



## Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy 2011-2012

All students have a responsibility to maintain certain academic standards and make satisfactory academic progress (SAP) toward a degree. The Financial Aid Office is required by federal and state law to determine the eligibility of financial aid applicants, even if they have not received financial aid previously. These standards apply to all grants, loans, work study, tuition waivers, and some scholarships.

### **All enrolled students' academic progress will be evaluated at the end of each payment period (semester).**

Federal law requires the consideration of three factors when determining whether a student is making satisfactory progress toward a degree: **1)** the qualitative standard, or grade point average; **2)** the maximum timeframe allowed, which at MSUB is 150% of the published length of a program; and **3)** the quantitative standard, or pace, at which a student must progress through his program to ensure that he will graduate within the maximum timeframe.

#### *Transfer Credits*

Credits attempted at prior post-secondary institutions will be included in determining Satisfactory Academic Progress. For this reason, transcripts will be collected and evaluated prior to determining financial aid eligibility of transfer students. Incoming transfer students who do not meet minimum SAP standards are ineligible for financial aid but can appeal.

#### *Non-passing Grades*

Grades of W (withdraw), I (Incomplete), X (No Pass), P (Passing), N (No Credit / Audit), and F (Failing) will be counted toward the number of credits attempted but not counted as passed or earned. If a graduate student earns a grade of T (work in progress), he/she will need to contact our office for a manual evaluation of eligibility.

#### *Repeat Courses*

All repeated credits will be counted toward the number of credits attempted. Repeats of previously unearned credits are eligible for funding within reason. Students may receive funding for a previously passed course one time only.

### **1. MINIMUM GRADE POINT AVERAGE**

Undergraduates, including post-baccalaureate students seeking a second undergraduate degree, are expected to maintain a 2.0 MSUB grade point average (GPA) and a 2.0 overall GPA.

Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 cumulative, MSUB GPA and a 3.0 overall GPA.

### **2. MAXIMUM TIMEFRAME**

Students are expected to earn a degree in a specific amount of time, measured by the credits attempted. For both Undergraduate and Graduate programs, this is 150 percent of the published length of the program, measured in credit hours. For example, if a degree requires 120 credits, a student is eligible for financial aid for a maximum of 180 attempted credits. If a student's total attempted credits exceed the maximum allowed for his/her program, or if it becomes evident a student cannot graduate within the maximum credits allowed for his/her program, the student becomes ineligible for financial aid. A student who completes the academic requirements for a program but does not yet have the degree or certificate is not eligible for further federal or state funding for that program. Please note that a change of major does not reset the maximum timeframe.

See the chart below for typical maximum duration of eligibility in various programs:

<u>DEGREE/PROGRAM</u>	<u>MAXIMUM # ATTEMPTED CREDITS (varies)</u>
Undergraduate Bachelor's Degree	180 – 192
Associate's Degree/2-yr Certificate	90 – 120
Second Bachelor's Degree	240 (includes all UG credits)
Certificate programs	45 – 60
Master's Degree	45 – 90
Provisional Graduates	(one calendar year)
Pre-professional programs	45 – 90
Teacher Certification	60

### 3. PACE

Pace is the rate at which a student must progress through his/her educational program to ensure that the student will complete the program within the maximum timeframe. Pace is determined by dividing the total number of hours the student has successfully completed by the total number attempted.

Successful completion requires a minimum grade of D or P (Passing).

Grades of W (Withdraw), I (Incomplete), X (No Pass), N (No grade), and F (Failing) are not considered to be passing grades.

Please note that most programs require grades of C or better to fulfill degree requirements.

