

## Academic Standards for Financial Aid Recipients

According to the U.S. Department of Education and State of Illinois student aid regulations, Oakton College must measure the academic success of students who apply for financial assistance. This policy promotes the successful completion of a student's educational program of study, and it is the student's responsibility to understand and comply with the policy. The following standards apply to students receiving federal or state financial assistance, including grants, loans, scholarships, and federal work-study. GI Bill recipients also must maintain compliance with the Standards of Academic Progress (SOAP) policy set by the College. Oakton determines compliance by measuring a student's cumulative academic record, even if the student did not receive financial assistance. Standards are subject to change according to the U.S. Department of Education and State of Illinois regulations.

**Note:** The financial aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy is distinct from Oakton's SOAP policy. Oakton will immediately cancel financial aid for students who receive a 0.00 GPA as a result of not completing any courses in their first semester at Oakton.

### REQUIREMENTS TO MAINTAIN FINANCIAL AID

#### Degree Objective

A student must be enrolled in an educational program of study leading to an eligible degree or certificate program (16 or more credit hours) by the withdrawal date ("W" date) of a semester. This requirement does not apply to students who only receive the Illinois Veterans' or Illinois National Guard grants. A student must also register for only those courses that are required for his/her declared degree or certificate program.

#### Grade Point Average

A student must maintain a cumulative college grade point average of 2.0 or higher (a C average).

#### Completion Rate

A student must complete a minimum of 66.67 percent of the cumulative Oakton credit hours attempted, including developmental courses. Repeated courses, transferred courses, courses graded as I, IR, W, N, F, FR, FS, IP, IS, J, Q, FZ, V, F20, I20, or any other grade will count as attempted credit hours. Courses graded as I, IR, W, N, F, FR, FS, IP, IS, J, Q, FZ, V, F20, I20, or any other non-completed grade, will not count as completed courses or earned grades. For example, a student who has successfully completed 30 credit hours and who has attempted 40 credit hours would have a completion rate of 75 percent. Noncredit courses are not included in calculating completion rate.

#### Maximum Time Frame of 150 Percent

Students must complete their Oakton degree or certificate within 150 percent of the college credit hours required for their declared educational program. For example, a student enrolled in an educational program that requires 60 credit hours has a maximum time frame of 90 attempted hours to complete the program. This student would not be eligible for financial assistance for more than 90 attempted credit hours. All attempted hours, including developmental courses, pass/fail courses, repeated courses, withdrawn courses, non-completed courses, and transfer courses accepted for credit at Oakton, will be counted toward this requirement. It is the student's responsibility to regularly meet with an academic advisor and ensure coursework taken meets the degree requirements for the program of study listed on his/her academic record. For students who are accepted into a limited enrollment program of study, Oakton will use a degree audit to determine how many hours remain to complete the new degree program.

*Note: If the college determines during SAP review that a student cannot mathematically complete the required courses for his/her educational program within the maximum time frame, the student will become ineligible for financial assistance. For example, if the number of credit hours the student needs to complete his/her declared educational program exceeds the maximum timeframe, he/she will immediately become ineligible for financial assistance.*

#### Transfer Courses

Transfer courses accepted for credit toward a student's educational program at Oakton will count as both attempted hours and completed hours. Oakton may request transcripts from previous institutions at any time to determine a student's prior completion rate and to ensure the student is making satisfactory academic progress towards degree completion.

#### Developmental Courses (Courses under 100-level)

A student can only receive financial assistance for up to 30 attempted hours if the financial assistance program will pay for developmental courses. An Oakton academic advisor must deem these courses necessary for successful completion of a program.

#### Repeated Courses

A student may receive financial assistance one additional time for a repeated course if the course was previously passed with a grade of A, B, C, D, P, AS, BS, CS, DS or P20. If a course is repeated, only the highest grade is used in the calculation of the cumulative GPA, but all attempts will remain on the transcript and are recorded for financial aid purposes.

## REVIEW OF ACADEMIC PROGRESS STANDARDS

To determine compliance with the academic standards for financial aid, a financial assistance advisor reviews each recipient's cumulative academic record at the conclusion of each semester—in August, January, and June. It can take a minimum of two to three weeks before a student receives a decision via email. **Decisions are final even if a grade changes after the decision is made.** Students who fail to maintain satisfactory academic progress after one semester will be placed on financial aid warning and will only be eligible to receive financial assistance for one more semester. **Students who fail to maintain academic progress after two semesters will be placed on financial aid cancellation and will no longer be eligible to receive financial assistance.** *In some cases students are automatically placed in Cancellation status and will not receive a Warning period.* Examples include: Students who receive a 0.00 GPA as a result of not completing any courses in a semester at Oakton or students not taking coursework required for the program of study listed on their academic record. Students may reestablish eligibility for financial assistance by meeting all requirements necessary to maintain satisfactory academic progress.

## APPEAL PROCEDURES

Any student whose financial assistance is canceled because of failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress has a right to appeal. Appeals must be complete, provide detailed information and supporting documentation about mitigating circumstances, and be submitted in writing to the Enrollment Center. Mitigating circumstances usually include injury or illness of the student, or the death of an immediate family member.

### Deadline Date

Federal regulations require appeals to be submitted in the semester in which the student is seeking financial assistance. The college recommends an appeal be submitted within the first two weeks of a semester; **Appeals must be received by the following dates: October 15 for fall; March 15 for spring; and July 7 for summer.** Appeals submitted after the deadline will be reviewed for the following semester. **A committee will review each appeal on a case-by-case basis and students will be notified of the committee's decision within 30 days. The decision of the appeals committee is final.**

### Required Documents

A student must submit the following information in the original submission. **Incomplete appeals will not be reviewed.**

**1. A typed letter, written and signed by the student, or submission of the online appeal form. Either must respond to instructions below in order to be considered complete.**

Summarize why the student failed to complete the academic progress requirements and identify the activities that would allow him/her to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress. Reference each semester the student did not complete every course in the semester. List your educational objectives and clarify how these objectives will be achieved. Letter must focus on personal extenuating circumstances, not financial need.

**2. Third party documentation**

Submit third party documentation that identifies the reason(s) why the student failed to maintain academic progress, such as a letter from a medical doctor or other mental health professional, medical, or legal documentation; or a death certificate. *An Oakton degree audit report, transcript, or change of major form is not considered third party documentation.*

**3. Forms completed with an Oakton academic advisor**

With an Oakton academic advisor's assistance, complete and submit a Standards of Academic Progress for Financial Aid Recipients Advising and Educational Agreement and an Academic Planning Guide. The Agreement Form is available at the Enrollment Center. The Academic Planning Guide lists coursework required to complete the student's educational program at Oakton and the semester in which courses will be taken. The educational program listed on these two forms must match the program of study indicated on the student's academic record.

### Appeal Decision

If the appeal is approved, the student must agree to the following in a signed contract:

- Follow the designated academic plan created with the academic advisor
- Receive a minimum of a C grade in each class and a 2.0 GPA for the semester
- Not drop/withdraw from any courses
- Meet with an academic advisor during the semester

Students whose appeals are approved will be placed on financial aid probation and are eligible to receive financial assistance for the approved semester. After the probation semester, if students do not meet academic standards or correctly follow their designated academic plan, they become ineligible to receive financial aid. If a student's appeal is denied or no appeal is made, all tuition and fee charges must be paid by the student until all requirements necessary to maintain satisfactory academic progress are met.