



## SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY

### *Graduate & Bachelor's Plus Students*

#### INTRODUCTION

Federal regulations require that an institution develop and enforce a satisfactory academic progress (SAP) policy for all Ashland University students. This policy is administered by the Financial Aid Office and pertains to all graduate students (including Pre-Doctor of Ministry and bachelor exempt) and Bachelor's Plus students enrolled at AU.

This is a separate policy and appeal process from the academic policy administered by the Academic Standards and Graduation Committee. Therefore, students may be permitted to enroll at Ashland University but may not be financial aid eligible due to not meeting the standards in the SAP policy.

#### STANDARDS OF MEASUREMENT

Ashland University is required to monitor academic progress based upon the *qualitative* and *quantitative* standards in this SAP policy. It is the recipient's responsibility to ensure they are meeting these standards to maintain financial aid eligibility. Annual reviews take place at the conclusion of the spring semester. Reviews include all periods of enrollment, including those for which the student did not receive Title IV aid.

Measurement	Standard of Measurement	Evaluation Timeline
Qualitative	<i>Cumulative</i> grade point average (GPA)	Annually
Quantitative	Pace of Completion	Annually
Quantitative	Maximum Timeframe	Annually

#### Qualitative Standards

Grade Point Average (GPA) – Students must achieve a minimum *cumulative* grade point average (GPA). Students who do not meet GPA standards will immediately lose financial aid eligibility.

Students in the *Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing* program must demonstrate reasonable progress towards annual completion of credit hours of relevant coursework as determined by the Financial Aid Office and the MFA department. A grade of “S” is assigned a 3.00 grade value in order to generate a cumulative GPA for satisfactory academic progress review purposes. Students who receive a “U” are required to retake the course and cannot proceed to the next course until they pass. Students academically dismissed from the MFA program are ineligible for aid at Ashland University.

Academic Degree/Program	Minimum Cumulative GPA
Bachelor's Plus	3.00
Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing	
Master of Arts in American History & Government	
Master of Arts in Strategic Communication & Leadership	
Master of Arts in Teaching American History & Government	
Master of Business Administration	
Master of Education	
Master of Science in Applied Physiology of Exercise	
Master of Science in Business Analytics	
Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies	
Master of Science in Supply Chain Management	
Graduate Certificates	
Doctor of Nursing Practice	
Doctor of Education in Leadership Studies	3.20
ATS Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC)	3.00
ATS Master of Arts (non-CMHC program)	2.00
ATS Master of Divinity	
ATS Doctor of Ministry (including Pre-DMin)	
ATS Graduate Certificates	

*ATS = Ashland Theological Seminary*

### Quantitative Standards

**Pace of Completion** – Students must successfully complete at least 66.67% of their *cumulative* attempted credits. Attempted credits are determined by the number of credits a student is registered for at the end of the drop date for any registered course. This percentage will be calculated by taking the number of completed credits divided by the number of attempted credits. Students who do not meet this standard at the time of review will immediately be ineligible for financial aid. Reinstatement of aid may occur through the appeal process or once the student attains the required percentage of completed credits at Ashland University, provided the student meets all other policy standards.

**Maximum Timeframe** – The maximum timeframe for Graduate and Bachelor Plus students to complete their program of study is 150% of the minimum degree/licensure requirements rounded up to the nearest full credit hour. After exceeding the 150% maximum timeframe restriction, the student is no longer eligible for financial aid. Classes withdrawn after the drop deadline for that semester will be considered attempted credits for maximum timeframe purposes. A chart showing the maximum timeframe hours for all AU Graduate and Bachelor Plus programs is available on our website at <http://www.ashland.edu/sap-max-credits>.

Additionally, a student who cannot mathematically complete a degree within the allotted maximum credits is also ineligible for aid. Affected students who have reached or exceeded the credit hours allowed due to academic program changes, changes in major, transfer hours accepted from other schools, or pursuit of a second degree (e.g. a second Master of Education degree) can have their status reviewed by submitting an appeal.

**ADDITIONAL FACTORS IMPACTING SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS**

Repeated Coursework – A student who repeats a failed course will receive financial aid for the repeated course each time it is attempted. A student who repeats a previously passed course in order to receive a higher grade can only receive financial aid for the repeated course one time. Repeat coursework will count towards the number of attempted hours for pace of completion and maximum timeframe purposes; however, only the highest grade will be used in the calculation of the student's grade point average.

Transfer Credits – Transfer credits do not impact a student's Ashland University GPA, and thus are not included when evaluating the *grade point average (GPA)* standard in this policy. In addition, the number of semesters attended at another school will not be considered when determining the minimum cumulative GPA required. Transfer credits will impact a student's pace of completion and maximum timeframe calculation, regardless if courses are relevant or not to the student's current major or program.

Incomplete Grades or Approved Extensions – A course assigned a grade of "I" or "E" is considered an "F" until the course is completed. It is the student's responsibility to notify the Financial Aid Office once the course has been assigned another grade.

