

# **Policy Statement and Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to describe the university's process for determining a student's eligibility for continued receipt of Title IV federal funds, Illinois state funds, and institution need-based grants on satisfactory academic progress (SAP) in accordance with federal requirements for financial aid, including the federal regulations implementing the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, 34 C.F.R. § 668.34. This policy applies to all students attending all academic programs. This Policy will be in effect for the Fall of 2020 and beyond.

As required by the federal regulations, UIS's SAP policy is at least as strict as its academic progress standards for students enrolled in the same academic program who are not receiving federal Title IV financial aid.

The university reviews SAP status at the end of each semester on all students and notifies aid recipients via email of their SAP status. A student may also view their SAP status on their student self-service account.

## **Definitions**

### **Attempted credits**

All courses in which the student enrolls and remains enrolled after the add/drop period of every semester even if the student later withdraws or ultimately fails the course.

### **Completion Rate or Pace**

Number of credit hours earned divided by the number of all credit hours attempted including transfer and AP credit hours.

### **Earned credits**

The number of credit hours from all courses in which the student receives a letter grade of "D" or better or a "CR" in a credit or no credit class.

### **Maximum Timeframe of Eligibility**

150% of the published length of the program needed to earn a degree, as measured by credit hours or clock hours.

### **Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)**

A combination of qualitative (grades) and quantitative (credit hours) components as measured by GPA, completion rate and maximum credit hours of eligibility, which satisfy federal, state and institutional requirements for aid recipients.

## Policy Specifics and Procedures

### SAP Determination

In order to maintain SAP, a student must meet the following criteria:

#### 1. Grade Point Average (GPA) – Qualitative Measure

While individual schools or academic programs may have other academic requirements (including for GPA), to be eligible for federal financial aid, a student must remain in good academic standing under this policy by maintaining the following cumulative GPA requirements:

**a. Undergraduate Students** – must maintain at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA

**b. Graduate Students** – must maintain at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA

The undergraduate and graduate grading scales/systems can be found in the Assessment Information and Academic Standards In the UIS Catalog: <https://www.uis.edu/registration/catalogs/>

**Please Note:** UIS **DOES NOT** round up. A GPA below the exact minimum requirement is not rounded up in order to meet the minimum standards. For example, undergraduate students with a 1.999 GPA or graduate students with a 2.999 GPA does not meet the minimum GPA requirements.

#### 2. Completion Rate – Quantitative Measure

All students must complete 67 percent of attempted credits for all enrollment periods. The completion rate is determined by dividing credits earned by the number of credits attempted.

**Please Note:** UIS **DOES NOT** round up. A completion percentage below the exact minimum requirement is not rounded up in order to meet the minimum standards. For example, if the number of credits earned divided by the number of credits attempted equates to .6666667 (a 66 percent completion rate), it will not meet the minimum credits attempted requirement.

### **3. Maximum Timeframe of Eligibility – Quantitative Measure**

All credits transferred to UIS and credits attempted at UIS count towards the maximum credits of eligibility requirements for SAP. Beyond the maximum timeframe, as defined above, students are not eligible for financial aid unless the academic program obtains appropriate authorization for additional credits or an academic advisor approves a student's SAP Degree Audit Appeal.

Students have a period of 150% of the credits required to complete the program to remain eligible for financial aid as indicated by the chart below. Students may request an exception to the maximum timeframe period. Below are examples of as maximum timeframe periods:

<b>ACADEMIC STANDING</b>	<b>IF THE NUMBER OF CREDITS IN A PROGRAM IS...</b>	<b>THEN THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF CREDITS IS....</b>
Bachelor's Degree Students	120 credits	180 credits
Master's Degree Candidate	45 credits	68 credits
Doctoral Degree Candidate	48 credits	72 credits

### **4. Treatment of Special Grades or Coursework**

#### **Incomplete Grades**

Courses for which a student receives a grade of "I" are included in the number of attempted credits but do not count as earned credits for the SAP calculation. An initial SAP calculation will be made; however, the SAP review will be reevaluated when the final grade is updated by the Office of Records and Registration. Therefore, a student may become ineligible due to incomplete grades and would remain ineligible until the grades are updates or an appeal is approved.

