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# **Self-Paced Degree Program Financial Aid Handbook**

## What is the Self-Paced Degree Program (SPDP)?

Upper Iowa University (UIU) offers undergraduate self-paced correspondence courses as an option for students pursuing a college degree. A correspondence course is a home-study course in which UIU provides instructional material to students who are not physically attending classes in a UIU classroom. UIU offers two convenient formats to complete coursework in the Self-Paced Degree Program (SPDP), web-based and paper based. Correspondence courses are self-driven and examinations are given when each portion of the class is completed.

### Academic Year

For the purpose of administering federal financial aid, the Federal Title IV academic year is defined in credit hours and instructional time. Students seeking financial aid for the Self-Paced Degree Program must meet the set academic year requirements of 24 credit hours and 24 months of instructional time. The financial aid office measures successful progression of coursework to determine eligibility throughout the academic year.

### Am I Eligible for Federal Financial aid for SPDP?

Students seeking financial aid must be officially accepted into Upper Iowa University, be degree seeking, and enrolled **at least half-time** for Federal Student Aid (FSA) purposes. **Students registered for 2 courses (6 credits) per each 6 month enrollment period are considered to be at a half-time status.** FSA funding covers the cost of tuition and an estimated book allowance for each course for students who meet eligibility requirements.

For Federal Student Aid (FSA) purposes, Self-Paced Degree Program (SPDP) courses are part of a non-term correspondence program with an

academic definition of 24 credit hours in 24 months of instructional time. Students seeking financial aid need to take a minimum of 2 self-paced classes for each 6 month enrollment and successfully complete the defined academic year of 24 credit hours during 2 calendar years (24 months) of enrollment before moving to the next academic year in the program. Courses for the SPDP program are 6 months in length.

Eligible degree seeking students can receive financial aid in one program of choice per enrollment period. **Prior enrollments must not overlap new enrollment periods for FSA purposes.**

Students may enroll for concurrent enrollment periods, however for FSA purposes, the student must choose which program they want to utilize their financial aid eligibility for. You cannot receive financial aid for the self-paced program *and* center/online courses. However, if you qualify and take out enough financial aid, you can utilize any overpayment to pay for self-paced coursework.

**Once a student begins a self-paced award year, they are locked into the program and must adhere to their enrollment period. Self-Paced courses taken outside of the enrollment period will not qualify for aid and if taken must be paid utilizing another payment method other than financial aid.**

Students receiving FSA funds in another program may choose to register for 1 or more additional courses through SPDP during the same timeframe, as well, by using partial overpayments received and/or through other payment methods.

### Financial Aid Process

Students must complete the [FAFSA](#) annually. UIU's school code is 001893 and must be listed on the application in order for the university to receive your information. Upon our receipt of the FAFSA, students will receive email

notifications for any missing information that is required to complete their file. The email will direct you to [Net Partner](#), the UIU financial aid portal. This site provides important information including downloadable forms, financial aid eligibility and disbursement dates. Students who wish to opt out of electronic transactions and receive paper notifications must contact the financial aid office for further instruction.

Email aid offer notifications are sent upon student file completion **and** when registration for the first enrollment period (at least 6 credit hours) has taken place. If a student qualifies for a federal grant, it will be accepted automatically. However, students are required to either accept or decline federal loan eligibility in the Net Partner portal. Declined aid eligibility is not replaced with other aid sources.

### Cost of Attendance

Self-paced students enrolled at a half-time status will have federal aid eligibility calculated based on cost of attendance. Tuition charges per class are \$990. Books and supplies are estimated to cost \$175 per class; therefore, the cost of attendance includes tuition charges and an **estimated** book allowance. **The Self-Paced Degree Program cost of attendance does not include additional allowances for personal expenses, transportation or room and board.**

Federal aid eligibility may cover the cost of tuition and an estimated book allowance for those who qualify and complete the process. The cost of attendance is based on the number of classes registered in a 6 month enrollment period. Students seeking aid must be registered in a minimum of 2 classes per 6 month enrollment to be considered at half-time status to qualify for financial aid. Students may enroll in up to 4 courses per 6 month enrollment period but aid is calculated for 2 classes per enrollment period, unless otherwise requested by the student. The cost of attendance is based on the cost of each class (\$990), as well as an estimated book allowance (\$175) for each class.

