

Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

Overview

Bath Spa University [BSU] is required by US Federal Law to define and enforce standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress [SAP] on students who wish to access US federal funds (subsidised, unsubsidised or PLUS Direct Loans). The SAP guidelines herein apply to all federal loan recipients, including undergraduates, postgraduates, full-time and part-time students.

Satisfactory Academic Progress will be evaluated prior to each loan disbursement point, based on the criteria set out in this document.

SAP Evaluation & Review

- **Evaluation Frequency & Process:** Students in receipt of Direct Loans will be evaluated at regular intervals throughout the academic year. Roughly one month in advance of each loan disbursement, enquiries will be made with relevant Schools/Departments to ensure that students are making Satisfactory Academic Progress.
- **Evaluation Criteria:** The evaluation process at each evaluation point will consider a student's progress with regard to both quantitative SAP standards (Maximum Course Completion Timeframes) and qualitative SAP standards (Academic Standards), as described below.
- **Notification:** Students will be notified in writing if their financial aid is suspended. Bath Spa University cannot waive the SAP requirements for any student to receive Direct Loans. However, an appeals procedure, described below, is available if students feel their ability to meet SAP was impacted by mitigating or extenuating circumstances.

Quantitative Criteria: Maximum Course Completion Timeframes

- **Maximum Completion Timeframes:** Eligible undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research postgraduate students are entitled to receive aid for up to 150% of the published course duration. For example:
 - *Undergraduate:* The maximum timeframe for a 3 year BA/BSc degree is 4.5 years.
 - *Taught Postgraduate:* The maximum timeframe for a 1 year MA course is 1.5 years.
 - *Research Postgraduate:* The maximum timeframe for a 3 year PhD is 4.5 years. This includes time for thesis writing and viva examination. The student's supervisor must agree that progress with research is satisfactory.
- **Exceeding Maximum Timeframes:** Undergraduate Students who exceed the 150% timeframe for any reason will be placed on Student Loan Denied status, and will be ineligible to receive further Direct Loan funding. Postgraduate students may, in exceptional circumstances, have a maximum timeframe which exceeds 150% of the published course length, as determined by the University.
- Periods when a student is not eligible for, or does not receive Direct Loans, still count toward the maximum time frame.

Qualitative Criteria: Academic Standards

In advance of each loan disbursement, enquiries will be made with Student Services and relevant Schools/Departments to ensure that students are making Satisfactory Academic Progress, as follows:

- **Enrolment Status:** All students must be enrolled at least half-time.
- **Academic Achievement:** Enquires will be made with Schools/Department to check that students are progressing towards a good pass in advance of each loan disbursement.

- *Undergraduate Students:* Students must achieve at least 35/100% in each assessment item and have an overall pass mark of 40/100% or above in the module to be eligible to pass.¹
- *Postgraduate Students:* Students must achieve at least 50/100% in each assessment item and have an overall pass mark of 50/100% or above in the module to be eligible to pass.
- **Pace and Progression:** To continue to be eligible for Direct Loans, students must maintain a minimum cumulative completion rate of two-thirds of credits attempted (67%) for progression to the following year of study in order to meet SAP maximum completion timeframes. For example:
 - *Undergraduate:* Where full-time students pursuing a BA/BSc would typically attempt 120 credits per academic year over one academic year, to remain in good SAP standing students must complete a minimum of 80/120 credits per academic year, and may carry forward no more than 40 credits into the next academic year as trailing units.
 - *Taught Postgraduate:* Where full-time students pursuing an MA/MSc would typically attempt 180 credits over one academic year for a total of 180 credits, to remain in good SAP standing students must complete a minimum of 120/180 credits per academic year, and may carry forward no more than 60 credits into the next academic year as trailing units.
 - *Note:* Tier 4 visa students should be mindful that visa policies may not align with SAP and/or University policies. For example, the University's option to study part-time if less than two-thirds of attempted credits have been completed is acceptable from a University and SAP policy perspective, but not from a Tier 4 perspective.

Impact of Transfers, Withdrawals, Interruptions, Repeats or Fails on SAP Standing

Student should consider the SAP policies below alongside University regulations and student visa restrictions, if applicable.

