

Royal Holloway, University of London

Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

The University's academic regulations for students on undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research programmes can be found at: [Attendance and academic regulations - Royal Holloway Student Intranet](#)

This policy outlines a number of specific requirements that apply to students receiving US federal loans. In accordance with federal regulations, the University is required to make sure that all students in receipt of US federal loans (Stafford and PLUS) maintain satisfactory academic progress towards completion of their chosen academic programme in order to remain eligible to receive federal loans. In addition, students need to be studying at the equivalent of at least part time (half time) course load. Failure to satisfy these requirements can result in the loss of eligibility to receive further funding.

Payment Periods

The payment periods for undergraduate and postgraduate students will be divided into two separate disbursements for each academic year. The International Advice team will check SAP at the end of each payment period. If the student is making appropriate academic progress, the disbursements will be made to the student.

Principles for measuring Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

The evaluation process will consider a student's performance on both qualitative and quantitative criteria. The student must meet the minimum standards for both components to remain eligible to receive federal aid.

Qualitative Requirements (Grades)

1. Students must be studying at least half-time in order to be eligible for federal loans.
2. The student must achieve the minimum standard required by their Supervisor/Tutor/School or Department. The University does not use a grade point average (GPA) and so considers that students should be equivalent of at least a Lower Second Class degree from undergraduate courses, at least a pass for postgraduate taught courses and at least at the level to allow a postgraduate research student to progress to the next research degree stage. Satisfactory progress for PhD students is determined by their Supervisor.
3. For students who are studying on programmes that are greater than two years in length, the University will confirm that the student has academic standing consistent with the requirements set out above at 2. at the end of their second academic year.
4. These requirements are cumulative.

Quantitative Requirements (Pace)

1. The student must progress through their course at a pace that will ensure that they graduate within the maximum timeframe.
2. The maximum timeframe for completion is 150% of the published length of the course. For example:
 - 3 year Undergraduate degree must be completed in no more than 4.5 years
 - 1 year Postgraduate Taught Masters degree must be completed in no more than 1.5 years

3. The University takes each year of full-time undergraduate study to equal 120 UK credits and 180 UK credits for postgraduate study in accordance with the Higher Education Credit Framework for England.
4. The student must achieve a pace of progression of 67% to maintain their eligibility to receive federal aid. This pace of progression is calculated by dividing the number of completed credits by the number of attempted credits in order to meet SAP maximum completion timeframes.
5. The pace is reviewed on a cumulative basis at each SAP assessment point.

Degree and Course Length	Credits for Completion	Maximum Timeframe	Pace
Undergraduate 3 years	360	540 Credits (4.5 years)	67%
Undergraduate 4 years	480	720 Credits (6 years)	67%
Taught Masters 12 months	180	270 Credits (1.5 years)	67%
Research/PhD 12 months	180	270 Credits (1.5 years)	67%

Progression Guidelines for undergraduate students and postgraduate taught students

- International students at the University in receipt of student visas are subject to regular monitoring of their attendance in accordance with the UK Government's immigration rules.
- The University's U.S. federal loans SAP policy applies the same rules for students enrolled on the same programme but not receiving U.S. federal loans, however, students who receive U.S. federal loans are subject to additional checks on their academic progress.
- They should be progressing towards completion as specified in the University's academic regulations and the Qualitative and Quantitative Requirements set out above to remain eligible for federal loan funding.
- Methods of assessment will be determined in order to measure the specific learning outcomes of each course and will be communicated to students in the course specifications.
- Achievement of each course outcome depends on whether attendance requirements and assessment requirements have been met as stated in the course specification.

Progression guidelines for postgraduate research students

- Postgraduate research students should complete their programme of study within the timeframe specified in the University's academic regulations to remain eligible for federal loan funding.
- The University will not award federal loans to PhD students beyond six years of full time study or ten years of part time study.
- The University's U.S. federal loans SAP policy applies the same rules for students enrolled on the same programme but not receiving U.S. federal loans, however, students who receive U.S. federal loans are subject to additional checks on their academic progress.
- They should progress towards completion as specified in the University's academic regulations and the Qualitative and Quantitative Requirements set out above to remain eligible for federal loan funding.
- This includes consideration that at the University a student's academic progress will be formally reviewed at least once every twelve months as a progress review with their supervisor

Checking a student's academic progress (all students)

The International Advice team will check a student's academic progress towards the end of each payment period, ie twice a year. This is to measure both their Qualitative and Quantitative progress. Academic progress is checked using our student record system and where necessary

through direct contact with the student's School or Department. The International Advice team also receive weekly updates on Student Movements from Student Administration. For continuing students, we will determine the successful completion of second payment period of the previous academic year by checking that the student record has been rolled forward to the next academic year.

