

Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

Requirements and Purpose

Federal regulations require that students make satisfactory progress toward attainment of a degree, diploma, or certificate objective in order to participate in federal student assistance programs. Helena College interprets federal intent of the satisfactory progress regulations as a means to prevent abuse of federal student assistance programs as opposed to placing limitations on students. Helena College's financial aid satisfactory academic progress policy is provided to ensure compliance with federal regulations and to prevent abuse of federal student assistance programs while supporting students' efforts to attain educational objectives. These standards represent minimum performance requirements based on federal statute and regulation and do not necessarily coincide with academic program requirements. In addition to meeting these standards, a student must fulfill all other requirements to receive financial aid.

Indicators of Progress

Financial aid satisfactory academic progress (SAP) is measured 'qualitatively' and 'quantitatively'. Quality of work is measured by cumulative grade point average (GPA) resulting from work done at Helena College. Quantity of work is measured against a maximum time frame in which the student must complete the educational objective. The quantitative measurement requires designation of a minimum amount of work a student must successfully complete (credit hours earned) by the end of designated periods of enrollment (full-time equivalent semesters). The quantitative measure is cumulative for all periods of enrollment and for all schools attended, including periods of enrollment in which students did not receive federal student financial assistance.

Enrollment Status

Student status is based on the following:

- **Full time (FT)** - Attempting 12 or more credits
- **Three-quarter time (QT)** – Attempting 9-11 credits
- **Half-Time (HT)** – Attempting 6-8 credits
- **Less-than-half-time (LTHT)** – Attempting 5 or fewer credits

For financial aid awarding and satisfactory academic progress purposes, enrollment status is based on credit hours for which the student is enrolled as of the published date considered to the end of the add/drop period of the term for the majority of students. Financial aid will be adjusted to reflect less-than-full-time status if the student is not registered for at least 12 credit hours on that date.

Financial aid will not be adjusted to reflect credit hours added after that date. Students who are

registered for a class on the first day of the term but never began attendance in that class cannot include that class in determining enrollment status for financial aid purposes. Financial aid will be adjusted if students are reported as never having started attendance in one or more of their classes. All summer sessions jointly are considered one term.

Students Subject to SAP Measurement

Students currently enrolled and re-admits are subject to SAP measurement. In most instances, a financial aid package will be provided before grades are posted. If SAP standards have not been met, the financial aid package is voided, pending appeal. New students, including transfer students, while subject to SAP, are not measured for satisfactory progress until grades have been posted for the first semester of attendance at Helena College.

SAP Measurement Date

SAP measurement is made after completion of each semester.

Measurement Standards of SAP

Qualitative Measurement

A student must possess a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher. A student must meet the above qualitative standard in addition to the quantitative standards discussed below.

Quantitative Measurement

Students must pass 70% of the cumulative credits attempted at Helena College in their degree/certificate program. Attempted credits will be based on a student's credit load at the end of the add/drop period for each term. Audit and non-credit remedial work are not considered in the measurement of SAP. Remedial and repeated course work for which a student received credit multiple times is treated as any other course work. Incompletes are considered as credits attempted when considering maximum time frames. Transfer credits are also considered when determining maximum time frames. If a student withdrew from a class or classes after the add/drop period, the student is considered to have attempted those classes, even though the student did not receive any earned credits from registering for the classes. Withdrawal from classes has a negative impact on SAP measurement.

Duration of Eligibility

Students are expected to complete their program of study within a reasonable time period. A student's maximum time frame is based on total credit hours attempted at Helena College plus any transfer credits accepted towards their program of study. These limits apply regardless of whether or not the student has received financial assistance. Students are eligible to receive aid for up to 150% of the published number of credit hours for a program of study (see program descriptions in the [College catalog](#)).

Example: If a program of study requires 60 credit hours to graduate, the maximum credit limit a student could take and receive financial aid would be 90 (60 X 150 percent). All credit hours attempted are counted.

At the end of each semester, the total number of attempted credit hours will be counted to see if the student has reached the maximum number of credit hours for their program. All credit hours are counted which includes:

- Credit hours attempted in semesters student did not receive financial aid.
- Credit hours attempted prior to a change in your program of study if those hours are applicable to student's new degree/certificate. A student will be allowed to change their program of study three times prior to receiving a degree/certificate and must inform the Financial Aid Office of the change.
- Credit hours transferred from another institution into student's program of study at Helena College.

Consequences

Financial Aid Warning

A student will be placed on financial aid warning if he/she:

- Fails to maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0 or
- Fails to complete 70% of cumulative attempted credit hours

During a warning semester, the student may still receive financial aid. The student's future financial aid eligibility is dependent upon how well the student does during the warning semester. If the student completes the required number of credit hours to reach the 70% cumulative pace measure

and has a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher, the student will be removed from financial aid warning status and restored to good standing. If, however, the student again fails to meet one or both of these requirements, the student will have their financial aid terminated.

Financial Aid Termination

A student will have their financial aid terminated if he/she:

- Fails to meet both qualitative and quantitative SAP requirements.
- Fails to meet the academic progress requirements at the end of a warning semester.
- Has been determined to have exceeded the maximum time frame OR has been determined unable to mathematically finish their program in the maximum time frame.

