

Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

To be eligible for federal, state, and institutional aid, students are required by the U.S. Department of Education to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Sierra College has established this SAP policy to ensure student success and accountability, and to promote timely advancement toward degree objectives. SAP guidelines are based on reasonable expectations of academic progress toward a degree. Accordingly, these guidelines should not be a hindrance to any student in good academic standing.

Due to the events of COVID-19 and in a letter posted on IFAP dated May 15, 2020 and August 21, 2020 subject: Guidance for Interruptions of Student Related to Coronavirus (COVID-19), the U.S. Department of Education has granted financial aid offices the ability to consider any withdraws during Spring 2020, Summer 2020, Fall 2020, Spring 21, and Summer 21 as a COVID-19 event. The Sierra College Financial Aid Office will not use any W or EW received in Spring 2020, Summer 2020, Fall 2020, Spring 20, and Summer 20 in the calculation of the quantitative component of the calculation of attempted units for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). The student system will be configured in such a way that future terms will recognize this event when SAP is run at the conclusion of each semester.

Note: The Financial Aid Office may change these policies at any time to ensure continued compliance with changes in federal and state regulations regarding student financial aid. As a result, students, must refer to the current catalog. Unlike degree requirements, changes in regulations, policies and procedures are immediate and supersede those in any prior catalog

This policy applies to the following financial aid programs:

- Federal Pell Grant
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)
- Federal Work-Study
- Federal Direct Loans
- California State Cal Grant
- All State funded programs
- Scholarships

Prior to each disbursement, Sierra College will review the qualitative standard (grade point average or GPA) and quantitative standard (pace).

Completed Program:

A student who completes the academic requirements for a program but does not yet have the degree or certificate is not eligible for further additional financial aid without an approved petition. This is discussed later in this section.

Determining Enrollment Status:

Prior to each financial aid disbursement, the Financial Aid Office will verify the number of units a student is enrolled in. For fall 2020, you must be in all units by September 7, 2020. For spring 2021, you must be in all units by February 7, 2021. For summer 2021, you must be in your all units by June 22, 2021. For purposes of the federal satisfactory academic progress, units attempted mean the number of units the student is enrolled in at the time of disbursement for the semester. Financial aid will not be adjusted for adding into courses after majority census or late add courses.

In determining whether or not a student is making satisfactory academic progress (SAP), the student's enrollment status is defined as the number of units the student was enrolled in at the end of the enrollment period.

To be considered fulltime in fall, spring and summer, a student must be enrolled in 12 or more units.

At Sierra College, Satisfactory Academic Progress is defined by the following three criteria:

- (1) Meeting a minimum term and cumulative grade point average requirement (GPA).
- (2) Earning a minimum number of units for credit per semester (Pace of Progression).
- (3) Completing the degree objective within a maximum number of semesters enrolled and a maximum number of units attempted (Maximum Time-Frame Allowance).

Students who do not meet one or more of the above criteria will be considered SAP ineligible for financial aid or will be placed in a financial aid SAP Warning Period.

Grade Point Average Requirement

At Sierra College, you must meet a minimum term and cumulative grade point average of 2.0. Only A, B, C, D, F (+/-) grades are counted in your cumulative grade point average.

Classes in which a student receives a grade of "F", "I", "NP", "MW", "EW" or "W" will not be counted as completed classes for satisfactory academic progress but will be counted as units attempted.

Pace of Progression Requirement

You must complete a minimum number of units each semester (Pace) to ensure completion of the degree within the maximum time frame. To calculate the Pace of Progression, divide the cumulative number of units you have successfully completed by the cumulative number of units you have attempted.

$$\text{Pace of Progression} = \frac{\text{Cumulative and Term Units Completed}}{\text{Cumulative and Term Units Attempted}}$$

You are required to successfully complete a minimum of 67 percent of all attempted units to remain eligible for federal, state, and institutional financial aid. Transfer units are not counted in Pace of Progression but are counted in attempted units.

When students attempt to many units and either withdraw or receive numerous failing grades, they run the risk of not meeting the federally required 67% towards their graduation goal. This is referred to as Pace of Progression towards graduation. When it is determined that it is mathematically impossible to meet the 67%, students are suspended from aid and will not be able to appeal for reinstatement at Sierra College.

Pace of Progression > 67% = SAP eligible

Impact of Grades on Pace of Progression & Maximum Time Frame		
Earned Grade	Count Toward Pace of Progression	Counted Toward Maximum Time Frame

	Units Completed	Units Attempted	
A, B, C, D (=/-)	YES	YES	YES
P	YES	YES	YES
F, I, NP, IP, MW, EW, W	NO	YES	YES

Units earned from credit by examination are not counted for financial aid purposes.

In the determination of enrollment status, it is permissible for a student to count units being taken concurrently at another college. A consortium agreement must be made between the two schools with one school designated as the primary school (from which the student receives financial aid) and the other school as the secondary school. Sierra College would enter into such an agreement if the other school is the primary school. On rare occasions, Sierra College will participate in a consortium agreement only as the primary school.

Because units taken at a proprietary school generally will not transfer, Sierra College will not enter into a consortium agreement with proprietary schools.

