

Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy Dublin City University (DCU)

US Federal Regulations require that all US Federal Student Aid (**FSA**) recipients must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (**SAP**). In accordance with U.S Department of Education Regulations (**668.34a**), an eligible institution is required to verify SAP for all FSA recipients before releasing any disbursed funds. All US students in receipt of US Federal Aid whilst studying at DCU are required to make satisfactory progress on their course and abide by University Regulations.

The University Regulations can be found by visiting the webpage in the following link:

<https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/ac.shtml>

The US Department of Education requires DCU to check SAP and the progress of each student in receipt of US Federal Aid at the end of each payment period or annually where applicable, to ensure that requirements are fully met. DCU will check each student's progress at the end of each semester for One Year Taught Masters Programmes and / or Undergraduate Bachelor programmes. Annual evaluations will take place for PhD programmes.

US Federal Regulations require that:

1. All students must progress at a pace which ensures they will graduate within the maximum timeframe – that is **150%** of the published length of that programme as measured in ECTS credits.
2. Student borrowers maintain satisfactory academic requirements by maintaining a minimum overall grade of 40% at the end of each SAP period

The DCU Grading System along with the European Grading System and DCU Degree Classifications can be found in the tables below.

Table 1 - DCU Grading System

The DCU Grades and ECTS Grading System (European Grading) equivalents are shown in the following table:

DCU Grade	ECTS Grade	Description
H1 = 70% or above	ECTS grade A	Excellent
H2.1 = 60-69%	ECTS grade B	Very Good
H2.2 = 50-59%	ECTS grade C	Good
H3 46-49%	ECTS grade D	Satisfactory
H3 40-45%	ECTS grade E	Sufficient
Fail 30-39%	ECTS grade FX	Fail – some work required
Fail 29% or below	ECTS grade F	Fail – considerable further work required

Exceptions:

1. If a student has a P (**Pass**) result code and the final mark is null, the ECTS grade obtained is C.
2. If a student has a F (**Fail**) result code, the student obtains an 'F' ECTS grade except if the final mark ≥ 30 , then a grade of 'FX' is allocated.

An ECTS Grade E or 40% is the passing grade in the DCU Grading system (see Table 1) The grades along with ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits as indicated above will be shown on transcripts and 40% is deemed to be the passing Grade for Federal Loan purposes at DCU.

The description of each grade is on the rear of the DCU Transcript and further information can be found [here](#).

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

For details relating to the ECTS grading system applied by European Universities, please visit [here](#).

Table 2 - Degree Classifications for Undergraduate Bachelor Degree Programmes at DCU

Level 8 Honours Bachelor Degree Award Classification	
Greater than or equal to 70%	First Class Honours
Between 60% and 69% inclusive	Second Class Honours, Grade I
Between 50% and 59% inclusive	Second Class Honours,
Grade II Between 40% and 49% inclusive	Third Class Honour

Continuing students must complete and pass the year with minimum overall grades of at least 40% in order to continue receiving loans.

Level 9 Taught Master's Degree:

To be eligible for consideration for the award of a Level 9 Master's Degree, a student must accumulate the requisite credits. A taught Master's award consists of a minimum of 60 ECTS credits of taught modules and a maximum of 30 ECTS credits for the dissertation/practicum. The mark to be used to determine the grade of classification is the precision mark based on the first attempt at the relevant, approved modules. Where the original precision mark is less than 40%, and the student subsequently successfully completes the requisite credits, the student will be awarded a Pass classification, irrespective of the final marks achieved.

Table 3 – Degree Classifications for Taught Masters Programmes at DCU

Level 9 Taught Master's Degree Classification	
Greater than or equal to 70%	First Class Honours
Between 60% and 69% inclusive	Second Class Honours, Grade I
Between 50% and 59% inclusive	Second Class Honours,
Grade II Between 40% and 49% inclusive	Third Class Honours

Level 9 Master's Degree (Research): The degree of Master's (Research) is a Major Level 9 award and is awarded without classification.

