

SAP Appeals, the Aid Office, and Academic Advisors: Working Together to Facilitate Student Success

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Agenda

- Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards
- Review current federal SAP requirements
- Discussion of who fails SAP on our campuses
- Appeal processes
- Working with academic advising community and other stakeholders
- Case studies
- Discussion

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Rules

- Qualitative Standards
 - Grade Point Average minimum
 - Must be as strict or stricter than institutional GPA rules
- Quantitative Standards
 - Often called “Pace” or “Completion Rate”
 - Minimum standard of successful completion of attempted credits
 - Standard must allow student to graduate within maximum timeframe
- Maximum Timeframe
 - 150% of published program length
- Must measure at least annually OR each payment period (term)

SAP Definitions

- Appeal—A process by which a student who is not meeting SAP standards petitions the school for reconsideration of his eligibility for Title IV funds.
- Financial aid probation—A status a school assigns to a student who is failing to make satisfactory academic progress and who successfully appeals; eligibility for aid may be reinstated for one payment period.
- Financial aid warning—A status a school assigns to a student who is failing to make satisfactory academic progress. The school reinstates eligibility for aid for one payment period and may do so without a student appeal. This status may only be used by schools that check SAP at the end of each payment period and only for students who were making SAP in the prior payment period for which they were enrolled or who were in the first payment period of their program.

Role of Financial Aid Office

- Facilitate student success
- Help students understand SAP requirements
- Help students navigate SAP appeal processes
- Help academic advisors and other campus stakeholders understand SAP standards and appeal processes

New California Law for 24-25

- Provide information to students about the institution's "satisfactory academic progress" standards and financial aid appeals process during new student orientation and include student-friendly language on the institution's internet website, course syllabi, and financial aid award letters regarding the standards and appeals process.
- Notify a student when the student has not achieved the "satisfactory academic progress" standards following every term of enrollment, regardless of the frequency at which "satisfactory academic progress" is formally evaluated.
- Evaluate adherence to grade point average and pace of completion standards based only on cumulative measures and not on individual term measures.
- Exclude remedial coursework from maximum timeframe calculations. calculations if the institution offers remedial coursework.
- Allow a student who changes majors to exclude credits and grades that do not count toward the student's new major in the "satisfactory academic progress" determination.
- In the case of a "satisfactory academic progress" determination for a transfer student, when calculating maximum timeframe as defined by Section 668.34(b) of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations, only include those credits from other institutions that count towards the student's current program of study.

New California Law for 24-25 (cont.)

- Accept both electronic and hard copy financial aid appeals for any student who is ineligible to receive financial aid due to the determination that the student did not meet “satisfactory academic progress,” as defined by the institution where the student is enrolled, subject to all of the following:
 - (i) A student who loses financial aid eligibility may **appeal the determination during any subsequent term following loss of financial aid eligibility. The institution shall not limit the total number of appeals that may be submitted by a student or throughout the duration of the student’s enrollment. The institution may limit the number of appeals per term, but each appeal that is denied shall be subject to the second review process pursuant to clause (vi). The institution shall not impose deadlines for submitting an appeal that are earlier than three weeks before the end of each term. An appeal decision shall be finalized and communicated to the student by the end of the term in which the appeal was received.**
 - (ii) A student who previously disenrolled while being ineligible to receive financial aid may appeal the loss of financial aid upon reenrollment, and the timing for consideration of the appeal shall allow the student, if the student meets the criteria for financial aid reinstatement, to qualify for reinstatement upon the first term of reenrollment.
 - (iii) The institution shall provide a student who is ineligible to receive financial aid with written notice of the financial aid appeals process, including the process for a student to file an appeal, information about the second review process for an appeal that is denied as described in clause (vi), and how a student may request a second review.

SAP Appeal Processes

- Committee process vs staff member review process
- Consider having academic adviser serve on committee
- Facilitate student/advisor meeting/discussions
- Collect academic plan for quantitative and maximum timeframe appeals that is signed/e-mailed by adviser
- Provide e-form options
- Ethical discussion of approving appeals providing more student debt to students who clearly are NOT progressing

SAP Appeal Ethics

- Approving appeals usually means more student loan debt
- Students near graduation need our help
- Students need to understand that most appeals likely to be approved
- Some advisers will sign unrealistic plans of study
- SAP Denial perception: Students Do Not Belong

Facilitating Good SAP Appeal Process Communication

- Describe clear appeal processes on websites and expectations of appeal letters (i.e., what happened and what has changed)
- Consider providing examples of extenuating circumstances and likelihood appeal is approved
- Consider returning appeals to students as incomplete if more information/explanation would help case
- If appeal denied, explain future appeal options (attend another college, stop out, private loans, etc.)

Who Fails to Meet SAP

- Research from [John Burton Advocates for Youth](#) has found that foster youth are disproportionately impacted by SAP requirements along with students of color more broadly.
- This analysis found that one in four of California's incoming community college Pell Grant recipients are not making SAP for their first two consecutive terms, disqualifying them from continued access to most forms of financial aid.
- Rates of SAP failure for Black, Native American, and Latinx students were more than twice that of white and Asian students.
- The highest rates of SAP failure were found among students with experience in the foster care system at 34 percent and African American foster youth had a SAP failure rate of 42 percent.

Potential SAP Changes Proposed

- Require all institutions to conduct SAP reviews at the end of each payment period, with students failing SAP receiving one payment period of Title IV eligibility on warning status before losing eligibility
- Provide for up to two SAP “resets” by which students who leave postsecondary enrollment for two years after failing to meet SAP standards can re-enroll and receive Title IV student aid without the prior failure to meet SAP standards factored into their eligibility.
- Require Department of Education to communicate with students who have failed SAP about the availability of the SAP reset; this would require an additional reporting requirement for institutions, since SAP status is not presently reported to ED

Providing SAP Updates to Campus

- The Financial Aid Director/designee should make sure campus leadership understands how SAP standards impact student success
- Campus leadership includes head of enrollment management, Registrar, Student Accounts/Bursar, academic support units
- Need to share at least annually...
 - How many fail each SAP measure
 - How many students appeal and how the appeal process works
 - How many appeals approved, denied, incomplete
 - How many students progress after successful appeal
 - How many students graduate

Serving the academic advising community

- Designate financial aid point of contact for campus academic advisors professional organization and/or listserv
- Offer to present financial aid updates that include SAP policies and procedures at an annual academic advising conference or monthly meeting
- Consider offering an annual campus-wide financial aid forum for academic advisers and other stakeholders
- Be sure to include key stakeholders in communication efforts including TRIO counseling staff and various student success staff across campus
- Consider having academic advisor(s) provide feedback on SAP appeal forms and processes

Case studies: GPA Appeals

- Any history of good grades?
- One bad term or multiple poor terms?
- Student requiring remedial courses?
- Extenuating circumstances?
- Plans for improvement (using campus resources, etc.)?
- Advisor input?
- Other ideas?

Case studies: Pace Appeals

- History of withdrawals in prior program?
- Withdrawal from entire terms due to extenuating circumstances?
- Recent successful completion of coursework?
- Other ideas?

Case studies: Max Time Frame Appeals

- Changed majors?
- Double majors?
- How many terms to degree?
- Good recent progress?
- Aid usage?
- Other ideas?

Questions

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