



Policies and Procedures

TITLE: SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS FOR FINANCIAL AID STUDENTS

POLICY NO: 1-6

EFFECTIVE DATE: 08/16/90

VCCS POLICY NO: N/A

REVISED DATE: 02/27/07

I. Purpose:

To reinforce responsible student behavior and describe the satisfactory academic progress (SAP) standards to which students that receive financial aid must adhere in order to maintain their financial aid eligibility. This policy is designed to satisfy the requirements set forth in 34 CFR (Compilation of Federal Regulations), Part 668, Section 668.16(e) and Section 668.34. The law requires that we establish qualitative standards (grade point average) and quantitative standards (completion rate and maximum time frame) to ensure students are making progress toward their educational goals.

II. Definitions:

Documentation: As it relates to appeals, documentation includes, but is not limited to, letters from physicians, licensed counselors, clergy, or other professionals not related to the student. It should be legible, on official letterhead and reference a time period that corresponds with semesters where the student had academic problems.

III. Policy:

Financial aid recipients at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College are expected and have the responsibility to complete the courses they attempt with a satisfactory grade. In order to continue financial aid eligibility, federal law requires a student to maintain satisfactory academic progress in the program he/she is pursuing. Satisfactory academic progress means that a student is maintaining a cumulative grade point average (GPA) at the minimum standard or higher and is completing the minimum number of semester credit hours or courses required in order to finish program requirements within the maximum allowable time frame. The standards used to judge satisfactory academic progress are cumulative and include all periods of a student's enrollment, even periods in which the student did not receive financial aid.

In keeping with J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College's academic standing and status policies, if a student is academically suspended or dismissed, then that student's financial aid eligibility is terminated.

A. Assessment of academic progress: The college will assess students prior to awarding financial aid and at the end of each fall and spring semester. While the college will not run SAP after summer semester grades, these grades will be counted in subsequent SAP program runs. It is possible that a student could lose their eligibility based on poor summer semester performance. Returning students who have not been assessed within the previous aid year will be re-assessed prior to making awards.

B. Quantitative standards

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1. Semester Credit Hour Completion Requirements: Students will be assessed for their completion rate when they have attempted 17 hours (credit + developmental) or 50% of the total credits required for their program of study. Federal regulations require a student to make measurable progress toward completing program requirements during each period of enrollment. To be making satisfactory academic progress, a student must successfully complete 66 2/3 percent of the classes he/she has attempted. Successful completion is defined as earning an A, B, C, D, R, or P. For example, if, at the point progress is assessed, a student has attempted a total of 17 credit or developmental hours, then he/she must have successfully completed at least 12 hours to be making satisfactory progress. If, at any point after 17 attempted hours, the student fails to comply with the 66 2/3 percent successful completion requirement, his/her financial aid eligibility terminates. After such a termination, the only way for a student to regain his/her financial aid eligibility is to successfully complete enough academic classes to bring his/her successful completion percentage up to the required standard, without help from financial aid programs.

2. Maximum time frame requirement: Federal regulations require the college to set a maximum time frame in which a student is expected to finish program requirements. For an undergraduate program, the maximum time frame may not exceed 150% of the published length of the program. Since developmental/ESL courses are not counted in any program requirements, they are not considered in the 150% rule.

The maximum time frame for any JSRCC program is computed by multiplying by 150% the number of credit hours listed for the program in the college catalog for the year the student entered the program. For instance, if the length of a program is published in a catalog as 60 credit hours, then the maximum time frame for that program is 90 credit hours (150% X 60 = 90). (NOTE: Program length information is contained in the college computer system and a maximum time frame calculation is made for each student at the time academic progress is assessed.)

Once a student has enrolled for the number of credit hours allowed under the maximum time frame for his/her program, that student's financial aid eligibility terminates even though he/she may not have finished the classes required for program completion. If terminated for exceeding the maximum time frame, a student may appeal in accordance with the appeal process described later in this policy.

C. Qualitative standards

1. Cumulative grade point average (GPA) requirements: To be making satisfactory academic progress, a student must have at least a cumulative GPA of:
 - a. 1.0 from the point 17 credit hours have been attempted and thru the point where 23 credit hours have been attempted
 - b. 1.50 from the point 24 credit hours have been attempted and through the point where 35 credit hours have been attempted

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- c. 1.75 from the point 36 credit hours have been attempted and through the point where 48 credit hours have been attempted
- d. 2.00 from the point 48 credit hours have been attempted and until all program requirements have been completed

Failure to have the required cumulative GPA will result in termination of a student's financial aid eligibility. After such a termination, the only way for a student to regain his/her financial aid eligibility is to successfully complete enough academic classes to bring his/her cumulative GPA up to the applicable standard without help from financial aid programs.

