

# Satisfactory Academic Progress Requirements

- Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Form (<https://gfcmsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Academic-Appeal-form.pdf>)

Great Falls College Montana State University (GFCMSU) is required by federal regulations to have a Satisfactory Academic Progress policy for financial aid eligibility purposes. To be eligible for federal loans, grants, and work study programs, as well as certain scholarships and waivers, a student must meet Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy standards regardless of whether the student has received financial aid previously. Non-federal student aid programs may base a student's eligibility on whether the student is meeting an institution's federal SAP standards. A state agency awarding state aid may establish its own academic standards. This policy is at least as strict as the University's academic standards. Student progress must be measured qualitatively and quantitatively and will be measured at the end of each semester (fall, spring, and summer) for all programs once official grades are posted.

The following qualitative and quantitative standards are considered when determining whether a student is making satisfactory academic progress toward a degree.

- **Minimum Grade Point Average**
- **Pace**
- **Maximum Time Frame**

The student must meet the minimum requirements defined below for each standard. Student **cumulative** status will be reviewed. This means all previous coursework at Great Falls College and transfer coursework is considered when determining satisfactory academic progress, regardless of how long ago and whether the student was receiving financial aid at that time. Violation of any one of these standards will result in financial aid suspension and the loss of financial aid eligibility.

## Minimum Grade Point Average (GPA)

GPA is the qualitative component of the SAP standards. A student must maintain a 2.0 cumulative grade point average to maintain satisfactory academic progress. Cumulative grade point average is calculated considering all grades for all academic semesters at GFCMSU. Remedial coursework is included toward GPA standards. GPA is based on credits taken only at GFCMSU. Credits accepted in transfer from other colleges and institutions are not used when calculating a student's GPA.

## Pace

Pace is a quantitative component of the SAP standards. A student must maintain a cumulative credit completion of 67% or higher. In other words, students must satisfactorily complete at least 67% of all of their attempted credits including transfer credits. Pace is measured in the following way:

$$\text{Earned credits/attempted credits} > = .67 \text{ (rounded)}$$

Examples of pace calculations are as follows:

1) A student has attempted 14 credits and has transferred in 12 credits. The student withdrew from 8 credits completing only 6 credits this semester. With transfer credits, the student has completed a total of 18 cumulative credits.

$$18/26 = .6923$$

18 earned credits divided by 26 attempted credits equals a 69% completion ratio. The student **is** meeting the pace standard.

2) A student has attempted 24 credits and has completely withdrawn from 12 credits this semester. The student has completed 12 credits total.

$$12/24 = .50$$

12 earned credits divided by 24 attempted credits equals a 50% completion ratio. The student **has not** met the pace standard.

## Maximum Time Frame

Maximum Time Frame is a quantitative component of the SAP standards.

Students are expected to earn a degree in a specific amount of time, measured by the number of attempted credits. A student's aid eligibility is limited to 150% of the required credits for the declared program of study. The number of required credits is indicated in the current Great Falls College catalog. Examples of credit limits are as follows:

<u>Credits Required to Complete Program:</u>	<u>Credit Limit for Financial Aid Eligibility:</u>
30 required credits (30 x 1.5 = 45)	45 attempted credits
45 required credits (45 x 1.5 = 68)	68 attempted credits
65 required credits (65 x 1.5 = 98)	98 attempted credits

Required credits include required pre-requisite classes for any program. Attempted credits include all GFCMSU credits, and all transfer credits accepted by Great Falls College regardless of whether or not those credits apply to a student's current program at Great Falls College.

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from completing the program of study in the allowable time frame, a student may submit a written request for extension to the Financial Aid Office. See the section on the Appeal Process for more details.

The information below details when a credit is counted as successfully completed (i.e., credit earned) or as attempted (i.e., credit attempted) for Pace and Maximum Time Frame standards:

- Satisfactory course completion means a student has received a minimum grade of D or P (satisfactory in pass/fail class). Such courses count toward earned and attempted credits.
- Grades of I (Incomplete), F (Failed), W (Withdraw), or NR (Not Reported) are NOT considered adequate or acceptable in maintaining academic progress. Such grades count as attempted credits, but not earned credits in the pace calculation. Such grades are counted as attempted credits in the maximum timeframe calculation. Please consult the GFCMSU catalog for information about I (Incomplete) and NR (Not Reported) grades: <https://catalog.gfcmsu.edu/student-services/academic-information/academic-grading/>
- Repeated Coursework- Students may repeat a passed course only one time on financial aid. Passed courses are those courses completed with a grade of a D or above. If a student repeats the same passed course more than once, that course will not be considered in determining the enrollment status for financial aid eligibility that semester but will still be counted in attempted credits for SAP determination. Courses for which the student received a W or F grade may be repeated multiple times as long as the student is otherwise meeting SAP standards. Each attempt of a repeated course will count as attempted credits. For impact of

repeated courses on GPA, please consult the GFCMSU catalog: <https://catalog.gfcmsu.edu/student-services/academic-information/academic-grading/>

