

SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY & GRADING

Maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress

Students must maintain the following to be making satisfactory academic progress (SAP):

- A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 for all courses applicable to the MIA or MPA degree.
- No more than two incomplete (IN) grades in a semester.
- Full-time enrollment, defined as a minimum of 12 credits per semester.*
- Avoidance of multiple grades of IN, UW, or F, which will result in a Dean's Hold on registration.
- Adherence to academic advisor instructions by registering for required core, concentration, or specialization courses in the appropriate sequence.

A student whose performance does not meet these standards may not be permitted to continue in the degree program. The School will take appropriate action, including removal of SIPA funding. If, at the end of a semester, a graduate student fails to meet the standards for progress, the student will receive a written warning concerning the lack of academic progress. The student must remedy the problem within the next semester. Failure to re-establish satisfactory academic standing may result in dismissal from SIPA, subject to review by the Committee of Deans. The Committee of Deans' decision is final. A student dismissed for academic performance may not re-apply to SIPA.

- Effective Fall 2011: Students must complete all MIA or MPA degree requirements within five years of the first semester of matriculation at SIPA.
- The total number of attempted credits toward the degree should not exceed 90 credits.
- Advanced Standing/Transfer credits do not impact the cumulative GPA but count as both attempted and completed credits.

*Note – students enrolled in the part-time Executive MPA Program (EMPA) must complete a minimum of 6 credits per term (instead of the nine required for full-time students).

Consequences of Failure to Meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

The Financial Aid Office measures SAP at the end of 2 semesters of enrollment, with warning letters sent after each completed semester. If the student meets all SAP conditions, they remain eligible to receive federal student aid funds in the next semester of enrollment unless otherwise deemed by the Financial Aid Office.

A student on probation after two semesters of enrollment is ineligible to receive federal student aid funds. For instance, if a student is on academic probation after their second semester, they will not receive federal financial aid for their third semester and can only borrow private loans. Academic standing will be reviewed after Semester 3 to determine eligibility of financial assistance for the fourth and final semester.

Students who withdraw from all courses or who fail to complete any courses in the previous semester successfully will be automatically placed on Financial Aid Probation, regardless of prior financial aid status. Students on an approved leave of absence are excluded.

Appeal Process

Students who have lost their financial aid eligibility due to failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress (SAP) have the option to appeal. To begin the appeal process, students should:

1. Submit a written appeal detailing the circumstances that led to the loss of your financial aid eligibility, along with any supporting documentation. Examples of circumstances that could be appealed include (but is not limited to): serious physical or mental illness of the student or an immediate family member, death of an immediate family member, or other extenuating exceptional circumstances.
2. In consultation with an academic advisor, students must **submit an Academic Plan form** outlining why they failed to make satisfactory academic progress and what has changed in their situation, which will allow them to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress at the subsequent evaluation. The form will need to be signed by the student and academic advisor. Please request the form from your advising dean.

If the appeal is approved, students will have one semester to meet the requirements listed in the Academic Plan to remain eligible for financial aid in the subsequent semester.

Grading Notations

The Professorial Faculty of the School of International and Public Affairs has adopted the following grading guidelines to ensure consistency and provide guidance to instructors at SIPA: Grades submitted for SIPA core courses must have an average GPA between 3.2 and 3.4, with a goal of 3.3. Courses with enrollments over 35 are also recommended to follow this rule. Workshop courses will be exceptions to this rule.

These guidelines do not need to be interpreted as a strict curve, and faculty are free to reach this goal in various ways. When the faculty voted to adopt these guidelines, they intended to preserve faculty flexibility and discretion but also wanted to create structure and norms. SIPA uses a standard A-F grading scale.

Grade	GPA Equivalent
A+	4.33 (Only to be awarded rarely - for extraordinary performance)
A (Excellent)	4.00
A-	3.67
B+	3.67 (Average grade for SIPA core courses)
B (Good)	3.00 (A cumulative GPA of 3.00 is required to remain in good academic standing and to graduate)
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C (Fair)	2.00
C-	1.67
D (Poor)	1.00
F (Failure)	0.00
P (Pass)	N/A

R (Auditing/R-Credit)	N/A
UW (Unofficial Withdrawal)	N/A

Pass/Fail

Core, concentration, and specialization courses cannot be taken pass/fail. Students can only opt to take elective courses on a pass/fail basis.* There is no limit to the number of elective courses that can be taken pass/fail. Please note the regulations below regarding taking a course pass/fail:

- The instructor's permission is not required to change the grading option to P/F (pass/fail). However, instructors can opt to block a course from pass/fail registration.
- Students can change the grading option for an eligible full semester course at any time via SSOL up to the "last day to change grading option" noted on the Academic Calendar. Note: Short courses are not subject to the pass/fail deadline. Requests for grading option changes can be submitted for a short course anytime before the final course session. After the official pass/fail deadline, requests for short courses can be submitted via the [registration request form](#).
- A grade of Pass is not calculated into a student's grade point average. Specific courses, such as one-point short courses or Professional Development, are offered only on a Pass/Fail basis.
- Students can reference the [SIPA academic calendar](#) for the pass/fail deadline date.

*For MPA-DP students, credits obtained from classes taken Pass/Fail, when a letter grade is an option, do not count towards the 54 needed to graduate.