The Higher Education Amendments of 1986 require a student to have a grade point average of at least C by the end of the second academic year. At JSRCC, the end of the second academic year means the point at which a student has attempted the equivalent of 48 semester credit hours at the college (excluding ESL and developmental classes). A grade point average of at least C means a cumulative GPA of 2.00 or higher.

- D. Developmental studies: Federal regulations allow a student to receive financial aid for only the equivalent of the first 30 semester credit hours of developmental studies attempted, regardless of whether or not the student received any financial aid for these developmental credit hours. A student may enroll in the same developmental studies class only three times and receive financial aid. A fourth or subsequent enrollment must be at the student's expense. Developmental courses will count toward the completion rate described in Section B.1. above.
- E. English as a Second Language (ESL): Federal regulations place no limit on the number of ESL credit hours a student may take and receive financial aid. However, at JSRCC, a student may enroll in the same ESL class only three times and receive financial aid. A fourth or subsequent enrollment must be at the student's expense. ESL courses will count toward the completion rate described in Section B.1. above.
- F. Course repeat: Repeated courses will be counted in the quantitative standards of completion rate and maximum time frame. Repeated courses will not be counted in the qualitative grade point average standards. Students may receive financial aid for repeated courses that fall within the VCCS repeat policy.
- G. Withdrawal (W grade): For financial aid satisfactory academic progress purposes, a withdrawal counts as a class attempted but not successfully completed.
- H. Incomplete class (I grade): For financial aid, satisfactory academic progress purposes, an incomplete class counts as a class attempted but not successfully completed.
- I. Missing grades: Courses that do not have grades will count as a course attempted but not successfully completed.

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- J. Audited class: The college does not grant academic credit for an audited class; therefore, a student cannot receive financial aid for such a class. Audited classes are not counted for financial aid satisfactory academic progress purposes.
- K. Transfer courses: Transfer courses that have been accepted by the college for the current academic plan will count toward the maximum time frame.
- L. Graduation - degree, diploma, or certificate requirements completed: Once a student has completed his/her program requirements, the student's financial aid eligibility ends. The college will not continue to award financial aid for additional periods of enrollment in a completed program.
- M. Second program: The college may award financial aid to a student who enrolls in a second program once the student has been admitted into the new program and granted credit for all previously completed classes that fulfill the requirements of the new program. The maximum time frame for completion of a second program will be individually determined based upon the number of additional classes the student must take. Also, the total previously attempted credits taken plus the credits needed to finish the second program must be less than or equal the absolute maximum total credits in Section O. below.
- N. Change of program: For students who meet the GPA and completion rate standards, the college may award financial aid to a student who changed his/her program once the student has been admitted into the new program and granted credit for all previously completed classes that fulfill the requirements of the new program. The maximum time frame for completion of the new program will be individually determined based upon the number of additional classes the student must take.
- O. Absolute maximum total credits: When a student has attempted the equivalent of 135 semester credit hours, that student's financial aid eligibility ends and they are not eligible for any further appeals.
- P. Warning: As a service to the student, the Financial Aid office will send financial aid warning notifications to students who are in jeopardy of losing eligibility. The warning letters will be generated each semester after grades for students who otherwise meet the SAP criteria above but:
 - 1. Have under a 2.0 cumulative grade point average (in non-developmental courses.), or
 - 2. Have completed less than 75% of the courses attempted

The letters will remind students of their responsibility and contain information about the Academic Support Center, Student Affairs, and other services that might help the student improve their situation before it gets worse.

- Q. Appeals and reinstatement: If a student's financial aid eligibility is terminated because he/she has failed the minimum standards within this policy, they may appeal the termination to the office of Financial Aid. Appeals must be written and should state the reason(s) why the

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student was unable to satisfy the standards, and they must cite and document a special mitigating circumstance that coincides with the problem semester(s).

Federal regulation allows the college, specifically, the director or designee(s), to consider special mitigating circumstances that prevented a student from meeting the standards. Examples of special circumstances are the death of a relative of the student, an injury or illness of the student, change of program, etc. If the director or designee reinstates a student's eligibility, the mitigating cause must be noted and the supporting documents attached for the record.

1. Academic Standing Committee: In most cases, the director's decision is final. However, if a student's appeal has been denied by the Financial Aid office, they may request a second and final review by the Academic Standing Committee. Only those appeals with documented, special mitigating circumstances will be eligible for committee review. The request for committee review must be in writing and signed by the student. Appeals forwarded to the committee will include copies of all documents used in the initial decision and the reason the initial appeal was denied.

