

Financial Aid

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Durham Technical Community College



Federal regulations require students receiving Title IV financial assistance to maintain what is called “satisfactory academic progress.” Satisfactory academic progress involves making good grades, completing courses attempted, and graduating within a reasonable time period. Failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress will result in the suspension of financial aid.

It is the responsibility of each student receiving financial aid to understand these specific academic progress standards, to comprehend how these standards may impact continued financial aid eligibility, to review specific academic program requirements, to compare these standards to individual progress each semester, and to seek additional support services immediately if at risk for not meeting the standards. This document outlines the methods of assessment, time limitations, various statuses, consequences, grades, and appeals procedure for satisfactory academic progress.

Assessment Standards

At Durham Technical Community College, satisfactory academic progress is measured by two standards. Students must meet both standards to continue to receive aid. Satisfactory progress is assessed when a student is first awarded financial aid in an academic year, regardless of term. Thereafter, satisfactory progress is assessed at the end of each term.

Standard One: Completion Rate

A student must successfully complete at least 67 percent of all attempted credit hours with a letter grade of A, B, C, or D. Coursework is defined as a cumulative history of every course attempted. Completion rate is calculated by total completed hours divided by total attempted hours.

Standard Two: Cumulative Grade Point Average

A student must maintain at least a 2.0 cumulative grade point average in all coursework. Coursework is defined as a cumulative history of every course attempted.

Students must maintain satisfactory academic progress regardless of enrollment status (full-time, part-time) or admitted program. All past and recent periods of enrollment (semesters or terms) at Durham Technical Community College are included in a student’s calculation of satisfactory academic progress, regardless of whether the student was receiving financial aid assistance at the time. For example, even though a student may have received aid beginning in 2008, that student’s academic records from prior to 2008 must also be considered in the calculation of satisfactory academic progress.

Academic Standing

It is important to note that a student's satisfactory academic progress for financial aid may not be the same as a student's academic standing for the college. The college determines academic progress standards, and each program may have additional requirements. As a result, even though a student may meet satisfactory progress for financial aid purposes, he or she may not be meeting the requirements necessary to continue in their program. It is the student's responsibility to know specific academic program requirements.

Time Limitations

All students receiving federal aid are required to complete programs within the federally-defined time limitations. These include limitations on developmental coursework attempted, maximum time frame for program completion, and lifetime Pell eligibility.

Federal regulations limit the amount of developmental education courses a student may take using financial aid. Students may only be eligible for funds to attempt up to 30 credit hours of any necessary developmental education courses as determined by college placement testing. Developmental courses are defined as any course with a leading zero (e.g. MAT 070 or ENG 080). Students are not eligible to receive additional financial aid funds for any developmental education courses after 30 credit hours of developmental coursework have been attempted.

Federal regulations limit the time that students have to complete an academic program using financial aid. The maximum time frame for each student receiving aid may not exceed 150 percent of the published length of the academic program in which the student is admitted. For example, a student admitted to the Criminal Justice Associate in Applied Science degree program can receive federal aid up to 105 hours (70 hours required to complete the program X 150 percent = 105 attempted hours). Federal regulations require the time limitation to be cumulative and must include all periods of enrollment, regardless of whether or not the student received aid. Withdrawals, incompletes, repeated courses, and all transfer credit will count as attempted hours toward the 150 percent maximum time limitation. If a student reaches the 150 percent maximum time frame and has not completed the academic program, federal and state financial aid will be terminated immediately. There is limited opportunity for appeal if maximum time frame has been reached prior to earning a degree, diploma, or certificate from Durham Tech. Students who have earned a degree, diploma, or certificate from Durham Tech prior to reaching maximum timeframe status may have aid eligibility extended if they are meeting both the cumulative GPA and completion rate requirements and have not reached their lifetime Pell eligibility limit.

