

## Professional Judgment Policy (PJ)

The Higher Amendments of 1965, as amended- Section 479A of the Higher Education Amendments of 1992 authorized the financial aid administrator to exercise Professional Judgment (PJ) on a case-by-case basis for special or unusual circumstances, adjustments to the cost of attendance, FAFSA data element adjustments, Dependency overrides, and changes to loan eligibility.

Due to extenuating circumstances, students and parents often find the information they provided on the FAFSA does not realistically reflect their ability to provide educational support. When this happens, students may choose to submit a Financial Aid Professional Judgment Appeal to our office requesting that their situation be reviewed. The student must consult with their financial aid counselor to determine if an appeal is warranted and to request the appeal form.

Old Dominion University Financial Aid office will provide individual consideration of each student's circumstances to the extent possible. Appeals will be reviewed by a Financial Aid professional Judgment Committee. Students must monitor their Old Dominion University emails account closely after submitting appeals, in case additional information is requested by the committee.

- **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.

Deadline to submit an appeal in the 2023-24 year:

September 29, 2023 – students attending the fall term only or fall and spring semesters.

February 28, 2024 – student attending spring term only.

Please allow 3 – 4 weeks, after submitting all requested documentation, for appeal results.

Appeal Requirements:

A completed 2023-24 professional judgment form along with requested documentation.

Other requested documentation depending on the circumstances of the appeal.

Please include the student's last name and UIN on every page of documentation.

Students that are selected for verification must complete the verification process prior to any professional judgment decisions.

If the appeal is approved, the aid eligibility will be re-evaluated.

Please note that additional aid is not guaranteed with a successful appeal. Any potential increases in aid eligibility are subject to fund availability.

Examples of professional judgment reasons include, but are not limited to the following:

- Death of the dependent student parent after application
- Death of the independent student spouse after application

- Unusually high medical/dental expenses not covered by insurance (out of pocket expenses) – must have paid statements and not already itemized on tax return. Medical expenses must exceed \$3000
- Separated or divorce of parent or student after application
- Loss of wages - Dependent students' parents' income has been significantly reduced since filing the FAFSA  
Independent students' income has been significantly reduced since filing the FAFSA  
The student or parent no longer receives benefits such as child support or other sources of income
- Excessive Dependent and Disability care expenses

### **Dependency Override**

A student may have unusual circumstances that justify a dependency override that will allow the financial aid administrator to change the students' status from dependent to independent. All dependency overrides are made on a case-by-case basis along with supporting documentation. The student must consult with a financial aid counselor to discuss circumstances and to request an appeal for review of dependency status form.

Once the documentation has been submitted, the financial aid counselor will submit the case to the committee. The committee will review the documentation and a notification will be sent to the student via student's Old Dominion University email account regarding the decision.

Please note extenuating circumstance do not include financial hardship, a parent's unwillingness to provide financial support, parents not claiming the student as a dependent for income tax purposes or a student demonstrating total self-sufficiency.

Contact or schedule a virtual appointment with a financial aid counselor to discuss your options at the link below.

<https://www.odu.edu/finaidoffice/virtual>