

Academic Setbacks Pose Broader Risks for University Students

From academic penalties to mental pressure, here's what to expect - and how to turn it around before it gets worse.

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, June 17, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- New findings from education analysts highlight the far-reaching consequences of failing a single module at university, with implications that extend beyond academic performance. These include delayed graduation, the potential loss of financial aid, and increased mental health strain.



A stressed student preparing for exams

In most degree programmes globally, core modules serve as prerequisites for more advanced coursework. Failure to pass these modules can delay students' academic progress and, in some cases, risk their continued enrollment.

Financial Implications Across Countries

Failing modules can significantly impact student funding eligibility. In South Africa, beneficiaries of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) must repay failed modules, and repeated failures may jeopardize future funding. Similar policies exist internationally. In the United States, federal student aid mandates a minimum GPA of 2.0 and a course completion rate of 67% to maintain funding eligibility. In the United Kingdom, Student Finance England may withhold future financial support if students fall short of academic progress requirements. In Australia, students using HECS-HELP can lose access if they fail more than 50% of their enrolled subjects.

Psychological and Institutional Impact

Academic failure can have emotional consequences. A 2021 study by Salimzadeh et al. found that students experiencing academic failure often report elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and shame. First-year students are particularly vulnerable as they navigate the transition to higher education. Without proper support, these challenges can contribute to a decline in well-being and academic engagement.

In addition to emotional tolls, multiple module failures can lead to academic probation or exclusion. South African universities such as the University of Pretoria, the University of Johannesburg, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal may classify students who fail four or more modules as high-risk for dropout. Institutional responses can include academic warnings, probation, or permanent exclusion.

Lack of Awareness and Intervention

One contributing factor to repeated failure is the lack of student awareness around institutional pass/fail thresholds. In South Africa, a 50% score is typically required to pass. In other countries, passing marks often range from 60% to 70%. Without understanding these criteria, students may overestimate their performance or fail to take corrective action in time. Early intervention — such as retaking modules, adjusting academic loads, or seeking academic support — can be essential in preventing further setbacks.

Role of Parents and Academic Support Structures

According to the American Psychological Association, students perform better when supported by “authoritative” parental figures — those who maintain both warmth and structure. Open communication, without assigning blame, is encouraged to help students address underlying issues such as poor time management or academic stress.

Tutoring continues to be an effective method of academic recovery. A global review of more than 200 studies found that high-impact tutoring, particularly when personalized and consistent, improves learning outcomes and academic confidence. Platforms such as [Prep2Perfection](#) offer tailored tutoring solutions by connecting students with peers from their own universities who understand institution-specific course demands.

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