

## **US Federal Aid - Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy**

To meet the requirements of the U.S. Department of Education, higher education institutions (such as Aberystwyth University) must establish minimum standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) for students receiving Federal Financial Aid.

SAP means the student is successfully proceeding towards fulfilling their degree requirements, and therefore will remain eligible to receive US Financial Aid. SAP is measured cumulatively in two areas: (i) **Qualitative** (academic grades); and (ii) **Quantitative** (the length of time it takes to complete the degree). Students must meet both standards to continue receiving financial aid. Both the qualitative and quantitative SAP standards are reviewed at each evaluation point.

Although this policy sets out the University's procedures for monitoring the academic progression of those students in receipt of US Federal Aid (specifically the Federal Direct and PLUS loans), these guidelines also apply to all students studying on Aberystwyth University taught awards. Please note in addition to the following policy, all students will be subject to UK Government Visas and Immigration legislation and requirements.

### **1. Qualitative Measure of Satisfactory Academic Progress (using Academic Grades)**

To maintain eligibility for financial aid, a student must achieve the academic grades necessary to remain in study at Aberystwyth University.

#### **1.1. Undergraduate Students:**

- 1.1.1. Students must accumulate a total of 120 credits across each academic year of study. In most cases this is made up by 6 modules of 20 credits each.
- 1.1.2. Students must achieve at least an aggregate module mark of no less than 40% across the full academic year. This is equivalent to a GPA of 2.0 in the USA. A grade of less than 40% is deemed to be a fail for that module.
- 1.1.3. Students are permitted to fail no more than 20 credits in their first year, and 20 credits in the rest of the degree programme, but will need to re-sit (repeat) the module and achieve the required grades at the next possible opportunity. Should a student need to re-sit modules the following year in order to pass the previous year, that student will be placed on Financial Aid Probation until grades are checked at the end of the first semester.

#### **1.2. Postgraduate (Masters) Students:**

- 1.2.1. A UK Masters is normally one full year (12 months) in duration. Masters students must accumulate a total of 180 credits through the programme. This is ordinarily, but not always, made up by six 20 credit modules and a final dissertation of 60 credits.
- 1.2.2. Students must pass each module with a grade of no less than 50%. This is equivalent to a GPA of 2.0 in the USA.

1.2.3. Students must demonstrate to their academic department that they are achieving Satisfactory Academic Progress (both Qualitative and Quantative) throughout the programme. In the case that grades are not yet available from the previous semester before the next loan disbursement is due, a Confirmation of Progression letter will be required from the student’s academic department to determine whether the student is on track to successfully complete their degree. If not, they are not demonstrating SAP, the student will be placed on Financial Aid Probation.

1.2.4. Students are permitted to fail no more than 20 credits, but will need to re-sit (repeat) the module and achieve the required grades at the next possible opportunity. Should a student need to re-sit modules in the following semester, that student will be placed on Financial Aid Probation until the student is able to demonstrate SAP.

### 1.3. Other

1.3.1. All students must maintain a level of academic progression as specified in the University’s [Rules and Regulations](#). Students who fail to maintain sufficient academic progress may be given one opportunity to repeat the year. Failure to progress successfully will lead to the student’s withdrawal from the University in line with policies and procedures outlined in the regulations. In accordance with the University’s academic regulations, a student may appeal against a decision on withdrawal, and if the appeal is upheld, the University will re-evaluate the student’s eligibility for financial aid. Students with student route visas should be aware that Government visa policies may not align with University satisfactory academic progress policies.

## 2. Quantitative Satisfactory Academic Progress (timeframe to complete degree)

2.1. **Attendance:** Students are not eligible for financial aid if their enrolment is below 50% (less than half time) of that which is required. More information about how the University monitors attendance, can be found in the [Engagement and Attendance Monitoring Policy](#).

2.2. **Maximum Timeframe:** For each programme of study, universities must establish a maximum time frame in which a student is expected to complete their degree. Federal regulations specify that the maximum time frame for programme completion may not exceed 150 per cent of the published length of the programme as measured in academic years. This is explained in the table below:

Standard Published Program Length	Program Length Total Credits	Maximum Federal Completion Timeframe
3-year UG degree	360 (120 each year)	4.5 years
4-year UG degree	480 (120 each year)	6 years
12-month Masters Degree	180	18 months
2+ years PhD Degree	PhD students must, at the end of two years, have achieved academic progression that will allow for completion within the maximum timeframe.	

2.3. **Pace and Progression:** To continue to be eligible for financial aid, students must maintain a minimum cumulative completion rate of 67% as calculated by dividing number of completed credits by the number of attempted credits in order to meet SAP maximum completion timeframes.

