

Academic Appeals Policies and Procedures

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The integrity of the academic process is paramount at the Rossier School of Education. To this end, every effort is made to ensure a fair, just and expedient adjudication process. In compliance with policies outlined in the University SCampus Student Guidebook (<http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/academic-policies/>), the Rossier School of Education has its own procedures for disputed academic evaluations. This document represents the official academic appeals process for the Rossier School of Education.

The policy regarding disputed academic evaluations entitles a student to several levels of appeal based on the type and severity of the issue. The appeals process exists to review the appropriateness of initial decisions. To that end, appeals must be logical, and contain clearly defined purpose and rationale.

The Rossier School of Education has charged the Office of Enrollment Management and Student Services to inform students of their rights and responsibilities and to assist them in these matters. The Assistant Dean for Enrollment Management and Student Services is available to meet with students to provide information and clarification on the academic appeals process, conduct administrative hearings and convene panel hearings.

In reviewing this document, please note the following:

- The policies and procedures described in this document do not pertain to situations involve allegations of academic dishonesty or to situations that result from discrimination.

Allegations of academic dishonesty are investigated and adjudicated by the USC Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (SJACS). Students found to be in violation of USC academic integrity standards may receive sanctions that are mandated by USC Policy. More information may be found online in the SCampus Student Guidebook at <http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/academic-policies/>.

Students who feel that an academic action was motivated by their membership in a protected class may request an investigation by the USC Office of Equity and Diversity. This office investigates complaints by faculty, staff, students and applicants who believe themselves to be harmed by sexual harassment or discrimination and harassment related to issues that have protected class status. If contacted, the Office of Equity and Diversity will conduct a separate, independent

investigation. More information may be found online at http://www.usc.edu/dept/hr/equity_diversity/.

- Per Rossier and USC policy, not all academic actions are subject to appeal. A list on non-appealable actions is also included.
- Ph.D. students are also subject to Graduate School policies, which in some instances provide an additional level of appeal. Pertinent instances are indicated.

Appeal Types and Processes

Grade Appeal

When a student brings forth issues of prejudiced, capricious or unfair evaluation of their work, the following procedures will be followed, except when a student has been charged with violating the rules regarding academic integrity (see Student Conduct Code, Section 14.00 Academic Integrity Review Process). All grade appeals must be filed in writing by the end of the following semester (excluding the summer session) after the student received the disputed grade or evaluation.

Level One: Instructor

The student shall request a review by the instructor. Every effort should be made to resolve the matter at this level. A grade appeal must be initiated with a request in writing to course instructor to review the grade in question. The instructor must notify the student in writing of the decision of their review regardless of the outcome within 15 days.

Level Two: Program

A student who is unsatisfied with the decision rendered by the faculty member may submit a Request for Appellate Review Form and supporting documents to the Program Director. The appeal will be conducted either by the Director or a faculty course coordinator, depending on the program. In considering the appeal, the program-level reviewer weighs the rationale of both the student and the instructor. The Program Director must inform both the student and the instructor of the decision in writing and, if the decision results in a change of grade, the instructor will have 15 days to respond before the change of grade is initiated.

Please note that this appeal should be directed to Program Director responsible for the program offering the course in question. This is not always the Program Director for the student's degree program.

Level Three: Appeal Panel or Administrative Review

A student who is not satisfied with the outcome of the program-level review may request a school-level appeal. To begin the process, students should contact the Assistant Dean for Enrollment Management and Student Services, and complete the Request for Appellate Review.

Appeals at this level must address one or more of the following criteria:

- New evidence has become available that is sufficient to alter the decision and that the appellant was not aware of, or could not have reasonably obtained at the time of the initial decision;
- The action imposed is excessive or inappropriate; or
- The parties involved failed to follow university rules or regulations while reviewing the cited incident.

The appellant may request either a Formal Panel Review or an Administrative Review.

If the student chooses a Formal Panel Review, the Assistant Dean for Enrollment Management and Student Services will convene the panel, which will consist of two Rossier faculty members serving on the relevant faculty Governance Committee and one student appointed by the Vice-Dean for Academic Programs. No panel member can be directly connected to the class section in which the grade was disputed.

Administrative Reviews are conducted directly by the Assistant Dean for Enrollment Management and Student Services.

All reviews are based on the written documentation only. No oral arguments are considered. The Review Panel or Assistant Dean will review the appellant's submission, any supporting materials submitted by the appellant, the class syllabus in use at the time the grade was assigned, as well as any correspondence related to the appeal process at the Program Director level. Consideration is limited to the criteria raised by the appellant.

The panel or Assistant Dean will make a recommendation to the Vice-Dean for Academic Programs, who will make a decision that is final and binding. Some grade changes require university committee approval, so the decision in those cases is in the form of a recommendation to the Academic Review Committee.

A written decision will be sent to the student within approximately 15 days of the hearing. This time period may be extended if necessary. The student will be informed in writing if the decision will be delayed.

Ph.D. Students Only. If the disputed action results in removal from the university or termination of a student's degree program, the student may choose to further appeal to the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. For all other grade appeals, the decision rendered at this level will be final and binding.

Preliminary Review Appeal [Ed.D. Students Only]

A student who does not pass the Preliminary Review has 15 days after receiving notification from the Dean to appeal the decision. The appeal is based on the written documents submitted and no oral testimony will be considered. Appeals should be made through to the Assistant Dean, Enrollment Management and Student Services.

A panel comprised of the Vice Deans for Academic Programs and Faculty Affairs reviews Preliminary Review appeals. The decision of this panel represents the final decision of the Rossier School of Education.

