

# Southwestern Community College Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

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# Satisfactory Academic Progress

## 1.0 Process Overview and Responsibilities

Southwestern Community College (SCC) is required under federal and state regulations to measure students' Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), to determine students' eligibility for financial aid. SAP will be measured when students apply for aid, and at the end of each semester, and will include both a qualitative and a quantitative measure. Students not meeting one or both of the measures may be placed on Financial Aid Warning, or suspended from receiving aid. Full details of the measures and the process are included in the SAP Policy sections below.

The SCC Financial Aid Director is responsible for the development and updating of SCC's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy, with the input of the Vice President of Instruction & Student Services and the Academic Deans. The SCC Financial Aid Office will be responsible for making sure that SAP eligibility is determined for all students applying for federal or state aid, using academic records maintained by the SCC Registrar's Office.

## 2.0 Same As or Stricter Than

### Policies

SCC's SAP policies for Title IV students (students applying for federal financial aid) are stricter than SCC's academic standards for students enrolled in the same educational programs who are not receiving Title IV aid. Both policies require a student to achieve a 2.0 Grade Point Average (GPA), but the SAP policy for Title IV students measures overall cumulative GPA each semester, while SCC academic policy measures program GPA at time of graduation. SAP policies also require that quantitative standards be met, while SCC academic policies do not. In addition, Title IV students are allowed eligibility via Financial Aid Warning status for only one semester, but non Title IV students with a semester GPA below 2.0 are allowed to continue to enroll and move from Academic Level 1 Probation to Academic Level 2 Probation to Academic Suspension.

The North Carolina legislature requires that students receiving North Carolina grant and scholarship programs meet the same SAP standards as Title IV recipients.

## 3.0 Categories of Students

### Policies

The SCC SAP policy will be applied consistently to all categories of students, e.g., full-time or part-time, and whether in a degree, or eligible certificate or diploma program.

## 4.0 Qualitative Measure

### Policies

SCC's SAP policy requires that a qualitative measure of a fixed 2.0 cumulative GPA be achieved at each evaluation, which will be at the end of each semester, when the SAP GPA will be calculated by the SCC Financial Aid Office. The qualitative measure is further defined as follows:

- Grades of A, B, C, D, F will carry the same number grade points per semester hour for SAP as they do for the SCC official academic GPA, per the SCC catalog.
- Grades representing withdrawals such as W, WF, and AW will not be reflected in the SAP GPA, which is the same as for the SCC official academic GPA.
- Incomplete grades will be treated the same as a punitive F grade, carrying zero grade points, until the grade is replaced with a final grade.
- The SAP GPA calculations will include grades received in developmental classes. The P (Passing) grade will carry four grade points, like an A grade. The R (Repeat) (or older CS (Continued Study)) grades given to signify not passing for developmental classes, will be treated the same as a punitive F grade, carrying zero grade points.
- The SAP GPA calculation will include grades a student received at SCC while concurrently enrolled in high school, and for any other terms when the student did not receive financial aid.
- The SAP GPA will include grades that may have been removed from the SCC official academic GPA due to the student receiving approval for SCC Academic Forgiveness.
- The SAP GPA calculation will not reflect grades earned on any transfer credit, Advanced or Secondary Placement credit, or Course Credit by Examination, since SCC does not assign a grade value to these credits.
- Other grades not included in the SAP GPA are Audit (AU or SR), and Never Attended (NA).

If a student does not meet this qualitative measure, he is not making SAP, and will be subject to the policies regarding Financial Aid Warning or suspension discussed below.

## 5.0 Quantitative Measure

### Policies

SCC's SAP policy requires that a quantitative measure be achieved at the end of each semester, when SAP is calculated by the Financial Aid Office. To ensure program completion within a reasonable time period, the regulations require students who are receiving federal or state financial aid to be limited to the number of credit hours they may attempt before finishing a program of study. This is called the Maximum Time Frame (MTF) to receive financial aid. At the end of each semester, students' SAP will be evaluated to determine if they have exceeded the MTF, and if they are on pace to complete the program without exceeding the MTF.

