Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

To be eligible to receive any federal financial aid and/or state need-based financial aid, students must adhere to the USCA Office of Financial Aid's Policy on Satisfactory Academic Progress. The intent of this policy is to ensure that students who are receiving federal and state financial aid for their education are making measurable progress toward completion of a degree in a reasonable period of time.

All federal financial assistance programs are authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended, and require the establishment of minimum standards of academic progress that students must meet to maintain general eligibility for financial aid. While students meeting these standards are generally eligible for aid, some aid programs require higher standards that may preclude the student from qualifying for those programs.

### Undergraduate Students

Undergraduate students are considered to be making satisfactory progress if they:

- **The Time Limitation Quantitative Standard, 150 Rule Requirement**: Complete requirements for a degree within a reasonable length of time. The total number of hours attempted at any post-secondary institution does not exceed 180 hours of course work for a four-year degree regardless of whether federal financial aid was received.

- **The Incremental Quantitative Standard, Hours Requirement**: Earn (pass) 67% of all hours attempted in the USC system plus other hours accepted for transfer by USC Aiken regardless of whether federal financial aid was received.

- **The Qualitative Standard, GPA Requirement**: Maintain a cumulative USC System Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0.

Failure to meet the above SAP standards will result in the loss of financial aid eligibility. Students deemed ineligible would need to submit a written appeal in order to have their eligibility reinstated. This determination applies without regard to any financial aid award letter that may have been sent or received prior to the time the determination is made.

### Graduate Students

Graduate students are considered to be making satisfactory academic progress if they:

- **The Time Limitation Quantitative Standard, 150 Rule Requirement**: Complete requirements for a degree within a reasonable length of time. The total number of hours attempted in the Master of Science in Clinical Psychology does not exceed 76 hours of course work and in the Masters Degree in Educational Technology does not exceed 54 hours of course work.

- **The Incremental Quantitative Standard, Hours Requirement**: Earn 67% of credit hours attempted.

- **The Qualitative Standard, GPA Requirement**: Meet the University academic standards for continued enrollment as specified by the student's USCA Graduate Program.

### How the Policy Works

Students who fail to meet SAP standards will be ineligible to receive any federal or state financial aid funds. Students who are found ineligible may appeal this determination under specifically prescribed conditions.

### Measurement and Time Frame

Undergraduate students are considered to be making satisfactory academic progress if the total number of hours attempted at any post-secondary institution does not exceed 180 hours and they earn (pass) 67 percent of all hours attempted and also maintain a cumulative USC system GPA of 2.0 or greater.

Satisfactory academic progress is measured annually by the Office of Financial Aid. This measurement occurs at the conclusion of each spring semester once grades are reported and recorded by Student Records. The measurement is for eligibility for the subsequent fall and spring semesters. However if a student attends summer school, they will also be reviewed at the end of the summer session(s).
Students whose records are not reviewed at the end of the spring or summer will be reviewed when they submit a FAFSA for the current year or upcoming year.

**Academic Suspension:** Federal Regulations also require that a review must be made if a student is placed on Academic Suspension (in accordance with USC Aiken academic policies) after the fall semester grades are reported. The Qualitative Standard in the SAP policy will have already required this group be reviewed except for freshmen. Freshmen who are placed on Academic Suspension after the fall semester will automatically lose their eligibility for spring semester aid. If a freshman is reinstated academically to return to USC Aiken, he/she has the option to submit an appeal and supporting documentation to determine the student's financial aid eligibility. If a student's academic appeal is approved, that does not guarantee that the financial aid appeal will be approved.

**SAP Academic Year**

The academic year for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) eligibility determination is comprised of the fall, spring, and summer terms.

**Academic Forgiveness**

The Satisfactory Academic Progress policy standards will not automatically apply to any hours forgiven under the University of South Carolina Aiken Academic Forgiveness Program. Students who have been granted academic forgiveness under this policy must contact the Office of Financial Aid for further assessment.

**Grading**

In determining a student's SAP standing, classes in which a student receives a W, WF, I, U, NR, or F are counted as attempted hours but not hours earned. Only grades of A, B, C, D, S, and T are counted as attempted hours and hours earned. Students enrolled in audit courses (AUD) will not receive financial aid for these classes. Grades of W, NR, I, U, S, T and AUD are not used when computing GPA. Receiving grades of W, WF, I, U, NR, or F can negatively impact the percentage of completion.

**Repeated Courses**

Repeated courses and transfer hours accepted by USC will be counted in both attempted hours and hours earned.

**Appeal Process and Related Information**

Appeals must be in writing and submitted to the Office of Financial Aid. An appeal will be deemed successful, and a status of "Probation" will assigned if the appeal meets one of the two conditions below:

- The student anticipates he/she will meet the regular SAP standards after the next payment period or period of enrollment (semester or summer session).
- The student, in conjunction with advisors in the Office of Financial Aid and academic counselors, develops an academic plan that, if followed, ensures that the student is able to meet SAP standards by a specific point in the future.

To regain eligibility at the end of the probationary semester, the student must either meet the regular SAP requirements, or be in compliance with the requirements of his/her academic plan, if one was developed.

If a student fails to either regain regular SAP eligibility or meet the conditions of his/her academic plan, the student is ineligible to receive aid.

Appeal forms and specific instructions regarding the submission of appeals may be obtained in the Office of Financial Aid.

**Change of Major:** Students who need to remain enrolled beyond their maximum time frame (180 attempted hours for undergraduates) due to a change of major will be required to submit an appeal.

**Second or Subsequent Degrees:** Students who are completing a subsequent baccalaureate degree will be required to appeal once they reach their maximum time frame. This appeal will require documentation from the student's academic department indicating the number of credit hours needed to complete his/her second degree. If the appeal is successful, the student's maximum attempted hours will be reset based on the information from the department.

**Deadline for Appealing:** Deadline for receipt of appeals in the Office of Financial Aid is 14 calendar days prior to the end of the semester for which aid is requested.
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