Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy

Requirement and Definition
Federal and state regulations require the University to establish and apply reasonable satisfactory academic progress standards and to review applicable student records to ensure students receiving financial assistance under the programs authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act or Georgia state law are complying with these standards. Georgia Southern University students who wish to receive financial aid must maintain satisfactory academic progress (SAP) in their selected course of study as set forth in this policy.

Students are notified of the SAP policy in the Georgia Southern University online Catalog, which is available at http://em.georgiasouthern.edu/registrar/resources/catalogs/. In addition, the SAP policy is sent to students’ Georgia Southern email account and postcards are mailed to the home address. Further, copies of the SAP policy, the SAP Appeal Form, and a SAP calculator are available in the University’s Financial Aid Office and on our website at http://em.georgiasouthern.edu/finaid/policies/satisfactory-academic-progress-sap/.

The Office of Financial Aid is responsible for evaluating satisfactory academic progress of students receiving financial assistance from all federal and state programs, and certain alternative loan programs.

Institutional SAP Policy
Financial aid academic progress standards for students are evaluated on the basis of grade point average (GPA), credit hour completion (PACE), and maximum time frame (MAX).

Financial aid standards of SAP for students will be checked at the end of each semester.

Georgia Southern University’s SAP policy requires maintaining academic standards based on the following three criteria:

1. Grade Point Average (GPA)
   Undergraduate students (other than students who have been accepted into the Education Major):
   Undergraduate students will be evaluated at the end of each term on the basis of cumulative GPA. The cumulative GPA required to maintain SAP for the total number of attempted hours is 2.0.

   Undergraduate Education Majors:
   Undergraduate education majors will be evaluated at the end of each term on the basis of cumulative GPA. Under the University’s academic policy, students who have been accepted into one of the Bachelor of Science in Education programs (i.e., B.S. Ed. in Early Childhood Education, Health and Physical Education, Middle Grades Education, or Special Education) and have been formally declared an Education Major are required to maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.50 from the time of the formal declaration as an Education Major -- which cannot happen until a student has been accepted into one of the Bachelor of Science in Education programs – until graduation. As a result, the cumulative GPA required for education majors to maintain SAP at each evaluation is 2.50.

   Under the University’s academic policy, students who have been accepted into the education major but do not maintain the required cumulative GPA of at least 2.50 may not continue as Education Majors. However, these students may choose to switch to another major in order to complete their degree. If an Education Major is determined not to be making SAP because he or she has not maintained the required 2.50 GPA, and he or she subsequently chooses to switch to another major, at the next SAP evaluation, the student’s GPA will be evaluated as compared to the requirement for the new major (i.e., 2.0). For purposes of that evaluation, all grades earned to date will be included in the GPA calculation.

   Note: Students must apply and gain acceptance to the Bachelor of Science in Education programs (i.e., B.S. Ed. in Early Childhood Education, Health and Physical Education, Middle Grades Education, or Special Education). In order to be accepted into the Education programs, a student must satisfy several requirements, including having completed a minimum of 50 semester credit hours (including completion of certain specified coursework), and having earned a cumulative GPA of at least 2.50 (including all coursework completed at Georgia Southern and any transfer credit accepted by Georgia Southern). As a result of these requirements, students generally are not accepted into the Education programs until after they have completed at least four semesters of coursework. Students who have expressed an interest in the Education programs but have not been accepted into the Education programs are classified as “pre-education” and are evaluated using the 2.0 GPA standard for non-education major undergraduate students. Students are not treated as education majors unless and until they are accepted into one of the Bachelor of Science in Education programs and have been formally declared an education major.

   Post baccalaureate students:
   Post baccalaureate students will be evaluated at the end of each term on the basis of cumulative GPA. The cumulative GPA required to maintain SAP for the total number of attempted hours is 2.0.

   Graduate students:
   Graduate students will be evaluated at the end of each term. Students enrolled in master’s degree, specialist, and PhD programs must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher at the end of each term.

   Failure to maintain the required minimum cumulative GPA standards will result in the loss of eligibility to receive financial aid.

2. Credit Hour Completion (PACE of Progression)
All students will be evaluated at the end of each term to determine if they are making satisfactory pace of progression in their academic program. PACE is calculated by dividing the cumulative number of hours the student has successfully completed (earned) by the cumulative number of hours the student has attempted. Undergraduate, post baccalaureate, and graduate students who enroll for full-time, three-quarter time or part-time course work throughout each academic year must complete (earn) at least 67% of all attempted hours registered for during each academic term.

3. Maximum Time Frame (MAX)
Students must progress through their educational programs at a rate that will allow the student to complete the program within the timeframe allowed for their program.

Undergraduate:
Undergraduate students must be projected to complete their program in a period of time that is not longer than 150 percent of the published length of the educational program, as measured in credit hours. For example, students in a 4-year, 126-credit program who have attempted more than 189 semester credit hours will become ineligible to receive financial aid. Degree programs that require more than 126 hours for graduation will have the 189 hours maximum timeframe increased proportionally by the number of hours above 126 required to receive the degree. A student must have at least a 2.0 cumulative grade point average and be projected to receive his/her degree the term immediately after earning the 189 hour maximum (or proportionally increased maximum) to be considered making SAP.