### 5.1 Maximum TimeFrame

#### Policies

The Maximum Time Frame (MTF) may not exceed 150% of the published length of a student's current program of study, measured in attempted credit hours. For example, the MTF is 90 hours for a 60 hour Associate's Degree program. Therefore, a student with numerous withdrawals or failures, or changes in program of study, will have more attempted hours than he will have hours completed toward his current program. If a student's attempted hours exceed this MTF quantitative measure, he will be given an Unsatisfactory SAP status and will not be eligible for federal or state financial aid. The MTF limit is further defined as follows:

- The standards used to measure the MTF are credit hours attempted.
- Hours attempted are counted for all terms the student has been enrolled, including while concurrently enrolled in high school, and during terms when the student did not receive financial aid.
- Transfer credits accepted by SCC, Advanced Placement credits, Secondary Placement credits, and Course Credits by Exam are counted as hours attempted.
- Transfer credits granted by the SCC Registrar will be the transfer credit hours counted towards the SAP quantitative measures.
- Credit hours attempted include all courses for which the student receives any of the following grades: A, B, C, D, F, P, R, CS, TR, AP, SP, S, W, WF, AW or I. Only AU or SR (audit) and NA (never attended) grades will not count as hours attempted.
- MTF is counted for part-time students exactly the same as for full-time students.
- If a student is granted Academic Forgiveness by the college, all forgiven hours are still counted in his attempted hours. If a student changes majors, all attempted hours for the prior program are counted in his total attempted hours.
- If a student's attempted hours exceed the MTF for his current program of study, he will be suspended from eligibility for any further federal or state financial aid, unless approved for an appeal or program completion reinstatement, as discussed in Sections 7 or 11 below.

In addition, a student becomes ineligible for federal and state aid and will be assigned a Max Time Reached status, when he reaches a point where it becomes mathematically impossible to complete his program within 150% of its length.

### 5.2 Pace

#### Policies

In order to complete the student's program without exceeding the Maximum Time Frame, the student must be progressing at a pace where he is completing at least 67% of all attempted hours. SCC requires a 67% cumulative Course Completion Rate (CCR), or pace, be achieved at each evaluation when SAP is calculated by the Financial Aid Office.

- This 67% CCR applies to all students, at all levels of enrollment and all levels of program completion.
- SCC calculates a student's CCR by dividing the cumulative number of credit hours the student has completed by the cumulative number of credit hours the student has attempted.
- Completed hours are those hours with A, B, C, D, P grades.
- All credit hours from another institution for which SCC awards transfer credit, Advanced Placement credits, Secondary Placement credits, and Course Credit by Exam will count as both hours attempted and hours completed.
- Remedial credit hours will be measured the same as non-remedial credit hours, with a P grades designating credit hours completed, and an R (or older CS) grade designating credit hours not completed.
- CCR values are carried out to two decimal places and standard rounding convention is used--thus 66.49% will round down to 66% and fail the requirement, and 66.50% will round up to 67% and pass the requirement.

If a student does not meet this CCR measure, he is not making SAP and will be subject to the policies regarding Financial Aid Warning or suspension discussed below.

## 6.0 Evaluation Periods

### Policies

SCC will evaluate SAP for all enrolled financial aid students at the end of each semester, which is also referred to as a payment period. Students will be evaluated for each qualitative and quantitative measure each time SAP is calculated.

## 6.1 Financial Aid Warning

### Policies

A student who is receiving federal or state aid, and who has not met the SAP standards, either qualitative GPA, quantitative Course Completion Rate, or both, will automatically be placed on Financial Aid Warning for his one next enrolled semester/payment period and will be eligible to receive financial aid for that Warning term. The Financial Aid Warning term does not apply to a student who has exceeded the Maximum Time Frame measure.

