



# Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policies and Procedures

The Athens State University Office of Student Financial Aid has approved the following standards defining satisfactory academic progress (SAP) in accordance with regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Education. Students should note that this standing is separate from any academic standing and should contact their academic advisor for more information concerning those issues.

*Effective July 1, 2024*

Credits and Coursework.....	2
Undergraduate SAP Standards.....	4
Graduate SAP Standards.....	7
Overview of SAP Statuses.....	9
SAP Appeal and Reinstatement Process.....	11

## Credits and Coursework

Unless listed as an exception below, all transfer work accepted by the Registrar's Office will be used in qualitative and quantitative measures. All coursework that is on the Athens State transcript, either articulated through transfer or earned at Athens State, will be used in all quantitative measures. Non-credit remedial courses are not included in any calculation. Any Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credits awarded through Athens State University are included as attempted and earned hours in the calculation toward the quantitative measurement, but are excluded from the qualitative measurement. Courses dropped during any drop/add period will not count as attempted hours.

### **I. Academic Amnesty Options – 34 CFR 668.16(a) and (d)**

Types of Academic Amnesty at Athens State University include Academic Bankruptcy, Course Forgiveness, and Repeat Course Policy. Courses and/or credit hours for which the student has been granted Academic Bankruptcy or Course Forgiveness are still included in qualitative and quantitative (attempted only) calculations for the purpose of Title IV eligibility. All attempts of Repeat Courses at Athens State are monitored as follows:

1. For pace, all hours attempted will be included in the calculation
2. For GPA, only the grade of the last attempt will be calculated

#### **A. Repeated Courses**

A Repeat Course, for the purpose of Financial Aid, is defined as a course taken with Athens State University for the purpose of replacing the GPA of the exact course taken previously at Athens State University. Exceptions may exist through the Transfer Equivalency Guide for coursework taken at other institutions.

Federal Regulations limit the number of times a student may repeat a course and receive financial aid for that course. These rules apply whether or not the student received aid for earlier enrollments in the course. A student can repeat and receive Title IV aid for a previously passed course only once as long as the course the student is repeating applies towards the student's degree completion requirements.

Once a student has completed any course twice with a passing grade, they are no longer eligible to receive Title IV aid for that course. The Department of Education considers a passing grade as any grade greater than a failing, or "F", grade. If a student chooses to retake a course, and that course is not eligible for aid, the Office of Financial Aid will recalculate the student's Title IV aid to exclude the credits for the repeated course from eligibility. A student may receive Title IV aid when repeating a course that was previously failed (received an "F" or "FN"), regardless of the number of times the course was attempted and failed, as long as the student is meeting satisfactory progress as defined in this policy.

### **II. Unique Grades**

Courses awarded a Pass Grade (P) under the Pass/Fail method or a Satisfactory Grade (S) under the Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory method (from the University or otherwise) will be included in the **quantitative** measurement but will be excluded from the **qualitative** measurement. Courses awarded an Incomplete (the grade of "I") will be counted as a failed (F) in any SAP Calculation. When an Incomplete grade is finalized (that is, updated from "I" to a passing or failing grade) it will be factored into the student's SAP calculations at the time of the next formal evaluation or upon appeal. The University will only retroactively change a student's SAP status when the grade of "I" becomes a final grade if the student appeals.

## Undergraduate SAP Standards

### I. Initial Baccalaureate Degree Standards

To be eligible for federal student aid, an undergraduate student must show Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward a stated degree goal. At Athens State University, a student's academic progress is checked at the end of each semester. The student must meet each of the following measurement standards of academic progress:

#### A. Qualitative Measure – (GPA)

**A student must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA).** The minimum **GPA** requirement for most undergraduate, degree-seeking students to graduate is a cumulative 2.00. Undergraduate students seeking a degree that includes a teaching certification must have a cumulative 2.50 GPA to meet the graduation requirement.

Failure to meet this SAP standard will result in a **Warning** status for one additional enrolled semester. If the standard is not met after the completion of that **Warning** semester the status will change to **Suspended**. An appeal is then required for financial aid reinstatement. There will be no consecutive **Warning** statuses given to a student who does not meet multiple SAP standards in a semester.

#### B. Quantitative Measure – (Completion Rate)

**A student must complete at least 67.00% (no rounding) of all hours attempted with passing grades.** This completion percentage is called **Completion Rate** or **Pace** and is calculated by dividing the total number of hours the student has successfully earned by the total number attempted. All withdrawals (W), Incompletes (I), and Failing Grades (F) count as attempted but unsuccessfully completed. See the [Impact of Withdrawal on the Financial Aid](#) page for additional details.

