

# STANDARDS OF SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS FOR FINANCIAL AID ELIGIBILITY

Effective Fall 2019, Revised March 11, 2020

Federal regulations require the FinancialAid Office to monitor the academic progress of all students seeking to earn a degree or certificate. This monitoring process is called Satisfactory AcademicProgress (SAP). Satisfactory Academic Progress is required of ALL financial aid applicants at Houston Community College, including those applicants who have not previously participated in federal aid programs. It is the student's responsibility to monitor academic progress. Although the Financial Aid Office attempts to send students correspondence informing them of their status, students who do not meet the standards will be ineligible for financial aid even if they do not receive correspondence.

**This policy applies to all new, transfer, continuing and returning students.** Academic progress is evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative requirements:

- Grade Point Average(GPA) -- Maintain a 2.0 cumulative grade point average.
- Completion Ratio - percentage of attempted cumulative hours completed. Complete and pass a minimum of 67% of the hours attempted at Houston Community College. The following chart provides the number of credits a student must earn compared to the number attempted (Enrollment).

Enrollment	Must Earn
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	3

Enrollment	Must Earn
5	4
6	4
7	5
8	6

<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Must Earn</b>
9	6
10	7
11	8
12	8

<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Must Earn</b>
13	9
14	10
15	10
16	11

*Attempted hours are all credit hours in which the student enrolls, including repeat courses, developmental and courses with grades of “F”, “W”, “I” or “IP.”*

- Maximum credit hours needed in which to complete a degree or certificate – Complete all degree or certificate requirements within 150% of the minimum number required to graduate.

Any student not meeting the satisfactory academic progress policies will be placed on FinancialAid Warning upon their first infraction. During this warning period, the student may receive financial aid funding. Eligibility for future semesters will be established based on the cumulative SAP requirement at the conclusion of the warning period.

**SAP Terms and Conditions:**

**I. Maximum Time Frame** – Federal regulations require that a student complete his/her program of study within 150% (length of program x 1.5) of the time allotted for the program. For example, an associate degree that is 65 credit hours in length must be completed within 98 (65 x 1.5) credit hours. After attempting 98 credit hours, the student’s financial aid eligibility would be suspended for the program. All credit hours attempted at Houston Community College, including repeated courses, developmental courses, grades of “F”, “W”, “I”, “FX” or “IP,” will be counted in the determination of hours attempted.

**II. Increments of Evaluation** – The academic year is defined as fall, spring, and subsequent summer semester. The academic progress of financial aid students will be evaluated after the completion of each semester. Student will be awarded based on the academic year; however, eligibility will be evaluated on a semester-by-semester basis.

**III. Remedial or Developmental Courses** – A student may receive federal aid for up to one academic year’s worth of remedial or developmental course work up to a maximum of 30 semester credit hours. Remedial courses attempted will be counted when determining the maximum time frame, cumulative GPA, and completion rate.

**IV. ESOL Courses** – ESOL courses attempted do not count against the remedial coursework limits.

**V. Satisfactory Completion** – Successful completion for ratio purposes is defined as receiving one of the following grades: “A,” “B,” “C,” or “D.” A grade of “W,” “F,” “I,” “IP,” “W,” “FX,” or “X” are considered attempted but not earned. Withdrawn courses(W) will not be counted in the GPA but will affect the completion ratio. The “FX” grade will calculate into your GPA as an “F” and is treated as attempted but not earned.

**VI. Repeat Courses** – A student who receives an “A,” “B,” “C,” or “D” grade in a course may repeat that course only once to attempt to earn an improved grade. Each attempt is included in the completion ratio.

**VII. Incomplete (“I” grades)** -- A grade of “I” (Incomplete) indicates that a student has not finished all course work required for a grade and is included in the cumulative credits attempted. An incomplete grade will not count as hours passed until a final grade is posted in the Registrar’s Office. If a student’s “I” grade changes during a semester, it is the student’s responsibility to inform the financial aid office of the change. If the change of grade will affect the student’s financial aid eligibility, the financial aid office will then do a recalculation during the semester. Otherwise, the change of grade will not be factored into the overall completion rate until the next increment of evaluation.

