

C. Academic Policies

1. Class Notes Policy

Notes or recordings made by students based on a university class or lecture may only be made for purposes of individual or group study, or for other usual non-commercial purposes that reasonably arise from the student's membership in the class or attendance at the university. This restriction also applies to any information distributed, disseminated or in any way displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email or otherwise on the internet, or via any other medium. Actions in violation of this policy constitute a violation of the Student Conduct Code, and may subject an individual or entity to university discipline and/or legal proceedings.

2. Disputed Academic Evaluation Procedures

Please note that students accused of an academic integrity violation are subject to the procedures in Part B, Section 13, above.

For other disputed academic evaluations, a student may receive up to two levels of formal appeal after review by the instructor. In the interest of preserving the very important student-instructor relationship, the student and instructor should try to resolve the grade dispute by direct communication. If the issue cannot be resolved by this dialogue, the grade dispute should move beyond the instructor 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 instructor are the department chair and the school dean.

The sequence of the appeal process depends upon the structure of the school in which the academic evaluation occurred. The two levels of appeal are as follows:

I. Schools Organized by Departments

For schools organized by departments, the first level of review, after speaking with the instructor, is by the department chair and, if needed, a second level of review by the dean. The process described in the paragraphs a. and b. below applies to:

USC Roski School of Art and Design

USC Marshall School of Business

USC School of Cinematic Arts

USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism

Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC (except the DDS, B.S./DH)

USC Price School of Public Policy

USC Viterbi School of Engineering

USC Thornton School of Music

USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences graduate students

- a. The department chair at their discretion may review the matter personally or conduct a formal review through an ad hoc or standing committee. The review committee is appointed by the department chair and consists of a faculty member from outside the involved department or academic unit, a student, a faculty member of the appealing student's choice, and two faculty members from the department or academic unit. A written decision will be given to the student after the department chair's decision or the review committee decision. Normally a decision should be sent to the student within approximately 15 days after the review. This time may be extended if necessary. The student should be informed in writing if the decision will be delayed.
- b. If either the student or faculty member who assigned the grade wishes to appeal the decision of the chair or the review committee, in the next level of appeal beyond the instructor and the department chair, they must appeal in writing to the dean of the academic unit within 2 weeks after receiving the written decision. The dean of the academic unit may review the matter personally or, if a formal review has not been conducted by the department, the dean must conduct a formal review. The review committee consists of the same categories of members within the academic unit as described above.

The committee will make a recommendation to the dean who will make a decision which is final and binding. Normally a written decision should be sent to the student within approximately 15 days after a review. This time may be extended if necessary. The student should be informed in writing if the decision will be delayed.

II. Schools not Organized by Departments

For schools not organized by departments, the second level of review beyond the instructor is by the dean. This applies to the following schools:

USC School of Dramatic Arts

USC Davis School of Gerontology

USC School of Social Work

III. Schools with Certain Professional Degrees

The following degrees are governed by separate disputed academic evaluation procedures. Copies of these procedures can be obtained directly from the school.

USC School of Architecture (separate procedures for all degrees except Ph.D.)

Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC (DDS, B.S./DH)

USC Rossier School of Education (separate procedures for all degrees except Ph.D.)

USC Gould School of Law (J.D., MCL, LL.M)

Keck School of Medicine of USC (M.D. and the Physician Assistant Practice program). Other degree programs in the Keck School of Medicine, including undergraduate, master's and Ph.D. programs, fall into the review category I above.

USC School of Pharmacy (Pharm.D., D.R.Sci.)

IV. Graduate Students who have been Dismissed from an Academic Program

Please note that students accused of an academic integrity violation are subject to the procedures in Part B, Section 13.

