



# SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS: GENERAL POLICY

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## INTRODUCTION

To remain in the program and graduate, a student must maintain satisfactory academic progress. The College's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy is applied consistently to all students. Since the educational program at the College is semester-based, the Dean's Office reviews every student's academic progress at the end of each semester.

Federal regulations also mandate certain minimum standards of satisfactory academic progress for students receiving federal student aid. The College's SAP policy for federal student aid purposes is referred to as the school's "federal student aid" SAP policy and must be at least as strict as the school's "general" SAP policy for students. Information about the College's "federal student aid" SAP policy can be found on the College's website in the section labeled "[Regulatory Information](#)." For the remainder of this document, SAP refers to Thomas Aquinas College's general SAP policy, unless noted otherwise.

## GRADES

The curriculum offered at Thomas Aquinas College aims to create in students the habits of thought and discourse that will stay with them throughout their lives. The acquisition of these habits is emphasized rather than grades. Students should be motivated by the love of truth. Nevertheless, grades based upon the student's participation in classroom discussions, papers, and written or oral examinations are given to help record the student's academic progress and to provide graduate and professional schools with the information they need to assess applications for admission.

The grades given for each course are A, B, C, D, or F. A *cumulative* C average (2.0) is required to graduate. Furthermore, each semester a student must achieve a *semester* grade point average that is at least a C average. If a student's semester average is below C, he is notified by the Dean that he has been placed on Academic Probation for the following term. In order to be taken off Academic Probation and return to making SAP, a student must attain at least a C average for the following term and also raise his cumulative average to at least a C if it has fallen below that. If he fails to meet these requirements, he will be dismissed from the program. Normally, a student receiving an F for a course will be dismissed from the program even if his GPA is a C or above.

Because all parts of the College's curriculum are interdependent, equal value is given to the grade for each class when computing the GPA. Pluses and minuses are neither recorded in the transcript nor used in the calculation of the GPA.

An incomplete grade for a course is to be made up within four weeks after the end of the semester in which it is given. If it is not made up, the grade becomes an F. Noncredit remedial coursework is not an option for correcting failed courses.

The first draft of the senior thesis is due to the advisor the Monday after Thanksgiving. Failure to turn in an acceptable first draft by this deadline will result in an Incomplete. If, after this, an acceptable first draft is not submitted by January 1, the Incomplete will become a "FAIL," and the student will be dismissed from the program.

If a student withdraws from his courses mid-semester, he is usually given no grade for those courses. If a student withdraws mid-finals week, he will receive grades for the courses he has completed, and receive a “W” on his transcript for the courses he has not.

### REVIEWING SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

As stated above, SAP is evaluated at the end of each semester. When reviewing SAP decisions, the College will, of course, take into account mitigating circumstances which affect the student’s progress, such as severe illness or injury or a death in the immediate family. Any other basis for an appeal will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If a student has any question about his academic standing or progress, or questions the College’s judgment that he has not been making SAP, he should speak with the Dean. (See “Procedures for Lodging Complaints or Appeals” below.)

### REPEATING COURSEWORK

Due to the highly integrated nature of the educational program at Thomas Aquinas College, no course may be repeated without repeating the coursework for the entire semester of which the course is a part. Any requests to repeat a semester are reviewed by the Instruction Committee on a case-by-case basis.

If a semester is repeated, only the grades for the most recent work are shown on the transcript and used to calculate the student’s GPA that is reported on his transcript. This is known as “academic renewal.”

Note: For federal student aid (FSA) purposes, grades earned in the previous semester are not excluded from the calculation of the student’s FSA GPA. The FSA program regulations make no provision for the concept of academic renewal. As a consequence, if a student repeats a semester, his “FSA GPA” is calculated differently than the GPA that is on his transcript. The FSA GPA includes all semesters. A student’s eligibility for continuing FSA requires that his cumulative FSA GPA be 2.0 or higher. Similarly, the credits for the repeated semester will be included when calculating whether the student exceeds the statutory maximum time frame (150% of “normal time”) in which he can receive federal student aid. See the College’s federal student aid SAP policy published on the College’s website for more information about this.

### REPEATED FINANCIAL AID

A student who was dismissed for academic reasons or who withdrew mid-semester may appeal to the Dean for permission to return and repeat a semester. If his appeal is granted, his eligibility for federal student aid depends upon his status vis-à-vis the school’s federal student aid SAP policy. See the College’s website for more information in this regard.

In the repeated semester, the student will be eligible for an institutionally-funded work-study position if the Financial Aid Director determines that the student has financial need, but he will be eligible only for the remainder of any institutionally-funded grant aid that was not used in the last semester he attended, if he has documented continuing need. (There will only be unused grant aid if the student previously withdrew mid-semester.) An exception to this rule may be provided if the Financial Aid Director judges that the reason for the repetition was beyond the control of the student. (See “Procedures for Lodging Complaints and/or Appeals” below.)

### PROCEDURES FOR LODGING COMPLAINTS OR APPEALS

The College has long held that relatively informal procedures are best for a small community. Consequently,

the procedure for lodging complaints is simple. The student who wishes to complain about either a grade or a recording error is to address the Dean, the Registrar, or some other appropriate official either in writing (which is preferable) or orally. The student should clearly identify which grade or record he believes should be corrected.

*Complaints about Student Grades:* The tutor who has taught a particular class makes the final determination of a student's grade. The Dean or Registrar informs the tutor in question of any complaint, and consults with him about whether the grade shall be changed. It is usually best for the student to speak directly to the tutor before appealing to the Dean or Registrar, though this is not required.

*Appeals about SAP:* If a student questions the College's judgment that he has not been making SAP, he should speak or write to the Dean. Appeals must contain (a) the basis on which the student is filing an appeal (e.g., a severe illness or injury, a death in the immediate family, or some other special circumstance), (b) an explanation of why these circumstances caused the student to fail to make SAP, and (c) a description of what has changed in the student's situation that will allow him to demonstrate SAP at the next evaluation. All decisions on appeals are final. Students will be notified of the disposition of their appeal in writing and/or by e-mail.

*Appeals for Financial Aid Eligibility in cases of SAP-related financial aid suspension:* When a student is ineligible for federal financial aid due to SAP-related financial aid suspension (see the College's website, in the regulatory section about federal student aid SAP, for a more complete discussion of this sort of situation), he may appeal for financial aid. Appeals for financial aid eligibility must be made in writing to the Director of Financial Aid and must contain (a) the basis on which the student is filing an appeal (e.g., a severe illness or injury, a death in the immediate family, or some other special circumstance), (b) an explanation of why these circumstances caused the student to fail to make federal student aid SAP, and (c) a description of what has changed in the student's situation that will allow him to demonstrate federal student aid SAP at the next evaluation. Appeals are not automatically granted. All decisions on appeals are final. Students will be notified of the disposition of their appeal in writing and/or by e-mail.

## READMISSION

A student may request readmission by writing to the Dean. Such a letter should explain the student's reasons for leaving, what activities have occupied the student during the interval, and reasons why it seems a good time to re-enroll. The Dean shares the letter with the Instruction Committee and sometimes other members of the faculty who can be helpful in judging the prudence of readmission. The Instruction Committee attempts to make a judgment looking to the well-being of the student and the community. Although the process is often simple, it is not unusual for the Dean to investigate further and ask for follow-up materials, such as transcripts or letters of reference. To allow adequate time to consider such requests, the Dean should be contacted no later than one month prior to the beginning of the semester in question.