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**Memorial University Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Framework and Guidelines (updated June 2019)**

A U.S. Department of Education regulation requires institutions approved to disburse Title IV Aid establish minimum standards for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) for U.S. students receiving Federal student loan funding. SAP is a measure of whether a student is progressing adequately toward completion of his/her course of study. All U.S. students who have received Direct Loan Program funds will have their academic progress reviewed at the end of each academic term. The qualitative and quantitative components of SAP outlined in this guideline will be reviewed to ensure both components have been met.

**Graduate Students Receiving Title IV Direct Loans**

In order to maintain US Direct Loans eligibility, students must achieve the following components:

**Qualitative component – Grade - Based**

1. Failure to attain a final passing grade of A or B in a program course shall lead to termination of a student's program unless:
   1. the regulations for a particular degree allow the student to repeat the course. Only one such repeat will be permitted in a student's program. Failure to obtain a grade of A or B in the repeated course shall lead to termination of the student's program.
   2. the Dean of Graduate Studies approves a repeat of the course, upon the recommendation of the Supervisor and the Supervisory Committee supported by the Head of the academic unit, where 1.a. above does not apply. Such recommendations must provide sufficient grounds for a repeat. Only one such repeat will be permitted in a student's program. Failure to obtain a grade of A or B in the repeated course shall lead to termination of the student's program.

***Note:***

*In exceptional circumstances, the Dean of Graduate Studies may approve a substitute course in place of the repeat upon the recommendation of the Supervisory Committee and Supervisor supported by the Head of the academic unit. Failure to obtain a grade of A or B in the substituted course shall lead to termination of the student's program.*

1. Failure in a non-program course will not normally result in termination of a student's program.
2. The Supervisor and the Supervisory Committee may recommend that a student be required to withdraw from the program, if after consultation with the student, the student's non-course work is deemed to have fallen below a satisfactory level.

<https://www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=GRAD-0022>

**Qualitative component – Master’s Theses and Reports**

1. Final examiners for the thesis/report will be appointed by the Dean on the recommendation of the academic unit. There will be two examiners for a Master's thesis. Examiners shall normally be those who have completed a graduate degree at the doctoral level, including a thesis, in the discipline or cognate area. Those serving as examiners shall not have been involved in the preparation of the thesis/report.
2. Examination of the thesis/report will result in one of the following recommendations by each examiner. The thesis/report is:
   1. acceptable without modifications; or
   2. acceptable, modifications are required but the thesis does not have to be re-examined\*; or
   3. unacceptable, the thesis/report requires modification and re-examination\*\*; or
   4. totally unacceptable, the thesis/report is failed.\*\*\*
   5. \*Modifications may include corrections of typographical errors and errors in nomenclature, improvement in phrasing, or rewriting of sections of the thesis/report. Modifications may be indicated in the text or listed separately;
   6. \*\*Modifications might include (but are not limited to) the rectification of one or more of the following deficiencies: (1) misinterpretation and/or misuse of the matter covered, omission of relevant materials, unfounded conclusions, illogicality of argument, improper analysis of data and the like, (2) bad writing, (3) unacceptable physical presentation. A detailed list of problems should be included with the report;
   7. \*\*\*A detailed list of the reason(s) for failure must be included in the report.
3. If all examiners recommend that the thesis/report is totally unacceptable, then the thesis will be failed, and shall not be re-examined.
4. If an examiner recommends that the thesis/report is unacceptable, and this recommendation is accepted by the Dean, then the student may apply to the Dean for permission to resubmit the thesis for re-examination in one of the following ways:
   1. to submit a modified thesis/report to the original examiners.
   2. to submit a modified thesis/report to new examiners.
   3. to submit the original thesis/report to an Examination Board to be appointed by the Dean.
5. If a thesis/report is re-examined, the student will not be awarded a pass unless all examiners find the thesis acceptable.
6. Under no circumstances may a thesis/report be re-examined more than once.

