Santa Clara University School of Law

SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY

(updated 3.20.2025)

SECTION ONE: GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

Maintaining satisfactory academic progress (SAP) is one of many federally mandated criteria viewed in determining students' eligibility for continued receipt of federal financial aid. In order to remain eligible, students must meet the following three components: quantitative (PACE), qualitative (GPA), and maximum time frame (MAX) standards. The standards measure students' performance in the following areas: credit hour completion rate, cumulative grade point average (GPA), and maximum time frame to complete a course of study.

These satisfactory academic progress standards apply to all federal financial aid programs including Federal Direct loans (Unsubsidized and Graduate PLUS). In addition to the satisfactory academic progress standards for financial aid, each school in the University may have different definitions of what constitutes satisfactory academic progress academically. Students should consult the Law Student Bulletin on the University's website for information on academic policies, financial aid eligibility, and possible actions for failure to meet these standards.

First year students can be disqualified and then readmitted academically after meeting certain criteria. A student that is academically reinstated may not be making satisfactory academic progress for financial aid purposes. Evaluating students' satisfactory academic progress is required by federal regulation. The outcome of the evaluation and its impact on student's financial aid eligibility overrides all other University policies or statements regarding a student's academic standing. The satisfactory academic progress standards contained in this policy apply to students enrolled in the School of Law. Students enrolled in dual-degree programs, such as JD/MBA must comply with the satisfactory academic policies of each program.

SECTION ONE: QUANTITATIVE STANDARDS (PACE)

The credit hour completion rate reflects the pace at which students must progress through their education program to ensure that they are able to complete their program within the maximum time frame. At the end of each term, students' academic progress will be measured by comparing the cumulative number of attempted credit hours against the cumulative number of credit hours earned. For all students, attempted hours is defined as all courses in which they are enrolled after the add/drop period has ended for the term and for which academic credit will be earned. This means that courses from which students withdraw after the add/drop period has ended will be considered attempted hours. All attempted hours will be counted whether or not financial aid was received.

Attempted hours also include the following courses:

- Withdrawals, incompletes, no grades and failing grades
- Failing grades in pass/no pass courses
- Grades of U in S/U courses (satisfactory/unsatisfactory)
- Courses taken as credit/no credit
- Repeated coursework
- Transfer credits, including credits from domestic and international study abroad programs

All students, whether full-time or part-time are expected to complete 67% of cumulative attempted credit hours during all terms of enrollment, including summer.

SECTION TWO: QUALITATIVE STANDARDS (GPA)

Please refer to the University's Student Bulletin, and the academic policies for the School of Law, for additional information on the University's grading system and how grade point averages are impacted by incompletes, withdrawals, repeat courses and transfer credits.

Cumulative GPA

All students enrolled in the School of Law are required to maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0. Satisfactory Academic Progress is reviewed at the end of each academic year after Spring term grades are finalized. Grades earned during a summer session may not be used to raise a student's GPA from the prior academic year. Failure to achieve or maintain a 2.0 GPA will result in a loss of eligibility for federal financial aid programs. Students that lose their eligibility may appeal by submitting a Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal and supporting documentation outlined in the appeal process.

Reinstatement

Students who are academically disqualified by the Law School and are reinstated are required to submit a Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal to have their financial aid eligibility reinstated. Academic readmission is not a guarantee of financial aid reinstatement.

Directed Study

Readmitted students are subject to the Directed Study policy as outlined in the Law School Student Bulletin section on Academic Policies. This policy serves as an academic plan for financial aid appeal purposes. If a Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal is granted, students will be evaluated at the end of each academic year to ensure they are meeting SAP policy. Continuation of eligibility for financial aid purposes once an appeal is granted requires a student to achieve a 2.0 GPA by the end of that academic year at which time they will be meeting SAP standards.

