

SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Many federal financial aid programs administered under Title IV regulations (e.g. Federal Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG) and Federal Direct Loans) and non-Title IV state programs (e.g. Cal Grants, Student Success Completion Grant (SSCG)) require students to meet federally mandated "satisfactory academic progress" (SAP) standards in order to maintain eligibility. This policy sets forth the standards by which students will be evaluated.

CALIFORNIA AB 789 REQUIREMENTS

Assembly Bill 789 requires California institutions to have SAP policies that meet all of the following requirements by the start of the 2024-25 academic year:

- GPA and pace of completion must be set at the minimum federal standards in 34 CFR 668.34(a);
- SAP standards and appeals process must be provided to students during new student orientation and be included (in student-friendly language) on the institution's website, course syllabi, website, and financial aid award letters. Faculty will also be requested to include student-friendly language on course syllabi regarding the standards and appeal process;
- Students must be notified when the student hasn't met SAP standards following every term of enrollment;
- GPA and pace of completion standards can only be based on cumulative measures (not individual terms);
- Remedial coursework must be excluded from maximum timeframe calculations if the institution offers remedial coursework;
- Students who fulfill the terms and conditions of the student's academic plan must be allowed to remain on "financial aid probation" as defined by Section 668.34(b) of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations, including continuing to receive financial aid for any term for which the student fulfills the terms and conditions of the student's academic plan;
- In the case of a "satisfactory academic progress" determination for a transfer student, when calculating maximum timeframe as defined by Section 668.34(b) of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations, only include those credits from other institutions that count towards the student's current program of study.
- Accept both electronic and hard copy financial aid appeals for any student who is ineligible to receive financial aid due to the determination that the student did not meet "satisfactory academic progress," as defined by the institution where the student is enrolled, subject to all of the following:
 - A student who loses financial aid eligibility may appeal the determination during any subsequent term following loss of financial aid eligibility. The institution shall

not limit the total number of appeals that may be submitted by a student throughout the duration of the student's enrollment. The institution may limit the number of appeals per term, but each appeal that is denied shall be subject to the second review process pursuant to clause (vi). The institution shall not impose deadlines for submitting an appeal that are earlier than three weeks before the end of each term.

- A student who previously disenrolled while being ineligible to receive financial aid may appeal the loss of financial aid upon reenrollment, and the timing for consideration of the appeal shall allow the student, if the student meets the criteria for financial aid reinstatement, to qualify for reinstatement upon the first term of reenrollment.
- The institution shall provide a student who is ineligible to receive financial aid with written notice of the financial aid appeals process, including the process for a student to file an appeal, information about the second review process for an appeal that is denied as described in clause (vi), and how a student may request a second review.
- In reviewing a student's appeal, the institution may consider any additional special circumstances that the institution deems appropriate, and shall consider a broad range of special circumstances, including, but not limited to, any of the following:
 - Death of a relative or other significant person.
 - Injury or illness, including, but not limited to, behavioral health conditions, of the student or a relative or other significant person.
 - Pregnancy or birth of a child.
 - Homelessness.
 - Loss of childcare.
 - Loss or change in employment.
 - Loss of access to personal or public transportation.
 - Being a victim of a serious crime, including, but not limited to, domestic abuse, even if the crime was not reported or did not result in criminal prosecution or civil liability.
 - Natural disaster.
 - Change of major.
- The institution shall review a student's appeal and notify the student of the appeal decision within 45 days of submission of a complete appeal. The institution shall not disenroll a student for nonpayment of tuition and fees while the student's appeal is pending.
- The institution shall provide a second review process for an appeal that is denied if requested by the student. The second review shall be conducted by a reviewer who did not participate in the first review.
- The institution shall waive any requirement for third-party written documentation of the special circumstances forming the basis of an appeal if that documentation cannot be reasonably obtained by the student and the student signs a statement attesting to the veracity of the special circumstances presented as the grounds for appeal.

- This subparagraph shall not be interpreted to require institutions to provide retroactive financial aid for a term preceding the term in which a student reenrolls.

SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS EVALUATIONS

After grades post at the end of each term, Solano Community College (SCC) evaluates the satisfactory academic progress of all students who were enrolled in that term using the standards and procedures outlined in this policy. This evaluation looks at all periods of a student's enrollment, including those in which the student did not receive Title IV federal aid.

Students are notified of the results of the review in two primary ways:

- e-mail to the student's school email address (for those students who have a financial aid record in our school information system); and/or
- an update to their Satisfactory Academic Progress status in the student portal.

