

SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY FOR RECIPIENTS OF US FEDERAL
AID: DIRECT LOANS

1. Overview

All students who are in receipt of US Federal Aid: Direct Loans (subsidized, unsubsidized and PLUS) whilst studying at the University of Ulster are required to make satisfactory academic progress on their course of study and to abide by the [University's Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations](#).

The US Department of Education Regulations require the University of Ulster to ensure that all students receiving Direct Loans are making Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP).

Each loan disbursement is subject to maintaining SAP at the University of Ulster and the academic progress of students will be evaluated prior to each disbursement to ensure that they are meeting both the Quantitative and Qualitative requirements below. Satisfactory progression to retain Federal Aid is entirely separate from the academic requirements to remain on the course and does not guarantee the outcome of a student's programme.

2. Qualitative Requirements

Students are expected to maintain SAP through their course of study. No progress confirmation is required for the first disbursement for a student's programme of study.

For students on taught programmes, an Examination Board decision of "Proceed" is sufficient to determine SAP to confirm that they are making satisfactory progress from one year to the next. For progress from semester 1 to semester 2, students should pass all modules for which they are enrolled as determined by the relevant course regulations.

For students enrolled on taught programmes of more than two academic years, the student must have a Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least a C or its equivalent – or have academic standing consistent with the University's requirements for graduation.

In the case of Graduate research students, enquiries will be made with the academic department/Research Graduate School to check that they are progressing towards a good pass in the required time frame and verify attendance before financial aid disbursements are due.

3. Quantitative Requirements

Students must be enrolled and continue to be enrolled at least half time at the University of Ulster to remain eligible for US Direct Loans.

If it is stated by the academic department that the student is not attending at least half-time, or if time put into the research is felt by the department not to be equal to half-time or above, Financial Aid will be suspended.

Students must progress through their course at a pace which ensures that they will graduate within the maximum timeframe. A student's pace of progression will be measured prior to loan disbursement to ensure that each student completes within the maximum time frame. The maximum timeframe cannot be longer than 150% of the published length of the programme, e.g. 4.5 years for a 3 year BSc or 1.5 years for a 1 year MSC.

4. Financial Aid Warning/Probation

In order to receive continued loan funding, students must meet both the academic progress (Qualitative) and course duration (Quantitative) minimum requirements.

Students who fail to achieve the required Qualitative and Quantitative standards will receive a warning or be placed on funding probation until the next disbursement by which time their grades/progress will be expected to be at the required level. This warning/probation status will last one payment period (i.e. until the next disbursement), during which time a student can still receive financial aid.

If the student achieves the required standard by the end of the warning/probation period, they will be placed in good standing for financial aid. If the marks/progress do not meet the required standard at the next attempt, then financial aid will be suspended, unless they are successful in an appeal (see below).

Students repeating a year or credits need to pass at the next available opportunity in order to maintain eligibility for Federal Aid.

A student that has their Federal Aid suspended but continues the course under their own means and subsequently meets SAP standards will be entitled to apply for loans and regain a probationary status.

Students will be informed by letter and email if they are given a warning or placed on probation or if financial aid is suspended.

5. Appeal Procedure

To appeal the financial aid suspension, a student must, within 14 calendar days of notification, indicate in writing the reason(s) for failure to meet the necessary financial aid SAP requirements and why financial aid should not be suspended. Full documentation in support of the appeal is required at the time of the appeal submission. Disbursement of loan funding will not be made while an appeal is being progressed.

An Appeals Panel, chaired by a senior member of academic staff will consider the appeal and render a decision, which will be conveyed in writing to the student within 14 calendar days of the student's appeal.

Appeals should be sent to:

The Office for Global Engagement
Global Operations and Intelligence Unit
University of Ulster
Shore Road
Newtownabbey
Co Antrim
BT37 0QB

All appeal decisions are final.

NOTE: The SAP Policy is separate from academic appeals relating to exam results. The outcome of a SAP appeal has no bearing on results achieved or grade awarded. SAP decisions are based on official exam results.

6. Financial Aid Reinstatement

If a student's appeal against funding suspension is successful, then the student's good standing will be restored and the student will be placed on probation for the payment period.

Students that fail SAP after a period of probation cannot receive aid unless they are successful in a further appeal and develop an academic plan approved by their supervisor.