Maximum Time Length and Maximum Unit Limitations:

Lastly, you must complete your degree objective within a specified amount of time. The time frame will depend on your enrollment status and educational objective.

For example, if you are enrolled in two-year program requiring 60 units, you will be eligible for financial aid for a maximum of 90 total attempted units (60 credit hours x 150% = 90 credit hours).

The same rule will be applied to students who are enrolled in an eligible certificate program (length of the certificate program x 150% = maximum credits a student may attempt to receive aid).

Transfer units are counted in the Maximum Time Frame Allowance. Up to thirty (30) units of remedial course work will not be counted in your attempted hours.

ESL Units:

All ESL units are treated as remedial coursework and used when calculating total units attempted towards the maximum time length and maximum unit limitations.

Once a student receives a Maximum Unit approved Appeal, they may not change their degree program and continue to receive financial aid. Students will only be allowed to receive aid for those courses reflected on their original Student Education Plan (SEP). Once a student receives an approved Maximum Unit Appeal, courses will be reviewed prior to each payment to ensure that the student is only paid for courses that are on the approved Student Education Plan (SEP). Students will not be required to submit a new Maximum Unit Appeal each semester.

The Financial Aid Office will not review Maximum Unit Appeals until after the add/drop period of each semester. The Financial Aid Advisory Committee may take up to 4 weeks to review a student's appeal.

Exception to this is if a student signs a Maximum Unit Registration Hold Form, available on the web. Maximum Unit Registration Hold: We will make all attempts to review this before the first term disbursement.

Repeated Course Work:

Effective July 1, 2011, per federal regulations, repeated coursework that falls under the following conditions cannot be included in a student's enrollment status for Title IV Federal Aid eligibility, including the Federal Pell Grant and Federal Stafford Loans:

- Repeating a previously passed course more than twice. A course is considered passed if the student receives a grade of D or better.
- Repeating a previously passed course due to failing other coursework.

Details

- Repeated enrollment that is not aid eligible will be excluded from the student's enrollment status for the term.
- Federal Title IV aid will be recalculated based on the student's adjusted enrollment status.
- This recalculation will be applied regardless of whether a student received aid for previous course enrollments.
- Some courses are repeatable per Sierra College policy but are still restricted for Federal Title IV aid by these regulations.
- Waitlisted courses do not count toward official enrollment status for financial aid purposes.

Example:

A student is repeating a previously passed three credit hour course for the third time. The student is enrolled in a total of twelve credit hours for the term. Per federal regulations, the repeated course must be excluded from the student's Title IV enrollment status. Only nine of the student's twelve hours can be used to calculate his Title IV aid eligibility. The student's Federal Pell Grant will be reduced to reflect three quarter time instead of full-time enrollment.

Remedial (including ESL) Course Work:

Sierra College remedial and ESL courses are considered the same as credit courses for tuition, for full-time academic standing and for SAP. Credits for remedial and ESL course work are included in the calculation of the 67% completion requirement.

Transfer Units

It is the student's responsibility to request transcripts from previously attended institutions if the student chooses to apply any of those units toward the current educational objective. Upon the student's request, transcripts from colleges accredited by one of the regional accrediting associations will be evaluated for use toward the student's current educational objective. All units applicable toward the current education objective will be counted when calculating the maximum time frame for financial aid. By federal regulation, all units attempted, although earned before the student was receiving financial aid, will be considered toward the maximum time frame.

Reinstatement

Students who are disqualified due to Cumulative (CUM) GPA may be reconsidered for aid once they have raised their CUM GPA above a 2.0. It will be the responsibility of the student to submit a new Reinstatement Petition.

NOTE: Request for Reinstatement Petitions and Maximum Unit Appeals will not be accepted past June 30th of the current year.

Special Financial Aid Considerations for Students Completing a Degree. Students that have remaining transfer units to complete after being awarded an AA/AS may appeal to continue to receive financial aid. If you are pursuing a transfer, keep in mind that financial aid eligibility is limited once you have completed the requirements for one major or degree. The student and their counselor must ensure these required units for transfer are updated on their Student Educational Plan in Degree Works.

If a student's Maximum Unit Appeal is approved, they will be placed on probation for each term they are in attendance thereafter. Should a student fail to complete at least 67% of their units or achieve a semester GPA of 2.0 or higher, they will be terminated from financial aid and must then submit a Reinstatement Petition for consideration.

Students who are dismissed from the College are not able to receive financial aid. Refer to the Probation, Dismissal & Readmission section of your catalog.

Pell Grants have a lifetime maximum of 18 semesters (6 years) at full-time attendance. Anything less than full-time and your Pell Grant will be prorated.

To check your PACE, you can log into your MySierra

NOTE:

Students who are on a Maximum Unit Appeal may not change their major and expect to receive additional financial aid. Once a student has been placed on an approved Maximum Unit Appeal, we will only use the Comprehensive Student Education Plan provided for the original Maximum Unit Appeal. Once a student receives an approved Maximum Unit Appeal, their courses will be reviewed prior to each payment to ensure that they are only paid for courses that are on their Student Education Plan. Students will not be required to submit a new Maximum Unit Appeal each semester.

