SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Students are expected to meet certain standards of satisfactory academic progress in order for financial aid to be renewed. The Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy (SAP) for Muskingum University Graduate students follows:

Federal regulations and Muskingum University policy require that students make Satisfactory Academic Progress in their course of study in order to be eligible to receive financial aid. Official standards of SAP for retention of financial aid at Muskingum are set by the Financial Aid Committee on Academic Progress for graduate programs. Membership in this committee consists of the Director of Operations of Student Financial Services and Sr Asst to Dean of Graduate and Continuing Studies and in some cases the Program Manager for the MISST program.

1. All financial aid awards are made contingent on making SAP. If the University makes an award and subsequently discovers that academic progress was not made, the award will be withdrawn.
2. Decisions regarding SAP for the retention of financial aid are made by the Financial Aid Committee on Academic Progress for graduate programs. Appeals of any decision made by this committee and questions about SAP should be directed to the Director of Operations, Student Financial Services.
3. The SAP requirements stated are applicable to federal financial assistance.
4. SAP is reviewed after the end of each semester and before aid for the subsequent semester is awarded.
5. Transfer credits count towards the evaluation of SAP.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Requirements

Muskingum’s SAP requirements for retention of financial aid have both a quantitative and a qualitative component. The quantitative element refers to the student’s actual progression toward a degree by measuring the number of credit hours attempted per semester. The qualitative requirement relates to the quality of a student’s academic performance as measured by grade-point average.

The financial aid guidelines are minimum requirements which a student must meet to be eligible for financial assistance provided that the Vice President for Graduate Studies has determined that the student is academically eligible to be enrolled at Muskingum. It is therefore possible for a student to be eligible for financial aid but be dismissed for academic reasons, or for a student to be eligible to be enrolled in a semester but be denied financial assistance.

Quantitative Requirements (Pace of Progression)

A student’s pace of progression (or class completion rate) is evaluated at the end of every semester to ensure that the student completes a program of study within a maximum time-frame. Students must successfully complete 67% of all coursework attempted at Muskingum in their graduate program. Muskingum University considers eight years of study as the standard time frame to complete a graduate program or licensure.
The following are considered when evaluating a student’s SAP:

- All attempted hours are counted, whether or not financial aid was received or the coursework was successfully completed.
- An attempted course is one for which the student is registered for at the end of the add/drop period of that semester.
- Withdrawals, incompletes and course failures are considered attempted but not earned hours. Courses where credits are not calculated as attempted hours toward a degree are exempt from the SAP calculation.
- Students may repeat a course they withdrew from or failed and still receive financial aid as long as SAP requirements are still being met.
- Passing credits received for pass/fail courses are considered attempted and earned credits; failing grades in pass/fail courses are considered attempted but not earned.
- Repeated courses are included in the calculation of both attempted and earned hours.
- Audited courses are not considered attempted or earned.
- Transfer credits, including those received prior to attending Muskingum University and those earned subsequent to entry do not count in the calculation of the GPA but are included in the calculation of attempted and earned credit hours.
- A change of program does not typically affect the calculation of SAP and maximum time frame. In an appeal situation a change of program may be considered as a special circumstance in the calculation of maximum time frame.
- If a student receives an Incomplete grade in a course that has prescribed work remaining that can only be fulfilled during the next semester, this incomplete will be considered a passing grade until the time the actual grade is submitted. At that time SAP will be reevaluated. If the incomplete is due to a student not finishing assignments, then the incomplete will be considered an F grade and counted in the SAP calculation.

Qualitative Requirements

Graduate students are expected to maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.75 to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress. Students should note that the SAP requirements are not the same as Muskingum’s definition of good academic standing as determined by the Vice President for Graduate and Continuing Studies.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Administrative Action (new definitions)

Warning Period

Academic progress will be reviewed at the end of each academic semester. If it is determined during the review that the student is not meeting SAP then the student will be placed on financial aid warning status. Students in financial aid warning will be eligible to receive federal financial aid during the warning period (semester) despite the determined that the student is not meeting SAP standards. Students will receive notification of their warning status via their Muskingum e-mail account. Students
in warning status who do not meet SAP requirements after the semester of the warning status will be placed on SAP suspension and will not be eligible for federal aid.

Financial Aid Suspension

Students in suspension status will be mailed a letter to the home address on file with the University explaining the reason(s) they are not meeting SAP. Future enrollment will be at the student’s own expense until both qualitative and quantitative academic progress guidelines are met unless the student submits an acceptable appeal.

