

Ecumenical Theological Seminary

Financial Aid (FA) Satisfactory Student Academic Progress (SAP)

Introduction

Federal regulations require that an institution develop and enforce a satisfactory academic progress (SAP) policy for all federal financial aid (FA) recipients. This policy is administered by the Ecumenical Theological Seminary Financial Aid Office and applies to any student enrolled in a graduate program that receives federal aid at Ecumenical Theological Seminary. The academic progress of students will be evaluated quarterly at the end of each term.

This policy is separate from the academic policy administered by the Academic department. Therefore, a student may be permitted to enroll at Ecumenical Theological Seminary, and not be financial aid eligible due to not meeting the standards in this policy.

To remain eligible for federal aid, students must maintain three standards of satisfactory academic progress: minimum grade point average, minimum hours completed, and maximum time frame.

Minimum GPA

All students receiving financial aid are expected to maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.35.

For students in the academic MA program, the minimum GPA is 3.0.

Minimum hours completed - PACE

Students must earn at least 67% of credit-hours attempted.

Maximum Time Frame for Degree Completion

Time Frames for Completion

According to ATS standards, all course credits applied toward degree requirements should be earned within 10 years of the awarding of the degree. This ten-year period is inclusive of all leaves of absences and summer terms. Changing programs within Master's programs will not extend this maximum timeframe – students wishing to change to a different program must consult with their advisor to ensure they will be able to meet the program requirements within the given timeframe.

Students who maintain active status but have not completed their degree program by the end of seven years will be notified by the seminary in writing.

There are three chronological bench marks for the completion of the M.Div. and the M.A.P.M.: required core courses, field education, and remaining required courses and electives. Based on a ten-year limit to completion of degree, required core courses must be completed within the first five years, the field education requirement must be completed by the seventh year, and remaining required courses and electives must be completed between the eighth and tenth years.

For the Academic MA, students should seek to finish required coursework (with the exception of the Master's Thesis) within five years, electives by the eighth year, and their thesis in the final years.

Financial Aid Warning

Financial Aid "warning" is a status assigned to a student who has fallen below the minimum SAP threshold cumulative grade point average of 2.35 (3.0 for academic MA) and/or whose completion rate is below 67 percent (the student has completed fewer than 67 percent of hours attempted).

Note: Students are still eligible to receive financial aid in this status.

Financial Aid Suspension: Unsatisfactory Student Academic Progress

A "suspension" status means that a student has an "unsatisfactory SAP status." Financial Aid suspension is assigned when a student fails to meet his/her progress requirements after being placed on a warning, probation or an academic plan. A re-admitted student whose prior coursework does not meet SAP thresholds may also be assigned to a probationary status. New-admits, based on the recommendation of the Admissions committee may also be placed on financial aid probation until successful completion of their first term.

The Financial Aid Office reserves the right to place students on probation who completely withdraw, i.e., students who fail to demonstrate any measurable progress within a given term. If a student withdraws completely or fails to complete all courses in a term, the student may be placed on probation but will be allowed to appeal.

Note: A student in financial aid suspension is **not** eligible to receive federal or state financial aid.

Student Academic Progress Appeal

A financial aid appeal is a written student appeal, required after aid is suspended due to a financial aid unsatisfactory academic progress status. In a financial aid appeal, a student petitions for reinstatement of said aid. An appeal must be submitted via email to

the Financial Aid office. Once an appeal is submitted, the Financial Aid Office will engage the appeal committee which consists of a representation from the FA office, Academic Dean, Vice President of Administration and the Department chair.

An appeal must include, at minimum, an explanation of the extenuating circumstances that caused the student to fall below the minimum SAP thresholds and it must also include an Academic plan for corrective action. An academic advisor's signature certifying that the student has discussed this plan with his/her academic advisor is required. Additional documentation may be requested in the appeal review. Extenuating circumstances could include personal or family illness, death of loved one, divorce or loss of employment. Other similar circumstances could be considered based on the decision of the appeal committee.

The Appeal Committee will review appeals and make a final determination as to whether financial aid eligibility will be approved for another term. The student will be notified of the committee's decision in writing, and the decision will be notated in the student's file. In the event of unusual or extenuating circumstances, the Financial Aid Committee may allow the student to receive financial aid for one additional term under a Financial Aid Probation or for a longer period of time under an Academic Plan for corrective action.

The student's academic progress will be reevaluated to determine if the student has met the required standards. If SAP standards are not met at the time of re-evaluation, the student's aid will be placed on hold, and the student has another opportunity to submit a financial aid appeal for review. There is no limit to the number of appeals a student may submit. Students can re-appeal an adverse appeal decision as long as they can provide additional documentation not previously submitted

SAP Appeals and Financial Aid Probation

A suspended student who has successfully appealed for reconsideration is reinstated for aid in a probation status. During probation, which lasts one full term (December Intensives aren't considered a full term), a student is expected to complete 100% of all courses with the minimum term GPA required for the student's academic level and/or academic program.

In situations in which a student will be unable to bring their overall GPA to a sufficient level within a single academic term, specific requirements will be stipulated in the probation terms to ensure the student will be able to achieve SAP within a specific time period. In the absence of an alternate academic plan, students may only receive Title IV funds for one term while on academic probation.

A student who has fallen below minimum SAP standards must re-establish a sufficient GPA and ratio of earned to attempted credits.

Pursuit of a second degree

When pursuing a second Master's degree, the maximum timeframe will be calculated based on the percentage of courses the students will be required to take at ETS. For example, if the student is transferring in 25% of the required courses for the program of study, the maximum time allowed will be 7.5 years.

Students moving from a Master's program into the Doctor of Ministry degree will still have the ten year maximum time from the beginning of their Doctoral coursework.

Incompletes

An instructor may record an initial grade of "Incomplete" ("I") when the instructor determines that events or circumstances beyond the student's control have prevented the student from submitting course requirements completely and on time (with "on time" referring to published or announced due dates) or by the last day of the term. The student must complete a "Request for Incomplete" form (secured from the Registrar's office or on the seminary's web site). The signatures of the course instructor, the student's advisor, and the Academic Dean are required.

When an "I" has been recorded, the student must complete all incomplete course work by the end of the fourth week after the end of the term during which the course was taken. After that time the "I" is changed on the permanent record to the grade entered by the instructor on the "Request for Incomplete" form. In other words, the instructor, based on the amount of work that was completed, will determine the student's grade for the course. Only under extreme extenuating circumstances that prevent the student from completing the work required to remove an "I", in consultation with the instructor, the Academic Dean, and the student's advisor, may the time for completion of work required to remove the "I" may be negotiated between the student and the instructor. In such a case of extenuating circumstances, a student may not enroll for new courses until all required work has been completed and every "I" has been removed. The purpose of this policy is not to punish the student but to enable faculty and staff to work with the student toward successful completion of all course requirements.

Unresolved incompletes do not affect satisfactory academic progress. However, if they are not resolved by the specified timeframe, the grade will be converted to an F, which will affect the student's status in regards to academic progress and probation.

Repeated Courses

Students may choose to retake a course if they have received a grade of C or lower. When a course is retaken, the new grade will replace the previous grade, but the old grade will remain on the student's transcript. Decisions regarding academic progress will be based on the revised grade. Retaking courses does not affect the maximum timeframe allowed for the program of study.

Transfer Credits

For the purposes of determining a student's SAP, transfer credits accepted towards completion of a degree program count as both hours attempted and hours completed. The maximum time frame for degree completion is not affected by transfer credits.

Remedial Coursework

ETS does not offer remedial coursework. Applicants are expected to meet the minimum standards before acceptance.