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Student Financial Aid Policy

Type

Academic (relates to academic affairs generally, faculty and/or student affairs)

I. Rationale

This policy has been developed to ensure that Baylor College of Medicine's (BCM or College) Student Financial Aid Program meets or exceeds the requirements set forth by federal regulations governing academic standards of progress for Financial Aid Eligibility as they pertain to students who receive Title IV funding. The policy also defines Satisfactory Academic Progress for all students.

II. Stakeholders Affected by this Policy

Compliance with this policy is mandatory for BCM students, program directors, deans, and school and program-based promotions committees, as well as the Offices of Student Financial Aid (SFA), Student Account Services (SAS) and the Registrar.

III. Definitions

- (a) **Academic Period** – Financial Aid is awarded annually and disbursed semiannually for periods covering July - December and January - June.
- (b) **Academic Plan** – a document produced by a school or program promotions committee that outlines a student's current academic status and required objectives to achieve good standing and eligibility for Title IV Financial Aid.
- (c) **Financial Aid** – Title IV and institutional aid sources of funding used for educational purposes.
- (d) **Financial Aid Appeal** – A process by which a student who is not meeting the school/program Satisfactory Academic Progress standards petitions the Office of Student Financial Aid for Title IV eligibility.
- (e) **Financial Aid Eligibility** – is determined through consideration of multiple factors including the student's degree-program costs (e.g., tuition and fees, room, meals, transportation, books, supplies), available resources (e.g., assets, family contributions), and degree of financial need.
- (f) **Financial Aid Ineligibility** – The loss of Financial Aid Eligibility due to failure to meet both the quantitative and Qualitative Standards established for their level of study when a student is on Financial Aid Probation. The student will remain ineligible for Financial Aid until both quantitative and Qualitative Standards are met.
- (g) **Financial Aid Probation** – A status assigned to a student who fails to make Satisfactory Academic Progress and who has appealed and has had eligibility for aid reinstated.
- (h) **Financial Aid Warning** – A status assigned to a student who fails to make Satisfactory Academic Progress when evaluated at the end of a Financial Aid payment period. A student is eligible for aid during Financial Aid Warning.

- (i) **Good Academic Standing** – A status that is assigned to a student by their school dean or program promotions committee. The SFA, SAS, and Office of the Registrar will presume that all students are in Good Academic Standing unless they have been suspended or dismissed.
- (j) **Pace** – A Quantitative Standard. Defines the Pace established by the school/program at which the student must progress to ensure educational program completion within the maximum time frame. A student must complete all course requirements within 150% of the length of the program. Refer to each school/program’s handbook for specific information on standard required length of study and the maximum time frame to achieve program completion.
- (k) **Qualitative Standard** – Measure of a student’s completion of the degree requirements. Refer to each school/program’s handbook for academic progression requirements.
- (l) **Quantitative Standard** – Measure of a student’s completion of credit hours on an annual basis. At BCM, students must complete two-thirds of the courses for which they are enrolled. This rate is determined by dividing the total completed course credit hours by the total of registered course credit hours.
- (m) **Satisfactory Academic Progress** – Successful completion of degree requirements according to published increments that lead to degree completion within published time limits.

IV. Policy

- A. **Student Financial Aid Eligibility.** The College offers institutional and federal Financial Aid to eligible students. This assistance includes long-term loans, scholarships, and federal work study opportunities. Applications for assistance are sent to all students upon acceptance into their programs. Continuing students are also provided application materials for each academic year (July through June).
 - i. Applications for Aid. Applications are processed in the order received, with priority given to entering students. BCM Financial Aid Applications are made available on March 1. It is recommended that each student complete and file his or her Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and tax return before March 1 of each calendar year in order to receive the best aid package possible. Institutional aid is limited and awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis until funds are depleted. [Application deadlines can be found on the BCM Financial Aid Website.](#)
 - ii. Tuition & Fee Refunds.
 - a. Financial Aid is first credited to the student's account for tuition and fees payment. Once all charges are paid, any resulting credit balance is refunded to the student. Refunds must be used to purchase books and supplies and cover the cost of living. Refunds will be calculated as described in the [Institutional Tuition and Fees Policy \(see 23.1.04, Section IV.A.v-vi\).](#)
 - b. Unusual circumstances or concerns may be brought to the attention of the Director of SFA, located in the Alkek Building on the BCM Campus (N104).
 - c. Students must provide documentation of their circumstances when submitting a request for additional financial assistance. Students may also bring questions to their class's Financial Aid representative or to the Student Services Financial Aid Committee.
 - iii. Short-term, Interest-Free Loans.
 - a. Short-term, interest free loans are available to most students to assist them with unexpected costs. The loan term lengths are sixty (60) days, at which point they are required to be repaid.
 - b. If not repaid when due, the student becomes ineligible for future borrowing through this loan program. These loans are managed by SAS.