For dismissals based on reasons other than academic integrity, the student may appeal in writing to the department chair or program director within 30 days of the date of dismissal. 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, they may appeal in writing to the dean of the school. If the second appeal is unsuccessful, then the student may appeal in writing to the Vice Provost for Graduate Programs. Such an appeal must be received within 30 days of the dean's decision. Appeal panel guidelines can be found at <http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/student-resources/#appeal-panel-guidelines>. For students in the M.D., J.D., and LL.M. programs, the school dean is the final level of appeal.

3. General Academic Petitions

The Office of Academic Review and Retention (John Hubbard Hall Lobby) is responsible for processing student requests to deviate from general university policies. Faculty requests to change a grade that was originally submitted incorrectly is processed by the Grades Department (John Hubbard Hall B010). The actual decisions on these requests are made by a subgroup of the Committee on Academic Policies and Procedures (CAPP) which meets several times a month.

Not all requests for deviation from normal requirements are handled through the same process. Registration-related exceptions are initiated in the Petition Services Office. These include such requests as adding or dropping courses after enrollment deadlines and changing the grading option after the third week. Degree requirement-related exceptions are initiated in the student's academic unit. These include requests to count excess units in a course with a unit maximum and to extend time to complete an incomplete. Decisions on these types of exception requests are reported to the Petition Services by the CAPP petitions panel.

The following exceptions are those that a student may request under certain circumstances. There is no assurance that the request will be approved. The panel will review the student's academic record and consider the circumstances that led to the student's situation. The circumstances must justify exempting an individual student from a rule or deadline that other students are being required to follow.

Students should take care that the material they submit is accurate, comprehensive and well documented. It is important to initiate the petition process as soon as possible. A student who wishes to file a petition should speak with an academic adviser to determine whether the request is appropriate and whether it will actually resolve the problem.

I. Registration-related Exceptions (See time limits for filing below)

A student wishing to request a registration-related exception should contact the Petition Services Office (John Hubbard Hall Lobby). By talking with an adviser, the student can determine whether there are grounds for an exception request and learn what documentation will be required. When all required documentation and endorsements are gathered, the student should submit the completed petition to the Petition Services Office. These requests are heard by the Registrar. Requests not approved by the Registrar are referred to the CAPP panel for review. Below are the registration-related exceptions with the guidelines.

Late or Retroactive Adding of One or More Courses

The final deadline for original registration is the end of the third week of classes for fall or spring semesters. For summer sessions or special sessions, the student must look up the equivalent of the third week deadline. This is also true for the twelfth week drop deadline. Please assume that, in any reference to registration deadlines, the third or twelfth week refer to the fall and spring semesters and that an equivalent deadline will be applied for shorter sessions.

The end of the third week of classes is also the deadline to add courses that are not listed on the original program. CAPP will consider petitions for exception to the add deadline only if the student has documented extenuating circumstances.

Extenuating circumstances are defined by CAPP as situations over which the student has no control (e.g., a family death). Reasons such as “I didn’t know the policy” or “I was out of town that week” or “I forgot” or “That isn’t how they did it at the last school I attended” are not considered to be extenuating circumstances.

In all cases, a petition to add a course must include a statement from the instructor indicating the quality of work and dates of attendance.

Late or Retroactive Withdrawal from One or More Courses

The final deadline for dropping one or more courses is the end of the 12th week of classes or its equivalent for a given term. To officially drop a course, the student must process a drop form through the Registration Department or drop through Web registration. This 12-week time period is considered generous. CAPP will entertain petitions for exceptions to the drop deadline when the student has documented extenuating circumstances or the student was unable to evaluate their level of performance prior to the drop deadline.

Withdrawal petitions based on medical reasons require accompanying documentation from the student’s physician. It is assumed that such requests will usually involve a complete withdrawal from all classes. If the request involves less than cancellation of the whole academic program, a complete explanation must be provided of courses to be dropped or retained, plans for completion of the remaining courses and an explanation of why the student’s medical condition allowed completion of some courses but not all. In general, if a student is healthy enough to participate in campus activities outside of class, they are considered responsible for all courses undertaken. In all cases, a petition to drop a course must include a statement from the instructor indicating the quality of work and dates of attendance.

