



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

Financial Aid: Policy and Procedures Manual For Graduate and Professional Students

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Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

TITLE: OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID	REFER QUESTIONS TO:	OSFA
EFFECTIVE DATE: November 1, 2016	Office of Student Financial Aid	Table of Content

Full-Time Enrollment.....3

Disbursing and Crediting.....5

Satisfactory Academic Progress.....6

 - **Graduate Students.....7**

 - **Professional Students.....7**

 - **Failure to Meet SAP Requirements.....8**

 - **SAP Appeals.....8**

Verification.....11

Deferment Policies and Procedures.....13

Records Maintenance.....14

Alternative Loan Certification 15



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

TITLE: Enrollment Status	REFER QUESTIONS TO:	OSFA		
EFFECTIVE DATE: November 1, 2016	Office of Student Financial Aid	PAGE 1	OF	PAGES 2

A. PURPOSE:

To set forth the policy and procedures for determining official certification of a student's enrollment status in regards to financial aid eligibility.

B. POLICY:

It is the policy of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore through the Office of Student Financial Aid, that full-time status for a Graduate or Professional student is 9 credit hours during each academic term/semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer). Graduate and Professional students must be registered for at least 4.5 credits (half-time) during the academic term to be eligible for financial aid.

The summer is considered one term/semester with three (3) mini sessions (Summer 1, Summer 2, and Summer 3) within the term and is evaluated as one term.

Ex. If a student is registered for a three (3) credit course in Summer 1 and a three (3) credit course in Summer 2 or 3, then that student will have a total of six (6) credits (half-time status) for the summer term.

This definition applies to all federal financial aid programs. Some Graduate Assistantship programs administered through the Graduate School employ Graduate units, which in turn, are utilized in making calculations to determine full- or part-time student status. However, this does not apply to the federal financial aid programs. For federal financial aid purposes each student's enrollment status at the university is determined by the amount of credits the student is registered for during a term.

Enrollment in a Graduate thesis (799) course or a Graduate/Professional dissertation (899) course constitutes full-time enrollment.

Classes taken for Audit do not count in the total semester hours in determining financial aid eligibility.



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

C. ENROLLMENT STATUS DESCRIPTIONS FOR FINANCIAL AID

Enrollment statuses are the same for every semester: Fall, Spring, and Summer.

Graduate & Professional (500 – 800 level courses)	
Full-Time	9 or more credit hours
Three Quarter Time	7 – 8 credit hours
Half Time	4.5 – 6 credit hours
Less Than Half Time	1 – 4 credit hours



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

TITLE: DISBURSEMENT AND CREDITING FUNDS	REFER QUESTIONS TO:	OSFA		
EFFECTIVE DATE: November 1, 2016	Office of Student Financial Aid	PAGE 1	OF	PAGES 1

A. **PURPOSE:**

To set forth the policy and procedures for disbursing financial aid (crediting accounts) awarded to students.

B. **POLICY:**

It is the policy of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore through the Office of Student Financial Aid to make available funds awarded to students for educational purposes by crediting the students' accounts in the amounts awarded or as adjusted by the Office of Student Financial Aid.

***Note:** For each semester, only students with a full-time enrollment status will have funds credited to their account 10 days prior to the first day of class for the semester. All other students with a less than full-time enrollment status will have funds credited to their account after the determined census date once their budgets and funds awarded are adjusted to match their enrollment status.

If a student falls below full-time enrollment after his/her funds have been credited to his/her account, but prior to the determined census date for the semester, those credited funds will be reversed from his/her account and re-disbursed after the determined census date once his/her budget and funds have been adjusted accordingly.



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

TITLE: SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROCESS – GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL STUDENT	REFER QUESTIONS TO:	OSFA		
EFFECTIVE DATE: November 1, 2016		Office of Student Financial Aid	PAGE 1	OF PAGES 5

A. PURPOSE:

To satisfy federal requirements (October 1983) that the University establish minimum standards of “Satisfactory Academic Progress” (SAP) for potential and current financial aid recipients.

B. POLICY:

It is the policy of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore to develop standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) in accordance with federal requirements. The University’s Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy (SAP) measures quantity (number of credits completed vs. those attempted) and quality (grade point average), maximum time frames for completion and measures progress incrementally.

Financial Aid Applicants must comply with the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy as a condition of initial or continued eligibility. The Office of Student Financial Aid will review SAP at the end of each payment period (fall, spring and summer). The SAP policy for financial aid is administered separately and independently of the University’s Academic Progress Policy administered by the Office of the Registrar.

***Please note:** When calculating SAP status, each student’s prior academic progress will be measured to determine eligibility.

Financial aid programs which are affected by the SAP Policy include: **Federal Perkins Loan, Federal Direct Stafford Loan(s), Federal Direct PLUS Loan(s), and State grants/scholarships** as well as all other programs which require the monitoring of Satisfactory Academic Progress.



