

# Financial Aid Appeal Guidelines

Date Adopted: June 15, 2015

## Student Financial Aid Appeal Administration:

1. The purpose of this document is to provide all LRCCD colleges with guidelines for processing student appeals. Understanding that the college's size, demographics and cultures are different, these guidelines are provided to assist to the extent possible in providing an equitable student experience regardless of which college the student chooses to attend in the Los Rios Community College District.
2. Each student who is denied aid due to the student's failure to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards will be sent a notice of the denial. If the student is eligible to appeal, the student will be sent information on the appeal procedures with the notice of denial. The primary method of providing this notice will be email, unless the student request a copy be sent to them via the U.S. Postal Service.
3. Students who are denied aid due to their failure to meet SAP standards, may regain their Title IV eligibility by meeting the SAP Standards based on their own actions, or being approved on appeal. Students who reestablish their Title IV eligibility by meeting the SAP standards are no longer required to meet the requirements of their appeal or probation criteria.
4. As part of the appeal notice, each college will provide the student with all appropriate deadlines, instructions for submitting an appeal and request that the student provide any documentation supporting the extenuating circumstances that caused the deficiency. Additionally, all notices for a student to submit an appeal will disclose that by submitting an appeal there is no guarantee the appeal will be approved and that any statements given outside the appeal committees' formal decision are not binding.
5. Each student that is required to appeal must attend a workshop conducted by the college. The workshop will cover the policies that govern financial aid and the campus support available to the student, i.e. tutoring services, DSPS, etc. The workshop may be in electronic form, i.e. D2L, PowerPoint, or may be done in person by a college staff member.
6. Each campus will have a committee to review the student financial aid appeals. The committee will be appointed by the college president or his/her designee. The committee should be designed to ensure fair and impartial consideration for each student appeal. The committee should be comprised of no less than three members with one of the members being a manager or supervisor.<sup>1</sup>
7. All financial aid appeals will be submitted in writing. Students will not be allowed to address the committee directly. Students can speak with a financial aid staff at their campus for any questions or concerns that may have regarding their SAP appeal.
8. In reviewing student financial aid appeals, committee members will weigh in part or whole as part of the decision process the following items:
  - a. The reason for the deficiency.
  - b. Documentation that supports the deficiency was extenuating and beyond the students control.
  - c. Frequency of deficiency. How many semesters has the student failed to meet SAP.
  - d. What has the student done to remediate the issue? What is the probability of the deficiency continuing?
  - e. Has the student focused on one program or has the student changed programs several times.

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<sup>1</sup>The appeals committee work should fall within the scope of the employee's regular responsibilities. If committee members other than an Assistant Financial Aid Officer(s), Financial Aid Officer(s) or Financial Aid Supervisor are appointed to review appeals, the proposed committee member's job description must be reviewed to ensure they are working within the scope of their regular responsibilities, if there are any questions if this work falls within the scope of a person's job description, please contact HR for review. Financial aid clerks (I & II) should not be assigned as members, unless absolutely necessary and appropriate out-of-class contract language has been reviewed

and implemented if appropriate. Student help may not be assigned as committee members.

- f. Has the student taken excessive courses that were not necessary for his/her program?
  - g. Has the student been approved on a prior appeal?
  - h. Has the student changed colleges and is moving more laterally in their education or is the student progressing toward a higher degree or certificate?
  - i. How much financial aid support has the student received. Is the student "borrowing" on future aid eligibility (Pell Limitations)?
  - j. Is the student taking advantage of other services on campus, i.e. EOPS, CalWorks, Tutoring, DSPS, etc.
  - k. Other items as determined appropriate by committee members.
9. Students will be informed of the outcome of the appeal committee's review via email. Students may request a notice be mailed to them of the outcome via U.S. Postal Service. The notice of outcome should indicate that the appeal is approved, denied, or pending further documentation/information. Because the appeal is approved by a majority vote, the notice of outcome should refrain from explaining the exact reasons for approval or denial. To the extent possible, any notices of "pending for documentation/information" should explain what the committee is looking to receive. Students who are required to submit new or additional information will be held to the deadlines associated with the receipt of new or added information.