- The student will receive aid during one Financial Aid Warning term while he is not making SAP, in which to improve his results to achieve the cumulative SAP standards.
- The Financial Aid Warning term is only allowed for a student who was making SAP in the payment period prior to the one for which he was last enrolled and evaluated, or who was in the first payment period of enrollment.
- If the student does not meet the minimum for both SAP standards by the end of the Financial Aid Warning term, he will be given an Unsatisfactory SAP status and suspended from receiving federal or state financial aid until he again meets the minimum for both above described SAP qualitative and quantitative standards, or files an appeal which is approved.
- Once a student has been enrolled during a Financial Aid Warning semester, and regained eligibility, he will not be eligible for another Financial Aid Warning status should he fall below the SAP standards again in the future. At that time, the student would be given an Unsatisfactory SAP status and suspended from receiving federal or state financial aid. The only exception to this one-time Warning limit, is if the student completes a program and then re-enrolls, as described in Section 11.

## 6.2 Financial Aid Probation

### Policies

If a student successfully files a SAP appeal, as outlined in Section 7, the student will be placed on Financial Aid Probation for one semester/payment period. Students on Financial Aid Probation are eligible for federal and state aid. If the student will require more than one payment period/semester to re-establish eligibility with SAP standards, the student can additionally be placed on an academic plan as detailed in Section 7.2. The student will be on Financial Aid Probation during the first payment period of the academic plan.

- The student will be notified of the Probation term requirements with his appeal approval notice.
- If the student can reach both the qualitative and quantitative cumulative SAP measures in one Probation semester, he will be notified of his one Probation term of eligibility, and that he will lose eligibility if he does not reach the required measures.
- If the student cannot reach both the qualitative and quantitative cumulative SAP measures in one Probation semester, he will be placed on an Academic Plan that will require a 2.5 semester GPA and a 75% semester completion rate in each subsequent semester until the cumulative SAP measures are met.

Students on Financial Aid Probation and on Financial Aid Academic Plans will be evaluated at the end of each payment period to determine compliance with said probation and plan terms, and when they must be moved to a new SAP status indicating they have achieved the SAP measures, or failed the terms of their probation or plan. The student will continue to be coded as Probation on Appeal in the system, so that he can be evaluated on each subsequent SAP run, to determine if he has met the conditions of his Probation or Academic Plan.

## 7.0 Appeals

### Policies

SCC has an appeal procedure for students who have failed to make SAP. Students not making SAP are informed about the appeal process in the SAP notification emails and letters. In order to approve a student's appeal, SCC must determine that the student will be able to meet SAP standards by the end of the subsequent payment period or else develop an Academic Plan for the student, which if followed, ensures he will be making SAP by a specified point in time.

The process is primarily intended to help a student who had special circumstances that prevented him from making SAP, or a student who has left one program and changed to a new program for just cause. If an appeal is granted, the student is deemed to be eligible for federal or state financial aid, and is subject to all special terms of the appeal, until such time that he meets all the SAP measures.

Details of the appeal process are as follows:

- The appeal process is designed to be used when a student has already utilized the one automatic FA Warning semester.
- The student may appeal the qualitative measure (GPA) or the quantitative measures (Course Completion Rate (CCR) or Maximum Time Frame (MTF)), or all.
- The student may appeal based on his injury or illness, the death of illness of an immediate family member, or other special circumstances that prevented the student from attending or being successful in his classes.
- The student may appeal MTF based on change in program, needing additional hours for developmental courses, excessive withdrawals or a combination of these factors.
- The student may appeal if an I grade in the SAP calculation, that has since been changed to a passing grade, is preventing the student from meeting SAP guidelines.