While reviewing an appeal, the committee may include any additional information it may wish to consider. If the committee decides to reinstate a student's financial aid eligibility, the committee may set specific requirements for the student. If the student fails to comply with these requirements, the student's financial aid eligibility terminates at the point of non-compliance. If the committee reinstates a student's eligibility, it must cite the mitigating circumstances and provide supporting documents for the record. Committee reinstatement decisions without documented mitigating circumstances will not be processed by the Financial Aid office.

- R. Subsequent appeals: In those cases where a student fails to meet the condition of their reinstatement, they will not be entitled to future financial aid until they meet the standards. If a student experienced a new mitigating circumstance during their reinstatement, they may appeal the loss of their aid by following the steps outlined in Section Q. above. If, after the second reinstatement, the student again fails the standard, they lose the ability to appeal and will not be entitled to financial aid until they meet the standards. This would require them to pay for classes from personal funds until they have earned sufficient credits or a grade point average that meets the standards in this policy.

IV. Procedures:

- A. The college shall send each student who is awarded financial aid a financial aid award notification letter. Enclosed will be an addendum that contains, among other things, current information about the college's Satisfactory Academic Progress for Financial Aid Students policy.
- B. Running the SAP program
 1. The director shall schedule the computer run of the SAP program after the grade reports for the applicable semester or term have been run.

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- 2. The director shall schedule the computer run of the SAP program weekly, after financial aid terms are built to perform SAP on new applicants.
- C. The SAP program will place a “not meets” in the SAP list box in the SIS. This prevents awarding and disbursing of aid. Designated staff members may also update the SAP SIS field to “not meets” if they determine the student is no longer maintaining SAP.
- D. The SAP program generates letters to students based on the specific criteria failed. The program will create a checklist of the items they did not meet and these items will show on the letter.

The SAP letter will inform the student that his/her financial aid eligibility was terminated at the end of the previous semester or term and indicate the reason(s) for the termination. The letter will inform the student of the conditions under which an appeal may be made and refer the student to the Access Center for further information and assistance.

- E. Access Center staff shall confer with the student to confirm the reason that he/she did not meet the established satisfactory academic progress standards and be guided by the conditions and the steps indicated below in determining whether a student may appeal termination of his/her financial aid eligibility.
- F. Maximum time frame: If the student’s financial aid eligibility was terminated because he/she exceeded the maximum time frame, the student may complete and submit an Appeal of Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Status for Financial Aid Students form, [JSRCC Form No. 30-0001](#), to the Access Center.
- G. Low GPA or less than 66 2/3 percent completion rate: If Access Center staff consider it appropriate, based on the “extremely extenuating circumstances” described below, the student will be instructed to complete and return to the Access Center an Appeal of Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Status for Financial Aid Students form, [JSRCC Form No. 30-0001](#), along with complete, official documentation of the circumstances involved.
- H. Extremely extenuating circumstances: The student must document completely that one of the following existed during the term in which his/her academic progress was determined to be unsatisfactory:
 - 1. The student experienced the death of an immediate family member or death of a person who shared the student’s household.
 - 2. The student experienced a severe illness or injury that required hospitalization, convalescence in an institutional setting, or confinement at home for at least seven (7) consecutive days. Recurring chronic conditions, pregnancy, and/or childbirth will not be considered under these criteria.
 - 3. A student’s minor child experienced a severe illness or injury that required hospitalization, convalescence in an institutional setting, or confinement at home for at least seven (7) consecutive days. Recurring chronic conditions will not be considered under these criteria.

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If the circumstance was a death, a copy of the death certificate and/or death notice from a newspaper shall be required. If the circumstance was severe illness or injury, the student must obtain documentation from an appropriate medical professional on official letterhead stationery and submit it to the Access Center staff. Proof of relationship (third-party verification, birth certificate, or court document) is required for any of the circumstances that involve a family member.

- I. Access Center staff shall collect the completed appeal form and supporting documentation and forward to Central Financial Aid.
- J. The director of financial aid (or designees) shall review the appeal form and documentation, and determine if the student's financial aid eligibility can be reinstated. Within ten (10) business days after receiving the appeal, the director of financial aid (or designees) shall inform the student of the decision in writing.
- K. The decision and reinstatement requirements will be entered into the SIS as a "comment" or a "checklist." This will become part of the student's record and will be the primary source of information regarding the student's status.
- L. For students who have been reinstated, their status in the SIS will be set to "probation" by the director or designee. The "probation" status in the SIS keeps the student from being switched back to "not meets" when the SAP program runs. The office shall run a report at the end of each semester for all students on "probation" to ensure they are meeting the conditions of their reinstatement. The report should show the "comment" or "checklist" text that shows the requirements. The director or designee will review these reports after grades to ensure the students are meeting the conditions.
- V. Other Information:

[JSRCC Form No. 30-0001](#), Appeal of Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Status for Financial Aid Students