SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

For Academic Advisors

PLEASE REFER TO THE SAP for Financial Aid Recipients Policy: https://financialaid.unl.edu/sap.shtml

HOW OFTEN IS SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS REVIEWED?
The Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid annually evaluates the SAP status for all financial aid recipients and new admits following the end of spring semester final grade submission (usually by the end of the 3rd week in May). The SAP GPA calculation is reviewed at the end of each semester for students who have completed their fourth semester at UNL. After the fourth semester GPA review, then that student’s SAP GPA calculation would be run after each spring semester along with the completion rate and maximum timeframe calculation.

Students who meet SAP will continue their financial aid eligibility for the next academic year-fall and spring semesters. Students, who do not meet SAP, are notified of their SAP status and loss of financial aid eligibility via letter within a week or two of the SAP evaluation (if they have applied for financial aid for the following academic year or when they do apply for financial aid).

WHAT FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS ARE AFFECTED?
If a student is not meeting SAP, they are generally ineligible for all federal, state, and some institutional grant and scholarship financial aid programs.

Private as well as some institutional scholarships may or may not require SAP standards be met and usually have their own specific standards for disbursement and renewal. Please see each scholarship program for details. Students can learn about possible private loans that do not require that SAP standards be met, through OSFA website at: https://financialaid.unl.edu/Alternative_loan.shtml. Students should be directed to their financial aid advisor for further information.

HOW DOES A STUDENT RE-GAIN FINANCIAL AID ELIGIBILITY?
A student can either successfully appeal for reinstatement of their financial aid eligibility or they can earn the necessary cumulative GPA or meet the minimum completion rate of the SAP for Financial Aid Recipients Policy, while paying for their UNL enrollment on their own. Transfer credit hours are not counted in the SAP calculation for earned to attempted credit hour-completion rate, but are counted towards total attempted credit hours-maximum timeframe. The transfer GPA from UNO, UNK or UNMC, however becomes part of the UNL cumulative GPA (as is calculated by the Office of the University Registrar) and therefore is counted in the SAP GPA calculation.

WHAT IS THE APPEAL PROCESS?
The student submits a completed appeal (personal narrative, support documents and a degree plan) to our office. The SAP Appeal Committee reviews the appeal and makes the decision to approve or deny the appeal. If the appeal is approved, the student will be on financial aid probation and have an Academic Plan, which they must follow each semester until they are meeting SAP. Students on financial aid probation are eligible to receive financial aid and are evaluated after each term to ensure they are following their Academic Plan.

WHEN ARE STUDENTS NOTIFIED ABOUT THE APPEAL PROCESS?
Within the SAP status notification letter they are also informed of their eligibility to appeal for reinstatement of their financial aid eligibility.

WHY ARE STUDENTS ENCOURAGED TO APPEAL?
Students are encouraged to appeal if financial aid is necessary to cover cost for school. We also believe going through the appeal process is beneficial for the student to determine a plan to progress toward degree completion. It does not guarantee the appeal will be approved.
HOW OFTEN ARE APPEALS REVIEWED?
SAP appeals are reviewed by a committee on a rolling basis after the May evaluation.

WHAT IS THE DEADLINE TO APPEAL?
There is no specific deadline, however students are encouraged to submit their appeal at least 2 – 3 weeks prior to the fall semester bill date of September 12th, the spring semester bill date of February 12th or the summer semester bill date of June 12th in order to avoid late payment fees.

WHAT DOES THE FINANCIAL AID APPEALS COMMITTEE CONSIDER WHEN REVIEWING AN APPEAL?
The Committee reviews each appeal individually, on a case-by-case basis. Written documentation of illness, accident, injury, death of a close family member, or other extenuating circumstances throughout the student’s academic career for which they could not plan, influence, or prevent will be considered carefully. Other extenuating circumstances could include family issues, or work (if student was required to suddenly increase hours such as full-time to overtime). Students should include this and other relevant information in their narrative, along with documentation from appropriate third parties, if applicable (e.g., a physician, therapist, etc.). Students should provide specific dates of the extenuating circumstance, which should coincide with the dates of the unsuccessful semesters. Students should include a plan of action or changes made in their lifestyle or academic approach, which will support academic success from the current semester going forward.

