

## **Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy**

### **Purpose**

All financial aid recipients are required to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) according to Federal regulations and policies set by Sandhills Community College (SCC). The intent of these policies is to ensure that students who are receiving financial aid are making measurable progress toward completion of an approved degree, diploma, or certificate program in a reasonable period of time and within a reasonable number of credit hours attempted in their program of study.

### **Scope**

Regulations require a student's progress for financial aid purposes to be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. In addition to a student's cumulative grade point average, students are also required to pass a percentage of all attempted coursework, and to complete their program of study within the maximum time frame established by the institution. To reasonably measure a student's academic progress for financial aid, the student's academic record will be evaluated including credit hours earned at other post-secondary institutions and transferred into the student's program of study at SCC. This requirement applies to all students who apply for financial assistance from Federal, State and Institutional Aid.

For students receiving financial aid, Satisfactory Academic Progress will be reviewed at the end of each semester of enrollment. Students who have attended SCC in the past without receiving financial aid will be evaluated for SAP based on their prior academic record, and subsequently, at the end of each semester of enrollment. Returning students are evaluated on a continuing basis from the first enrollment at Sandhills. Returning students who were previously enrolled under a Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy other than the current Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy will be required to meet the standards of the current policy upon returning. There is no requirement in the federal regulations for institutions to notify students who are not applying for or receiving Title IV, HEA aid of their eligibility under SAP.

### **Standards of Progress**

To receive financial aid, the student must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress toward an eligible program of study. There are two standards in the Financial Aid Office's standards of progress that students receiving financial aid must meet in order to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress:

**Qualitative Standard:** The minimum **cumulative** grade point average (GPA) requirement the student must maintain to receive and/or continue receiving financial aid assistance is **2.0**. This includes all degree, diploma and certificate programs.

**Quantitative Standard:** 67 % Completion Rate and 150% Maximum Time Frame (Normal rounding rules apply. Example: 66.5% = 67%)

The student must maintain the minimums as listed below:

**Completion Rate Requirement:** The student must successfully complete 67% of the cumulative credit hours attempted to meet the minimum requirement. Example: if the student attempts 59 credit hours during enrollment, the student must successfully complete 40 credit hours ( $40 \text{ hours completed} \div 59 \text{ hours attempted} = .67$  or 67%). Successful completion is defined as receiving a grade of A, B, C, D, or P (Pass).

**Maximum Time Frame:** The maximum timeframe for a student to complete a program is 150% of the published length of the program. Example: if 75 credit hours are required to complete a degree, the student must complete the program, prior to the maximum of 113 credit hours. ( $75 \text{ credit hour program} \times 150\% = 113$ ). One academic year of credit (30 credit hours) may be added for required foundation coursework. If

a student is pursuing more than one program of study, maximum time frame standards of 150% will be applied toward each program for all attempted hours. If a student should need additional periods of enrollment to complete his/her program or if the student has a valid reason for pursuing an additional program of study, appeal procedures noted within this Satisfactory Academic Progress policy may be applied.

**Please note:** Both pace and maximum time frame are measured in credit hours (except for Clock Hour programs – see below), regardless of full time or part time attendance.

**If a student does not meet any ONE of the above three criteria, the student has failed to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress, and failure to do so will result in termination of eligibility to receive funds from federal Title IV, state, and institutional financial aid programs.**

### **Treatment of Selected Grades**

**Withdrawals/Drops:** Credit hours in which a student receives a grade of Drop (DR) and Withdraw Passing (WP) do not affect a student's GPA; however, Failing Withdraw (FW) is calculated as 0.0 in the GPA calculation for SAP. Grades of DR, WP, and FW are included in the number of attempted hours, but do not count toward successfully completed hours. Students who withdraw may have difficulty meeting the satisfactory academic progress requirements. Courses dropped during the official add/drop period (usually the first 8 days of the semester) are not included as attempted and/or unsuccessful credits.

**Incompletes and Failing Grades:** Credit hours in which a student receives a grade of Incomplete (I), Repeat (R), or Fail (F) are included in the number of attempted hours, but do not count toward successfully completed hours. All three grades are calculated as 0.0 in the GPA calculation for SAP. Students with incompletes may have difficulty meeting the satisfactory academic progress requirements at the time of evaluation but may request reevaluation upon completion.

**Incomplete Emergency and Withdraw Emergency (COVID-19)** – In response to the national emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, SCC added two new grades to the curriculum grading schemes for the Spring 2020 semester only, the Incomplete Emergency (IE) and Withdraw Emergency (WE) grades, which are only applied to students in response to COVID-19. IE and WE grades are not included in the quantitative component of the Satisfactory Academic Progress calculation. If a student receives a final grade for a class, the new grade and number of credits attempted will be used to determine if the student is making SAP.

