

HORRY-GEORGETOWN TECHNICAL COLLEGE

# POLICY

Number: 9.6.5  
Title: Professional Judgment  
Authority: Title 59, Chapter 53, Sections 810-860 of the  
1976 Code of Laws of South Carolina, as Amended  
Responsibility: Financial Aid Director

Original Approval Date: 09-09-1993  
Last Cabinet Review: 03-29-2023  
Last Revision: 11-01-2017

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Chairperson

Authority to exercise professional judgment is found in the federal financial aid regulations. Both current regulations and law recognize that the Student Financial Aid Office may sometimes need to make adjustments to the costs of attendance and/or to the expected family contribution to allow for special circumstances.

For the current award year, the financial aid office may use professional judgment to either increase or decrease one or more of the data elements used to calculate the Estimated Family Contribution (EFC). The reason must be documented in the student's file and it must relate to that student's special circumstances. Special circumstances are described as those that differentiate an individual student, not conditions that exist for a whole class of students. Thus, adjustments may only be made on a "case-by-case" basis.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) does not collect information on special circumstances, but the notice in FAFSA tells applicants to notify the financial aid administrator if they have special circumstances. The FAFSA gives examples of elementary or secondary school tuition, unusual medical or dental expenses, a family member who is a dislocated worker, or other unusual circumstances. Professional judgment is not limited to the situations mentioned, and could include those circumstances that were considered to be "special conditions" in previous school years, such as divorce, separation, or the death of a parent or spouse after the application was filed.

In exercising professional judgment, the financial aid office may no longer make a direct change to the EFC figure, assessment rates, or allowances; they may only adjust an actual data item. The data item that is changed should reflect the student's special circumstances.