

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy for Title IV Financial Aid Recipients

1. Introduction

- 1.1 To be eligible for US federal student loan, a student must make Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). This policy applies to all full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students in receipt of funding via the Federal Direct Loan Program (also known as 'financial aid' and 'Title IV aid') at the University of Sussex.
- 1.2 The University of Sussex is required by US Federal Law to monitor that any student in receipt of US Federal Student Aid is making Satisfactory Academic Progress towards completion of their academic program.
- 1.3 The University of Sussex has a set of [Undergraduate](#) (UG), [Postgraduate Taught](#) (PGT) and [Postgraduate Research](#) (PGR) degree regulations which set out the academic requirements for progression through and completion of its degree programs. These apply to all students studying for a University of Sussex degree. These regulations are published on the University's website and are accessible to all students.

2. SAP Evaluation and Review

- 2.1 Students receiving financial aid will be evaluated at the end of each payment period before their subsequent disbursement of federal aid to assessing whether they are making satisfactory academic progress.
- 2.2 The student's School will be contacted by the Financial Aid Office to check that satisfactory academic progress has been made before each loan disbursement, at the end of each payment period. Both qualitative and quantitative standards are reviewed.
- 2.3 Students will be notified in writing if a financial aid warning is issued, or if financial aid is suspended or probated based on the evaluation above. An appeal procedure for verifiable or unforeseen circumstances is available if a student believes they meet these criteria. The University of Sussex cannot waive any student's Satisfactory Academic Progress requirement.

3. Measuring Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

3.1 Quantitative Criteria – maximum course completion timeframes

- 3.1.1 Students must complete their course at a pace that ensures that they will graduate within the maximum timeframe. Federal regulations specify that the maximum timeframe for program completion may not exceed 150 per cent of the program's published length as measured in credit hours. For the University of Sussex awards these timeframes are as follows:

Standard published program length	Program length in credit hours	Maximum Uni of Sussex period of registration	Maximum Federal timeframe for completion (in years)
3-year Undergraduate degree (full-time)	360	6 years (720 hours)	4.5 years (540 hours)
4-year Undergraduate degree (full-time)	480	7 years (840 hours)	6 years (720 hours)
12-month Postgraduate taught degree (full-time)	180	2 years (360 hours)	18 months (270 hours)
24-month Postgraduate taught degree (part-time)	180	3 years (270 hours)	3 years (270 hours)

Table 1: Maximum course completion timeframes

3.2 Quantitative Criteria - Pace and Progression

- 3.2.1 To continue to be eligible for financial aid, students must maintain a minimum cumulative completion rate of 66.7% as calculated by dividing the number of completed credits (cumulative credit hours completed) by the number of attempted credits (cumulative credit hours attempted) to meet SAP maximum completion timeframes.

3.3 Qualitative Criteria – Academic Standards

- 3.3.1 This evaluation process will consider the student's progress as per the requirements stipulated in the academic regulations applicable to their degree and level, to determine their eligibility for continued financial aid.
- 3.3.2 The University operates a 0 – 100 marking scale for all taught courses with pass thresholds at 40% on modules at levels 3 to 6 of the FHEQ (undergraduate) and 50% on modules at level 7 of the FHEQ (postgraduate) and applies standard thresholds across the University for the calculation of classification. These are articulated in the University's Undergraduate and Postgraduate regulations.
- 3.3.3 To demonstrate Satisfactory Academic Progress students in an undergraduate program are required to achieve a minimum overall mean of 40% and 120 credits to progress to the next stage or to be considered for an award. Students on an integrated master's course are required to achieve a stage mean of 50% and 120 credits in the final stage. This follows the application of trailed, compensated, and condoned credit rules.
- 3.3.4 To demonstrate Satisfactory Academic Progress students in a taught postgraduate program are required to achieve a minimum overall mean of 50% and the credit requirements of the award as defined in the University's [Academic Framework](#). This is following the application of rules on compensated and condoned credit. Taught postgraduate degrees are at one academic level (FHEQ level 7); student achievement is therefore measured in credit accumulation rather than a progression from one level to a higher level of study.
- 3.3.5 Students who fail to meet the requirements for progression or award at the first attempt will be granted an opportunity to be reassessed by retake in those modules where the pass mark has not been achieved (40% for UG and 50% for the final stage of an integrated master's course and all postgraduate modules). The opportunity to retake is normally within the same academic year. The mark achieved on the retake will be capped at the pass threshold for the module.

