

POLICY FOR SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS (SAP) FOR STUDENT RECEIVING FEDERAL STUDENT AID

1. Overview:

Students in receipt of Title IV funding ("Federal Student Aid"), as certified by Birkbeck College in accordance with the US Department of Education's federal loans programmes, are required to be in good standing and to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress toward their degree requirements for each academic year in which they are enrolled.

The standards used to measure Satisfactory Academic Progress are explained below and students must pass both the qualitative and quantitative measures to be considered as making Satisfactory Academic Progress. These standards apply to undergraduate and postgraduate students in receipt of Federal Student Aid and studying at Birkbeck on full-time and part-time programmes. Distance Learning courses are not eligible for Federal Student Aid.

Satisfactory Academic Progress is assessed at least three times a year for all programmes, at the end of each payment period (i.e. each academic term).

2. Qualitative Measures of Progress:

Birkbeck, as a UK Higher Education practitioner, does not use Grade Point Average (GPA) to establish Satisfactory Academic Progress. Students are required to achieve the following marks to pass individual modules (including dissertations).

Undergraduate students:	40% minimum
Postgraduate students:	50% minimum

In addition, some programmes will require students to pass specific modules in order to facilitate their progression on the course. These will be outlined in the relevant programme specification.

Optional assessments, where offered by programmes, will not be taken into consideration as part of this measure.

If a student is enrolled on a course longer than 2 academic years, at the end of the second academic year the student must have achieved at least a predicted 'Pass' grade by achieving the marks above across all of the modules they have taken.

The qualitative standards for Federal Student Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress are the same as Birkbeck's Satisfactory Academic Progress standards for all other students (i.e. those not receiving Federal Student Aid). Birkbeck's standards can be found in the College's Common Awards Scheme (<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/policies/regulations>) and the relevant academic programme specification.

3. Quantitative Measures of Progress:

All academic programmes at Birkbeck have a published length of study. In order to be considered as making Satisfactory Academic Progress, students in receipt of Federal Student Aid must be in a position to complete the course within 150% / 1.5 times the published length of study (not including any time spent on approved academic interruption/suspended study). For example, if a programme's published length of study is 1 year the student must be in an academic position to complete the programme within 1.5 years / 18 months of the start of the programme each time they are evaluated for Satisfactory Academic Progress.

The pace that student progress is measured is set by the number of credits required to complete the programme and achieve the qualification, divided by 1.5 times the published length of the programme. As an example, a programme requires 360 credits for the qualification to be awarded; its published length of study is 3 years so the maximum time that a student can take is 4.5 years (3 years x 1.5). Students would therefore be expected to have achieved an average of at least 80 credits per academic year in order to be progressing at an acceptable pace.

The quantitative standards for Federal Student Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress may be stricter than those applied to other students (i.e. those not receiving Federal Student Aid) as the US Department of Education requirements have priority for these students. Birkbeck's standard can be found in the College's Common Awards Scheme (<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/policies/regulations>) and the relevant academic programme specification.

4. Evaluating Progress:

For all programmes Academic Progress will be evaluated three times over the academic year: in December (at the end of the Autumn Term payment period); in March (the end of Spring Term payment period); and at the end of the academic year (the end of the Summer Term payment period, usually in July/August).

Evaluation during the academic year (in December and March) will be performed prior to the following terms' disbursement of Federal Student Aid.

As the evaluation at the end of the Summer Term is also the end of the academic year this evaluation will affect the first disbursement period of any following academic year. This will affect all students studying an academic programme over multiple academic years, including programmes with a published length of study of two or more years and students required to repeat modules in a subsequent academic year in order to graduate or progress on their programme.

Qualitative measures will be evaluated on actual examinations and other academic assessment results, where available. Where these are not available students will be evaluated on their predicted results, as obtained from the relevant academic department.

Quantitative measures will be evaluated based on actual credits achieved from completed modules. Where modules have not yet been completed, or results are pending, students will be evaluated on their predicted results, as obtained from the relevant academic department.

5. Academic Situations that may affect Qualitative and/or Quantitative measurements:

Remedial / Foundation courses: Where a student is required to complete a remedial / Foundation course, this time will be added to the total published length of study of the student's main programme when calculating the student's pace and the maximum length of study allowed. For example, a 1 year Foundation programme + a 3 year undergraduate degree = 4 years published length of study x 150% = 6 years maximum length of study allowed. Students will still be expected to achieve the relevant grades for qualitative measurement for their remedial / Foundation course.

5i. Incompletes:

If a student fails to complete a mandatory assessment this may result in them failing the relevant module, subject to the relevant programme specification. This will be considered as part of the qualitative measurement and may result in the student being evaluated as not making Satisfactory Academic Progress.

5ii. Module Repetitions:

Where a student fails a module they may be provided with an opportunity to repeat the entire module the following academic year, at the discretion of the relevant academic department. This is permissible within this Satisfactory Academic Progress policy providing that the student can still complete the overall programme within 150% the published programme length, although they may still be placed on Financial Aid warning (see **Financial Aid Warning** below).

5iii. Examination re-sits:

Where students are required to re-take an assessment element only (e.g. re-sit an examination) and attendance at classes is not required the student will be considered as enrolled on an 'Examinations-only' basis. This is not a full enrolment and is considered as 'less than half time' study under US Department of Education regulations. Examinations-only students are not eligible for Federal Student Aid and the Satisfactory Academic Progress policy will therefore not apply for the duration of the Examinations-only enrolment (usually one full academic year).

