

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Directions on Appealing SAP Suspension Undergraduate Students



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Were you notified you were unable to receive financial aid at NLU due to not meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards? Many students experience unexpected events that cause them to have a difficult time during their education. This guide is intended help students navigate through the SAP Appeal process in order to continue to receive federal financial aid.

How to Appeal SAP Suspension - Undergraduate Students

Step 1 Meet with your Coach or Advisor

Schedule an appointment with your success coach/academic advisor to discuss your options and receive the "Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Appeal" form to complete. Your coach/advisor will guide you through the process and assist you in completing your appeal.

Step 2 Complete the SAP Appeal Form

The SAP Appeal form will ask you to:

1. Complete several short answers to explain the extenuating circumstances that impacted your success in college and what has changed so that you can be successful in your courses going forward.
2. Provide documentation of the circumstance to support your appeal.
3. Develop an Academic Plan that outlines the classes you will take each term and minimum grades you will need to receive in order to continue to receive financial aid.

Step 3 Submit your Completed Appeal by the Deadline

SAP Appeals are reviewed twice a term by the SAP Appeal Committee. In order to be reviewed for a term, appeals need to be submitted prior to term start (to be reviewed by the Committee in Week 2), or prior to Week 4 (to be reviewed by Week 6).

The earlier you submit your appeal, the sooner you will know if it has been approved and your aid has been reinstated!

Completed appeals should be emailed to your Coach/Advisor. Note: for six-week classes, appeals should be submitted prior to the term start.

Step 4 Keep Calm, Focused and Patient

Once your appeal is submitted, it will be reviewed by an Appeal Review Committee in Week 2 or Week 6 of the term. Be patient with the process as each appeal must be considered individually. You and your Coach/Advisor will be notified as soon as your appeal and Academic Plan has been approved.

If you choose to be enrolled for the term in which you submit your appeal, continue to attend/engage in class, complete assignments and communicate with your faculty.

Writing a successful SAP Appeal

Appeal Guidance and Tips



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Explaining the Extenuating Circumstance

- **Be clear and specific.** Review the list of allowable extenuating circumstances and state the circumstance(s) that apply to your situation, including relevant dates and event details. Do not include information that is not related to the circumstance or your main message.



DON'Ts

Do NOT say "I could not balance work and school"



DOs

Instead say, "My employer had me work additional hours in order to keep my job, which I require to support my family. While I had previously worked between 15-20 hours/week, in December 2018, my employer informed me that I would need to increase my hours to 25-30 hours/week, coming into work at least an hour early for each shift."

- **Proofread your statement.** A statement that is free of grammatical errors and spelling mistakes makes a better impression than one with errors. If you are comfortable with doing so, ask a teacher, coach/advisor, or a writing specialist at NLU to read over your letter.

Impact on Academic Performance and Change in Circumstance

- **Be compelling.** Clearly explain how your situation impacted your performance in school.
- **Be reflective.** How has your situation or behavior changed? How have you demonstrated resilience and persistence?



DON'Ts

Do NOT say "It was hard to go to school when I was sick. I feel better now."



DOs

Instead say, "The medication I was on due to my illness caused me to be extremely tired, and I frequently had to miss school as I could not get out of bed. As a result, I fell behind in my courses. I was able to adjust my medication and have been able to go to school and work regularly for the last two months without missing a class or shift."

Actions to maintain satisfactory academic progress

- **List specific steps** that you will take to be successful in your courses.
 - What new study habits have you incorporated into your routine to promote academic success?
 - What steps have you taken to improve your situation (ie. counseling, moving, reduction of work hours)?
 - What campus resources might assist you in achieving your goals (e.g. tutoring, study tables, office hours)?
- **Be detailed.** Provide the exact actions you will take to be successful.



DON'Ts

Do NOT say "I plan to study more, attend all my classes, and try harder."



DOs

Instead say, "I have met with a Writing Specialist and am signed up to meet with them weekly. I am meeting with my professor once a week for math. I have started keeping a planner to mark out assignment deadlines."

Evidence/Documentation

Appeal submissions that do not include documentation that supports your appeal are more likely to be denied. See the examples of acceptable forms of supporting documentation for various situations on the SAP Appeal form or consult with your success coach/advisor on potential documentation that may work for your situation.

Frequency Asked Questions

Answers to common questions about SAP Appeals



WHAT IS THE APPEAL PROCESS?

The student submits a completed appeal (personal narrative, support documents and an academic plan) to their coach/advisor. For Undergraduate Appeals, the SAP Appeal Committee reviews the appeal and makes the decision to approve or deny the appeal. If the appeal is approved, the student will be on financial aid probation and have an Academic Plan, which they must follow each term until they are meeting SAP. Students on financial aid probation are eligible to receive financial aid and are evaluated after each term to ensure they are following their Academic Plan. Once a student meets the standards again, they are eligible to receive financial aid. Note: Students are only allowed one lifetime appeal at NLU, so if an Undergraduate student continues into a graduate program and is put on SAP Suspension, they are unable to appeal again.

