

Writing a Financial Aid SAP Appeal

Common Grounds for SAP Appeal Letters:

A SAP appeal serves as a lifeline for students facing adverse circumstances that impede their ability to maintain satisfactory academic progress (SAP). Common circumstances that typically justify such appeals are:

Serious Health Issues: Student grappling with significant health challenges that hinder their coursework completion may qualify for a SAP appeal. This includes personal health issues or those affecting immediate family members.

Family Emergencies: Instances of serious illness, injury, or bereavement within the student's immediate family can warrant a SAP appeal.

Mental Health Struggles: Students contending with mental health issues that substantially impact their academic performance may be eligible for a SAP appeal.

Domestic Challenges: Adverse situations within the student's household or immediate family, such as financial crises or domestic upheavals, may justify a SAP appeal.

Timeframe Situations: Students that are not able to complete and graduate from their program within 150% of the program required credits, may justify a SAP appeal.

What is the Goal of the Appeal Letter?

The primary objective of your SAP appeal letter is to persuade the review committee that your academic setbacks were attributable to extenuating circumstances.

Explain your Situation

Provide a detailed account of your circumstances, highlighting how they adversely affected your academic performance. Clearly explain how your situation aligns with the grounds for a SAP appeal, and how your circumstances were affected during the time you were attending school.

Outline your Corrective Action Plan

Showcase the steps you've taken to address the challenges you faced. Highlight any proactive measures you undertook during the semester, such as seeking support from instructors or accessing relevant resources. Reflect on the lessons learned from your experience and illustrate your commitment to personal and academic growth.

Present a concrete plan outlining how you intend to overcome the obstacles and enhance your academic performance moving forward. Emphasize your readiness to implement strategies to prevent a recurrence of similar challenges. Even if you cannot entirely mitigate the extenuating circumstances, demonstrate your ability to navigate them more effectively while maintaining academic progress.

By articulating your circumstances, demonstrating growth, and outlining a proactive plan, you can bolster the effectiveness of your SAP appeal letter and increase your chances of securing the reinstatement of financial aid.

What additional material should I include in my SAP Appeal?

If you possess official documentation that corroborates your circumstances, it's advisable to include it alongside your appeal letter. While this list isn't exhaustive, it encompasses several key documents you may consider including:

Medical Documentation: Notes or reports from healthcare professionals, such as doctors or psychologists, can substantiate health-related challenges affecting your academic performance and can provide confirmation of the dates your circumstances occurred.

Legal Documents: Police reports or legal notices, such as eviction notices or accident reports can provide concrete evidence of extenuating circumstances.

Academic Support: If you sought assistance from professors or academic advisors during the semester, including notes or emails documenting these interactions can strengthen your appeal.

Examples of Nonacceptable Circumstances for SAP Appeal Letters:

These examples are not extenuating circumstances and not acceptable circumstances for appeals:

- Your need for financial aid
- Lack of knowledge of SAP standards
- You did not know what classes to register for
- You were too young/immature or not focused on your education
- You did not like the instructor
- You did not know what major to choose
- You stopped attending classes
- You have already used the circumstance previously and cannot provide any new information

SAP Appeal Examples

First Paragraph: Detailed explanation of extenuating circumstance(s) that contributed to your current academic standing.

Example:

This letter is to appeal to the Financial Aid Appeal Committee so I may continue receiving Federal Financial Aid at Southeast Community College. The reason(s) I have not met Satisfactory Academic Progress is...

- ✓ Explain in detail any extenuating circumstance(s) that contributed to your current academic standing.
- ✓ Provide documentation supporting your extenuating circumstance if possible (medical records, funeral announcements, etc.).

Second Paragraph: Explain how circumstances have changed and will allow you to perform at a satisfactory level. Conclude with reiterating why the committee should consider your appeal, and explain a specific action plan that you will follow to attain academic success. Use specific examples and supporting documentation is strongly encouraged.

Example:

- ✓ Changes you have identified as beneficial in any of the following areas: academics, campus activities, family, social, work, etc.
- ✓ Explain the tools you will use (ex: tutoring, workshops, etc.).
- ✓ What are your goals for next semester and how will you achieve them?

First SAP Appeal Example:

First Paragraph: Describe what happened that prevented you from meeting SAP.

