

College of the Atlantic Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Federal Government requires that the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy must be at least as strict as the policy the institution applies to a student who is not receiving assistance under the Title IV, HEA program. The policy is detailed in the COA College Catalog in the Academic Standing section and it is posted on the college website.

The SAP policy also provides for consistent application of standards to all students within categories of students, e.g., full-time, part-time, undergraduate and graduate students and educational programs established by the institution noting the basic elements of the policy that measure progress.

Academic progress is evaluated at least annually to correspond with the end of the last payment period.

QUALITATIVE STANDARD

The qualitative measure of satisfactory progress is defined as receiving “credit” or a passing grade in an individual course or the appropriate credits (implying satisfactory completion) for an internship, residency, or final project. Further, although College of the Atlantic does not routinely calculate a grade point average, federal regulations require that by the end of the second academic year (measured as a period of time, not a student’s grade level), a student must maintain a C average or its equivalent. Courses recorded on the transcript as “credit” are considered to be *at least* the equivalent of a grade of C. After the second academic year, if a student by reason of failing courses or by passing courses with a grade of D, is, in effect, maintaining the equivalent of a grade point average of less than a C (defined as being below a 2.0 average on a 4.0 scale), that student is *not* considered to making satisfactory progress unless it is specifically documented through the College’s Review and Appeals Process that such academic performance will not impede a student’s ability to graduate.

QUANTITATIVE STANDARD

In addition to the qualitative measure of satisfactory progress, federal regulations require that a school set a maximum time frame during which a student is expected to complete his/her program. College of the Atlantic allows a student to attempt a maximum of five academic years plus one term in order to complete the required four years of successful academic work required for achievement of the COA Degree. This is based on a full-time enrollment of three credits per term equals nine credits in COA’s 3-term academic year. Another way of looking at it is to note that a student has 16 terms to successfully complete the equivalent of the required 12 terms of academic work. Therefore, the maximum time frame for completion of the College of the Atlantic Degree with financial aid eligibility is one and one third times the length of the 4-year program. A student with transfer credits has a shorter program length (36 required credits minus the number of credits transferred in). The maximum time frame for a student with transfer credit

is calculated at the same one and one-third times ratio. This is the same as *at least* a 75% successful completion rate.

This quantitative measure must be assessed incrementally. College of the Atlantic uses one year increments.

DEFINITIONS

Based on the full time standard described above, College of the Atlantic will allow for transfer credits, part-time enrollment status, periods of non-enrollment, etc., by requiring that a student must be successfully completing at least 75% of the academic work he/she has attempted in each increment in order to be considered eligible for financial aid funds. For transfer students, all eligible transfer credits are counted as attempted and completed and must conform to a grade of at least a C or 2.0 GPA.

“Attempted work” is defined as the number of credits a student is officially enrolled for as of each enrollment period’s add/drop deadline. A student is considered to be successfully completing work that he/she has enrolled for (as defined above) if credit has been awarded or the work can be considered to be in progress, i.e. the potential for successful completion exists.

Unsuccessfully completed work includes courses noted on the transcript as “NC” (no credit) as receiving a grade of F, or as receiving a grade below C if the equivalent GPA is less than 2.0 by the end of the second academic year jeopardizes a student’s ability to graduate from the College.

Attempted work that shows “incomplete” or “extension” status will not be counted as work unsuccessfully completed, so long as the potential for “credit” status continues to exist. This category will be treated as work in progress as the college has a policy limiting the amount of time attempted course work can be considered in “incomplete” or “extension” status. However, students with multiple “incompletes” or “extensions” will be monitored closely.

A grade of “W” (withdrawal) is counted as attempted work. Repeated work will count as work attempted and not be eligible for campus-based or institutional aid.

PROCEDURE

As noted previously, College of the Atlantic measures academic progress in one year increments. However, progress is monitored throughout the academic year. Student academic progress is monitored as grade reports become available after the close of each of the three ten-week terms. Provided the student maintains the *potential* to achieve a successful completion ratio of at least 75% at the end of a one year increment, the student is considered to be making satisfactory academic progress.

A special problem arises for students entering midyear or not enrolling for all terms in an

academic year. Students entering the College for the first time who enter midyear or take an approved Leave of Absence from the College during their first academic year of enrollment will have a three-term (equivalent of one academic year) increment in order to achieve the minimum 75% completion ratio. This three-term increment may overlap two academic years. For all other students, the *current* academic year will be used as the increment during which satisfactory academic progress will be measured. In other words, in order to maintain satisfactory academic progress, all students except for those noted above, must maintain at least a 75% successful completion ratio by the end of the current academic year in order to retain eligibility for financial aid.

With regards to qualitative standards, a student must maintain at least a 2.0 GPA by the end of the second academic year and, prior to the end of the second year, must maintain the *potential* to achieve a minimum 2.0 GPA by the end of the second year unless it is specifically documented through the College's Review and Appeals process that such academic performance will not impede a student's ability to graduate. This is also monitored as grade reports become available at the close of each term.

CONDITIONS

Students who fail to meet the SAP standards will be placed on financial aid probation and have their financial aid suspended until such time as they have re-established SAP in conformance with the policy standards. They will receive a written notification of the results of any such evaluation that impacts their eligibility for T-IV aid. A student may appeal a decision to suspend financial aid through Review and Appeals if s/he believes special circumstances merit a review.

If a student is not making SAP according to the school's policy, the school may place the student on financial aid probation and may disburse Title IV, HEA program funds to the student for the subsequent payment period if –a) the school evaluates that the student is not making satisfactory academic progress; b) the student appeals the determination; and c) the school determines that the student should be able to make satisfactory academic progress during the subsequent payment period and meet the school's satisfactory academic progress standards at the end of that payment period, or the school develops an academic plan for the student that, if followed, will ensure that the student is able to meet the school's satisfactory academic progress standards by a specific point in time.

A student on financial aid probation for a payment period may not receive title IV, HEA program funds for the subsequent payment period unless the student makes SAP or the school determines that the student met the requirements specified by the school in the academic plan for the student.

It should also be noted that campus-based funds withheld from a student who has had his/her aid suspended may be redistributed within an academic year and may cease to be available to that student during said academic year even upon reestablishment of satisfactory academic progress at the discretion of the Financial Aid Office. In no case will any form of financial aid be awarded

retroactively for a term of enrollment during which aid was suspended.

MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

Under certain conditions the normal standards for satisfactory process may be set aside. Essentially this would be when a student's failure to make satisfactory progress can be definitively attributed to factors outside of a student's control that negatively influenced the student's ability or opportunity to successfully complete academic work. In such cases the underlying assumption would be that, in the absence of such factors, it can be reasonably assumed that the student would likely have done successful academic work.

Normal standards for satisfactory academic progress may be set aside if a student can document that s/he was seriously ill or injured during the enrollment period in question. This would typically be documented with a written statement from an attending physician or the academic dean or academic probation officer if s/he is intimately familiar with the circumstances.

If it can be documented that a student was severely affected by a personal or family trauma that could include the death or life-threatening illness or injury of a close relative, spouse, domestic partner or close friend, normal standards for satisfactory progress may be set aside for the enrollment period in question.

Also, if it can be documented that an extreme disruption affected a student's life such as divorce, separation or extreme domestic upheaval in the student's immediate family or that a student was involuntarily and unavoidably affected by such an extreme disruption in the life of a close relative, spouse, domestic partner or very close friend, normal standards for satisfactory progress may be set aside for the enrollment period in question.