Further details on Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis are available by visiting the following link:

www4.dcu.ie/registry/regulations/postgraduate_regulations.shtml

Students are advised to inform the Federal Aid Administrator of any changes in study details e.g. Academic Progress, Programme Change, mode of study, extenuating circumstances, temporary or permanent withdrawal) as soon as possible so that we can assess the impact on SAP. For extenuating circumstances and withdrawal situations, students should speak to their Programme Chair for guidance on procedures.

SAP Evaluations

SAP evaluations will include evaluation of the qualitative (grade-based), quantitative (time-related) and maximum timeframes outlined in the qualitative and quantitative measures below.

Qualitative Measure

This relates to a student's Academic Standing and is required to access the quality of academic work using standards measurable against a norm e.g. grades and work projects.

For students undertaking DCU programmes **of 4 years or less in duration**, students must have successfully completed the stipulated number of credits for their programme in each semester in order to progress.

Federal regulations require that the maximum timeframe for programmes be divided into equal increments and that academic progress be evaluated at the end of each increment. DCU specifies an increment as one academic semester for all taught study components¹.

The progress of research students is monitored annually at Department or Faculty Level and with the Federal Loan Administrator.

Quantitative Measures (Duration and Pace)

In order to continue receiving Federal Loan funding, students must meet the minimum requirements for both academic progress as illustrated in the preceding paragraphs. Students must complete 67% of their attempted credits each academic year and must also complete the programme at a pace which ensures that they will graduate within the maximum timeframe. If a student is undertaking 60 ECTS credits in one academic year, they must complete at least 40 credits to meet this requirement. If a student is undertaking 90 ECTS credits in an academic year, they must complete 60 ECTS credits in an academic year.

The maximum time-frame for completion of both undergraduate and postgraduate courses is 150% of the published length of the programme as measured in ECTS credits. For *Postgraduate programmes, the school may use discretion to allow additional time when it is deemed appropriate.

Therefore, the maximum timeframe in which a student is required to complete a programme of study at DCU is as follows:

Table 4 – Maximum Timeframe for completion incorporating 150% rule

Programme Type	Published Completion Time and credits	Time (credits) eligible for Aid incorporating 150% rule
Bachelor Degree	3 year programmes (180 ECTS credits)	4.5 years (270 ECTS credits)
Bachelor Degree	4 year programmes (240 ECTS credits)	6 years 360 ECTS credits)
*Postgraduate Degree (taught, full-time)	1 year programmes (90 – 120 ECTS credits)	1.5 years (135 – 180 ECTS credits)
*Postgraduate Degree (taught, part-time)	2 year programmes (90 – 120 ECTS credits)	3 years (135 – 180 ECTS credits)
*Master's Degree (research, full-time)	2 year programmes	3 years
*Master's Degree (research, part-time)	3 year programmes	4.5 years
*PhD programme (full-time)	3 - 4 year programmes	4.5 – 6 years
*PhD programme (part-time)	4 - 5 year programmes	6 years – 7 years (7 years is the maximum at DCU)

¹ For full-time taught postgraduate programmes, the project and / or dissertation period from May – August constitutes a further and final increment for which the final disbursement is awarded.

Students are deemed ineligible at the evaluation point when they will exceed the maximum timeframe and **not** at the point when they actually reach the maximum time-frame.

All periods of enrolment contribute when assessing progress, even periods when the student did not receive federal loans. Students must be studying at least half time in order to remain eligible for federal loans.

SAP evaluations will include evaluation of the qualitative (grade-based), quantitative (time-related) and maximum timeframes outlined in the quantitative outlined in the preceding paragraphs.

SAP is carefully monitored for each student receiving FSA at the end of each semester. This practice serves to minimise the possibility of increasing loan indebtedness for students who are falling behind academically. It also affords the student the opportunity to take corrective action as soon as possible, in the case of an adverse review. Regulation guidelines require institutions to determine SAP at the end of each increment/semester so that FSA probation or suspension can be imposed, as necessary, during the following period. The frequency of monitoring SAP, together with the Multiple Disbursement Rule (where annual loan amounts are disbursed in equal instalments at the beginning of each period of enrolment) are designed to protect institutions against increased Default Rates, and students, who are failing academically, against higher debt levels.

