DISPUTING AN ANNENBERG GRADE

USC policy regarding disputed academic evaluations entitles a student to two levels of formal appeal after review by the faculty member. This policy follows USC’s SCampus policy.

(Note: When reviewing SCampus please be aware that when it refers to the Department chair, the appropriate parallel at Annenberg is the director of the Journalism and Communication schools).

If a student has a concern with a grade they should utilize the following process.

FIRST – COMMUNICATE WITH THE FACULTY MEMBER

In the interest of preserving the very important student-faculty member relationship, the student and faculty member should try to resolve the grade dispute by direct communication. A useful process is for students to reflect on the issue and then reach out to their faculty. Students should provide a summary of the concern through email and include any relevant documentation. Students should provide the faculty member a reasonable period of time (approximately two weeks) to provide her or his perspective. Many grade concerns can be resolved in this process.

SECOND – REVIEW BY THE ANNENBERG SCHOOL

If this dialogue cannot resolve the issue, the grade dispute should move beyond the faculty member to the next level of review. All grade appeals must be brought no later than the end of the semester following the semester for which the student received the disputed grade.

The two levels of appeal beyond the faculty member are the department chair and the school dean. If student-faculty member communication cannot resolve the dispute, the student should email her or his petition for grade review to the director of respective school.

Students should contact Dr. Sarah Banet-Weiser at sbanet@asc.usc.edu for all courses offered by the Communication school, including courses offered as part of the following programs:

- B.A. in Communication
- Master of Communication Management
- Master of Public Diplomacy
- M.A. in Global Communication
- M.S. in Digital Social Media
- Ph.D. in Communication

Students should contact Willow Bay at Wbay@usc.edu for all courses offered by the Journalism school, including courses offered as part of the following programs:

- B.A. in Journalism
- B.A. in Public Relations
- M.A. in Strategic Public Relations
- M.S. in Journalism
- M.A. in Specialized Journalism
- M.A. in Specialized Journalism (The Arts)

For courses offered as Communication and Journalism (ASCJ) courses, students should contact Dr. Gordon Stables at stables@usc.edu.
The petition should include a brief (one to two page) summary of the dispute and include all relevant documents: all the academic work about which there are concerns related to evaluation. The student should also provide evidence of the inability to resolve the matter with the faculty member.

THIRD – REVIEW OF THE PETITION

The School director will review the matter. They have two options for review.

A) DIRECT REVIEW BY THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

The School director may personally review the matter. They will notify the faculty member of the petition and review information from both the student and faculty member.

B) REVIEW BY AN ANNENBERG GRADE APPEALS COMMITTEE

Once the matter has been sent to the Annenberg Grade Appeals Committee, the chair of that committee will confirm with the student and notify the faculty member of the petition. The committee chair may ask for additional information and documentation from any of the parties.

The chair will also schedule a hearing. The hearing committee is appointed by the School director and consists of:

- a) faculty member from outside the involved department or academic unit,
- b) a student representative,
- c) a faculty member of the appealing student’s choice, and,
- d) two faculty members from the student’s Annenberg school (Journalism or Communication).

The goal of the hearing is to ensure that the Committee has the best possible information in order to reach a judgment. At the hearing, the student and faculty member will be given the opportunity to summarize their perspectives. The Committee may ask questions of each participant.

FOURTH – RESULTS OF THE REVIEW

After either a director or committee review, a written decision will be given to both the student and faculty member. Normally a decision should be sent to the student within 15 days after the hearing. This time may be extended if necessary. The student and faculty member should be informed in writing if the decision will be delayed.

FIFTH – APPEALS OF THE REVIEW

If either the student or the faculty member who assigned the grade wishes to appeal the decision of the chair or the hearing committee, they must appeal in writing to the Annenberg Dean’s office within two weeks after receiving the written decision. All appeals should be directed to the Annenberg Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, Dr. Gordon Stables at stables@usc.edu. The Assistant Dean for Student Affairs will consult with the Annenberg Dean to review the matter personally.

If the petition was initially reviewed by the school director (and a hearing was not conducted), the Dean’s office will conduct a hearing. The hearing committee consists of the same categories of members within the academic unit as described above. The committee will make a recommendation to the dean.

The Annenberg Dean will then make a final and binding decision. Normally a written decision will be sent to the student and faculty member within 15 days after the hearing. This time may be extended if necessary. The student and faculty member should be informed in writing if the decision will be delayed.
GRADUATE STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN DISMISSED FROM AN ANNEBORG ACADEMIC PROGRAM

A student may appeal in writing to the school director within 30 days of the date of dismissal.

Students should contact Dr. Sarah Banet-Weiser at sbanet@asc.usc.edu for dismissal from programs offered by the Communication school, including the following:

- Master of Communication Management
- Master of Public Diplomacy
- M.A. in Global Communication
- M.S. in Digital Social Media
- Ph.D. in Communication

Students should contact Willow Bay at Wbay@usc.edu for dismissal from programs offered by the Journalism school, including the following:

- M.A. in Strategic Public Relations
- M.S. in Journalism
- M.A. in Specialized Journalism
- M.A. in Specialized Journalism (The Arts)

If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal, then, within 30 days of the date of the department’s or program’s decision, she or he may appeal in writing to the dean of the school. All appeals should be directed to the Annenberg Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, Dr. Gordon Stables at stables@usc.edu. The Assistant Dean for Student Affairs will consult with the Annenberg Dean to review the matter personally.

If the second appeal is unsuccessful, then the student may appeal in writing to the Vice Provost for Graduate Programs, Dr. Sally (Sarah) Pratt vpgp@usc.edu.

Such an appeal must be received within 6 months after the student has received notice of the outcome of the school’s decision. Appeal panel guidelines can be found at the following website: http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/index.html