



## OFFICE OF FINANCIAL AID 2019–2020 SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY (SAP)

In accordance with Federal and State regulations, these guidelines apply to all students requesting Title IV funds regardless of whether the student has previously received Title IV aid. The federal government mandates that aid recipients should be making satisfactory academic progress toward a degree or certificate in order to maintain financial aid eligibility. These standards may be different than the academic standards to earn a degree or certificate. Where differences exist, the standards set forth in this policy shall be used to determine eligibility for participation in student financial aid programs at Rio Hondo College (RHC).

For the purpose of determining eligibility to receive financial aid, overall quality and quantity of performance (as measured by grade point average and number of units COMPLETED vs. ATTEMPTED) is reviewed and evaluated by the Office of Financial Aid at the end of every semester including summer. Students who meet SAP standards as identified are maintaining satisfactory academic progress. Those students who do not meet the standards should refer to the following sections related to Financial Aid Warning, Suspension (Ineligibility), and the Appeal Process. The standards apply to all financial aid students and to all coursework taken, including coursework taken whether or not financial aid was received. RHC’s satisfactory academic standards fall into three parts:

### **Part One: Minimum Grade Point Average Requirement**

At the time of review, a student’s official cumulative grade point average (GPA) is evaluated to determine whether qualitative standards are being met. Student’s pursuing a course of study leading to an A.A degree, an A.S degree, a certificate, or transfer program to a 4-year college or university must maintain at least a **2.00** cumulative average.

### **Part Two: Unit Requirement/Pace of Progression**

Federal regulations require that a student receive aid only for courses, which meet the student’s published declared program of study as published in the RHC catalog. This will be based on attempted units that are stated on your college academic transcript at all colleges previously enrolled/attended. All students are required to successfully complete a minimum of 67% of the units attempted.

Completed units are enrolled units for which credit is received and final grades posted. Only grades of A, B, C, D, or P are considered units completed. Classes in which a student receives a grade of “F”, “I”, “NP”, “IP”, “W” or other will not be counted as units completed for satisfactory academic progress purposes, but the units will be counted as attempted. Regardless of how many units a student attempts, by the end of each semester, students must successfully complete a minimum of 67% of the units attempted:

UNITS ATTEMPTED	MUST COMPLETE	UNITS ATTEMPTED	MUST COMPLETE
1	1	13	9
2	1	14	9
3	2	15	10
4	3	16	11
5	3	17	11
6	4	18	12
7	5	19	13
8	5	20	13
9	6	21	14
10	7	22	15
11	7	23	15
12	8	24	16

### **Part Three: Maximum Time Frame Requirement**

Federal Regulations allow students to receive financial aid for a limited time only. A student can only receive financial assistance for a maximum of 150% of the school’s published program length. RHC measures the progress of all students in attempted semester units.

60 units is the standard for completion of many of the degree programs at RHC. Thus, 90 attempted units is the maximum for which a student can receive financial assistance (60 units x 150% = 90 units). On a case-by-case basis, students may be permitted to receive financial aid beyond the maximum time frame if there is a change in major or if a degree or transfer program requires units in excess of 90. If a student transfers in coursework from other institutions, we will count all attempted units accepted in the SAP calculation, for both progress and maximum time frame.

A student enrolled in a Certificate program may be eligible for financial aid for a maximum of 150% of the published length of that program. **Once this limit has been reached, a student is ineligible for further financial aid.**

Grades of F, NP, (no credit), I (incomplete) or W (withdrawal) are considered attempted units and are included when calculating Maximum Time Frame. Academic Renewal is not recognized for financial aid purposes, and is always counted in units attempted, GPA calculation, and maximum time frame, even when a more favorable grade was subsequently received, both attempts would be counted.

Students are encouraged to see a counselor and develop a Student Educational Plan to ensure they are taking the appropriate required coursework for their program, so that they are not disqualified for continued financial aid assistance before they complete their program. It is critical that students take the correct classes required for their degree, as even passing one's classes with a high GPA, does not ensure the student will be able to graduate within the 150% maximum time frame. Taking courses not required for one's degree, may result in the student being cut off from receiving future financial aid.

