



## Satisfactory Academic Progress

All federal financial assistance programs are authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended, and require the College of Law to establish minimum standards of academic progress that a student must meet to maintain general eligibility for financial aid. Students must make Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to remain eligible for federal aid such as Stafford Loans and Graduate PLUS Loans. SAP standards are used solely to determine federal financial aid eligibility; they do not cancel, modify, or override College of Law academic policies regarding academic probation, exclusion, or other academic requirements.

- A. SAP Standards:** Stetson University College of Law has adopted the following standards for measuring SAP<sup>1</sup>:
- 1. Qualitative SAP standard:** To be eligible for federal financial aid and considered as having made SAP, a J.D. student must maintain the minimum cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) required by College of Law policies relating to academic exclusion and readmission. LL.M. students have a different grading system. In any given semester, LL.M. students must not receive a grade of Credit, Fail, or X in more than 50% of the credits attempted in that semester. Additionally, after the first semester, in all credits attempted at the College of Law, the student may not receive a grade of Credit, Fail, or X in more than 30% of the credits attempted. Student transcripts will be verified at the end of each semester or grading period to ensure they meet the SAP standard for their program.
  - 2. Quantitative SAP standard:** To complete the degree requirements for graduation within the maximum time limit and considered as having made SAP, a student should successfully complete 67% of the cumulative credit hours attempted each semester, including Stetson summer study abroad. Attempted credits include any hours for which a student is registered at the conclusion of the relevant drop/add period. Any attempted credits that are canceled and removed from a student's transcript (e.g., via withdrawal) are still considered attempted credits for purposes of determining financial aid eligibility under this policy. Attempted credits include all grades, including 0.00, "U," "Fail," "X," "W," and

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<sup>1</sup> All coursework attempted where credit is applied to Stetson University College of Law degree programs will be evaluated for SAP. This includes live courses, online/distance education, dual degree programs and study- or semester-abroad courses.

“I.” Credits earned in a course for which an “I” grade was initially assigned and for which a Satisfactory Grade is then substituted count as earned credits. Grades of 0.75 to 4.00, and grades of “S+,” “S,” “S-,” “High Honors,” “Honors,” “Pass,” and “Credit” are considered satisfactory grades under this policy. If a student is required to repeat a course, the repeated course is counted toward the number of attempted credits. Transfer credits accepted by the College of Law for a degree program do count as attempted and earned credits for SAP purposes. The quantitative SAP assessment will be reviewed for all students at the end of each semester or grading period.

3. **Maximum time to earn a degree:** Federal regulations allow us to award students up to 150% of their required hours. A J.D. degree requires 88 credit hours to graduate. For J.D. students, this is 132 hours ( $88 \times 150\% = 132$ ). The LL.M. in International Law and LL.M. in Advocacy require 24 credit hours to graduate. For LL.M. students, this is 36 hours ( $24 \times 150\% = 36$ ). The LL.M. in Elder Law requires 25 credit hours to graduate. This equates to 37.5 hours ( $25 \times 150\% = 37.5$ ). The maximum timeframes for students to finish their degree will be verified at the end of each semester or grading period to insure compliance toward graduation and monitor the student’s SAP.

**B. Financial Aid Warning and Probation:** Federal regulation allows for a limited opportunity to continue federal financial aid eligibility even when SAP standards are not currently met. These options are detailed below.

1. **Financial Aid Warning:** A student who fails to maintain the qualitative or quantitative standards for SAP is automatically placed on Financial Aid Warning. The Office of Admissions and Student Financial Planning will notify the student when this occurs and will advise the student regarding the SAP standards that must be met by a specific term to retain eligibility for federal financial aid. The following apply to students on Financial Aid Warning:
  - a. The student will continue to receive federal financial aid for one payment period or semester (referred to as the warning period). Aid for the subsequent period is placed on hold status until SAP can be reviewed following that subsequent aid period.
  - b. If the student is still not making SAP after the warning period, the Office of Admissions and Student Financial Planning will notify the student that he or she is ineligible for federal financial aid until either (i) all SAP standards are successfully met, or (ii) the student has

successfully appealed and been granted a period of financial aid probation, as detailed below.

c. Financial aid warning status is not appealable.

2. **Financial Aid Probation:** Financial Aid Probation is a status assigned to a student who fails to make SAP, has appealed, and has had eligibility for aid reinstated. Once a student is notified that aid eligibility has been suspended for failing to make SAP, the student may appeal that determination using the process below. Financial Aid Probation allows a student to continue to receive aid under the terms specified by the Assistant Dean for Admissions and Student Financial Planning if the appeal is granted.