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

C. PROCEDURE:

For financial aid purposes, a student is considered to be meeting SAP requirements if the following criteria are met:

Graduate & Professional Programs

Minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average

Graduate and Professional students must maintain the required cumulative grade point of at least 3.0.

Completion Rate Requirement

All Graduate and Professional students must have successfully completed at least **66.67%** of all credits attempted at UMES.

What Counts as Attempted Credits?

An attempted credit includes graded courses (A, B, C, D, F), non-graded courses (I, PS, S, CS, AU, W, WF, WP, NR, IP, RA, RB, RC, RD, RF, XD, XF, Advanced Placement, CLEP, Departmental Challenge Exams, International Baccalaureate Exams and Military Education Credit); and all transfer credits accepted by UMES.

ALL incompletes, withdrawals, failures, and repeats are included as attempts when determining SAP for financial aid.

Students are evaluated on *pace of completion*, meaning students must complete 66.67% of the credit hours in which they are enrolled beyond the last day of add/drop. The formula used to determine the pace of completion consists of taking the credit hours completed and dividing that number by the credit hours attempted. This number must be equal to or exceed 66.67%. Advance standing hours (e.g., transfer credits) that are accepted for credit are counted in both the hours attempted and hours completed. Incompletes and withdrawals are attempted, but not completed credit hours and will decrease a student's pace of completion. Redemption and duplicate credits are counted as completed credit hours only once and will also decrease a student's pace of completion.



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

To calculate the percentage of credits completed; total all attempted UMES credits and total all completed UMES credits, then divide the number of completed credits by the number of attempted credits. (See **Repeat Course** section in the University Catalog for further information regarding repeating of courses)

Total Completed Credits / Total Attempted Credits = Percentage Completed

Ex. John registered for 9 credits at UMES for the fall 2015 semester but withdrew (W) from a three (3) credit course and only completed six (6) credits at the conclusion of the Fall 2015 semester. At the end of the Fall 2015 semester John attempted nine (9) credits and completed six (6) credits. In this scenario, John's cumulative completion rate calculates 66.67% (6 completed credits divided by 9 attempted credits = .6666 X 100 = 66.67 (when rounded up)).

Maximum Time Frame

The federal government requires a Graduate or Professional student to obtain his/her degree within a given time frame to remain eligible to receive financial aid. The given time frame is determined by the academic program and listed as "maximum program credits". A student is allowed to have attempted up to 100% of the required credits for a Graduate or Professional degree before the loss of financial aid eligibility. The published length for a student to obtain his/her degree varies according to the degree sought. **Refer to the UMES Catalogue to determine the published length required for the degree you are seeking.**

A financial aid eligibility termination letter will be sent to those students who have attempted the maximum amount of credits required to obtain a degree.

Students placed on "warning" after the first occurrence for one or both of the above requirements (Minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average/Completion Rate Requirement) must meet all SAP requirements after the next consecutive semester or financial aid eligibility will be terminated

Failure to meet minimum SAP requirements

Any student who initially fails to meet minimum SAP requirements will be placed on ***financial aid warning***. If a student is placed on financial aid warning, he or she does not need to appeal, because financial aid eligibility has not been revoked. If, at the end of the warning period the student does not meet the minimum requirements for SAP, all aid will be suspended. ***In order to meet financial aid warning requirements students must come into full compliance with the SAP policy (meeting minimum GPA and completion rate requirements)***. Students who are placed on financial aid warning are encouraged to seek academic and/or personal counseling. Counseling services can provide the student with



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

additional support which may help alleviate obstacles that hinder satisfactory academic progress. *Students who are on financial aid warning are further encouraged to consult with a financial aid counselor prior to withdrawing from any classes or if midterm grades are failures.*

Reinstatement of Aid

Aid may be reinstated on a probationary status by meeting the minimum requirements for SAP or by an approved appeal. A student who has had his/her financial aid eligibility terminated has the right to make a written appeal if *extenuating* circumstances exist and can be *documented*. If aid is not reinstated, suspension will remain in effect until the student comes into full compliance with the SAP policy. Non-enrollment at UMES does not restore eligibility (i.e. – enrollment at another institution or “sitting out” a semester).

Appeals

Students have the right to appeal a decision of ineligibility to continue to receive financial assistance. Students who wish to appeal may do so by submitting a letter of appeal *and supporting documentation* to the Office of Student Financial Aid within *fifteen (15) days* of the date of notification that aid has been suspended. The appeal may *NOT* be based upon need for the assistance OR lack of knowledge that the assistance was in jeopardy. An appeal must be based upon some extenuating circumstance which prevented a student from passing most of their courses, or which necessitated withdrawing from classes. The situation/condition must have taken place within the semester(s) the student did not meet satisfactory academic progress. The appeal must thoroughly outline the conditions and extenuating circumstances which led to the failure to meet SAP and must explain what has changed in the student’s situation that will allow him/her to make satisfactory academic progress at the next evaluation. Examples of possible situations include documented serious illness, severe injury or death of an *immediate* family member. Students who file an appeal are required to include a written academic plan which has been reviewed and approved by the Office of Graduate Studies or an academic advisor.

