

# **Southern University and A & M College Baton Rouge, Louisiana Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Financial Aid (Effective July 1, 2020)**

## **Introduction**

Financial aid recipients are expected to make reasonable progress as a condition of receiving and continuing to receive student financial aid. Student progress is assessed according to both qualitative and quantitative measures. The qualitative measure (Grade Point Average-GPA) is very similar to the Academic Progress standard applied to all SU students. The quantitative measure, referred to as the student's "Pace" (number of credit hours successfully completed and the maximum timeframe) is used to monitor progress toward degree completion. When these measures are applied, federal regulations require that the student's entire academic history is considered. This includes semesters or terms during which the student did not receive student financial aid. The University has developed this policy to provide a framework for monitoring and determining a student's Satisfactory Academic Progress in accordance with Federal and Institutional requirements. This policy applies to all new, transfer, re-entry, re-admit with transfer work, and continuing students at SUBR.

## **Purpose**

The intent of this policy is to 1) ensure that students using the Title IV and State financial aid programs are demonstrating responsible use of public funds in pursuit of their educational goals; and 2) set standards for monitoring all financial aid recipients' course completion rate "pace" and cumulative GPA annually and notifying individual students when progress is not met and/or when they have met or exceeded the maximum timeframe allowed.

## **Authority**

The policy contained herein is the result to implement a corrective action plan to comply with a federal compliance of improper payment finding of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), correspondence received March 27, 2020 to be effective **July 1, 2020** and beyond or until further amended. The applicable regulations are in 34 CFR 668.16(e), 668.32(f) and 668.34. This policy will replace all previous SAP policies established by the University. The Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended and final regulations set by the United States Department of Education (34CFR668.16) require that institutions of higher education establish reasonable standards of satisfactory academic progress as a condition of continuing eligibility for federal aid programs. Nothing in this policy shall be construed as an exemption from the requirements of any other federal or state agency, or other granting or governing authority that apply to a student or to the financial assistance the student receives, nor does this policy limit the authority of the Director of Financial Aid when taking responsible action to eliminate fraud or abuse in these programs.

## **Programs Governed by this Policy**

All Federal Title IV programs: Pell Grant, Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG), National "SMART" Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG), Federal Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant, William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan programs (Subsidized, Unsubsidized, PLUS, and Graduate PLUS), and Federal College Work Study Program, as well as other State and Institutional Programs for which SAP compliance is required are governed by this policy, as applicable.

**Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards**

To encourage the completion of degree/certificate programs within a reasonable timeframe and to comply with federal and state requirements, financial aid recipients attending Southern University and A&M College (SU) must maintain satisfactory academic progress as a condition for receiving financial aid. Satisfactory academic progress requires financial aid recipients to do the following:

1. Meet minimum cumulative grade point averages as listed below;
2. Complete their degree or certificate within the maximum allowable timeframe;
3. Complete and earn credit for a reasonable number of credit hours (at least 67% of cumulative credit hours attempted) towards a degree or certificate, measured incrementally; and complete courses at an overall “pace” which will, once again ensure graduation 2 within the maximum allowable timeframe, measured in total cumulative hours attempted. In determining the 67% earned/pursued ratio, hours **will not** be rounded up to the nearest whole number.

Financial aid recipients who do not meet these standards will lose their financial aid eligibility. Also and unless otherwise stated, a student’s entire academic history (including transfer hours applicable towards a program of study at SUBR and in accordance with the university’s Transfer Policy) is considered for purposes of this policy, regardless of whether the student received financial aid at the time the credit hours were completed.

**Minimum Cumulative Standards**

<b>Total Cumulative Hours Attempted</b>	<b>Min. Cum. % Hours Earned</b>	<b>Maintaining Progress</b>	<b>Financial Aid Suspended</b>
<b><u>Undergraduates</u></b>			
Bachelor’s Degree			
0 – 29 credit hours	67%	1.51 or greater	0.00 – 1.50
30 – 59 credit hours	67%	1.75 or greater	0.00 – 1.74
60 – 89 credit hours	67%	2.00 or greater	0.00 – 1.99
90 – 180 credit hours	67%	2.00 or greater	0.00 – 1.99
181+ Ineligible for Financial Aid			
<b><u>Teacher’s Certification</u></b>			
0 – 45 credit hours	67%	2.50 or greater	0.00 – 2.49
46+ Ineligible for Financial Aid			
<b><u>Graduates</u></b>			
<b>Master’s Degree</b>			
0 – 60 credit hours	67%	3.00 or greater	0.00 – 2.99
61+ Ineligible for Financial Aid			
<b>Doctoral Degree</b>			
0 – 60 credit hours	67%	3.00 or greater	0.00 – 2.99
61+ Ineligible for Financial Aid			

\*Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) used for purposes of this policy is calculated by Southern University in accordance with established policy and procedure.