For example, if a student is signed up for 2 SPDP courses they would be awarded a maximum of \$2300 for that enrollment (Example A). This reflects how FSA funds will cover the actual cost of courses and includes a book allowance. If a student is signed up for 3 SPDP courses you would be awarded (upon request) a maximum of \$3450 for that enrollment (Example B).

#### Example A

2 classes + 2 books = total award  
( $\$990 \times 2 = \$1980$ ) + ( $\$175 \times 2 = \$350$ ) = \$2505

#### Example B

3 classes + 3 books = total award  
( $\$990 \times 3 = \$2970$ ) + ( $\$175 \times 3 = \$525$ ) = \$3495

Student aid eligibility reflects a half-time status. The Financial Aid Office (FAO) determines eligibility from FAFSA information. Self-Paced awards are calculated using the cost of attendance and half-time federal Pell chart (for those who qualify). Federal loan eligibility (subsidized and unsubsidized) is awarded based on grade level, cost of attendance, and any other estimated financial assistance (EFA) received (for example, military tuition assistance, partnership discounts, or employer reimbursement). The maximum federal borrowing loan limits apply, as determined by the U.S. Department of Education.

If your financial need or full cost of attendance is met, you may not be eligible for additional aid without reducing your previous award.

### When can I start my SPDP Classes?

Students may begin their SPDP classes at 12 different times throughout the year, on the first day of the month. Each class enrollment period is 6 months in length. Once you finish the first (6-month) enrollment period, you can begin your second set of courses the following month. For financial aid purposes, the start of the award year begins with classes beginning on

May 1. For instance, classes starting on May 1, 2020, are considered part of the 2020-2021 school year, for financial aid purposes only.

## **Types of Financial Aid Available for SPDP**

### ***Federal Pell Grant***

The Federal Pell Grant program is designed to provide financial assistance to eligible undergraduate students. In order to determine eligibility for the Federal Pell Grant a student must annually complete the FAFSA. Aid eligibility amounts may vary according to the cost of attendance and enrollment status and are subject to maximum borrowing loan limits as set by the U.S. Department of Education. For FSA purposes, students enrolled in the SPDP program are always considered to be enrolled at half-time status, therefore, Pell Grant is also calculated and awarded this way.

### ***Federal Direct Student Loans***

The Federal Direct Student Loan Program includes both subsidized (need-based) and unsubsidized (non-need-based) loans. You may have either loan type or a combination on your award.

During the time you are enrolled at least half-time, the federal government will pay the interest on your Subsidized Federal Direct Student Loan(s). Principal payments begin after the six-month grace period. Unsubsidized Federal Direct Student Loan interest will accrue interest during the in-school periods. You have the option of paying on the interest while you are a student or adding the interest to the principal of your loan (capitalizing).

To qualify for a Federal Direct Student Loan, a student must file a FAFSA, be accepted into UIU, be degree seeking, and enrolled for at least a half-time status. Students who qualify will receive an award letter showing the loan type.

Loans must be accepted through the Net Partner portal.

For information regarding the lifetime aggregate borrowing limits for these loans, contact the Federal Department of Education or [National Student Loan Data System](#).

Federal Borrower Exit counseling for student loan borrowers is required when you graduate or cease half-time enrollment. It can be completed online here:

<https://studentaid.gov/app/counselingInstructions.action?counselingType=exit>

## **Outside Awards**

Many employers and agencies extend educational benefits or scholarships to their employees. Students should contact their employer's human resource office to see if any assistance is available. Please note that outside awards are considered as estimated financial assistance towards meeting your financial need. If your outside assistance combined with need-based aid exceeds your cost of attendance, an adjustment of your financial aid package would be required. Please report outside awards to the FAO as the information becomes available.

## **How will I Receive my Financial Aid?**

Once your aid eligibility is calculated and you have accepted it in your Net Partner portal, the coursework is tracked to determine completion requirements. Financial aid is awarded yearly and disbursed to eligible students after successfully completing each 6 month enrollment in the payment period, throughout the program's academic year. Any earned aid is disbursed and applied toward the self-paced charges.

Self-paced progression is measured by successful completion of credit hours earned and months of instructional time completed in the defined academic year. Students will not advance to their next annual loan limit, nor receive additional disbursements until successful completion is achieved.

