

## **Gaston College Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards and Policies**

All financial aid recipients are required to meet satisfactory academic progress (SAP) according to federal regulations and policies set by Gaston College. The intent of these policies is to ensure that students who are receiving financial aid are making measurable progress toward completion of an approved program of study. Satisfactory Academic Progress is evaluated by the qualitative, quantitative, and maximum timeframe standards outlined below.

### **Progress Standards**

In determining a student's SAP status, all credit hours, including transfer credit, and all periods of attendance at Gaston College, are included regardless of whether financial aid was received for these periods. Students must meet the following progress standards in order to maintain Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress and receive financial aid:

#### **Qualitative Standard**

Students must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.0 each semester as computed by the Financial Aid Office. This may be different from your transcript GPA.

#### **Quantitative Standard**

Students must successfully complete 67% of the cumulative credit hours attempted each semester. For example, if the student has attempted 50 credit hours, the student must successfully complete 33 credit hours (50 hours attempted x 67% = 33 hours). Successful completion is defined as the number of credit hours from each term at Gaston for which the student received a passing grade of "A", "B", "C", "D", "P", "P1", "P2", or "P3".

#### **Maximum Time Frame Eligibility Requirements**

Students must complete their program of study in a time frame not to exceed 150% of the published length of the program. For instance, if the published length of an academic program is 64 credit hours, the maximum eligibility timeframe cannot exceed 96 (64 x 150%) attempted credit hours. If a student is pursuing more than one program of study, maximum timeframe standards of 150% will be applied toward the most recent major for all attempted hours.

### **Monitoring**

The Financial Aid & Veterans Affairs Office will monitor satisfactory academic progress for all enrolled students who have applied for or are receiving financial aid to ensure that they are making progress toward program completion. SAP will be reviewed for all students at the end of each semester.

In order to measure a student's satisfactory progress toward his or her current major, the student's total academic record at Gaston College will be evaluated whether or not the student received financial aid for the entire time of enrollment.

### **Satisfactory Academic Progress Notifications**

Students who are placed on financial aid Warning, Suspension, Probation or have exceeded Maximum Time Frame will be notified by the Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs Office via letter and email. Students at satisfactory status are notified of their status via email.

## Financial Aid Statuses

**Satisfactory:** Satisfactory status is achieved when all criteria explained above are met.

**Warning:** Students are placed on financial aid “Warning” status for one semester the first time the student fails to meet SAP standards at the end of a semester. Students will continue to be eligible for financial aid for one semester only during the Warning period. The student is responsible for regaining satisfactory academic progress standards by the end of the warning period in order to continue receiving financial aid.

**Suspension:** Students who fail to regain SAP at the end of the Warning period will be placed on financial aid “Suspension” status. The student is no longer eligible for financial aid and his or her aid is terminated immediately. Any financial aid previously awarded before the suspension occurred will be terminated and will not be re-instated without an appeal. The suspension status will remain until the student enrolls in a future semester(s), without financial aid, and regains satisfactory academic progress.

**Probation:** Students are placed on financial aid “Probation” status when the suspension status is appealed and approved. Financial aid will be reinstated during the probationary term. Students on probation must maintain a term GPA of 2.00 and a 100% term completion rate. If a student withdraws or fails a course during a term which drops the term completion rate below 100%, or does not maintain a term GPA of 2.00, the appeal is terminated and the student will return to a financial aid Suspension status.

**Termination:** Students are to adhere to the academic plan they created when the appeal was approved and maintain a term GPA of 2.00 and a 100% term completion rate. If the student does not, he or she will be placed on Financial Aid “Termination.” The student will lose financial aid eligibility and will have to enroll in additional hours without financial aid before another appeal will be considered.

**Maximum Time Frame:** Students who have attempted the maximum allowable credit hours, 150% of their program of study, will have their financial aid suspended. Maximum time frame appeals are typically considered for up to two semesters of additional eligibility under extraordinary circumstances, most commonly to allow the student to graduate.

## Appeals and Academic Plans

Students who have been suspended from receiving financial aid may appeal to the Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs Office to request the academic progress requirements only where there are extenuating circumstances. A student may complete the Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Request form that explains the extenuating circumstances that have affected academic performance and what has changed that will allow him/her to now maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress. If a student can regain the required cumulative 2.0 GPA and cumulative 67% completion rate within one semester of enrollment, an appeal may be approved without an academic plan.

Students who cannot regain financial aid eligibility after one semester on an appeal must complete an academic plan. A plan outlines what classes the student will need to take each semester while working toward gaining financial aid eligibility. The plan will also outline the number of semesters a student will need to complete to bring them back to satisfactory progress and regain financial aid. The student must adhere to the requirements of the plan to continue receiving aid. A semester GPA of 2.0 and 100% completion rate is required for each semester of the academic plan or the student will be placed back on suspension.

