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## WHAT IS SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS?

In accordance with U.S. Department of Education regulations<sup>1</sup>, schools are required to assess the academic progress of eligible students receiving Title IV funds. The purpose of Section I is to define terminology as outlined in the federal regulations. These regulations are effective for all financial aid students beginning July 1, 2011.

The purpose of Section II is to define procedures for monitoring the satisfactory academic progress (SAP) of financial aid students. The purpose of Section III is to establish procedures for students who are not meeting these standards and who have extenuating circumstances to file an appeal and apply to have their eligibility reinstated

### Section I. Definition of Terms

**Financial aid probation** is defined as a status assigned by an institution to a student who fails to make satisfactory academic progress and who has appealed and has had eligibility for aid reinstated.

**Financial aid warning** is defined as a status assigned to a student who fails to make satisfactory academic progress at an institution that evaluates academic progress at the end of each payment period. This status may be conferred to the student automatically without any action taken by the student. Students on financial aid warning may continue to receive assistance under the Title IV, HEA programs for one payment period despite a determination that the student is not making satisfactory academic progress.

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<sup>1</sup> 668.34 (a) Satisfactory Academic Progress policy

**Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal** is defined as a process by which a student who is not meeting the institution's standards petitions the institution for reconsideration of the student's eligibility for Title IV, HEA program funds. The definition of Extenuating Circumstances includes:

- A. Death in the immediate family.
- B. Medical conditions such as a family member needing round-the-clock care by the student.
- C. Extended illness of student or immediate family.
- D. Military duty.
- E. Other documented extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the student.

## Section II - WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE?

### Satisfactory Academic Progress for Financial Aid Recipients

All students applying for or receiving US Federal Aid (subsidized Stafford, unsubsidized Stafford and PLUS loans) at University College Dublin must progress satisfactorily towards completion of a chosen academic program.

University College Dublin is required by US Federal law to define and enforce standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). The policy is at least as strict as the policy the institution applies to a student who is not receiving assistance under the title IV, HEA programs. The University will evaluate SAP at the end of each semester.

The guidelines have been established to encourage students to complete successfully academic programs for which aid is received. Students receiving financial aid will be evaluated at the end of each semester. This evaluation process will consider the students progress under the following categories:

1. Qualitative Measure
2. Quantitative Measure
3. Maximum Timeframe

In order to receive US Federal funds, students must meet minimum standards for all the above mentioned components, whilst simultaneously adhering to University academic rules.

The policy provides for consistent application of standards to all students within categories of students, e.g. full-time, part-time, undergraduate, and graduate students, and educational programs established by the school.

## Qualitative Measure

This relates to a student's Academic Standing and is required to access the quality of academic work using standards measurable against a norm.

### Students with course duration of 4 years or less:

- (i) Students must have a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.4 or greater at the end of each semester

### Students with a course duration of 5 years or more:

- (i) Students must have a cumulative GPA of 2.4 or greater at the end of the first year.
- (ii) Students must have a cumulative GPA of 2.4 or greater at the end of each semester after they have completed their first year.

University College Dublin shows its grades in a fail (G) to high distinction (A+) level. The following table has been provided to allow manual calculation of grades.

	<b>GPA Values for grades are as follows:</b>	
	A+	4.2
	A	4.0
	B	3.4
	C	2.8
	D	2.2
	E (fail)	1.6
	F (fail)	1.0
	G (fail)	.4
$\frac{\text{Sum of (Credit points x GPA value of grade)}}{\text{Sum of Credit Points}}$		

## Quantitative Measure

This requirement measures progress toward program completion.

In order to meet the quantitative measure, a student must complete 67% of their attempted credits each academic year.

For example, a student who has attempted a cumulative total of 60 ECTS credits must complete at least \*40 credits to meet the requirement ( $60 \times .67 = 40.2$ ).