**VIII. Audit Courses** – Audit courses neither earn credit or influence grade point average and are not counted in credits attempted. Audit courses are not eligible for financial aid.

**IX. Transfer Courses** – Courses accepted for credit at Houston Community College from another institution that meet the college’s transfer policy are NOT counted in the total credits attempted. (Grades for transfer courses are not calculated in the GPA). Courses at proprietary and trade schools will generally not be accepted for credit toward degree or certificate requirements.

**X. Academic Amnesty/Renewal** – As part of Houston Community College institutional academic progress policy the college adheres to State Law (Educ. Code, Sec, 51.931)which allows students with academic credits earned 10 or more years prior to the starting date of the semester to have those credits or grades not considered in the admission decision (academic fresh start). For the purposes of calculating a student’s SAP for student aid programs, all grades earned from previous enrollment periods will count towards the student’s maximum time frame.

**XI. Change of Program of Study/Major** – A student may change from one program of study/major to another during his/her attendance at Houston Community College. Students who change from one program of study/major to another are still expected to maintain satisfactory academic progress and complete the course work within the time frame limitations. The total amount of credit hours taken will be evaluated for SAP.

**XII. Prior Attendance** – The financial aid office is required to consider all attendance at Houston Community College when determining whether or not a student is making Satisfactory Academic Progress, regardless of the year taken and even if financial aid was not received during any of the previous periods of enrollment. The financial aid office will review the student's Houston Community College academic history to determine if the SAP requirements have been met. Any student who does not meet these requirements will be placed on "warning", "probation" or "suspension" as appropriate.

**XII. Financial Aid Warning** – Upon the student's first infraction period they will be placed on Financial Aid Warning. Students will be eligible for financial aid during the period they are placed on warning. After the warning period, if a student's cumulative GPA and/or completion rate does not meet the college's SAP standards, the student will be placed on financial aid suspension. The suspension status will remain unless the grade that caused the probation was in error or submitted late.

- a. If a student successfully completes the warning period and cumulative GPA and completion rate meet the college's minimum standards the student regains eligibility for financial aid.
- b. If a student successfully completes the warning period but the cumulative GPA and/or completion rate do not meet the college's minimum standards the student may be placed on suspension.
- c. If a student does not successfully complete the warning period, the student will be placed on suspension.

The Financial Aid Office will notify any student who is placed on warning, probation, or suspension. A notification will be sent to the student's Houston Community College e-mail address and SAP status is displayed on the student's myHCC self-service screen.

**XIV. Financial Aid Suspension** - Students not meeting the college's SAP policy, after an initial warning period, will be placed on Financial Aid Suspension.

**XV. Academic Suspension** - Academic suspension is determined by the Registrar's Office. Students may not appeal for financial aid until the academic suspension is lifted. An approval on an academic appeal does not automatically mean the student will be granted approval on a financial aid appeal. An academic appeal is separate from a financial aid eligibility appeal.

**XVI. Appeal of Financial Aid Suspension** – Students who are placed on Financial Aid Suspension have the option to appeal the determination. Students who have failed to maintain the minimum requirements will be recommended to meet with an academic advisor for an academic advisement report that accurately reflects their educational goals with the college.

