

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

**(Taken from pages 27-32 of the 2011-2012 Academic Catalog)**

Federal student financial assistance regulations require Sterling College, as an institution offering federal student financial assistance, to measure Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) of each attending student on a regular basis. **SAP, as assessed by Sterling College's Financial Aid Office, is separate and distinct from a student's academic standing as determined by his/her college or academic unit at Sterling College.** SAP is a method of measuring a student's progress toward program completion. To be eligible for federal aid, a student must maintain satisfactory academic progress. SAP is measured through the use of qualitative and quantitative tests. Qualitative tests reference a student's grades (e.g. cumulative GPA) and quantitative tests reference how much time has elapsed since the student began his/her program of study (i.e. length/duration).

Students who are placed on SAP exclusion, as detailed below, are ineligible to receive federal student financial assistance. Examples of assistance include: Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), Federal Perkins Loan, Federal Work Study, Federal Direct Loan (subsidized and/or unsubsidized), Federal Direct Parent PLUS Loan, Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant, and the Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant.

Sterling College's Financial Aid Office is responsible for measuring SAP for the purposes of monitoring federal student aid eligibility. The Satisfactory Academic Progress standards outlined in this policy are as strict as or stricter than Sterling College's institutional academic progress policies for students pursuing an educational credential. Specifically, Sterling College's degree requirements do not impose a set time frame in which a student must have successfully completed his/her academic program.

### **SAP Evaluation Increments**

In accordance with the final program integrity regulations, published October 29, 2010, on the topic of SAP by the U.S. Department of Education, Sterling College's Office of Financial Assistance has elected to measure SAP at the conclusion of each regularly scheduled semester/term. At Sterling College the semester/term represents a student's payment period for federal financial assistance. Consequently, SAP will be measured in increments of single terms, i.e. at the conclusion of each fall, spring, and summer term.

### **Quantitative Measure**

Sterling College's Financial Aid Office utilizes two quantitative tests to measure a student's pace as well as maximum timeframe toward his/her degree completion. These quantitative tests are:

- Ratio of Attempted to Completed Units Single Term Test
- Ratio of Attempted to Completed Units Cumulative Test

The maximum attempted units may not exceed 150% of the published length of the educational program. Where a student has successfully transferred course credits from other post-secondary institutions to Sterling College, those credits are included in the Maximum

Attempted Units Test noted above. More specifically, each credit successfully transferred to Sterling College is considered to represent one attempted unit which was successfully completed.

### **Qualitative Measure**

Sterling College's Financial Aid Office utilizes a qualitative test to measure a student's academic standing necessary to complete his/her degree program. The Cumulative GPA Test is utilized by Sterling College's Financial Aid Office to measure the qualitative component of SAP for its undergraduate student population. To pass this test, undergraduate students with less than 32 credit hours must maintain a cumulative GPA of 1.85 or higher; undergraduate students with 32 or more hours must maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.000 or higher.

### **SAP Statuses and Implications**

As students' SAP is evaluated at the regularly scheduled increments, Sterling College's Financial Aid Office will typically confer one of five differing SAP statuses upon a student. They are:

- **Good Standing** – This status is indicative that a student has successfully passed all of the applicable quantitative and qualitative tests that were deployed in evaluating his/her SAP status. The student has passed the SAP eligibility criteria to receive federal student financial assistance.
- **Warning** – Since Sterling College's Financial Aid Office endeavors to evaluate student SAP at the conclusion of each regularly scheduled term (fall, spring, summer), a student may be placed on SAP Warning. A student who has been placed on Warning from a previous status of Good Standing retains his/her federal student aid eligibility for one subsequent term of enrollment. A student on Warning status is not required to successfully appeal his/her SAP status to receive federal student financial assistance. Typically, a status of Warning will be conferred on a student when his/her SAP status of Good Standing is downgraded at a subsequent evaluation where the student fails to pass one or more of the applicable SAP tests outlined above.
- **Exclusion** – This status indicates that the student is no longer eligible to receive federal student financial aid. Typically, a status of Exclusion will be conferred on a student where he/she failed to pass all of the deployed SAP tests following a term in which his/her status had been determined to be Warning. A student may also be placed on exclusion from a previous SAP status of Probation-Academic Plan where the student failed to meet the academic expectations for the term in review.
- **Probation – Academic Plan** - This status allows a student to receive federal financial assistance for a potential period of time greater than one term following the successful appeal by the student of his/her SAP Exclusion status. This status may be conferred on a student by the Financial Aid Office utilizing professional judgment after reviewing the student's SAP appeal filed in response to an Exclusion status. This status requires the creation of an academic plan that outlines academic recovery objectives over consecutive terms. A student with a status of Probation – Academic Plan is evaluated at the conclusion of each term in an effort to determine if the

student has successfully met the objectives for that particular term. Provided the student meets the objectives for a given term, he/she will remain on the Probation – Academic Plan status and will not be required to file an additional SAP appeal. Conversely, if a student with an SAP status of Probation – Academic Plan fails to meet the objectives for a given term, as set out as a condition of this status, the student’s SAP will be downgraded to Exclusion with the resulting loss of federal student eligibility at the time of evaluation.

## **Appeals**

Students who have been placed on Exclusion status may file an appeal with Sterling College’s Financial Aid Office. The appeal must include:

- contact information for the student,
- a statement from the student detailing the cause(s) for his/her failure to meet the SAP standards as well as his/her plans for future academic improvement, and
- a statement from the student’s academic advisor and/or representative from his/her academic department/college corroborating the student’s academic improvement plans.

The above noted appeal may be filed utilizing an SAP Appeal form which may be obtained under the forms link on the Financial Aid webpage. Alternatively, the appeal may be submitted in whole via e-mail communication with the office by the student.

Upon receipt of the completed appeal, a financial aid staff member will review the information provided to determine if the student has encountered mitigating circumstances that warrant the continuation of federal student eligibility even though the student is not currently meeting the established SAP standards. An appeal may be approved or denied. SAP appeal determinations are final and may not be contested.

## **Probationary Period**

In the event that the SAP appeal is approved, a SAP status of Probation – Single Term or Probation – Academic Plan will be conferred on the student.

As a condition of the Probation statuses, the Financial Aid Office may set specific academic requirements. The requirements may include any combination of the following:

- successful completion of a set number of units for one or more academic terms,
- attainment of a set percentage of attempted vs. completed for one or more terms,
- attainment of a specific term GPA for one or more terms, and/or
- setting a limit on the number of units attempted for one or more terms interruption of one or more terms.

## **Regaining Eligibility**

Typically, to be conferred the SAP status of Good Standing a student must pass all of the quantitative and qualitative measurements applicable to his/her academic career as described in both the Quantitative Measurement and Qualitative Measurement sections above.

However, on a case-by-case basis the Financial Aid Office may place a student on SAP Good Standing status where it has been determined that unique circumstances to the student render an incomplete assessment of the student's true SAP status via the systematic tests deployed.

### **Communication of SAP Statuses**

Generally, the Financial Aid Office makes no special provision to inform a student that he/she has a SAP status of Good Standing. The communications outlined below typically take the form of either a paper or electronic (e-mail) notification. Electronic communications are sent to the student's official campus e-mail address.

- If it has been determined that a student has either a SAP status of Warning or Exclusion, the Financial Aid Office will communicate this status to the student along with the implications of the status in regard to federal eligibility.
- Probationary SAP status such as Probation- Academic Plan are communicated to the student upon the successful completion of the student's appeal process.
- In the event that a SAP appeal is denied, a communication is sent to the student when the determination is made.