SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY

Satisfactory academic progress (SAP) includes two components: a qualitative component based on grades, and a quantitative component based on the time to complete the program. These two components are explained below.

The College's SAP policy is applied consistently to all students. To remain in the program and graduate, a student must maintain satisfactory academic progress. 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.

Students are notified of the College's SAP policy in the Student Handbook given to each student annually.

Grades: The Qualitative Component of SAP
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 or Associate 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.

Time Frame to Complete the Program: The Quantitative Component of SAP
At most other colleges, a student may vary the rate at which he proceeds through his program of studies. For this reason, Congress requires schools that participate in the federal student aid programs (FSA) to define the "**normal time frame**" for completing a program, the "**maximum time frame**" a student can take to complete a program if he wishes to remain eligible for federal student aid, and the minimum "**pace**" at which he must proceed each semester in order to complete the program within the maximum time frame. The next few pages discuss the application of those concepts and other FSA requirements to the traditional academic rules here at Thomas Aquinas College.

The four-year interdisciplinary course of studies offered by the College has a fixed curriculum. All students attend full-time and all students take a pre-determined set of classes and credits each semester.

The "**normal time frame"** for completing our educational program is eight semesters. Since the object and the method of this program are not arbitrary, the curriculum of Thomas Aquinas College is the same for all. The curriculum integrates the materials that constitute the major subjects of liberal education in a way that illumines their meaning and shows their relevance to one another. As a consequence, all students in the program take the same courses in the same order. All are required to attend full-time, and to complete the program in eight semesters. The semesters need not be consecutive, but normally are.

COURSE TITLE	CREDIT HOURS	
	1st Semester	2nd Semester
Theology I: Sacred Scripture	3	3
Philosophy I: Logic	3	3
Natural Science I: Biology, Natural History, and Measurement	3	3
Mathematics I: Euclidean Geometry	4	4
Language I: Latin and English Grammar	3	3
Seminar I: Ancient Greek Philosophy, Literature, and History	2	2
TOTAL CREDIT HOURS YEAR 1	18	18
Theology II: Patristic Theology	3	3
Philosophy II: Natural Philosophy	3	3
Natural Science II: Atomic Theory	3	3
Mathematics II: Ancient and Modern Astronomy	4	4
Language II: Latin and English Grammar	3	3
Seminar II: Ancient Roman & Medieval Philosophy, Literature & History	2	2
TOTAL CREDIT HOURS YEAR 2	18	18
Theology III: Aquinas – Science of Theology, Essence of God, Law	3	3
Philosophy III: Ethics and Political Philosophy	3	3
Natural Science III: Mathematical Physics – Galileo and Newton	4	4
Mathematics III: Analytic Geometry and Calculus	3	3
Music I: Theories of Tuning and Tonality	2	2
Seminar III: Early Modern Philosophy, Literature, and History	4	4
TOTAL CREDIT HOURS YEAR 3	19	19
Theology IV: Aquinas – the Trinity and the Sacraments	3	3
Philosophy IV: Natural Philosophy and Metaphysics	3	3
Natural Science IV: Optics, Electromagnetism, and Evolution	4	4
Mathematics IV: Number Theory, Non-Euclidean Geometry, and Relativity	3	3
Seminar IV: Late Modern Philosophy, Literature, and Theology	4	4
Senior Thesis: Written and Defended		2
TOTAL CREDIT HOURS YEAR 4	17	19
TOTAL CREDIT HOURS	146	

Due to the fact that all students take a pre-determined set of classes and credits per semester, the "**maximum time frame"** in which a student must complete the program is no more than the "normal time frame" of eight semesters. (Appeals to repeat a semester are a separate matter discussed below.)