Federal Pell grant recipients will qualify for the first half of their Pell Grant eligibility after successfully completing 25% of the coursework in the program's defined academic year (see page 1). The second half of the Pell Grant eligibility is disbursed for students after successful completion of 75% of their required coursework for the defined academic year.

If you decide to accept federal loan eligibility, you will need to complete the required amount of coursework by the end date of the courses to receive a loan disbursement.

**\* Course Extensions do not apply for financial aid purposes. If you file for a course extension, you will not qualify for the aid you were awarded.\***

Completion standards must be met for the program to qualify for additional eligibility in future enrollments. Students will not advance to their next annual loan limit, nor receive additional disbursements until the successful completion of 24 credits and 24 months of instructional time is met.

Financial aid eligibility will disburse for each 6 month enrollment period and **will not** disburse early for students meeting their completion requirements prior to the end date.

### **Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards and Duration of Eligibility for Receiving Financial Aid at UIU**

The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires students to maintain satisfactory

academic progress toward their degree in order to receive financial aid. At UIU, these standards apply to students who are receiving or applying for financial aid from one or more of the various federal, state, or institutional grant, scholarship, work, or loan programs.

The [Upper Iowa University Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards](#) for Financial Aid apply to all students seeking to establish or maintain financial aid eligibility. **These standards apply to a student's entire degree program including terms in which financial aid was not applied for or disbursed.** These standards contain both a quantitative (cumulative credit hours earned divided by cumulative credit hours attempted) component and a qualitative (cumulative GPA) component. These are the minimum standards required in order to maintain financial aid eligibility.

#### **SAP Determination:**

The Financial Aid Office evaluates [SAP](#) for all students (excluding self-paced students) at the end of each semester of their current academic year to determine financial aid eligibility for the next semester. Self-paced students are evaluated, once all grades have been received, at the regular semester evaluation period following the conclusion of their self-paced enrollment period. Students who have failed to meet federal SAP requirements are ineligible to receive any federal or state financial aid.

#### **Duration of Eligibility**

Students must earn two-thirds (66.66% rounded) of their attempted credit hours (on a cumulative basis) in order to continue to receive financial aid. Students who do not achieve this quantitative measure of progress toward earning a degree or certificate have the option of appealing for the restoration of financial aid eligibility for a probationary period. Student appeals should include a discussion of the factors which contributed to the lack of progress and the measures planned by the

student (including an academic improvement plan) to assist in a return to satisfactory academic progress compliance. Probationary periods will be determined on a per student basis.

General financial aid eligibility will terminate when the credit hours required for a specific degree/program are earned or the student has attempted greater than 150% of the credit hours required for a specific degree/program.

### **Grade Point Average (GPA) Requirements**

Students must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average for the appropriate grade level listed below:

Freshman – 1.75 (0 to 29 completed credits)  
Sophomore – 1.90 (30-59 completed credits)  
Junior and above – 2.00 (60+ completed credits)

Students who do not meet this qualitative measure of progress toward earning a degree or certificate have the option of appealing for the restoration of financial aid eligibility for a probationary period. Appeals should include a discussion of the factors which contributed to the cumulative GPA and the measures planned by the student (including an Academic Improvement Plan) to assist in a return to satisfactory academic progress compliance. Probationary periods will be determined on a per student basis.

### **Transfer Credits**

UIU will count transfer credits accepted towards a student's educational program as both attempted and successfully completed hours. These credits will be included in completions and maximum timeframe calculations but excluded from the semester GPA calculations.

### **Failure to Meet Requirements**

Students who do not meet the [SAP](#) requirements jeopardize their eligibility for financial aid and are placed in one of the following statuses:

**Financial Aid Warning:** *An undergraduate or graduate student who does not meet SAP requirements will be placed on Financial Aid Warning which allows the student to receive financial aid for one additional semester. The student will be evaluated for SAP again at the end of the warning period.*

**Financial Aid Suspension:** *An undergraduate or graduate student who fails to meet SAP requirements after Financial Aid Warning is placed on Financial Aid Suspension and is not eligible to receive financial aid without a successful appeal. Should the student not wish to appeal, the student must meet SAP requirements before aid eligibility can be re-established.*

**Financial Aid Probation:** *An undergraduate or graduate student who has successfully appealed a Financial Aid Suspension will be placed on Probation for one semester. If the student meets the SAP standards at the end of the Probation semester, the student's status will reset back to passing SAP. If they do not meet the SAP standards at the end of the probation, the student will be placed back into Financial Aid Suspension.*

## Withdrawing from Self-Paced Courses and Consequences for Financial Aid

The Higher Education Amendments of 1998, as well as the program integrity regulations in 2010, set forth regulations governing the treatment of Title IV funds when a student withdraws from an institution.