SECTION THREE: MAXIMUM TIMEFRAME (MAX)

Students are required to complete their program of study within a reasonable timeframe based upon the average length of their program. Financial aid eligibility will be suspended for students who fail to complete their program of study within the published maximum program length outlined in the Student Bulletin. Students within one term of graduation may appeal for an additional term of financial aid eligibility as long as they have not already completed the requirements of their degree. Electives not needed for actual degree completion will not be considered, including Summer Study Abroad Programs unless they complete degree requirements.

Maximum timeframe is measured in two ways:

1. Maximum program length-This is the maximum time you are allowed to take to complete your degree program. The following outlines the published maximum timeframe for each program:

Program	Standard Program Length	Maximum Program Length
Juris Doctorate	3 years	5 years
JD/MBA or JD/MSIS[1]	3 years	5 years
LLM	1 year	2 years
MLS	1 year	2 years

[1] Standard program length does not include joint degree requirements.

2. Credit hours attempted – with the exception of audited courses, all attempted credits applied to a student's degree program count towards the maximum timeframe whether financial aid was received or not.

Program	Units Required	Maximum Attempted Units
Juris Doctorate	86	129
JD/MBA or JD/MSIS[2]	86	129
LLM	24	36
MLS	36	54

[2] Units required does not include joint degree requirements.

Credit hours included in credit hours attempted are comprised of all credits applied to a student's degree program including:

- All transfer credits applied to a student's degree program
- All attempted coursework even if no credits were earned due to withdrawal, incompletes, unsatisfactory, no grade, or failing grades
- All transfer credits applied to a student's degree program from domestic and international study abroad programs
- Credit/No credit courses, Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory courses
- All repeated coursework

Courses not included in the 150% maximum:

- Audited courses

Failure to complete degree requirements within either published timeframe will result in a loss of federal financial aid eligibility.

SECTION FOUR: EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PROGRESS

At the end of each academic year, students will be evaluated for satisfactory academic progress. Students who do not meet satisfactory academic progress will be notified of their status by email to their University email address. The process is as follows:

INELIGIBLE: If a student fails to achieve a 2.0 overall GPA at the end of the review period they will no longer be eligible for federal financial aid. Any federal aid the student has received for the term in which they lose eligibility will be cancelled. The student may submit an appeal to have their aid reinstated following the process outlined below.

SECTION FIVE: THE APPEAL PROCESS

Students who lose their financial aid eligibility due to failure to meet satisfactory academic progress may appeal their status. Students who wish to appeal their financial aid eligibility must complete and submit the following:

1. An attached statement describing the specific reason(s) beyond your control (events and/or circumstances) that directly contributed to the lack of meeting the satisfactory academic progress requirements and the steps you are taking to make sure you are successful.
2. Documentation to support your appeal (e.g medical billing statement as proof of illness, etc).
3. Signature by academic advisor/faculty mentor confirming a discussion of a plan of a corrective action has taken place (see below).
4. Copy of corrective action plan.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal – form available on our website.

Once the completed appeal is received, the information will be reviewed by the Law Admissions and Financial Aid Office. Based upon the documentation submitted, the Law Admissions and Financial Aid Office will approve or deny the appeal. Students will be notified of the decision by email no later than two weeks after the completed appeal is received.

Appeal decisions of the Law Admissions and Financial Aid Office

1. The Law Admissions and Financial Aid Office may deny a student's appeal. A student with a denied appeal will not be eligible for federal financial aid until they are able to meet the satisfactory academic progress standards. They may elect to apply for a private education loan to cover their educational expenses if unable to pay out of pocket.

2. The Law Admissions and Financial Aid Office may approve a student's appeal:
A. Based upon circumstances and the ability to meet requirements within one academic year, **OR**
B. In certain cases, based on participation in a directed study plan administered by the Office of Academic and Bar Success and the student as outlined in the Law School Student Bulletin section on Academic Policies.

When a student submits an appeal, the decision of the Law Admissions and Financial Aid Office is final and cannot be appealed further.