



## **SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY**

Columbia Central University has established the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy as the evaluation criteria to determine the academic achievement of students. This rule is part of the eligibility requirements to participate in the Title IV financial aid programs of the Federal Department of Education, as well as to institute the procedures for the monitoring and application of this policy.

### **Explanatory Statement**

The Federal Department of Education requires institutions of higher education to establish, publish, and enforce reasonable standards that measure the student's academic progress to determine their eligibility to participate in Title IV aid programs. Under this rule, all students participating in the federal financial aid programs may receive such assistance as long as it does not exceed 150% of the time required to complete the study program in which they are enrolled.

### **Applicability**

This policy applies to all students enrolled at CCU, regardless of whether they are full time or part-time students, private, or receive financial aid from the Title IV Program, Veteran recipients, or receive any other type of aid. The policy does not substitute any other institutional norm or policy related to the student academic achievement or the maximum time to complete a degree. The policy does not interfere with the academic requirements of the accrediting programs or agencies.

### **Rules**

To maintain satisfactory academic progress and be eligible to receive federal, state, and institutional financial aid, the student must meet the qualitative and quantitative criteria and the maximum time required to complete their study program.

Satisfactory Academic Progress is a student who meets the three criteria when evaluated. The student who does not comply with the policy may lose their eligibility to receive financial aid or may be suspended from the Institution. This is according to the application as to the individual evaluation of each student.



### **Qualitative Criterion**

To achieve academic eligibility from the qualitative point of view, the student must achieve the minimum cumulative academic index (GPA) for their study program, as described in the academic progress tables.

### **Quantitative Criteria**

This criterion determines the gradual progress of the student towards obtaining the certificate or degree by passing a minimum percentage of attempted and approved credits, as indicated in the academic progress tables. Attempted credits are all those in which the student enrolls in a regular program. Approved credits are all attempted credits in which grades of A, B, C, D, P, T are obtained.

Courses with grades F, W, WT, WF are considered attempted but not passed courses. In addition, the accumulated average and the credits attempted versus approved until the last school period of studies will be considered. For this quantitative criterion, all validated courses from other institutions will be considered.

### **Maximum Time Criterion**

Students can complete their study program within one and a half times the normal duration of the program. The maximum time is reached when the credits attempted by the student exceed one and a half times the number of credits required to obtain the degree or certificate from the program in which the student is currently enrolled.

A student who has passed 150% of the credits in their program may be allowed to continue for a further term at the discretion of the Counselor and/or Chancellor. This term will not be considered eligible for financial aid. The student enrolls under an Academic Plan.

Students are expected to meet the required minimum credits and average at the end of each testing period or semester. Students must satisfactorily pass at least the established percentage of the credits enrolled and attempted. The Registrar's Office will prepare the list of students who do not comply with the satisfactory academic progress policy and will notify the Financial Aid, Collections, and Counseling offices in writing.



**Tables to evaluate the Student's Satisfactory Academic Progress by Level:**

<b>Associate and Bachelor's Degree Programs</b>	<b>Grade Point Average (GPA)</b>	<b>Minimum % of Credits Accumulated</b>
<b>Total of Credits Attempted</b>		<b>Approved of the Attempted</b>
34 credits or less	1.00	33%
35 to 57 credits	1.60	50%
58 credits or more	2.25	67%

<b>Master's Degree Program</b>	<b>Grade Point Average (GPA)</b>	<b>Minimum % of Credits Accumulated</b>
<b>Total of Credits Attempted</b>		<b>Approved of the Attempts</b>
15 credits or less	2.50	50%
16 credits or more	3.00	67%

<b>Certificate Program</b>	<b>Grade Point Average (GPA)</b>	<b>Minimum % of Credits Accumulated</b>
<b>Total of Credits Attempted</b>		<b>Approved of the Attempted</b>
15 credits or less	1.00	33%
16 to 27 credits	1.25	50%
28 credits or more	2.00	67%

**Veteran Students and/or Beneficiaries**

Veterans Administration, under Federal Code, Title 38, requires veteran students and/or their beneficiaries to complete their program of study in the regular time allotted to it. If someone extends the time established to complete their 100% study program, they must inform themselves to other available financial aid for which they may be eligible and will not be eligible for Veterans benefits.



## **Withdrawals**

Courses withdrawn within the period stipulated for changes in the academic calendar will not count for the determination of the quantitative criteria. Courses withdrawn after the change period will count as attempted and not approved.

## **Transferred Students**

Credits accepted in transfer are considered approved courses for the purposes of this policy. However, because no grades are assigned to transferred courses, they will have no impact on the student's GPA.

## **Course Repetition**

CCU will allow its students to repeat the courses as many times as they wish, but for average purpose the best grade obtained will be considered (for general average purpose, previous attempts are not considered). All repeated courses will be considered as attempted credits when computation is done to determine satisfactory academic progress. In those cases where there are N/A (never participated) within the attempts of the same class, they will not be taken into consideration, since no payment of federal funds is made for them.

For federal funds eligibility purpose, a student may repeat a course which was previously approved once more to improve its grade when it requires a minimum grade within the study program. The student may repeat courses as many times as it wished if they failed the course and if the academic progress is not affected.

In case of students with Veterans benefits and/or their beneficiaries, the Veterans Administration will only pay for the repetition of failed courses or courses where a minimum grade is required.

## **Change of Program**

When a student requests a change of program, the institution determines which of the courses taken are equivalent to those required in the new one. These credits will count as attempted credits and will be considered in the calculation of the academic grade point average.