S, P, and U Grades – A course assigned a grade of "S" (satisfactory) or "P" (passing) is assigned a 3.00 grade value and is factored into the cumulative GPA for satisfactory academic progress purposes only. A grade of "U" (unsatisfactory) is not assigned a grade value and is not factored into the cumulative GPA.

Course Withdrawals – Financial aid eligibility may be affected if a student elects to remove a class from their schedule after the semester drop date and a "W" grade is assigned on their transcript. These courses will be considered attempted courses for pace of completion and maximum timeframe purposes; however, they will not be factored into the cumulative GPA.

Audited Courses – Audited courses refer to any credit course which a student attends as a listener only with a prior understanding between school officials and the student that such attendance will not result in credit being granted toward graduation. Audited courses will not be factored into SAP calculations.

**SAP APPEALS**

Students not meeting the minimum standards for satisfactory academic progress are ineligible for federal, state, and institutional financial aid (e.g. grants, scholarships, work study and loans). Students will be notified of their Title IV aid ineligibility via email and Self-Service if they are not meeting the minimum standards for satisfactory academic progress. However, students may request reinstatement of their financial aid eligibility by submitting an appeal to the Financial Aid Office. The appeal must explain the unusual or extenuating circumstances that prevented the student from meeting satisfactory academic progress standards and what has changed that will allow them to meet satisfactory academic progress standards during the next evaluation. Unusual or extenuating circumstances may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Death of a relative
- Family difficulties, such as divorce or illness
- Injury or illness of the student
- Severe mental or emotional stress
- Physical or mental hardship

The following circumstances are not considered unusual or extenuating and beyond the student's control:

- Not knowing the SAP deadline, policy or procedure
- Work conflicts
- Voluntary overtime
- Circumstances not date-aligned with SAP issue

**All three elements of the SAP policy (GPA, pace and maximum timeframe) are appealable; however, each element may warrant its own reasoning for failure to abide by SAP standards.** SAP appeals must be submitted and approved for a student to be placed on financial aid probation and financial aid reinstated. Students may be placed on financial aid probation for only one payment period, at the end of which the student is expected to meet SAP standards. If the student fails to make SAP by the end of the payment period on which he or she was on financial aid probation, the student will become ineligible for financial aid for the payment period following that in which the student failed to meet financial aid SAP standards. Students can submit another financial aid appeal explaining why they were unable to meet appeal conditions. New documentation supporting the extenuating circumstance must accompany subsequent appeal requests.

### **SAP APPEAL PROCESS**

Students may request reinstatement of their financial aid eligibility by submitting an appeal via Etrieve, found under [Financial Aid Forms](#), to the Financial Aid Office. The signed appeal must explain and provide supporting documentation for the unusual or extenuating circumstances that prevented the student from meeting satisfactory academic progress standards and what has changed that will allow them to meet satisfactory academic progress standards during the next evaluation. Upon submission of the Etrieve form, the form will be forwarded to the Financial Aid Office workflow for review.

SAP appeals will be accepted throughout the academic year. SAP appeals requesting reinstatement of financial aid for the current academic term must be submitted two weeks prior to the end of the academic term. There is no limit to the number of SAP appeals a student may submit. If a student wishes to contest a denied SAP appeal, they must contact [financialaid@ashland.edu](mailto:financialaid@ashland.edu).

Note: Per federal regulations, students paying for classes on their own or sitting out for an enrollment period is not sufficient to re-establish eligibility for Title IV aid.

### **SAP APPEAL DOCUMENTATION**

Attached to and accompanying your SAP appeal should be date-specific supporting documentation. Failure to submit supporting documentation may result in the denial of your SAP appeal and continuing ineligibility of Title IV and institutional aid. Examples of acceptable documentation include, but is not limited to:

- Letter from a physician or counselor on letterhead
- Third-party documentation of death such as an obituary, funeral notice, or death certificate
- Accident reports, police records, court records, etc.
- Documentation to support attempting more than the maximum number of units allowed for your program (Maximum Time Limit appeals only)

Note: You will not have an opportunity to meet with the SAP committee, so it is important that your appeal includes all necessary information at the time of submission.

## **ACADEMIC PLANS**

For GPA and pace appeals, if it is not mathematically possible for a student to regain Satisfactory status with one additional semester under Financial Aid Probation, an appeal may be approved for a longer period of time under an Academic Plan. Academic Plans are developed to bring the student back into compliance with SAP standards by a specific point in time provided the student follows the plan. All maximum timeframe appeals require, and are incorporated with, an academic plan as it is not mathematically possible to complete the academic program within 150% of the minimum degree/licensure requirements.