Student Notification of SAP Decisions

The Financial Aid Office will, in most instances, measure SAP after developing a financial aid package for a student. In this case, the student will be notified in writing if he or she has not met SAP standards and that the financial aid package is cancelled. At the same time, the student will be notified of the appeal process (described below).

Exceptions/Appeals

A student who is notified of failure to meet SAP standards may appeal the conclusion reached by the Financial Aid Office and/or request that he/she be granted an exception to the policy. The Registrar's Office must grant academic reinstatement to students on academic suspension before the Office of Financial Aid will consider an appeal for financial aid eligibility reinstatement.

Appeal Requirements

The student must respond in writing to the notification of failure to meet SAP standards. The response must be directed to the Financial Aid Appeals Committee at Helena College. The response must describe in specific terms why Helena College should grant an exception to its established SAP policy.

At a minimum, the response must include the following:

1. A personal statement, plus supporting documentation, as appropriate, explaining the circumstances that have led to failure to meet established SAP standards.
2. The nature and timing of the circumstances (e.g., injury or illness, death of a loved one). A student with a maximum credit hour violation must address the circumstances that prevented their graduation within the applicable credit limit.
3. How the circumstances affected the student's ability to meet the standards. If more than one enrollment period was affected, each enrollment period and the relevant circumstances must be specifically addressed.
4. How the circumstances have been resolved or managed to permit the student to meet the standards.
5. The statement should also include an academic plan outlining how the student expects to meet the SAP standards, as well as the time frame in which the student expects to be back in compliance with such standards.

Appeal Deadlines and Processing

Appeals for financial aid eligibility reinstatement must be received in the Financial Aid Office no later than two weeks prior to the start of the term for which the student desires aid. Appeals will be reviewed by the Financial Aid Appeals Committee on a case-by-case basis as soon as possible and may take two weeks or more for an answer depending on the appeal volume at the time submitted. There will be no appeals accepted for financial aid reinstatement for the Summer term.

The Financial Aid Director and Financial Aid Appeals Committee will review the student's response and will make a decision on the appeal. Two actions may result on the appeal:

1. The Financial Aid Appeals Committee may deny the appeal. The Financial Aid Director is the final authority regarding SAP decisions. The student will be notified, in writing, of action on the appeal in a timely manner. The student must pay for and pass at least 6 credits prior to re-appealing to have financial aid reinstated.
2. The Financial Aid Appeals Committee may approve the appeal. If such is the case, the student will receive written notice of the approval along with conditions to be met in the future, if appropriate. A student may be approved in one of two statuses:
 - a. Probation: Helena College determines that the student should be able to make satisfactory academic progress during the subsequent payment period and meet the college's satisfactory academic progress standards at the end of the payment period.
 - b. Academic Plan: The Financial Aid Appeals Committee recommends an academic plan be created between the student and advisor that, if followed, will ensure the student is able to meet the institution's satisfactory academic progress standards by a specific point in time.

Students approved on an Academic Plan will complete and sign the plan with an Academic Advisor. The plan will be recorded in the Financial Aid Office and will be monitored by the Financial Aid Appeals Committee every term. If a student is not academically progressing as planned, financial aid will be terminated.

Additional Information:

Additional Degree: Students who have obtained an Associate degree and wish to return to Helena College for a subsequent degree may not be eligible for Financial Aid. Changes from AAS to AS or AA degrees will receive consideration as they are separate and distinct degree programs. The request for a subsequent degree must be submitted to the Director of Financial Aid with a degree audit from the Registrar. If approved for a new degree or certificate, the student will be required to only take courses that relate to the new degree or certificate. It is the student's responsibility to not take courses that do not fit the program; doing so may result in financial aid termination. There is a maximum of three degree changes in order to receive financial aid. If a student changes his/her major more than three times, he/she will need to appeal for aid to the Director of Financial Aid.

Challenge Courses: Students will not be funded with financial aid for challenged courses.

Changed and Late Grades: The student must notify the Financial Aid Office of grade changes, including updates for incomplete or missing grades. Grades must be officially changed in the Registrar's Office before financial aid eligibility will be reviewed.

Evaluation Time Frame: Helena College will evaluate a student's satisfactory academic progress at the end of each payment period: fall, spring, and summer. A student placed on financial aid warning or termination will be notified via US mail to the current mailing or permanent address on record. It is the responsibility of the student to keep their address updated via MyHC.

Incomplete: An incomplete course is one for which no term credits were earned. It is construed as an 'F' until a positive letter grade is recorded by the Registrar. A student who is placed on warning or termination due to incomplete credits may request the Financial Aid Office review his/her status once the course has been completed.

Remedial Courses: Certain sub-100 remedial courses, which do not apply toward graduation requirements, may be included as part of their credit load for determining enrollment status each term. These courses can total no more than half their credit load per term and cannot exceed 30 credits in total.

Return of Title IV Funds: Federal regulations require colleges to recalculate a student's financial aid for those who officially or unofficially withdraw from classes prior to completing 60% of a semester, to determine the amount of aid that was earned and unearned with the unearned portion having to be returned to the Federal Department of Education.