



PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT

When there are unusual circumstances that impact a student's federal student aid eligibility, a Financial Aid Counselor may use professional judgment on a case-by-case basis to adjust the student's cost of attendance or the data used to calculate the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Adequate documentation for such adjustments must substantiate any unique situations of individual students.

Special Circumstances refer to changes in financial situations that justify an aid administrator adjusting the data elements on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). For example, recent unemployment, changes to family income, assets, etc.

Unusual Circumstances refer to the conditions that justify an aid administrator making an adjustment to a student's dependency status (more commonly referred to as a dependency override) based on a unique situation such as human trafficking, refugee or asylum status, parental abandonment, incarceration, etc.

Students should contact the Financial Aid Counselor to discuss personal situations to determine if they may be eligible for a professional judgment and obtain the required forms. The Financial Aid Counselor will review professional judgment requests for the current award year within 21 days and notify students via email, phone or in-person of the decision.

The Department of Education does not have the authority to override a professional judgment decision. The decision of the Financial Aid Counselor is final. **There is no appeal.***

*fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/fsa-handbook/application-and-verification-guide