#### **Study Abroad**

Grades for credits attempted in study abroad programs are often delayed in being reported to the Office of Records and Registration. Therefore, the SAP status may be adversely affected. These credits are considered attempted but not earned until the official grade is posted. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that official transcripts for study abroad are provided to the Transfer Center in a timely manner.

### **Audited Courses**

Audited courses do not count as credits attempted or earned.

### **Advanced Placement Courses**

Advanced placement (AP) courses accepted from high school that appear on the official college transcript are considered attempted and earned credits for the SAP calculation.

### **English as a Second Language Courses**

English Language Program (ELP) courses are not included in attempted or earned credits, a student's GPA, maximum time frame, and/or completion rate for SAP requirements.

### **Course Withdrawal**

Courses for which a student receives a grade of "W" are included in the number of attempted credits but do not count as earned credits they do not count in the GPA for the SAP calculation.

### **Transfer Credits**

Transfer credits count in the totals for both attempted credits and earned credits. However, accepted transfer credits are not included in the transfer student's overall GPA at UIS.

### **Repeated Courses**

Based on federal regulations, any course that a student has already completed and passed can be taken only one additional time. After one repeated attempt, the course will no longer be eligible for financial aid.

For the purposes of financial aid eligibility, UIS uses the U.S. Department of Education definition that a passing grade is a "D" or higher.

All attempted credits, including credits for repeated courses, are counted in the SAP calculation. However, repeated course(s) are excluded from the GPA calculation for SAP.

### **5. Course in Program of Study (CPoS)**

The US Department of Education limits the amount of credits for which a student may receive financial aid. Under federal regulations, financial aid will pay for only one undergraduate bachelor's degree or the equivalent of 120 credits at UIS. As part of a degree program, students select courses to complete major and general education requirements. Students may review their degree audit to determine how selected courses count in the 120 credits, including transfer credits, advanced placement (AP) or dual enrollment course credits and courses taken at UIS.

**Important note for students considering adding a second major or changing a major:** A student's financial aid eligibility as an undergraduate ends once the student has completed the requirements for one bachelor's degree, even if the student has not applied for graduation and/or intends to complete additional undergraduate coursework. There is no exception to this limit. Students may apply for a second bachelor program, however, will only be eligible for any remaining federal student loan eligibility.

### **Effect of Second Majors**

Students are encouraged to select courses carefully to complete both majors within the 120-credit financial aid limit. Once a student has completed the credits necessary to graduate from either major, financial aid eligibility no longer extends to the maximum timeframe of 150% and ends immediately.

### **Effect of Changing of Majors**

Changing majors will trigger a re-evaluation of all credits on a student's transcript. Courses that counted in one major may be considered electives in another major. Before making these changes, students should review their academic plans and any potential impact on financial aid eligibility with their Academic Advisor.

### **SAP Status Review**

Students who receive or apply for any type of financial aid will have their SAP reviewed by Financial Aid at the end of each semester. Students who do not achieve the required GPA or progress at the required pace are no longer eligible to receive Title IV financial

aid. In addition, other types of state grant, institutional or scholarship aid may also be affected.

All first-time students at UIS (freshmen, transfer students) enter UIS in good academic standing for SAP. Regardless of the initial term (fall or spring), the student will have their SAP reviewed at the end of the spring semester.

For readmitted students, UIS calculates SAP based on all grades and credits. The Grade Exclusion Policy applied by the Office for Records and Registration does not impact the annual SAP status. Readmitted students are encouraged to review the appeal process discussed later in this policy.

Non-Degree Seeking students, not accepted in a degree or certificate program, are not eligible for federal or state financial aid. However, if the student later enrolls in a degree or certificate program, all attempted credits, including those taken while classified as a non-degree seeking student, are used to determine SAP.

The SAP calculation determines the student's financial aid eligibility. The SAP calculation results in the student being assigned to one of the statuses listed below, which may or may not require the student to take action to regain financial aid eligibility. Students may read about their SAP status online via the Financial Aid SAP section of the UIS Enterprise Self- Service website (<https://apps.uillinois.edu/selfservice/>).