- The student's must submit a completed SCC Financial Aid SAP Appeals Form, with a letter and documentation that must explain and document why he has failed to make SAP due to any special circumstances, and which must also explain how his circumstances have changed so that he can now be a successful student.
- If the appeal is for exceeding MTF, the student's advisor must complete and sign the Program Completion Information form listing all remaining required courses and the projected number of semesters to completion of the program.
- The SCC Financial Aid Director will review the appeal and decide whether to approve or deny it. The Director will review the appeal within 30 days of receipt of a complete appeal package, and notify the student within 7 days of the decision.
- If the appeal is approved, it will be either: 1) for one semester only since it was determined that the student can make SAP in one semester; 2) for a certain number of terms required to reach graduation for MTF appeals; or 3) on an Academic Plan.
- If the appeal is denied, the student retains his unsatisfactory SAP status.
- The decision of the SCC Financial Aid Director may be appealed to the SCC Dean of Students. However, the Dean's decision is final, and no further appeal is available to the student.
- There is no rule prohibiting a student from appealing more than one time over his time of enrollment at SCC if qualifying special circumstances should arise more than one time.

## 7.1 Documentation

### Policies

A SAP appeal is considered a professional judgment by the SCC Financial Aid Office, and must be substantiated by adequate documentation. An appeal must explain both why the student failed to meet SAP standards, and what has changed in his situation which will allow him to now be successful. Any available and applicable documentation should be provided to address both these factors. Some examples of documentation appropriate to an appeal include, but are not limited to:

- Medical record or physician's report to substantiate illness or injury
- Obituaries or death certificates to substantiate a death in the family
- Written statement from counselor, clergy, or other third party professional who knows the student's situation
- Written statement from academic advisor or professor attesting to the student's difficulties and/or improvement
- For a Maximum Time Frame appeal, the SCC Program Completion Information form must be completed by the student's advisor to provide information on the remaining courses in the student's program and the projected time frame to completion.

## 7.2 Academic Plans

### Policies

There may be situations when the Financial Aid Office will place a student on an Academic Plan.

- Any student who files a Financial Aid SAP Appeal that is approved, and will require more than the one term to reach SAP standards, will be placed on an Academic Plan.
- An Academic Plan that is part of a Financial Aid SAP Appeal will require that the student earn a semester GPA of at least 2.5 and a semester course completion rate of at least 75% in terms subsequent to the appeal approval.
- The Academic Plan is specific to the student, and may contain other provisions the student must meet to help ensure his academic success.
- A student on an Academic Plan will be evaluated at the end of each semester by the Financial Aid Office to be sure all terms and conditions are being met.
- If the student fails the terms of his Academic Plan, he will no longer be eligible for aid, and will be assigned an unsatisfactory SAP status.
- The Academic Plan will be concluded when the student reaches the cumulative SAP standards of 2.0 GPA and 67% course completion rate.

## 8.0 Regaining Eligibility

### Policies

Students who have had their financial aid suspended, and had their appeal denied, or who did not avail themselves of the appeal process, may regain SAP eligibility in subsequent semesters. A student will regain SAP eligibility as soon as he meets the qualitative standard of at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA, and the quantitative standards at least a 67% cumulative Course Completion Rate, without exceeding the 150% Maximum Time Frame for his program of study. These standards are defined in detail in Sections 4 and 5. Once a student meets SAP standards, financial aid eligibility will take effect during the next term he is in attendance.

In addition, a student who completes a diploma or degree program at SCC and returns to begin a Second Degree, may have his SAP reset as described in Section 11.

## **9.0 Treatment of Nonpunitive Grades, Repeated Courses, Audited Courses, Pass/Fail Courses, Withdrawals, and Incompletes**

### **Policies**

The following statements will provide definitions and treatment for SAP calculations of SCC's nonpunitive withdrawal grades, repeated courses, audited courses, and incompletes.