Academic Plans must be completed in consultation with your academic advisor and reviewed by the Financial Aid Office prior to approval. The student's academic progress will be reevaluated by the Financial Aid Office each semester to determine if appeal conditions were met. Students who meet all appeal conditions for the semester will be approved to receive aid for the next semester. If the student on an academic plan fails to adhere to the requirements in the plan and is not making satisfactory academic progress, the student will become ineligible for financial aid for the payment period following that in which the student failed to adhere to the Academic Plan. Students can submit another financial aid appeal explaining why they were unable to meet appeal conditions. New documentation supporting the extenuating circumstance must accompany subsequent appeal requests.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS**

There is no requirement for a student to contact the Financial Aid Office before submitting an appeal. If there are any questions regarding the SAP appeal process, students can submit any inquiries to [financialaid@ashland.edu](mailto:financialaid@ashland.edu).

Students will be notified via email of the committee's decision regarding their SAP appeal. Additionally, the decision will be notated in the student's file. The Financial Aid Office will reach out to the student if any additional documentation is required.

## **INTERPRETATION AND ENFORCEMENT**

The Executive Director of Financial Aid will have primary responsibility for the interpretation and enforcement of this policy. Unusual issues related to this policy may be directed to the Financial Aid Office.

## **CONSUMER INFORMATION**

Information published regarding SAP appeals and policy can be found on our Consumer Information webpage linked [here](#). Any revisions to appeal policies will take effect immediately upon publication to our webpage linked [here](#). However, currently approved academic plans will not be affected by any published revisions.

## APPENDIX

The following definitions apply to this financial aid SAP policy only. Please refer to the academic catalog on Ashland University website for the specific academic requirements for the University or your program of study.

1. **Academic Plan:** A guided plan of action assigned to students who are mathematically unable to meet SAP standards after one semester.
2. **Enrollment Status:** Based on the number of credits enrolled during a regular semester:

Enrollment Status	Bachelor's Plus and *Pre-Dmin	Bachelor's Exempt		▲ Graduate	Doctor of Ministry
	<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>Less than 90 Credit Hours</i>	<i>90 or more Credits Hours</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>
Full-time	12	12	6	6	4
Three-quarter time	9	9	N/A	N/A	N/A
Half-time	6	6	3	3	2

\* Eligibility for financial aid is limited to one-year for Pre-Doctor of Ministry students.

▲ Also applicable to Doctorate of Education and Doctorate of Nurse Practitioner students.

3. **Financial Aid:** Title IV federal, state and/or institutional aid. Institutional aid includes any scholarship or discounts including tuition waiver or tuition exchange.
4. **Grade Point Average (GPA):** A measure of a student's academic achievement at an institution calculated by dividing the total number of grade points earned by the total number of credit hours completed.
5. **Grade of Incomplete (I) or Extension (E):** A grade assigned by a professor allowing the student more time to complete course requirements.
6. **Graduate Student:** A student attending Ashland University or Ashland Theological Seminary (ATS) who has earned a Bachelor's degree and is pursuing additional education in a specific field. Students designated as bachelor's exempt may be considered undergraduate students for financial aid purposes until specific criteria are met. Pre-Doctor of Ministry and Bachelor Plus students are not considered graduate students but must meet the academic standards included in the Graduate and Bachelor's Plus SAP policy.
7. **Maximum Timeframe:** An institution must establish a maximum timeframe in which a student is expected to complete degree requirements for each program of study. The maximum timeframe is 150% of the minimum degree/licensure requirements rounded up to the nearest full credit hour.

8. **Preparatory Coursework:** A student not enrolled in a degree program is eligible for Federal Direct Subsidized/Unsubsidized Loans for up to one consecutive 12-month period beginning on the first day of the loan period if the coursework taken is necessary for enrollment in an eligible program. The courses must be part of an eligible program otherwise offered by the school though the student does not have to be in that program.
9. **Repeated Course:** Any courses a student has completed and is now enrolling in again either due to failure to meet program requirements or to obtain a better grade.
10. **Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP):** There are minimum standards for GPA, pace of completion and maximum timeframe that a student must meet in order to be eligible for financial aid as outlined in this SAP policy.
11. **Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Statuses**
  - **Satisfactory** – student is eligible to receive financial aid.
  - **Unsatisfactory** – student is not eligible for financial aid since SAP standards are not met.
  - **Maximum Timeframe Exceeded** – student is not eligible for financial aid since the 150% maximum timeframe restriction has been reached.
12. **Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Appeal Statuses:** a student not meeting satisfactory academic progress standards can request the reinstatement of financial aid through an appeal process. Possible appeal results may include:
  - **Approved under a one-semester probation** – the student has been granted one additional semester of financial aid eligibility to reach SAP standards.
  - **Approved under an academic plan** – the student has been granted one or more semesters of financial aid eligibility to reach the standards outlined in this policy.
  - **Approved maximum timeframe extension** – the student can receive financial aid to complete their degree up to the number of semesters specified in their approved appeal.
  - **Denied** – the student cannot receive financial aid based on the appeal submitted.
  - **Denied Forever** – the student cannot receive financial aid and is not eligible to re-appeal.
13. **Transfer Credits:** Courses taken at another institution that are accepted by Ashland University. Transfer credits count toward the student's pace of completion and maximum timeframe calculation.