



## Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

All students have a responsibility to maintain certain academic standards and make satisfactory academic progress (SAP) toward a degree. The Financial Aid Office is required by federal and state law to determine the eligibility of financial aid applicants, even if they have not received financial aid previously. These standards apply to all grants, loans, work study, tuition waivers, and some scholarships.

The purpose of this policy is to evaluate students at the end of each term to ensure students are satisfactorily progressing towards degree completion. The policy provides for consistent application of standards to all students within categories of student enrollment (full-time, part-time), undergraduate, and graduate students, and educational programs established by the institution.

**All enrolled students' academic progress will be evaluated at the end of each payment period (semester).**

Federal law requires the consideration of three factors when determining whether a student is making satisfactory progress toward a degree: the qualitative and quantitative standards, and the maximum timeframe allowed.

**1. MINIMUM GRADE POINT AVERAGE (QUALITATIVE STANDARD)**

Undergraduates, including post-baccalaureate students seeking a second undergraduate degree, are expected to maintain a 2.0 MSUB grade point average (GPA) and a 2.0 overall GPA.

Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 cumulative, MSUB GPA and a 3.0 overall GPA.

**2. PACE (QUANTITATIVE STANDARD)**

Pace is the rate at which a student must progress through his/her educational program to ensure that the student will complete the program within the maximum timeframe. Pace is determined by dividing the total number of hours the student has *successfully* completed by the total number attempted. Successful completion requires a minimum grade of D or P (Passing). Grades of W (Withdraw), I (Incomplete), X (No Pass), N (No grade), and F (Failing) are not considered to be passing grades. Please note that most programs require grades of C or better to fulfill degree requirements.

**3. MAXIMUM TIMEFRAME**

Students are expected to earn a degree in a specific amount of time, measured by the credits attempted. For both Undergraduate and Graduate programs, this is 150 percent of the published length of the program, measured in credit hours. For example, if a degree requires 120 credits, a student is eligible for financial aid for a maximum of 180 attempted credits. If a student's total attempted credits exceed the maximum allowed for his/her program, or if it becomes evident a student cannot graduate within the maximum credits allowed for his/her program, the student becomes ineligible for financial aid. A student who completes the academic requirements for a program but does not yet have the degree or certificate is not eligible for further federal or state funding for that program. Please note that a change of major does not reset the maximum timeframe.

*See the chart below for typical maximum duration of eligibility in various programs:*

Degree/Program	Maximum # Attempted Credits (varies)
Undergraduate Bachelor Degree	180-192
Assoc. Degree/2 Yr. Certificate	90-120
Second Bachelor's Degree	240 (includes all UG credits)
Certificate programs	45-60
Master's Degree	45-90
Provisional Graduates	(one calendar year)
Pre-Professional programs	45-90
Teacher Certification	60

### **Transfer Credits**

Credits attempted at prior post-secondary institutions will be included in determining Satisfactory Academic Progress. The Registrar evaluates and posts transcripts from prior institutions. All posted transfer credit hours on official transcripts are considered attempted and earned. Transfer credit hours and grades are included in the Minimum Cumulative Financial Aid GPA, Pace, and Maximum Time Frame calculations.

If a transcript is provided after financial aid is awarded, Cumulative Financial Aid GPA, Pace, and Maximum Time Frame will be reviewed at the end of the currently enrolled term.

1. Transfer students with no grade history at MSU Billings will be considered for freshman grade level aid only and placed in Warning status
  - a. Students can request to have their transfer hours evaluated early in their first term, but will be held accountable for the SAP calculation results immediately.
2. Returning students whose academic history would have justified SAP suspension or who were on suspension when they last attended will re-enter on SAP SUSPENSION. (See Appeals below.)
3. Complete academic transcripts must be submitted to the Office of Admissions/Registrar for any academic work attempted at other institutions before the end of their first semester at MSU-Billings. At the end of the first semester at MSUB, the SAP calculation will include all credits earned at MSUB and from all transfer institutions.
  - a. Students making SAP will have grade level recalculated relative to the new accepted credits applying to their degree.
  - b. Students who fail to make SAP will be placed on SAP SUSPENSION and lose eligibility for further aid. (See Appeals below.)
4. Students will be eligible for student financial aid when they are again making SAP, or have successfully appealed and were placed on Probation. (See Appeals Below)

### **Non-passing Grades**

Grades of W (withdraw), I (Incomplete), X (No Pass, Withdraw), N (No Credit / Audit), and F (Failing) will be counted toward the number of credits attempted but not counted as passed or earned. If a graduate student earns a grade of T (work in progress), he/she will need to contact our office for an evaluation of eligibility.