5iv. Credit transfer:

Students may receive academic credit or exemption from some modules due to previous study at Birkbeck or another Higher Education Practitioner, at the discretion of the relevant academic department. Any credit/exemption achieved in this way will be counted as the equivalent of credit achieved through normal study on the programme in terms of qualitative and quantitative measures.

5v. Withdrawal:

If a student withdraws from a module any marks gained will no longer be considered in the Satisfactory Academic Progress evaluation unless the marks are transferred to an alternative module. Withdrawal from a module may also affect the student's pace of study depending upon the point in the year that the withdrawal is completed and whether an alternative module is registered. Where the student has registered on a new module in place of the withdrawn module, the replacement module will be used in all future Satisfactory Academic Progress evaluations and the withdrawn module will be disregarded.

If a student is withdrawn from their programme they will be subject to Birkbeck's Return of Title IV Funds policy.

6. Evaluation Result:

All students that meet the qualitative and quantitative requirements to be considered as making Standard Academic Progress will be entitled to receive Federal Student Aid funding (as administered by Birkbeck) until the next evaluation.

All students that fail to meet either the qualitative and quantitative requirements will be placed on a Financial Aid Warning. Students will be notified of a Financial Aid Warning within 5 working days of the relevant evaluation.

If, at any time, it becomes impossible for the student to complete their programme within the maximum time allowed their eligibility for Federal Student Aid administered by Birkbeck will be terminated.

7. Financial Aid Warnings:

A student placed on Financial Aid Warning will still be entitled to Federal Student Aid funding for at least the following payment period.

A Financial Aid Warning is not permanent and may be withdrawn providing that the student is making Satisfactory Academic Progress at the next evaluation period.

A Financial Aid Warning does not affect a student's ability to attend college and will have no bearing on a student's academic results (e.g. the grade of degree awarded).

A Financial Aid Warning cannot be appealed.

Birkbeck's International Student Administration office will be notified of all students placed on Financial Aid Warning as this may affect the student's immigration/visa status.

8. Termination of Federal Student Aid:

Students placed on Financial Aid Warning must be making Satisfactory Academic Progress at the next evaluation or their eligibility for Federal Student Aid administered through Birkbeck will be terminated.

Students cannot be placed on a Financial Aid Warning for two consecutive periods.

Students will be notified of the termination of their eligibility for Federal Student Aid funding administered through Birkbeck within 5 working days of the relevant evaluation. The termination notice will include details of how to appeal the termination.

Birkbeck's International Student Administration office will be notified of the termination of a student's Federal Student Aid as this may affect the student's immigration/visa status.

9. Appeal Process:

A student may not appeal being placed on Financial Aid Warning.

A student may appeal a decision to terminate their eligibility for Federal Student Aid funding within 10 working days of receiving notification of termination where they believe exceptional circumstances have prevented them making Satisfactory Academic Progress.

Exceptional circumstances may include death or serious illness of an immediate family member, or serious illness or injury of the student. Other circumstances will be determined by the Head of Academic Services.

Appeals must be presented as a formal statement explaining the exceptional circumstances and must include relevant official documentation to support the appeal.

Appeals will not be considered on the strength of a student's formal statement alone and students must demonstrate their exceptional circumstances with relevant official documentation, such as a doctor's note or death certificate. Documentation does not have to be an original, however it must be a legible copy (e.g. photocopy or scanned document) and the original document must be available on request.

Appeals must be made in writing to:

The Head of Academic Services,
Birkbeck, University of London
Malet Street, WC1E 7HX

Telephone appeals will not be accepted.

All appeals will be acknowledged by email within 24 hours of the appeals being received.

10. Appeal outcome:

Appeals will be considered by the Head of Academic Services and the students will receive a decision within 14 days of the appeal being received.

Federal Student Aid funding will not be disbursed while an appeal is being considered.

10i. Successful appeals:

Following a successful appeal the student will be placed on a Financial Aid Probation.

Students on Financial Aid Probation will be required to subscribe to an academic plan created between them and their academic department that ensures that the student can return to Satisfactory Academic Progress as soon as reasonably possible. Provided that they meet the requirements of the academic plan they will be considered as making Satisfactory Academic Progress at the next evaluation, the Financial Aid Probation will be withdrawn and they will continue to be eligible for Federal Student Aid.

Following a successful appeal Federal Student Aid funding will be re-instated as soon as is practicably possible after an academic plan has been agreed. Students will be informed of the expected date of any funding disbursement that will be made outside the timescale stated in their original loan notification letter.

Eligibility for Federal Student Aid administered through Birkbeck will be terminated if a student on Financial Aid Probation is not meeting the requirements of their academic plan at their next evaluation. Students may still be able to appeal this termination under section 9 of this policy.

5ii. Unsuccessful appeals:

Following an unsuccessful appeal the student will be liable to pay any remaining tuition fees and/or living costs as appropriate.

The Head of Academic Services' decision in relation to a Satisfactory Academic Progress appeal is final however the student may still have recourse through Birkbeck's Student Complaint Procedure.

**A. Penton,
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