

# **THE SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES POLICY ON SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FSA) RECIPIENTS**

August 13, 2024

## **1. SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS**

To determine financial aid eligibility under Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, all institutions, including Columbia University – School of Professional Studies, must establish reasonable standards for measuring whether a student maintains satisfactory academic progress (SAP). On October 29, 2010, the Secretary of Education published final rules to improve 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. Student Financial Services, in conjunction with the School of Professional Studies, has revised its satisfactory academic progress policy to comply with the new regulations.

Students enrolled at the School of Professional Studies who do not make satisfactory academic progress will not be eligible for the following federal Title IV aid programs:

- Federal Work-Study Program
- Federal Direct Loan Programs, both Subsidized and Unsubsidized loans
- Federal Parent PLUS 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.

Student Financial Services, in conjunction with the School of Professional Studies, will review academic records after each term for students seeking a graduate degree (e.g. Master of Science) or Certificate to monitor that students are making progress towards degree completion. Students must maintain qualitative and quantitative standards and may not exceed the maximum time frame for their program.

### **1.1 “AT LEAST AS STRICT...”**

All students, whether Title IV recipients or not, are required to maintain qualitative and quantitative standards, and may not exceed the maximum time frame for their program. Students who do not meet this requirement will risk dismissal from the School. The School of Professional Studies considers a student’s academic progress to be satisfactory when it progresses at a rate that allows the student to complete all requirements for Graduate and Non-degree programs.

### **1.2 CONSISTENT APPLICATION**

Satisfactory academic progress standards, as outlined in this policy, apply to all Federal Student Aid programs and FSA recipients. The following are defined categories of students:

1. Full-time graduate students

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2. Part-time graduate students
3. Full-time, non-degree students
  - a. Certificate
4. Part-time, non-degree students
  - a. Certificate

## 1.3 REGULAR EVALUATIONS

Student Financial Services, in conjunction with the School of Professional Studies, will review academic records after each term for students seeking a graduate degree (e.g. Master of Science) or Certificate to monitor that students are making progress towards degree completion. Students must maintain qualitative and quantitative standards and may not exceed the maximum time frame for their program. Internal reviews are completed each semester to ensure that the system of record matches the applicable SAP status for a student meeting SAP. This step is performed prior to a student submitting an appeal under any other status.

## 1.4 GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)

To maintain the qualitative standards of satisfactory academic progress, students must meet the cumulative grade point average at the end of each term, as outlined in the charts below. The table below summarizes the minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) required for each program type:

Program Type	Cumulative Grade Point Average
Graduate	3.0
Certificate	3.0

## 1.5 MAXIMUM TIME FRAME AND PACE OF COMPLETION

The pace of completion permits a myriad of enrollment permutations since percentage controls the progress. Students must successfully earn credits toward their degree greater than or equal to 67% of the credits attempted. For example, if a student has attempted 24 credit hours, they must earn 16 credits of those attempted (16 earned credits / 24 attempted credits x 100% = 67%).

The maximum timeframe permits students to receive federal student aid within a set limit throughout their program. Students must progress through their program at a pace that will ensure they will graduate within the maximum timeframe of 150% of the published program length. The table below summarizes the minimum requirement for a maximum timeframe by program:

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Program information	Program Code	Pool Code(s)	# of Points/Credits Needed to Complete	Maximum Credits Attempted	Maximum Timeframe Allowed for Program Completion in Semesters or Terms
MS Actuarial Science	SPACTU	SPACTU	36	54	3 years
MS Applied Analytics	SPAAMS	SPAAMS	36	54	6 terms
MS Applied Analytics (online)	SPAAMO	SPAAMO	36	54	6 terms
MS Bioethics	SPBIET	SPBIET	36	54	3 years
MS Bioethics (online)	SPBIEO	SPBIEO	36	54	3 years
MS Bioethics (dual with MPH)	SPBEPH	SPBEPH	36	54	3 years
MS Construction Administration	SPCNAD	SPCNAD	36	54	5 years
MS Enterprise Risk Management	SPRSKM	SPRSKM	36	54	6 terms
MS Enterprise Risk Management (online)	SPRSKO	SPRSKO	36	54	6 terms
MS Human Capital Management	SPHCM	SPHCM	36	54	6 terms
MS Human Capital Management	SPHCMO	SPHCMO	36	54	6 terms

