

# Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students

## Purpose and Scope

Federal regulations mandate that a student receiving financial assistance under Title IV programs must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress in their course of study regardless of whether or not Financial Aid is awarded each semester. Western New Mexico University's (WNMU's) Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students must be applied consistently to all Financial Aid recipients within identifiable categories of students (such as full-time or part-time).

Students pursuing Graduate Certificates or Master's degrees are responsible for understanding and adhering to the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students.

Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress for Graduate Students is measured with the following standards as mandated by Federal Regulations:

- Qualitative (Cumulative Grade Point Average)
- Quantitative Percentage (Attempted hours/Earned hours)

## Qualitative Standard

Students will be expected to maintain the minimum academic standards as outlined in the Graduate Studies section of the WNMU catalog. WNMU uses a 4-point scale for grade point average (G.P.A.) and requires students to maintain a 3.0 cumulative G.P.A. or better.

## Quantitative Standard

The quantitative standard is used to accurately measure a student's progress in a program. All students must maintain a cumulative minimum completion ratio of 67% or better. Progress is calculated based on cumulative total of credits transferred towards the degree, and attempted credits at WNMU as compared to credits earned at WNMU and transferred, regardless of whether the student received aid in those semesters. (Example: total credits earned divided by total credits attempted equals completion ratio.)

Students must complete their educational program within a time frame no longer than 150% of the published length of the educational program, as measured by transfer and attempted credits. (For example, a student could receive federal financial aid for up to 45 credits in a 30 credit Graduate program).

Note: All graduate credit, including transfer credit, must have been earned within the seven years prior to issuance of the graduate degree as outlined in the Graduate Studies section of the WNMU Catalog. (See Time Limit).

How are my grades evaluated under the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students?

- The student's cumulative G.P.A. must be a 3.0 or higher to satisfy the requirements of the qualitative standard of the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students.
- Grades of "A", "B", "C", "D", "F", "NF", "P", and transfer credit will be considered credit hours attempted and earned.
- Grades of "W", "I", "MW", or "MI" will not be considered as credit hours earned for the 67% Completion Rate Requirement but will be considered as credit hours attempted.
- Grades of "PR" assigned for thesis hours during the development and preparation of a thesis but prior to its final completion will be considered credit hours attempted and earned.
- Students who withdraw from the university must still maintain Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress for Graduate Students for the 67% Completion Rate Requirement.

## What happens if I fail to meet the standards of the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students?

1. Following the first semester in which a student does not meet the standards of the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students, the student will be placed on Financial Aid Warning Status for the next semester of enrollment. Students may be allowed to receive Financial Aid funds while on Financial Aid Warning Status as long as they are otherwise eligible.
2. A student who is on Financial Aid Warning Status and who improves their academic performance as defined by the qualitative and quantitative standards will be placed in good standing and may be eligible to continue to receive Financial Aid for following semesters.
3. A student who is on Financial Aid Warning Status and who fails to meet the standards of the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students will be placed on Financial Aid Suspension and denied further funding until they meet the qualitative and quantitative standards.
4. Appeals Process
  - A student who fails to meet the standards of the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students under certain circumstances beyond the student's control, such as illness, death in the family, or an accident, has the right to appeal. Throughout the appeal process the student must be prepared to pay their own expenses, such as tuition, fees, books, supplies, etc. Please follow the procedure below to appeal a Financial Aid Suspension:
    - A Financial Aid Appeal form must be obtained from and submitted to the WNMU Office of Financial Aid.
    - Documentation supporting the extenuating circumstances must be available for review.
    - It is the student's responsibility to follow up with the Office of Financial Aid after submitting a complete appeal form with all of the required documentation to determine the status of their appeal.
    - Appeals will be approved or disapproved by the Financial Aid Appeals Committee.
    - If a Financial Aid Appeal is approved, the student will be placed on Financial Aid Probation and will be eligible to receive Title IV aid. The student's record is reviewed after the first semester of probation. If the student has brought their term G.P.A. up to a 3.0 and has also successfully completed 67% of the total number of credits attempted during the Financial Aid Probation semester, they will be placed in good standing. If the student has completed 67% of the total number of credits but did not bring their cumulative G.P.A. up to a 3.0 and the term G.P.A. is a 3.0 or better, the student is eligible for one additional semester of Financial Aid Probation. If the term G.P.A. is less than a 3.0, the student will be placed on Financial Aid Suspension. A student who is on Financial Aid Probation will be notified by university e-mail of their status and what they must do to continue to receive Financial Aid.
    - If a Financial Aid Appeal is disapproved, the student will be placed on Financial Aid Suspension and denied further funding until they meet the qualitative and quantitative standards. If otherwise eligible, a student may complete their program of study but must pay their own expenses, such as tuition, fees, books, supplies, etc.
    - All decisions made by the Financial Aid Appeals Committee are final.

### Complete Withdrawals and the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students

Students who completely withdraw must still maintain the standards of the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students. A complete withdrawal will always have a negative effect on a student's standing under this policy. If a student completely withdraws during the semester and follows the appropriate procedures and deadlines, their grades for the semester will be all "W"s. These grades are not passing; therefore, the student did not meet the 67% Completion Rate Requirement and will be placed either on Financial Aid Warning, Office of Financial Aid Probation, or Financial Aid Suspension depending on what their status was before the semester began.

### Impact of Academic Probation and Disqualification on Financial Aid

Students on Graduate Division Academic Probation or Graduate Division Academic Disqualification automatically will be placed on Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Suspension, respectively. If a student successfully appeals their Graduate Division Academic Disqualification, that appeal has no effect on their standing with the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students; they will still be on Financial Aid Warning or Suspension. Please refer to the Financial Aid Appeals Process.

## **Notification of Status under the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy**

Students placed on Financial Aid Warning or Financial Aid Suspension will be notified by the Office of Financial Aid by e-mail of their status after grades are available.

### **The effect of dropping or withdrawing from a course**

Students who reduce their course load by dropping or withdrawing from a course after the semester has begun risk non-compliance with the 67% Completion Rate Requirement. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid.

### **The effect of Financial Aid Suspension on Financial Aid Awards**

Title IV federal aid for graduate students consists of loans; therefore, all loan awards will be cancelled if a student is on Financial Aid Suspension.

### **Consortium Agreements and the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students**

When WNMU has a Consortium Agreement with a participating institution, the student must meet the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students of the institution that is awarding aid.

### **The effect of repeating courses**

There is no specific limitation on the number of times a student may attempt a course under the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Graduate Students. All course attempts, even repeated courses, will count when assessing whether a student meets the 67% Completion Rate Requirement. Financial Aid however, can only pay for a course that has been repeated twice, the third time and more the student must pay for the course(s) out of pocket.

### **The effect of Incomplete grades**

Courses in which the student receives an incomplete ("I") at the end of the semester will count as attempted credit hours and as a non-passing grade when assessing if a student meets the 67% Completion Rate Requirement.