Auditing/R credit (registered for the course; no qualitative grade assigned):

- Students who audit (receive R credit) a course must be registered in SSOL and appear on the grade roster. Students who are not officially registered will not have access to CourseWorks. Students who wish to receive R credit for a course must request permission from the instructor during course registration. Registration priority should be given to students taking a course for full credit over auditing. Instructors are not obligated to grant R credit; however, if permission is given, the student must meet course requirements established at the instructor's discretion. Upon successfully completing the course, the instructor will submit the grade of 'R' for these students. Should students not meet course requirements or fail to attend class, instructors can submit a grade of UW (Unofficial Withdraw) or F (Failure). Students approved for R-credit registration are only exempt from final examinations according to university policy. NOTE: credits taken for R credit do not count toward the minimum 54-credit graduation requirement, but R credit does count toward the credit limit covered by the flat tuition rate in the fall and spring semesters.

The mark of W (Withdrawal):

- This is given to a student who drops a course between the end of add/drop and the fifth week of classes. Students cannot drop/withdraw from a course after the date noted on the [SIPA academic calendar](#).

The mark of UW (Unofficial Withdrawal):

- This is given to a student who discontinues attendance in a course without submitting an official request to withdraw before the stated deadline on the SIPA Academic Calendar (fifth week of classes).
- A "UW" is a permanent grade and will remain on the transcript if the student repeats the course.

The mark of CP (Credit Pending):

- The mark of Credit Pending (CP) may be entered at the discretion of an instructor in two instances: (1) in courses that regularly involve research or projects extending beyond the end of the term and (2) in highly exceptional cases where a short extension (generally less than two or three weeks) has been approved for student completion of selected course requirements. Once the work has been completed, the instructor immediately changes the CP to a letter grade using the web grading system. If an instructor does not replace a CP with a letter grade within 30 days, the CP reverts to an Unofficial Withdrawal (UW). The Associate Dean for Student Affairs may also enter a CP for exceptional administrative circumstances, such as leaves of absence and disciplinary matters.

The mark of IN (Incomplete):

Incompletes are granted or denied at the discretion of course Instructors. Incompletes can be granted in cases of incapacitating illness, serious family emergency, or in circumstances of comparable gravity. Permission can also be granted in order to allow a student to consult research materials not obtainable in the course of the semester.

If an instructor grants an incomplete for a course, the instructor and student must agree on a date on which the coursework will be completed. This date must be **no later than the last day of the exam period of the following semester**. It is the student's responsibility to make sure a grade is submitted by the agreed-upon date. The instructor is not required to submit a grade for the course after the agreed-upon date. The mark of incomplete (IN) is not a final grade. Therefore, if a final grade is not submitted by this date, the mark of IN will revert to UW (Unofficial Withdrawal), and the credits in the course will be forfeited. Note that students cannot be certified for graduation with a notation of incomplete (IN) on their transcript. All grades must be final in order for a student to graduate.

SIPA policy states that if the outstanding coursework is not completed **by the last day of the exam period of the following term**, the grade will automatically revert to Unofficial Withdrawal (UW), defined as "student did not complete attendance and assignments, but failed to withdraw." The mark of UW is a final, permanent grade that cannot be changed. Students with two or more marks of incomplete (IN) will have a registration hold placed on their account **and may not register for classes in subsequent semesters (in exceptional circumstances, a student may submit a written appeal to the Committee of Deans for approval to continue, but the Committee of Deans may decline such requests, and there is no further appeal).**

Any student who believes that their situation warrants the granting of "IN" must follow this process:

1. Students will initiate the Incomplete process by speaking with the instructor and securing instructor approval.
2. The student will complete the **Application for Incomplete** and upload the instructor's approval **by the last day of the final exam period**.

3. The student will be contacted and counseled by their SIPA Advising Dean. The Advising Dean will approve and post the grading notation of Incomplete.
4. After the Application for Incomplete is received by OSA, the student should meet with their Advising Dean or Program Director. OSA approves and posts the Incomplete grading notation after receiving the student's completed form.
5. Once an Incomplete has been entered into the student's record, instructors can update that notation with a letter grade in SSOL once the student has completed all course requirements.

For questions on the incomplete process, instructors should contact Senior Assistant Dean Stefan Brown in the Office of Student Affairs at asb167@columbia.edu.

The mark of AB (Absent from the Final Examination):

- Granted by the instructor, not later than the day of the examination, to a student whose attendance and progress have been satisfactory and who cannot be present because of sickness or some other extreme emergency, which must be substantiated. The student must make arrangements with the instructor to remove the AB.

The mark of YC (Year Course):

- A temporary mark is given at the end of the first term of a course in which the entire year's work must be completed before a qualitative grade is assigned. The grade given at the end of the second term is the grade for the entire course.

Repeating Courses

- Students are allowed to repeat a course in which they received a failing grade (i.e., "F"). A failed course may be repeated only once. If repeated, both grades earned in the course will remain on the student's transcript, and both grades will be factored into the student's GPA.
- Students cannot repeat a course in which they have received a passing grade.
- Students cannot take courses of duplicative content. Example: students may not take SIPA U6300 - Microeconomics if they have received a passing grade in SIPA U6400 - Microeconomic Analysis.