



International Academic Programmes Office

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch, 7701, South Africa
 Level 3, Masingene Building
 Cross Campus Road, Rondebosch
 Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 2822/3740
 E-mail: iapo-finance@uct.ac.za/leon.petersen@uct.ac.za
 Internet: <https://uct.ac.za/international>

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP Policy)

UCT is required by U.S. Federal Law (34CFR 668.16) to define and enforce standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) on students who wish to access U.S. federal aid. The guidelines have been established to encourage students to maintain satisfactory academic progress towards their degree requirements for each study period for which they are enrolled.

SAP, as described below, is evaluated at the end of each semester (June and November). Failure to maintain satisfactory progress may result in cancellation of financial aid awards and you may have to pay back any funds already received. You are also required to settle any outstanding fees immediately or by 30 June.

GRADES AND PACE OF COMPLETION

Students receiving US federal aid funds will have their academic progress assessed at the end of each payment period (semester). The assessment will consider the following:

- **ACADEMIC STANDING** Satisfactory grade point average (Qualitative component)
- **MAXIMUM TIMEFRAME and PACE** Timeframe eligibility for degree completion (Quantitative components).

For students to remain eligible, they must meet the minimum requirements for the above-mentioned components, as well as UCT's published progression requirements.

Basic standards for Satisfactory Academic performance

QUALITATIVE

Obtain a satisfactory grade point average or academic progress evaluation.

- **Undergraduate degree students:** enrolled in a programme of study of more than 2 academic years must, once the student has been enrolled for two academic years, achieve a "C" average (50-59%) at the end of each semester/payment period.
- **Post graduate degree students:** to achieve a "C" average (50-59%) at the end of each semester/payment period.
- **Masters students doing their dissertation and Research degree students:** to achieve a "satisfactory progress" status at the end of each academic period.

All students to achieve the "academically eligible to continue" status to maintain their eligibility for funds for the following academic year.

Satisfactory progress is measured and confirmed annually by the Faculty Examination Committee (FEC) and displayed on the student's academic record.

Recommended grade conversion table

| UCT grades | | | Approximate equivalents: |
|------------|--|---|--------------------------|
| | | | In the U.S. |
| 1 | 75 - 100% | First Class | A |
| 2+ | 70 - 74% | Second Class (Division One) | B+ |
| 2- | 60 - 69% | Second Class (Division Two) | B |
| 3 | 50 - 59% | Third Class | C |
| F | 0 - 49% | Fail | F |
| FS | 0 - 49% | Failed but permitted to write supplementary exams on academic grounds | |
| DPR: | Duly Performed certificate refused i.e. not permitted to write examination | | F |
| AB: | Absent from examination | | F |
| INC: | Incomplete or course not completed | | F |

QUANTITATIVE

Pace of completion

Every programme is made up of specific, pre-set courses for each year of study. This sets targets of the absolute minimum number of courses a student is expected to pass in an academic period.

In addition, a student borrower cannot attempt more than 150% of the minimum number of credits required to complete the programme as a full-time student. To achieve this, students must pass two-thirds (67% or 80 NQF credits) of the standard full-time (120 NQF credits) load for the academic period they have studied.

Progress rules: Candidates must complete all the prescribed courses.

UG students: Any students following the regular programme of study who fail three or more courses in the first semester of their first year of study will be transferred to the extended programme of study in the second semester of their first year of study.

Calculating pace

To determine if you have maintained a satisfactory pace of progression toward your degree, you will need to know how many credits you have attempted and completed during your undergraduate career.

Example: (please refer to the faculty handbook for more information regarding your degree programme).

The HEQSF requires the following credits per qualification:

- Bachelor's degree of 3 years (exit level 7): Minimum of 360 credits.
- Bachelor's degree of 4 years (exit level 8) : Minimum of 480 credits

Maximum NQF per annum (1 course = 18 NQF credits x 8 coursework courses = 144 NQF)

Minimum credit load for the year 120 NQF attempt to complete (360 credits over 3 years)

Now divide the number of credits successfully completed by the number of credits attempted, to calculate your percentage.

$$\frac{5 \text{ courses completed} = 90 \text{ NQF credits}}{7 \text{ courses attempted} = 126 \text{ NQF credits}} = 71\% \text{ (2 courses failed for the year)}$$

This exceeds the 67% minimum and meets the satisfactory pace requirement.

For a post-graduate degree: the institution defines the maximum based upon the length of the programme

Masters by research: must show satisfactory academic progress at the end of each semester and prior to the next term's disbursement. Supervisors will be required to confirm that satisfactory academic progress has been made.

For a post-graduate degree, the institution defines the maximum based upon the length of the programme

PhD students are required to meet milestone reports as set by their Supervisor. PhD Supervisors will be required to confirm that a PhD student has made satisfactory progress prior to each disbursement.

Maximum time frame

An UG student

Must complete all the courses prescribed for the degree within the prescribed time plus two years.