### **SAP Warning**

**SAP Warning** - Students who fail to make SAP who were previously in good SAP standing will be given a warning semester in which they will remain eligible for financial aid.

### **SAP Cancellation and Probation**

**SAP Cancellation** - Students are NOT ELIGIBLE for federal, state or institutional financial aid. This status is assigned to students who fail to achieve SAP. In order to regain financial aid eligibility, a student must successfully appeal their suspension under the process set forth below.

**Financial Aid Probation**- Students are ELIGIBLE for federal financial aid only for one semester and not for state or institutional aid. This status is assigned after students completes a successful SAP appeal and it has been determined by the SAP Committee that the student should be able to return to good SAP status by the end of the following

semester. At the completion of the probation semester, the student will be re-evaluated to determine if SAP has been met or not. If SAP requirements are met, the student will regain eligibility for federal, state and/or institutional financial aid programs. If SAP requirements are not met, the student is assigned to continued financial aid probation (as described below) and must follow additional SAP requirements, including the submission of an academic plan.

**Continued Financial Aid Probation** - Students are ELIGIBLE for Title IV federal aid only and not for state or institutional aid. This status is assigned to students, following a successful SAP Appeal, if the SAP Committee has determined that the student will need more than one semester to regain eligibility or the student has not regained eligibility after one term on financial aid probation. Students on continued financial aid probation are required to submit an academic plan for the next two semesters that sets forth a reasonable path toward achieving SAP. If at the end of each semester students do not meet the SAP Academic Plan or overall SAP requirements, they will be put on Final Financial Aid Suspension status

### **SAP Appeal and Academic Plan Process**

Students whose financial aid has been suspended must submit an SAP Appeal in order to be considered for financial aid for the upcoming semester. Appeal decisions are based on the information presented on the appeal forms, supporting documentation and, if needed, successful completion of an academic plan. If applicable, supporting documentation (i.e. medical documents, police reports, obituary, etc.) must be included with the SAP appeal, as set forth below.

The SAP Review Committee meets at least twice a month to review the submitted appeals. The committee consists of Financial Aid personnel. Once decisions are made, the Office of Financial Aid will notify students via their UIS email address of the outcome of the appeal and, if needed, request additional documentation.

Appeal decisions fall into one of the following categories:

- **Approved** – Student eligibility for aid is reinstated
- **Approved with Conditions** – Student must satisfy certain academic conditions in order for aid eligibility to be reinstated
- **Denied** – Student is not eligible for financial aid
- **Denied Failed Plan** – Student not eligible because did not meet the requirements of previous approved plan

The SAP Committee monitors decisions on SAP appeals each semester to ensure consistent application of the policies governing these regulations. Decisions made by the committee are communicated to students within 48 hours of the decision and documented within the student records.

As part of the SAP appeal process, students may choose to provide personal or sensitive information or documentation explaining why they did not meet SAP. Financial Aid personnel review appeals with discretion and maintain confidentiality consistent with university policy. Confidentiality of student records is governed by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and applicable UIS policy (<https://www.vpaa.uillinois.edu/cms/One.aspx?portalId=420456&pageId=468096>) which generally limits access to student education records only to necessary school officials.

The following list outlines the items that are **REQUIRED** for an SAP appeal:

**1. SAP Appeal Form** – This form can be found on the following UIS Financial Aid URL: <https://www.uis.edu/financialaid/forms2021/>. Students are required to complete the entire SAP Appeal form and follow the instructions provided.

**2. SAP Explanation** – Students are required to provide a detailed explanation as to why they did not meet SAP. This explanation should explain the unusual and/or mitigating circumstances that caused an undue hardship affecting the student's academic progress. Such special circumstances may include:

- a severe illness or injury to the student or immediate family member;
- death of a student's relative;
- activation into military services;
- assault, harassment; or
- other circumstances beyond the student's control.

Students need to be specific and provide supporting documentation. All SAP explanations must also outline the steps students are planning to take to ensure future academic success at UIS.

