



Professional Judgment Revisited: Resources for Financial Aid Administrators

Challenging economic times may increase your students' requests for professional judgment review.

The Department of Education encourages financial aid administrators to be sensitive to the potential for increased numbers of students with unusual circumstances warranting a professional judgment review. Challenging or difficult economic times may create unexpected or atypical situations that may negatively impact the financial stability and well-being of students.



Things to keep in mind

Section 479A of the Higher Education Act gives financial aid administrators the authority to make adjustments on the basis of adequate documentation, but only on a case-by-case basis. Unusual or special circumstances differentiate an individual student, not a whole class of students.

Review your office Professional Judgment Policy. Ensure that specifics are included, such as how professional judgment is considered, the process for a student to follow, how decisions are made and the typical amount of time in which a decision is rendered. Be sure students are aware that decisions are final and cannot be appealed if they aren't satisfied with the outcome.

Document, document, document!

Don't be concerned about the number of supporting documents you require students to furnish to authenticate their circumstance(s). Always remember to keep a copy of the documentation in the student's file whether or not the request is approved.

Policies and Procedures

Your office's Policies and Procedures should include the following:

- Whether or not your school considers professional judgment issues.
- Identify the role of the Professional Judgment Review committee, if one is established.

- Establish a written policy for the review of an appeal and identify documentation to be collected.
- Include a copy of your Professional Judgment Policy in the office Policy and Procedures Handbook in addition to the student handbook.
- Ensure a file is verified prior to making the professional judgment review decision.

Resources

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<http://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/0809FSAIndexedHBook.pdf>

HEA, Section 479A