**FINANCIAL AID SUSPENSION** occurs when a student:

- Is academically suspended
- Withdraws from MSU Billings
- Earns zero credits during a semester
- Exceeds the maximum timeframe for his or her program; or at any point when it becomes mathematically impossible for the student to complete the program within the appropriate timeframe (Financial Aid Warning does not apply)
- Has a cumulative, undergraduate MSUB GPA below 2.0
- Has a cumulative, undergraduate overall GPA below 2.0
- Has a cumulative, graduate MSUB GPA below 3.0
- Has a cumulative, graduate overall GPA below 3.0
- Earns less than 67% of OVERALL attempted credits
- Fails to meet minimum SAP standards after **warning** period (see below)

#### Financial Aid WARNING Status

***A student who was eligible at the beginning of a payment period but is not making Satisfactory Academic Progress standards because of GPA or Pace deficiency at the end of a payment period, will be placed on financial aid warning status. Students in warning status remain eligible to receive funding for one additional semester. A student must meet all standards at the end of the one semester warning period, or he/she will be suspended from financial aid eligibility.***

Students who earn zero credits during a semester, or are academically suspended, are suspended immediately from financial aid and are ineligible for a warning status. Incoming transfer students who do not meet minimum SAP standards are ineligible for a warning status. Students found ineligible due to a violation of maximum timeframe are ineligible for a warning status.

Students suspended from financial aid for any reason will remain ineligible until all deficiencies are remedied and Satisfactory Academic Progress is met according to all three criteria. Attending another school, sitting out of school for a period of time, or "bankrupting" credits will not reinstate financial aid eligibility.

Once a student believes he/she is meeting minimum satisfactory academic progress standards, it is the student's responsibility to notify the Financial Aid Office for reconsideration of eligibility.

## FINANCIAL AID PROBATION

Students who fail to make satisfactory academic progress but who have a successful appeal will be placed on Financial Aid Probation. The student placed on probation will be required to follow a specific academic plan.

## APPEAL PROCEDURES

A student who is suspended from financial aid because of failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress and feels there were extenuating circumstances which contributed to the lack of progress, may appeal the suspension. Examples for the basis on which a student may file an appeal are the death of a relative, an injury or illness of the student, or other extenuating/special circumstances.

Appeals will be reviewed twice per month. In addition, we will attempt to make a decision on all complete appeals prior to the start of each semester. Students will be notified in writing of the results and of any conditions expected.

An appeal consists of:

- **SHORT LETTER** addressing why the student failed to make SAP and what has changed that will now allow him/her to progress.
- **APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION** supporting the reason for the appeal and/or showing how the problem has been resolved. If a student feels it is not possible to document his/her extenuating circumstances, his/her letter of appeal must explain why.
- **ACADEMIC PLAN OF STUDY**, completed by the student and his/her academic advisor, showing how the student will meet SAP standards by a specific time or complete their program.

The appeal will be Approved, Denied, or Tabled.

- **APPROVED APPEAL**  
Students with an approved appeal are placed on Financial Aid Probation and are eligible to receive funding on a probationary basis. The majority of approved appeals require that certain terms and conditions be met in order to maintain financial aid eligibility. For example, a student may be required to earn 100 percent of the credits he/she attempts each semester with a grade of 'C' or higher in each course.

A student actively on probation due to a successful appeal will be reviewed for continued probation at the end of each payment period (semester) until he/she is making SAP according to all three criteria. If, at the end of the payment period, the student is meeting minimum standards, he/she can be taken off probation status. If, at the end of the payment period, the student continues to not meet minimum SAP standards but has met the terms and conditions of the appeal and is following the Academic Plan of Study, he/she may continue on probation. Failure to meet the terms of the appeal or follow the Academic Plan of Study will result in financial aid suspension.

- **TABLED APPEAL**  
Appeals may be tabled for additional documentation, further explanation, current or mid-term grades, receipt of transcripts from transfer schools, or any other appropriate materials.
- **DENIED APPEAL**  
Students will be informed of the reasons for the denial of their appeal and given an explanation of how they can restore Financial Aid eligibility.

Appeal procedures and Plan of Study forms are available in the Financial Aid Office and on line at <http://www.msubillings.edu/finaid/forms.htm>.