Third party documentation need not be specific, but should inform the committee on the student’s prognosis (readiness to return and ability to focus on his/her academics). If, however a First-Year student had difficulty with course-work or time management and sought assistance during the semester that could be verified, such as in MyPlan, we would take that into consideration.

HOW LONG BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ISSUES A DECISION? HOW ARE STUDENTS NOTIFIED?
Appeal decisions are generally made in at least 2 – 3 weeks after the completed appeal (all requested documentation received) was submitted. Students will receive the appeal decision via their preferred email address and can be viewed in MyRED.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A STUDENT’S APPEAL IS APPROVED?
When the SAP Appeal is approved, the student is sent an email, which outlines the criteria that they must meet each semester-this along with their degree plan is considered the Academic Plan. We will review the student’s academic record at the end of each semester until they are meeting SAP or has graduated whichever comes first.

The Academic Plan usually requires that the students follow the submitted degree plan, earn all credit hours in which they enroll, with no withdrawals, incompletes, and N or F grades as well as earn at least a 2.000 semester GPA. If an advisee needs to drop/withdraw or take an incomplete grade, they should check with OSFA first before doing so.

CAN STUDENTS AMEND THEIR ACADEMIC PLAN?
Plans can be amended on a case-by-case basis. The student working with their academic advisor, will submit the amended academic for review by the SAP committee. Students will be notified via email if the SAP committee has approved their amended academic plan. Failure to notify OSFA of changes to their academic plan, could result in the denial of a subsequent term evaluation or appeal.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A STUDENT’S APPEAL IS DENIED?
If a student’s appeal is denied, the decision is final and not subject to further review. The student is sent an email, which outlines the steps toward regaining their financial aid eligibility. Eligibility for a subsequent appeal is based on the student completing a successful semester on their own.

WHAT IS A SUCCESSFUL SEMESTER ON HIS/HER OWN?
A successful semester on their own is defined as a student completing a semester without federal or state financial aid before being eligible to re-appeal. To be eligible to re-appeal students must successfully complete all courses on degree plan with no F’s, W’s, N’s, or I’s, earn a semester GPA of 2.000 or higher and complete degree plan within timeframe provided on the appeal.
IF THE APPEAL IS DENIED, WILL THE OFFICE SCHOLARSHIPS AND FINANCIAL AID REVIEW OTHER AID OPTIONS FOR THE STUDENT?
Yes. We provide other options in the email to students regarding their denial and students are welcome to make an appointment to meet with a financial aid advisor to discuss further. We also accept walk-in appointments Monday – Friday from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE FINANCIAL AID ADVISOR IN THE APPEAL?
To explain the process of appealing and discuss other financial aid options should the appeal be denied.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR?
To assist the student in completing the degree plan and discuss options to progress towards graduation (such as: steps toward declaring a major when a low GPA is a factor—develop a plan to reach the required GPA, while ensuring that the student can declare and graduate within in a reasonable timeframe without exceeding the maximum timeframe rule). Please note: The SAP Committee may review MyPLAN notes for further information about a student’s appeal.

WHAT TYPE OF AID IS AVAILABLE FOR A STUDENT WHO SUBMITS AN APPEAL RIGHT BEFORE THE SEMESTER BEGINS?
Only aid not affected by the SAP status, such as scholarships from individual programs, private scholarships and/or private loans (if the student has these aid types). If students do have these aid types, they will not have any aid available as they are ineligible.

WHAT SHOULD THE ADVISORS’ ROLE BE IF THE APPEAL IS DENIED?
Financial aid advisors will discuss other aid options.

If students are not able to obtain other aid options, then academic advisors could assist students by informing them of community college options for transfer coursework, which can be applied towards the degree program. Please keep in mind, however that transfer work has no bearing on UNL PACE or GPA (exception: transfer GPA from UNO, UNK and UNMC does affect the SAP GPA calculation), but transfer work does impact the maximum timeframe rule.

ARE THERE ANY STUDENT GROUPS THAT WILL PUSH TO THE MYPLAN OVERVIEW SCREEN?
Yes. Any student who has applied for financial aid will have one of the following items listed in the overview screen pertaining to their SAP status.

