

National Paralegal College National Juris University

Satisfactory Academic Progress and Academic Success Guide

In Plain English

What is a Satisfactory Academic Progress policy?

- ▶ Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) is a policy to ensure that all students in the school are working towards timely program completion.

Why have a Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy?

- ▶ Required by federal regulation for Title IV (TIV) Financial Aid recipients
- ▶ Required by NPC/NJU for all students
- ▶ To make clear what is expected of students
- ▶ To explain what is necessary to succeed at NPC/NJU
- ▶ To explain what is necessary to retain TIV eligibility
- ▶ To explain the consequences of not maintaining SAP

Where does the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy appear in your Literature?

- ▶ The entire SAP policy appears in the Consumer Guide.
- ▶ Relevant elements of the policy appear in:
 - ▶ The Student Handbook
 - ▶ The course syllabi
 - ▶ The NPC and NJU websites
- ▶ This document is meant to supplement, not replace, those sources.

Who does the SAP policy affect?

- ▶ All students are required to make reasonable progress towards meeting the minimum GPA required for graduation.
- ▶ Financial aid students have mandated evaluations for SAP. At NPC / NJU these take place at the end of each payment period. We may be forced to remove someone from financial aid due to federal regulations even if the person is allowed to remain in the school.
- ▶ A student removed from financial aid for failure to comply with the SAP policy will have to make alternative tuition payment arrangements to remain in the school.
- ▶ Refer to the SAP policy for reinstatement requirements
- ▶ *Note: Both tuition disbursements and monthly stipends can be reduced or cancelled based on progress.*

What does the SAP policy require me to do?

- ▶ The SAP policy requires that all students:
 - ▶ Complete classes by the scheduled course end date.
 - ▶ While a 30 day extension is available, utilizing the extension will delay future financial aid disbursements.
 - ▶ Course grades are penalized by 3 raw points per day when an extension is used which may put your GPA at risk.
 - ▶ Maintain a grade point average of 2.0* or higher (discussed below)
* For NJU students, all references to a 2.0 GPA throughout this document should be replaced with a 3.0 GPA.
 - ▶ Be on track to finish the degree or certification program within 1.5 times the average completion rate
 - ▶ Example: A Bachelor's degree within 6 years, since the average completion rate is 4 years.

What contributes to failure to meet the SAP Policy?

- ▶ When you fail courses
- ▶ When you do not complete courses
- ▶ When your grade point average falls below 2.0
- ▶ When you are progressing at a rate that will not allow completion of your academic program within 1.5 times the normal completion rate
- ▶ When you fail to schedule consecutive courses that will allow you to proceed with the timely continuation of your program

When is SAP evaluated?

- ▶ SAP is evaluated at the end of each payment period
- ▶ A payment period does not end until the courses have been **successfully completed** (grades of F, I, W are not considered successfully completed)
- ▶ A payment period is generally 4 courses for NPC programs and 3 for NJU programs (it may be less for transfer students and those nearing the end of their program)
- ▶ Refer to the complete SAP policy for more information on evaluation points.

What will happen if my academic progress is not on par with the SAP policy?

- ▶ You will be placed on FA Warning for one payment period during which FA will be disbursed
- ▶ Students not regaining SAP after the Warning period, become ineligible for Financial Aid and are placed in FA Suspension status
- ▶ You may appeal the FA Suspension. If the appeal is granted, you will be placed on FA probation for one payment period during which FA will be disbursed.
- ▶ If the appeal is not granted or SAP status is not attained by the end of the FA probation period, FA is again suspended.

What is FA Probation?

- ▶ FA probation lasts for one payment period during which financial aid is disbursed
- ▶ Students granted probation are required to sign a probation agreement which states that the student will:
 - ▶ Submit one assignment or exam per week
 - ▶ Participate in approved Academically Related Activities and fulfill their interaction requirement in each class, weekly
 - ▶ Not be eligible to use extensions
 - ▶ Ask for assistance from their mentor and instructors; request extra credit when needed
 - ▶ Raise their GPA by the required deadline

Failure to comply with any of the above can result in the revocation of probation and dismissal from financial aid at ANY TIME during the probation period.

What will happen if I don't meet the SAP policy by the end of Probation?

