

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

OFFICE OF SCHOLARSHIPS & FINANCIAL AID

STANDARDS OF SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS FOR FINANCIAL AID ELIGIBILITY - 2019-2020

As a result of the regulatory relief being afforded to the University of Houston by the US Department of Education due to COVID-19, the SAP policy is being relaxed for students enrolled during the spring 2020 semester. Changes to the SAP policy for the interim period can be found in red through this document.

Federal regulations require all students make satisfactory academic progress (SAP) in their programs of study to maintain eligibility for financial aid. ***This policy applies to all new, transfer, continuing, and returning students.*** Academic progress is monitored annually and evaluated using both qualitative (grade point average) and quantitative (completion rate and maximum timeframe) requirements:

- **Grade Point Average (GPA)** – Undergraduate, Law, Optometry or graduate Architecture students must maintain a 2.0 cumulative GPA. All other graduate students must maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA.

Courses with grades of “S” or “NCR” will not be factored into the term or cumulative grade point average, thus those grades will not increase or decrease a student’s grade point average.

- **Completion Rate** – Students must complete and pass a minimum of 67% of the hours attempted at the University of Houston. The completion rate is calculated by dividing total completed credit hours by total attempted credit hours. Rounding rules are not applied to completion rates.

Attempted credit hours are all credit hours shown on your transcript. All credit hours attempted at the University of Houston, including repeated courses with a grade of “F,” “I,” “IP,” or “U,” and all **transfer hours** accepted toward your degree at the University of Houston will be counted in the determination of hours attempted.

Successful completion for ratio purposes is defined as receiving a grade of “A” through “D-” or an “S.” Grades of “F,” “I,” “IP,” “U” or “W” are considered credit hours attempted, but not earned.

Courses with grades of “S” are counted as courses attempted and passed. “S” grades will positively impact the completion rate. Courses with grades of “NCR” are counted as courses attempted, but not passed. “NCR” grades will negatively impact the completion rate.

- **Maximum Timeframe** – Federal regulations require that a student complete his program of study within 150% (length of program x 1.5) of the time (credit hours) allotted for the program. For example, if an undergraduate degree is 120 credit hours in length, the student must complete the program within a maximum of 180 (120 x 1.5) attempted credit hours. After attempting 180 credit hours, the undergraduate student’s financial aid eligibility will be terminated for that program. All credit hours attempted at the University of Houston, including repeated courses with a grade of “F,”

“W,” “I,” or “IP,” and all **transfer hours** to be used toward a degree at the University of Houston, will be counted in the determination of hours attempted.

Grades of “S” and “NCR” will be counted toward the maximum timeframe calculation.

When considering the maximum timeframe, students should also be aware that Federal Direct Subsidized Loans are also limited to 150% of the student’s published program length. Students may not receive Federal Direct Subsidized Loans beyond their maximum eligibility period and may lose the interest subsidy. More information is available at <https://studentloans.gov/myDirectLoan/directSubsidizedLoanTimeLimitation.action>.

Federal Pell Grants also have limited Lifetime Eligibility Units which correspond roughly with 150% of an undergraduate degree program. More information is available at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/pell/calculate-eligibility>.

Students not meeting SAP will be placed on financial aid suspension and are not eligible to receive further funding. Students have the right to appeal their suspension by submitting a SAP Appeal form with supporting documentation to the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid.

SAP Requirements by Program

| Undergraduate Level | Cumulative GPA Required | Cumulative Completion Ratio Required | Maximum Cumulative Hours Allowed |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| All degree programs | 2.0 | 67% | 180 |

| Graduate Level | Minimum Cumulative GPA Required | Minimum Completion Rate Required | Maximum Timeframe to Degree |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Masters | At least 3.0 | 67% | 150% of published required hours for the program. |
| Doctoral | At least 3.0 | 67% | |
| Optometry Master of Science in Physiological Optics/Vision | At least 2.0 | 67% | 45 |
| Doctor of Optometry | At least 2.0 | 67% | 265 |
| Doctor of Philosophy in Physiological Optics/Vision | At least 2.0 | 67% | 90 |
| Doctor of Pharmacy | At least 2.0 | 67% | 318 |
| Doctor of Philosophy in Pharmaceutics and Pharmacology Master of Science in Pharmacy Administration | At least 2.0 | 67% | 54 |

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|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----|-----|
| Law J.D. | At least 2.0 | 67% | 135 |
| Law LL.M. | At least 2.0 | 67% | 36 |
| Law J.D./MBA | At least 2.0 | 67% | 166 |
| Master of Architecture level I | At least 2.0 | 67% | 145 |
| Master of Architecture level II | At least 2.0 | 67% | 90 |
| Master of Science in Architecture | At least 2.0 | 67% | 54 |
| Master of Architectural Studies | At least 2.0 | 67% | 45 |
| Master of Space Architecture | At least 2.0 | 67% | 45 |