**Transfer Credit:** Students transferring from another college will be considered making satisfactory progress at the time of initial enrollment at SCC. Grades from courses taken at other institutions are not included in the GPA calculation for SAP. Any such transfer credits will be included in the completion rate requirement as both attempted and completed credits, while a student's maximum time to receive financial aid will be reduced by the equivalent transfer of credit hours.

**Audit and Never Attend:** Audit (AU) or Never Attend (NA) courses are not considered attempted course work and are not included in the grade point average or completion rate determinations. A student cannot receive financial aid for courses that the student audits or is considered a no show (AU or NA).

**Repeat Course:** For financial aid purposes, all hours attempted will continue to be counted in each component of the student's academic progress.

**Credit by Exam:** While Credit by Exam (CE) is not included in enrollment status for purposes of awarding financial aid, the attempted and completed credits are counted in each component of the quantitative standard. The grade CE has no numerical value at SCC and, therefore, does not affect the GPA.

**Experiential Learning:** When a student earns credit for Experiential Learning (EL) which is given for career experience that duplicates experience required for a course, it is not included in enrollment status for purposes of awarding financial aid; however, the attempted and completed credits are counted in each component of the quantitative standard. The grade EL has no numerical value at SCC and, therefore, does not affect the GPA.

**Foundation Courses:** Courses taken at SCC and numbered less than 100 are included in GPA calculations for SAP, as well as when calculating the 67% Completion Rate. One academic year of credit (30 credit hours) may be added for required foundation coursework when calculating the 150% Maximum Time Frame. Only 30 credits of foundation coursework will be included in a student's enrollment status for federal financial aid.

When calculating the cumulative GPA for foundation courses, a P grade is the equivalent of a grade of A. An R grade is the equivalent of a grade of F and is calculated as 0.0 in the GPA calculation for SAP. Credit hours in which a student receives a grade of R are included in the number of attempted hours but do not count toward successfully completed hours.

### **Summer Session**

Credit hours attempted and earned during summer session will be included in the calculation of Satisfactory Academic Progress, just as any other enrollment period. For purposes of financial aid, full time enrollment in summer is 12 credit hours.

### **Clock Hour Programs**

Students enrolled in clock hour programs will have SAP evaluated at the end of each payment period. At the time of review, students must have successfully completed both the clock hours and weeks of instructional time required for the payment period. Maximum Time Frame is measured in cumulative clock hours required to complete the program and expressed in calendar time. (Note that a student in a clock hour program cannot receive aid for hours beyond those in the program; the maximum time frame applies to the amount of calendar time the student takes to complete those hours.) For example, if the program is 1200 clock hours and meets 30 clock hours per week, that means the program is 40 weeks in length. 150% of 40 weeks is 60 weeks. A student may receive aid while enrolled in this program for up to 60 weeks to complete the 1200 clock hours required for graduation.

### **Complete Academic Record**

In order to measure a student's satisfactory progress toward degree, diploma, or certificate requirements, the student's total academic record at Sandhills Community College must be evaluated whether or not the student received financial aid for the entire time of enrollment. This includes, but is not limited to, courses taken through dual enrollment, the Huskins program, the Career and College Promise program, and the Sandhoke Early College program. When students complete course work for more than one major, college and financial aid academic progress standards must be met to receive student financial aid.

### **Eligibility Status**

**Satisfactory:** Satisfactory status is achieved when all the criteria explained above are met.

**Financial Aid Warning:** Students (not currently on Warning, Suspension, or Probation) who do not have the required cumulative grade point average of 2.0 and/or have not successfully completed 67% of their attempted credit hours, will be placed on Warning for the following semester. A student on financial aid Warning may continue to receive Title IV aid for one payment period. Satisfactory progress will be monitored at the end of the semester to determine if the student has met the standards of progress and is eligible to continue to receive financial aid.

**Financial Aid Suspension:** Students on financial aid Warning who have not attained at least a cumulative 67% completion rate and/or earned the minimum required cumulative grade point average of 2.0 will have their financial aid suspended at the conclusion of the Warning period.

**Financial Aid Probation:** If a status of Suspension is appealed and approved, a status of Probation is assigned. This status requires students to maintain both a term GPA greater than or equal to 2.0 and a term completion rate equal to 100%. In order to achieve a completion rate equal to 100%, a student must successfully complete each course enrolled in for the term. The pace component may also require a course by course plan toward degree completion. If a student withdraws or fails a course during the Probation term dropping the term completion rate below 100%, or does not maintain a term GPA greater than or equal to 2.0, the appeal is terminated and the student will be placed on a financial aid Suspension status.

