

Professional Judgment Policy

The Higher Education Act of 1992 allows financial aid administrators to make professional judgment decisions when there are special or unusual family or student circumstances that may call for adjustments in determining a student's eligibility for financial aid. Circumstances requiring professional judgment must be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. These circumstances must be documented.

Professional judgment adjustments may increase or decrease a student's EFC or cost of attendance. Specified adjustments may be made to data elements, but not to the formula. Adjustments made will apply to all institutional, state and Title IV aid awarded.

Circumstances that may warrant a professional judgment decision include, but are not limited, to the following:

- ◆ A change in income of the student's family that would affect the family's ability to pay for college expenses. Examples would be loss of employment, loss of untaxed benefits, a separation or death. Documentation required: Income Reduction Certification.
- ◆ Student requests consideration as an independent student. Documentation required: Request for Dependency Status Change, and supporting statement must be signed by an eligible third party as detailed on the request form.
- ◆ Excessive medical or legal expenses. Documentation required: Verification of medical expenses paid by family from doctors, hospitals, etc. or copy of tax return verifying itemized deductions, showing medical expenses.

The required documentation listed for each of these circumstances explains what information is necessary for each situation. The documentation must be complete before approval will be considered. Documentation of professional judgment decisions will be maintained in the student's folder.

Professional judgment situations are unique, and addressed on a case-by-case basis. Circumstances other than those listed may be considered and will require documentation specific to that situation.

The Financial Aid Supervisor has the final authority to make professional judgment decisions.