

Maintaining Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

Medill graduate students are held to all policies and procedures outlined in the Northwestern University Student Handbook. Students using Title IV Funds (Federal Stafford, Perkins, Graduate PLUS Loans and/or Work-Study) and or Medill grants or scholarships to fund their Medill education must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress to maintain their financial aid eligibility.

Students are considered to be making satisfactory academic progress if they complete at least 66% units of approved graduate credits per quarter with at least a 3.0 grade point average. Students receiving a grade of C+, C or C- or a current cumulative GPA of less than 3.0 will be placed on academic probation by the department chair for their specific graduate program. They will be allowed to continue their studies for an additional quarter to re-establish satisfactory academic standing, unless they are in the final quarter of their degree program. Students who have not achieved a 3.0 cumulative grade point average by the end of their final quarter will not be eligible for graduation. Any student who receives a cumulative total of 3 grades of C (C+,C, C-) or a grade of F is automatically dismissed from the program.

Financial Aid may be jeopardized by a student's failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress as defined above.

SAP Policy

Federal and state regulations require recipients of financial aid to maintain satisfactory academic progress in their program of study. It is the University's expectation that students will make progress towards completion of the degree in which they are enrolled.

Medill students must demonstrate satisfactory academic progress in three fundamental ways:

1. Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher
2. Complete program within a specified period of time
3. Complete 66% of all credits attempted per academic quarter

1. Maintain a Cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher

The Satisfactory Academic Progress regulations require that you maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) in order to remain eligible for financial aid. This cumulative GPA is a 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale).

If you drop below a cumulative GPA of 3.0, you will be placed in financial aid warning. While in financial aid warning, you will continue to receive your financial aid for one additional academic term, but you will need to bring your GPA above a 3.0 by the end of the warning term.

2. Complete Academic Program within a Specific Period of Time

Students have a maximum timeframe of 150% of the length of their standard program to complete their degree requirements. For example, if a program is four quarters full-time academic quarters, a student attending full-time may not exceed six quarters of full-time academic quarters to complete their degree.

All periods of enrollment are counted toward the maximum number of terms. Periods of academic leave or non-enrollment will not count against the maximum terms of enrollment.

Repeated coursework is counted in the same manner as all other coursework for the purpose of Satisfactory Academic Progress. Periods of academic leave or non-enrollment will not count against the maximum terms of enrollment.

Students who have completed all required coursework for his or her degree but have not yet received the degree cannot receive further federal or state financial aid for that program. Students who register for recognized optional additional quarters will remain eligible for federal financial aid.

Students must be on track to complete their degree within their maximum time-frame in order to maintain their financial aid eligibility.

Students who have questions about determining their personal maximum timeframe may contact the Office of Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid.

3. Complete two-thirds (66.6%) of all credits attempted per academic term:

In order to meet the minimum standard of academic progress each academic term, students must complete at least two-thirds of the credits attempted per academic term.

Courses dropped after the end of the Drop/Add period will be counted towards credits attempted. Grades of D, F, Y (incomplete), W (withdrawal), or X (unofficial withdrawal) do not satisfy the requirements for the 2/3 completion rate.

Evaluation of Satisfactory Academic Progress

Evaluation of satisfactory academic progress is made at the end each term by Medill's Office of Student Life and the Office of Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid once grades are published in the university system. SAP progress will be evaluated up to four times per academic year. Medill's Office of Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid will review the list with the Director of the Office of Student Life prior to communicating to the students the effect of the Satisfactory Academic Progress on their financial aid.

SAP Warning

If a student fails to meet the requirements for Satisfactory Academic Progress for any academic term, he/she is placed on SAP warning for one academic term. During this warning period, the student will still be eligible for federal financial aid and institutional grant aid but the student must meet the following criteria:

1. Complete all credits attempted during the following term with a grade of B or higher.
2. Maintain or earn a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.
3. Be on track to complete their degree within their maximum allowed time-frame.

The student will be notified by the Office of Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid via their NU email account that the student has been placed on SAP Warning.

SAP Suspension

Students who do not meet the terms of their SAP warning period by achieving a grade point average of 3.0 or higher, will be academically dismissed from the program as stated above. Once a student meets all requirements for reinstatement of financial aid after a suspension, it is the student's responsibility to contact Medill's Office of Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid to request a SAP review for reinstatement of federal and institutional aid eligibility. Once the Office of Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid determine that a student is now compliant with SAP requirements, aid will be reinstated for the following academic terms.

Appeals

If a student fails to meet the SAP requirements as stated above due to extenuating circumstances such as a family member's death or illness (of the student or immediate family member), etc, the student may submit a written appeal to Medill's Office of Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid. The appeal must be received by the Office of Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid prior to the first day of the subsequent academic term.

The written appeal should explain any relevant extraordinary circumstances, address the reason(s) for failing to meet the minimum academic requirements, and offer some solution to the problems that affected prior academic performance. Supporting documentation, such as statements from academic advisers, professors, professional health care workers, etc., may also be requested. The appeal will be reviewed by a committee chaired by the Director and Associate Director of Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid. All decisions made by the committee are final. Students will be notified if their appeal is granted or denied via an email to their NU email account and letter.

If an appeal is granted, the student will be placed in one of two categories:

1. SAP Probation

If a student is placed on SAP Probation after an appeal, the student will be eligible for aid during one additional academic term. During the probationary period, the student must meet all SAP requirements. If the student fails to meet SAP during their probationary period, their aid will be suspended without the ability to appeal. In order to reinstate federal financial aid eligibility after a SAP suspension, students must meet the criteria for reinstatement listed above without the use of federal financial aid.

2. SAP Academic Plan

Students may be placed on an academic improvement plan upon submission of a successful appeal. If it is mathematically impossible for a student to resolve all deficiencies during one term of attendance and the student's reason for appeal is appropriate according to federal regulations, the student may be placed on an academic improvement plan with the end goal being to resolve all deficiencies. An academic improvement plan varies in length and is determined by the SAP committee. It does not have to equate to the exact number of terms it would take a student to resolve all deficiencies. If the student is meeting the criteria identified in the SAP appeal approval at each term review, the student's academic improvement plan may be extended.

Special Considerations for First-time Financial Aid Applicants

Current students who apply for financial aid are required to meet the satisfactory academic progress requirements. If you are a currently enrolled student but have not received federal financial aid for previous terms of enrollment in your current program, you are considered to be a First-Time Financial Aid Applicant. Your previous coursework must meet the minimum academic progress requirements. If it does not, you will need to complete a Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) appeal for first-time aid filers. Your appeal should include the following:

- Description of a specific reason, event, or circumstance that prevented you from meeting the academic progress requirements
- A specific plan/corrective action to improve your academic progress.

If you have questions regarding the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy, as it applies to financial aid, please schedule an appointment to meet with the Associate Director in the Office of Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid.