

SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY FOR FINANCIAL AID RECIPIENTS

Effective Fall Semester, 2011

The purpose of financial aid at Richmond Community College is to supplement the resources of the student and the family. The College makes every effort to insure that every student will have an opportunity to attend, regardless of financial ability. However, students have responsibility for their own education and must pursue and complete course work, which permits them to meet degree requirements within a reasonable timeframe. Successful completion of a diploma or degree requires that a student earn a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.00 (C) on all hours completed in that degree curriculum.

In compliance with appropriate Federal Regulations, RCC will adhere to the policies stated in this section for determination of satisfactory academic progress for students receiving assistance through RCC's Financial Aid Office. This includes federal, state, and institutional aid. (See separate policy for Veteran students.) Students must maintain satisfactory academic progress before financial aid can be awarded. The Financial Aid Office is required to evaluate the student's entire academic record in determining the student's compliance regardless of the age of the record or whether or not aid was received. Certain special awards, i.e., academic scholarships, may require higher academic achievement than the standard policy.

Policy Statement

In order to be eligible for financial aid, students must meet the following minimum guidelines at the end of each semester:

1. **Qualitative Standard** – All financial aid recipients must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.00 at the end of each semester.
2. **Quantitative Standard** - Students must make progress toward their degree or diploma by successfully completing a minimum percentage of coursework attempted. Students must maintain the proper pace of progression to ensure that they complete a degree program within the maximum timeframe. Successful completion is defined as completion of at least 67 percent of the total hours attempted with a grade of A, B, C, or D. The pace of progression toward a degree is measured by dividing the cumulative hours the student has completed by the cumulative hours the student has attempted. Courses resulting in final grades of F, I, U, X, W, WP, and WF are not considered as successfully completed. All courses taken for credit in which a student is enrolled after the official tuition refund period has ended are counted as attempted hours and are shown on the academic transcript. Courses resulting in final grades of AU, AP, AR, MT, and NA are not considered as attempted or earned hours.
3. **Maximum Timeframe** - Students must complete their educational program of study in a timeframe not to exceed 150 percent of the published length of program for full-time students. This will be measured in credit hours attempted (e.g., if the academic program length requires 65 credit hours to graduate, the maximum time frame or pace of progression cannot exceed 98 credit hours attempted). All hours attempted at Richmond Community College and hours transferred from other post secondary institutions, regardless of when they were attempted, are counted toward the maximum timeframe for program completion. An additional 30 credit hours may be allowed for required remedial coursework.

Eligibility Status

Satisfactory: Satisfactory status is achieved when the student's cumulative GPA is a 2.00 or higher, the cumulative completion rate of courses is 67% of his attempted credit hours at the end of each semester, and the credit hours attempted by the student do not exceed 150 percent of the published length of the program for a full-time student.

Warning : A student whose cumulative grade point average is below 2.00 and/or has not completed 67% of their cumulative attempted credit hours will be placed on financial aid warning for the following semester. A warning period allows the student to receive financial aid for one semester even though the student does not meet all of the requirements. At the end of the warning period, if the student meets all of the Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements, s/he remains eligible for continued financial aid.

Termination: At the conclusion of the warning period, if a student's cumulative grade point average is below a 2.00 GPA and/or the student's cumulative completion rate of courses is below the required 67% completion of attempted credit hours, the student's financial aid will be terminated. Also, students who have attempted the maximum allowable credit hours for their program will have their financial aid terminated.

Probation: Students who have had their financial aid terminated because they did not make satisfactory academic progress have the right to an appeal. The appeal procedures are outlined below. Students whose appeals have been approved will be placed on financial aid probation for one semester. Their academic progress will be reevaluated at the end of that semester. Students who meet the satisfactory academic progress guidelines will be re-instated. Those who do not meet the standards will have their aid terminated. Students may file another appeal if they feel there are mitigating circumstances which hindered their progress.

Special Notes

- 1. Withdrawal from College and/or Course Withdrawals (W)** - Students who withdraw from classes at RCC should understand their withdrawal may affect their eligibility for financial aid as determined by this Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy (SAP). Withdrawal from the College and/or course(s) before the end of the official Tuition Refund Period (census date for the semester or course, whichever comes first) are not calculated in the SAP.
- 2. Student Initiated Withdrawal Between 10% and 75% of Semester (W)** - After the end of the official Tuition Refund Period (census date for the semester or course, whichever comes first) a student who voluntarily withdraws from a course(s) will receive a "W" grade. This grade will count as an attempted course and will affect the student's ability to meet the quantitative requirements and complete his program within the maximum timeframe.
- 3. Student Initiated Withdrawal After 75% Point (WF)** - A student who officially withdraws from a course(s) after the 75% point of the term will receive a "WF" grade. A course for which a "WF" grade is given will count as an attempted course and will be counted as an "F" in computing grade point averages.
- 4. Instructor Initiated Withdrawal Before 75% Point (W)** - A student withdrawn from a course(s) in this manner will receive a "W" grade. This grade will count as an attempted course and will affect the student's ability to meet the quantitative requirements and complete his program within the maximum timeframe.
- 5. Instructor Initiated Withdrawal After the 75% Point of the Term (WP or WF)** - If a student violates the attendance policy, the instructor will assign a "WP" or a "WF" grade according to the quality of a student's performance at the time a student is withdrawn. A course for which a "WP" grade is given will count as an attempted course and will affect the student's ability to meet the quantitative requirements to complete his program within the maximum timeframe. A course for which a "WF" is given will count as an attempted course and will be counted as an "F" in computing grade point averages.