- ▶ If you do not meet SAP requirements at the end of the probation period:
 - ▶ You become ineligible for Financial Aid
 - ▶ You are placed in FA Suspension status for the next payment period
 - ▶ You must make arrangements to pay all past charges as well as tuition for all courses in the payment period that have not been covered by FA.
 - ▶ You may not regain FA eligibility until SAP requirements have been met at an evaluation point.
 - ▶ Reinstatement is not retroactive.

What else can affect my academic success?

- ▶ Not scheduling consecutive courses (gap between courses when not on LOA)
- ▶ Incomplete courses
- ▶ Failed course
- ▶ Course extensions

What will happen if I don't have a current course scheduled?

- ▶ You may be locked out of your account and prevented from completing your coursework and participating in course work until you schedule additional courses (though you should receive a warning well before this happens)
- ▶ You may be withdrawn if you have not notified the school in writing (email is acceptable) that you will be returning

What other Academic Standards are there that affect me?

- ▶ In addition to meeting the SAP requirements, you must also adhere to all other NPC/NJU policies
- ▶ You may be dismissed from the school for poor academic performance or “chronic incompletes”
- ▶ You may be placed on academic probation

Dismissal for Chronic Incomplete

- ▶ This occurs when a student received a grade of “Incomplete” in two consecutive or overlapping courses.
 - ▶ Note: Grades of “I” are converted into an “F” for calculation of Cumulative GPA
- ▶ Example:
 - ▶ Getting an “I” in Torts, starting in January
 - ▶ Getting another “I” in Constitutional Law, starting in February
 - ▶ Remember that “I*” is just a placeholder grade and is not the same thing as an “I” which is a final grade of Incomplete. This is used for courses that no longer have live lectures but are still open for work to be completed through the grace period or an extension.
 - ▶ This is true even if the student has passed courses starting in December and/or March in the meantime
- ▶ This rule can be waived by staff, but it will only be waived in cases of emergency or other extenuating reason.
- ▶ Please don’t assume it will be waived. It will not be waived in most cases.

What is a Grade Point Average?

- ▶ Every grade, from I/F through A is worth a certain number of grade points (or quality points):
 - ▶ A or A+ = 4.0 A- = 3.67 B+ = 3.33
 - ▶ B = 3.0 B- = 2.67 C+ = 2.33
 - ▶ C = 2.0 C- = 1.67 D = 1.0
 - ▶ I or F = 0.00
- ▶ To calculate your GPA, add the total number of grade points you've earned, divided by the number of courses you have taken.
 - ▶ A "W" (withdrawal from a course in the first 4 weeks) does not count towards GPA, though it may result in some tuition liability. It will also count negatively towards your pace of progression.

Why is Grade Point Average Important?

- ▶ To graduate, you will need an over-all (cumulative) grade point average, CGPA, of 2.0 or better
- ▶ To remain in good academic standing (and not be placed on academic probation), you need to maintain a CGPA of 2.0 or better
- ▶ To continue to receive federal financial aid, you must maintain a CGPA of 2.0 or better at each SAP evaluation point.
- ▶ A higher GPA is a better academic record and looks better on a resume
- ▶ Remember that, while “D” and “C-” are passing grades, they are below 2.0. Getting one of these grades once in a while is okay, but if you consistently receive these grades, you will have difficulty maintaining your academic standing.

Academic Probation

- ▶ A student whose GPA is and remains below 2.0 for two course periods (which can be as little as two months), will be placed on academic probation.
- ▶ If you are placed on academic probation, you will be notified via email.
- ▶ This is even if you have received no failing grades.
- ▶ Academic Probation is separate from FA SAP Probation and may be put into place prior to and in addition to SAP probation
- ▶ Examples:
 - ▶ A student who starts off his or her program with two straight grades of C- is eligible to be placed on academic probation.
 - ▶ A student whose first course has a grade of C-, if the next course isn't at least C+, the cumulative GPA will still be under 2.0 and the student will be placed on Academic Probation.

What happens if I am placed on academic probation?

- ▶ You will be notified by email. It is imperative that you ensure NPC/NJU has your current email address.
- ▶ You will be monitored by a faculty member to ensure compliance with academic probation terms.
- ▶ Your student mentor will be notified so that assistance may be offered to the extent necessary.
- ▶ You will be required to comply with certain conditions on your continued enrollment, including:
 - ▶ Requirement to submit exams or assignments on a more rigid schedule
 - ▶ Stipulation that you must complete every weekly interaction to remain enrolled
 - ▶ Stipulation that you must complete every course you're enrolled in to remain enrolled
 - ▶ Limitations on your ability to receive extensions to submit your work
 - ▶ Other conditions imposed by NPC/NJU
- ▶ Remember: Academic Probation is separate from FA SAP statuses of probation, warning and suspension

How can I get off Academic Probation?