**Qualitative component – Ph. D and Psty. D Theses**

Students for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy and the Degree of Doctor of Psychology must submit a written dissertation deemed acceptable by the University, and demonstrate their ability to defend their work in a public oral examination. For this reason, the final decision on whether a student will be recommended for the award of the degree is made only at the conclusion of the oral examination

**Responsibilities of the Thesis Examining Board**

The work of each student will be assessed by a Thesis Examining Board. Its first responsibility is to determine whether the thesis successfully demonstrates the student's competence to undertake independent research work. The Board must be satisfied that the work contributes significantly to knowledge in the field of study; that the contribution is of high scholarly merit; that the student is aware of the pertinent published literature; that it is written in a satisfactory style; and that it is free from typographical and other mechanical errors. The second responsibility of the Board is to conduct a final oral examination of the student and to then recommend to the Dean of Graduate Studies whether the student should be awarded the Degree.

1. **Composition of the Thesis Examining Board**

The members of the Thesis Examining Board will be appointed by the Dean on the recommendation of the Head of the academic unit who will have consulted with the supervisory committee. The Board shall consist of four members. Normally these will be the student's Supervisor (who serves on the Board in a non-voting capacity), two examiners from within the University, and one from outside the University. However, when circumstances warrant, a second external examiner may be substituted for one of the internal examiners with permission of the Dean. Examiners shall normally be those who have completed a graduate degree at the doctoral level, including a thesis, in the discipline or cognate area. Members of the supervisory committee other than the Supervisor are ineligible for appointment to the Board. Those serving as examiners shall not have been involved in the preparation of the thesis/report.

1. **The Examination Process**
   1. The voting members of the Board shall submit written reports on the thesis containing an assessment of the quality of the written work and a recommendation as to whether the student should be permitted to proceed to an oral examination and defence of the work. An examiner may recommend:
      1. that the student be allowed to proceed to the oral defence of the thesis\*; or
      2. that the student not be allowed to proceed to the oral defence at this time\*\*; or
      3. that the student should be failed.

\*Any suggested corrections or revisions should be outlined in the examiner's report. It is understood that it will be the responsibility of the Supervisory Committee to discuss the suggested changes with the student, to determine which should be incorporated in the thesis before its final submission.

\*\*This recommendation reflects the examiner's opinion that further research, re-analysis of data, or thorough rewriting of the material is required. The thesis may, however, be re-submitted for examination.

* 1. If all examiners recommend that the student should be failed, then the thesis shall not be re-examined.
  2. If an examiner recommends that the student not be allowed to proceed to the oral defence, and this recommendation is accepted by the Dean, then the student may apply to the Dean for permission to resubmit the thesis for re-examination in one of the following ways:
     1. to submit a modified thesis to the original examiners.
     2. to submit a modified thesis to new examiners.
     3. to submit the original thesis to an Examination Board to be appointed by the Dean.
  3. No student will be permitted to re-submit a thesis more than once. In case of a re-submitted thesis an examiner may recommend only:
     1. that the student be allowed to proceed to the oral defence of the thesis; or
     2. that the student should be failed.
  4. After receiving the reports from all three voting members of the Board the Dean will consider the recommendations and determine whether an oral defence of the thesis will be scheduled.
  5. The Final Oral Examination and Defence of Thesis will take place at a time and place to be determined by the Dean of Graduate Studies and will be chaired by the Dean or delegate. The presence of all members of the Examining Board is normally required.
  6. Following the defence, the Board will meet *in* *camera* to render a final assessment of the thesis and the student's ability to defend the their work. The Board may recommend one of the following outcomes:
     1. Passed with distinction (Awarded to students who demonstrate superior knowledge of their research area(s); this category requires unanimous support of the Board. A simple majority vote will result in a recommendation of 'passed'.)
     2. Passed\*
     3. Passed Subject to Conditions\*\*
     4. Re-examination required\*\*\*
     5. Failed\*\*\*\*

\*This recommendation may have attached to it the requirement that the student complete certain specified revisions to the satisfaction of the Supervisory Committee, the Head of the academic unit and the Dean. These revisions must have been specified in the written appraisal submitted prior to the Oral Examination.

\*\*This recommendation is made if there are revisions beyond those specified in the written appraisal submitted prior to the Oral Examination. This recommendation must have the conditions attached and cannot include the option of re-examination.

\*\*\*The members of the Thesis Examination Board may attach to this recommendation a list of any requirements which they feel are appropriate.

\*\*\*\*Re-examination not permitted.

