



PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT

Professional Judgment

Some students may have special or unusual circumstances which are not fully accounted for by the standardized federal need analysis formula used by the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA).

These special or unusual circumstances might allow the financial aid office to exercise professional judgment to determine a student's need more accurately by changing certain FAFSA data. This is done on a case-by-case basis upon receipt of proper documentation.

Special circumstances refer to the financial situations (loss of a job, etc.) that justify an aid administrator adjusting data elements in the *Cost of Attendance* (COA) or in the *Student Aid Index* (SAI) 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 abandonment, incarceration), more commonly referred to as a dependency override.

If you have completed a FAFSA and believe that your circumstances are special, unusual, or both, please contact the financial aid office for information on how to request a professional judgment.

If you are applying for institutional aid you can also make note of special or unusual circumstances on your *Confidential Financial Aid Application* (CFAA) by completing section L - Parents' Special Circumstances and section M - Explanations/Special Circumstances.

For questions related to professional judgment and for more information, please contact the financial aid office here:

<https://www.thomasaquinas.edu/admission/contact-financial-aid>