

Satisfactory Academic Progress for the MD Degree

The academic requirements for the MD degree include the satisfactory completion of the MD curriculum at Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine. The progress of each student is monitored annually by the Committee on Academic and Professional Standards (CAPS) and Vice Dean to ensure that students meet the overall requirements to move from one level of instruction to another, via the Policy on Academic Professional Standards governing the MD Program.

Federal law and regulations require that all students receiving financial assistance maintain satisfactory academic progress. Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) is the successful completion of degree requirements according to established increments that lead to the awarding of the degree within published time limits. The following policy outlines the standards for SAP at Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, which apply to all matriculated MD students, whether or not they are recipients of financial aid.

Qualitative Measures of SAP

Each student at Geisinger Commonwealth is required to successfully complete all of GCSOM's required course work, examinations, and mandatory academic exercises in order to graduate with an MD degree, as defined by the program. Geisinger Commonwealth does not measure academic progress by means of a cumulative grade point average but rather with grades of Pass or Fail in Years I and II and with grades of Honors, High Pass, Pass or Fail in clinical courses in Years III and IV. Specifically, all courses in Year I must be completed with a grade of Pass for progression to Year II, and all courses in Year II must be completed with a grade of Pass for progression to the third-year. In the third and fourth year, students must complete all courses, clerkships or approved activities with a minimum grade of Pass.

Maximum Time Frame

The normal time frame for completion of required course work for the MD degree is four academic years. Due to academic or personal difficulties or scholarly activities, a student may require additional time. In such situations, an academic plan may be established for the student that departs from the norm and that may require the repetition of all or part of a year of study. Requests for exceptions to the time frame for completion of required course work are submitted for review by the Committee on Academic and Professional Standards (CAPS). The maximum time frame permitted for completion of the MD degree is six years and the maximum time frame permitted to receive Federal financial aid is six years including any approved leave of absence. Students will be notified both via email and writing if they are close to exceeding or have exceeded the maximum time frame allowed. Students will be allowed to submit a letter of appeal to the Director of Financial. If the appeal is approved, the student must have an approved academic plan before federal assistance is granted.

Review and Notification of Lack of Satisfactory Academic Progress

During the annual review of a student's SAP by the Committee on Academic and Professional Standards (CAPS), progression to the next academic year is based upon a review of all grades, including withdrawals, incompletes and fail grades. Any student who has not achieved a

minimum of a pass grade in all core courses/clerkships/narrative evaluations cannot progress to the next year.

CAPS will notify annually, in writing, all students who have not met the standards for Satisfactory Academic Progress outlined in the Qualitative Measures and/or Maximum Time Frame sections. The notification will indicate the nature of the deficiency and any methods that may be available for correcting the deficiency. A student who fails to meet one or more of the standards for SAP (qualitative and/or time frame) is notified by the Financial Aid Office that they will be ineligible for financial aid beginning with the term immediately following the term in which the SAP requirements were not met, pending results of the appeals process, outlined below.

Effective July 1, 2016 repeating coursework for all full-time graduate students (MD) will be restricted by federal regulations to repeating coursework previously taken to no more than one repetition of a previously passed course for the receipt of Title IV aid. This means that a student who will be repeating an entire year in the MD program for the second time will not be eligible for federal aid if it includes courses previously retaken and passed.

Appeals

Eligibility for continued financial aid will only be re-established if the student subsequently meets Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements, or if the student successfully appeals their ineligibility for financial aid to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs. The appeal must state the reasons for failing to meet SAP requirements, including, if applicable, special circumstances that contributed to the student's failure to meet satisfactory academic progress requirements (e.g., the death of a relative, an injury or illness of the student, or other special circumstances), and what may have changed in the student's situation that will allow the student to demonstrate SAP at the next evaluation.

If the Associate Dean of Student Affairs determines that the student's appeal should be approved, the student's aid will be reinstated, and the student will be placed on Financial Aid Probation. The Financial Aid Office will notify the student in writing and via email regarding the terms of their appeal. If the terms are not met, the student will not be eligible for an additional appeal within the academic award year.

Financial Aid Probation

Once an appeal has been approved, a student is placed on financial aid probation and is eligible for financial aid. CAPS, in conjunction with the student and other college personnel deemed appropriate by CAPS, will develop an academic plan for the student that will ensure, if followed, that the student is able to meet Geisinger Commonwealth's SAP standards by a specific point of time. The student is eligible for financial aid during the time frame stated in the academic plan. At the end of the time frame stated in the academic plan, the student must have met the SAP standards. CAPS will review and notify the student in writing if they have not met the requirements of the academic plan. CAPS will notify the student of the continued deficiency and any method(s) available to correct the deficiency. A student who does not comply with each SAP standard by the end of the financial aid probationary period is suspended from financial aid eligibility. A student can submit another appeal per the appeal procedure outlined previously but not within the same academic year the original appeal was approved. A student shall be reinstated for financial aid eligibility when he/she has satisfactorily completed sufficient coursework to meet the standards of progress within the maximum time frames outlined previously.

A student who has lost eligibility for financial aid due to deficiencies in satisfactory academic progress cannot automatically regain eligibility by paying tuition for a semester or by sitting out a term. Eligibility may be regained only by eliminating all SAP deficiencies.

Enforcement

The Offices of the Registrar, Financial Aid and CAPS shall have the responsibility for monitoring and enforcing Satisfactory Academic Progress. Course directors will notify CAPS annually of any students who are not making satisfactory academic progress. CAPS will determine whether academic sanctions are warranted and will inform the student. The Financial Aid Office will inform any student whose financial aid has been impacted and the steps necessary for reinstatement of financial aid.

*REVISED May 2021 to reflect maximum timeframe of 6 years to earn MD degree.