Example:

My first semester at SCC found me overwhelmed due to attending classes and taking care of my family. I was unsure how or where to seek out help, and as a result, developed anxiety. The anxiety felt debilitating and I struggled to get up each day and go to class and face life. At one point, I stopped attending classes because I didn't even care anymore. I was so far behind in my classes and my school life felt hopeless and my anxiety increased even more.

Second Paragraph: Describe what has or will change and what support systems are in place to ensure success.

Example:

After that first semester, I got connected to the Student Support Center and sought out support. I have met with CAPS and/or Disability Services and took a reduced course load. I met with my college advisor to map out what classes I need to take to get me back on track

and how to approach the work. I have started seeing a psychiatrist and I am on medication to control my anxiety as well as learning every day coping tools. As you will see, my grades for the last enrollment period have improved over those in my past enrollment periods, and I am confident I am able to handle the rigors of school life again.

Third Paragraph: Tell us about your supporting documentation

Example:

- Verification of appointment times at CAPS, Disability Services, Advisor, Student Support Center, psychologist, etc.
- Letter from psychiatrist confirming care and dates.

Second SAP Appeal Example:

First Paragraph: Describe what happened that prevented you from meeting SAP.

Example:

I am writing to help explain why I was unable to meet the conditions in my first SAP appeal. I was involved in a car accident in early November and severely broke my right arm. I was in the hospital for three days and then had to undergo physical therapy, which meant missing class time. I sought out accommodations through Student Support Services, unfortunately due to the timing of the semester, it was difficult to get back on track and my instructors have given me incomplete grades.

Second Paragraph: Describe what has or will change and what support systems are in place to ensure success.

Example:

In spring, I have an approved reduced course load which will help me manage my work along with my continuing doctor's appointments. I plan to work on my incompletes during the break, with a goal of having them done by the end of the spring enrollment periods. My physical therapy will continue in spring, but with the help of accommodations, I am better equipped to juggle the appointments and work. I am expected to be at 95% recovery by the end of the spring term.

Third Paragraph: Tell us about your supporting documentation

Example:

- Police report of accident
- Doctor's note
- Physical therapy appointment confirmations
- Supporting statement from instructor

Third SAP Appeal Example:

First Paragraph: Describe what happened that prevented you from meeting SAP.

Example:

During the spring term, my grandmother's health declined due to various health problems accompanied with her elderly age. I come from a single-mother household and my grandmother lives with us. There was no one to help take care of her or to take her to appointments other than my mother and me. I was not able to attend all of my classes due to this disruption of my school schedule, and my homework suffered.

Second Paragraph: Describe what has or will change and what support systems are in place to ensure success.

Example:

At the start of the New Year, my uncle moved back into the area to help take care of my grandmother while she receives ongoing treatment for her illness. I will be able to register for classes next semester and will attend them regularly. I will be able to focus on my schoolwork in a way I was not able to during the spring term. I can meet with a tutor after my classes if I feel I need a tutor, since my

schedule is not arranged around grandmother's appointments and care. I can continue to help with her care when I am able, but my first priority is attending classes and completing homework so I can complete my classes and graduate from my program.

Third Paragraph: Tell us about your supporting documentation.

Example:

- Evidence of medical bills or doctor's appointments
- Letter from grandmother's doctor or other medical professional dealing with her care.

Fourth SAP Appeal Example:

First Paragraph: Describe what happened that prevented you from meeting SAP.

Example:

I am at Max Timeframe because I was enrolled in the Agribusiness program. I graduated from that program with a Horticulture focus. My career plan is to own my own greenhouse business one day, so after I graduated with my Agribusiness Degree, I decided to return to school in the Business Administration program to gain additional knowledge in Marketing and Entrepreneurship.

Second Paragraph: Describe what has or will change and what support systems are in place to ensure success.

Example:

I have been meeting regularly with my Business advisor to take classes required for my program and I am on track to graduate next year. I have a strong support system at home and have a dedicated study time to ensure my goal of passing all my classes. I will not drop any classes unnecessarily.

Third Paragraph: Tell us about your supporting documentation.

Example:

I have enclosed a copy of my current schedule which shows the Business classes I am taking, as well as the planned classes my advisor and I have set up to show that my graduation is on track. I have also attached my unofficial transcript from SCC, showing graduation from my previous program, as well as showing the classes I have completed in the Business program.