Federal regulations also limit the amount of Pell available to a student in his or her lifetime. The "lifetime eligibility limit" refers to the limit on the number of full-time semesters in which a student may receive Pell or any state grants that are tied to Pell eligibility. Students have twelve (12) full-time equivalent semesters in which they are eligible for Pell grants. For example, if a student enrolls half-time in two semesters, that student is considered as having used one full-time semester for lifetime eligibility limit determination purposes. Students who have reached their lifetime eligibility limit do not have an opportunity for appeal.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Status and Consequences

Students who do not complete at least 67 percent of all attempted credit hours and/or fail to attain the required 2.0 cumulative grade point average will be notified via email of failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress. There are three primary levels of status for satisfactory academic progress: satisfactory, warning, and suspension. However, a fourth status of probation will be assigned to students under certain conditions, if they have appealed and had eligibility for financial aid reinstated for one term.

Satisfactory Status

If a student completes at least 67 percent of all attempted coursework and maintains the required 2.0 grade point average, a student will receive a status of “satisfactory” and will continue to receive aid. There is no limit applicable to a status of “satisfactory,” and satisfactory academic progress will be checked again at the end of the following term.

Warning Status

If a student does not complete at least 67 percent of all attempted credit hours, does not maintain the required 2.0 grade point average, or both in any one term; the student will receive a status of “warning.” Students will continue to be eligible for aid at “warning” status. Warning status is limited to one term. Satisfactory academic progress will be checked again at the end of the warning term.

Suspension Status

If a student who is currently on warning status does not complete at least 67 percent of all attempted credit hours, does not maintain the required 2.0 grade point average, or both; the student will receive a status of “suspension.” Federal and state aid will be immediately terminated. Aid will not be reinstated until either the student files and is granted an appeal or enrolls for subsequent semesters/terms, at the student’s own expense, and completes the academic work necessary to regain both a 67 percent completion rate and 2.0 cumulative grade point average. There is no limit applicable to a status of “suspension,” and satisfactory academic progress will be checked again at the end of each subsequent term. If the student does not appeal the initial status of “suspension,” financial aid will be terminated.

Probation Status

If a student meets the conditions for an appeal, submits an appeal, and has financial aid reinstated, the student will receive a status of “probation.” Probation indicates that one more increment of aid for one semester or term will be allowed. A status of “probation” is limited to one period of enrollment, and satisfactory academic progress will be checked at the end of the probation term.

If a student placed on financial aid probation re-establishes a 67 percent completion rate and a 2.0 cumulative grade point average during the probationary term, financial aid will be reinstated and the student will return to a status of “satisfactory.” If a student placed on financial aid probation does not regain both a 67 percent completion rate and a 2.0 cumulative grade point average during the probationary term, financial aid will be terminated and the student will return to a status of “suspension.” No further appeals will be allowed. Aid will not be reinstated until the student enrolls for subsequent semesters/terms, at the student’s own expense, and completes the academic work necessary to regain both a 67 percent completion rate and a 2.0 cumulative grade point average.

Withdrawals, Incompletes, and Other Course Information

When a student withdraws from a course, it has a negative impact on satisfactory academic progress. All grades of "W" (Withdrawal) or "IP" (In Progress) will count as hours attempted but not completed when calculating completion rate or when determining maximum time frame allowed for program completion and could prevent a student from meeting satisfactory academic progress standards. Grades of "WP" will count as both attempted hours and completed hours. Grades of "NS" (No Show) will not count as hours attempted and, as a result, will not affect satisfactory academic progress.

Grades of "I" (Incomplete) may also have a negative impact on satisfactory academic progress. If a student receives a grade of "I" for a course, the student must complete all remaining academic work by the end of the next term, or the "I" grade will be changed to an "F" grade. Incompletes will count as hours attempted but not completed for program completion. Failure to change incompletes to a passing grade could prevent a student from meeting satisfactory academic progress.