For the purposes of US financial aid, the maximum timeframe in which a student borrower may receive federal loan funds cannot exceed 150% of the minimum length of programme. To achieve this, student borrowers must pass two-thirds (67%) of the standard full-time load for the semester they have studied. A standard full-time load is minimum 60 NQF credits in each teaching semester. To clarify, this means passing 40 NQF credits of a 60 NQF credits per semester. A student is ineligible for US federal loan funds when it becomes impossible for the student to complete the programme within 150% of its length for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

| Course length | Maximum timeframe |
|---|---|
| 3-year Undergraduate degree 360 NQF credits | Plus 2 years 150% = 540 NQF credits attempted |
| 4-year Undergraduate degree 480 NQF credits | Plus 2 years 150% = 720 NQF credits attempted |

Post Graduate students

A Postgraduate-taught Degree consisting of 90 NQF credits must be completed without attempting any more than 135 NQF credits = 67%. At Masters level, the combination of courses which will give you a credit load of at least 45 NQF credits*.

* The South African coursework Masters is 180 NQF credits. This is typically split into 90 NQF credits for the dissertation and 90 NQF credits for courses taken across one year.

The Faculty Examination Committee will annually review progress in the student's dissertation/ thesis research and decide, based on an annual report from the student's supervisor, whether the candidate will be readmitted to the degree in the following academic year. These are documented in a memorandum of understanding signed by the student, supervisor, and Dean of Faculty (or nominee). Progress is monitored annually in a Planned Progress Agreement (PPA, an addendum to the MOU). The Faculty Examination Committee considers evidence of progress against the MOU or PPA in reaching its decision about whether to readmit the candidate in the following academic year. As with taught qualifications, the readmission and progression rules for the programme or specialization may specify both the period within which candidates are expected to complete their research and qualify for the award of the degree. Students who do not complete within the specified time would need to seek

a concession from the Faculty Examination Committee.

Masters and PhD Supervisors will be required to confirm that the research candidate has made satisfactory progress prior to each disbursement.

Completion level

Each qualification has an exit level and is required to have a minimum number of HEQSF credits at that level. One credit equals 10 notional hours of learning. The HEQSF requires the following credits per qualification:

| | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 3-year UG | 360 NQF (min 120 per academic period) | 90 credit hours |
| 4-year UG | 480 NQF (min 120 academic period) | 120 credit hours (min 30 credit hours per year x 4 years) |

Students to obtain a minimum of 60 NQF credits per semester/ is equivalent to:

- 15 US credits/ credit hours equates to 60 NQF per semester (4 courses per semester)
- 30 US credits/credit hours equates to 120 NQF per academic period (8 courses per year)

PG students: at Masters level, the combination of courses which will give you a credit load of at least 45 NQF credits*.

* The South African coursework Masters is 180 NQF credits. This is typically split into 90 NQF credits for the dissertation and 90 NQF credits for courses taken across one year.

For students to remain eligible, they must meet the minimum requirements for both the above-mentioned components.

Please note, academic period of study completed at UCT while not receiving federal loans will also be included in determining satisfactory academic progress and eligibility for US Federal Aid funds.

Maximum time-frame - Example:

- Degree programme requires 120 credits for completion.
Or 3-year Degree programme requires 360 NQF credits for completion (120 NQF credits per year x 3 years)
- $120 \times 150\% = 180$ attempted credits are maximum time frame
Or $360 \text{ NQF credits} \times 150\% = 540$ attempted NQF credits are maximum time frame
- Quantitative measure (tied to max time frame)
- $120 \text{ credits} / 180 \text{ credits} = 66.6\%$ (usually rounded to 67%)
Or $360 \text{ NQF credits} / 540 \text{ NQF} = 66.6\%$
- Must earn 67% of credits attempted to graduate in maximum time frame

Ineligibility for further aid

- Student is ineligible at the evaluation point when it is mathematically impossible to meet SAP.
Progress rules: Candidates must complete all the prescribed courses.
 - The student is not meeting SAP due to exceeding the maximum time frame because he or she has more courses to complete than what can graduate within the maximum time frame.

How a student's GPA and pace of completion are affected by:

Incompletes

- If a course is declared incomplete, it remains on the record with a result of INC 'incomplete'.
- Incomplete grades are included in the calculation of the maximum timeframe and pace of completion; however, they are not included in the calculation of the cumulative GPA until a grade is awarded.

Withdrawals

- Where a course is withdrawn the course is removed from the student's record.
- Will be awarded by the department INC (incomplete or course not completed).
- Withdrawal from a course or courses affects a student's eligibility for Aid if it means that they will not complete their programme within the maximum allowed timeframe and pace of completion components.
- Withdrawal from a course or courses affects a student's eligibility for Aid if it means that they are not enrolled at least 40 NQF credits for that semester. Students who have received Faculty approval to reduce their course load in one or more semesters are required to meet SAP to remain eligible to receive US Financial Aid.

