



Professional Judgement (PJ) Policy

For Federal Aid (Direct Loans)

1. Overview

Professional Judgement is the process by which an institution can review an individual student's unique circumstances and exercise the authority to amend data elements of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application which is used to calculate their Federal Aid package.

Where there are unusual or special circumstances which impact a student's Federal Student Aid eligibility, federal regulations give Financial Aid Administrators (**FAAs**) discretion or professional judgment (on a case-by-case basis and with adequate documentation) to make adjustments to:

1. Data elements on a student's FAFSA form that impact the SAI
2. The Cost of Attendance package
3. A student's dependency status.

The Department of Education does not have the authority to override a school's professional judgement decision.

Special circumstances

The FAA may use PJ on a case-by-case basis to adjust the student's cost of attendance or the data used to calculate the SAI. The FSA handbook gives examples of special circumstances that **may** be considered:

- Change in employment status, income, or assets
- Change in housing status (e.g. homelessness)
- Medical, dental, or nursing home expenses not covered by insurance
- Child or dependent care expenses
- Severe disability of the student or other member of the student's household.

Unusual circumstances

The FAA may make an adjustment to a student's dependency status based on their unique situation, more commonly referred to as a dependency override. An FAA may override only from dependent to independent status.

For circumstances related to independent status, students are also able to indicate this on their FAFSA form. For example, if you are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or unusual circumstances

prevent you from contacting your parents. By adding this to your FAFSA, this will indicate to the FAA that you are “provisionally independent”. Once in receipt of this information, the FAA will review your circumstances to determine whether they are able to make a dependency override.

A student may have both a special circumstance and an unusual circumstance, and FAAs may make adjustments that are appropriate to each student’s situation with appropriate documentation.

Any adjustment made under this policy is only valid at the school making the change.

2. What to do if you would like to be considered for a PJ

If you have special or unusual circumstances which you would like to be considered for professional judgement, please email the Student Financial Support Team (sfsu@york.ac.uk) at the University of York. A Financial Aid Administrator (FAA) will consider your special or unusual circumstances and may request supporting documentation before making a professional judgement.

3. How the Professional Judgement process works

Once you have contacted Student Financial Support, or if you are considered “provisionally independent” via your FAFSA, you will receive an email from SFS notifying you of the next steps and actions required. Once all of the necessary documentation (which may include legal documents, rental agreements, bills and written statements, etc.) has been received, the FAA will review your circumstances and evidence, make a professional judgement and you will be notified of the outcome by email to your University of York email account.

Determinations are made as soon as practicable after reviewing the requested evidence and will usually be completed within 2 weeks, however during busy periods, this may take longer.

4. How we manage your data

Documentation supporting the judgement will be stored for at least 3 years after your final term. This documentation will be held electronically on Student Financial Support’s secure online cloud. Access to this cloud is restricted to members of SFS only.

See more about our [Consumer Disclosure Information](#) and how we manage your data.

5. Who makes Professional Judgement decisions

Professional judgement decisions are made by a Financial Aid Administrator in the Student Financial Support Team at the University of York and authorised by the Student Administration Manager.

6. Appealing a decision

If you believe your request has not been assessed correctly (in line with the published guidelines) and you would like it reviewed, please email sfsu@york.ac.uk in the first instance with your reason for requesting this. One of the team will then review your case.

The University will aim to provide an outcome within 2 weeks, however during busy periods, this may take longer.

7. Contact

For enquiries about this document or US Federal Aid, please contact:

Student Financial Support

University of York

sfsu@york.ac.uk

(Office Hours: Monday to Friday, 10am - 4pm)