Failure to meet this SAP standard will result in a **Warning** status for one additional enrolled semester. If the standard is not met after the completion of that **Warning** semester the status will change to **Suspended**. An appeal is then required for financial aid reinstatement. There will be no consecutive **Warning** statuses given to a student who does not meet multiple SAP standards in a semester.

#### C. Maximum Time Frame – (Maximum Allowable Total Attempted Hours)

**A student must complete a degree program within a reasonable length of time.** At Athens State University, a reasonable length of time for the completion of an initial undergraduate degree program is defined as no more than 150 percent of the normal time required to complete that degree program. The cumulative

number of attempted hours accepted by the Athens State Registrar's Office will be used for this calculation.

**Example:** If your degree requires that you complete 124 credit hours, then your reasonable length of time will be 124 hours x 150 percent = 186 hours. You will be within your reasonable length of time during your first 186 hours of attempted coursework.

Students changing majors, minors, and concentrations will not have additional time allowed for goal accomplishment and are strongly encouraged not to withdraw from any classes prior to contacting the Office of Student Financial Aid as they are still required to successfully complete the minimum 67.00% (no rounding) of their total attempted hours.

Failure to meet this SAP standard will result in **Maximum Time Frame Suspension**. An appeal is then required for financial aid reinstatement. There is no **warning** status semester, but an email is sent out to students when they are within 20 hours of their maximum credit limit.

**Important Note:** Incoming students transferring to Athens State University will have the credits accepted by the Registrar's Office reviewed to determine applicability toward their program of study at Athens State. This evaluation will determine the mathematical possibility of completing their chosen degree within the credit hour constraints of the program. If the review yields a determination that the chosen degree cannot be obtained within the given 150 percent time frame, the student will immediately be placed on **Maximum Time Frame Suspension** which will then require an appeal process to determine any future Title IV Eligibility.

## II. Dual Baccalaureate (Concurrent) Degrees SAP Standards

For students simultaneously pursuing two (or more) baccalaureate degrees, **qualitative** and **quantitative** SAP standards must be met as written. Their **Maximum Time Frame** will be calculated using the degree with the greater number of required hours. If a student meets the requirements for graduation for one degree before completing all requirements for the other(s), they become a **Second Baccalaureate Degree Student** and are subject to all financial aid restrictions as such from that point on.

## III. Double Majors SAP Standards

For students simultaneously pursuing two (or more) majors within one degree, **qualitative** and **quantitative** SAP standards must be met as written. Their **Maximum Time Frame** will be calculated using the major with the greater number of required hours. Students do not receive additional financial aid eligibility when pursuing more than one major. Additionally, once students meet the degree requirements to complete one of the majors, they are considered to have earned a degree, even if they are still

completing the requirements for their other major. They then become a **Second Baccalaureate Degree Student** and are subject to all financial aid restrictions as such from that point on.

#### **IV. Second Baccalaureate Degree SAP Standards**

If a student is seeking a second degree, they must complete the requirements within 150 percent of the time frame for the degree or financial aid-eligible non-degree program. An approved plan of study is required to be on file in the Office of Student Financial Aid for all students pursuing an additional degree or an initial financial aid-eligible non-degree program. This plan must be followed. Additionally, both the **qualitative** and **quantitative** Undergraduate SAP standards must be met as written.

#### **V. Otherwise Eligible Non-Degree Students' Sap Standards**

Otherwise eligible non-degree students (those pursuing approved Provisional Teaching Certifications or Temporary Special Education Teacher Certifications) are subject to the undergraduate SAP requirements.

## Graduate SAP Standards

### I. Initial Graduate Degree Standards

To be eligible for federal student aid, a graduate student must show Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward a stated degree goal. At Athens State University, a student's academic progress is checked at the end of each semester. The student must meet each of the following measurement standards of academic progress:

#### A. Qualitative Measure – (GPA)

**A student must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average.** The minimum **GPA** for a graduate-level degree-seeking student is a cumulative 3.00. **Note:** Failure to meet this SAP standard will result in a **Warning** status for one additional enrolled semester. If the standard is not met after the completion of that **Warning** semester the status will change to **Suspended**. An appeal is then required for financial aid reinstatement. There will be no consecutive **Warning** statuses given to a student who does not meet multiple SAP standards in a semester.