***Please Note:** Appeals submitting without an academic plan and supporting documentation will be denied.

All financial aid appeals should:

1. Be submitted to the Office of Student Financial Aid. They must be typewritten and signed by the student submitting the appeal.
2. Identify the circumstances which lead to the failure to maintain minimum SAP requirements.



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

3. Provide supporting documentation, (i.e. medical documentation, death notice, etc.)
4. Identify and have approved by The Office of Graduate Studies or an academic advisor an Academic Plan to correct academic deficiencies

The Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Appeals Committee Coordinator will notify the student in writing of the decision to reinstate or deny aid. If aid is reinstated, conditions may apply. If the conditions are not met, aid will be cancelled. ***All decisions at this point are final.***

For incomplete or partial appeals, supporting documentation and corrective plan of action must be received ***no later than twenty (20) days*** prior to the beginning of the academic term for which the student is requesting reinstatement. The committee ***will not review*** any incomplete or partial appeals. The Committee ***will not*** assume the responsibility for gathering documentation; this is the responsibility of the student. Appeals received after the deadline date ***will not*** be considered. All appeals must be ***signed originals from the student***. All appeals letters must be ***typed***. All supporting documentation submitted by the student becomes property of the UMES Office of Student Financial Aid.

Additional Information

Academic dismissal or disciplinary suspension from UMES will result in the automatic cancellation of financial aid eligibility.

Only matriculating students (formally admitted) can receive financial aid.

Students who withdraw from UMES, either ***officially*** by withdrawing through the Registrar's Office or ***unofficially*** by not attending all courses registered for the term, will have their financial aid adjusted in accordance with the Federal Return of Title IV Funds Refund Policy.



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

TITLE: VERIFICATION	REFER QUESTIONS TO:	OSFA		
EFFECTIVE DATE: November 1, 2016	Office of Student Financial Aid	PAGE 1	OF	PAGES 2

A. PURPOSE:

Verification is implemented to reduce the error rates in the applicant-reported data and to assure, to the maximum extent possible, that eligible applicants receive the correct amount of financial assistance (Federal Register. 3/14/86, Preamble p. 8946)

B. POLICY:

1. The Office of Student Financial Aid is required to verify all applicants selected for verification through the Integrated Verification Criteria (IVC). However; there are “verification exclusions” or times when an institution is not required to verify a student’s application, even when a student is selected by the Department of Education. **Except in the case of the student’s death, however, none of the exemptions excuse an institution from the requirement to resolve conflicting information.**
2. Graduate and Professional students who meet the “exclusion” requirements and who do not have conflicting information issues will be notified within seven (7) – fourteen (14) business days of their eligibility for financial assistance.
3. UMES OSFA will notify all applicants whose FAFSA contains conflicting information to resolve the conflicting information and make corrections electronically before financial aid is processed.
4. The OSFA is required to refer applicants who may have engaged in fraud or other criminal misconduct in connection with aid application to the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Education, or if more appropriate, to a state or local law enforcement agency having jurisdiction to investigate the matter. Referrals to local or state agencies must be reported on an annual basis to the Inspector General.
5. Applicants who may be excluded from verification are:
 - a. An applicant who is eligible to receive only unsubsidized student financial assistance.



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

- b. An applicant who dies before verification is complete
- c. Not an aid recipient. The student won't receive Title IV aid for reasons other than a failure to complete verification. This includes being ineligible for that aid and withdrawing without receiving it.
- d. Applicant verified by another school. The student completed verification for the current award year at another school before transferring.
- e. Post enrollment. The student was selected for verification after ceasing to be enrolled at UMES and all (including late) disbursements were made.



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

TITLE: DEFERMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	REFER QUESTIONS TO:	OSFA
EFFECTIVE DATE: November 1, 2016	Office of Student Financial Aid	PAGE OF PAGES 1 1 1

A. PURPOSE:

To establish a means by which to register students who show financial need but financial aid is pending.

B. POLICY:

The Office of Student Financial Aid will give deferments for tuition and fees for students showing eligibility based on a preliminary review. The amounts shown on the deferment reflects estimated eligibility which may change. Deferments will be given for Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG), Federal Perkins and Federal Direct Loans. Deferments may also be given for documented third-party awards on a case by case basis.