Financial aid probation

Students who have submitted an acceptable SAP appeal will be placed on financial aid probation. Students are eligible for financial aid during the probationary period. This is a status where a student who has failed to make satisfactory academic progress (aid is suspended) and who has appealed and has had eligibility reinstated. At the end of the probation semester the student must meet Muskingum’s SAP standards to be eligible for future funding, or if not, must have met the terms of the appeal and the student’s academic plan.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Information

Students on Financial Aid suspension due to not making SAP may appeal their status by following the procedures outlined below:

1. **Appeal letter** - After notification of not making SAP, a student may appeal in writing (an attached document sent via e-mail is acceptable) within two weeks to the Director of Operations, Student Financial Services. Students must indicate why they failed to make SAP and what has changed that will allow them to make SAP at the next evaluation. Students must be able to document mitigating circumstances that occurred during the course of the semester in question that could not have been anticipated prior to that period, and that adversely affected their ability to successfully complete their required coursework. Events such as the death or hospitalization of an immediate family member, extended illness suffered by the student or other unforeseeable events that may have caused significant hardship for the student may be considered as examples of mitigating circumstances.

   The appeal letter must include:
   - Name, home address, email address and phone number
   - The circumstances that affected academic progress
   - What has changed in the student’s situation that would allow the student to meet SAP at the next evaluation
   - The student’s plan of action to improve academic performance

   The appeal should be no less than one page double spaced, and it is to be addressed to the Director of Operations, Student Financial Services, Mrs Janet Vejsicky. It may be mailed to Muskingum University, Student Financial Services, 163 Stormont Street, New Concord, OH 43762 or the appeal may be emailed to janv@muskingum.edu.

2. **Academic Plan** - Some students may be required to submit an academic plan as part of the appeal process. The Financial Aid Committee on Academic Progress will determine if an academic plan is required and will notify the student. Students must use the Satisfactory
**Academic Progress Academic Plan Form for Graduate Students.** The plan must be submitted at the time of the appeal, or within two weeks of a response from the Committee requesting a plan be submitted.

### After Submitting Your Appeal and Academic Plan (if required)

Students will be notified by mail of the results of the appeal. Please make sure that the address listed on the appeal letter is current. The Committee will also contact students by their Muskingum e-mail account if they have any questions.

During the appeal review some of the factors that may be considered are described below. This list does not include all possible factors but the factors listed below will be reviewed as well as other information that the student provides:

- Whether the student can meet the SAP requirements after successful completion of the next semester of enrollment.
- Whether the student is successfully following their academic plan (if required) and is making progress under that plan
- Validity of the reasons for failing to meet the SAP standards
- Resolution of the problems leading up to failure to meet the standards
- Prior academic history
- Meeting with the student’s academic advisor
- Number of previous suspensions and reinstatements
- Student’s demonstrated motivation to succeed
- Quality of appeal and supporting documentation

Students whose appeals have been approved by the Committee will be placed on Financial Aid Probation status. A student may then continue to receive financial assistance during the probationary period. At the end of the probationary period the student will either be removed from probation because the student is meeting SAP standards, remain on probation because the student is meeting the requirements of their academic plan (although still not meeting SAP requirements), or the student will be placed on suspension because standards are not met. Students placed in a subsequent suspension status have the option to appeal; however, the Committee may not accept appeals with similar circumstances as appeals submitted during prior semesters. Students whose appeals are not approved will be placed in suspension status.

Students who are in suspension status may use one or more of the following payment options while attempting to regain SAP:

1. Student’s own resources
2. Muskingum University Payment Plan
3. Private Alternative Loan (with approved credit)

Reinstatement of financial aid eligibility will occur immediately upon the student’s attainment of both the quantitative and/or qualitative benchmarks of SAP. Coursework taken at school other than Muskingum will count toward meeting the quantitative requirement, but not the qualitative requirement.
Academic Plan Status

A student who is on an approved academic plan will have his/her status reviewed after each academic semester to ensure that the student is successfully following the plan. Students who are meeting their academic plan will still be eligible for financial aid. If the student does not meet the plan requirements (and is not meeting SAP) at any time, financial aid eligibility will be revoked for the subsequent semester and the student will be placed in suspension status. The student has the option to appeal the suspension status. Students following an academic plan can exceed the maximum time frame requirements.

Revised 9/8/11