Students who reach 60 attempted units will be required to submit a full Educational Plan. The purpose of the Educational Plan is to assure that the student is fully aware of courses remaining required to meet his/her graduation or transfer requirements, and to assist the student in planning to complete his/her coursework within the time limit allowed for receiving financial aid. All applicants for aid at RHC must have an Educational Plan done in order to complete their financial aid file by the time they have attempted 60 units. Students who do not submit a full educational plan to The Office of Financial Aid may risk delay of financial aid disbursements. Once the student has attempted 90 units or 150% of their program, s/he is no longer eligible for financial aid.

### **Other Provisions**

The Office of Financial aid has the authority under federal regulations to place a student on warning, probation or suspension for future financial aid due to academic history indicating a pattern of inability or unwillingness to progress, such as continued or numerous withdrawals or enrollment inconsistent with the student's educational objective, for failing to meet reasonable academic progress standards. If grades are not yet posted, any financial aid award offered is tentative until the academic record is reviewed.

If at any point in time it is determined that the student cannot complete their course of study within the 150% timeframe (90 units for AA/AS, other certificate programs, will vary), they will be immediately disqualified from future financial aid, for the remainder of their program even if currently meeting the SAP standards. Students are responsible for keeping track of their academic situation that could result in warning or ineligibility status for financial aid. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of their status, submit an appeal and not rely on being notified by the Office of Financial Aid.

### **Remedial and ESL Courses**

Financial Aid may be received for remedial (basic skills) courses if the remedial courses are a prerequisite for entrance into a regular college program. Aid cannot be received for more than 30 attempted units of remedial coursework. ESL coursework must be part of an eligible program of study to receive financial aid. A student enrolled in ESL classes, who is not in an eligible program of study, is not eligible for financial aid funds. ESL and remedial coursework will count toward the 2.0 GPA and 67% units completion requirements (SAP standards). However, ESL units will not count towards the maximum timeframe limit and a maximum of 30 attempted remedial units will be subtracted from the total; when maximum time frame units are being counted.

### **Repeat Courses**

Financial assistance may be awarded to cover the cost of courses previously taken to improve a grade of D, F, W, NC, or I. Once a student passes a course, however, we will only pay for one subsequent attempt. Both attempts, even if aid was not received, will count in the SAP calculation. Repeated semester units will count toward the 90 unit maximum allowed.

### **Financial Aid Warning**

Students who have not earned a 2.0 cumulative GPA or did not complete 67% of all units attempted will be placed on automatic warning status for one academic semester only during which they will maintain eligibility to receive student financial aid. There is no financial aid warning for maximum time frame. Students who are placed on financial aid warning will receive a Financial Aid Warning Notice which describes the standards that will be used in subsequent reviews to determine the student's eligibility for further federal financial aid. If a student fails to meet any of the requirements outlined above, the following actions will be taken:

- On the first non-consecutive occurrence, the student will be sent a Financial Aid Warning Notice to their AccessRIO Portal informing the student they did not meet the satisfactory academic progress standards. In order to continue to receive student financial aid the following semester they must improve and meet the minimum requirements to avoid suspension.
- On the second consecutive occurrence (while on warning) the student will receive a Suspension Notice to their AccessRIO Portal indicating they failed to meet the terms of the Financial Aid Warning Notice and therefore will not be eligible to receive further financial aid (federal or state, **with the exception of the BOGW**). Students whose aid eligibility is suspended may appeal for reinstatement after one academic year without financial aid after making progress. Student appeals will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

### **Financial Aid Suspension / Ineligibility**

A student who does not meet the minimum standards as stated in this policy during their warning status semester will not be eligible to receive student financial aid at Rio Hondo College. Generally, a student who is suspended from financial aid must meet SAP standards by completing two successful semesters with 6 or more units without financial aid, and meet all SAP eligibility criteria to regain eligibility and then submit a SAP Appeal Request Form.

Any financial aid previously offered, awarded, or reserved for ineligible students will be withdrawn. Withdrawn aid is not necessarily recovered even if the student's aid eligibility is later reinstated. Rio Hondo College will use the reinstatement date to determine availability of funds. Ineligible students may only be eligible for a Board of Governor's Fee Waiver.

### **Appeal Process**

Under certain conditions, a student may be eligible to appeal for reinstatement of aid, without meeting the SAP Policy. Students who are suspended will receive notification via their AccessRIO portal. At RHC, appeals are offered in the fall and spring semesters only, during a specified period of time. Students must obtain, sign and complete a Rio Hondo College Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Request Form. The forms must be submitted according to its instructions including all appropriate documentation.