- ▶ **Raise your GPA to 2.0 or higher**
- ▶ Once you do this, you're off academic probation
- ▶ However, if you were on academic probation and then came off, and then your GPA dips back below 2.0, you may be placed right back on probation without a two course period waiting period.
- ▶ Financial Aid students who are on financial aid probation for not meeting SAP retain that status until they are evaluated at the end of the pay period and have achieved a 2.0 GPA

What can cause me to be dismissed when on academic probation?

- ▶ Failure to comply with any conditions imposed as a result of academic probation, including and especially failing a course, can lead to dismissal.
- ▶ If, while on probation, you go another two course periods without raising your GPA to 2.0 or higher, you may be dismissed for poor academic performance.
 - ▶ We will carefully review your record before we dismiss you and, if we see that you are making significant progress towards regaining your good academic standing, we can exercise our discretion to allow you to remain in the school and continue to make progress. For FA students, although this discretion may allow you to continue in your program, you may need to continue as a cash paying student.

How can I raise my Grade Point Average?

- ▶ The best way to raise your GPA is to get good grades.
- ▶ Re-taking a failed course and passing the course is especially effective in raising your GPA because the “old” failing grade from the course you re-took is not considered in the CGPA calculation, thereby removing a 0.00 GPA course.
 - ▶ Note: a failed course is included in the determination of SAP Maximum Timeframe even if successfully retaken, so the time for the extra course will count against you but the “F” will not.
- ▶ You may request extra credit assignments. Extra credit assignments are available for all 100 level legal courses and a few other courses.
 - ▶ In some cases, if necessary, you may be allowed to do an extra credit assignment for a course that you did not complete or did not pass, but in most cases, you will be given EC assignments for course(s) you have already passed.
 - ▶ You must put substantial effort and thought into doing your extra credit assignments in order to gain an increased grade.
 - ▶ If you do a good job on an EC assignment, you may be awarded up to a one full letter increase in your course grade (though 1/3 and 2/3 of a letter increases are more common).
- ▶ Remember that grades of “I” convert to “F” if the work is not completed as scheduled.

How can I raise my Grade Point Average? Cont.

▶ Avoid having to raise a grade by succeeding from the start.

Participate in class. Participate in live lectures as often as your schedule allows. While you can fulfill your required interactions in other ways, the ability to interact with your instructor and classmates “live” regarding course material is invaluable.

Pace your work. If you have to raise your GPA by the end of a pay period we would suggest that you plot out a schedule of completion for your assignments and exams and stick to it as best you can.

Our overlapping schedule allows for a lot of student flexibility but requires students to use discipline to complete their work in a timely manner. Often procrastinating causes students to become overwhelmed while trying to complete a few courses at once.

Request assistance early. Completing work early will allow you to request assistance from your mentor or instructor so you can make sure your work is up to par before it's due - keeping your grades higher.

Schedule Modification: Half-time students are still eligible for FA. If you are struggling to keep up with your work, speak to an FA rep about how attending part-time will affect your FA. We often recommend removing an upcoming class so students can be evaluated and know if they are FA eligible before accruing additional charges. This also allows more time to concentrate on the current courses that require completion before starting another one.

How does low GPA affect my Financial Aid?

- ▶ Under the NPC/NJU Satisfactory Academic Progress policy based on federal regulations, students **MUST** maintain a GPA of 2.0 or higher at each evaluation point to remain eligible for financial aid. (See earlier slides).
- ▶ In addition, only courses with passing grades count as successfully completed for financial aid purposes. If your program has 20 courses, you will not receive more than 20 FA disbursements regardless of how many courses it takes you to complete the program.
- ▶ Therefore, failing courses, not completing courses, or maintaining a low GPA **CAN AND WILL** hurt your disbursement schedule.
 - ▶ Example: Once a student is funded for the first 4 courses, no additional financial aid disbursements will be made until the student passes 4 courses. A failed or incomplete course will delay a disbursement until four courses are completed and have passing grades posted. The failed/incomplete courses will not count as one of the successfully completed four courses and additional courses will need to be completed to replace them.
 - ▶ The projected time tables in your award letter **assume** completing and passing **all** courses and submission of **all** materials in a timely manner. **Failing courses or not submitting work by course deadlines will disrupt your financial aid timetable.**

When and by whom will I be notified if my financial aid is in jeopardy?