SAP Guidelines

- I. **Increments of Evaluation** – The academic year is defined as fall and spring semesters, and the subsequent summer term. The academic progress of financial aid recipients will be evaluated on a yearly basis at the end of the last term enrolled. In addition to yearly evaluation, all undergraduate students will be evaluated at the end of their fourth semester of enrollment at UH, regardless of whether this falls at the end of the academic year. Students will be awarded based on the academic year; however, eligibility will be evaluated based on the prior academic year’s grades.
- II. **Incompletes (“I” grades)** – A grade of “I” (Incomplete) indicates that a student has not finished all course work required for a grade and is included in the cumulative credits attempted. An incomplete grade will not count as hours successfully completed until a final grade is posted. If a student’s “I” grade changes during a semester, it is the student’s responsibility to inform the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid of the change. If the grade change will affect the student’s financial aid eligibility, a mid-year recalculation will be done. Otherwise, the change of grade will not be factored into the overall completion rate until the next evaluation period.
- III. **Withdrawals (“W” grades)** – A grade of “W” indicates the student withdrew from the course after the last day to drop. Courses with a grade of “W” will not be calculated in the GPA, although these grades are used to calculate the completion rate and maximum timeframe.
- IV. **All “W” Grades in One Semester** – Withdrawing from all classes after the official reporting date (ORD), which is the 12th day of class, will impact a student’s completion rate calculation and future financial aid eligibility, and could result in the need to repay unearned financial aid received in that term.
- V. **All Failing Grades in One Semester** – Students who receive any combination of “F,” “W” or “U” grades for a term must be evaluated to determine if the student earned the failing grades or if the student took an “unofficial withdrawal.” Faculty members are contacted to determine the student’s last date of substantive academic interaction. Evaluation of an “unofficial withdrawal” could result in the need to repay unearned financial aid received in that term.

VI. Repeated Courses –

- a. A **successfully completed** course (“A” through “D-”) may be repeated **only once** and the student may receive financial aid funding for that course during the term in which the repeat occurs assuming the student meets all other eligibility requirements. Both the initial and repeated courses will be included in the quantitative (completion rate and maximum timeframe) and qualitative (GPA) calculations.
- b. An **unsuccessfully completed** course (“F,” “I,” “W” or “IP”) may be repeated **more than once** and may receive financial aid each occurrence assuming the student meets all other eligibility requirements. All attempts apply toward the quantitative (completion rate and maximum timeframe) and qualitative (GPA) calculations.

VII. First Year Grade Exclusion Policy – UH policy allows students to exclude from the calculation of the GPA up to three grades of “D+” or below in courses taken within the first twelve months of the students’ initial matriculation semester. For the purposes of calculating a student’s financial aid eligibility, however, the grade exclusion policy does not apply; **all attempted grades are counted in the SAP calculation.**

VIII. Dual Degree – The 150% percent maximum time frame for students enrolled in two degree programs will be calculated based on the primary degree program on the student’s record.

IX. Transfer Courses – Courses accepted for credit at the University of Houston from another institution—which meet the University’s transfer policy—are counted in the total credits attempted and completed. Grades for transfer courses are not calculated in the GPA.

X. Audited Courses – Audited courses neither earn credit nor influence GPA, and they are not counted in credits attempted or GPA. They are not eligible for financial aid.

XI. Prior Attendance – The Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid is required to consider all attendance at UH when determining whether a student is making SAP, even if financial aid was not received during any of the previous periods of enrollment. The Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid will review the student’s UH academic history to determine SAP status.

XII. Academic Amnesty/Renewal – The University of Houston’s institutional academic progress policy adheres to State Law (Educ. Code, Sec. 51.931) which allows students with academic credits earned 10 or more years prior to the starting date of the semester in which they seek admission to any public institution of higher education to have those credits or grades not considered in the admission decision. This opportunity is known as Academic Fresh Start.

For the purposes of calculating a student’s SAP status, however, **all transfer credits and all grades earned at UH will count in SAP assessment.**

XIII. Change of Program of Study/Major – A student may change from one major to another during attendance at the University of Houston. Students who change majors, however, are still expected to maintain SAP and complete the degree program within the timeframe limitations. As such, the total amount of credit hours attempted will be evaluated for SAP purposes.

- XIV. Consortium Agreement** – Students on an approved consortium agreement with another institution will have all hours attempted at the other institution included in the completion rate calculation.
- XV. GPA Assessment** – Students in all academic programs must meet the minimum GPA requirements listed in the **SAP Requirements by Program** chart above.
- XVI. SAP Notifications** – The Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid will notify students whose SAP status puts them at risk of losing financial aid eligibility via their destination email address in their myUH self-service portal. All students can see their SAP status within their myUH self-service on the “View Financial Aid” page.
- XVII. Financial Aid Suspension** – Students who do not meet minimum SAP requirements will be placed on financial aid suspension. No further funding may be awarded; however, students may have eligibility reinstated on a probationary status after approval of a successful financial aid SAP appeal. Students whose appeals are approved must make academic progress and return to SAP good standing within one probationary term. Students who do not meet the requirements will have all further financial aid suspended until they do.
- XVIII. SAP Appeal Documentation** – Students who are placed on financial aid suspension may submit an appeal to reinstate eligibility. A financial aid SAP appeal consists of the UH SAP Appeal form and a letter of appeal and supporting documentation; students may also be required to complete a SAP Academic Plan for future semesters. Financial aid SAP appeals must be submitted by the required deadline to be considered for the current semester.

