



## **Professional Judgment/ Special Circumstance Policy**

Federal regulations allow limited exceptions or adjustments to information reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Such exceptions or adjustments, known as a “Professional Judgment”. Professional Judgment requests are considered on a case-by-case basis based on supporting documentation of your circumstances. Whether any adjustments are made is at the sole discretion of the Financial Aid Office Administrator and cannot be appealed beyond the financial aid office.

### **Reasons to submit a Special Circumstances/ Professional Judgment request:**

- Changes to dependency status
- Unusually high medical or dental expenses.
- Family members enrolled in college at least half-time in a degree-seeking program.
- Changes in a family's reported income.
- Death or disability of a wage earner.
- Separation/divorce of the student's parents
- One-time taxable income.

### **Situations not considered Special Circumstances:**

- Vacation expenses
- Tithing expenses
- Standard living expenses (e.g., utilities, credit card expenses, children's allowances, etc.)
- Mortgage payments
- Car payments
- Lottery or gambling winnings or losses
- Credit card or other personal debt problems
- All other discretionary expenses
- Fluctuations in investment/rental income, self-employment or business income
- Costs and fees associated with bankruptcies, foreclosures or debt collections

Reason for Professional Judgment	Documents Required
Loss of Change of Employment and/or Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Employer separation notice indicating the last date of employment</li> <li>•Copy of the last paycheck</li> <li>•Documentation of the gross income of the person whose employment status changed</li> <li>•Documentation of any type of income being received including workman's compensation, payments from 401(k) or 403(b) plans, the financial contribution made by individuals outside of the household</li> </ul>
Change in marital status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Student's/Parent's marriage certificate</li> <li>•Student's and spouse's/ Parent's most recent signed tax returns</li> <li>•Divorce or separation document</li> </ul>
Death of a Parent or Spouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Death certificate of the deceased individual</li> <li>•Copy of final paycheck</li> <li>•Documentation of any death benefits received</li> </ul>
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Documentation of disability diagnosis</li> <li>•Documentation of expenses related to the student's disability, i.e. Personal assistance, transportation, equipment, or supplies (<i>These expenses cannot be paid or provided by other agencies to be considered for a Professional Judgment.</i>)</li> </ul>
Reduction in Child Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Documentation of the total amount of child support expected for each child</li> </ul>
Unusual Medical/Dental Expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Documentation of paid out-of- pocket medical expenses</li> <li>•Copy of Schedule A (tax form)</li> </ul>
Dependent Care Expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Proof of dependent care expenses paid for the current academic year on letterhead</li> </ul>
Computer Purchase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Proof of cost of computer required for educational purposes or proof of purchase (This is a one-time adjustment)</li> </ul>
Professional Licensure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Proof of costs associated with professional licensure or proof of payment (This is a one-time adjustment. Preparatory coursework cannot be included)</li> </ul>

Note: An approved Professional Judgment Appeal may not result in a change to the students' financial aid award package.

**To Apply for Professional Judgment/ Special Circumstance:**

Please send an email to [finaid@piedmont.edu](mailto:finaid@piedmont.edu) and include any supporting documents (with social security numbers, bank accounts, etc. redacted). Once the documents are reviewed the financial aid advisor will reach out to the student with the outcome of the request, typically within 2-3 weeks. In some cases, an adjustment to the FAFSA does not increase the students' eligibility for grants or the total amount of the aid offered.