*\*For Financial Aid UCD will use standard rounding rules when calculating percentages under the quantitative measurement.*

For further information in relation to ECTS Credits see the following:

<http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/asug/modulesandcredits/>

## Maximum Timeframe

A full time or part time undergraduate student, graduate student, graduate research (Ph.D.), or professional student<sup>2</sup> is entitled to receive aid for 150% of the allocated course period:

- (i) 1 year degree – eligibility for aid 1.5 years
- (ii) 2 year degree – eligibility for aid 3 years
- (iii) 3 year degree – eligibility for aid 4.5 years
- (iv) 4 year degree – eligibility for aid 6 years
- (v) 5 year degree – eligibility for aid 7.5 years

The maximum timeframe is used to determine the pace of completion required to ensure that a student completes the program within the maximum timeframe:

$$\frac{100\% \text{ Scheduled Limit}}{150\% \text{ Maximum Time}} = 67\% \text{ Pace Requirement}$$

The Maximum timeframe will be measured at each evaluation point. A student is ineligible at the evaluation point where indicated will exceed max timeframe NOT at the point when they reach the max timeframe.

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<sup>2</sup> Please see appendix 1 for further information relating to UCD's SAP policy for medical students.

Example: If a degree program requires 180 credits for completion, then you would calculate the maximum timeframe as follows:  $180 \times 150\% = 270$  credits ; if at any point this student cannot finish his degree within 270 credits, due to exceeding the max timeframe because he requires more credits to earn than what is allowed to graduate within the maximum timeframe, the student is not meeting SAP.

*Note the Quantitative measure is tied to the maximum timeframe.*

Published length of degree programme	Credits in degree programme	Maximum timeframe to complete programme while receiving US Direct Loans
1 year (Postgraduate)	90 to 120 credits	1.5 years or 135 to 180 credits
2 years (Postgraduate)	180 to 240 credits	3 years or 270 to 360 credits
4 years (Undergraduate)	240 to 270 credits	360 to 405 credits
PhD	270 to 360 credits	6 years or 405 to 540 credits

## Professional Students - remediation

A student who does not satisfactorily complete all course requirements may be permitted to remediate.

In this case, a student assigned a schedule which deviates from the norm and who earns satisfactory assessment in all courses for which enrolled will be deemed to be making SAP. In some cases, the student may be placed on a Leave of Absence until the necessary rotation of coursework is available again. If the Colleges of Medicine or Veterinary Medicine determine that a student is close enough to SAP to be placed on academic probation rather than suspension, the Financial Aid Office will take this into consideration. The University will not suspend a student from aid if the College allows the individual to continue pursuing his/her degree, as the Colleges have extremely high standards, international accreditation, and follow specific board testing criteria.

The normal time frame for completion of required coursework for the graduate entry medicine or veterinary degrees is four academic years. Due to academic or personal

difficulties, a student may require additional time. In such situations, the University may establish a schedule for that student which departs from the norm and which may require repeating a year of study. To be considered making SAP, a student must complete the first two years of the curriculum by the end of the third year after initial enrolment. Students placed on Leave of Absence by their College will be given the opportunity to repeat a semester or a year, as appropriate, with financial aid assistance upon recommendation by the student's College. A student not making progress will be ineligible for financial aid until he/she has successfully completed sufficient course requirements to enter the third year of studies. All graduate entry medical and veterinary students are expected to complete their degree programs within 6 years after admission to their respective colleges. No assistance is provided those students extending degree studies beyond that time.

## Transfer Students

Transfer credit applied toward a student's program counts in the maximum time frame calculation. Transfer credit hours accepted by UCD as credit are counted as attempted and completed hours in the pace rate calculation. A student's transfer grade point average does not count toward the UCD term or cumulative GPA.

Transfer students and students entering with approved credits may be expected to complete degree requirements in less than the advertised timeframe, depending on the number of credits received when entering the University.

Example: if a transfer student enters year 3 of a 5-year program, they will only have 150% of the time of the remaining 2 years. Therefore, the student will be eligible for student loans for 3.5 years.

## Repetitions

Repeated, remedial, and incomplete credits count as assessed credits. Even though a repeated course will count only once toward your academic requirements and your GPA, each repeat is assessed separately and thus counts separately for aid purposes.

Students can repeat a course if they have failed. Students should refer to the registrar's policy for more information:

<http://www.ucd.ie/students/resitsrepeats.html>

Please note that Course repetitions count toward courses attempted, thereby also affecting the quantitative measure.

## Withdrawals

All coursework with a "W" (withdrawal) distinction are also counted as attempted, but not completed, regardless of the conditions of the withdrawal.

## Financial Aid Warnings

Students who fail to achieve the required GPA level commensurate with the longevity of their degree program, and their academic level within that degree structure, will be placed on Financial Aid warning for six months or until the results of their next exam period are available, whichever is shorter.

