

Professional Judgment/ Special Circumstances / Unusual Circumstances Process

Professional Judgment refers to the school's authority to make adjustments, on a case-by-case basis, to information reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) so that the Department of Education can recalculate the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The EFC is the number that the school uses to determine if a student is eligible for need based financial aid.

Please Note: The school does not have the authority to make direct adjustments to the EFC or to the formula used to calculate the EFC, just data elements on the FAFSA which may change the EFC.

Special Circumstances refer to the financial situations (loss of a job, etc.) that justify an aid administrator adjusting data elements in the COA or in the EFC calculation.

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

The process to review is an extensive process that requires a thorough review by the Financial Aid Office to determine what, if any changes, may be appropriate based on your FAFSA application. It is a time intensive process that includes the following steps:

- If a request is submitted, the student will be institutionally selected for Verification (if not previously selected). Be aware that during the Verification process,

corrections to your FAFSA may be required which can result in a change to a student's aid eligibility.

- The file will then be reviewed to determine if all required documentation has been submitted. **If additional documentation is required, the student will be notified by email.**

- The Financial Aid Office will determine if a student's request and documentation meets the criteria to make data element changes to their FAFSA.
 - **If approved**, appropriate changes will be made to the student's FAFSA and submitted to the Department of Education. The Department of Education will then recalculate the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and the student's eligibility for need based aid. The student will be notified by email.
 - **If denied**, the student will be notified by email.

If a student would like to request consideration of special circumstances, the request must be submitted in writing.

The Financial Aid Office reserves the right to deny any appeals that would not increase a student's eligibility for aid. The decision of the Financial Aid office is final and cannot be appealed to the Department of Education.

Note: All supporting documentation must be received prior to the appeal being considered

Please allow at least 4 weeks for the completion of the Professional Judgement process.