

Satisfactory Academic Progress for the Penn State College of Medicine

The Office of Student Aid for the Penn State College of Medicine is required by the U.S. Department of Education to monitor student progression toward completion of their medical degree. Students must be academically progressing toward completion at a minimally accepted level as established in the following general standards. (Please note: This standard may be different from Penn State College of Medicine criteria for determining satisfactory academic standing necessary to maintain degree-seeking status.)

Special situations that fall outside the stated general policy are subject to professional judgment appeal by the Student Aid Office regarding continued eligibility.

Student Aid Programs Impacted by this Standard

- Federal Perkins Loan
- Federal Stafford Loan
- Federal Grad Plus Loan
- Federal Work-Study
- Some University aid programs

Eligibility

Standards for satisfactory academic progress in medical school are not as easily defined as in undergraduate or graduate programs. The lengths of courses vary and differ from the semester calendar and grade-point averages cannot be calculated on an Honors/Pass/Fail system. The following general standards have been established for maintenance of satisfactory academic progress in a medical school student's course of study.

The student must complete each required course and the appropriate number of elective courses. Any course failure will be reviewed by the Promotions Committee and recommendations made to rectify the failure. Failures must be rectified to meet the maximum time frame for completion of a medical degree.

The maximum time frame for completion of a medical degree is six years. This time frame assumes that the student is enrolled full-time and excludes periods during which the student obtains an approved leave(s) of absence. The student's progress is to be measured in one-year (twelve-month) increments. These standards are applicable to all students while enrolled in the College of Medicine's MD Degree Program, which has academic responsibility for a single category of students and a single program of study.

The College of Medicine recognizes that there are circumstances under which it may not be desirable for a student who has encountered academic difficulty in the curriculum to proceed immediately to the next portion of the curriculum, without having repeated the failed portion(s) of the curriculum. The structure of the curriculum that encompasses the first seventy-three weeks of study may not permit immediate repetition of a course since

the course may not be given again until the next year. The College of Medicine Promotions Committee may ask the student to take a leave of absence for the balance of an academic year and to repeat, at least in part, the portion of the curriculum where the failure(s) occurred. In such a case the student is considered to be making satisfactory academic progress during the repeated period, and the period of absence is not counted in the “maximum time frame” established for that purpose. Incomplete and/or deferred grades, and course audits are not considered in determination of academic progress or credit standards.

A student who is required to repeat a course or year of study by the Promotions Committee will only be considered to be on probation for satisfactory academic progress for the first time that they repeat any course or year of study. For subsequent repeats of the same course or year of study the student will be considered to not be making academic progress. Satisfactory academic progress will resume when the student enters into the next sequential year of medical school.

If a student’s academic progress is found to be unsatisfactory, resulting in his/her ineligibility for financial assistance under the Title IV programs, the student may appeal for reinstatement of the aid. The student’s appeal must document the reasons for the failure to meet the standards for satisfactory academic progress and must include a plan that demonstrates a means for the student to bring his or her academic progress into conformance with the standards within a period of one year. The vice dean for medical education will review the plan and approve it, reject it, or suggest modifications. An accepted appeal results in the student’s academic progress being considered satisfactory on a probationary basis, for a period of no more than one year. If the appeal is denied, the student may not receive financial aid assistance under the Title IV programs until such a time as he or she again meets the standards of satisfactory academic progress.