## **Student Financial Aid Appeal Eligibility:**

Financial aid eligibility is determined in compliance with federal and state regulations, and institutional policies, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, medical condition, sexual orientation or other legally protected basis. If a student wishes to file a grievance they should follow the directions outlined in the college catalog.

Students who do not meet the satisfactory academic progress standards to receive aid may be eligible to appeal. Appeals are to be submitted in writing only. If the student is approved on an appeal, the student will be placed on probation, be required to have an agreed upon academic plan, and the student's academic performance will be reviewed at the end of each term.

If the student is approved on an appeal and fails to meet the requirements of their probation outlined below, the student will be denied aid and will not be eligible to appeal again until the following award year:

- a. Student takes coursework that is applicable to their degree or certificate program, and
- b. Student successfully completes at minimum 67% of all courses attempted in each term following the appeal approval, and
- c. Student completes all coursework with a term GPA of 2.0 or higher in each term following the appeal approval, and
- d. The student is within the maximum time frame allowed in any prior appeal, or
- e. Other as defined by the student academic plan.

If the student complies with the requirements of their probation, the student may continue to receive aid for the remainder of the year.

Students who fail to meet SAP standards and were either denied or did not submit an appeal, may regain Title IV eligibility by meeting the SAP Standards based on their own actions. Students who reestablish their Title IV eligibility by meeting the SAP standards while on probation are no longer required to meet the requirements of their probation criteria. Once the student has resolved his or her deficiencies and meets the SAP criteria, the student should notify the financial aid office to re-evaluate their financial aid eligibility.

If the student is denied on an appeal and corrects the deficiency for which they were initially denied and is now dismissed for another reason within the same award year, the student may be offered the opportunity to appeal again for a different deficiency. Students cannot appeal twice in a year for the same deficiency. The maximum number of times a student can appeal in an award year is two. Once a decision has been rendered the decision is final and cannot be appealed.

In order for the student to be eligible to appeal the denial of aid due to:

1. Not successfully completing at least 67% of all coursework taken at (Name of college), the student must provide the following documentation that covers all periods of enrollment (terms) at the college where the student failed to complete at least 67% of the courses attempted:
  - a. Medical documents that support that the student was medically unable to attend classes for reasons beyond the student's control, or
  - b. Verification (obituary or death certificate) that a death of the student's immediate family. Immediate family for purposes of a financial aid appeal is parents, siblings, children, spouse, or grandparents, or
  - c. Verification of military orders for military personnel and their families that have been temporarily reassigned or called to active service, or
  - d. Verification of natural disaster beyond the student's control that impacted the student's academic performance, or
  - e. Personal tragedies that are beyond the student's control and is documented by a 3rd party professional, i.e. police, courts, or medical, and
  - f. Statement from the student detailing the reason for the deficiencies, what action has been taken to ensure it will not occur in the future, and
  - g. An academic plan developed by (Name of college). The plan must at a minimum:
    - i. Require the student to acknowledge the academic requirements to receive financial aid, and
    - ii. Require the student to acknowledge his or her responsibility to be aware of the various deadlines for dropping classes, and
    - iii. Require the student to acknowledge that the student is only eligible to receive aid for classes that are applicable to his or her program of study, and
    - iv. Require the student to acknowledge they understand that support services are available including but not limited to tutoring, academic counseling, and disabled student services, to assist them in being successful, and
    - v. Student acknowledges they must complete a minimum of 67% of all courses attempted in each term following the appeal approval, and
    - vi. Student acknowledges they must complete all coursework with a term GPA of 2.0 or higher in each term following the appeal approval, and
    - vii. Students must acknowledge that they understand that their academic progress will be reviewed at the end of each term and that the review process may cause delays in receiving aid in following terms and they will be responsible for the academic outcome of these terms

Students who do not submit documentation to support their appeal for all periods of deficiency are subject to being denied financial aid.