Change of programme.

A student who transfers into a new academic programme will also transfer with any SAP warning or sanction and will need to meet the specified criteria in the new programme before re-establishing

eligibility to receive aid.

Repetitions

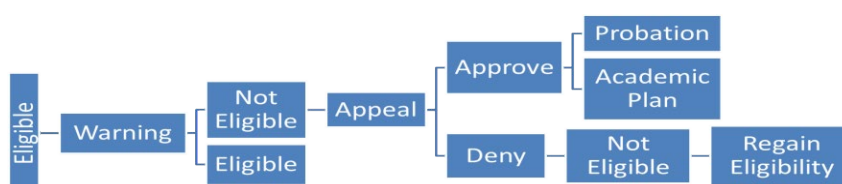
- Courses previously awarded US federal aid may be eligible for further aid. To be considered for funding, a student must
 - a) have met SAP
 - b) the course was completed but a passing grade was not achieved and
 - c) the course or courses are required for degree completion.
- A course may only be repeated once for US federal loan funding purposes. All courses will count towards cumulative GPA, timeframe, and pace component

Transfer of credits from other institutions.

- Credits completed and awarded from previous study and that count towards the programme are included in the SAP assessment of maximum timeframe and pace of completion.
- The length of time that the student has credited to UCT will count towards maximum timeframe; and the points waived due to the credits from the other institution are counted as part of the total allowed points for pace.
- Courses credited that do not count towards the programme at our institution will not be included in the SAP assessment.
- The credited courses from another institution will not count towards the cumulative GPA component.
- Students who transfer within the University to a new academic programme and/or major will have the transferred credit count towards the cumulative GPA, timeframe, and pace components.
- Students will also carry forward any US federal aid-related warning, probation, or suspension status into the new academic programme.

CHECKING SAP

- Check at the end of each payment period for programme of study that are one academic year
- For programmes longer than one academic year:
 - Must evaluate annually
 - May evaluate at the end of each payment period
 - A student who never applied for funding and did not make SAP and wants to apply for example in the 3rd year of his programme may not be eligible as he had to make satisfactory progress. Student can appeal.



WARNING PERIOD

- UCT evaluate financial aid (FA) satisfactory academic progress (SAP) at the end of each semester to assess if a student meets the minimum qualitative (grade base (50-59%)) and quantitative (time base (67% pace + max time frame)) components of FA SAP. Student who failed either or both component of Financial Aid SAP will be place on FA Warning status for which they continue to receive aid for the subsequent payment period.
- Failing to achieve SAP after one payment period results in a loss of eligibility.
- For an institution that chooses to evaluate SAP at the end of each payment period, a “financial aid warning” status may be used.
 - Student may continue to receive Title IV aid for one payment period provided all other eligibility requirements are met. Satisfactory academic progress or "C" average (50-59%) must be achieved by the end of the next progress review/payment period.
 - No appeal necessary
 - It is possible for a student to receive more than one warning period during their academic career if it is not consecutive.

APPEALS

- This is a process by which student, who has not met the school's SAP policy, petitions for reconsideration of eligibility for Title IV aid

When students are placed on financial aid probation:

- The student can appeal this decision by indicating in writing the reason(s) for failure to meet the SAP requirements and why financial aid should not be suspended. The appeal must be based on mitigating circumstances, such as the death of a relative, injury or illness of student or family member, or other special circumstances that prohibited the student from making SAP.
- Appeals must be formally requested to the US Federal Aid administrator at UCT International Office within 10 working days from the date of being notified of the loss of eligibility.

Appeals must contain the following:

- Written statement, explaining why you failed to make satisfactory academic progress and what has changed in your situation that will allow you to make satisfactory progress at the next evaluation
- Supporting evidence, for example:
 - Copy of death certificate
 - Medical certificate from a registered medical practitioner
 - Student's department /lecturer
 - Written comments from Faculty Advisor, Associate Dean, and/or postgraduate supervisor

Notification to students

- Students are notified of the results of the SAP review that impacts student's eligibility for Title IV aid
- If a student does not appeal and pays out of his own pocket the student must still be tracked if making SAP to put him on probation

PROBATION given after a student appealed and the appeal is approved

- Students who fail to achieve the "C" average (50-59%) or a satisfactory academic progress at the end of the warning term will be put on probation
- Student on probation may only receive Title IV funds for ONE payment period
- Student on probation may not receive Title IV funds for the subsequent payment period UNLESS:
 - Student is now making SAP
- SAP must be checked at the end of the probationary payment period (even if SAP is normally checked annually)
- A student may be placed on probation for one payment period per appeal.
 - If no grades available, the department will be contacted to check if the student is on track.

ACADEMIC REFERENCES

[General Rules and Policies](#) (book 3)

[FACULTY Handbooks](#)