Satisfactory Academic Progress

Federal and state regulations require institutions to establish standards of satisfactory academic progress (SAP) for recipients of financial aid. The purpose of SAP is to measure a student’s progress toward completion of the specific educational program in which he or she is enrolled. The Office of Financial Aid is responsible for ensuring that all financial aid recipients are meeting these standards. This requirement is accomplished through an evaluation that occurs at the end of each academic semester (fall, spring, and summer).

A satisfactory academic progress policy consists of two standards — qualitative and quantitative. Below is a description of both of these standards.

**Qualitative Standard**

This standard assesses quality of academic work as measured by grade point average (GPA).

**Undergraduate Students.** An undergraduate student must be in “good standing” with Brenau University, as evidenced by a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher. This GPA is calculated on all courses taken for academic credit at Brenau University (including remedial courses that carry academic credit) as well as those accepted for transfer from other eligible postsecondary institutions. In addition, a student must earn a minimum semester GPA of 2.0 in the coursework attempted in each semester of enrollment.

It should be noted that the minimum GPA requirements referred to above do not apply to the renewal of academic scholarships, HOPE Scholarship, Zell Miller Scholarship, or other grant or scholarship programs that require a higher GPA for renewal or continuation.

**Graduate Students.** A graduate student must be in “good standing” with Brenau University, as evidenced by a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. This GPA is calculated on all courses taken for academic credit at Brenau University as well as those accepted for transfer from other eligible postsecondary institutions. In addition, a graduate student may earn no more than one grade below a B while enrolled in a graduate program, with the exception of students who are taking undergraduate courses as prerequisites or foundation courses. Those required undergraduate courses will not count toward academic standing for graduate students; however, grades in those courses will be factored into the cumulative GPA for the graduate program.

**Quantitative Standard**

**Rate of Progress.** A student receiving financial aid must demonstrate measurable progress toward the completion of his/her degree program by maintaining an overall rate of progress of 67 percent. This applies to both full-time and part-time financial aid recipients. The rate of progress is calculated using the following formula: Hours successfully completed, or earned, divided by hours attempted. Attempted hours are those credit hours for which a student is still registered after the last date on which dropped classes can be totally eliminated from a student’s semester registration (and transcript) as published by the Brenau Registrar. Earned hours are successfully completed courses in which grades of A, B, C, D, or P are awarded, as long as credit is earned. Withdrawals (W, WF), incompletes (I), and failed courses (F) are considered attempted hours by not earned hours. The following points should be noted with regard to rate of progress calculations:

1. Withdrawals, incompletes, and failed courses are considered attempted hours but not earned hours. If an incomplete course impacts a student’s satisfactory academic progress standing, it is the student’s responsibility to notify the Office of Financial Aid when a final grade has been earned.
2. Audited courses are not considered attempted or earned hours.
3. Credits transferred to Brenau University, including those taken as a transient student while enrolled at Brenau are included in attempted hours and earned hours, and are subject to maximum time frame standards below.
4. Repeated courses, for which a passing grade was previously received, are included in attempted hours and GPA calculation, but are not included in earned hours.

**Maximum Time Frame.** Regulations that govern federal student aid programs limit a student’s ability to receive financial aid to not more than 150% of the credit hours required to complete his or her specific educational program.

Frequent course drops or withdrawal from school, changes of major, and failed or repeated courses could jeopardize financial aid eligibility. All hours attempted at Brenau University, as well as those credits accepted on transfer from previous institutions toward the student’s degree program will count toward the maximum time frame. A student who had completed sufficient hours and required courses to complete his or her degree program is no longer eligible to receive financial aid even if there is some other obstacle such as a required minimum GPA that is preventing graduation.

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Undergraduate Example. Most students pursuing a bachelor’s degree at Brenau University may attempt up to a maximum of 180 semester hours toward the completion of an educational program that requires 120 semester hours. Students enrolled in Brenau degree programs that require more than 120 hours will have a proportionally longer time frame.