There are two types of withdrawals that fall under the return to Title IV (R2T4) federal calculation regulations:

**Withdrawals (W)** – A student initiates the withdrawal from a course by contacting their academic advisor or by completing the Course Withdrawal form on the MY UIU Portal.

**Administrative Withdrawals (AW)** A student is considered to be Administratively Withdrawn if no assignments are received and verified by the instructor within the first 60 days of the enrollment period. Students who are administratively withdrawn for non-submission of assignments are charged an administrative fee.

## Enrollment Changes

For **financial aid purposes**, students must take 2 sets of courses (6 month enrollment per set) and successfully complete the coursework prior to the end date of each 6 month enrollment to qualify for awarded aid eligibility for the payment period (12 months in length). Students who do not successfully complete the assignments within each enrollment or do not re-enroll within 45 days of completing the first set of courses for a second enrollment during the payment period will be considered withdrawn and a refund calculation is required. Students ceasing enrollment during a 12 month payment period are required to complete the **Self-paced Degree Program Financial Aid Enrollment Intentions form** to indicate their intentions for future enrollment. Enrollment changes could affect current and future eligibility.

Students must be enrolled in a minimum of 6 credits (2 courses) each enrollment period to be eligible for aid. **At any point in time when a change results in a student's enrollment status being less than half time (less than 6 credits) in a 6 month enrollment, eligibility will cease and a re-calculation may be processed.**

\*There is a course withdrawal fee for each class you withdraw from.\*

## R2T4 Self-Paced Example:

\$4,660 = Institutional Charges

\$4,660 = Title IV Loans

\$0 = Title IV Grants

\$4,660 = Total Title IV aid

Student withdrew after completing 1 out of 14 assignments.

Percent Earned  $1/14 = 7.1\%$

Percent Unearned  $100\% - 7.1\% = 92.9\%$

Amount of Title IV aid earned:

$\$4,660 \times 7.1\% = \$330.86$

Unearned Title IV due to the school:

$\$4,329 \times 92.9\% = \$4021.64$

Amount for school to return: Compare the amount of Title IV aid to be returned (\$4,329) to the amount of unearned charges (\$4021), and return the lesser amount.

## UIU will return aid as follows:

- Title IV Loans \$4,022
- Title IV Grants \$0



The example shown above does not reflect every student R2T4 refund calculation that may exist. More detailed calculation examples are available in the Financial Aid Office. The UIU refund policy is available in the [UIU Academic Catalog](#) and online.

Upper Iowa University reserves the right to amend the Title IV Return of Funds Policy at any time in order to comply with Federal regulations. Please contact the Financial Aid Office to discuss individual circumstances.

### **Tuition Adjustments for Withdrawal**

Withdrawing from classes is an expensive decision and may change your financial aid eligibility. Your academic advisor is available to discuss this decision with you. A grade of **W** (withdrawal) is posted for any course from which a student withdraws.

Tuition refunds are determined upon receiving a request for withdrawal, using the number of assignments submitted as compared to the total due. Tuition adjustment percentages are available in the [UIU Academic catalog](#).

### **Repeat Coursework**

Students (who are utilizing financial aid) enrolled in the Self-Paced Degree program, a non-term based program, may not receive credit for re-taking coursework. If you earn an F grade in your self-paced coursework, you will not qualify for financial aid when/if you choose to retake the failed class/classes.

### **F Grades**

Students who receive F grades in their coursework will be subject to an R2T4 (Return of Title IV Funds Calculation) to determine how much of their financial aid eligibility has been earned. The calculation is based on how much of the coursework was completed and how

much was required. Students utilizing federal financial aid are not allowed to repeat coursework (including classes with an F grade) in the self-paced program. Students who choose to repeat coursework will be required to use another form of payment to pay for charges incurred.

### **Whom can I contact for questions about financial aid?**

UIU's Financial Aid Office has specialists who can assist you in understanding your award eligibility and other questions related to your financial aid. Please contact our office when you need help at 1-800-553-4150, or email: [financialaid@uiu.edu](mailto:financialaid@uiu.edu)