- ▶ A financial aid representative will send you a “low GPA” warning if your GPA is below 2.0. This is apart from academic probation, which is sent by the academic department. It is also separate from the SAP evaluation. It is an “early warning!”
- ▶ You will receive an official “FA Warning” email if your GPA is below 2.0 or you are not progressing satisfactorily at the end of a payment period and you were previously meeting SAP standards.
- ▶ If you receive this *FA warning*, you have one payment period to bring your GPA/rate of progress to within the SAP standards.
- ▶ If you do not meet SAP standards by the end of the *warning* period, FA is suspended.
 - ▶ If this happens, you will be required to make private payment plans in order to remain in the school.
- ▶ You may appeal the FA Suspension. The Suspension letter will explain the appeal process.

If it looks like my GPA is too low, should I assume it's impossible to raise my GPA in time to remain in the school?

- ▶ No!
- ▶ Even if it doesn't look like you will be able to raise your GPA quickly to 2.0, we can offer you options such as extra credit assignments and the ability to re-take failed classes that can raise your GPA relatively quickly.
 - ▶ Please contact Dean Stephen Haas (shaas@nationalparalegal.edu) to inquire about what projects are available to allow you to raise your GPA.
- ▶ If we see you are serious about regaining academic standing and are willing and able to put in the necessary work, we will work with you to the extent we can.
- ▶ However, please note that we cannot waive financial aid regulations. So, once you've lost FA eligibility due to low GPA, you will need to contact the FA department to discuss the possibility of appealing that determination.

Assistance is Available: Student Mentors

- ▶ Student mentors can be a wonderful resource if you feel lost or unable to complete assignments or exams.
- ▶ Feel free to email your student mentor at any time.
- ▶ If you are unsure who your student mentor is or, for whatever reason, don't think you're able to work with your mentor, please contact the Director of Student Mentors, Anne Lewis, at anne@nationalparalegal.edu.

Assistance is Available: NPC/NJU Faculty

- ▶ NPC/NJU employs faculty whose responsibility it is to do what they can to assist students who are struggling. These instructors have years of experience in assisting students and who know what it takes to do well at NPC/NJU.
- ▶ Examples of faculty who can be contacted for academic assistance:
 - ▶ Rachel Nudell at susan@nationalparalegal.edu
or 800-371-6105 x 123
 - ▶ DeDe Sandler at dede@nationalparalegal.edu

Assistance is Available: Leaves of Absence

- ▶ If something happens that simply makes it impossible to keep up with your work in the near term, you may consider a leave of absence.
- ▶ Please contact student services at 800-371-6105 x 0 to begin the process of arranging a leave of absence.

Leave of Absence Rules

- ▶ You must have a legitimate reason for requesting a leave of absence.
- ▶ Supporting documentation may be required.
- ▶ You generally will not be granted a leave of absence if you are enrolled in any courses that still have lectures to attend. Before taking a leave of absence, you will need to complete or withdraw from all current courses.
- ▶ When you are scheduled to come back from an LOA, you must in fact, immediately begin interacting with the school during the first week of the course. Failing to come back after a LOA will result in dismissal.
- ▶ A student is not eligible to receive financial aid disbursements when on LOA.
- ▶ The last date of attendance prior to the LOA will be used for loan repayment determination for students who fail to return from the LOA as scheduled. A student who takes a 6 month (the maximum allowed) LOA and then does not return to NPC has used the grace period and will immediately be in a “repayment” status for outstanding federal loans.

I still have questions. Who can help?

- ▶ Course scheduling or re-scheduling or general enrollment status questions:
 - ▶ info@nationalparalegal.edu or 800-371-6105 x 0
- ▶ For questions relevant to financial aid:
 - ▶ aid@nationalparalegal.edu or 800-371-6105 x 1
- ▶ Technical support
 - ▶ support@nationalparalegal.edu or 800-371-6105 x 2
- ▶ Academic Support
 - ▶ academicsupport@nationalparalegal.edu or 800-371-6105 x 5
- ▶ Student mentor support
 - ▶ Anne Lewis: anne@nationalparalegal.edu