The "**pace**" at which a student must progress through the educational program in order to complete the program within the "maximum time frame" is statutorily calculated by dividing the cumulative number of credit hours earned by the cumulative number of credit hours attempted. The College measures the student's progress at the end of each semester.

$$\text{Pace} = \frac{\text{Cumulative Credit Hours Earned}}{\text{Cumulative Credit Hours Attempted}}$$

Since all students at Thomas Aquinas College take a pre-determined set of classes and credits each semester, and since all of the coursework within any given semester must be successfully completed to remain in the program, the "pace" at which a student must complete the program is one-eighth of the entire program per semester. Students cannot proceed at a slower pace. As a consequence, students must maintain a 100% completion rate as they progress toward their bachelor's degree at Thomas Aquinas College in order to remain eligible for federal student aid. (Appeals to repeat a semester are a separate matter discussed below.)

Due to the unique nature of the College's educational program, credits from other institutions do not transfer and consequently are not included in the calculation of a student's completion rate.

The credit hours for failed courses, as well as for incomplete courses and courses from which the student has withdrawn, do not count as credit hours earned (numerator) but do count as credit hours attempted (denominator). Accordingly, students who fail to complete courses or who withdraw from courses mid-semester are not maintaining the required pace and are dismissed from the program. This is discussed in more detail below.

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 or Associate Dean. (See "Procedures for Lodging Complaints and/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 student is dismissed for failing to meet the terms of Academic Probation or for having failed a class, but is subsequently allowed to return and repeat the semester, the College extends the institution's own quantitative academic progress standards for such a student. This allows him to complete the program in nine semesters instead of eight. If, after repeating a semester, the student does not meet the qualitative terms (grade requirements) of SAP, he is dismissed from the program. It would be rare for the Instruction Committee to approve more than one such repetition of a semester.

If a student withdraws mid-semester and is subsequently allowed to return and begin the semester again, the College extends the institution's own quantitative academic progress standards for such a student. This allows him to complete the program in nine semesters instead of eight.

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." For federal student aid (FSA) purposes, however, 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.

Financial Aid Warning

If a student is notified by the Dean or Associate Dean that he has been placed on Academic Probation, federal student aid regulations require the College's Financial Aid Office to inform the student that he has been placed on a "Financial Aid Warning" status and is in jeopardy of losing eligibility for federal student aid. The Financial Aid Office will send the student a letter to that effect.

A student with a Financial Aid Warning remains eligible for federal and institutional student aid for that semester while he is making efforts to achieve SAP. He must regain SAP (including the FSA GPA requirement discussed above) in order to have the Financial Aid Warning status removed. If he does not regain SAP, he will be placed on Financial Aid *Suspension* in the following semester. This means he will not be eligible for federal financial aid in that semester. This is a moot point, however, since at Thomas Aquinas College students are dismissed from the program if they do not meet the terms of the Dean's or Associate Dean's academic probation letter and so the question of financial aid eligibility becomes irrelevant.

Repeated Financial Aid

A student who was dismissed for academic reasons or who withdrew mid-semester may appeal to the Dean or Associate Dean for permission to return and repeat a semester. If his appeal is granted, his eligibility for federal student aid depends upon whether he had a Financial Aid Warning status in the most recent semester he last attended. If he had a Financial Aid Warning status in the most recent semester he last attended, he will have a "Financial Aid Suspension" status for the semester of his return. This means he will not be eligible for federal student aid for that repeated semester. At the end of the repeated semester, the student must meet SAP standards in order to regain eligibility for federal student aid and, more importantly, to remain in the program. (As explained above, federal student aid eligibility will depend upon the student's FSA GPA, rather than his transcript GPA.)

The student may appeal for federal student aid eligibility in the repeated semester, but appeals are granted only if the reason for the repetition was beyond the control of the student. (See "Procedures for Lodging Complaints and/or Appeals" below.) If the student's appeal is granted, he will be placed on "Financial Aid Probation" and will be allowed to receive federal student aid for one repetition of the courses. At the end of the semester, the student must meet SAP standards in order to continue receiving federal student aid and, more importantly, to remain in the program. (As explained above, federal student aid eligibility will depend upon the student's FSA GPA, rather than his transcript GPA.)

In the repeated semester, the student will be eligible for a Service Scholarship (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 or Associate 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, Associate 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, Associate 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 or Associate 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 description of that situation above), 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 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. 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 or Associate 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 or Associate 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 or Associate 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 or Associate Dean should be contacted no later than one month prior to the beginning of the semester in question.