Factors Impacting Satisfactory Academic Progress Grades, Earned Hours, and Attempted Hours Grades, Earned Hours and Attempted Hours include all grades and hours appearing on the transcript, including those with “W”, “P”, “S”, “U”, “NC”, “FN”, and “I” grades. Remedial, repeated, transfer, suspended, and academic clemency hours are also counted as pursued hours, even for those semesters in which the student did not receive aid. Transfer credits earned at other institutions which are not applicable to an academic program at SUBR, will not be included in the assessment of SAP.

**Repeated Courses**

In the event that a course is repeated, the grade considered for the credit and GPA calculations will be the higher of the two grades earned. Each attempt will be used in evaluating the course completion ratio and cumulative number of attempted hours.

**Minimum Requirements per Academic Level**

- **Undergraduate Students:** Students who are enrolled in an eligible undergraduate curriculum must earn the required attempted/earned hour ratio and GPA outlined previously within this policy. These students may receive financial aid for a maximum of 180 attempted hours.
- **Graduate/Doctoral Students:** Students who have been admitted to and are enrolled in an eligible Graduate or Doctoral program must earn the required attempted/earned hour ratio and GPA outlined previously within this policy. These students may receive financial aid for a maximum of 60 attempted hours, respectively. •
- **Additional Degrees:** Students seeking additional degrees beyond the first undergraduate or graduate degree are limited as follows:

**Bachelors..... 45 credit hours beyond prior degree**  
**Masters..... 60 credit hours beyond prior degree**  
**Teacher Certification ..... 45 credit hours beyond prior degree**

- **Second Baccalaureate Students:** Students seeking a second baccalaureate degree in an eligible curriculum may receive financial aid for an additional 45 attempted hours and must maintain a 2.0 GPA for hours taken toward the second degree. For example, if a student completed the first undergraduate degree with 200 attempted credit hours, then he or she will only be eligible to receive financial aid for an additional 45 credit hours toward the second Baccalaureate degree.
- **Second Master’s Degree Students:** Students seeking a second master’s degree in an eligible curriculum may receive financial aid for an additional 60 attempted hours and must maintain a 3.0 GPA for hours taken toward the second degree. For example, if a student completed the first Master’s degree with 60 attempted credit hours, then he or she will only be eligible to receive financial aid for an additional 60 credit hours toward the second Master’s Degree.
- **Teacher’s Certification Students:** Students seeking Teacher’s Certification may receive financial aid for 45 attempted hours and must maintain a 2.5 GPA for hours taken toward the Certificate program.

- Double Majors: Students seeking double majors must complete their degree program for the primary major within the limits set for that major. Additional hours will not be allowed for double majors. The student may, however, petition the appeals committee for consideration.

### **Minimum Cumulative Credit Hour Completion**

Financial aid recipients must satisfactorily complete at least 67% of their cumulative credit hours attempted. Grades of A, B, C, D, or P are considered satisfactory. All other grades such as F, FN, NS, W, or I are considered unsatisfactory.

A student who is unable to complete his or her degree program within the applicable timeline may appeal for an additional period of financial aid eligibility in order to complete the degree program. Special consideration will be given to a student whose attempted hours include developmental courses.

### **Student Eligibility Considerations**

**Undergraduate students** must be officially admitted to the university as degree seeking or teacher certification. Generally, students who are officially admitted and degree seeking must attempt at least half-time hours to be fully considered for Title IV aid. Students attending less than half-time must be evaluated for financial aid in the Office of Student Financial Aid for any possible awards.

**Graduate students** must have a degree objective and be admitted into a Graduate program.

Note: Students who have been counseled regarding acceptance into a graduate program and are enrolled in required prerequisites but are not yet classified as a graduate student may receive a Stafford loan for one consecutive year based on undergraduate loan 4 limits. To be eligible for this exception, the student must be taking classes that are a prerequisite for admission. If the student is only taking courses to raise the GPA in order to be admitted, he/she would not qualify for loans under this exception.

Graduate students must be enrolled in graduate level courses that are applicable toward their program. Coursework taken at the undergraduate level will not be courses counted toward the half-time status required for federal Financial Aid eligibility (Student loans, Work-Study, TEACH Grants). In order to receive loans at the Graduate level, students must be enrolled at least half-time (in accordance with Title IV guidelines) in graduate level courses that are applicable toward their degree.