6. **Failures (F)** - Grades of "F" are used when computing the GPA and cumulative attempted hours, but do not qualify as successful completion of credit hours attempted. These grades will negatively impact the student's ability to maintain compliance with the SAP standards.
7. **Grades of "Incomplete" "I"** - An incomplete will count as attempted hours but not completed hours and will have a negative impact on GPA. No earned hours will be posted until a grade has been assigned the coursework. Students with 'incompletes' may have difficulty meeting the satisfactory academic progress requirements at the time of evaluation, but may be reevaluated upon completion. The student must make a written request to the Financial Aid Office when the coursework has been completed. The request form is available on the RCC website.
8. **Never Attended Classes (NA)** - Credit hours for which a student registers but never attends will not be counted as attempted or earned hours. **The student is responsible for paying the tuition and fees for these courses and charges for unreturned books and supplies.**
9. **Course Repeats** - Students may be allowed to repeat a course in accordance with the policy outlined in the College Catalog. For financial aid purposes, all hours attempted and/or completed will be counted in cumulative hours. However, only the highest grade will be counted in the grade point average. Therefore, it is possible that a student repeating coursework may not be in compliance with the quantitative and maximum timeframe component of this policy.
10. **Remedial Coursework** - Remedial coursework will count in the number of attempted and earned hours and grades given for these courses will affect GPA. In addition, there is a limit of 30 semester hours of remedial coursework that can be included in a student's enrollment status which will not count in the 150 percent timeframe.
11. **Audited Courses** – An audited class is not included in the enrollment hours for purposes of awarding financial aid funds. The audited hours will not count as attempted or earned hours.
12. **Transfer Credit** - Transfer credit is included in the total hours attempted and earned.
13. **Proficiency (Credit by Exam)** - While a credit by exam ("X") is not included in the enrollment hours for purposes of awarding financial aid, the attempted and completed credits are counted in each component of the quantitative standard and the maximum timeframe.
14. **Summer Session** – Credit hours attempted and earned during the summer session are included in the calculation of SAP. Full-time status is the same for the summer session as it is for the fall and spring semesters. (12 credit hours)

Monitoring and Notification Process

It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of his/her satisfactory academic progress status for financial aid eligibility.

To determine a student's academic progress status and eligibility for financial aid, a student's academic record will be evaluated at the end of each semester or period of enrollment. Once the student is determined to be ineligible for financial aid, the student will be sent written notification informing him/her that he/she is being placed on financial aid warning for one semester due to failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress standards. If the student does not meet all of the requirements at the end of the warning semester, he/she is determined to be ineligible at that time for aid and the student will be terminated from the financial aid programs. The student will be sent written or email notification informing them that their financial aid eligibility has been terminated. This notification will also appear on WebAdvisor.

In addition, RCC checks to ensure the student is making satisfactory academic progress in each payment period before aid is disbursed.

Regaining Satisfactory Academic Progress

In order to regain financial aid eligibility, the following steps may be taken:

Maximum Timeframe (150%)

Students who exceed the maximum allowable timeframe to complete a program of study must provide a Graduation Plan Form signed by their Academic Advisor or a Student Development Counselor. The student will submit the Graduation Plan form to the Financial Aid Office. The form will be reviewed by the Financial Aid Appeals Committee. The Graduation Plan form is available on the RCC website and should be submitted to the Financial Aid Office.

Qualitative Standard (Cumulative GPA)

Deficiencies in cumulative grade point average (GPA) can be remedied by taking courses at RCC without the benefit of federal financial aid until the required GPA has been attained. If the student is successful in bringing up the GPA to the required level, the student must make a written request to the Financial Aid Office for appeal. The form is available on the RCC website.

Quantitative Standard (Completion of 67% of Attempted Hours)

Deficiencies in hours earned may be remedied by successfully earning hours at RCC without the benefit of federal financial aid. If the student is successful in bringing up the percentage of completed courses to the required 67% completion rate, the student must make a written request to the Financial Aid Office for appeal. The form is available on the RCC website.

Financial Aid Appeals Process

A student who has become ineligible for financial aid due to lack of satisfactory grade point average or percentage of credit hours completed, or for exceeding the maximum time frame, may appeal his/her status to the Financial Aid Committee. Federal regulations allow the Financial Aid Office to extend eligibility to students who fail to meet minimum standards if they can document that there were mitigating circumstances beyond their control that caused them to perform below standards. Mitigating circumstances may include but are not limited to:

1. Serious illness or injury that prevented the student from completing his/her classes.
2. Death in the student's immediate family.
3. Unusual situation over which the student had no control that prevented him/her from successfully completing his/her classes.

Appeals must be made in writing on a Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Request Form. These forms are available online. Included in the appeal should be a description of the circumstances which caused the student not to make satisfactory academic progress. In addition, the student should describe how those circumstances have changed in order for them to successfully meet the conditions for progress. All appeals along with any supporting documentation must be submitted to the Financial Aid Office. The Vice President for Student Development or the Director of Financial Aid will notify the student in writing, email or by phone of the decision made by the Committee. The decision will also be seen on WebAdvisor. The decision of the Financial Aid Committee will be final.

***Please note: Federal regulations do not provide (allow) for a second appeal that immediately follows a previous probation period. While a student may, over the course of an entire academic career, repeat the financial aid probation, two such periods cannot be consecutive without an intervening period during which the student makes SAP.*