TREATMENT OF STUDENTS WITH LESS THAN 12 ATTEMPTED UNITS

Federal SAP regulations allow institutions to use a graduated approach to assessing quantitative and qualitative standards wherein it is easier to meet SAP standards in the beginning of the student's program of study but still require the student to complete on time.

Federal regulations also require that SAP standards never dip below those required by the institution for students who are NOT receiving federal financial aid.

In order to match the federal SAP policy more closely with the academic and progress standing rules used for all Solano students, students with less than 12 overall attempted units (including transfer units and courses with incomplete grades) will be considered to be making satisfactory academic progress. Once a student has attempted 12 units or more, the following standards will be strictly applied.

QUALITATIVE STANDARDS: CUMULATIVE GPA $\geq$ 2.0

To maintain eligibility for Title IV aid (and non-Title IV programs that use SAP standards as an eligibility requirement), a student must maintain good grades.

For each course taken, a student is awarded quality points based on their performance that are equal to the unit value of a course multiplied by the grade points earned. SCC calculates grade points per unit using the following values: A = 4 points; B = 3 points; C = 2 points; D = 1 point; F = no points.

For example, a student who earned a B in a three unit class would receive 9 quality points (3 units X 3 grade points).

For each student, SCC computes a cumulative grade point average (GPA) with this formula:

$$\frac{\text{Total units taken} \times \text{total grade points earned}}{\text{Total units taken}}$$

To meet SAP standards, a student must have a GPA of 2.0 or better on this 4.0 scale. This means that you have received a C grade or better in most of your classes.

Note:

- Grades for remedial and ESL courses are included in the cumulative GPA calculation.
- Grades for transfer courses will also be included in the GPA calculation if the records office has entered them into the student information system.
- Classes in which the student received the following grades are not included in GPA calculations: P, NP, CR, NC, I or W.

QUANTITATIVE STANDARDS

To receive Title IV aid, students must also demonstrate that they are completing their programs in a timely fashion.

- Students must complete at least 67%* of the cumulative number of SCC units attempted at each SAP evaluation.
 - The pace of completion is computed by dividing the total number of institutional units completed by the total number of units attempted.
 - Starting in 2024-25, calculation of the pace of completion will not include remedial and ESL units taken at Solano Community College.
 - *Formula uses rounding and compares units completed to (0.665 x unit attempted).
- A student may not attempt more than 150% of the published amount of units required to complete the program in which the student is enrolled.
 - For example, most AA/AS degrees are 60 units long, so their maximum time frame is 90 units. Once a student has attempted 90 units, they are no longer eligible for Title IV aid and must appeal to receive aid in subsequent terms.
 - The 150% limit for nursing students is 126 units.
 - The 150% for students in the BS for Biomanufacturing is 180 units.
 - For eligible certificate programs, maximum time frame varies (i.e. 30 unit program = 45 units maximum, 18 unit program = 27 units maximum).
 - Calculation of the 150% program limits includes:
 - any accepted transfer units;
 - courses for which a student has received a grade of "W"; and
 - any incomplete courses.

- Starting in 2024-25, calculation of the 150% program limits will not include remedial units taken at Solano Community College.

WARNING STATUS

When students fail to meet one of the standards above, the Financial Aid office will place them on "Warning" status for the next term (assuming they were not already on warning, probation, or ineligible status for the term that was evaluated).

- Students may receive financial aid while on "Warning" status.
- Students who meet all SAP standards at the end of their Warning semester become fully eligible again in the following term.
- Students not making SAP at the end of the warning period are determined to be ineligible for financial aid.

REESTABLISHING ELIGIBILITY

Students may reestablish their eligibility by taking classes without receiving Title IV aid and meeting all qualitative and quantitative SAP standards listed above.

- If students receive a grade change after the SAP evaluation, they can file a SAP appeal to have their eligibility reviewed. If the SAP appeal is approved, they may receive Title IV aid in a subsequent term (see "appeal process" below).
- Unlike some state programs, sitting out one semester or longer will not reestablish eligibility for federal financial aid and/or Cal Grants.
- Students returning to Solano after an extended time should contact the Financial Aid office to revisit their eligibility.

APPEAL PROCESS

Students determined ineligible for federal financial aid due to unsatisfactory academic progress may submit an appeal if they had extenuating circumstances that affected their ability to perform well in school. Extenuating circumstances may include illness, injury, death in the family, change in employment, or any other situation that may have made it difficult to succeed in their coursework.