It is possible for a student to receive more than one warning period during academic career just NOT consecutively.

Students who have been placed on warning and do not meet the requirements applicable to degree and level will be suspended and ineligible to receive aid until such time as they achieve the required GPA.

## Financial Aid SAP Appeal

Students who have their eligibility for US Federal Aid suspended may appeal the suspension if one or more extenuating circumstances exist. All appeals must be received within ten days of receipt of the Notice of Suspension.

Students must indicate in writing to the chairperson of the Appeals Committee the reason (s) for failure to meet the necessary Financial Aid SAP requirements and why financial aid should not be suspended. All documentation to support the appeal is required at time of appeal

submission. In particular the appeal must include information as to why the student failed to make SAP, AND what has changed that will allow the student to make SAP at the next evaluation.

An SAP Appeals Committee will consider each case and their decision is final.

Appeals will not be accepted in cases where a student is not attempting any new modules, i.e. is registered to just repeats and/or resits.

Note: The SAP policy is separate from academic appeals relating to exam results or test scores. The outcome of a SAP appeal has no bearing on results achieved or grades awarded. SAP decisions are based on official exam results and test scores only. In cases where no scheduled testing occurs during a payment period, SAP is assessed and reported by appropriate members of the teaching staff.

If successful with an appeal students are placed on probation.

## Financial Aid Probation

To be placed on Probation, a student must:

1. Appeal and have it approved by the school; AND
2. Student expected to be making SAP in next payment period; OR
3. Be successfully following an academic plan designed to ensure student will be able to meet SAP by a specific point in time

A student on Probation may only receive Title IV funds for **ONE payment period**. A student on Probation may not receive Title IV funds for the subsequent payment period UNLESS:

1. Student is now making SAP; or
2. Institution determines student met requirements specified by the school in the academic plan and student still covered by academic plan

SAP will be checked at the end of the probationary period. Students who have been placed on probation and subsequently meet the GPA requirements in the next semester will be placed back into good Financial Aid (SAP) standing.



Students on probation will receive funding but they must meet the required academic standards during that semester to avoid suspension of eligibility for funding.

Therefore, a student who fails to maintain SAP during two consecutive semesters will be deemed ineligible for funding for the following loan period.

Students will be notified of probation or suspension by letter and/or email.

## Academic Plans

The academic plan is developed by the institution and the student individually.

As part of general University procedures programme coordinators reviews student academic progression on an annual basis. Compliance of academic plans may be monitored collaboratively between, but not limited to, the following support units:

- [Peer Mentors](#)
- [Student Advisers](#)
- [Programme Offices](#)

The academic plan must be designed to ensure that the student is able to meet the institution's satisfactory academic progress standards by a specific point in time.

*In some cases, this could mean that the maximum timeframe would be extended based on the student's approved appeal.*

## SAP Evaluations

Each official evaluation will include evaluation of the qualitative (grade-based), quantitative (time-related) and maximum timeframe standards discussed above.

Warning and probation statuses only last for one payment period, no matter how frequently SAP is evaluated



## UCD Student Advisers

*...for advice,  
information and support,  
we're here every day.*

***Disclaimer:** Although every effort has been made to ensure that information provided is both helpful to prospective candidates and accurate at the time of its publication, it is possible that some information may be outdated or superseded after print and before the start of the academic year. Information is for guidance only and we advise that specific queries should be directed to [federalaid@ucd.ie](mailto:federalaid@ucd.ie)*



For further information please contact us.  
We will be happy to deal with your enquiry or direct you to the best person to answer your questions.

### University College Dublin

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## Appendix 1. School of Medicine SAP

### Definition of Unsatisfactory Academic Progress

Academic Regulations describe the rules for student progression to subsequent stages within their programme of study. On occasions, students may not meet the necessary requirements for progression. Successive versions of Academic Regulations have been associated with an evolution of the criteria used to determine when a student's progress has become sufficiently unsatisfactory that the relevant Programme Board could consider exclusion of that student from their programme of study.

The Medicine Programme Board deems a student's academic progress to be academically unacceptable when:

- (i) the student's GPA falls below 2.00 for four out of five consecutive semesters for which they are registered to a programme,
- (ii) the student fails to achieve a passing grade in a module within four consecutive assessment offerings for that module. (Where an assessment offering is not availed of owing to a successful Extenuating Circumstance Application that offering will not be included in this count).