The university will not consider a student's second or subsequent appeal based on the circumstances cited as the basis of any previously denied appeal(s). However, if a previous appeal was denied on the basis of insufficient documentation, then the student may submit additional documentation as a part of the previous appeal. Submission of this additional documentation is not a second or subsequent appeal.



Students who have already satisfied an academic plan and are resubmitting the SAP explanation for continued financial aid eligibility are required to explain only the future steps they plan to take to achieve SAP.

**3. Supporting Documentation** – To demonstrate extenuating circumstance(s), students must attach any supporting documentation from a qualified professional (e.g. physician, counselor, lawyer, social worker, teacher, religious leader, academic advisor, and/or UIS Student Health Services or Counseling Services). All supporting documentation submitted must:

- Reasonably demonstrate the qualified professional's identity and relevant credentials, for example, on official stationery with appropriate signatures or by email from a valid UIS email account.
- Verify that the extenuating circumstance(s) occurred during the timeframe relevant to the appeal.
- Verify that the extenuating circumstance(s) will no longer prevent the student from achieving satisfactory academic performance.
- If the document submitted is an obituary or death notice, then state the student's relationship to the deceased individual.

Insufficient supporting documentation may be grounds for denying a student's appeal. If an appeal based on medical reasons is denied for insufficient documentation, then the student may supplement the appeal with additional documentation. Students who require a reasonable accommodation for a disability may contact the university's ADA Coordinator.

**4. Academic Plan** - Required for students that have exceeded Maximum Timeframe of Eligibility. Students and their academic advisor will complete an academic plan together. The academic plan includes a course planner for the current academic year where the student and advisor plan a reasonably efficient path to graduation. If the student will need longer than one academic year to meet graduation requirements, the academic advisor may provide additional information on the academic plan.

**5. Use this guide to determine the required documentation needed for the SAP Appeal.**

SAP Reason	Documents Needed for SAP Appeal
GPA	<p data-bbox="727 306 1560 338">SAP explanation of circumstances leading to SAP violation</p> <p data-bbox="727 390 1360 422">Steps to manage circumstances in the future</p> <p data-bbox="727 474 1052 506">Proof of circumstances</p>
Completion Rate	<p data-bbox="727 636 1560 667">SAP explanation of circumstances leading to SAP violation</p> <p data-bbox="727 720 1360 751">Steps to manage circumstances in the future</p> <p data-bbox="727 804 1052 835">Proof of circumstances</p>
Maximum Timeframe	<p data-bbox="727 966 1560 997">SAP explanation of circumstances leading to SAP violation</p> <p data-bbox="727 1050 1360 1081">Steps to manage circumstances in the future</p> <p data-bbox="727 1134 1052 1165">Proof of circumstances</p> <p data-bbox="727 1218 1133 1249">Copy of Degree Works audit</p> <p data-bbox="727 1302 1401 1333">Satisfactory Academic Progress Academic Plan</p>

**SAP Appeal Deadlines – Mandatory and Recommended**

UIS considers SAP appeals for the following semester up until 30 days after the last day of the semester in which the student’s financial aid was suspended. Therefore, UIS encourages students to submit appeals as soon as possible but no later than 30 days after receiving the SAP suspension letter.

Completed SAP appeal documents should be directed to:

## UIS Office of Financial Aid

### Forms

The following form is available on the UIS Financial Aid website and is **REQUIRED** along with supporting documentation before the university will review an SAP Appeal:

1. [Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Form](#)

### Related Documents

#### 1. Federal requirements:

Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, Pub. Law 115-134, § 484(c), 20 USC § 1091(c), and implementing regulations, 34 CFR 668.16(e), 34 CFR 668.32(f), 34 CFR 668.34

#### 2. 2018-2019 Federal Student Aid Handbook:

School-Determined Requirements - Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) pp. 1-14 – 1-18

<https://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1819FSAHbkVol1Ch1.pdf>

Students who are ineligible for financial aid because of SAP requirements may be eligible to apply for Private Alternative Educational loans. Information about these can be found at