- OSFA SAP: Met SAP (no action needed)
- OSFA SAP: Did NOT Meet SAP (ineligible; refer to financial aid)
- OSFA SAP: On OSFA Academic Plan (must follow approved plan)
- OSFA SAP: Not Calculated Yet (refer to financial aid)
- OSFA SAP: Borderline SAP (don’t drop class; refer to financial aid)

DOES COMPLETING A TWO SEMESTER PLAN NEGATIVELY AFFECT THE STUDENT’S APPEAL?
Two semester plans are acceptable for first and second year students. Upper level students, will need the full degree plan to ensure they can graduate with no more than 180 attempted credit hours.

DO ADVISORS NEED TO WRITE A LETTER EXPLAINING WHY THEY ARE ONLY COMPLETING A TWO SEMESTER PLAN?
(Or will the committee know that for UNDL/PHLT/PENG/PLAW students, they won’t have a plan to completion?)
No letter is necessary for first and second year students. We will need additional information, only if a two semester plan is provided for an upper level student.
WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN THE DEGREE PLAN FOR UNDECLARED STUDENTS?
A reasonable plan in which a student in academic trouble can reasonably be successful and return to meeting SAP standards. This reasonable plan should also reveal to the student that they can meet the criteria of the major within a reasonable period of time (does not have to be in 4 years max, could be longer if necessary) and still graduate under 180 credit hours.

IF A STUDENT PLANS TO TAKE ONE COURSE DURING A SUMMER SESSION, SHOULD IT BE LISTED? Can we list a general requirement, rather than specific courses (i.e. ACE 7 instead of MUNM 287)?
Yes, please list any summer courses and general requirements are acceptable.

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS TO CONSIDER:

- Important for the advisors to list on the degree plan, the total number of transfer credit hours that will be used toward fulfilling major and degree requirements. This can be very helpful with regard to students who may be close or have exceeded the 180 maximum credit hour requirement.

- We will recalculate student’s maximum attempted hours, if the student has excess of 60 transfer credit hours from a community college and excess of 90 transfer credit hours from a 4-year institution. (We will manually recalculate when a student has appealed due to exceeding the 180 maximum credit hour requirement).

- If a student has exceeded or will exceed the 180 maximum credit hour requirement and the student has more than one major/minor, it would be in the student’s best interest to decide on the major in which they can graduate in the shortest amount of time and present that in the appeal for reinstatement of their aid. The regulation is in place to ensure the student is making progress towards earning a degree, the 180 maximum credit hour requirement allows for a student to change majors, and may even allow for a double major/minor but not in excess of 180 credit hours.

- Academic Bankruptcy does not forgive attempted credit hours in the SAP calculation. All UNL hours attempted and earned prior to Academic Bankruptcy will be calculated in a student’s SAP status.

- If a student, who has the SAP status “On OSFA Academic Plan,” seeks to withdraw from or take an incomplete in any attempted coursework, they should be directed to OSFA before taking this step. Students “On OSFA Academic Plans” are required to successfully complete all attempted courses, and therefore they should be reminded of this requirement, the consequences of withdrawing or taking an incomplete, as well as reviewing the steps they should take for appealing loss of their financial aid eligibility.

- If a student, who has the SAP status “Borderline SAP” (students whose SAP status falls in close range of the minimum SAP policy guidelines), seeks to withdraw from or take an incomplete in any attempted coursework, they should also be directed to OSFA to learn the outcome of taking this step. The financial aid advisor can manually calculate their completion rate and outline steps for a possible appeal.

- If after the spring SAP calculation has been run, a student subsequently meets the minimum SAP policy guidelines by completing a summer and/or fall semester on their own, or had a positive grade change, then they should complete the Student Now Meeting SAP Policy Guidelines or SAP Status Calculation for Study Abroad Hours form. Since the SAP calculation is run just once a year, OSFA does not run a report at any other time of the year to find students, who have regained eligibility for financial aid. SAP appeal forms can be found on our website: http://financialaid.unl.edu/forms.shtml

- As study abroad transfer credits are not calculated as UNL earned hours in SAP, it is important to direct students to complete the Student Now Meeting SAP Policy Guidelines or SAP Status Calculation for Study Abroad Hours form, if they have received a Fail to Meet SAP letter and per their academic records appear that they should be otherwise meeting SAP standards. Study abroad participants should ensure that they have had their study abroad transfer credits evaluated and posted to their academic records. OSFA cannot calculate their SAP status unless the study abroad credits have been applied to their UNL transcripts.