#### B. Quantitative Measure – (Completion Rate)

**A student must complete at least 67.00% (no rounding) of all hours attempted with passing grades.** This completion percentage is called **Completion Rate** or **Pace** and is calculated by dividing the total number of hours the student has successfully earned by the total number attempted. All withdrawals (W), Incompletes (I), and Failing Grades (F) as attempted but unsuccessfully completed. See the [Impact of Withdrawal on the Financial Aid](#) page for additional details.

**Note:** Failure to meet this SAP standard will result in a **Warning** status for one additional enrolled semester. If the standard is not met after the completion of that **Warning** semester the status will change to **Suspended**. An appeal is then required for financial aid reinstatement. There will be no consecutive **Warning** statuses given to a student who does not meet multiple SAP standards in a semester.

#### C. Maximum Time Frame – (Maximum Allowable Total Attempted Hours)

**A student must complete a degree program within a reasonable length of time.** At Athens State University, a reasonable length of time for the completion of an initial graduate degree program is defined as no more than 150 percent of the normal time required to complete a degree program. The cumulative number of attempted hours accepted by the Athens State Registrar's Office will be used for this calculation.

**Example:** If your degree requires that you complete 30 credit hours, then your reasonable length of time will be 30 hours x 150 percent = 45 hours. You will be

within your reasonable length of time during your first 45 hours of attempted coursework.

Failure to meet this SAP standard will result in a **Maximum Time Frame Suspension**. An appeal is then required for financial aid reinstatement. There is no **warning** status semester given, although an email is sent to students when they are within 20 credits of their maximum timeframe

**Note:** Incoming students will have the credits accepted by the Registrar's Office, as outlined by the Admission Policy, reviewed to determine the mathematical possibility of completing their chosen degree within the given time frame. If the review yields a determination that the chosen degree cannot be obtained within the given 150 percent time frame, the student will be immediately placed on **Maximum Time Frame Suspension** which will then require an appeal process to determine any future Title IV Eligibility.

## **II. Second Graduate Degree SAP Standards**

If a student is seeking a second graduate degree, they must complete the requirements within 150% percent of the time frame for the degree. An approved plan of study is required to be on file in the Office of Student Financial Aid for all students pursuing an additional degree. This plan must be followed. Additionally, both the qualitative and quantitative SAP standards must be met as written.



## Overview of SAP Statuses

Students are subject to various SAP statuses and will be notified by the Office of Student Financial Aid at the end of each payment period (semester) if they are placed on a SAP Status other than Good Standing. Updating SAP statuses may require adjustments to financial aid awards. Review the SAP Statuses below:

### I. Good Standing

This status is given to students that meet all SAP standards as listed in the current SAP Policy.

### II. Warning – 34 CRF 668.34

The first semester a student does not meet one of the standards for SAP, they will be placed on **Warning** status. During the warning semester, the student will continue to be eligible to receive Title IV aid. This **Warning** status can apply to a student only during the first semester of attendance following an initial determination of not meeting any SAP Standard, even if the student does not utilize Title IV Aid during the payment period they attend. After attending a payment period (semester) on **Warning** status a student who again does not meet the minimum standards will be placed on a Suspension status.

### III. Suspension

After attending one semester on **Warning** status, if a student again does not meet the required qualitative and quantitative SAP Standards, they will be placed on a **Suspension** status. While suspended, a student is no longer eligible to receive any financial aid until the required standards are met or an appeal is successfully approved.

### IV. Maximum Time Frame Suspension (MAX)

This status is given when the Office of Student Financial Aid is notified that it is mathematically impossible for a student to earn their chosen degree within the allotted reasonable length of time (review specifics under the degree options above). While on **MAX** status, a student is no longer eligible to receive any financial aid until an appeal is successfully approved.

### V. Probation – 34 CRF 668.34

This status is given at the conclusion of a successful appeal process after being placed on a **Suspension** status. With this status, Title IV eligibility is reinstated and the student is again eligible to receive federal financial aid. This status is only for one semester and will carry terms and/or stipulations for continued eligibility. Failure to follow all terms related to a probationary status at the next scheduled review will result in SAP status being updated to **Suspended after Appeal**. If all probationary terms are met but Satisfactory Academic Progress is still not achieved, the student's SAP status will be updated to **Academic Plan**

**Participant** until all SAP conditions or graduation requirements are met. (One of the requirements for a successful appeal is an approved academic plan.)