### 3. **SAP Evaluation Points**

3.1. **Bachelors and PhD:** Evaluation points fall at the end of each academic year. Though financial packages may go out before this date, loan origination will not take place until the confirmation of final marks.

3.2. **Masters:** At the beginning of the second and third semester.

3.3. **Students on Financial Aid Probation:** Grades will be checked at the end of the semester to ensure they satisfy SAP requirements.

### 4. **Appeals**

4.1. Students may appeal their failure to meet SAP requirements by submitting a written letter of appeal to the International Sponsor Relations Manager ([internationalfunding@aber.ac.uk](mailto:internationalfunding@aber.ac.uk)). The appeal must show:

4.1.1. that there has been a material error or irregularity, for example that examinations or assessments were not conducted in accordance with the current regulations of the award; or

4.1.2. that the student's performance was adversely affected by injury or illness, the death of a relative, or other special circumstances.

If applicable, students will be required to supply documentary evidence in support of their appeal. The appeal must explain what has changed in the student's situation that will allow the student to achieve SAP at the next evaluation.

4.2. The appeal will be considered by the SAP Appeals Panel, made up by the International Sponsor Relations Manager, a representative from the relevant Academic Department and the relevant Faculty Registrar. The decision of the appeal will be communicated to the student in writing within 14 days of submission, if all necessary supporting evidence (as determined by the SAP Appeals Panel) is complete. The decision of the SAP Appeals Panel is final, although students can also utilise the University's student complaints procedure in the normal way.

4.3. Where a student successfully appeals their SAP status, the student will regain eligibility for the entire period of enrolment in which they were determined to be meeting the satisfactory academic progress requirement, but will be placed given Financial Aid Probation status.

### 5. **Financial Aid Probation Status**

5.1. If a student needs to repeat a stage or an element of study prior to progression, they may still qualify for funding but will be placed on Financial Aid Probation. If, by the time of the next disbursement period, progress and attendance meet the SAP requirements, financial aid will continue. If progress does not meet SAP requirements, the student will be placed on Financial Aid Denied status and financial aid will be suspended for the remainder of the payment

period. An assessment will be made at the end of each semester to determine whether aid can be reinstated for the next payment period.

## **6. Financial Aid Denied Status**

- 6.1. Students failing to satisfy the minimum SAP requirements, after a repeat year of study, and/or after having been on Financial Aid Probation will be given Financial Aid Denied status, withdrawn from the programme of study and will not be eligible for further financial aid.

## **7. Other Issues Related to US Financial Aid**

- 7.1. **Transfer Students:** Modules which are deemed applicable to the proposed Aberystwyth University degree will be accepted and will be used to award exemption from corresponding modules within the new programme. Only those grades earned at Aberystwyth University will be used to compute the qualitative requirement.
- 7.2. **Change of Programme or Degree:** Grades previously earned at Aberystwyth University will be used to measure the qualitative SAP requirements. Previous course modules coinciding with new course modules will be used towards the quantitative (pace & progression) SAP requirements. If none coincide, none will be used.
- 7.3. **Incompletes:** This is not normal practice in the UK. An incomplete module is considered a fail.
- 7.4. **Temporary Withdrawals:** Should a student withdraw from a programme and wish to return at a later time, the SAP will be checked using the final grades a student received within that programme. Should a student choose to return and enter a different program, SAP will be determined at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> year, per the practice for 1<sup>st</sup> year students.

## **8. Aberystwyth University's Assessment Regulations for all Students**

- 8.1. Please refer to the [Rules & Regulations](#) section within Aberystwyth University's [Academic Quality Handbook](#) for full details of the University's regulations on assessment of students (including rules for progression). Please further refer to the links below:
- 8.1.1. [Undergraduate Bachelors and Undergraduate \(integrated\) Masters Students](#)
- 8.1.2. [Postgraduate Taught Masters \(MA/LLM/MSc/MRes\) Students](#) *See also Code of Practice for Taught Postgraduates*
- 8.1.3. [Postgraduate Research Masters \(MPhil/LLM by Research\) Students](#) *See also Code of Practice for Research Postgraduates*
- 8.1.4. [Doctoral \(PhD\) Students](#) *See also Code of Practice for Research Postgraduates*

## **9. Regulations for Visas and Immigration for all non-UK Students**

- 9.1. Please note that in addition to meeting the University's requirements for engagement and attendance, all students will be subject to UK Government Visas and Immigration legislation and requirements.

9.2. It should also be stressed that poor attendance will result in the University reporting this to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and may result in the student's visa being revoked.