**Warning Near Maximum Time Frame:** Students who have attempted approximately 100% of the maximum allowable credit hours for their program of study will receive a courtesy notification status of Warning Near Maximum Time Frame

**Maximum Time Frame:** Students will have their financial aid suspended when it becomes mathematically impossible for them to complete their program within 150% of its length.

**Notification of Financial Aid Warning, Suspension, Probation, Warning Near Maximum Time Frame, or Maximum Time Frame:** The Financial Aid Office will send correspondence to any student who is placed on financial aid Warning, Suspension, Warning Near Maximum Time Frame, or Maximum Time Frame.

**Eligibility for Retaking Coursework:** A student may receive financial aid to retake a course as long as the student has never passed the course. A student who previously passed a course with a grade higher than an “F” and wishes to retake it may receive financial aid to retake it *one time only*.

### **Regaining Eligibility**

Students who attend Sandhills Community College (without federal financial aid) may regain financial aid eligibility by achieving a 67% completion rate and earning the required GPA based on hours attempted. A student may request reconsideration of eligibility for financial aid by submitting a written request to the Financial Aid Office once all requirements are met. *Paying for a semester or sitting out a semester does NOT permit you to regain satisfactory academic progress.*

**Appeal of Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards:** Students who have been disqualified from receiving financial aid may appeal to the Financial Aid Office to waive the satisfactory progress requirements only where there are extenuating circumstances. A student may submit written documentation to the Financial Aid Office by completing the Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Request form explaining the circumstances that have affected academic performance and what has changed that will allow him/her to make Satisfactory Academic Progress at the end of the next term of enrollment or within a reasonable period of time prior to program graduation. Supporting documentation be presented for each semester at SCC that the student did not successfully complete 67% of their classes and/or the semester GPA was below 2.0.

Examples of circumstances outside of your control that may be considered include: death in the family, accident, illness, military deployment, or other serious personal problems that were beyond the control of the student and can be supported with proper documentation from involved third party sources.

Examples of circumstances within your control that will not be considered include: Returning to school after an extended period of absence, changing academic program, and immaturity. An appeal may not be based on a student’s financial need or lack of understanding of actions that put the student’s financial aid in jeopardy.

Students who have exceeded the maximum allowable time frame to complete a program of study may also appeal. These students must explain what caused them to exceed the Maximum Time Frame allowed for their major and how many credits are required to complete it. They must provide a graduation plan completed and signed by their academic advisor that lists the courses needed to graduate and when each course will be taken. If the plan is considered reasonable, the student may receive financial aid with his or her progress being monitored for one or more semesters until the degree is completed, as long as the conditions set forth are met.

**Appeal Process:** A student may appeal in writing to the Financial Aid Office using the Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Request form explaining why satisfactory academic progress requirements were not met and what has changed that will allow him/her to make Satisfactory Academic Progress. Supporting documentation for the extenuating circumstance is required and specified according to the student’s situation on the Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Request form. The Financial Aid Appeals Committee will review the appeal and a decision will be rendered within fifteen (15) business days. The student will be informed of the committee’s appeal decision by letter.

**Approved Appeals:** A student whose appeal is approved and is allowed to continue on Financial Aid Probation based on extenuating circumstances may receive Title IV funds for one payment period. At that point, to maintain Title IV eligibility, the student must meet SCC's SAP standards or the requirement of an established individual academic plan that will ensure that the student is able to meet SAP standards by a specific time prior to graduation.

**Denied Appeals:** If your appeal is denied or if you do not meet the conditions of an approved appeal, you will be asked to attend at your own expense until you achieve the required completion rate, GPA, or both (you cannot make up a deficiency if your appeal was due to exceeding the maximum timeframe to earn a degree).

**Second Appeals:** A second appeal may be considered but you will not be allowed to submit it for the same issue that led to the first appeal, such as the same medical condition. A student must have very unusual circumstances to warrant a second appeal. As a result, very few second appeals are approved.

If a student disagrees with the determination by the Financial Aid Appeals Committee, the student may appeal their decision to the Vice President of Student Services. This appeal must be submitted in writing within five (5) business days from the date of the letter from the Financial Aid Appeals Committee. The decision of the Vice President of Student Services is final.

**NOTE:** All notices regarding your academic progress for financial aid purposes will be sent to your SCC student email account. You are responsible for monitoring this mailbox.

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