* 1. If the members of the Board are unanimous in their recommendation, the Chair of the Examination may accept this recommendation and inform the student of the decision. In any other case, however, the delivering of any final decision shall be deferred pending further consultation within the School of Graduate Studies.
  2. No student shall be permitted more than two Oral Examinations.

In summary, the grounds for termination of a graduate program are as follows:

* 1. Failure to comply with the conditions of admission into a program, unless the conditions of admission have been changed with approval of the academic unit and the School of Graduate Studies;
  2. Failure to register in any semester by the final date for adding courses - <https://www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=GRAD-0018>;
  3. Failure to obtain the required grades in courses as stated in the appropriate degree regulations - <https://www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=GRAD-0022> ;
  4. Failure in comprehensive examinations - <https://www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=GRAD-0024> ;
  5. Demonstrated lack of progress in a program supported by written documentation;
  6. Recommendation of the Supervisory Committee - <https://www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=GRAD-0025>;
  7. Failure of Thesis, Project, or Internship - <https://www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=GRAD-0026> ;
  8. Academic misconduct - <https://www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=GRAD-0015>

1. The foregoing notwithstanding the University reserves the right to require students to discontinue their program or to deny them admission where, in the opinion of the Academic Council of the School of Graduate Studies, following appropriate professional consultation, there is a reasonable likelihood that a student's health or conduct could result in endangering the lives, health, or safety of other persons on campus or in settings related to the student's university studies.
2. The foregoing notwithstanding, the School of Graduate Studies reserves the right to require students to discontinue their studies, or to deny them re-admission, where a student has been determined to have engaged in unprofessional conduct. The code of ethics of each profession will serve as the guideline as to what constitutes unprofessional conduct. However, should there not be any statements of what constitutes unprofessional conduct, the following standard will apply:

Unprofessional Conduct: conduct which involves a breach of the duties required by professional ethics.

**If a student’s program is terminated, they can no longer receive Title IV Direct Loans.**

**Quantitative component - Maximum Timeframe**

**Program Completion**

Students must complete their degree program in a timely manner in order to remain eligible for Title IV Direct Loans throughout their entire degree program. The maximum timeframe for completion of the Graduate – Master’s degree program may not exceed 200% of the published length of a graduate program. For example, a student completing a 2 year (6 semesters) degree must have his or her degree program completed within 4 years (12 semesters)

The maximum timeframe for completion of the Graduate – Ph. D degree program may not exceed 150% of the published length of a graduate program. For example, a student completing a 4 year (12 semesters) doctoral degree must have his or her degree program completed within 6 years (16 semesters)

Timeframes for graduate programs are as follows:

* One-year master’s programs: one year (three semesters)
* All other master’s programs: two years (six semesters)
* Doctoral programs: four years (twelve semesters)

**While the maximum time allowable to complete a degree is 7 years at Memorial University, students may not exceed the Quantitative component outlined in this document.**

Periods where a student remains enrolled but does not receive Title IV aid will still count toward the maximum timeframe.

**Time Limit for Revision**

The final version of Master's, Ph.D., and Psy.D. Theses/reports found acceptable with or without corrections shall be submitted to the School of Graduate Studies within 6 months of the date on which the thesis/report and the student's examiners' reports are returned to the student's academic unit. If a corrected thesis/report is not submitted within 6 months the student is considered to have withdrawn from the program. After this time, the student must apply to be readmitted.

Master's, Ph.D., and Psy.D. Ttheses/reports requiring re-examination shall be resubmitted to the School of Graduate Studies within 12 months of the date on which the thesis/report and the examiner's reports are returned to the student. Students requiring resubmission and re-examination of theses/reports must maintain their registration during this period. Failure to resubmit the revised thesis/report within 12 months will result in termination of the student's program.

**Transfer Credits**

Transfer credits will count toward the maximum timeframe for course-based programs only. The percentage of the program requirements being fulfilled by transfer credits will be deducted from the student’s maximum timeframe. For example, if a student transfers 3 courses into a 10-course Master of Education program, the student must have that program completed in 8 semesters, instead of 12 semesters.

**Changing Program**

If a student decides to change majors or degrees, any credit hours already completed that can be applied to the new program will normally count toward the degree, in the same manner that transfer credits count.