2. Not successfully completing courses with (Name of College) cumulative GPA of at least 2.0 of all coursework, the student must provide the following documentation that covers all periods of enrollment (terms) where the student failed to complete the term with a term GPA of at least 2.0:

- a. Medical documents that support that the student was medically unable to complete the term with a GPA of at least 2.0 or higher for reasons beyond the students control, or
- b. Verification (obituary or death certificate) that a death of the student's immediate family. Immediate family for purposes of a financial aid appeal is parents, siblings, children, spouse, or grandparents, or
- c. Verification of military orders for military personnel and their families that have been temporarily reassigned or called to active service, or
- d. Verification of natural disaster beyond the students control that impacted the student's academic performance, or
- e. Personal tragedies that are beyond the students control and is documented by a 3rd party professional, i.e. police, courts, or medical, and
- f. Statement from the student detailing the reason for the deficiencies, what action has been taken to ensure it will not occur in the future, and
- g. An academic plan developed by the (Name of college). The plan must at a minimum:
  - i. Require the student to acknowledge the academic requirements to receive financial aid, and
  - ii. Require the student to acknowledge his or her responsibility to be aware of the various deadlines for dropping classes, and
  - iii. Require the student to acknowledge that the student is only eligible to receive aid for classes that are applicable to his or her program of study, and
  - iv. Require the student to acknowledge they understand that support services are available including but not limited to tutoring, academic counseling, and disabled student services, to assist them in being successful, and
  - v. Student acknowledges they must complete a minimum of 67% of all courses attempted in each term following the appeal approval, and
  - vi. Student acknowledges they must complete all coursework with a term GPA of 2.0 or higher in each term following the appeal approval, and
  - vii. Students must acknowledge that they understand that their academic progress will be reviewed at the end of each term and that the review process may cause delays in receiving aid in following terms and they will be responsible for the academic outcome of these terms

Students who do not submit documentation to support their appeal for all periods of deficiency are subject to being denied financial aid.

3. Having already attempted more than 150% of the units required for a degree or certificate program (This total attempted units includes units transferred in from other colleges and completed at other LRCCD colleges), the student must provide the following documentation and meet the requirements listed:
  - a. For students who have attempted 150% of the units required for a degree or certificate: Statement from the student detailing the reason for any deficiencies and/or reasons for remaining at this level of education and what action has been taken to ensure program is completed in a timely manner.
  - b. For students who have completed an Associates degree: Explain why you are not currently using the degree you have completed and why you are returning to a community college, and
  - c. Student takes coursework that is applicable to their degree or certificate program, and
  - d. Student completes at minimum 67% of all courses attempted in each term following the appeal approval, and
  - e. Student completes all coursework with a term GPA of 2.0 or higher in each term following the appeal approval.
  - f. An academic plan developed by the attending college. The plan must at a minimum:
    - i. Require the student to acknowledge the academic requirements to receive financial aid, and

- ii. Require the student to acknowledge his or her responsibility to be aware of the various deadlines for dropping classes, and
- iii. Require the student to acknowledge that the student is only eligible to receive aid for classes that are applicable to his or her program of study, and
- iv. Require the student to acknowledge they understand that support services are available including but not limited to tutoring, academic counseling, and disabled student services, to assist them in being successful, and
- v. Student acknowledges they must complete a minimum of 67% of all courses attempted in each term following the appeal approval, and
- vi. Student acknowledges they must complete all coursework with a term GPA of 2.0 or higher in each term following the appeal approval, and
- vii. Students must acknowledge that they understand that their academic progress will be reviewed at the end of each term and that the review process may cause delays in receiving aid in following terms and they will be responsible for the academic outcome of these terms.

Students who have attempted 150 or more units or have BA degree or higher are not eligible to appeal the denial of aid regardless of the reason. (This total attempted units includes units transferred in from other colleges and completed at other LRCCD colleges). If a student has been approved on appeal prior to reaching 150 units, the student may continue to receive aid until the end of their program as long as they meet the requirements of their probation. If the student fails to meet the requirements of their probation and is beyond 150 units, the student is no longer eligible for appeal.