- a. Mitigating Circumstances– Houston Community College recognizes mitigating circumstances and the affects it may have on a student’s academic progress. In cases where a student has an unusual situation that has affected their ability to be successfully complete classes, allowances may be made to place the student on financial aid probation. Mitigating circumstances must be supporting by appropriate documentation. Examples of mitigating circumstances include student or family illness, severe injury, learning or functional disability, or an unusual circumstance that disrupted the students academic performance.
- b. A student on suspension may appeal to reestablish eligibility by submitting a “Financial Aid Appeal for Satisfactory Academic Progress” form with supporting documentation to the Financial Aid Office by the census date of each regular term of the semester. Students appealing their suspension must pay their own expenses until the appeal is reviewed. Failure to provide supporting documentation will result in the denial of an appeal.
- c. The Financial Aid Office will review the appeal and determine if extenuating circumstances exist to support a decision of continued aid eligibility. The student will be notified electronically of the appeal decision.
- d. The student may only be permitted to receive aid during one warning period and one probationary period, consecutively. Students who do not meet the conditions of the probationary period may not be approved for additional appeals. Upon denial of an appeal, a student may request that their appeal be reviewed. A student can request a review by completing the appropriate request form within the deadline. The decision is final and cannot be appealed.

**XVII. Reinstatement of Financial Aid** – If an appeal is approved, financial aid will be reinstated for the upcoming semester. The student’s academic performance at the end of the semester will be measured. The following conditions apply to the probationary period.

- a. Financial Aid Probation status will be applicable to students who have had an appeal approved and will be eligible for financial aid for one payment period at a time.
- b. Student must maintain a 2.0 GPA and successfully complete 67% of attempted credits for the semester to be considered for continued financial aid probation.
- c. Students placed on probation must comply with all conditions established by the Financial Aid Office.

If a student’s financial aid appeal is denied and the student successfully completes 6 for more credit hours, they may submit an appeal to have their eligibility reconsidered.

**XVII. Financial Aid Probation** – Students will be eligible for financial aid consideration during the period they are placed on probation. If a student’s GPA and/or completion rate does not meet the college’s minimum standard, the student may be placed on financial aid suspension.

**IXIX. Continued Financial Aid Probation** - Students who met the standards during the probationary term by adhering to the academic advisement report but have not met the cumulative requirements may be placed on continued probation.

- a. A student is allowed one warning period and one appeal. Subsequent sequential appeals may be denied. A student who has satisfactorily restored themselves to “meeting” the academic progress requirements will be considered in compliance and will receive a new warning semester and may appeal subsequent infractions.
- b. A student who fails to meet the conditions of their probationary status will be placed on suspension and may follow the appeal process to be reconsidered for financial aid.

**XIX. Unusual Enrollment History** - Beginning in the 2013/2014 award year, in the effort to prevent abuse in the Federal Pell Grant Program, the Department of Education (DOE) has begun to identify students with unusual enrollment histories. The specific enrollment pattern that the DOE is concerned about is one where the student attends an institution long enough to receive title IV credit balance funds, leaves without completing the enrollment period, enrolls at another institution, and repeats the pattern of remaining just long enough to collect another title IV credit balance without having earned any academic credit.

**Steps to Resolve -**

- a. The student will submit all college transcripts for the past three years to the admissions department for evaluation. The Admissions department prefers the transcripts be sent electronically. If the student is unable to have them sent electronically, please send to the address listed below:

**Houston CommunityCollege Admissions/Records**  
**P.O. Box 667517**  
**Houston, TX 77266-7517**

*This process can take approximately 2-4 weeks.*

- b. Once the student is aware that their transcripts have been evaluated, the student will then contact the Financial Aid Office. The Financial Aid Office will compare the evaluated transcripts with the student’s financial aid history that was reported to the National Student Loan Database (NSLDS). Students are encouraged to access their financial aid histories by logging into [http://www.nsls.ed.gov/nsls\\_SA/](http://www.nsls.ed.gov/nsls_SA/).

- c. If Pell Grant funds were received and credit hours were not earned during these award years, the student may be determined ineligible for further federal financial aid.
- d. Students that are determined ineligible may submit an appeal form and explain their failure to earn academic credit. These reasons could include illness, a family emergency, a change in where the student is living, and military obligations. Supporting documentation must be provided. Failure to provide documentation may result in the denial of student's appeal. All appeal decisions are final.