- 3.3.6 Following reassessment by retake the University may permit an undergraduate student to progress to the next stage of study while trailing up to a maximum of 30 credits from the previous stage, provided an uncapped stage mean of 40% has been achieved. Credit can be trailed at all stages, including into the final stage. Trailing is not permitted on modules contributing to postgraduate awards.
- 3.3.7 Once a student has studied the required modules at a credit level, the University may allow a student's overall performance to compensate for the marginal failure. No reassessment is then required. Compensation may only be applied where a student fulfils the following criteria:
- an uncapped stage means of 40% for an undergraduate course (except the final stage of an integrated masters course where the uncapped mean is 50%) or an uncapped stage mean of 50% for a taught postgraduate course
 - marginal failure in modules to a maximum value of 30 credits.
- 3.3.8 The University defines a marginal failure as a mark between 35 and 39% at the undergraduate level and 45 – 49% at the postgraduate level (level 7). Where compensation is applied the actual mark achieved will stand for progression and award purposes.
- 3.3.9 All students on a course with a duration longer than two academic years must have achieved a minimum threshold of 40% in years one and two for undergraduate and 50% for postgraduate.
- 3.3.10 Progression requirements for postgraduate research degrees, which are not credit-bearing, are described in the [Regulations for Degrees of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy](#).

4. Remedial non-credit courses

- 4.1 The University does not allow recipients of Title IV aid to take non-credit remedial courses.

5. Impact of transfers, withdrawals, failures and re-assessments on SAP eligibility

- 5.1 If a student transfers from another institution, credits and time were taken to achieve that credit will only be counted if the credits count towards the student's current University of Sussex program.
- 5.2 Generally all periods of the student's enrolment (including incomplete modules) count when assessing progress, even periods in which the student did not receive Federal Student Aid funds.
- 5.3 A student who withdraws from the University, but subsequently re-enrols for the same degree, any credit hours completed and grades achieved as part of the prior study will count towards the assessment of Satisfactory Academic Progress.
- 5.4 Where a student withdraws from the University and subsequently registers for a new degree in which there is no transfer of credit from their previous degree, this will not be included in the subsequent Satisfactory Academic Progress evaluation.

- 5.5 Any student considering withdrawing from the University is encouraged to be aware of the implications of withdrawal and to seek [advice](#) on the effect this may have on loans eligibility
- 5.6 For students who are required to be reassessed in a failed module, the reassessment result will be considered during the evaluation process.
- 5.7 Students will become ineligible for financial aid as soon as it becomes clear that a consequence of either withdrawal or reassessment means that they will exceed the maximum timeframe to complete their course and not at the point that they reach the maximum timeframe.

6. Financial Aid Warning

- 6.1 Students who fail to achieve Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) at the required standard as per the applicable Academic Regulations and also within the duration and pace noted above, will result in a Financial Aid Warning.
- 6.2 The student will be notified of this in writing.
- 6.3 A student who receives a Financial Aid Warning will be eligible to receive Title IV aid for one further payment period.
- 6.4 At the end of that payment period an assessment will be made to determine if SAP has been made. If the student meets SAP standards they will regain eligibility for the following payment period.
- 6.5 If a student fails to meet SAP standards at this time they will be issued with a Notice of Suspension of Aid and advised of the mechanism to submit an appeal. (see section 9 below).