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(online)					
MS Information & Knowledge Strategy	SPIKNS	SPIKNS	36	54	3 Years
MPS Insurance Management (online)	SPIMGO	SPIMGO	30	45	4 terms in succession
MS Narrative Medicine	SPNMED	SPNMED	38	54	6 years if part-time
MS Negotiation & Conflict Resolution	SPNACR	SPNACR	36	54	3 years
MS Negotiation & Conflict Resolution (hybrid)	SPNACO	SPNACO	36	54	3 years
MS Nonprofit Management	SPNOPM	SPNOPM	36	54	3 years
MS Nonprofit Management (online)	SPNOPO	SPNOPO	36	54	3 years
MS Political Analytics	SPPOAN	SPPOAN	36	54	3 years
MS Sports Management	SPORTS	SPORTS	36	54	4 years
MS Strategic Communication	SPCOMT	SPCOMT	36	54	3 years
MS Strategic Communication (online)	SPCOMO	SPCOMO	36	54	3 years
MS Strategic Communication (for	SPCOME	SPCOME	36	54	3 years

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Executives)					
MS Sustainability Management	SPSUMA	SPSUMA	36	54	9 terms
MS Sustainability Science	SPSUSC	SPSUSC	36	54	9 terms
MS Technology Management	SPTMT	SPTMT	36	54	3 years
MS Technology Management (for Executives)	SPTMT2	SPTMT2	36	54	3 years
MPS Wealth Managment (online)	SPWMGO	SPWMGO	30	45	4 terms consecutively
Classics - Certificate	SPCCLS	SPCCLS	24	36	3 years
Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology - Certificate	SPCEEB	SPCEEB	29	43	3 years
Psychology - Certificate	SPCPSY	SPCPSY	28	42	3 years
Quantitative Studies for Finance - Certificate	SPCQMF	SPCQMF	24	36	6 terms

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## **1.6 EFFECT/TREATMENT OF “ATYPICAL” COURSES/SITUATIONS**

The School of Professional Studies includes all courses attempted at the institution plus coursework accepted as transfer credit towards the student’s declared major in the quantitative measurement to determine successful satisfactory academic progress. This also includes courses taken via a Consortium Agreement. Earned hours include all courses in which a passing grade was received (A, B, C, D). The calculation counts all withdrawn courses (W, UW) and failed courses (F) as unearned hours. Repeated courses are counted in the attempted hours and are taken into consideration for the maximum allowed hours for completion of the degree.

### **1.6.1 EFFECT OF INCOMPLETES**

Courses with incomplete grades are included as cumulative attempted credits. However, these courses cannot be used as credits earned toward the degree since successful completion is the criterion for positive credit accumulation. Incomplete grades will be treated as an F when calculating a student’s cumulative GPA to determine whether a student has maintained the qualitative standards of satisfactory academic progress.

If the student fails to meet the appropriate standard for credit accumulation due to the lack of successful completion grades for these courses, the recording of successful completion grades within a term which brings the accumulated credit level to the appropriate standard will restore eligibility for the term and subsequent terms within the academic year.

### **1.6.2 EFFECT OF WITHDRAWALS**

Withdrawals as part of the change of program period will not be included as cumulative attempted credits. Withdrawals that 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 being required to repay any assistance received due to the student’s enrollment at the time of receipt of the student assistance funds.

### **1.6.3 EFFECT OF COURSE REPETITIONS**

Completed courses can generally be accepted toward degree requirements once. However, each time a student attempts a course, it is included as part of the cumulative attempted credit record. Therefore, regardless of the prior grade, repeated courses reduce a student’s capacity to meet the appropriate credit accumulation standard.

### **1.6.4 EFFECT OF DUAL DEGREES**

This section is not applicable.

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## 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

Transfer students shall be reviewed for purposes of satisfactory academic progress.

All transfer credits will be counted as completed credits toward the degree and toward attempted points at Columbia.

## 1.6.7 EFFECT OF CHANGES OF MAJOR OR PROGRAM OF STUDY

### *Readmission*

Upon readmission after at least one year of non-re-enrollment, the student will receive assistance for the terms in the academic year of readmission and will be evaluated for future eligibility at the end of the spring term against the appropriate standard for the degree program for which the student is enrolled. The student's previous academic history will be included in the calculation. If a student is readmitted after less than one year of non-enrollment, the academic record will be evaluated for satisfactory academic progress under these standards as the record stood at the end of the last term of attendance.

