

SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS (SIPA)
SIPA POLICY ON SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FSA) RECIPIENTS

1. SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

SIPA maintains standards for satisfactory academic progress for federal aid recipients to assure that only students meeting those standards receive federal aid. SIPA's SAP standards include assessment of both qualitative and quantitative measures. Monitoring satisfactory academic progress is a shared responsibility of the Offices of Financial Aid and Student Affairs.

SIPA's SAP standards for federal aid are the same as those used for academic progress required for continuation in the degree programs, and are described and communicated on the SIPA website with the following text:

Academic Progress: Students must maintain a 3.0 minimum cumulative grade point average for all courses applicable to the MIA or MPA degree. A student whose performance does not meet these standards may not be permitted to continue to enroll in the degree program and appropriate action will be taken by the School. If at the end of a semester a graduate student fails to meet the GPA requirement, or accumulates 2 or more INC (Incomplete) grades, or in other ways fails to meet the standards for progress, the student will receive a written warning concerning the lack of academic progress. The student must remedy the problem within one semester. Failure to re-establish satisfactory academic standing may result in dismissal from SIPA, subject to review by the Associate Dean of Student Affairs. A student who is dismissed must wait a minimum of one calendar year from the date of dismissal before applying for readmission to the graduate program.

Satisfactory academic progress for a full-time student is defined as a minimum GPA of 3.00 and completing a minimum of 9* credits per term toward the degree. Full-time students who do not earn this minimum number of credits will have a Dean's Hold placed on their registration.

A Dean's Hold prevents a student from registering for classes and from receiving the degree. Students with two or more IN or UW or one or more grades of F will have their registration placed on Dean's Hold. In serious cases of unsatisfactory performance, a Dean's Hold may lead to dismissal from the School upon recommendation by the Committee of Deans. Students who are placed on Dean's Hold must be granted permission to register by the Associate Dean.

Effective Fall 2011: Students are required to complete all of the MIA or MPA degree requirements within five years of the first semester of matriculation at SIPA.

The total number of attempted credits toward the degree should not exceed 90 credits.

Advanced Standing/Transfer credits do not impact the cumulative GPA, but count as both attempted and completed credits.

*Note – students enrolled in the part-time Executive MPA Program (EMPA) are required to complete an average of 6 credits per term instead of the 9 required for full-time students.

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1.1 “AT LEAST AS STRICT...” SIPA’s academic progress requirements are identical for all students, regardless of financial aid application or eligibility status.

The Office of Student Affairs reviews progress for all students once per academic year at the conclusion of the spring semester (students in some programs that begin in the summer, as well as those who begin in January and do not enroll in the summer are reviewed at the end of the fall, their second semester; students in the EMPA program are reviewed at the end of the summer term unless they are not enrolled for the summer, in which case they are reviewed at the end of the spring) and does not differentiate between aid applicants/recipients and non-applicants/recipients. All students found not to be meeting SIPA’s SAP standards are reported to the Financial Aid Office, who then identifies those who have applied for aid or who have applied for it in the past.

1.2 CONSISTENT APPLICATION SIPA only offers graduate programs, and holds students in all programs to the same qualitative standards for academic progress. The only differentiation in quantitative standards for students enrolled in the Executive Masters in Public Administration (EMPA) program; as that is predominantly a part-time program, students may maintain a lower number of credits completed per semester than required of full-time students and still be considered to be making SAP. All students, regardless of program, are reviewed simultaneously by the same measures except as indicated above for those in the EMPA program.

1.3 REGULAR EVALUATIONS The evaluation by the Offices of Student Affairs and Financial Aid to determine Financial Aid eligibility by SAP standards will be performed annually as described in Section 1.1 above.

If at the end of a semester a graduate student fails to meet the GPA requirement, or accumulates 2 or more INC grades, or in other ways fails to meet the standards for progress, the student will receive a written warning concerning the lack of academic progress. The student must remedy the problem within one semester. Failure to re-establish satisfactory academic standing may result in dismissal from SIPA, subject to review by the Associate Dean of Student Affairs. A student who is dismissed must wait a minimum of one calendar year from the date of dismissal before applying for readmission to the graduate program.

1.4 GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA) SIPA mandates a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale for the school’s qualitative measure of SAP. The Office of Student Affairs will notify the Financial Aid Office annually of any continuing students with a grade point average of less than 3.0. The Financial Aid Office will mark that student’s record as not meeting SAP standards and notify them of the implications to their application for financial aid. Students must maintain a 3.0 minimum cumulative grade point average for all courses applicable to the MIA or MPA degree. A student whose performance does not meet these standards may not be permitted to continue to enroll in the degree program and appropriate action will be taken by the School.