For students studying on programmes that are greater than two years in length, the International Advice team will confirm that the student has academic standing consistent with the qualitative requirements set out above at 2. at the end of their second academic year.

Students who make an application for federal aid after the first payment period will have their academic progress checked on our student record system and where necessary through direct contact with the student's Schools and/or Department prior to their loan being underwritten.

Procedures when a student is not progressing satisfactorily

If we determine that a student has failed to progress satisfactorily at the required standard, we will notify the student that we are placing them on Financial Aid Warning. This warning will last from one payment period (i.e. until the next disbursement) during which time, the student will receive their disbursement.

If the student regains satisfactory academic progress by the end of the subsequent payment period, the student will receive their next disbursement and they will be removed from the Financial Aid Warning status.

If the student fails to regain satisfactory academic progress by the end of the subsequent payment period, they will be notified that they will be ineligible to receive further disbursement of financial aid. At that point, the student can only regain their eligibility if they submit an appeal that proves successful.

Appeals

A student who fails to meet SAP standards can submit an appeal of this determination to the International Advice team by email to usloans@rhul.ac.uk within 14 days of being notified that their aid has been suspended. In their appeal, the student must:

- Include the grounds for the appeal. This should be the extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control that affected their progress (e.g. ill health, injury, bereavement or other special circumstances).
- State what has changed in their situation that will allow them to meet satisfactory academic progress at the next evaluation date.
- Any other relevant information.

The International Advice team will call an Appeal Panel with appropriate University staff to consider the appeal on its merits. The Appeal Panel may require extra evidence, documentation and contributions from the student's Supervisor/Tutors/School and/or Department.

The US Loans team will notify the student in writing of the Appeal Panel's decision. This decision is final.

- If the appeal is unsuccessful, the student will no longer be eligible to receive federal financial aid with immediate effect.
- If the appeal is successful, the student will be placed on Financial Aid Probation for one payment period and given specific requirements to meet in order to reinstate their

eligibility to receive Financial Aid e.g. resitting and passing failed exams, submitting coursework or dissertations, making up lost module time etc.

- At the end of the probationary period (usually one payment period), SAP will be re-evaluated according to the SAP policy and any conditions set in the appeal decision. If these requirements are met, the student will become eligible for financial aid. If these requirements are not met, the student will again become ineligible for financial aid. The student will need to fund their studies with their own money and try to meet SAP at a later time to become eligible again.

Impact of Transfers, Withdrawals, Interruption, Incompletes and Repetitions on Satisfactory Academic Progress

- Transfer of credits already completed would count towards the qualitative and quantitative standards, provided the credits count towards the award being sought for the purposes of SAP (grades and pace). If all elements of the new course are unrelated to the old course, credit hours will not be included in the quantitative timeframe (pace)
- If a student withdraws from the University at any point during their course, any credit hours completed would be counted as part of the quantitative requirement (pace).
- If the student withdraws but chooses to reapply to the University to study on the same programme, they will have the same SAP status that they had at the time that they withdrew. Therefore, if the student was ineligible to receive financial aid when they withdrew, they will not be able to receive federal aid when they are re-admitted and their status will be financial aid dismissal. The student will need to take specific, defined action to regain satisfactory academic progress over the next academic year (two payment periods) before they become eligible to receive federal loans. It will not be sufficient simply for them to pay for the classes or sit out for the academic year as this does not re-establish eligibility.
- If the student has an approved period of interruption at any point during their course, any credit hours completed would be counted as part of the quantitative requirement (pace). The period while the student is withdrawn would not be counted towards the quantitative standard (pace).
- Students resitting examinations or assessments not in attendance are not eligible to receive federal loans until they pass the relevant credits and meet SAP requirements. Grades points from reassessment will be capped at the minimum pass mark. This will affect both the qualitative and quantitative standards (grades and pace). Any credit hours already completed would be counted in the quantitative standard (pace).
- There is no 'incomplete' status at the University.

November 2023