- Non punitive SCC grades of W (Withdrawal), AW or WF (Administrative Withdrawal) will be counted as hours attempted, but not as hours completed.
- W, AW, or WF grades have no impact on the SAP qualitative measure (GPA).
- If a student repeats a course, whether it was previously completed or not, the hours will be counted each time as hours attempted. If he passes more than one time, the passing hours will be counted each time as hours completed. (Federal aid may only be paid for one repeat of a previously passed course.)
- The most recent grade of a repeated course will be the only grade included in the SAP qualitative measure (GPA).
- There is no maximum number of times a student may attempt a non-completed course, so long as he meets the cumulative quantitative and qualitative measures of SAP.
- Courses with grades of AU or SR (Audit) and NA (Never Attended) do not count in either the SAP qualitative or quantitative measures. A student may not receive federal or state aid for these hours.
- I (Incomplete) grades will initially be counted as hours attempted, but not completed.
- I (Incomplete) grades will initially have a punitive impact of 0.0 on GPA, like an F (Failing) grade, at the end of the semester calculation. Since the I grade could become an F grade and make an otherwise SAP eligible student ineligible, I grades are initially counted as an F.
- Approximately two weeks into the next semester, any I grade must be replaced with a passing grade submitted by the faculty, or it will be replaced with an F grade by the Registrar. These changes will not be reflected in the student's SAP status until the next SAP evaluation at the end of the semester.

## **10.0 Treatment of Remedial, Enrichment, and English as a Second Language Courses**

### **Policies**

SCC does not offer any programs that are eligible for financial aid that include enrichment or ESL courses. SCC does offer remedial courses that are required for a significant number of students taking Title IV approved programs.

- Remedial courses will count towards the SAP qualitative measure as previously discussed in Section 4. P grades (used for remedial courses only) that designate Passing will be assigned a 4.0 GPA for SAP calculations, and R grades (used for remedial courses only) that designate a required Repeat will be assigned a 0.0 GPA for SAP calculations.
- Remedial courses will also count towards the SAP quantitative measures as previously discussed in Section 5.
- If a student exceeds the Maximum Time Frame due to being required to take remedial courses, it can be a basis for a SAP appeal as discussed in Section 7.
- Per federal regulations, a student cannot receive Title IV aid for remedial hours in excess of 30 attempted remedial semester credit hours.

## **11.0 Treatment of Consortium, Change of Major, Second Degree, and Second Major Courses**

### **Policies**

SAP Policies for other special situations are described below:

- Hours taken at a host school under a written Consortium Agreement, where SCC is the home school, will be included in the student's SCC Course Completion Rate calculation.
- Hours completed at a host school under a Consortium Agreement will be transferred in to SCC as transfer credits and treated towards Maximum Time Frame as described in Section 5.1.
- If a student makes a Change of Major without completing his previous program, all hours in the previous program will continue to count towards both his qualitative and quantitative SAP measures.
- If a student has declared a Second Major, also called a double major, the Maximum Time Frame will be 150% of the hours required to complete both programs, after eliminating any overlap for courses required by both programs. The student must show that he is actively taking courses for both programs each academic year, in order for SCC to count both programs in the Maximum Time Frame limit.
- If a student has completed any degree or diploma program at SCC, and returns to begin a Second Degree, at that point his SAP is reset, and his quantitative and qualitative measurements start again. However, the student will carry forward all hours for courses that are required for the new program, but have been completed in the prior program. These carry forward hours will count as attempted and completed credits towards the quantitative measures, and will also be included in the qualitative measure. A completed certificate program will not restart a student's SAP, with the exception of the Cosmetology certificate, due to its length.

## **12.0 Completion of Degree Requirements**

### **Policies**

If a student has completed all the requirements for a diploma or degree, he will be instructed by his advisor to apply for graduation from the program, and will not be paid any additional financial aid for that program, as he no longer has any required hours. He will not be granted a restart of SAP unless the credential is confirmed by the SCC Registrar.

## **13.0 Notices**

### **Policies**

SCC's SAP policy is published in a student-friendly condensed version in the SCC Catalog, the student Handbook, the SCC website, and as a handout in the SCC Financial Aid Office. The complete SAP Policies and Procedures are also available on the SCC website, and in the SCC Financial Aid Office for all current and prospective students.

The Financial Aid Director is responsible for making sure the information is available for all students, and that it is kept current. The Financial Aid Director is also responsible for making sure that students have regular, readily available information that informs them of their individual SAP status and eligibility.