### **Returning and Transfer Students**

Returning and transfer students must be in good academic standing and must have earned 67% of all hours attempted and meet the GPA requirement associated with their grade/career level to be eligible to receive financial aid. Academic progress will be monitored using the Minimum Cumulative Standards chart previously outlined in this policy. Official transcripts for all schools attended must be received and processed by the Admissions office before a SAP evaluation can be completed on a student who is transferring or returning with additional credit hours. Students who do not meet the requirements upon transferring or returning to SUBR will not qualify for Federal Student Aid. Transfer hours applicable towards a program of study at SUBR and in accordance with the university's Transfer Policy will be considered for purposes of this policy regardless of whether the student received financial aid at the time the credit hours were completed.

## **Evaluation Intervals and Notification of Eligibility**

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) shall be monitored annually at the conclusion of the Spring term for the following Summer/Fall/Spring terms or at the time the student is applying for financial aid, if a current satisfactory progress assessment is not available. If a student is academically suspended between monitoring periods, the student's eligibility for financial aid will also be suspended and must be reassessed at the time the student is readmitted to the University. Students enrolling in the Fall 2020 term will have their SAP status evaluated at the end of the Spring 2021 term (annually) under the New SAP Policy. Students who do not meet one or more of the standards for Satisfactory Academic Progress at the end of the evaluation period will no longer be eligible to receive assistance under the Title IV programs unless the student has appealed, successfully and is placed on financial aid probation. Not attending one or more semesters will not affect or change a student's SAP status.

## **Financial Aid Probationary Period**

At the end of one payment period on "Probation," the student must meet the minimum SAP standards on their own in order to continue to receive financial aid or meet the requirements of his/her Academic Plan (if applicable) to qualify for further funds. While a student is on "Probation," the student may be required to fulfill specific terms and conditions under the "Academic Plan" developed through the Center for Student Success, such as taking a reduced course load, enrolling in specific courses, or meeting a specified GPA and earned/attempted hour ratio at the end of each term. If a student placed on an Academic Plan fails to meet the plan's requirements at the end of each term on probation, the student will lose his/her eligibility for financial aid and will be required to submit a Financial Aid Appeal for reinstatement consideration for the next enrolled semester/term.

## **Notification of Financial Aid Termination**

The Office of Student Financial Aid will send a Satisfactory Academic Progress Notification to any student who is no longer eligible for financial aid, due to the student's failure to meet one or more of the provisions outlined herein. It is the responsibility of the student to maintain current addresses with the Office of the Registrar. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the student to stay informed of the University's SAP standards and to monitor his/her progress frequently.

## **Appeal Procedures**

Students who have been denied financial aid based upon the provisions outlined in this policy have the right to submit an appeal to explain and document their mitigating circumstances. All appeals must be accompanied by supporting documentation. An appeal will be denied if sufficient documentation is not submitted with the appeal. Appeals must explain why the student failed to make satisfactory progress and what has changed in his/her situation that will allow the student to meet the requirements at the next evaluation. Appeal forms are available online at [www.subr.edu](http://www.subr.edu) or in the Financial Aid Office. Students may not submit an appeal after the published deadline date has passed for the semester. Appeals are approved for current or 5 subsequent semesters only; appeals cannot be submitted for prior semesters.

**Students are limited to a maximum of five (5) financial aid appeals per degree attempt.** Appeals Committee members are anonymous. Questions regarding the appeals process should be directed to the Appeals Committee via email at [financialaid@subr.edu](mailto:financialaid@subr.edu).

To initiate a Satisfactory Academic Progress appeal, the student must complete a Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Form and submit it along with all required supporting documentation to the University's Appeals Committee.

### **Mitigating Circumstances**

Mitigating circumstances are unforeseen, special or unusual/traumatic conditions which caused undue hardship. These circumstances may include serious illness or injury relating to the student, death or serious illness of an immediate family member, significant traumatic occurrence that impaired emotional and/or physical health, exceeding maximum attempted hours or other documented circumstances.

All appeals must be in writing and submitted within the timelines established by the University's Appeals Committee. All documents and the appeal application must be mailed together via certified mail with return receipt requested (unless otherwise indicated). Faxes, late, or separated documents may not be accepted. Decisions concerning SAP appeals are voted on by a committee. The decision of the committee is final and may not be overturned. Generally, the committee will notify students of their decision by email within 20 business days of the date their appeal is documented and received by the committee.