### *Approved Leave of Absence (LOA)*

Students on an approved Leave of Absence (LOA) are required to maintain both qualitative and quantitative standards as outlined in this policy in order to return to the program and receive federal student aid.

### *Change of Major / Program*

Students who are changing programs shall have their status reviewed for satisfactory academic progress. This measurement is calculated using the courses deemed acceptable toward the new program. Courses deemed acceptable toward the new program will affect the student's CGPA, maximum time frame, and pace of completion.

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## 1.7 STATUS DEFINITIONS

Below are satisfactory academic progress definitions:

### *Financial Aid Probation*

Office of Student Financial Planning will assign this status to students who are failing SAP and who successfully appeal the academic review. Aid eligibility may be reinstated for one payment period.

### *Financial Aid Warning*

The Office of Student Financial Planning will assign this status to students who fail SAP at the end of each payment period but were making SAP in the prior payment period. The Office of Student Financial Planning will reinstate eligibility for one payment period without an appeal.

## 1.8 APPEALS

Federal regulations do not mandate that institutions offer an appeal process; however, the Office of Student Affairs at the School of Professional Studies has established a Title IV satisfactory academic progress appeal process. Students with unforeseen extenuating circumstances that prevented them from making SAP may submit an appeal in writing to the Office of Student Affairs at the School of Professional Studies.

A student may initiate the SAP appeal process by preparing and submitting a written Title IV Satisfactory Academic Progress appeal with all substantiating documentation to the Office of Student Affairs at the School of Professional Studies. The appeal must include (1) a detailed explanation regarding (a) why the student failed to make SAP (examples of appeal-worthy circumstances are: serious physical or mental illness of the student, serious physical or mental illness of a student's immediate family member, death of a student's immediate family member and other extreme circumstances) and (b) what has changed that will allow the student to make SAP at the subsequent evaluation, and (2) a SAP Academic Plan that outlines the specific plan/corrective action to improve academic progress.

A determination will be made by the Office of Student Affairs at the School of Professional Studies whether the student's appeal will be approved or denied. All appeal decisions are final.

A two-tier review process has been established to confirm that all appeal documents are reviewed for accuracy and completeness. This includes internal sign-offs for approved appeal statuses.

### 1.8.1 ACADEMIC PLANS

A SAP Academic Plan outlines a specific plan/corrective action to improve academic progress. Students must follow the SAP Academic Plan to receive



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federal, state, and institutional financial assistance.

To retain Title IV eligibility, students must be enrolled only in the courses listed on their SAP Academic Plan, meet minimum completion rates, and make progress each semester toward all SAP requirements, as outlined by the School, by the Academic Plan projected end date and/or graduation date. Failure to meet the terms of the Academic Plan will jeopardize eligibility for federal, state, and institutional financial assistance.

## **1.9 RESTORING ELIGIBILITY**

A student whose appeal has been granted will receive federal financial aid but will be expected to meet the terms of the Academic Plan to ensure that the student fully meets the minimum SAP requirements by the end of the subsequent term. The approval of a SAP appeal is related to the renewal of federal and institutional need-based aid only.

A student whose appeal has been denied or lost eligibility by not meeting the standard without appeal may regain eligibility by leaving the institution for at least one year. Upon re-admittance, the student will receive assistance for the terms in the academic year of re-admittance and will be subject to SAP evaluation of eligibility at the end of that year or payment period.

Students who choose to remain enrolled at the School without the receipt of Title IV funding may request a review of their academic records after any term in which they are enrolled without such benefits to determine whether the appropriate standards for the degree program(s) in which the students are enrolled have been met. If the standards are met, eligibility is regained for subsequent terms in the academic year.

Students who choose to remain enrolled at the School without receiving Title IV funding or institutional aid are responsible for all debts owed to the University, including any fees or tuition that may have been incurred during the review process.

## **1.10 NOTIFICATIONS**

The Office of Student Affairs at the School of Professional Studies will review all students' academic records after each term. Students not making satisfactory academic progress toward their degree may lose eligibility for future Title IV aid. Students will be notified of their ineligible status via the Office of Student Affairs at the School of Professional Studies.

Note: If a student has a grade change or correction to their academic record after the review process, he/she should notify the Office of Student Affairs at the School of Professional Studies in writing to request a re-evaluation of their academic progress.

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