- Appeals require the following documentation:
 - Typed, signed, and dated statement that includes:
 - What extenuating circumstances caused the student to fall below the SAP standards;
 - What has changed that will allow the student to meet the standards and successfully complete their program of study; AND

- Sufficient detail for a person unfamiliar with the student's situation to make a decision based on the statement alone.
 - A comprehensive Student Education Plan (SEP)
 - Any additional information requested by the financial aid office
- The Financial Aid office will review each appeal on a case-by-case basis and inform the student of the results of the appeal. Note that submitting an appeal is not a guarantee that the appeal will be approved.
- If a SAP appeal is approved, the student will be placed on "probation" status (see below)
- If a SAP appeal is denied, the appeal will be automatically reviewed by the Dean of Financial Aid / EOPS. If the Dean agrees that the appeal should be denied, the student will be ineligible for financial aid that term. They may reestablish eligibility according to the rules outlined in this policy, or file another appeal in a subsequent term if their situation has changed sufficiently to warrant a new appeal.

PROBATION

Students who receive an approval for their SAP appeal will be placed on probation status.

- Students may receive financial aid during terms of probation.
- Students must complete 67% of their units attempted with a 2.0 GPA each semester while on probation.
 - The SEP submitted with the initial appeal sets the length of time in which the student is supposed to complete their program of study
 - If the student completes 67% of their units attempted with a 2.0 GPA each term, they can stay on probation until they have reached the final term indicated in the SEP.
- If a student on probation status fails to meet the pace of completion and GPA requirements, they will be deemed ineligible for the following term.
 - Any future appeals will have a higher level of scrutiny applied since the student failed to meet the conditions of the first one.

TRANSFER UNITS

Transfer units accepted by SCC will be:

- included in the calculation of a student's GPA if the records office has entered those grades into the student information system
- included as both attempted and completed units in the evaluation of student's pace and maximum timeframe

INCOMPLETE GRADES

Incomplete grades are not included in the qualitative GPA calculation.

- Courses with incomplete grades are included as attempted units for both the pace and maximum timeframe measures used in the quantitative standards.
- Once an incomplete course has been completed, the resulting grade change will be used in subsequent SAP evaluations. Previous evaluations that used the incomplete grade will not be re-evaluated.

COURSE REPETITION

- If a student has earned a passing grade in a course, they may only repeat it once and receive Title IV aid for it. Exceptions may include art, music, and/or athletic courses that students may take each term to stay in practice.
- If a student repeats a course, but withdraws before completing it that course will not be considered a repeat attempt.
- Only the first passing grade (C or better) of a repeated course will be included in the GPA calculation. (Prior to Spring 2025, the highest grade was used.)
- Repeated courses will be included in the pace and maximum timeframe calculations
 - Repeated hours will be included in attempted hours (but not earned hours) for the pace calculation.
 - All repeated hours will be included towards maximum timeframe

EFFECT OF WITHDRAWALS

- Withdrawing from a course before it starts will not affect a student's SAP evaluation, unless the student has received financial aid prior to the beginning of the term.
- Classes with a final grade of W will not be included in the calculation of GPA used in the qualitative standard.
- Classes with a final grade of W will be treated as attempted units, adversely affecting both the pace and maximum timeframe measures of the quantitative standards.

CHANGING OR ADDING PROGRAMS OF STUDY

- SAP will be evaluated based on the student's primary declared program of study.
- Any SCC units used to pursue other programs of study (former or concurrent) will be used in the evaluation.
- Students can expect to appeal when they've reached the maximum timeframe for their primary declared program of study even if they have remaining coursework in a second certificate or degree program.

EXCUSED WITHDRAWALS

Excused withdrawals are sometimes granted by the records office for situations where a student needs to withdraw for reasons beyond their control. Please note:

- Federal rules for satisfactory academic progress require us to include excused withdrawals in the calculation of pace and maximum timeframe, unless those

withdrawals were granted during Spring 2020 or have been coded specifically as a COVID-19 related withdrawal.

ACADEMIC RENEWAL

Occasionally, students will have their grades “renewed” through the office of admissions and records (OAR). Federal regulations require us to ignore any academic renewals when calculating satisfactory academic progress.

REMEDIAL AND ESL COURSEWORK

Solano has the following policies specific to remedial and ESL coursework:

- Starting in 2024-25, calculation of the quantitative elements (150% program limits and pace of completion) will not include remedial units taken at Solano Community College.
- Grades for remedial and ESL courses are included in the cumulative GPA calculation.