### **Reinstatement of Financial Aid Eligibility**

Students who do not maintain satisfactory academic progress shall lose their eligibility for financial aid and may only regain eligibility by eliminating all satisfactory progress deficiencies at their own expense, by appealing their satisfactory academic progress status and being placed on Financial Aid Probation, or after being placed on Probation, they continue to meet the requirements of their Academic Plan. If the student is required to appeal, reinstatement of Financial Aid will be based on the strength of the appeal statement, documentation received, and the academic record. Filing an appeal does not guarantee Financial Aid reinstatement.

### **IMPORTANT REMINDERS:**

Students applying for financial assistance must be in compliance with the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy (SAP) as a condition of initial or continuing eligibility.

- Financial aid will be denied to students who fail to maintain progress under this policy.
- SAP is monitored annually — at the conclusion of the Spring semester for the following Summer/Fall/Spring terms. At that time, a formal review will be made to ensure compliance with the grade point average, maximum time limit, and minimum earned hour requirements of this policy. If placed on an Academic Plan as a result of an appeal approval, a review will also be performed to determine if the requirements of the plan have been met.
- First-time aid recipients who have previously attended SU must also be in compliance with the policy regardless to whether aid was received during periods of prior attendance.
- Students who fail to meet the Satisfactory Academic Progress standards will be notified by letter or electronic means of their deficiency. • It is the responsibility of students who have been notified of a satisfactory progress deficiency to document any corrections to information used to determine their status.
- Any aid released to a student who is subsequently determined to be ineligible to have received funds under the rules for SAP will be rescinded and the student will be billed for all funds disbursed.

### **Promulgation**

This policy will be included in the University catalog and other appropriate University publications. The policy, or a summary of its primary features, will be provided to each financial aid recipient.

### **Amendment to the Policy**

This policy will be amended whenever applicable federal or state laws and regulations are changed.

### **Implementation Date**

Implementation of new Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy to be effective for eligibility determinations for periods after July 1, 2020 unless otherwise amended. Initial SAP evaluation under this policy will occur at the end of the Spring 2020 term.

### **Definitions**

1. **Academic Clemency** – Academic Clemency provides an opportunity for persons to apply for a new undergraduate academic beginning at SUBR by disregarding their prior academic record. For Federal Student Aid purposes, all attempted hours will be included in determining a student’s financial aid eligibility, including those disregarded on the basis of Academic Clemency. Coursework included in Academic Clemency DO NOT count toward earned hours. This means that the completion rate of a student granted academic clemency may be adversely affected. Questions regarding Academic Clemency should be addressed to the Registrar’s Office at (225) 771-5050.
2. **Academic Suspension** - Students are ineligible for financial aid while suspended. An explanation of cumulative grade point averages and their effect on enrollment is found in the Southern University and A&M College Catalog. Contact the Registrar’s Office at (225) 771-5050 for further information.
3. **Appeal** – A process by which a student who is not meeting SAP standards petitions the school for reconsideration of his eligibility for financial aid.
4. **Attempted Course** - A course which remains on the student's record after the first fourteen days of the term.
5. **Completed Course/Earned Credit** - A course in which a grade of A, B, C, D, or P was received. (Note: Withdrawal (W), blank grades, incomplete grades (I), audits (AU), and failures (F) and (FN) are not considered "earned credit" for meeting progress requirements).
6. **Financial Aid Probation** - A period in which a student who has been identified as not meeting one or more of the standards in this policy may continue to receive financial aid. At the end of the probationary period, a student is expected to meet the Satisfactory Academic Progress and/or Academic Plan requirements or in order to continue receiving financial aid.
7. **Financial Aid Termination/Suspension** - The point at which a student is no longer eligible to receive financial aid as defined in this policy.
8. **Incomplete** - A grade of "I" received for an attempted course; no credit will be applied until the course is completed. However, the hours will be counted in determining a student’s “Pace” toward degree completion.
9. **Maximum Timeframe** - Time limit set for receipt of financial aid that is specific to a student's program of study. For undergraduate programs, federal law defines this limit as 150% of the normal program’s length. This policy sets specific timeframes for both undergraduate and graduate programs of study.
10. **Qualitative Measure** - Measurement of a student’s academic standing consistent with the requirement for graduation from their program of study. It is required that students who have attended for a period of two academic years of undergraduate study maintain a 2.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA).
11. **Quantitative Measure** – Maximum timeframe the student has to complete their program of study and a minimum number of credits the student must satisfactorily complete at each increment (Pace).
12. **Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)** – Maintaining the required cumulative GPA and completion of courses at a rate that meets the standards defined in this policy.
13. **Transfer Credit** - Course accepted for credit at SU from another institution. Questions regarding Transfer Credit should be addressed to the Admissions Office at (225) 771-2430.