**C. Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal:**

1. A student who is ineligible for aid for failing to maintain SAP may submit a Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Form to the Appeals Committee if he or she can establish that mitigating circumstances occurred during the relevant academic periods that affected his or her academic ability to maintain SAP. This appeal applies only to aid availability. An approved SAP appeal does not mean that the student meets the College of Law's standards for other purposes (e.g., the student may still be excluded by the Academic Standards Committee, subject to participate in the Further Required Curriculum, etc.). Examples of mitigating circumstances include a student's injury or prolonged illness, death of a relative, and repercussions of a natural disaster. As part of the appeal process, the student must:
  - a. Describe and submit documentation to support how the mitigating circumstances led to an academic deficiency outside the student's control.
  - b. Provide a detailed plan about how the student will handle or resolve the mitigating circumstance to regain their financial aid eligibility and return to making SAP.
  - c. If the student cannot mathematically achieve SAP standards in one semester, the student must submit with the Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Form a proposed academic plan that would allow the student to meet the SAP standards within a set period of time. The student is encouraged to meet with the Director of Academic Success

and/or a member of the Academic Success Program in developing proposed academic plans.

2. **Appeal Process:** The SAP Appeals Committee reviews all SAP appeals. Members of the Appeals Committee include the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, the Assistant Dean for Admissions and Student Financial Planning and the Director of Academic Success Office. If a student cannot mathematically achieve SAP standards in one semester, then the Appeals Committee must approve an academic plan before Financial Aid Probation can be granted. As noted above, an academic plan must detail what is necessary for the student to achieve SAP standards in a prescribed amount of time.

3. If Financial Aid Probation is granted through appeal and the student can meet SAP in one semester, aid may be received for that semester. A student may be required to fulfill specific terms, such as taking a reduced course load or enrolling in specific courses while on Financial Aid Probation. If an academic plan is approved, eligibility for aid will be reinstated and can be received as long as all conditions of the plan are met. If the academic plan conditions are not met, then aid eligibility is lost until the student meets the SAP standards. Loss of eligibility after a period of Financial Aid Probation is not appealable.

4. If the appeal is denied or eligibility lost for failing to meet the terms of an approved academic plan, the student must immediately make arrangements to pay for their school expenses.

5. The student will be notified of the outcome of his or her appeal in writing or via email to the student's College of Law email account.

**D. Continuing Studies after Loss of Aid Eligibility:** Students who lose their federal financial aid eligibility may continue their studies using other aid sources or by funding their education themselves as long as they otherwise meet the College academic and other requirements and no academic hold is in place.

**E. Delays in Aid Disbursement:** Because grades may not be available before the beginning of the next scheduled semester, it is possible that financial aid may be disbursed to a student before the review can be conducted. If a student is placed on Financial Aid Warning after grades are posted, the student remains eligible for the aid received. If the student is already on Financial Aid Warning, aid will not be disbursed until it is determined that the student has met the requirements for SAP. If the student is on Financial Aid Probation, the student must meet the requirements for satisfactory academic progress or meet any academic plan conditions in order to receive aid. If a

student is determined to be ineligible for the financial aid that has been disbursed due to failure to meet one or more satisfactory academic progress standards or academic plan conditions, the aid that was disbursed will be canceled and returned to the student's loan servicer. The student is then responsible for making payment arrangements for any amounts owed to the College of Law.

**F. Foreign Dual Degree and Exchange Programs and Domestic Dual Degree**

**Programs:** Students participating in Dual Degree (foreign or domestic) and Exchange Programs are subject to SAP evaluation. Students who participate in these programs may receive grades at a later date due to the host school's academic schedule. Therefore, the student may be subject to a delayed SAP review. This could result in a delay in the student's financial aid disbursement for the subsequent semester.

**Cross-references:** *Eligibility to Receive Financial Aid; Refund of Tuition and Fees; Grade Records and Reports; Requirements for Degree and Maximum Time to Complete Degree; Grades; Title IV Return of Aid for Leaves and Withdrawals; Grading, Academic Exclusion and Readmission, and Honors for LL.M. Students; Maximum and Minimum Credit Hours for Elder Law and Advocacy LL.M. Programs and Maximum Time to Complete Degree; Maximum and Minimum Credit Hours for International Law LL.M. Program and Maximum Time to Complete Degree.*

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