7. Appeals

- 7.1 Students who lose eligibility for Title IV aid because they have failed to achieve SAP may appeal if one or more of the following extenuating circumstances exists:
- Sudden and unforeseen physical or mental illness that results in absence from academic activities;
 - Bereavement of a close relative or significant other (i.e. parent, spouse, sibling, dependent child);
 - Other extenuating circumstances as determined by the Directorate for Student Experience.
- 7.2 Students must provide:
- The reason(s) for failure to meet the necessary SAP requirements;
 - Details of the change in circumstances which will allow the SAP requirements to be met by the end of the next payment period;
 - A case as to why financial aid should not be suspended;
 - All documentation to support the appeal must be submitted at the same time as the appeal.
- 7.3 Appeals must be made in writing within ten working days of the issue of the Notice of Financial Aid Suspension and should either be sent to:

**Financial Aid Office
Conduct and Funding
Bramber House,
Level 1, North Side
University of Sussex
Falmer
East Sussex, BN1 9QU**

Or e-mailed to: usfinancialaid@sussex.ac.uk

8. Outcome of Appeals

8.1 Financial Aid Probation

- 8.1.1 If the appeal is upheld and the student is deemed capable of meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements by the end of the subsequent payment period, the student is placed on Financial Aid Probation for one payment period only. The student's progress will be reviewed again at the end of the payment period.
- 8.1.2 If the appeal is upheld but the student is determined to require more than one payment period to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements, the student will be placed on Financial Aid Probation and an academic plan (learning agreement) will be developed. The student's progress will be reviewed at the end of the payment period to determine if the student is meeting the requirements of the academic plan (learning agreement). If the student is meeting the requirements of the academic plan (learning agreement), or the universally applicable Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements, the student is eligible to receive Title IV aid as long as the student continues to meet those requirements.

9. Financial Aid Suspension

- 9.1 If a student on Financial Aid probation fails to meet SAP requirements by the end of the following payment period, eligibility to receive further Title IV aid will be suspended until they achieve the required standards.
- 9.2 If the appeal is not upheld, is unsuccessful or the student does not appeal, the student loses eligibility and has financial aid suspended.
- 9.2 Students will receive notification of financial aid suspension in writing.
- 9.3 A student who has had their financial aid suspended but continues on their course, under their means, and who subsequently meets satisfactory academic progress standards will be entitled to apply for, or receive financial aid.

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Glossary

Compensation	The Programme Assessment Board decides to allow a student's overall performance to compensate for marginal failure in up to 30 credits so that no reassessment of the failed module is required.
Condonement	The decision of the Programme Assessment Board to take account of the overall performance of a student that without incurring a penalty, a part of the programme that has failed need not be retrieved.
Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)	The national framework for higher education qualifications of UK degree-awarding bodies sets out the different qualification levels and national expectations of standards of achievement.
Integrated Masters	An integrated Master's degree is a four-year degree course which combines three years of undergraduate study with an additional fourth year at the postgraduate level.
Level	The credit level, <i>i.e.</i> level 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7. Credit level descriptors are used to help work out the level of learning in individual modules. Credit level descriptors are guides that help identify the relative demand, complexity and depth of learning, and learner autonomy expected at each level, and also indicate the differences between the levels.
Module	Self-contained, formally structured and credit-bearing unit of study, with a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria at a specified credit level. The credit volume reflects the notional student effort required to complete a module successfully. Credit volume is determined by calculating the required learning hours based on 1 credit for 10 hours of learning. The all University of Sussex undergraduate and postgraduate modules are weighted as 15 credits or multiples thereof.
Programme	The set of modules studied by a student.
Programme Assessment Board (PAB)	The assessment board is responsible for the overall assessment of students following similar programmes and for the standards of awards. It has the power to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on reassessment requirements • compensate and condone failure • recommend awards
Reassessment	The generic term for the occasions when a student, who has failed a module, is permitted by the PAB to recover the failure. There are two types of reassessment – retake and repeat:
	Retake where a student is permitted or required to retake an examination at the next sitting or resubmit coursework for a module within the same course year.
	Repeat where a student is permitted or required to repeat all elements of assessment for that module in the following course year.
Semester	The period in which a module may be taught and assessed.
Stage	A term used to designate a period of study at the end of which students are assessed and eligibility for progression is decided.
Trailed Credit	The decision of a Programme Assessment Board to permit an undergraduate student to progress to the next stage of study while trailing up to 30 credits from the previous stage.
Working days	When periods of days are referred to in this document, unless otherwise stated a 'day' is normally a <i>University working day</i> , which is any day except weekends, bank holidays, minimum service days and the period between Christmas and New Year when the University's administrative offices are closed. This applies even when some areas of the University, such as libraries and learning spaces, are open during these times.