1.5 MAXIMUM TIME FRAME AND PACE OF COMPLETION Students are required to complete all of the MIA or MPA degree requirements within five years of the first semester of matriculation at SIPA, and by attempting no more than 150% of the total number of credits required to complete the SIPA portion of any degree, including dual degrees.

Students are expected to complete 67% of registered applicable courses per term.

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1.6 EFFECT/TREATMENT OF “ATYPICAL” COURSES/SITUATIONS

See details in following sections.

1.6.1 EFFECT OF INCOMPLETES

Two or more grades of Incomplete (INC) will automatically trigger academic action and the student will be considered not to be making SAP.

INC grades are not calculated in the cumulative GPA. However, the credits for courses with INC grades count toward the maximum number of attempted credits toward the degree.

Depending on whether a passing or failing grade is awarded when a resolution of the INC grade is granted, SAP will be reevaluated.

1.6.2 EFFECT OF WITHDRAWALS

Students who withdraw from a course receive either a W (withdrawal) or UW (unofficial withdrawal) grade.

Two or more UW grades will automatically trigger academic action and the student will be considered not to be making SAP. UW grades are not calculated in the cumulative GPA. The credits for courses with UW grades count toward the maximum number of attempted credits toward the degree.

W grades are not calculated in the cumulative GPA. The credits for courses with W grades count toward the maximum number of attempted credits toward the degree.

1.6.3 EFFECT OF COURSE REPETITIONS

If a student repeats a course, only the first grade counts toward the GPA, so typically students are only advised to repeat a course if they fail it the first time so that they can fulfill the requirement; SIPA does not allow a student to repeat a course simply to improve their grade. Repeated grades count toward the maximum number of attempted credits toward the degree.

1.6.4 EFFECT OF DUAL DEGREES

Depending on the specific dual-degree program, students' maximum time frame for completing the degree may vary. The cumulative GPA for dual degrees will be based on semester(s) they are in residence at SIPA. A dual-degree student has a maximum of 30 additional credits (above the minimum required) to compete the SIPA portion of the dual-degree program.

1.6.5 EFFECT OF ADVANCED STANDING

Advanced Standing does not impact the cumulative GPA, but counts as both attempted and completed credits.

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1.6.6 EFFECT OF TRANSFERS OF CREDIT FROM OTHER SCHOOLS OR INSTITUTIONS

Transfer credits do not impact the cumulative GPA, but count as both attempted and completed credits.

Please note that not all SIPA programs accept transfer credits. The 2-year MIA/MPA programs allow up to 12 points (1 residency unit) of transfer credit (referred to as Advanced Standing).

The Executive MPA also allows up to 6 transfer credits.

PEPM Students who have previously completed a graduate degree in economics or a related discipline may apply to transfer up to nine credits from their previous graduate degree toward the PEPM MPA degree.

The MPA in Environmental Science and Policy and MPA in Development Practice do not accept transfer credits.

Courses transferred must be applicable to the degree and have received an earned grade of B or better, and they are not factored into the SIPA GPA.

1.6.7 EFFECT OF CHANGES OF PROGRAM OF STUDY

Only students making SAP are allowed to change their program. Students who change programs are held to the same standards for quantitative and qualitative measures and maximum time frame as students who originally matriculated in the program.

1.6.8 EFFECT OF PASS/FAIL GRADES

In the event of a university, school or program decision to transition from the regular quality points based grading system (A, B, etc, on a scale of 4.0) to a pass/fail grading system for a period of time, SIPA will refer to the student's prior cumulative GPA and add a separate assessment of the pass/fail semester. SIPA assigns no quality points to a grade of "pass," but does in such a system treat a grade of "fail" the same way as it would an "F," so that a passing grade has no impact on a GPA, but a failing grade does.

If a student had a prior cumulative GPA of no less than 2.9 and then received all grades of "pass" in the effected semester, the student will be considered to be making satisfactory academic progress. Conversely, if a student's first semester at SIPA is graded on a pass/fail basis and then returns to quality points, if a student earned all grades of "pass" in the first semester and a GPA of at least 2.9 the following semester, they would be considered to be making SAP.

If a student's entire year used for SAP assessment falls within a pass/fail grading system, any student who has a grade of "pass" for all courses will be considered to be meeting SAP standards. Any student who has failed one course will not be considered to be making SAP.

Students whose GPA was lower than 2.9 in the quality points graded semester will not be considered to be making SAP regardless of their performance during the pass/fail term. Students with a GPA less than 3.0 and who fail at least one course during the pass/fail term will likewise not be meeting SAP standards.

This policy pertaining to a widespread mandated transition to pass/fail grading does not apply to students selecting to take individual courses on a pass/fail basis while regular quality points based

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grading is otherwise being used. Such students must still meet normal requirements for GPA and pace of completion.