Due to COVID-19, documentation submission requirements for the appeal process have been temporarily relaxed by the US Department of Education to make the process easier for students. On the appeal form, a student’s thoughtful description of how COVID-19 impacted their ability to successfully meet SAP requirements is acceptable.

- XIX. SAP Appeal Deadline** – To be eligible to appeal a loss of financial aid eligibility for the current term, students must submit both a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) before the first day of the term, **and** a complete financial aid SAP appeal by the University’s official reporting date (ORD). **Students who are not meeting SAP and do not meet both deadlines will not have their financial aid SAP appeals considered for the current term.** These students may appeal for the next term.
- XX. SAP Appeal Process**
- a. ***Students appealing their aid suspension must pay their own expenses until the appeal has been reviewed and the student is determined eligible for the reinstatement of financial aid.***
 - b. A student on financial aid suspension must submit a SAP Appeal Form with supporting documentation to the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid by the official reporting date (ORD) of each term in order to receive consideration for financial aid eligibility for the remainder of the academic year. Failure to provide supporting documentation will result in the denial of the appeal.

- c. Students who have exceeded the maximum cumulative hours allowed must submit a printed degree plan that accurately reflects their educational goals in the college, in addition to their appeal and appeal documentation. Section C of the SAP Appeal Form is to be completed by an academic advisor.
- d. The Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid will review the appeal within four weeks of its receipt and determine whether financial aid eligibility can be reinstated. Students will be notified of the appeal decision via their destination email address, as noted in the myUH self-service center.
- e. Students who have eligibility reinstated but fail to meet SAP in the next academic year, may not appeal for the subsequent academic year, unless they have experienced a documented mitigating circumstance.
- f. A student who has restored satisfactory academic progress by meeting the requirements will be considered fully eligible for financial aid without SAP-related restrictions.
- g. A student who has been wholly reinstated but subsequently loses financial aid eligibility due to not meeting SAP again, may only appeal one additional time.
- h. If a student's financial aid SAP appeal is denied, the responsibility to make payment arrangements with the University rests solely with the student. Students may not appeal denials.

XXI. Academic Probation – Academic probation is determined by the Office of the University Registrar and is not the same as financial aid probation. If students have been academically suspended (as opposed to having their financial aid suspended), they may not appeal reinstatement of their financial aid eligibility until academic probation is lifted. An approval on an academic appeal does not automatically mean the student will be granted approval on a financial aid appeal.

XXII. Reinstatement of Financial Aid – If a student's SAP appeal is approved and financial aid eligibility is reinstated, the student will be notified via email of the conditions of reinstatement and placed on financial aid probation.

- a. Students who have had a SAP appeal approved are placed on financial aid probation. Students who are not meeting their cumulative GPA and ratio requirements will be eligible for financial aid but must maintain academic requirements including a 2.25 semester GPA and 100% semester course completion ratio.
- b. Students who are exceeding their cumulative hours but are otherwise meeting their cumulative GPA and ratio must maintain a 100% completion ratio and a 2.0 semester GPA.
- c. Students placed on probation must comply with all conditions established by the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid.
- d. If a final decision is made not to reinstate the student's financial aid, the student must take personal financial responsibility to complete at least half-time, self-funded enrollment (6 hours for undergraduates) with high academic performance. In addition, the student must satisfactorily complete all hours attempted (with a term GPA of 2.25 or above) in an eligible program of study. After satisfactorily completing a semester of at least half-time enrollment with personal financial responsibility, the student regains eligibility to appeal for the subsequent semester they enroll. Documentation of progress must be included with the appeal.
- e. Once eligibility is re-established per the SAP policy, the student can be evaluated for

financial aid for future enrollment period.

XXIII. SAP Academic Plan Agreement – If the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid determines that the student may not be able to meet the cumulative SAP requirements within one term, the office may choose to place the student on a SAP Academic Plan Agreement, allowing the student a longer timeframe (i.e.: more than one term) to meet SAP minimum requirements. Students who meet the conditions and requirements for their academic plan will be allowed to continue receiving aid during the semesters agreed upon in the plan. If the student does not meet the 100% semester completion rate and a 2.25 semester GPA while on an Academic Plan Agreement, the student will have failed the plan and will have their aid suspended. If the student is assigned an academic plan and continues to meet the requirements of that plan, there is no need to submit an additional appeal, until the time period of that plan expires.

Students who were on a SAP Academic Plan Agreement during spring 2020 and did not meet all requirements of the plan, should complete a Mitigating Circumstances Appeal (below).

XXIV. Mitigating Circumstances – The University of Houston recognizes that students often face mitigating circumstances which effect their academic progress. In cases where a student has an unusual circumstance beyond the student’s control, allowances may be made. The following are examples of mitigating circumstances that may receive consideration with appropriate documentation: severe illness or injury preventing academic participation; a learning or functional disability; unusual circumstances that have been disruptive to the student’s academic performance; or the death or serious illness of an immediate family member. Students facing these types of situations should speak with a financial aid advisor to discuss their continued financial aid eligibility.