- c. Students and their families may refer to the Financial Assistance for a Health Professions Education brochure for more information about funding sources. They may also consult additional handouts available through SFA.

B. Academic Standards of Progress for Financial Aid Eligibility.

- i. All students enrolled at BCM are considered to be in Good Academic Standing unless they are dismissed or suspended from the College following action by the school's dean or student promotions committee.
- ii. The standards of academic progress are based on school-level policies that guide each school or program promotions committee in their determination of whether a student is making Satisfactory Academic Progress. Students should refer to their respective school/program's handbook to review the applicable criteria for Satisfactory Academic Progress. Other policies such as the course repeat and transfer credit policies will also be considered by schools when determining Satisfactory Academic Progress.
- iii. BCM does not measure academic progress by means of a cumulative grade point average. All students must complete each required course in the curriculum with a passing grade in order to graduate. Therefore, grade performance as a measure of Satisfactory Academic Progress for Financial Aid Eligibility must be reviewed in the context of each student's program of study. A student may receive Financial Aid when repeating a course that was previously failed one time only.

- C. Appeals.** Students who do not meet the minimum standards for Satisfactory Academic Progress may appeal to SFA for reinstatement of their Financial Aid Eligibility. Circumstances which may be considered as a basis for an appeal may include family emergency, death in the student's immediate family, a student's medical illness or injury, or other undue hardships. Students may pursue an appeal as described in Section VI. D (below).

V. Responsibilities

A. School/Program Promotions Committee:

- i. The school/program-specific promotions committee will determine if a student is making Satisfactory Academic Progress in the program and is in Good Academic Standing, as per the definition of good standing mentioned in the definitions section of this policy. The standards of progress are based on the policies used by the promotions committee in each school.
- ii. Each school/program is responsible for determining a student's progress and Pace. No student can receive Financial Aid beyond 150% of the school/program length, including years without receiving Financial Aid.
- iii. Students not meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress as determined by the promotions committee will be notified in writing from the committee of their status outlining their deficiencies, methods for correcting the deficiency and consequences that may result in probation, suspension or dismissal from the program. This will be the student's Academic Plan for maintaining good standing and eligibility for Title IV Financial Aid.
- iv. The school or program's promotion committee has the discretion to determine the duration of academic review based on the availability of relevant facts, but in any case the period of academic review shall be no less than one month and no more than one semester. When the period of academic review concludes, the appropriate promotions committee will reevaluate whether the student has made Satisfactory Academic Progress according to the Academic Plan.

B. School/Program Director/Dean or Designee:

- i. The school's program director, dean, or dean's designee will notify SFA and the Office of the Registrar if a student is at risk for not meeting Pace requirements, or if they are not making Satisfactory Academic Progress (e.g., LOA, suspension, dismissal).
- ii. When a school/program's student promotions committee grants a LOA, or identifies that a student is at-risk of not meeting Pace requirements, the program director/dean or designee notifies the Office of the Registrar and SFA.

C. The Office of the Registrar:

- i. If a student is not making Satisfactory Academic Progress, the Office of the Registrar will be notified and will update the student record with academic status information and place in the students' academic file.
- ii. The Office of the Registrar will place notations on the student's transcript when students are suspended, withdrawn or dismissed from BCM, per the school/program's specific handbook. This notation will remain on the transcript permanently, unless the student successfully appeals the adverse academic decision.