Federal Aid Warning

Failure to maintain SAP can result in suspension or termination of FSA eligibility. Once it has been determined that a student has not met SAP, a warning in writing is given by the Federal Aid Administrator to the student. The warning will advise that the student can continue to be eligible to receive funding for the next payment period only however; will become ineligible for aid if SAP is not met at the end of that payment period. No appeal is necessary.

Students who have been placed on warning and who do not meet make the required SAP at the end of the end of the next payment period as outlined in the warning will be suspended and ineligible to receive aid until they meet SAP.

NOTE: It is possible for a student to receive more than one warning period during academic career, just not consecutively.

Once a student has been deemed ineligible and suspended, the student may appeal. A successful appeal will see the student placed on Probation.

Appeal Procedure for Reinstatement of Financial Aid Eligibility:

As mentioned above, students have the right to appeal if their US Federal Aid has been suspended, and the appeals mechanism and terms set out below are in place to evaluate circumstances. Supporting documentation will be requested as evidence in any appeals situation.

Typical circumstances for appeals may include:

- Illness or injury
- Death of a family member
- Divorce or family difficulties
- Financial difficulties
- Personal difficulties

Terms and Conditions of Appeal:

Any suspended student will be advised of this action in writing, in a timely manner. Students must submit an Appeal in writing to the Financial Aid Administrator within 14 days of receipt of the correspondence letter. Students must submit any supporting documentation along with their letter of appeal. An 'Appeals' Board will consider appeals during a specially called Board meeting and students will be informed of the outcome of their appeal within 14 days of this meeting. A successful outcome for the appeal will see student placed on Financial Aid Probation.

Financial Aid Probation

In order for a student be placed on Financial Aid Probation, a student must:

1. Appeal and have it approved by the school; AND
2. Student expected to be making SAP in next payment period; OR
3. Be successfully following an academic plan designed to ensure student will be able to meet SAP by a specific point in time

A student on Probation may only receive Title IV funds for ONE payment period. A student on Probation may not receive Title IV funds for the subsequent payment period UNLESS:

1. Student resumes making SAP; or
2. DCU determines student has met requirements specified by the school in the academic plan and student is still covered by academic plan.

SAP will be checked at the end of the agreed probationary period. Students who have been placed on probation and subsequently meet the SAP requirements in the next semester will be placed back into good Financial Aid (SAP) standing.

Students on probation will receive funding but they must meet the required academic standards during that semester to avoid suspension of eligibility for funding.

A student who fails to maintain SAP during two consecutive semesters will be deemed ineligible for funding for the following loan period.

Students will be notified of probation or suspension by letter and/or email.

Documentation and Confidentiality:

The appeals process (as outlined above) will be fully documented and recorded in the student's file.

All aspects of the appeals procedure are strictly confidential and will not be shared or discussed with persons who are not directly involved in FSA administration or the appeals process. Likewise, the notification of students who do not appeal will be treated in strict confidence.

Monitoring SAP:

Financial Aid Administrators are required to check SAP for each FSA recipient at the end of each semester. Each student's file contains documentary evidence of SAP for each semester.

In the case of graduate students who are not tested or examined regularly (e.g. research/thesis), a signed statement from the programme supervisor, department head, or other such official, which determines the SAP status of a student at a given time, will satisfy the SAP requirement. A form has been designed for this purpose and can be requested from the Financial Aid Administrator.

Notification of the Policy to all Departments:

All relevant departments will be advised of the compliance requirements and the need for co-operation in dealing with requests for SAP determinations from the FAA, as necessary.

Appeals Panel:

A panel of six persons has been established from which two or three individuals will be selected as the committee to adjudicate on each appeal.

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