**Changing Routes**

Students changing routes or transferring programs will retain the start date of their original programs. For example, if a student starts a course-route MA in History program in Fall 2018, and then switches to a thesis-route MA in History in Spring 2019, the maximum timeframe begins from Fall 2018.

**Course Withdrawals**

A student who drops all courses before the last day to drop classes without academic prejudice will not have those courses count toward his or her maximum timeframe. A student who drops from some, but not all of his or her courses will still have those courses that they attempt count towards his or her maximum timeframe. Courses may be dropped after the deadline with sufficient grounds. Refer to section 4.3.4 point 3 in the Calendar. <https://www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=GRAD-0018#GRAD-0652>

**Academic Standing – Eligibility for Continuance**

A student who fails to meet the academic requirements for continuance and is required to withdraw from the University for a number of semesters, will not be eligible for future Federal student loan funding. Upon return to this institution, he/she must submit an appeal as outlined in the Appeal procedure section.

**Appeal Procedure**

**Financial Aid Warning**

If a student fails to meet the SAP requirements, he/she will be considered on **Financial Aid Warning**. Memorial University will provide written notification to the student outlining the terms and conditions of their financial aid warning and the requirements to re-establish SAP to continue and/or reinstate their eligibility for Direct Loan Program funds. No appeal is required however, during this term, which is a temporary, one payment-period status, Memorial University will disburse the student’s funds for the next payment period ***only.***

**Financial Aid Probation**

If a student is on Financial Aid Warning status and has not re-established SAP by the end of the Financial Aid Warning term, the student will lose their eligibility for Federal student loan funding. Students have the option to submit an appeal explaining why he/she is failing to meet the SAP requirements and what their plan is to meet the SAP requirements in the future. If the appeal is approved by the Appeals Committee, the student will be placed on **Financial Aid Probation**.A student placed on probation must either be on-track to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements by the end of the subsequent payment period (no academic plan required, based on the financial aid appeal), or, if the student will require more than one payment period to meet SAP requirements, the University requires the student to develop an academic plan to meet the SAP requirements.

**If a student who has been placed on Financial Aid Probation is not successful in achieving SAP at the end of the funded term, he/she will become ineligible for future Federal student loan funding**.

**Appeal Procedure**

If it is determined that a student failed to meet SAP requirements as outlined in this Policy, the student may appeal this determination by providing a detailed letter outlining the exceptional and/or extenuating circumstances which resulted in their failure to maintain SAP. Supporting and relevant documentation will be required to be included with the appeal letter.

* The student has 30 days from the date of determination to submit their appeal letter to the SAP Appeal committee. If the appeal letter is not received within the required 30 days, **Federal student loan funding will be suspended.** If extenuating circumstances prevent the submission with in the 30 day timeframe, supporting documentation will be required.
* A SAP appeal committee will review the appeal and will notify the student, in writing of the outcome of the appeal within 30 days of the committee’s meeting.

Appeals should be sent to:

SAP Appeal Committee  
Scholarships, Bursaries and Financial Aid  
UC-4018, Memorial University of Newfoundland  
St. John’s, NL, A1S 5S7  
[scholarships@mun.ca](mailto:scholarships@mun.ca)

**Re-establishing Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP**)

Graduate students at Memorial University are required to achieve a minimum passing grade of 65% or higher in each program course to continue on in their program during the financial aid probation term to re-establish SAP.

If, at the end of the financial aid probation term, the student continues to demonstrate the he/she is not successfully progressing academically towards fulfilling the requirements of the quantitative measure, and it is not mathematically possible for him/her to complete the program within 150% of the length of the program, the student will not be eligible to receive Direct Loan Program funds.

* The University will provide written notification to the student informing him/her of their ineligibility status and will provide information pertaining to how the student can obtain re-eligibility and include information on seeking alternate sources of funding.

A student must meet SAP requirements before aid eligibility can be re-established. The student may appeal this decision if exceptional and or extenuating circumstances existed which impacted the student’s ability to achieve the SAP requirements. Supporting documentation and a letter outlining the circumstances are required.

**Exceptions**

Exceptions are permissible if an institution determines a student’s failure to meet SAP is due to:

* Family difficulties
* Medical problems
* Illness or injury
* Death in a family
* Financial difficulties
* Other special circumstances