HOW OFTEN ARE APPEALS REVIEWED?

Undergraduate SAP appeals are reviewed by a committee twice a term (in Week 2 and Week 6). Appeals are due 10 days prior the Committee meeting (prior to term start to be reviewed in Week 2 and prior to Week 5 to be reviewed in Week 6).

WHAT DOES THE SAP APPEALS COMMITTEE CONSIDER WHEN REVIEWING AN APPEAL?

The Committee reviews each appeal individually, on a case-by-case basis. Written documentation of illness, accident, injury, death of a close family member, or other extenuating circumstances throughout the student's academic career for which they could not plan, influence, or prevent will be considered carefully. Other extenuating circumstances could include family issues, or work (if student was required to suddenly increase hours such as full-time to overtime). Students should include this and other relevant information in their narrative, along with documentation from appropriate third parties, if applicable (e.g., a physician, therapist, etc.). Students should provide specific dates of the extenuating circumstance, which should coincide with the dates of the unsuccessful semesters. Students should include a plan of action or changes made in their lifestyle or academic approach, which will support academic success from the current term going forward.

HOW LONG BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ISSUES A DECISION? HOW ARE STUDENTS NOTIFIED?

Appeal decisions are generally made in at least 3 to 4 weeks after the completed appeal (all requested documentation received) was submitted. Students will receive the appeal decision via their nl.edu email address.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A STUDENT'S APPEAL IS APPROVED?

When the SAP Appeal is approved, the student is sent an email with the approved academic plan, which outlines the criteria that they must meet each term. The student's academic record will be reviewed at the end of each term to ensure they are meeting the criteria in the academic plan and/or are meeting SAP standards.

CAN STUDENTS AMEND THEIR ACADEMIC PLAN?

Plans can be amended on a case-by-case basis prior to the start of the next term. The student working with their coach/academic advisor, will submit the amended academic for review by the Office of Student Finance. Students will be notified via email if the amended academic plan is approved. Failure to notify Student Finance of changes to the academic plan could result in the denial of a subsequent term evaluation or appeal.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A STUDENT'S APPEAL IS DENIED?

If a student's appeal is denied, the decision is final and not subject to further review. The student is sent an email, which outlines the steps toward regaining their financial aid eligibility and options to continue enrollment in the absence of financial aid.

EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION

POSSIBLE CIRCUMSTANCES	SUGGESTED DOCUMENTATION
Death in the family or significant person in your life (relationship must be listed)	Death certificate, obituary, Memorial/funeral service pamphlet
Divorce or separation	Court documents, lawyer statement, counselor/therapist statement
Assault or Domestic violence	Court documents, restraining orders, police records, letter from shelter/case worker/therapist
Crime victim	Legal documentation, police records, letter from shelter/case worker/therapist
Physical and/or mental illness	Documentation from medical professional Dates of hospital stays or discharge paperwork
ICE/deportation threats/occurrences	Letter from Immigration attorney, advocacy group; if no documentation provided, timeline/detail of events included in the form along with current status
Babysitter/caregiver issues (including serious illness or injury of a family member)	Daycare letter, documentation of appointments, letter from Dr. office or social worker stating the need for student to be a caregiver
Change in economic/financial situation parent/student	Unemployment paperwork, proof of funding stoppage, letter from employer
Risk for homelessness/residential changes	Eviction notice, legal papers, documentation from shelter
Imposed employment changes parent/student	Statement from employer, unemployment paperwork
Legal Issues, including unjust arrest or incarceration	Court documents, record of incarceration
Physical, mental and emotional stress, including personal problems with family, roommate, or other significant person	Documentation from medical professional, NLU counseling center, or written statement from an attorney or professional advisor describing circumstances
Ward of state/foster care issues	Court documents, counselor/case worker letters
Academic accommodations not previously utilized	Accommodations letter from NLU, Documentation from medical professional

SAMPLE APPEAL

TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT

Student Statement

To be completed by student, typed, no more than 250 words per questions.

Please explain what extenuating circumstances you experienced that led to you being unable to meet satisfactory academic progress. Be specific and include dates and details of the events.

In what ways did this impact your academic performance? Did you reach out to your instructors and advisor/coach during this time frame to discuss your extenuating circumstances? How has this circumstance changed? Be specific and include dates and details.

What specific actions and behaviors will you take moving forward to maintain satisfactory academic progress?

What evidence/documentation are you submitting for your circumstances?

Office Use Only – To be completed by a SAP Appeal Committee Chair

Final Decision

_____ Appeal approved and student place on financial aid probation.

_____ Appeal Denied. Reason:

SAP Appeal Committee Chair Signature

Date