D. The Office of Student Financial Aid:

- i. SFA will review the Satisfactory Academic Progress of all aid recipients at the end of each academic year. Review of a student's academic status will be in collaboration with the school/program's program director, dean, or dean's designee after the promotions committee has reviewed the academic progress status of all students.
- ii. SFA will notify the student in writing with the explanation of the results that impact the student's eligibility for Title IV and institutional aid funds.
- iii. SFA will notify the student in writing of their Financial Aid suspension status and the appeal process for possible reinstatement of their Financial Aid Eligibility. Students will be informed that during the appeal process, they are eligible to receive Financial Aid.
- iv. SFA will verify academic progress at the end of the payment period with the school/program's promotions committee. If the student is not successfully progressing to complete the program at the required Pace, the Office of Student Financial Aid will communicate relevant policy and procedures to the student.
- v. SFA will assist students ineligible for aid in seeking an outside private loan.

VI. Procedures for Implementation and Review

A. Financial Aid Warning.

- i. Students who fail to meet either the Quantitative or Qualitative Standards set forth in this policy will receive a Financial Aid Warning in writing from SFA.
- ii. Students who receive a Financial Aid Warning may continue to receive Financial Aid funds for one Academic Period.

B. Financial Aid Probation.

- i. Students who fail to meet either the Quantitative or Qualitative Standards for one or more Academic Periods will be placed on Financial Aid Probation and this will be communicated in writing by SFA.
- ii. Students on Financial Aid Probation may continue to receive Financial Aid funds for one Academic Period.

C. Financial Aid Ineligibility.

- i. Students on Financial Aid Probation who fail to meet either the Quantitative or Qualitative Standards will lose their Financial Aid Eligibility.

- ii. The loss of Financial Aid Eligibility will continue until the student has met both Quantitative and Qualitative Standards established for their level of study.

D. Financial Aid Appeal.

- i. Appeals should be submitted in writing and must include relevant documentation. SFA must receive the written appeal no later than 60 days after the start of the Academic Period for which the Financial Aid is requested. Appeals will be resolved as described in the [Student Appeals & Grievances Policy](#) (see 23.1.08, Section VI.F).

VII. Stakeholder Compliance

SFA in coordination with the Office of Compliance will monitor BCM's Student Financial Aid Program's compliance with the requirements set forth by federal regulations governing academic standards of progress for Financial Aid Eligibility pertaining to students who receive Title IV funding.

VIII. Tools

- Consult the [Office of Student Financial Aid Website](#) for more specific information on tuition, fees, account services, and eligibility for scholarships, loans, and refunds.
- Consult the [Office of the Registrar Website](#) for more information on residency, grades, transcript requests, and related services.
- Consult the [Student Services Website](#) for links to academic resources, support services, student committees, and information on student grievances and mistreatment.
- Consult the [Student Benefits](#) webpage maintained by the Office of Human Resources for more information on health plan premiums and [benefits in the event of graduation or withdrawal](#).

IX. Related Policies

- [23.1.04 – Institutional Tuition and Fees Policy](#)
- [23.1.05 – Acceptance of Transfer Credit Policy](#)
- [23.1.08 – Student Appeals & Grievances Policy](#)
- [23.1.09 – Course Repeat Policy](#)
- [23.1.11 – Credit Hour Policy](#)
- Consult **School Handbooks** for information on specific Academic Progress Requirements:
 - [School of Medicine Handbook](#)
 - [Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences \(Ph.D Program Handbook\)](#)
 - [School of Allied Health Sciences Handbook](#)
 - [Doctor of Nursing Practice-Nurse Anesthesia Student Manual](#)
 - [National School of Tropical Medicine Handbook](#)

X. Applicable Laws, Regulations & Standards

- Student Eligibility: Satisfactory Academic Progress, [34 C.F.R. § 668.34](#)
- [Association of American Medical Colleges: Satisfactory Academic Progress Guidelines \(2012\)](#)
- Department of Education's [Return of Title IV Funds Policy](#)
- [Higher Education Act](#), Sec 472.