## **Application of the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy**

The student's academic progress will be evaluated at the end of each academic term. Grades reported as incomplete or requests for grade reviews at the time of evaluation will be considered



attempted and not approved but will not affect the student's GPA. After the incompletes are removed and the corresponding grade reviews are carried out, the student's academic progress will be evaluated again. In the case of students in readmission, their academic progress will be evaluated at the time of being readmitted to the university.

When the student does not meet any of the criteria in the term to be evaluated, the student will be placed in one of the following classifications, as applicable:

### **Warning Classification**

Students who do not demonstrate satisfactory academic progress as established in the policy are classified in Financial Aid with a warning status. These students may continue to receive the financial aid assigned for an additional semester.

The Registrar will refer all students who are classified under Warning to the Counselor to receive academic advice and develop an orientation and intervention plan. The plan is intended to guide and prevent the student to fall under the suspension classification on the next semester for not meeting the satisfactory academic progress standard.

At the next evaluation period, students who correct the deficiency by raising their grade point average and credits above the required parameters will be removed from the Warning classification, returning to satisfactory academic status at the end of the term.

### **Academic Suspension Classification**

Students who are in a warning classification and who do not pass the classification by raising their average and credits above the minimum parameters, will be placed on Academic Suspension; losing your eligibility for financial aid as long as they don't appeal. Students classified in suspension will not be eligible for financial aid, unless they request an appeal, and it is approved by the Committee on Academic Progress. A suspension is appealable under certain mitigating circumstances. See appeal process below.

Suspended students who do not appeal may not enroll in the following academic term after being declared suspension but are eligible to apply for readmission after recessing an academic term. If readmission is approved, the student will return to CCU on financial aid probation or extended period. The student will remain on financial aid probation or extended period and will remain ineligible for financial aid programs until the deficiencies are overcome and his/her Satisfactory Academic Progress eligibility is restored.



## **Appeal Procedure**

A student placed on Academic Suspension may appeal such classification based on mitigating circumstances, within a period of no more than 5 business days from the date of notification. The appeal must be by letter that includes a complete description of the circumstances that led to the academic difficulty, how those circumstances have changed, and a plan for academic success. Said appeal must be accompanied by any copy of the supporting documents that supports it.

The Academic Progress Committee will be composed of the Academic Director and/or Program Coordinator, Registrar, Counselor, and the Director of the Financial Aid Office. Based on the documentation presented and the merits of the case, a decision will be made regarding the case. The Committee will notify in writing the action that has been taken in the case within a period not exceeding five (5) business days from the date the appeal is received. The Committee's decision will be final and firm, therefore, it cannot be appealed.

## **Mitigating Circumstances**

Mitigating circumstances are defined as those beyond the direct control of the student. These can affect the student and not allow him/her to progress satisfactorily and/or to achieve his/her academic objective. Among these we can mention the following:

1. Change in the educational goal
2. Death of a relative
3. Health problems
4. Changes in the family unit
5. Changes and/or loss of employment
6. Other situations beyond the student's control

Students who present any of the above situations may appeal the suspension to the Academic Progress Committee. For the appeal to be considered, it must be accompanied by the documents that support the condition, such as medical certificates, notifications of layoffs, etc.

## **Financial Aid Probation**

Once an appeal is approved, the student is placed on financial aid probation and will be required to meet with the Counselor to develop an academic plan. The plan will be designed to return the student to a good academic achievement within the maximum time (see measurement table). The student remains eligible for Federal financial assistance if the terms stipulated in the Academic plan are met.



## **Regain Financial Assistance Eligibility by Means Other than Appeal**

The suspended student who does not file an appeal or who is denied the appeal may become eligible for federal student aid by one or more of the following methods: 1) by overcoming deficiencies (regaining satisfactory academic progress) by completing courses in CCU as a student in extended period classification without federal financial aid benefits (requires an absence of at least one full term – see definition of Suspension), and / or 2) completing courses at another accredited university and having them accepted on transfer to CCU, resulting in compliance with academic parameters.

### **Reinstatement as a Regular Student**

All students who, after having been classified in financial aid warning, economic aid probation, and achieve the academic progress required by their study program, will be reinstated as a regular student for Financial Aid eligibility. It is recommended that during the Warning and Probation periods under this subsection, the student does not enroll in more than 12 credits per academic term or as recommended by the Counselor, preferably repeating courses whose grade has been D or F: if necessary.

### **Reinstatement of Students who did not meet Satisfactory Academic Progress**

Students who are readmitted after not complying with the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy will be evaluated during the current semester and their classification will depend on the progress made.

### **COVID-19 Exception for SAP Quantitative Criteria**

In compliance with article 3509 of the CARES Act, those credits attempted that a student has not been able to complete because of a circumstance related to the COVID-19 pandemic will be excluded from the quantitative component of satisfactory academic progress (SAP). Permitted circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- Illness of the student or a member of his family
- The need to become a caregiver or first responder
- Economic difficulties
- Increase in working hours
- Loss of childcare
- Impossibility of continuing with classes through online education



Regarding the effect of excluding credit attempts in the maximum term, SAP policy requires that the rate at which students' progress in the program guarantees the completion of that program within a maximum term of 150%. A four-year program consisting of 120 credit hours with a maximum term of 180 credit hours (150 percent of the program duration) must have a rate of 66.666 percent (rounded to the 67 percent), measured cumulatively at each interval, to ensure that students complete the program within the maximum time frame.

For example, the pace of a student who has completed 78 of the 120 attempted hours is 65 percent ( $78/120$ ), below what is necessary to do the SAP. However, if 12 credits that the student attempted but were unable to complete in the spring of 2020 due to a circumstance related to COVID 19, the rate becomes 72 percent ( $79/108$ ) and follows the SAP. The credits attempted will be effectively excluded from the maximum term, as well as from the rhythm measurement.