Repeating courses may also have a negative impact on satisfactory academic progress. When students receive incompletes or failing grades, they are encouraged and allowed to repeat courses (up to two times in accordance with college procedure) as required by their advisor. Students should be aware, however, that repeated courses will count as hours attempted for program completion, and could prevent a student from meeting satisfactory academic progress. All credit hours attempted count in the calculation of satisfactory academic progress.

Audits, credit-by-exam, and other course proficiency exams are not covered by any type of financial aid. Students are responsible for all costs incurred with these types of courses. These hours do not count as hours attempted in the 150 percent time frame allowed for program completion.

Change of Program

Students who change programs should be aware that all credit hours attempted, regardless of the program, will count toward satisfactory progress unless the student graduates. Students who graduate from one program at Durham Tech, and wish to earn another degree, diploma, or certificate from Durham Tech will be allowed to complete a new program within a new 150 percent time frame.

Conditions for an Appeal to be Considered

Students may appeal financial aid termination due to failure to complete at least 67 percent of all attempted credit hours and/or maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 if they can demonstrate that two conditions for appeal are evident: the presence of special circumstances and the ability to regain satisfactory academic progress in one probation status term. Both conditions must be evident for an appeal to be considered.

Condition One: Special Circumstances

To consider an appeal, the student must have experienced any of the following unusual situations in the semester or term that he or she failed to meet satisfactory academic progress: injury to or illness of the student, death of a family member, undue hardship, or other serious crises. If a student cannot demonstrate one of these four categories of special circumstances, an appeal may not be considered.

Condition Two: Ability to Regain Satisfactory Academic Progress

To consider an appeal, a student must document the specific credit hours (courses) that he or she will attempt during the probationary term to regain both satisfactory academic progress standards by the end of the probation term. If the student cannot demonstrate that the credit hours attempted during the probation term can bring the student's completion rate back to 67 percent and cumulative grade point average back to 2.0, an appeal may not be considered.

Students who have reached maximum time frame have the opportunity to appeal in limited circumstances. Students who have reached the lifetime eligibility limit for Pell eligibility do not have an opportunity for appeal.

Appeal Procedures for Financial Aid Termination

To appeal, the student must complete the [appeal form](#) (found online or in the Financial Aid office) and submit it to the Financial Aid office. As part of the appeal, students must articulate why they failed to make satisfactory academic progress and how their circumstances have changed to allow them to be academically successful. The students must also demonstrate how they intend to again meet both satisfactory academic progress standards by the end of the probation term. This should include documentation of clear, specific, and mitigating circumstances which justify the continued request for aid, as well as an outline of the specific courses that will be attempted and successfully completed.

The written appeal will be reviewed by a financial aid officer. After the review by a financial aid officer, the appeal will be forwarded to the Director of Financial Aid for a final decision. Regardless of whether or not reinstatement of aid is justified, the student will be notified of the decision in writing within ten business days of submission.

Please note that since satisfactory academic progress cannot be checked until all grades have been submitted for a term and final registration for the following term may be complete only a few working days after that date, the financial aid office cannot guarantee a decision on an appeal in time to hold existing registration or reinstate registration for the following term. Students who are currently under warning, probation, and suspension status should be prepared to pay for any next semester registration costs independently to hold classes until an appeal decision can be made.

If the appeal is approved, the student will be allowed one more increment of aid (one semester or term for all programs) to demonstrate academic progress. If the appeal is not approved, the student may elect to appeal the decision using the [student grievance procedure](#). The decision from the student grievance procedure will exhaust all avenues of the appeal process.

If the decision to not reinstate a student's aid is upheld, the student must enroll for subsequent semesters/terms, at the student's own expense, and complete the academic work necessary to regain both a 67 percent completion rate and a 2.0 cumulative grade point average. If and when a student again meets satisfactory academic progress, the student again becomes eligible for financial aid.

Students may call 919-536-7209 or visit the Financial Aid office for more information.

Approved July 2012