NASFAA TRAINING TRACK

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Satisfactory Academic Progress: Best Practices

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Overview of Session

In this session we will:

- Review required and optional policy components

- Identify tools and tips for evaluating your school's existing satisfactory academic progress (SAP) policy and consumer information

- Share best practices

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Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

Must be reasonable and consistently applied to all students within categories:

Category Examples:	
Classification	
Undergraduate	Graduate
Enrollment	
Full-time	Part-time
Program	
Nursing	Business

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Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

- SAP must be evaluated at least once a year, but may be performed more frequently
- Required elements include a measurement of the following standards at each evaluation:
  - Qualitative
    - Grade Point Average (GPA)
  - Quantitative
    - Pace
    - Maximum Timeframe

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Qualitative Component - GPA

Grade Point Average

- Specified GPA or comparable standard measured against a norm for each evaluation period

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Qualitative Component - GPA

May have a graduated GPA but if program is greater than two academic years, must meet the following:

- At the end of second academic year, must have GPA of at least a "C" or its equivalent; or

- Academic standing consistent with school's requirements for graduation

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Graduated GPA Example

Student Grade Level at Evaluation	Grade Point Average
Freshman	1.60
Sophomore	1.80
Junior	2.00
Senior	2.00

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Quantitative Component – Maximum Timeframe

- 150% of the published program length or less for undergraduate programs

- Schools free to set own policies related to number of changes in major allowed

- Established by the school for graduate programs

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Maximum Timeframe Examples

Undergraduate Program	Published Program Length	Maximum Time Frame
Credit hours	120 credit hours	180 credit hours
Clock hours	900 clock hours/ 10 months	1350 clock hours/ 15 months

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Quantitative Component - Pace

Pace is defined as the student's progression to ensure completion within the maximum time frame

- Must be measured at each evaluation

- A graduated pace standard is permitted

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Graduated Pace Example

Student Grade Level at Evaluation	Minimum Completion Percentage
First Year	66%
Second Year	70%
Third Year	75%
Fourth Year & Beyond	75%

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Satisfactory Academic Policy

Policy must explain how GPA and pace are affected by:

- Incompletes
- Withdrawals
- Repeated coursework
- Changes in program of study
- Transfer credits
- Noncredit and/or reduced credit remedial coursework

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Transfer and Remedial Coursework

- Required to count transfer hours accepted at your institution as both attempted and completed hours in SAP
- If a regular student enrolled in remedial coursework within an eligible program:
  - Must include remedial courses when evaluating qualitative standards
  - May include when evaluating quantitative standards

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Repeated Coursework

- SAP rules do not require schools to allow course repetitions

- SAP rules do not require schools to limit the number of course repetitions

- SAP rules do address the treatment of repeats for measuring satisfactory progress

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Satisfactory Academic Progress: Best Practices

Repeated Coursework

- SAP rules must address the treatment of repeats for Title IV eligibility

- Repeat coursework is a separate topic, but directly related to SAP

- Information on repeat courses is found in 668.2(b), *Full-time student*

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Satisfactory Academic Policy

- Must clearly explain the consequences of not meeting SAP

- Must explain how students not making SAP can restore their eligibility for financial aid funds

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Financial Aid Warning

- Can only be used if checking SAP each payment period

- Financial aid warning status is assigned automatically and student is still eligible to receive aid during the financial aid warning term (appeal not needed to be given financial aid warning status)

- If SAP standards are not met during financial aid warning term, an appeal can be filed

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Appeals

- Process to petition reconsideration of eligibility

- School option to allow or limit the number of times a student can appeal

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Appeals

- Reasons for an appeal
  - The death of a relative
  - An injury or illness of the student
  - Other special circumstances

- Appeal must include:
  - Reason(s) the student was unable to meet SAP
  - What has changed to enable the student to meet SAP at the next evaluation point

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Financial Aid Probation

- If SAP is checked annually, student may appeal to have a financial aid probation term to meet minimum requirements

- If SAP is checked each term, student may appeal if after financial aid warning term SAP standards are not met

- Financial aid probation may be for one term only

- No limit on number of times may be on probation, but must appeal each time

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Academic Plan

- If SAP policy permits and will need more than one payment period to meet SAP standards, may place student on academic plan
- Academic plan, if followed, should ensure student able to meet SAP standards by a specific point in time
- May stipulate payment period restrictions:
  - Number of credit/clock hours taken
  - Registration in specified courses
  - Requirement of certain grade point average

