



NORTHWESTERN  
UNIVERSITY

## *Graduate Financial Aid*

# Satisfactory Academic Progress

BIENEN SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
Office of Music Admission  
and Financial Aid  
711 Elgin Road – Room 1  
Evanston, IL 60208-1200  
Phone: 847-491-3141  
Fax: 847-467-7440  
[musiclife@northwestern.edu](mailto:musiclife@northwestern.edu)

---

The following guidelines are applicable to all graduate students in the Bienen School of Music who are recipients of federal financial aid. Undergraduate students should refer to the policies of the Office of Undergraduate Financial Aid. PhD student guidelines for financial aid are presented in conjunction with policies set forth by The Graduate School at Northwestern University.

Cases of improper academic and/or research conduct, and inappropriate or unprofessional behavior are considered outside the boundaries of “satisfactory academic progress” for financial aid purposes. These cases are covered separately in the Bienen School of Music Graduate Studies Handbook ([www.music.northwestern.edu/academics/degrees-and-certificates/index.html](http://www.music.northwestern.edu/academics/degrees-and-certificates/index.html)), and the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access ([www.northwestern.edu/hr/eo](http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/eo)). These cases are addressed according to the University’s existing disciplinary procedures and may result in a range of sanctions up to and including exclusion from the University.

### Satisfactory Academic Progress

Federal guidelines require that students make real and measurable progress toward degree completion in order to continue to receive federal aid. This requirement is called “Satisfactory Academic Progress” or SAP. The Office of Music Admission and Financial Aid will review SAP annually. There are four sets of criteria that may be taken into account when determining SAP – students must meet all four criteria to remain eligible:

- Grade Point Average
- Pace of degree completion
- Maximum completion timeframe
- Program- or department-specific criteria

**Grade point average** – Students must maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 (B) to remain eligible for financial aid. Students whose overall grade average is below 3.0, or who have more than three incomplete grades will not pass this review. Coursework taken on a Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grading basis will be taken into account. Students who return to the Bienen School of Music after being academically dismissed must complete one quarter of full-time graduate study with a 3.0 GPA before they can regain financial aid eligibility.

**Pace of degree completion** – To be eligible for financial aid, graduate students must be enrolled full-time (at least three units per quarter during coursework). You must complete and pass two-thirds (67%) of all attempted units. Only coursework at the 300, 400, and 500 levels may count towards graduate study, and therefore towards federal financial aid eligibility. The intended length of coursework (number of quarters) for each degree program (located in the Graduate Financial Aid Handbook, [www.music.northwestern.edu/admission/graduate-financial-aid](http://www.music.northwestern.edu/admission/graduate-financial-aid)) will be taken into consideration.

*Note: You may not use repeated, passed courses to maintain full-time status or to fulfill additional degree requirements.*

Students in the Master of Music degree may not transfer graduate credit to the Bienen School of Music. Students in the Doctor of Music program may transfer up to three units in music academic subjects with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. Approved transfer units for the Doctor of Music degree will be counted in the calculation of attempted and completed units towards degree completion, but approval of transfer credit by the Director of Graduate Studies must be communicated in writing to the Office of Music Admission and Financial Aid.

Maximum completion timeframe – Master of Music (MM) students must complete degree requirements within the intended length of each degree, with the requirement that at least three quarters are taken consecutively. The number of units for which you receive federal financial aid may not exceed 150% of the units required for graduation. Registration in Master’s Recital Continuation or Resident Master’s Study beyond the intended length of study is not eligible for any form of financial aid. Students who drop/withdraw from a required course in their final quarter for reasons of health, family emergency or death, etc., may appeal for additional financial aid in subsequent quarters to complete the unfinished requirements.