Post Baccalaureate:
Post Baccalaureate students must be projected to complete their Post Baccalaureate program in a period of time that is not longer than 150 percent of the published length of the educational program, as measured in credit hours. For example, students in a 60-credit graduate program who have attempted more than 90 semester credit hours will become ineligible to receive financial aid. Degree programs that require more than 60 hours for graduation will have the 90 hours maximum timeframe increased proportionally by the number of hours above 60 required to receive the degree. A graduate student must have at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA and be projected to receive his/her degree the term immediately after earning the 90 hour maximum (or proportionally increased maximum) to be considered making satisfactory progress.

Institutional SAP Status

Students not maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress are notified of their SAP status and related consequences in writing by the Financial Aid Office. At the end of each SAP evaluation period, one of the following SAP statuses will be assigned:

Satisfactory: Student is making SAP, as measured by all of the following requirements: GPA, PACE, and/or MAX Time Frame. Student is eligible to continue receiving financial aid.

Financial Aid Warning: Student is not making SAP as measured by one or more of the following requirements: GPA, PACE, and/or MAX Time Frame. For the next term in which the student is enrolled, the student remains eligible to continue receiving financial aid. The student must make SAP at the time of the next SAP evaluation period, or the student will be deemed ineligible to receive financial aid and will be placed on Financial Aid Suspension (unless and until he or she appeals that determination successfully and is placed subsequently on Financial Aid Probation).

Financial Aid Suspension: Student is not making SAP based on one or more of the requirements (i.e., GPA, PACE and/or MAX Time Frame) after (1) being on Financial Aid Warning status for one term and failing to meet the required SAP standards, or (2) not satisfying the requirements of the academic plan developed for the student when he or she was placed on Financial Aid Suspension. Financial aid eligibility is terminated until the student has achieved the required minimum standards to make SAP, or the student has obtained an approved appeal.

Financial Aid Probation: A student on Financial Aid Suspension has the right to appeal to have financial aid reinstated. If the appeal is approved, the student is placed on Financial Aid Probation. Students with approved SAP appeals are monitored by the Office of Financial Aid every term of enrollment to determine if they have achieved the goals of their academic plan. Failure to make progress as set out in the academic plan will result in the loss of eligibility to receive financial aid (i.e., Financial Aid Suspension).

Special Circumstances Affecting SAP Criteria

Learning Support Classes:

Learning support students will have their first 30 credit hours of learning support course work excluded from the maximum time frame calculation defined above. Learning support credit hours in excess of 30 credit hours will be included in the calculation of the maximum time frame and the required percentage of credit hour completion. Grades earned through learning support course work will not be included in the calculation of the cumulative GPA.

Dropped and Repeated Courses:

All credit hours attempted during each term in which a student is enrolled and receives aid will count toward the maximum time frame and minimum credit hours completion. A student is considered enrolled based on the number of credit hours registered after the second day of each academic term. Students who drop courses or completely withdraw from the University during the 100% refund period will not have those hours considered in determining total hours registered. Students who drop courses or completely withdraw from the University after the 100% refund period will have those hours considered in determining total hours registered, which will count toward the maximum time frame calculation. Repeated courses will count in the calculation of attempted hours. All grades earned in repeated courses will be used to calculate the GPA for purposes of SAP.

Grades of A, B, C, D, or S represent satisfactory completion of a course. Grades of F, I, W, WF, U, or Audit represent unsatisfactory completion of a course. Grades of IP or V will not be included in the number of hours earned toward the completion of a degree.

Withdrawal from School:

A financial aid student who withdraws from school during the 100% refund period of any term will not have their registered hours included in the maximum time frame calculation nor be required to meet the minimum credit hour completion percentage. However, any student withdrawing from school after the 100% refund period will have their registered hours included in the maximum time frame calculation and be required to meet the minimum credit hour completion percentage.

Effect of Grades on GPA:

Grades of A, B, C, D, or S are included in determination of GPA for purposes of SAP. Grades of F, I, IP, K, NR, S, U, V, W, WT, W% or WM are not included in this calculation. Appeals will not be reviewed until “I” (incomplete) grades have been changed. For HOPE scholarship recipients, “I” grades could affect HOPE eligibility status when the grade for the incomplete is eventually submitted to the Office of the Registrar. Students who had been awarded HOPE, but later became ineligible with the grade change, will have HOPE awards canceled until the next checkpoint, and will be responsible for the repayment of any HOPE funds received while not eligible.

Transfer Credits:

Credits transferred from other institutions will count toward maximum time frame, credit hour completion percentage, and the cumulative GPA calculation for SAP evaluation purposes.

Consortium Agreements:

Credit hours earned through consortium or contractual agreements (contracts with other higher education institutions) will count toward maximum time frame, credit hour completion percentage, and cumulative GPA.

Reestablish Financial Aid Eligibility

A student seeking to reestablish eligibility of financial aid may do so by:

- achieving SAP standards towards their course of study, as set forth in this policy, at the time of a future SAP evaluation, or
- acquiring a successful appeal through the appeal process and being placed on Financial Aid Probation status.