

**POLICY ON SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS
FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FSA) RECIPIENTS**

1. SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

For purposes of determining financial aid eligibility under Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, all institutions, including Columbia University – the Graduate School of Engineering and Applied Science, must establish reasonable standards for measuring whether a student is maintaining satisfactory academic progress (SAP). On October 29, 2010, the Secretary of Education published final rules aimed at improving the integrity of programs authorized under Title IV of the HEA. Effective July 1, 2011, institutions must comply with the published regulations that impact SAP.

Students enrolled at the Graduate School of Engineering and Applied Science who do not make satisfactory academic progress will not be eligible for the following federal Title IV aid programs:

- Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan Program.
- Federal Graduate PLUS Loan Program.

In addition, students who do not meet satisfactory academic progress will not be eligible to receive institutional grants and scholarships.

The Office of Student Financial Planning in conjunction with the Graduate School of Engineering and Applied Science will review academic records after each term for students seeking a degree or certificate (non-degree) to monitor that students are making progress towards degree completion. Students are required to maintain qualitative and quantitative standards and may not exceed the maximum time frame for their program.

1.1 “AT LEAST AS STRICT...”

All School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS) graduate students (regardless of financial aid status) will be subject to the same policies and procedures.

1.2 CONSISTENT APPLICATION

Standards for part-time students are the same as those for full-time students. Please note that Columbia Video Network (CVN) students are included in this assessment.

1.3 REGULAR EVALUATIONS

Reviews by individual SEAS departments occur at the end of every academic year. Probation notices will be delivered by the Office of Graduate Student Affairs (GSA) after completion of spring semester.

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1.4 GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)

Students must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5 or better. All courses taken are included in the SAP assessment, with the exception of remedial courses. Remedial courses must be designated as such by the academic department. Remedial courses do not count as attempted credits in SAP.

The grade point average is computed on the basis of the following index: A = 4.0, B = 3.0, C = 2.0, D = 1.0, F = 0.0. Designations of + or – (used only with A, B, C) are equivalent to 0.33 (i.e., B+ = 3.33; B– = 2.67).

1.5 MAXIMUM TIME FRAME AND PACE OF COMPLETION

The Master of Science degree must be completed no later than 5 years from the start of the program. This also applies to Columbia Video Network (CVN) programs.

The PhD or DES degree must be completed no later than 7 years from the start of the program.

The maximum timeframe in which a student must complete the degree cannot exceed 133% of the standard length of the program. For example, if a program requires 30 credits, a student may attempt up to 40 credits toward the degree and remain eligible for aid. To ensure completion of the degree within this timeframe, students in all programs must successfully complete (i.e., receive a C- or better in) at least 75% of all attempted credits.

1.6 EFFECT/TREATMENT OF “ATYPICAL” COURSES/SITUATIONS

All repeated courses, failed courses, unofficial withdrawals, and transferred credits will count as credits attempted toward the maximum time frame.

In order to complete the necessary number of credits for a graduate degree, students must complete 75% of all credits attempted. Grades of UW, IN, R, CP, and F, as well as missing grades, are counted as attempted credits and will NOT count as earned credits.

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Retaking courses will add to the attempted total but will count only once as an earned credit.

1.6.1 **EFFECT OF INCOMPLETES** – IN grades will count as attempted (but not earned) credits. Students with IN grades will be placed on academic probation and, if applicable, financial aid probation. These students will be reassessed at the end of the following term of enrollment.

1.6.2 **EFFECT OF WITHDRAWALS** – Withdrawals, as part of the change of program period, will not be included as cumulative attempted credits. Withdrawals which are recorded on a student's permanent record will be included as cumulative attempted credits and will have an adverse effect on a student's capability to meet the appropriate standard.

NOTE: Retroactive "non-punitive" administrative withdrawal activity may result in the student repaying any federal assistance.

1.6.3 **EFFECT OF COURSE REPETITIONS** – If the course is failed and the student retakes it, then the "F" is computed into the GPA and zero credits are earned (but the course credits count toward attempted credits for SAP purposes). The new grade and course credits will appear for the same course when retaken and calculated into the GPA if the student passes the course the second time. The course will appear on the transcript twice.

If a student is retaking a course to earn a better grade, then the first grade and course credits are calculated in the GPA. The course and new grade will also appear on the student's transcript, but the academic department or Graduate Student Affairs must contact the Registrar to manually change the course credit to zero, so that the course credits are not counted twice on the student's record. The course will appear on the transcript twice.

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- 1.6.4 **EFFECT OF DUAL DEGREES** – SEAS will assess students only while they are officially enrolled in SEAS. Only courses taken toward the SEAS degree will be assessed by SEAS. While the dual-degree student is enrolled in another school, that school's SAP policy applies.
- 1.6.5 **EFFECT OF ADVANCED STANDING** – Advanced standing (transfer) credits will count as attempted credits but will not affect the GPA.
- 1.6.6 **EFFECT OF TRANSFERS OF CREDIT FROM OTHER SCHOOLS OR INSTITUTIONS** – No transfer credit is allowed for SEAS graduate programs.
- 1.6.7 **EFFECT OF CHANGES OF MAJOR OR PROGRAM OF STUDY** – Only courses applicable to the current degree will count towards the GPA and point total.

1.7 STATUS DEFINITIONS

Financial Aid Probation: If at the end of the spring term during SEAS' annual evaluation process, a student receiving federal aid is found to not be meeting SAP requirements, that student will be notified in writing and placed on Financial Aid Probation. Financial Aid Probation is a status defined by federal regulations as being ineligible for federal financial aid.

Students on Financial Aid Probation will be assessed each semester with the following possible outcomes:

1. Removal of probation status if SAP requirements are now met;
2. Continuation of probation status if SAP requirements have not been met; but, the Academic Plan is being followed;
3. Suspension or dismissal if progress toward SAP eligibility is insufficient.

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1.8 PROVISION FOR A FINANCIAL AID WARNING STATUS

SEAS evaluates SAP annually for graduate students and therefore according to federal regulations there is no official Financial Aid Warning status available.

1.9 APPEALS

A student who has experienced documented extenuating circumstances (death of a family member, severe illness, or other situations of comparable gravity) that have affected his or her ability to meet SAP may appeal the probation status. An appeal form may be obtained from the Office of Graduate Student Affairs. Appeals should be submitted to the Associate Dean within 10 business days of the notification of probation. The Associate Dean will review the appeal and notify the student of the result via email within 10 business days of the appeal submission. This appeal must contain an academic plan approved and signed by a departmental advisor.

1.9.1 ACADEMIC PLANS

An academic plan must contain a detailed term-by-term schedule for completion of degree with minimum required GPA and within the maximum allowed timeframe for the degree. Appeal forms with templates for academic plans are available in the Office of Graduate Student Affairs.

1.10 RESTORING ELIGIBILITY

Students are SAP eligible when they meet SAP requirements. Students placed on Financial Aid Probation may regain eligibility through a successful appeal, or, if they are still eligible to take courses when on Financial Aid Probation, may pay tuition through other means and bring academic achievement back to SAP eligibility standards.

1.11 NOTIFICATIONS

Students who may not meet SAP will receive unofficial warning letters from their departments after the fall semester. Official probation letters will be issued by GSA and by the Financial Aid Office following the spring term.

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