- **Transfer Credits:** Approved credits transferred from other institutions will be included in the number of credits attempted and earned, and will thus count toward the maximum timeframe for completion (quantitative SAP requirement). However, transfer credits will not be used in grading calculations (qualitative SAP requirement).
- **Course/Route/Award/Degree Changes:** The 150% maximum completion timeframe rule is applicable to students who change course, route, award or degree. Such changes can sometimes be completed within the original programme timeframe, but students are advised to seek counsel from Student Services and International Liaison staff prior to requesting changes.
- **Module Changes:** It is only possible to change modules without consequence to academic records within specific timeframes; see the relevant BSU policy document linked below for full details.
- **Course Withdrawals:** Students considering withdrawing from their course are encouraged to seek counsel from their Head of School, Course Leader, Finance Office, Student Support and/or Student Services, as appropriate. These services can advise you of the effect that your withdrawal can have on loans eligibility and repayment options.
- **Failures/Incompletes:** There is no 'incomplete' status at Bath Spa University. Rather, there is the possibility that student will be given a Fail status for non-submission of work or not meeting the required pass threshold. Failures will be treated as unearned but attempted credits, and thus included in both grade and maximum completion timeframe calculations. Students would be 'referred' with one re-submission opportunity that would be capped at 40% (the minimum passing grade). If students are deemed to have non-submission owing to mitigating circumstances, they are 'deferred' for that particular assessment.
- **Repeats:** For courses that are repeated, grade calculations will take account of the most recent grade earned. Students cannot attempt to repeat an assessment or course for which they have already received a passing grade.

¹ For comparison purposes, Bath Spa University translates a pass of 40/100% to be equivalent to grade C or 2.0 GPA, and a pass of 50/100% to be equivalent to grade B or 3.0 GPA.

Unsatisfactory SAP and Reinstatement of Federal Loans Eligibility

- Students who fail to meet the requirements for minimum SAP as noted above will be placed on Student Loan Probation for the following loan period. If the student subsequently meets the requirements in the loan disbursement period, they will be placed back into good SAP standing. However, if at the time of the next SAP evaluation the student is still not progressing, the student will be placed on Student Loans Denied status and Direct Loans funding will be suspended.
 - Students will be informed by email if Direct Loan funding is probated or suspended, and will be advised of the conditions they need to meet in order to re-establish eligibility.
 - Student loans can be received during the Probationary period. Direct Loan funding will be suspended during Student Loans Denied period until such time as SAP is re-established.
 - Students may appeal for mitigating or extenuating circumstance; see below for details.

Appeals Procedure

- **Appeals Process:** The student must submit an appeal of Student Loan Denied status in writing to Katie Jane Millington, Senior International & Partnerships Officer (k.millington@bathspa.ac.uk) by the date specified in the Student Loan Denied notification letter. Students must sign and date the letter of appeal and clearly indicate any mitigating or extenuating circumstances that impeded their ability to meet SAP and why financial aid should not be suspended. The initial appeal must include full documentation/evidence to substantiate the appeal. The International Liaison team will consider the appeal and notify the student in writing of its decision within fifteen working days of the student's appeal. All decisions are final.
- **Appeals Outcomes:** If a student's appeal against probation is successful then the student's good standing will be restored, and they will be placed on Probation Status for the payment period rather than Student Loan Denied Status. A student that has their Federal Aid suspended but continues the course under their own means and subsequently meets Satisfactory Academic Progress standards will be entitled to regain a probationary status and apply for loans.

Additional Academic & Immigration Policies

The SAP regulations noted herein do not contradict Bath Spa University's own academic policies or regulations, nor regulations that may be imposed by UK Visas & Immigration; rather, they serve to highlight the conditions under which Direct Loans are granted.

Satisfactory academic progress to retain Direct Loan funding is entirely separate from the academic requirements to remain on the course and does not guarantee the outcome of a student's course. In addition to meeting the specialised SAP criteria set out by the US Department of Education, students in receipt of federal aid must simultaneously adhere to:

- The University's General Regulations, available: <https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/regulations/student-general-regulations>)
- The University's Academic Regulations, available: <https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/about-us/governance/quality-and-standards/>
- The University's Undergraduate/Postgraduate Course Guidance (as appropriate), available: <https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/>
- Regulations set out by UK Visa & Immigration (if and as appropriate), available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-application-for-uk-visa-as-tier-4-student>