Students may only receive two approved Reinstatement Petitions while at Sierra College. To regain eligibility a student must meet PACE.

Students who are accepted into and attending the Nursing Program will not need to submit a Maximum 90 Unit Appeal. It will be granted automatically until the student either graduates from the Nursing Program or is no longer accepted in the program.

Request for Reinstatement Petitions and Maximum Unit Appeals will not be accepted past June 30th of the current year.

Monitoring of Satisfactory Academic Progress

Satisfactory academic progress is monitored for all financial aid applicants at the end of each enrolled semester. The Financial Aid Office monitors grade point average, Pace of Progression, and the Maximum Time-Frame Allowance.

Any student who does not meet Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements will be notified by the Financial Aid Office via your Sierra College e-mail and your status will be updated in MySierra.

The Financial Aid Office will complete the SAP evaluation after the prior semester grades have been officially posted by the Admissions and Records Department. If grades are not made official before the

beginning of the subsequent semester, an otherwise eligible student may have his or her financial aid disbursement delayed. No exception can be made to this process

When Satisfactory Academic Progress is Not Maintained

Maximum Time Frame: If you have reached the Maximum Time-Frame Allowance, you will be ineligible for further financial aid without an approved, written SAP Appeal. For example, if you are enrolled in two-year program requiring 60 units, you will be eligible for financial aid for a maximum of 90 total attempted units (60 credit hours x 150% = 90 credit hours).

Academic Disqualification: If you are academically disqualified from the College, you will be ineligible for further financial aid.

There is no financial aid SAP Warning Period in Maximum Time Frame or Academic Disqualification.

GPA & Pace of Progression: If you do not meet the Pace of Progression or GPA requirements, you will be placed in a semester financial aid SAP Warning Period or SAP termination.

Financial Aid Ineligibility: If the minimum requirements for GPA and Pace of Progression are not met by the end of the Warning Period, you will no longer be considered to be making Satisfactory Academic Progress and will become ineligible for financial aid without an approved, written SAP Appeal.

Regaining Financial Aid Eligibility

With a Grade Change or Academic Improvement if you were placed on a financial aid SAP Warning Period due to insufficient GPA or Pace of progression, your financial aid eligibility can be reinstated within the award year with a grade change, a successful completion of sufficient units or a sufficient improvement in GPA by the end of the Warning Period. If you have received a grade change, please notify the Financial Aid Office in writing once the requirements have been met.

With a SAP Appeal for Maximum Time Frame if you need additional time to complete your degree, you should meet with your academic counselor to complete a Financial Aid Maximum Unit Appeal Form. The Financial Aid Office may increase the Maximum Time Frame for students who have changed majors, are adding a major or have experienced a one-time extenuating circumstance such as illness or injury that has since been resolved. The Financial Aid Office will make no adjustments for declared minors.

With a SAP Appeal for GPA or Pace of Progression you may also appeal the determination that you are not meeting GPA and Pace of Progression requirements. If you have experienced an extended illness, onetime extenuating circumstances that have since been resolved, or enrollment limitations due to academic advisement, meet with your academic counselor to complete a Financial Aid Reinstatement Petition and submit needed documentation as describe within the Petition. Financial Aid Reinstatement Petition

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Appeals

Students must meet with their academic counselors to complete the Reinstatement Petitions or Maximum Unit Appeals. These forms must be submitted with complete supporting documentation to the Financial Aid Office. The SAP Appeal Forms must contain the Student Education Plan your counselor has approved for you. For the appeal to be approved, the Student Education Plan must lead to graduation within 150% of the published degree time.

You must also provide a written appeal letter that includes the following information/explanation:

- What caused your work at Sierra to fall below acceptable standards? Provide a specific explanation.
 - How have those conflicts been resolved?

- How will you maintain good academic standards and progress toward the degree if the appeal is granted?
- If the reason is due to a death in the family, please provide documentation
- If the reason is due to medical reasons, please provide a doctor's notification that you may resume your studies.

Definitions:

Good: A student is considered in good standing if they complete at least 67% of all units enrolled and earned a 2.0 GPA for the semester/term.

Warning: A student will be put into warning status if they fall below the 67% completion rate for the semester. A student will be removed from warning at the end of the next semester if they complete at least 67% of their units with a 2.0 GPA.

Termination: A student is terminated if they were on warning from a previous semester and then completed less than 67% of the courses for which aid was provided or their cumulative GPA was less than 2.0.

Probation: A student is placed on probation if they receive an approved Reinstatement Petition or Maximum Unit Appeal. A student may continue on probation if their CUM GPA is below a 2.0 but their term GPA is above a 2.0. This is considered making progress (PACE) term-by-term. A student may be removed from probation if they complete at least 67% of their units and achieve a CUM GPA of 2.0.

If a student's Maximum Unit Appeal is approved, they will be placed on probation for each term they are in attendance thereafter. Should a student fail to complete at least 67% of their units or achieve a semester GPA of 2.0 or higher, they will be terminated from financial aid and must then submit a Reinstatement Petition for consideration.

67% Completion rate (PACE): Students must pass at least 67% of their coursework each semester and overall.