1.6.9 EFFECT OF DISASTERS OR SIMILAR UNANTICIPATED CIRCUMSTANCES

In the event of a declared disaster or significant unanticipated circumstances that may disrupt students' ability to complete their classes, whether as normally delivered or otherwise, SIPA may remove any credits attempted but not earned from the quantitative measure of pace of completion as permitted under sub-regulatory guidance by the US Department of Education. This may be applied for all students, or groups of students who were all similarly impacted, but not individual students.

1.6.10 MANUAL ADJUSTMENTS DUE TO SYSTEM LIMITATIONS

In cases in which there are any other limitations or nuance of a student's academic records in SIS or any other system in use for the storage of academic records, such that what is reflected in the system does not fully represent what SIPA is utilizing for the measuring of academic progress in accordance with its own academic policy, the Office of Financial Aid will accept the decision of advisors in the Office of Student Affairs as overriding the data in SIS. This includes, but is not limited to, items 1.6.1 through 1.6.9, inclusive, as well as any additional scenarios that may be added to this document at a later date.

1.7 STATUS DEFINITIONS

SIPA does not use the Financial Aid Warning status, as SAP is not checked every semester unless a student is on Financial Aid Probation. SIPA does not offer any programs of one academic year or less in duration.

Financial Aid Probation:

If at the end of the academic year, during SIPA's annual evaluation process, a student receiving federal aid is found to not be meeting SAP requirements, that student will be notified in writing and placed on Financial Aid Probation after a successful appeal. Financial aid probation can be granted only after the student has appealed and has had eligibility for aid reinstated based on the appeal. If students appeal successfully, this status does then trigger a SAP review at the conclusion of the subsequent semester. At the conclusion of the probationary period, a student must be meeting all standards for SAP or they lose federal and institutional eligibility, and there are no further avenues for appeal.

Students may appeal by following the steps described in Section 1.9, Appeals, below. A successful appeal combined with an academic plan may restore federal aid eligibility.

1.8 PROVISION FOR A FINANCIAL AID WARNING STATUS

SIPA evaluates SAP on an annual basis and per federal regulations therefore does not use the Financial Aid Warning status.

1.9 APPEALS

If a student is not meeting SIPA's SAP standards and is determined to be ineligible for federal aid as a result of that status, they do have the opportunity to appeal the decision to the Offices of Financial Aid and Student Affairs.

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Appeals must be submitted to the student's advisor in the Office of Student Affairs. If the advisor has met with the student and is confident that the mutually agreed upon academic plan is sufficient to put the student on track to graduate within the program's maximum timeframe, the appeal will be referred to the Director of Financial Aid for a final decision. If approved, the student's financial aid records will be updated accordingly.

Aid received following a successful appeal will be awarded on a probationary basis only, for the duration of one semester. After that semester, the student's academic record will be reviewed for compliance with the academic plan submitted during the appeal process. If the student is then found to be satisfying the criteria established in the academic plan, their federal aid will continue for the following semester without interruption. If after receiving federal aid on a probationary basis for one semester the student is found not to be meeting the standards set in their academic plan, federal aid for the following semester is cancelled.

1.9.1 ACADEMIC PLANS

An academic plan is completed by the student and is submitted to the academic advisor in OSA who will then notify the Director of Financial Aid if it is approved. This is required for all students who appeal the SAP decision. Students with a successful appeal must meet the terms set forth in their academic plan in order to maintain federal aid eligibility.

1.10 RESTORING ELIGIBILITY

As explained in section 1.9, students not meeting SAP standards have the right to appeal, and the process is explained to them in the original notification they receive instructing them that they are not making SAP. A student who is ineligible for federal funds (either an appeal is unsuccessful or the student does not appeal) may restore eligibility if they are still enrolled for the following academic year.

The appeal procedure is explained in section 1.9. If a student not making SAP either does not appeal, or if they appeal unsuccessfully and return for the subsequent year to enroll and apply for financial aid, their academic progress will be reviewed after the following spring semester as per normal procedures. It should be noted that most SIPA programs are less than 3 years in length, so following a year of ineligibility, most students will have had an opportunity to complete their program.

1.11 NOTIFICATIONS

Students who are not meeting SIPA SAP standards must be notified of this status, how it impacts financial aid eligibility, their right to appeal, instructions on the appeal procedure, and how the results of the appeal procedure may impact their eligibility.

The Financial Aid Office will notify all students found by the Office of Student Affairs not to be meeting SIPA SAP standards. This notification will be sent via email to the student's UNI email account, which is consistent with SIPA policy that all official notifications from the school are sent to the UNI email address. To avoid confusion about types of aid for which a student does not qualify, this notification is not sent to international students.