

## **SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS (SAP POLICY) FOR FINANCIAL AID RECIPIENTS**

All students applying for or receiving US Federal Aid (Stafford and Federal PLUS Loans) at The Graduate Institute must progress satisfactorily towards completion of a chosen academic programme.

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

Our definition of Satisfactory Academic Progress for the purposes of receiving Title IV Federal Loans is measured by:

- Time Frame – Maximum time allowed in completing an academic programme.
- Performance – ECTS credits earned by the student each semester.

### **SAP is assessed as follows:**

**Qualitative standard (grades):** Students must achieve minimum standards as required by the academic department and supervisor (equivalent to a passing grade of 4) and academic standing consistent with graduation requirements. The minimum standards must be met prior to the next disbursement payment period.

Students are evaluated constantly, course by course, throughout the academic year, but their satisfactory academic progress is checked periodically at the end of each semester.

Students receiving financial aid are evaluated at the end of the semester before receiving their second disbursement. This evaluation consists of reviewing both the qualitative measurements<sup>1</sup> of their performance (grades, work projects, class assistance and participation) and quantitative measurements (checking whether they are within the timeframe for completing their degree) in order to determine the student's progress and his eligibility for continued financial aid.

**Quantitative standard (pace):** Students must progress through their programme at a pace which ensures that they will graduate within the maximum timeframe in accordance with the Institute's Academic Regulations. The maximum timeframe for which a student could obtain financial assistance is 150% of the standard, published timeframe for a study programme. For example, a 2 year graduate degree must be completed in no more than 3 years. The 150% maximum timeframe includes any previously transferred/accounted and/or attempted credits. Students must also be studying at least half-time in order to be eligible for federal loans.

All MA programs at the Graduate Institute are 2 year programs.

This time scale includes any previous periods of study at other institutions at the same grade level. Students must normally pass each unit of assessment to gain the

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<sup>1</sup> The grade of 4 is the minimum pass grade which allows students to obtain the ECTS credits associated to the course. This rule applies to all courses offered at the Institute, however, participation and attendance rules vary from programme to programme.

academic credits for that year of study, before being able to progress onto the next year.

All PhD students must have met all of the Institute's progress deadlines plus any written deadlines agreed with their supervisor. The supervisor must agree that progress with research is satisfactory and meeting required timeframes set by them. Furthermore, all PhD students are expected to meet the requirements of the PTD<sup>2</sup>'s (Preliminary Thesis Dissertation) during their third semester.

More information on the requirements of the PTD can be found on:

<http://graduateinstitute.ch/home/students/infoacademic/phd.html>

A student who does not meet the minimum criteria fixed by the Graduate Institute will be eliminated and thus not eligible for federal loans.

## **Academic Progress Review**

Academic progress takes place prior to the next term's disbursement of loans. All students will be subject to a termly confirmation of Satisfactory Academic Progress. The financial Aid Administrator will review the student's records and will reach out to the student's supervisor, academic advisor or Director of studies if needed.

## **Procedure for assessing Satisfactory Academic Progress of US Federal Aid recipients**

The academic progress of students will be assessed prior to the disbursement of Federal Aid at the start of each academic term to determine continued eligibility. The US Loans Administrators will seek confirmation that satisfactory academic progress has been made under the following criteria in line with US Federal Regulations:

- a) The student is on track to complete their academic course as per the Institute's Academic Regulations and no more than 150% of the published length of the programme.
- b) The student's progress is in line with the level expected for his/her academic programme, as defined in the Graduate Institute's Assessment Regulations, and sufficient to enable continued academic progression on their course.

When SAP is confirmed, the students' financial aid will be processed.

## **Financial Aid Warning**

Where the students' academic course does not meet the requirements and the department is unable to confirm that they are making satisfactory academic progress, the student will be issued with a financial aid warning for the next academic term. The student will continue to receive their financial aid during the given term but will be expected to have resumed satisfactory academic progress prior to the next scheduled disbursement of financial aid.