Doctoral Screening Appeal [Ph.D. Students Only]

A student who does not pass the Doctoral Screening has 15 days after receiving notification from the Dean to appeal the decision. The appeal is based on the written documents submitted and no oral testimony will be considered. Appeals should be made through to the Assistant Dean, Enrollment Management and Student Services.

A panel comprised of the Vice Deans for Academic Programs and Faculty Affairs reviews Doctoral Screening appeals. The decision of this panel represents the final decision of the Rossier School of Education.

An additional level of appeal is available through the Graduate School following the Decanal Grievance Panel Guidelines, which can be found online at http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/grievance_acad.html. Students should contact the Graduate School for procedural information.

Dissertation Defense [Ph.D. Students Only]

The outcome of a dissertation defense is not appealable within the Rossier School. However, at the Dissertation Committee's discretion, a student may be examined a second time. The time and content of the second examination are subject to Rossier and USC Graduate School policies, which can be found in the current USC Catalogue.

A student who has not successfully defended their dissertation may appeal this decision by writing directly to the Associate Vice Provost for Academic Programs and adhering to the Decanal Grievance Panel Guidelines, which may be found online at http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/grievance_acad.html.

Dismissal Action by an Academic Review Panel

A dismissal action made by an Academic Review Panel for failure to meet the conditions of a behavioral contract can be appealed through two levels of review: first by the Program, and then at the School level. If a Program Director has been involved in the initial review, the Associate Dean for Academic Programs will conduct the department level appeal.

Appeals Process

Following an initial review, the student may file a written appeal. The primary documents to be reviewed are:

- The written decision from the initial review;
- The Appellate Review Request Form (This must be submitted to initiate the process);
- The written appeal and any supporting documentation submitted by the party appealing;
- Any written rebuttal submitted by the instructor or other party to the complaint.

Program-level appeals are submitted to the Director of the Program Office. Students may file a Program Level Appeal by no later than the end of the academic term following the date of the academic action under appeal.

School-level appeals are submitted to the Assistant Dean for Enrollment Management and Student Services. Students may file a Program Level Appeal by no later than six months following the date of the Program-level appeal decision.

Written appeals must state the specific charges that the student wishes the panel or hearing officer to address, and provide a compelling rationale. An appeal is **not** a rehearing of the issue; rather, it is a process to correct a perceived injustice based on the grounds for appeal. It is therefore vital to address and provide documented support for your case on the grounds listed. The burden rests on the appellant to make his or her case. If supporting documentation is provided, its importance should be explained in the appeal.

The appeal panel or administrative officer has the authority to recommend to the Dean's designee that the original decision be upheld or reversed, the sanctions be increased or decreased, or that the case be dismissed based on failure to provide adequate grounds.

Rossier School of Education appeal reviews are not open to the public. As these cases are decided based on the written submission and no oral arguments are needed, students are not permitted to attend the proceedings.

The University of Southern California maintains the privacy of student education records consistent with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (1974). Detailed information about student's rights can be found in the "**Student Education Records**" section of the SCampus Student Guidebook.

Non-Appealable Academic Actions

Conditions of Admission

Students may not appeal the conditions placed upon their admission to the University. A student who fails to meet the conditions of admission within the designated timeframe, is subject to dismissal by the Director of their program.

Time to Degree Extension

School policies governing the time permitted for students to complete degree requirements can be found in the current USC catalogue. A student may petition for an extension, but the decision of the school is final.

Ph.D. Students Only. In unusual situations, a student who has been granted the maximum appeal time by the Rossier School may petition the Graduate School for further extensions.

Qualifying Examination [Ed.D. Students only]

The outcome of a qualifying examination is not appealable. However, at the program's discretion, a student may be examined a second time. The time and content of the second examination are subject to Rossier School policies, which can be found in the current USC catalogue.

Dissertation Defense [Ed.D. Students only]

The outcome of a dissertation defense is not appealable. However, at its discretion, a dissertation committee may permit a student to defend a second time. The time and content of the second examination are subject to Rossier School policies, which can be found in the current USC catalogue.

Failure to Meet CCTC Mandated Teaching Performance Expectation 12 [MAT Students only]

An Academic Review Panel's decision to impose remediation, suspension, or dismissal from a credential track on a student who fails to comply with CCTC TPE 12 is not appealable. An action to dismiss a student from the degree program on these grounds may be appealed following the instructions for "Dismissal Action by an Academic Review Panel."

Disciplinary Action by an Academic Review Panel

An Academic Review Panel's decision to impose remediation, suspension, or dismissal from a credential track on a student who fails to comply with the conditions of behavioral contract is not appealable. An action to dismiss a student from the degree program on these grounds may be appealed following the instructions for "Dismissal Action by an Academic Review Panel."

Appellate Review Request Form

Your Name _____ Date of Initial Decision _____

USC ID# _____ USC E-mail _____

Current Address _____ Phone _____

Review Level Requested

- Program Office
- Rossier School

Academic Action Under Appeal

- Course Grade
- Ed.D. Preliminary Review
- Ed.D. Doctoral Screening
- Dismissal Action by an Academic Review Panel

Ph.D. Dissertation Defense (contact the Graduate School directly – do not use this form)

Grounds for Appeal

- New evidence has become available that is sufficient to alter the decision and that the appellant was not aware of or could not have reasonably obtained at the time of the initial decision.
- The action taken is excessive or inappropriate.
- The parties involved failed to follow university rules or regulations while reviewing the cited incident.

Hearing Body (School Level Review Only)

Please select the type of hearing body you wish to review your case.

- Administrative Review
- Panel Review

Appeal Statement and Supporting Documents (please attach)