C. PROCEDURES:

1. OSFA representative checks for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP).
2. OSFA representative reviews documents (Student Aid Report (SAR), Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR), etc.) to estimate eligibility.
3. OSFA representative identifies the eligible programs and the estimated amount on the deferment form.
4. An OSFA representative and the student will sign and date the deferment.
5. The OSFA representative retains one copy and gives two copies to the student.
6. If a deferment covers tuition, fees, and other costs, student will go to Student Accounts to complete the registration process. If the deferment does not cover costs, the student must commit to the UMES payment plan and/or make immediate payment prior to registration.



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

TITLE: RECORDS MAINTENANCE	REFER QUESTIONS TO: Office of Student Financial Aid	OSFA		
EFFECTIVE DATE: November 1, 2016		PAGE 1	OF	PAGES 1

A. **PURPOSE:**

To set forth policy and procedures for the maintenance of student and general financial aid files.

B. **POLICY:**

It is the policy of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore through the Office of Student Financial Aid, to maintain student and general files in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

C. **PROCEDURES:**

1. **Student Files:**

- a. The Office Clerk III will review all incoming documents for accuracy, signatures, etc. These documents will be logged in PeopleSoft as appropriate
- b. The Office Clerk III will scan the documents into the Image Now system and link appropriately
- c. Electronic records are retained for at least three (3) years and maintained by OSFA Administrative Computing.

2. **General Files:**

- a. The Office Clerk will determine if there is an existing file. If no, one will be created for general documents which need to be retained in the general files. If a folder exists, the information is filed
- b. Generally, general files are retained for three (3) years



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

TITLE: ALTERNATIVE LOAN CERTIFICATION	REFER QUESTIONS TO:	NUMBER:
EFFECTIVE DATE: November 1, 2016	Office of Student Financial Aid	OSFA 7 - 011
		PAGE OF PAGES
		1 2

A. PURPOSE:

To set forth policy and procedures concerning private/alternative educational loans and the limited conditions whereby the institution will certify such loans.

B. POLICY:

It is the policy of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, through the Office of Student Financial Aid, to certify alternative loans on a limited basis. Alternative loans are generally offered at a variable interest rate compared to federal student loan(s) which are offered at a fixed interest rate. It is the goal of the institution to ensure that students take advantage of all available federal student loan benefits before resorting to a private alternative loan.

C. DEFINITION:

Private/Alternative loans are those loans not covered by the Department of Education (DOE) (i.e. Federal Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Stafford Loan(s), and/or Parent or Graduate PLUS Loan).

D. REQUIREMENTS:

Students desiring certification of a private alternative loan *must*:

1. Complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), listing UMES as one of the schools to receive their information (school code #002106), for the current aid year
2. Provide all documents required by the Office of Student Financial Aid (i.e. – those documents required to resolve conflicting information)
3. Use an alternative lender that meets the electronic processing requirements of UMES.
4. Meet with the Alternative Loan Coordinator prior to certification



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

E. CONDITIONS FOR CERTIFICATION:

The institution will certify all approved private/alternative loans under the following conditions:

1. Student has been approved for private/alternative loan by loan provider
2. Student is attending UMES for term or academic year in which loan has been approved for.
3. Student is registered for the minimum credits to receive private/alternative loan based on private/alternative loan provider requirements.
4. Loan provider has approved private/alternative loan to pay balance from a prior semester. *Note, in such cases loan may not exceed amount of prior balance.
5. In instances in which the student's financial aid has been suspended for failure to meet minimum Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements as defined in the Student Affairs policy SAV-405, as long as loan provider does not require student to be meeting SAP requirements.
6. The student has exhausted annual and/or aggregate federal student loan limits and still has a financial obligation to the institution
7. Other warranted cases as documented and approved by the Director of Financial Aid

The institution ***will not*** certify alternative loans if:

1. The student has not completed a Free Application for Federal Aid (FAFSA) nor waived his/her right to complete a FAFSA.
2. In instances in which the student's financial aid has been suspended for failure to meet minimum Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements as defined in the Student Affairs policy SAV-405, the private/alternative loan provider requires the student to be meeting SAP requirements.
3. The student has a prior balance from a previous academic term, unless the private/alternative loan is for the academic term containing the prior balance.



Office of Student Financial Aid Policies for Graduate and Professional Students

F. LOAN LIMITS

The institution will certify a private alternative loan (all previous conditions met) for the cost of attendance minus any other financial aid received. The institution will consider the student's eligibility for federal student loans, regardless of whether or not the student chooses to take these loans. A student may not request a private alternative loan to replace a federal student loan for which the student is eligible.

Example:

Student A is a 1st year Graduate student whose cost of attendance is \$32,000. The student has received a federal unsubsidized loan of \$10,250 and has requested certification of a private loan for \$32,000.

Because Student A is eligible for \$10,250 under the federal student loan program, the OSFA would certify the alternative loan for a maximum of \$21,750.