Where satisfactory academic progress is not confirmed by the end of the academic term, the student will be advised in writing that their financial aid will be suspended. The Financial Aid Warning is a one time status and cannot be repeated.

## **Appeals - exceptional circumstances affecting satisfactory academic performance**

A student who has received written advice that their financial aid will be suspended may appeal (within 10 days of receiving written notification) if they consider that exceptional circumstances surrounding their progress can be demonstrated. Such exceptional circumstances include:

- Death in his/her immediate family. Immediate family includes parents, grandparents, spouse, children and siblings.

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<sup>2</sup> The successful defence of the PTD is a requirement for continuing their studies.

- Extended illness of a student that causes the student to be absent from class for at least 15 days or the equivalent in research time.
- Extended illness of a family member that places hardship on the student.
- Student was the victim of a natural disaster that caused him/her to not attend the Institute
- Mitigating circumstances as determined by the Financial Aid Office.

All appeals must be received within ten days of receipt of the Notice of Suspension. Students will be required to indicate why they believe financial aid should not be terminated in their case and provide reasons for failing to meet the satisfactory academic progress requirements. Students will also be required to supply documentary evidence in support of their appeal. This may include:

- Copy of death certificate
- Medical certificate from a registered doctor or psychiatrist
- Bank statements and/or financial accounts
- Other relevant evidence specific to the appeal

Appeals should be submitted to the Financial Aid Office (US Loans Team) located at the Maison de la Paix, 2 chemin Eugène Rigot, 1202 Geneva.

Disbursement of loan funding will not be made while an appeal is being processed. In case of an appeal, the Director of Studies will be notified immediately and will be reviewing each case individually.

The circumstances of the appeal will be considered further and a decision of the appeal will be communicated to the student in writing within 14 days of submission, if all necessary supporting evidence is complete.

Students must indicate in writing the reason(s) for failure to meet the necessary financial aid SAP requirements and why financial aid should not be suspended. In the event of an appeal against a decision of elimination from their studies, the matter may be referred to the competent body. Appeals are then heard by a Commission established for this purpose.

### **Financial Aid Probation**

When an appeal is upheld, the student will have their financial aid reinstated, but will be placed on financial aid probation for the next academic term. The student will be expected to have resumed SAP prior to the next disbursement of financial aid or, meet the conditions of an academic action plan that has been put in place for the student. This will be through consultation with the student's academic advisor or supervisor and with the purpose to ensure that the student is able to meet the satisfactory academic progress standards by a given time.

### **Elimination / Suspension from studies**

If the evaluation results in elimination from their programme and thus suspension from financial aid, the student will be immediately notified by the Director of Studies. The Financial Aid Office will then be instructed to suspend any pending disbursement. The student can appeal if he believes that this evaluation is erroneous in any way.

The Graduate Institute cannot waive the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirement for any student that has applied for financial Aid.

Below are some examples of changes that affect may student's SAP progress:

### **Repetition or reassessment due to academic failure**

A student, who is required to retake a year and is attending at least half time, will be eligible for aid for this repeat year if he/she meets the required pass rates and SAP

warning/probation rules as well as the 150% timeframes, as detailed in this document.

### **Incomplete grades**

Students who have not submitted assessments may have their Title IV loans withdrawn as they may have not met the minimum pass rates and pace of credit completion.

### **Transfer credits**

Transfer credits for the same grade level will count towards the 150% timeframe as detailed in this document.

### **Fail/ Repeat/Pass and Progress**

The Graduate Institute's academic board is responsible for determining students' onward progression, in accordance with the Institute's regulations. In the case where a student is not permitted to progress onto the next semester/year, then no further loans will be payable.

Below are some examples of changes that **do not** affect your SAP progress:

Period of approved suspension/suspension of status, including maternity / paternity / and adoption leave

Change of programme of study