The Medicine Programme Board reserves the right to deem a student's performance to be unacceptable for justifiable reasons beyond the two stated criteria above. Thus, they are not the sole exclusion or non-progression criteria. Another situation where a student may be excluded from a programme would be when the student fails to meet fitness to proceed/practice criteria. A failure to engage with the Academic Mentoring process by a student who is required to do so will be taken into consideration by the Medicine Programme Board when considering that student's case.

The Medicine Programme Board will not permit progression when a student falls foul of either of the following progression criteria:

(i) A student may not progress to Stage 3 unless they have completed all the requirements for Stage 1, and a student may not progress to any Stage n if they have not completed the requirements for Stage n-2.

(ii) A student may not progress to Stage 5 of the undergraduate entry to medicine degree programme if Stage 4 is not complete. Similarly, the Medicine Programme Board does not permit progression to Stage 3 of the graduate entry to medicine degree programme if Stage 2 is not complete.

Students will not be excluded from their programme of study based upon their first attempt at Stage 1 because such students would not fall foul of any of the criteria described above.

*Identification of Unacceptable Academic Progress (i.e. identification of “at risk” students)*

Programme Examination Review Committees (PERC) and the subsequent Programme Examination Board (PEB) meetings shall identify “at risk” students.

The Medicine Programme Board will consider the cases of “at risk” students and agree upon the appropriate course of action in each case.

*Communication with “at risk” students*

Students whose academic progress defines them as “at risk” will receive due notification; the nature of such notification will depend upon each student’s circumstances. For example, a letter from the Dean (or Associate Dean) alone may suffice or the student may be required to engage with an advice and mentorship plan as set out in the next paragraph.

*Advising and Managing “At Risk” students*

The Medicine Programme Board (or the Dean or Associate Dean) in association with the relevant Degree Committee shall decide upon an appropriate member of academic staff to act as an academic mentor for the student. Such staff may include (but not be limited to) the Dean, Associate Dean, Programme Director, Stage Coordinators or Subject Heads. The nominated academic staff member will arrange to meet the student. The first meeting will

provide an opportunity for the student to discuss their particular circumstances and agree the approaches to be adopted to remedy the student's "at risk" status.

At the end of the first meeting a meeting record form will be completed and

1. The student should sign the form to acknowledge that:

(i) the First Meeting has taken place

(ii) the student's situation has been explained to them

(iii) he/she will engage in the remedial approaches agreed in the First Meeting. (Academic advice should include emphasis on the differences between *resit* and *repeat* attempts at failed modules where necessary).

(iv) he/she will liaise with the Programme Office to ensure that appropriate registration arrangements are put in place.

2. The form should also be signed by the staff member present. Original forms must be retained by the Programme Office. Photocopies of the original form may be retained by the staff member and the student for their own records.

Students whose academic performance continues to be deemed unacceptable will receive further notification from the Dean or Associate Dean and will be required to meet a designated academic staff member which may be the original academic mentor. Subsequent meetings will operate in a similar fashion to the First Meeting. Specifically, the student should sign the form to acknowledge that:

(i) the Subsequent Meeting has taken place

(ii) the student's situation has been explained to them

(iii) he/she will engage in the remedial approaches agreed in the Subsequent Meeting.

It is emphasized that the primary purpose of these meetings is to help the student to achieve satisfactory academic progress. However, if such progress remains to be deemed unacceptable by the Medicine Programme Board the Board will refer the case to the relevant University Programme Board.

If the Medicine Programme Board deems that a student's academic performance remains unacceptable the Board will, with supporting evidence:

- (i) initiate a mechanism to recommend to the University Programme Board that the student be excluded from their programme of study, and
- (ii) inform the student that the recommendation will be made .

A student who will not complete their programme may be eligible for the award of an exit degree.

### Appeals Procedure

Natural justice requires that a student should have the right to an Appeals Process when he/she believes that:

- (i) the decision to exclude is unjust owing to extenuating circumstances that were not taken into account by the Medicine Programme Board, or
- (ii) the Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Policy had not been properly adhered to.

In cases where a student wishes to appeal the decision of exclusion from their programme by the Medicine Programme Board an appeals committee shall be constituted by the Dean or Associate Dean. Membership of the committee will be at the discretion of the Dean or Associate Dean but cognisance will be given to the circumstances of the appeal. At the request of the student an appropriate officer of the Students' Union may accompany the student.