Doctor of Music (DM) students have seven (7) calendar years from the date of initial matriculation to complete all degree requirements. During the required two years of coursework (three years for those entering the Composition DM without a Master’s degree), the number of units for which you receive federal financial aid may not exceed 150% of the units required for coursework completion. After coursework is completed, DM students will remain eligible to receive federal financial aid while in doctoral continuation, provided they have met all the prerequisites for approval to register in DM continuation outlined in the Graduate Studies Handbook. Students who are not approved to register for DM continuation are ineligible for financial aid. Students in DM continuation who receive financial aid must achieve candidacy for the DM by the end of their fourth year of registration. Students seeking financial aid in their fifth, sixth, or seventh year of registration may be asked to provide a written record of correspondence with their doctoral committee and/or primary advisor that includes the timely completion of deadlines for any outstanding requirements. Failure to provide proof of progress towards degree completion beyond the fourth year of registration may result in a failed SAP review.

*Note: Merit-based financial aid will only be offered for the intended length of coursework for each degree.*

Program- or department-specific criteria – Each program and/or department within the Bienen School of Music may require additional criteria for degree completion not outlined in this document. Examples might include exit examinations, thesis projects, studio class attendance, foreign language requirements, portfolios, etc. These requirements must be published in the Graduate Studies Handbook for the year in which the student matriculated in order to be included in a SAP review.

### Financial Aid Suspension

Students who fail the annual SAP review will be declared ineligible for all forms of financial aid. Notice of financial aid suspension will be sent to a student’s Northwestern University email address. It is the student’s responsibility to inform their instructors of any academic implications that may result from the suspension of financial aid. Students who remain enrolled in coursework at the Bienen School of Music after receipt of a suspension notice are solely responsible for payment of charges to their student account for that quarter. Financial aid may be reinstated as the result of a successful appeal; however, the Bienen School of Music is not responsible for late payment or late registration fees that are incurred as a result of the suspension of financial aid.

Students who dispute a grade for a required course, who receive an incomplete grade, or whose grades have not been submitted by their instructor may still be subject to financial aid suspension. It is the responsibility of the student to reconcile any situations that impede their financial aid eligibility. Financial aid can be reinstated (in some cases retroactively) as the result of a successful appeal.

If a student is the recipient of Federal College Work-Study, they should cease to perform their duties upon receiving notification of financial aid suspension. Regardless of whether a financial aid appeal has been filed, no payment will be made for work performed during the period of financial aid ineligibility. Students who are successful in an appeal for the reinstatement of financial aid may have their work award reinstated. Students who are on a graduate work stipend (not FCWS) should only cease to perform their duties if their financial aid cancellation notice includes a cancellation of the work stipend award.

Students will not be given a financial aid warning period. It is the responsibility of the student to maintain sufficient progress towards degree completion and a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher at all times. The Office of Music Admission and Financial Aid reserves the right to suspend students who completely withdraw or fail to complete any courses in a term, and may ask the student to submit an appeal upon subsequent registration.

### Appeal of Financial Aid Suspension

If your financial aid has been suspended because of failure to meet the minimum SAP requirements, and you feel that severe or unusual circumstances have kept you from making progress toward your degree, you may submit an appeal. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Director of Music Admission and Financial Aid. The appeal may be submitted via email provided it comes from a Northwestern University email address (@u.northwestern.edu). Decisions on a financial aid appeal will be made in a timely manner, and will be communicated in writing to the student.

An appeal of financial aid cancellation must include:

- Reason for failure to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (e.g., death in the family, severe illness, etc.)
- A description of what has changed that will now allow SAP to be achieved
- Plan of action for finishing all degree requirements, including a time-frame
- A signature from your academic advisor to document that you have discussed this plan of action together

The appeal committee reserves the right to request any supplemental information that may help in making a decision to reinstate financial aid.

Students who are readmitted to the Bienen School of Music after an absence, and whose former coursework indicates that they are below the minimum SAP requirements, will not initially be eligible for federal financial aid. However, students may submit an appeal as described above for the first quarter of re-entry.

Current NU students who are applying for financial aid for the first time, and whose former coursework indicates that they are below the minimum SAP requirements, will not initially be eligible for federal financial aid. However, students may submit an appeal as described above to receive federal financial aid.

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to:

Ryan O'Mealey  
Director of Music Admission and Financial Aid  
847-491-3141  
[r-omealey@northwestern.edu](mailto:r-omealey@northwestern.edu)