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Academic Plan

- May stipulate payment period restrictions:
  - Registration for fewer credit/clock hours
  - Registration in specified courses
  - Certain term grade point average requirements

- May be as simple as a calculation or as detailed as a class by class schedule

- May require collaboration with other offices

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Student Consumer Information

Must make readily available to current and prospective students information regarding:

- Standards student must maintain to be consider to be making satisfactory progress in program of study for purposes of receiving Title IV aid

- Criteria by which student who failed to make satisfactory progress may re-establish eligibility

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Guidance on SAP

- Section 668.34 of Student Assistance General Provisions regulations

- Program Integrity Q&A: http://www2.ed.gov/print/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2009/sap.html

- *Satisfactory Academic Progress,* NASFAA Monograph 25, August 2012

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Guidance on SAP

- Preamble to the 10/29/10 Program Integrity Final Rule: http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2010-10-29/pdf/2010-26531.pdf

- 2012–13 *FSA Handbook*, pp. 1-8 to 1-12

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Questions?

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Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeals
Policies and Procedures

The following table describes various elements of satisfactory academic progress (SAP) appeal policies and procedures, which are part of an institution's SAP policies and procedures. It may be used in conjunction with *NASFAA's Policies and Procedures Tools* (a benefit of NASFAA membership).

Circumstances	
Policies	**Procedures**
• Provide general descriptions of circumstances that warrant consideration of a SAP appeal as well those that are not acceptable • State which elements of the SAP policy are appealable (e.g. pace, maximum time frame) and not appealable	• Describe the general process for reviewing the reasons for a SAP appeal request • Describe process for considering any exceptions to the policies • If not appealable, describe the process by which a student may re-establish eligibility
Appeal Process	
Policies	**Procedures**
• Provide a description of how a student makes a request (e.g. in writing) • Must the student sign the appeal request? • Include information on how the institution utilizes technology in the process (e.g. use of an on-line request form) • Is there a deadline by which students must submit appeals? • Which staff is responsible for reviewing appeals? • Describe any limits on the number of appeals a student may submit • Note the institution's policy on appealing a denied SAP appeal	• Does your institution have a request form students must complete? • How are requests routed to the appropriate staff? • How does your office handle incomplete appeal requests? • How does a student appeal a decision? Which staff reviews such appeals? • How is the student informed of the appeal decision? • If the student re-appeals, how does the institution determine if the premise of the new appeal is different from the previous appeal?
Documentation	
Policies	**Procedures**
• Provide examples of acceptable documentation • Detail any documentation requirements for students' ability to meet SAP standards after the subsequent payment period • Include consequences of failing to submit requested documentation • Include any deadlines for submitting documentation	• How does the financial aid office notify students of documentation requirements? • What actions does the institution take when students submit documentation late?

Communication with Students

Policies	Procedures
• Address if the student must have contact with the financial aid office before submitting an appeal • Discuss what contact, if any, the financial aid office will have with the student during the process • Provide a timeframe in which the appeal will be reviewed and decided upon (e.g. one week, 30 days)	• What type of contact does the student need to have with the financial aid office? Is an appointment with a counselor required? • If the financial aid office will be in contact with the student during the process, how frequent is the contact? Is it at predetermined points?

Consumer Information

Policies	Procedures
• Describe the information you publish regarding SAP appeals • Discuss how revisions to appeal policies impact previously released information	• How is information about SAP appeals disseminated? • How are changes to policies publicized?

Academic Plans

Policies	Procedures
• Provide a general description of the situations for which you will utilize academic plans as well as situations for which plans will not be used • Describe how academic plans will or will not be used for various categories of students • State whether or not the use of academic plans will be limited based on elements of the SAP policy • Discuss your policies for the development of academic plans • Describe your policies for monitoring student compliance • Describe the contact students on academic plans must have, if any, with campus offices	• How will academic plans be developed? • Which staff is responsible for developing academic plans and monitoring compliance? • How will students be notified regarding their academic plans and the requirements of the plans? • How will students be notified regarding their compliance with academic plans? • How will the use of academic plans fit into the SAP evaluation process?