Graduate Example. If a graduate program requires 30 hours for completion, a student may attempt up to a maximum of 45 hours in that program, and likewise, based on the number of required hours in a particular graduate program.

Important note: A recipient of federal student aid may not enroll in courses generally not required for his or her specific educational program. This includes enrolling in unneeded courses for the sole purpose of attaining a higher cumulative GPA or to simply maintain a specific enrollment status (i.e. half-time to establish federal loan eligibility or full-time to maintain eligibility for health insurance). However, a student is allowed to repeat a course that was previously passed in order to obtain a higher grade, but can receive financial aid to repeat that course only one time. For undergraduate students, the intent of this repeat policy is to allow a student to try to earn a higher grade and an improved GPA when, on the advice of the student’s academic adviser, the student needs to take that action to gain admission into a specific Brenau major. Undergraduate students will not be allowed to repeat previously passed courses for the sole purpose of obtaining financial aid or a more desirable financial aid package. For graduate students, the intent of this repeat policy is to allow a student to repeat a course only when a higher grade is required by academic policy. Graduate students will not be allowed to repeat courses in which they have earned a grade of B or higher for the sole purpose of obtaining financial aid or a more desirable financial aid package.

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Evaluation Process

Academic records of financial aid recipients will be reviewed at the end of each semester to determine if students are maintaining the standards established in Brenau University’s SAP policy. A student who fails to meet the SAP standards, qualitative and/or quantitative, will be assigned one of the following SAP statuses, and will be notified in writing:

- **Financial Aid Warning** is the status assigned to a student who has not achieved the required GPA and/or has not met the rate of progress standards of the SAP policy. A student on financial aid warning is eligible for financial aid for one additional semester.

- **Financial Aid Suspension** is the status assigned to a student who, after one semester on financial aid warning, still has a deficient GPA and/or has not met the rate of progress standards. This status also applies to a student who has exceeded the 150% time frame for completing his/her degree program. A student on financial aid suspension will be notified of his/her ineligibility for future financial aid, as well as how to submit an appeal (outlined below).

- **Financial Aid Probation** is the status assigned to a student who failed to make satisfactory academic progress, but submitted a qualifying appeal, and had eligibility for financial aid reinstated. A student placed on financial aid probation is eligible for financial aid for one semester in which he/she must fully meet the requirements Brenau’s satisfactory academic progress policy. Or he/she may be placed an academic plan designed to ensure compliance with SAP by a specific point in time.

Appeal Procedures

A financial aid recipient who has lost eligibility after failure to make SAP during a Financial Aid Warning semester may appeal to the Financial Aid Committee to request a semester of Financial Aid Probation. Appeals should be submitted in writing to the Director of Financial Aid.

A financial aid appeal must include these two components:

1. **The extenuating circumstances that caused the student to fail to make SAP.** Circumstances that may be considered are those events/situations that are out of the student’s control, such as serious injury, illness (physical or mental) of the student or an immediate family member, death of an immediate family member, or other mitigating circumstances. Appeals should include a description of the applicable circumstances, including documentation (from a physician or other health care provider, law enforcement agency, social services, agency, etc.) that supports those circumstances.

2. **What has changed that will allow the student to make SAP at the next evaluation.** The student must include information regarding extenuating circumstances that will no longer exist, as well as any additional measures that will be taken to ensure he or she will make SAP during the probation semester, if granted.

The Financial Aid Committee will review each written appeal, along with relevant academic history. The Director of Financial Aid will notify the student of the committee’s decision in writing either by mail or via the student’s Brenau email account. A student whose appeal is approved may receive financial aid for one probationary semester, after which another SAP review will be conducted.

Restoring Financial Aid Eligibility

A student whose appeal is not granted, or a student who does not have extenuating circumstances can only regain eligibility by meeting the requirements of Brenau’s SAP policy as stated above. Taking courses at the student’s expense (without financial aid), sitting out a semester, or taking courses at another institution does not automatically restore financial aid eligibility. When a student has resolved the academic deficiencies that resulted in termination of eligibility, he or she should contact the Office of Financial Aid and request a new SAP evaluation.

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