### **Repeat Courses**

Repeated credits will be counted toward the number of credits attempted. Repeats of previously unearned credits are eligible for funding within reason. Students may receive funding for a previously passed course one time only.

### **Remedial Courses**

Remedial courses (credit bearing courses numbered below 100) and ESL courses are counted in the qualitative and quantitative standards, and the maximum timeframe allowed for SAP purposes.

### **FINANCIAL AID WARNING**

***A student who was eligible at the beginning of a payment period but is not making Satisfactory Academic Progress standards because of GPA or Pace deficiency at the end of a payment period (term), will be placed on financial aid warning status. Students in Warning status remain eligible to receive funding for one additional semester. A student must meet all standards at the end of the one semester Warning period, or he/she will be Suspended from financial aid eligibility.***

Students are ineligible for a Warning status and are immediately Suspended, if they:

- earn zero credits during a semester
- become academically suspended
- cannot complete a degree within the maximum timeframe

**FINANCIAL AID SUSPENSION** occurs when a student:

- Is academically suspended (Financial Aid Warning does not apply)
- Withdraws from MSU Billings all credits during a semester (Financial Aid Warning does not apply)
- Earns zero credits during a semester (Financial Aid Warning does not apply)
- Exceeds the maximum timeframe for his or her program; or at any point when it becomes mathematically impossible for the student to complete the program within the maximum timeframe (Financial Aid Warning does not apply)
- Has a cumulative, undergraduate MSUB GPA below 2.0
- Has a cumulative, undergraduate overall GPA below 2.0
- Has a cumulative, graduate MSUB GPA below 3.0
- Has a cumulative, graduate overall GPA below 3.0
- Has earned less than 67% of OVERALL attempted credits
- Fails to meet minimum SAP standards after Warning period (see below)

### **FINANCIAL AID PROBATION**

Students who fail to make satisfactory academic progress but who have a successful appeal will be placed on Financial Aid Probation and will be required to follow a specific academic plan.

### **APPEAL PROCEDURES**

A student who is suspended from financial aid because of failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress may appeal the suspension. A successful appeal will be based on documented extenuating or special circumstances that caused lack of progress. Examples for the basis on which a student may file an appeal are the death of a relative, an injury or illness of the student, or other extenuating or special circumstances.

An appeal consists of:

- **SHORT LETTER** addressing why the student failed to make SAP and what has changed that will now allow him/her to progress.
- **APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION** supporting the reason for the appeal and/or showing how the problem has been resolved. If a student feels it is not possible to document the extenuating circumstances, the letter of appeal must explain why.
- **ACADEMIC PLAN OF STUDY**, completed by the student and the academic advisor, showing how the student will meet SAP standards by a specific time or complete the program.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal forms are available in the Financial Aid Office or: <http://www.msubillings.edu/finaid/forms.htm>.

Appeals are reviewed by committee twice per month. Students will be notified in writing of the results and of any conditions expected. The appeal will be Approved, Tabled, or Denied:

- **APPROVED APPEAL**  
Students with an approved appeal are placed on Financial Aid Probation and are eligible to receive funding provided they continue to meet the conditions of the academic plan. For example, a student may be required to earn 100 percent of the credits he/she attempts each semester with a grade of 'C' or higher in each course.

The student's grades will be reviewed at the end of each payment period (semester) to ensure that he/she is meeting the terms of the appeal.

- If the student now meets minimum SAP standards (2.0 GPA, 67% Pace), Probation will be removed and the student is in good standing.
- If the student has met the terms and conditions of the appeal and is following the Academic Plan of Study, but still does not meet minimum SAP standards, he/she will continue on Probation.
- Failure to meet the terms and conditions of the appeal or failure to follow the Academic Plan of Study will result in financial aid Suspension.

- **TABLED APPEAL**

Appeals may be tabled for additional documentation, further explanation, current or mid-term grades, receipt of transcripts from transfer schools, or any other appropriate materials.

- **DENIED APPEAL**

Students will be informed of the reasons for the denial of their appeal and given an explanation of how they can restore Financial Aid eligibility. Students with denied appeals may appeal to the Director of Financial Aid for reconsideration.

*Updated 7/25/2024*