

# **POLICY ON SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FSA) RECIPIENTS**

May 6, 2013

## **1. SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS**

Compilation of Federal Regulations (CFR):

34 CFR 668.34 – Student Assistance General Provisions

34 CFR 668.16(e) – Administrative Capability

34 CFR 668.32(f) – Student Eligibility - General

### **1.1 “AT LEAST AS STRICT...”**

Columbia College (CC) and the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) require undergraduate students to meet the same level of academic standards regardless of whether they receive federal financial aid.

### **1.2 CONSISTENT APPLICATION**

CC and SEAS undergraduate students must follow the rules outlined in this policy to maintain satisfactory academic progress and be eligible for federal financial aid.

Generally, undergraduate students matriculated into single degree programs in CC and SEAS are required to attend school full time, for four years/8 semesters not including summer term. The undergraduate degree requires 124 credits to be satisfactorily completed.

Dual-degree students are expected to complete the dual degree in five years. Dual-degree programs require 124 credits at Columbia College and SEAS; secondary residency requirements vary by program to complete the degree.

Certain exceptions provide for an appeals process (see section 1.8, “Appeals”), under which CC and SEAS undergraduate students can be part time:

- **9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> Semester:** On a successful appeal, students may enroll for a 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> semester, during which they may attend part-time. However, per federal regulations they must be enrolled at least half-time to receive federal aid.
- **Summer terms:** CC and SEAS students can be part time during the summer. In the summer term, taking 6 or more points qualifies as full-time status for CC and SEAS students and they may be eligible for federal aid.

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All satisfactory academic progress assessments of students enrolled in the summer term will take place in the following Spring as part of the annual satisfactory academic progress assessment of all students.

The satisfactory academic progress assessment of students in their 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> term will take place following the completion of those terms as part of the student's application process for another semester. This assessment will only take place if the student fails to graduate by the completion of their 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> semester.

The summer term will be treated for Financial Aid purposes as the beginning of the academic year.

The Satisfactory academic progress assessment does not differ if a student is full time or part time, unless the student falls below the minimum of 6 credits required by the federal government. This is true for both CC and SEAS students.

For the differences between the treatment of undergraduate students in the College, SEAS, and Graduate students in GSAS or SEAS, please see the appropriate graduate school satisfactory academic progress policies.

Visiting and Exchange students may be eligible for federal financial aid through their home institution, but should consult with the undergraduate financial aid office at Columbia University for guidance. Since visiting and exchange students are not enrolled in a degree program at Columbia University, their satisfactory academic progress will be determined by their home institution.

Per federal regulations, international students are not eligible for federal financial aid.

### **1.3 REGULAR EVALUATIONS**

CC and SEAS students will be assessed for satisfactory academic performance at the end of the Spring term of the academic year. Students required to take a summer term in order to be restored to satisfactory academic progress will be reassessed following that summer term. All other CC and SEAS students taking summer classes will be assessed according to the guidelines above.

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### **1.4 GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)**

To maintain satisfactory academic progress, a student must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA): The minimum for undergraduates is 2.0 by the end of each academic year. The GPA will be reviewed annually, after the posting of the spring semester grades, and the overall cumulative GPA must be equal to or greater than 2.0.

#### **Procedures:**

**Columbia College:** To successfully complete points, students must receive grades of A, B, C, or D. Non-passing grade designations include F, UW, and W. AR and INC do not count toward the GPA unless replaced by a passing grade. A passing grade must be achieved; an F is unacceptable.

**School of Engineering and Applied Science:** Grades counting towards GPA calculation are A, B, C, and D. Non-passing grade designations include F, W, and UW. INC does not count toward the GPA unless replaced by a passing grade. If an INC is replaced by an F, then the F will count toward the GPA, not towards completed points.

GRADING SYSTEM	
A	3.68 to 4.0
B	2.68 to 3.0
C	1.68 to 2.0
D	.01 to 1.0
NON-PASSING GRADES	
F	Failed (0.0)
UW	Unofficial Withdrawal
AR	Administrative Review
INC	Incomplete

Advanced placement points are not included in the calculation of the GPA. A grade of "P" does not count toward the GPA. Incompletes and AR's do not count unless replaced by an A,B,C,D, or F. This applies to both Columbia College and the School of Engineering and Applied Science.

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### **1.5 MAXIMUM TIME FRAME AND PACE OF COMPLETION**

**Maximum Time Frame:** Generally, students must complete a degree program in a maximum timeframe of no more than eight semesters, including any semesters at institutions at which students were previously matriculated. Requests to continue beyond that period of time must be approved by the Committee on Academic Standing and the Office of Financial Aid. On appeal, maximum attempted points will never exceed 150 percent of points required to graduate.

**Pace of Completion:** Students must successfully complete at least 67 percent of all points attempted each semester. This is reviewed annually at the end of each spring semester and the aggregate percentage of coursework attempted and passed must equal 67 percent or greater at each review. (For example, a student who is enrolled in 12 points at the drop deadline and completes only 8 has completed 67 percent of attempted points.)

The grades of P, D, and F count toward pace of completion calculation.

### **1.6 EFFECT/TREATMENT OF “ATYPICAL” COURSES/SITUATIONS**

#### **1.6.1 EFFECT OF INCOMPLETES**

If a student receives an incomplete, this course will count as attempted points in the assessment of satisfactory academic progress. Since incompletes are temporary grades, they have no impact on the GPA of the student. Once final grades are awarded for an incomplete, students will be re-assessed for satisfactory academic progress.

#### **1.6.2 EFFECT OF WITHDRAWALS**

Withdrawals as part of the change of program period will not be included as cumulative attempted credits. Withdrawals which are recorded on a student's permanent record will be included as cumulative attempted credits and will have an adverse effect on a student's capability to meet the appropriate standard.

