolled periods. Schools must factor in all courses that have been attempted and completed. Please refer to the [Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Process](#) listed below.

## II. Quantitative Standards

- A. Maximum Time Frame: Graduate students working on a Doctoral Degree must complete the degree within the time frame allowed by the Graduate School which is currently eight years from the date of initial entry (six years for Education Specialist).
- B. Withdrawals: Excessive withdrawals and/or dropped courses indicate a lack of progression toward the degree. Students must not exceed a total of 15 hours of coursework taken after admission into the Graduate Doctoral Program in which grades of "W" are received.
- C. Enrollment Hours: Federal regulations require a student to enroll in a minimum number of credit hours per term in order to receive a federal student aid disbursement. Federal student aid recipients attending MSU in a graduate program must enroll for at least 5 credit hours per term. Students who enroll for the minimum number of hours and receive a federal student aid disbursement that requires a minimum of 5 hours of enrollment must not drop below the 5 credit hour minimum prior to the last day to register (during the add/drop period) for both the Fall and Spring terms of the school year.

In accordance with federal regulations, students must successfully make satisfactory academic progress towards a degree program in order to receive financial aid. The qualitative and quantitative SAP standards will be checked at the end of each semester, including summer. Students in good standing not already on SAP Financial Aid Suspension or Financial Aid Probation who fail to meet any SAP standard at that time will be placed on Financial Aid Warning for the term immediately following the end of the semester in which the SAP requirements were not met. If all other eligibility criteria have been met, students may be eligible to receive student aid funds during the Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Probationary terms. Please review the [Financial Aid Probation Term information](#) and Financial Aid Warning Term information sections below to determine the procedures to receive financial aid funds during the Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Probation Term.

Students who fail to meet the minimum requirements at the end of the Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Probationary term will be placed on Financial Aid Suspension and will lose eligibility for student aid funds until such time that the minimum SAP requirements have been met. All students who have been placed on Financial Aid Suspension as a result of the failure to meet these SAP standards have the right to appeal. Please refer to the [Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Process](#) listed below.

Graduate students who choose to appeal the Financial Aid Suspension status must include a letter in support of the appeal from the Academic Department (Academic Advisor or Major Professor).

### **SAP Impact of Course Repetition, Withdrawals, Incompletes, Transfer Credits, Changes in Major**

Additional information about MSU's policy on Credit, Grades, and Academic Standing can be viewed online at <http://www.msstate.edu/dept/audit/1212.html>.

#### **Course Repetition**

Repeat credits are applied when a student repeats a course in order to improve a grade. Students are allowed to repeat a previously passed course and have it count toward enrollment for financial aid

eligibility only once. Each attempt at the course, however, will count toward a student's pace and maximum time frame. A student may repeat a class as allowed by the MSU Repeat Policy (<http://www.msstate.edu/dept/audit/PDF/1236.pdf>).

### **Withdrawals**

A school's SAP policy cannot exclude "W" grades when reviewing SAP. Withdrawal hours are assigned when a student withdraws from a class after the drop period. Withdrawal hours count as credit hours attempted toward both pace and maximum time frame.

### **Incompletes**

Incomplete (I) is a temporary grade that is assigned only in exceptional circumstances. It will be given only to students who cannot complete the work of a course on schedule because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control.

Undergraduate students who receive an "I" grade must complete all work within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the student's next enrollment. If a grade of "I" is not resolved into a passing grade within the allotted time, the grade becomes an "F".

Graduate students who receive a grade of "I" must complete all work no later than the last day of class of the next semester (excluding summer) whether the student is enrolled or not. Failure of graduate students to remove an "I" grade during the specified time will result in an automatic grade of "F".

### **Transfer Credits**

Coursework taken at another institution that is accepted and officially transcript as transfer credit by MSU will count as both attempted and completed credit hours toward pace and maximum time frame. Students who exceed the maximum time frame can submit a SAP Appeal to determine if their aid can be reinstated.

### **Changes in Major**

Students who have changed majors or are pursuing a second degree may reach their maximum time frame before their program of study is complete. All credits attempted are treated in the quantitative, qualitative, and maximum time frame for SAP.

## **Warning Term information**

Procedures for the disbursement of student aid during the Financial Aid Warning term and requirements that must be met at the conclusion of the Warning term can be viewed online at: <http://www.sfa.msstate.edu/pdf/fawi.pdf>

## **Probation Term information**

Procedures for the disbursement of student aid during the Financial Aid Probation term and requirements that must be met at the conclusion of the Probation term can be viewed online at: <http://www.sfa.msstate.edu/pdf/fapi.pdf>

## **Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Process**

Appeals of suspension of financial aid may be made on the basis of mitigating circumstances. Further information about mitigating circumstances and instructions for preparing a financial aid suspension appeal can be obtained by contacting the Department of Student Financial Aid at the address listed above or through the web at: [http://www.sfa.msstate.edu/pdf/SAP\\_Appeal\\_Form.pdf](http://www.sfa.msstate.edu/pdf/SAP_Appeal_Form.pdf) (PDF file).

## **Satisfactory Academic Progress Terminology**

Information about SAP terminologies and additional policy requirements can be viewed online at: <http://www.sfa.msstate.edu/pdf/sapt.pdf>

Review

The Vice President for Student Affairs and the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs are responsible for the review of this operating policy by July 31 of each year.

OP 91.150  
5/14/07



**DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS  
OPERATING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**STUDENT AFFAIRS OP 91.150: Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy**

**REVIEWED BY:**

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Vice President for Student Affairs

9/13/2011  
Date

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Vice President for Student Affairs

11/27/2011  
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/s/ Lesia Bryant  
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11/11/2011  
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12/07/2011  
Date

**APPROVED BY:**

/s/ Mark E. Keenum  
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1/23/2012  
Date