- Transfer credits earned at another school and accepted by GFCMSU count as both attempted and earned. Transfer credits will be used in determining pace and maximum timeframe. The student's GPA is not affected by credits that have been transferred to GFCMSU from another institution. Transfer credits accepted by GFCMSU are factored into the student's SAP status at the next evaluation.
- Grade Changes- When a grade is changed, a student's SAP status can be immediately reevaluated upon request. The student or Records Office must contact the financial aid office after the grade change is posted to his or her academic record to request that the SAP status be reevaluated. Grade changes will otherwise be factored into the student's SAP status at the next evaluation.

### **SAP Determination and Monitoring**

After final grades are submitted to the Registrar at the end of each semester, the financial aid office determines each student's SAP status for the next semester of enrollment. If a student has failed to meet any combination of the qualitative and quantitative standards they will be notified in writing.

The first time that a student fails to meet SAP standards when previously in good standing, the student will be placed on **WARNING** status for one semester. Students **are** eligible for aid on WARNING.

If a student fails to meet SAP standards more than one consecutive semester, the student will be placed on **SUSPENSION** status. Financial aid suspension continues until

1. the student's written appeal based on extenuating circumstances is approved through the Financial Aid Office (see Appeal Process section) or
2. the student brings himself/herself into good standing (raises his/her CGPA and or meets PACE) at Great Falls College without benefit of financial aid.

Financial aid will not be awarded or disbursed for any semester that a student is on financial aid suspension.

### **Appeal Process**

If a student is placed on financial aid suspension and there are extenuating circumstances, the student has the right to submit an appeal. The appeal must include a written explanation of the circumstances that resulted in the suspension and a description of what is now different about the situation that will ensure success. The student must also submit an academic plan signed by an advisor that details the plan, by semester, for program completion. Examples of extenuating circumstances could be (1) documented illness of the student or student's immediate family member, (2) documented death of student's immediate family member, or (3) other documented circumstances out of the student's control. If the student exceeds the maximum time frame (credit limit) allowed for his/her plan of study, a written request for an extension of aid eligibility may be submitted to the Financial Aid Office along with an academic plan signed by an advisor that details the plan, by semester, for program completion. This written request must explain and document the circumstances preventing the student from completing the plan of study in the credits allowed. Appeals will be accepted at any time but will not be granted retroactively to a prior semester.

### **Appeal Decisions**

The Financial Aid Appeal Committee will review the written appeal, attached documentation, and the student's entire academic history to determine if the student's circumstances warrant approving the student's aid eligibility for the next semester of enrollment. Appeals will be reviewed and approved or denied on a case-by-case basis. The following are possible appeal decision statuses:

- **Approved-PROBATION:** the committee grants the appeal, and *the student can rectify the problem within the semester for which the appeal is granted and resume a good status (i.e., retake failed courses and GPA is 2.0 or higher and they meet standards for credit completion).* The student will be eligible for aid while on probation status. At the end of that semester, they will be measured again by the SAP standards above. If standards are met, student will be in good standing for the next semester of enrollment. If the student fails to meet the standards, they will again be placed on suspension for the next semester of enrollment.
- **Approved-ACADEMIC PLAN:** the committee grants the appeal; however, the problem will take more than one semester to rectify. The student will be eligible for aid while on academic plan status. After each semester on the plan, the student will be measured by the terms of the plan. If the student is following the plan successfully, they will be allowed to continue their plan for the next semester of enrollment or until they have returned to good status (meeting all SAP standards). If the student does not follow the plan successfully, they will again be placed on suspension for the next semester of enrollment.
- **Approved-MAXIMUM TIMEFRAME EXTENSION:** the committee grants the appeal, and the student is allowed to receive financial aid for the approved extension only. The student must continue to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress pace and GPA standards throughout the timeframe extension. The student will be measured by the terms of the extension after each semester. Failure to meet the terms of the extension will result in the cancellation of any remaining extension.
- **Denied:** The committee denies the appeal and the student is not eligible to receive financial aid until they re-establish satisfactory academic progress standards by attending courses without the benefit of financial aid. If the appeal is denied for maximum time frame (credit limit) extension, the student is ineligible for financial assistance at Great Falls College for that program of study. The student cannot bring themselves into good standing at Great Falls College by attending without benefit of aid. A student who repeatedly violates the satisfactory academic policy in one program of study can be considered ineligible for financial aid in a new program of study.

It is the student's responsibility to read and understand the standards of this policy. In addition, it is the student's responsibility to initiate all appeals or requests for reinstatement. Reinstatement of financial aid is subject to funds available at the time of reinstatement. A student who is suspended for an entire semester during the academic year cannot receive aid eligibility for that semester.