Each appeal will be reviewed by the SAP committee for approval or denial based upon the student's individual circumstances. Appeals considered for approval must demonstrate that the student will be able to meet the SAP Policy at the end of the financial aid probation period. If a student's progress is such that there is no way they will be able to meet the SAP Policy at the end of the financial aid probation, their appeal will be denied. All decisions are final and there is no higher appeal.

You will be notified via your RioMail email of the appeal decision within 30 working days of submittal. The decision of the Committee is FINAL. A student may appeal for either an Extenuating Circumstances Appeal or a Maximum Time Frame Appeal.

### **Extenuating Circumstances Appeal**

Students who are ineligible because of a GPA less than 2.0 or a completion rate of less than 67%, documentation of extenuating circumstances is required. This must be documentation of extenuating circumstances for the semesters where there was lack of progress, and must match up with the written explanation. An Ineligible student may submit a SAP Appeal Request Form with a thorough and clearly typed explanation of the extenuating circumstances surrounding his/her failure to maintain SAP, including corrective action to be taken in order to meet SAP standards and attach documentation to support his/her case. Incorrect or contradictory appeals will be denied, and the student will not be able to resubmit their appeal during that semester. The appeal will be denied if extenuating circumstance documentation is not provided. Subsequent review and a determination will be made based upon several factors, including Federal and State regulations, the student's academic and financial aid history and the student's clearly stated and documented extenuating circumstances.

Reasons a student may be eligible for an Extenuating Circumstances Appeal that **must be supported by Official Documentation** include:

Suspended student extenuating circumstances (beyond the student's control) that prevented him/her from meeting SAP standards

- Serious Illness, injury or medical condition requiring doctor's care
- Death of an immediate family member
- Victim of a crime or unexpected disaster
- Extenuating circumstances that were beyond the student's control

### **Maximum Time Frame Appeal**

Students who are suspended due to maximum time frame will not need to submit official documentation. However, you will need to complete a SAP Appeal Request Form, full educational plan, and typed statement indicating why you have attempted 90 units or more.

Reasons a student may be eligible for a Maximum Time Frame Appeal and must include a **Full Student Educational Plan**:

- Student has reached 90 units, completed their program, and is working on transfer units. (Note: Only students completing a program at RHC, and completing transfer requirements in order to transfer to a 4 year institution will be considered for reinstatement. A student coming to RHC from a university, taking classes, and then returning to a university would not be eligible for Title IV funds at RHC.)
- Change of academic program will be considered on a case by case basis.
- Student has reached the maximum time frame of attempted units, but a portion of the unit total is comprised of remedial coursework which would reduce the unit attempted total.
- BA/BS Degree completed. Not eligible for grants, loans only. Student must document that they have changed a major and provide documentation as to why they cannot seek employment in their prior field of study. All prior coursework must be

evaluated first, to determine what units are applicable to the new course of study. Those applicable units must be below the maximum time frame for the current program in order for the appeal to be considered.

Note: Change in degree/major without extraordinary circumstances does not constitute sufficient reason for exceeding the 90 unit limit.) If the appeal is approved, the student may receive financial aid on probation for one or more semesters until the degree is completed.

### **Appeal Approved**

If the Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal is approved the student will be placed on Probation Status and funding will only be disbursed for the semester in which they were approved and forward. Eligibility for federal, state and institutional eligibility will be determined after the appeal has been approved and the appeal probation contract received. Continued eligibility will be based on meeting a 2.0 GPA and 67% completion rate each semester.

### **Appeal Denied**

Students whose appeals are denied may regain eligibility by meeting the SAP standards for (2) straight academic semesters and requesting a review of their SAP status by submitting a SAP Appeal Request Form.

### **The Review Process**

Applicants will be reviewed for SAP at the end of every semester including summer when grades are posted. The College may conduct reviews on a case-by-case basis throughout the year.

### **What does it mean to meet the Rio Hondo College Office of Financial Aid SAP standards?**

Students that earn a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 or better, successfully completes 67% of all units attempted and meets his/her educational objective before attempting a total of 90 cumulative units will meet the Satisfactory Academic Progress standard.

Legislation and governmental regulations are continually changing the face of student financial aid. Information is subject to change without notice.