



Converse University
Policy for Professional Judgement & Special Circumstances

Effective Date: July 1, 2022

Last Revision Date: April 27, 2022

Responsible Party: Associate Vice President for Student Financial Services
Associate Director of Student Financial Services

1. Policy and Purpose

To set forth the policy and procedures for professional judgment decisions and reevaluation of student eligibility for federal, state and institutional financial aid.

2. Policy Statement

It is the policy of Converse University in accordance with the Higher Education Act to allow the financial aid administrator(s) to make professional judgment decisions in determining a student's eligibility for financial aid. Circumstances requiring professional judgment must be analyzed on a case-by-case basis except as allowed by the Higher Education Opportunities for Students (HEROES) Act of 2003. Procedures are established to ensure compliance.

3. Procedures

Aid administrators may treat a student with special circumstances differently than the ***strict application*** of federal methodology may permit. Adjustments can either decrease the student's expected family contribution, increase/decrease the cost of attendance, change dependency status or academic progress determination. In the case of an adjustment to the student's EFC or COA, specified adjustments may only be made to certain data elements as provided in the Higher Education statute.

1. Professional judgment decisions may be made in the following areas:
 - a. Dependency status
 - b. Need analysis
 - i. Calculation of the Expected Family Contribution (EFC)
 - ii. Calculation of the Cost of Attendance (COA)
 - c. Denial or reduction of Direct Loan or Direct PLUS Loan eligibility
 - d. Direct unsubsidized loan eligibility for a dependent student without parental FAFSA data
 - e. Satisfactory Academic Progress (refer to the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Financial Aid).



2. Supporting documentation for extenuating circumstances and professional judgment decisions must be maintained in the student's file. The reason for a professional judgment adjustment must relate directly to the student's special circumstances.
3. Only financial aid administrators at the institution have the authority to render professional judgment decisions. All decisions must be reviewed and approved by the Associate Vice President for Student Financial Services.
4. The decision of the Associate Vice President for Student Financial Services is final and cannot be appealed at the institution level or to the U.S. Department of Education.
5. Circumstances which may warrant a professional decision include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Parent loss of income due to retirement, unemployment or change in employment.
 - b. Death of a parent after the FAFSA has been filed.
 - c. Parental separation or divorce after the FAFSA has been filed.
 - d. Independent student voluntary loss of income due to retirement, unemployment or change in employment. NOTE: Voluntary loss of employment to enroll at the institution full-time **will not** be considered in professional judgment.
 - e. Death of a student's spouse after the FAFSA has been filed.
 - f. Independent student separation or divorce after the FAFSA has been filed.
 - g. Request for a change of dependency from dependent to independent.
 - h. Appeal for reinstatement of financial aid suspended due to failure to meet minimum satisfactory academic progress standards.
6. Students must submit their request for special consideration/appeal in writing, including an original signature.
 - a. Student must submit the "Request for Special Consideration and/or Reevaluation Form."
 - b. Student must submit supporting documentation. The documentation must:
 - i. Substantiate the student's unique situation.
 - ii. Be from an official source such as a former employer, unemployment agency, social services, death certificates, attorney statements, etc.
 - iii. Be notarized if from a third-party or family member.
 - iv. Additional documentation as deemed necessary and relevant by the University based on the unique student situation and circumstances.
 - c. Students and parents requesting reevaluation of the EFC or COA must submit all documents required of any student/family selected for verification to include:
 - i. Federal 1040 tax transcripts for the federal tax year used to determine eligibility AND federal 1040 tax transcripts for the most recent federal tax year.
 - ii. All W2 forms for the federal tax year used to determine eligibility AND all W2 forms for the most recent federal tax year.
 - iii. Verification Worksheets (Dependent or Independent).
 - d. Satisfactory academic progress professional judgment decisions will be made in



- accordance with the University's Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for financial aid.
- e. Requests for a change in dependency status will require the submission of the "Request for Dependency Override" form and all supporting documentation.

4. Administrative Authority

4.1 Basic Terms and General Management Procedures

4.1(a) Basic Terms

The Associate Vice President for Student Financial Services has the authority to establish and modify the basic terms for professional judgment evaluation.

- 4.1(b)** The Associate Vice President for Student Financial Services has the authority to develop and maintain general management procedures for professional judgment evaluation.