These forms, along with supporting documentation (required), must be submitted to the Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs Office. Circumstances may include, but are not limited to, serious injury, death of a family member, or other extenuating circumstances that occurred during the term the student received failing grades and/or withdrew from classes.

If a status of Suspension is appealed and approved, a status of Probation is assigned. This status requires students to maintain both a term GPA of 2.00 and a 100% term completion rate. In order to achieve a 100% completion rate, a student must successfully complete each course enrolled for the term. If a student

withdraws or fails a course during a term which drops the term completion rate below 100%, or does not maintain a term GPA of 2.00, the appeal is terminated and the student will return to a Suspension status.

If an appeal is denied, the student will be advised on how many courses they will need to pay for out-of-pocket before they may be eligible to re-appeal.

Students may submit more than one appeal throughout their academic career; however, appeals based off the same recurring circumstances will not be considered.

## Treatment of Selected Grades

**Withdrawals** – Grades of "WA" or "WI" are included in attempted hours, but do not count toward successfully completed hours and will not count in the GPA. Grades of "WE" (COVID-19 Related), are not included in attempted hours and will not count in the GPA. Students who withdraw may have difficulty meeting the satisfactory academic progress requirements. If a student does not formally withdraw from a course but simply stops attending, the last date of attendance or activity will be used in determining the student's unofficial withdrawal date. Please see the Gaston College Unofficial Withdrawal policy for additional information.

**Incompletes, Failing, and Missing Grades** – Grades of "I", "F", or "X" are included in attempted hours, but do not count toward successfully completed hours. Grades of "IE" (COVID-19 Related) are not included in attempted hours and will not count in the GPA. In addition, grades of "F" negatively affect GPA and completion rate. Students with incompletes (I) or missing grades (X) may have difficulty meeting the satisfactory academic progress (completion) requirements at the time of evaluation but may request re-evaluation upon completion and receiving a final grade.

**Audit and No Show** – Grades for audit ("AU") or no show ("NS") are not considered attempted coursework. Neither of these is included in the grade point average or completion rate determinations. A student cannot receive financial aid for courses that he or she audits or is considered a no show.

**Credit-by-Exam** – Credit-by-exam ("CE") is not included in the enrollment hours for purposes of awarding financial aid; however, the attempted and completed credits are counted in each component of the quantitative standard.

**Developmental Courses** – Courses numbered less than 100, in which the student receives a "P", "P1", "P2", "P3", or "R" grade, are not included in GPA calculations, but are included when calculating the 67% completion rate. Financial aid recipients may receive financial aid for a maximum of 30 attempted credit hours of developmental courses. Developmental hours are excluded from total attempted hours for maximum timeframe calculation purposes.

**Repeat Courses** – For financial aid purposes, all repeated credits are included as hours attempted and count towards maximum time frame requirements. Students are allowed to re-take a previously passed course once. Students who fail a course may repeat it as long as it falls within the College's repeat policy.

**Transfer Credit** – Transfer credits from other institutions that are accepted by the College are factored into the completion rate requirement and maximum timeframe as both attempted and completed credits. Developmental credit hours from other North Carolina community colleges may be included as transfer credit.

## Change of Majors

Students who change their major are still responsible for maintaining satisfactory academic progress in accordance with the procedures as outlined. A review of satisfactory academic progress will be based on the student's current major. For example, changing from an associate program into a diploma or certificate program will reduce the maximum number of hours, and the student may lose federal and state eligibility immediately upon making the change. Please contact the Financial Aid/VA office prior to any major changes.

## Complete Academic Record

In order to measure a student's satisfactory progress toward an eligible major, the student's total academic record at Gaston College must be evaluated whether or not the student received financial aid for the entire time of enrollment. This includes, but is not limited to, courses taken while in high school. When students complete course work for more than one program, College and financial aid academic progress standards must be met for all programs to receive financial aid.

## Returning Students

Returning students are evaluated on a continuing basis from the first enrollment at Gaston College unless an extenuating circumstance is considered. Returning students who were previously enrolled under an academic progress policy other than the current academic progress policy will be required to meet the standards of the current policy upon returning. Please be aware that grades excluded with Academic Forgiveness still apply toward Satisfactory Academic Progress for financial aid.

## Regaining Eligibility

Students who attend Gaston College may regain financial aid eligibility by achieving a cumulative 67% completion rate and earning a cumulative 2.0 GPA; maximum timeframe eligibility must also be maintained. A student may request reconsideration of eligibility for financial aid by submitting a written request to the Office of Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs once all requirements are met.

YOUR COURSEWORK MUST BE RESTRICTED TO THE MAJOR THAT IS ON FILE IN THE OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR. STUDENTS SHOULD CONTACT THE FINANCIAL AID OFFICE BEFORE CHANGING PROGRAMS, AUDITING AND/OR WITHDRAWING FROM ANY COURSES.

***DISCLAIMER: Gaston College reserves the right to change this policy at any time, and without notice.***