

Southern Regional Technical College Definition of a Qualifying Emergency

A world-wide pandemic known as Coronavirus (COVID-19) began affecting the United States in the Spring of 2020. As a result of the virus and the National State of Emergency declared by the President of the United States and the State of Emergency Declared by the Governor of Georgia, SRTC moved all Spring Semester 2020 (202014) courses to an online/distance education format and closed the college to the public beginning on March 16, 2020.

The Department of Education released guidance to rules for administering federal financial aid during the federally declared major disaster, as defined in The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act in 42 U.S.C. § 5122(2) (Stafford Act).

In the guidance, each college was directed to establish the definition of a “qualifying emergency” and apply that definition to the response implemented when assisting students through the pandemic in terms of academic progression and distribution of federal financial aid as well as emergency financial assistance provided during the pandemic.

SRTC, hereby, establishes the following definition for a qualifying emergency:

A qualifying emergency is defined by SRTC as a change to the normal operations of the college due to an event that affects not only the college but also the communities it serves in such a manner as to greatly alter day-to-day operations. Changes to the delivery of the academic coursework that affects every class and every student enrolled, changes to the ability to provide face to face service to students and the public, and the widespread disruption of general services as a result of a declared national state of emergency or state issued state of emergency.

SRTC understands that students enrolled in Spring Semester 2020 are highly likely to be experiencing one or more of the below challenges in relations to COVID-19 responses from the College and in their personal lives.

1. Difficulty accessing coursework due to lack of reliable internet services
2. Difficulty accessing coursework due to access to a computer, tablet, or other electronic device suitable for class
3. Inability to complete required lab hours as required for program due to college closure or any of the issues below
4. Loss of childcare
5. Loss of personal income or family income as a result of COVID-19
6. Works in an essential job capacity and work shifts have increased
7. Taking care of family exposed to COVID-19
8. Taking care of family that are most at risk for COVID-19 and ordered to shelter in place
9. Loss of access to medical and mental health treatment due to shelter in place
10. Military Reservist activated in response to COVID-19
11. Other hardships that can be directly related to COVID-19

Understanding that SRTC cannot collect documentation for all difficulties that students are facing in relation to COVID-19, SRTC will provide a waiver to all students who withdraw or stop attending as of March 16, 2020 during Spring Semester for the return of federal financial aid funds not earned at the time of the withdrawal and completion rate calculation for Satisfactory Academic Progress.

References:

Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-declaring-national-emergency-concerning-novel-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak/>
2020 State of Georgia Executive Orders

<https://gov.georgia.gov/executive-action/executive-orders/2020-executive-orders>

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| 3/14/2020 | Georgia Declaration of Public Health State of Emergency |
| 3/16/2020 | School Closures to Stop Spread of COVID-19 |
| 3/26/2020 | Extended School Closures to Stop Spread of COVID-19 |
| 4/02/2020 | Closing Public Elementary and Secondary Schools through the end of 2019-2020 school year to stop the spread of COVID-19 |
| 4/02/2020 | Issuing a statewide shelter in place to stop the spread of COVID-19 |
| 4/09/2020 | Extended statewide shelter in place through May 1 |