**VI. Academic Plan Participant – 34 CRF 668.34**

This status is given either at (1) the completion of the Financial Aid Probation or (2) the conclusion of a successful appeal process after being placed on a **MAX** status. All given probationary terms will still apply for the duration of the **Academic Plan Participant** status. If at any time the terms are not met, the student will be placed on **SAP Suspension after Appeal** status. If given the **Academic Plan Participant** status after **MAX**, the student is no longer eligible to change their degree program (major or minor) or financial aid eligibility will be revoked.

**VII. Suspension after Appeal**

This status carries the same terms as the Suspension status but is given after either the Probation or Academic Plan Participant status. If a student wants access to Title IV Aid prior to gaining satisfactory academic progress through attending at their own expense, this status requires the student to appeal to the Financial Aid Suspension Appeal Committee after successfully completing at least six (6) credit hours at Athens State without the use of Title IV Aid.

## SAP Appeal and Reinstatement Process

The process, detailed below, is for appeals related to the suspension and reinstatement of financial aid only. Students who have also been suspended from the University for unsatisfactory academic performance must file a separate appeal concerning the University suspension.

### I. Reinstatement Options

Students have two options to seek to regain federal financial aid eligibility:

- A. Regain Satisfactory Academic Progress by completing appropriate coursework to raise the Completion **Rate** and/or cumulative **GPA** to the outlined standards without the benefit of using federal financial aid as a payment method.
- B. Complete a Financial Aid Suspension Appeal form and submit all required supporting documentation for consideration, then be approved.

#### i. Appeal Requirements

- 1. A written explanation of the unusual or mitigating circumstances that the student believes prevented or hindered them in making satisfactory academic progress or completing their degree within the allowable timeframe. Include what has changed and/or the corrective actions being taken to prevent future problems.
- 2. An Accepted Coursework Evaluation Form (Official Financial Aid Plan of Study Form) and an up-to-date Academic Plan in Degree Works (MAP) showing a clear path to graduation.
- 3. Supporting documentation by indicating below which situation(s) applies:
  - a. **Medical:** If a personal medical problem contributed to the failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress, attach documentation from a medical professional from whom the student received advice or treatment.
  - b. **Death/Illness:** If the death or illness of an immediate family member contributed to the lack of academic progress, attach appropriate copies of medical records, death certificate, obituary, etc.
  - c. **Military Service:** If the student withdrew due to military service, provide documentation which includes dates military service began and/or ended.
  - d. **Other Circumstances:** Clearly state the circumstances (not listed above) in the written explanation and provide appropriate documentation.

**RECOMMENDED:** At least one letter of support from someone (not a family member) who can attest to the

extenuating circumstances (e.g., medical doctor, clergy, professional, etc.).

**Note:** Circumstances related to the typical adjustment to college life such as working while attending school, financial issues related to paying bills, and car maintenance/travel to campus, are not always considered extenuating for purposes of appealing suspension of financial aid.

## II. Appeal Timeline

All appeal forms and documentation should be provided to the Office of Student Financial Aid no later than **30 days** prior to the tuition payment deadline of the semester of appeal. If Fall is the semester of appeal *and a student attended the prior summer*, documentation should be provided no later than **14 days** prior to the tuition payment deadline for that payment period. Failure to provide all initial documentation in accordance with these deadlines will delay any determination and require the student to procure an alternative payment method to ensure courses are not dropped. *Please note: Submitting an appeal does not exclude the student from any late-payment fees assessed by the Office of Financial Services.*

Once the Office of Student Financial Aid decides on an appeal, the student will be notified via their Athens State University email account. If the appeal is approved, the student's SAP status will be **Probation** for the semester of requested return only. Failure to follow all terms related to a probationary status at the next scheduled review will result in SAP status being updated to **Suspended after Appeal**. If all probationary terms are met but Satisfactory Academic Progress is still not achieved, the student's SAP status will be updated to **Academic Plan Participant** status until all SAP conditions are met.

**Important Note:** If a student is appealing with the status Suspension After Appeal, all new and prior appeal information and all supporting documents will be sent to the Financial Aid Suspension Committee for review. The Committee will review the appeal and notify the student via the Athens State University email account. The Committee's decision is final and there will be no further appeal reviewed for that financial aid suspension case. The Committee reviews appeals on an intermittent basis.

If an appeal is denied or the student decides not to appeal, they must successfully complete the coursework necessary and achieve the grades required to return to compliance with SAP.

Questions concerning all aspects of Satisfactory Academic Progress can be sent to the Office of Student Financial Aid at [finaid@athens.edu](mailto:finaid@athens.edu).