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NOTE: Retroactive “non-punitive” administrative withdrawal activity may result in the requirement for the student to repay any assistance received as a result of the student’s enrollment at the time of receipt of the student assistance funds.

### **1.6.3 EFFECT OF COURSE REPETITIONS**

If a course can be taken for credits multiple times according to its course description, then the credits for the course will count as accepted credits and the grades will be factored into the GPA calculation in any assessment for satisfactory academic progress.

If a student passes a previously failed course, then the course will count toward attempted points and both grades will be factored into the GPA calculation in any assessment for satisfactory academic progress.

If a student retakes a class that s/he previously passed, then the course will not count toward completed points, but will be counted towards attempted credits. The course grade will not be calculated into of the GPA in any assessment for satisfactory academic progress. An exception will be made when the repeated class is necessary for the student’s major or concentration. In these cases, the credits will count towards that students’ full time status for the semester.

### **1.6.4 EFFECT OF DUAL DEGREES**

All dual degree programs require the completion of at least 5 years of study. Students enrolled in dual degree programs cannot earn two degrees in four years.

### **1.6.5 EFFECT OF ADVANCED STANDING**

CC and SEAS allow a maximum of 16 points of advanced standing toward the undergraduate degree. All of these points will be counted as completed points toward the degree, but not toward attempted points at Columbia. The maximum credits may include Advanced Placement and transfer credits. Both CC and SEAS students can also receive an additional 6 credits for college classes taken after the student has graduated from his or her secondary school and before the student has matriculated at Columbia.

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### **1.6.6 EFFECT OF TRANSFERS OF CREDIT FROM OTHER SCHOOLS OR INSTITUTIONS**

For the standard for accepting transfer points, please consult the relevant sections of the CC or SEAS bulletin. All transfer points accepted by CC or SEAS will be considered completed points toward the degree. CC students can transfer up to 64 points. SEAS students can transfer a maximum of 68 points towards their degree. Both CC and SEAS students must complete a minimum of 60 points at Columbia in order to receive a degree from Columbia.

### **1.6.7 EFFECT OF CHANGES OF MAJOR OR PROGRAM OF STUDY**

All CC and SEAS students are expected to complete their degree in 8 semesters even if they change their major. Changes of major have no impact on the required pace of completion time permitted by the program. Also see Section 1.6.4 above regarding Dual Degrees.

## **1.7 STATUS DEFINITIONS**

### **1.7a Financial Aid Probation:**

CC and SEAS assess satisfactory academic progress at the end of each Spring term. Students not meeting satisfactory academic progress will be placed on Financial Aid Probation, meaning they will not be eligible to receive federal financial aid during the next term in which they are enrolled. In other words, any student who does not meet satisfactory academic progress will receive a letter stating that they are on Financial Aid Probation and have lost federal financial aid eligibility. For students placed on Financial Aid probation, academic progress will be evaluated at the end of each term.

Students may appeal a Financial Aid Probation status by following the steps outlined in section 1.8, Appeals, below.

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**Academic Suspensions:** A student who has been suspended for academic reasons and falls below satisfactory academic progress guidelines may be on Financial Aid Probation upon re-enrolling.

Students may appeal this decision by following the appeals process.

### **1.8 APPEALS**

A student may appeal loss of financial aid eligibility.

**Appeals Process:** Students not meeting satisfactory academic progress at the end of the annual Spring assessment, who are placed on Financial Aid Probation, may appeal the loss of their financial aid eligibility by submitting a successful appeal by August 1.

The committee will meet in mid-August and notify students of decision prior to the start of the fall term. To appeal, students must complete the satisfactory academic progress Appeal Form, which allows a student to explain and document circumstances and develop an Academic Plan, if necessary, in consultation with an academic adviser. Qualifying circumstances for an appeal may include death of a relative, injury or illness of the student or other special circumstances.

[A successful appeal of Financial aid probation means students will be monitored and have one semester (or as specified by the Academic Plan):

- to meet the satisfactory academic progress requirements and be removed from financial aid probation; or
- to meet the Academic Plan requirements and possibly remain on financial aid probation in order to remain eligible for financial aid in the subsequent term.

Students [with a successful appeal and an academic plan] continue to receive aid while on financial aid probation.

#### **1.8.1 ACADEMIC PLANS**

A SAP Academic Plan outlines the specific plan/corrective action to improve academic progress. Students will be required to follow the SAP Academic Plan in order to receive federal, state and institutional financial assistance.

Students must be enrolled only in the course work listed on their SAP Academic Plan, meet minimum completion rates, and be making progress each semester toward all SAP requirements, as outlined by the School, by the

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Academic Plan projected end date and/or graduation date to retain Title IV eligibility. Failure to meet the terms of the Academic Plan will jeopardize eligibility for federal, state and institutional financial assistance.

### **1.9 RESTORING ELIGIBILITY**

A student can regain financial aid eligibility by either following the appeals process above, or by becoming compliant with satisfactory academic progress regulations.

### **1.10 NOTIFICATIONS**

The Financial Aid Office will notify students in writing when federal aid eligibility is affected by satisfactory academic progress evaluation.

The Financial Aid Office will send written communication independently to students who are placed on or removed from Financial Aid Probation.

Students whose appeal has been approved will be notified in writing that they are on Financial Aid Probation. Students with approved appeals are given one semester (spring or fall) to become compliant. If after the next academic semester, the student is still not meeting satisfactory academic progress, financial aid will be suspended.

Language will be added to grade review letters to include a statement about potential effect on satisfactory academic progress standing.