A final word of caution: CAPP almost never approves requests for late withdrawals if the student has taken the final exam in a course. However, a student should not take this

word of caution as an indication that they should purposefully miss a final exam because of a pending petition to drop. A student who misses a final exam because of a pending petition and then discovers that the petition was denied, will surely be in a worse position because the final exam grade will be calculated as an “F.”

Change in Registration Grading Option from Pass/No Pass to Letter Grade or Vice Versa

The final deadline for changing the grading option of a course from pass/no pass to a letter grade or vice versa is the end of the third week of classes or its equivalent for a given term. Approval of requests to change enrollment status after the deadline is rare.

Time Limits for Registration-related Requests

Exception requests for retroactive change of an official registration for a semester or special session must be submitted no later than 24 months from the last day of final examinations for the semester or special session in question. If appropriate, the time limit can be waived by the dean of the academic unit in which the student is seeking a degree, but may not be waived if the courses in question occurred longer than five years previously.

II. Degree Requirement-related Exceptions

These requests are generated in the student’s major department or school. When the petition is completed, the school’s petition contact person will submit the petition to Academic Review and Retention to be heard by the CAPP petitions panel. Below are the most common degree requirement-related petitions with the guidelines.

Extension of Time for Removal of an Incomplete (IN)

One calendar year is allowed to remove the mark of IN. A mark of IN cannot be removed by repeating the course, even if it is successfully completed within the calendar year requirement. If the IN is not removed within the calendar year, the course is considered “lapsed” and the grade is changed to an IX. Lapsed incompletes (IX) are penalty grades and are calculated as grades of “F.” Courses offered on a Credit/No Credit basis or taken on a Pass/No Pass basis for which a mark of Incomplete is assigned will be lapsed with a mark of NC or NP and will not be calculated into the grade point average.

Extensions beyond this deadline are not likely to be approved if the student has enrolled in subsequent semesters, since it is assumed that the student’s first priority should be the removal of the incomplete.

In all cases, a petition for an extension of time for removal of an IN must include a statement from the instructor explaining what is needed to complete the course and why the instructor feels the student should be given even further time for completion.

Other degree-related exceptions include requests to count excess units for a course with a unit maximum.

Exceptions Made Elsewhere

The Office of Admission and Financial Aid, Financial Services and the Graduate School have similar processes for actions taken by their respective committees or deans. Still other requests are handled through the exception process which comes directly from the academic unit to the Degree Progress Department.

Registration in Graduate-level Courses by Undergraduate Students

Exceptional undergraduate students may enroll in a graduate course. In order to do so, students must receive approval from the instructor. Students must also have prior approval from the chair of the major department to count the course for undergraduate credit or audit the course. The student's major department will notify the Registration Department in writing regarding the manner in which the graduate course will be used. In no case will a student be allowed to enroll in and receive credit for a graduate course if the student's cumulative USC GPA is below 2.0.

Graduate Credit for 400 and 500 Level Work Taken as an Undergraduate

An undergraduate student who is within 12 semester units of the bachelor's degree and has a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 may request to enroll in and reserve for graduate credit a limited amount of work at the 400 and 500 levels during the last semester as a senior, provided that the semester program does not exceed 16 semester units. A written request should be submitted to the Registration Department and should bear the endorsements of the chair of the student's major department and of the department in which the reserved work is to be taken. The Registration Department verifies that the units being reserved are not needed to fulfill requirements for the bachelor's degree.

III. Exceptions to the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences Limits on Units in the Major or Limits on the College Basic Requirement

Departments within the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences awarding the B.A. degree cannot require fewer than 24 or more than 36 upper division units in the major. However, students may elect to take up to 40 upper division units within their major without a petition. A student wishing to exceed the limit must obtain the approval of the department with the final endorsement of the dean of undergraduate programs.

Students who major in the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences must earn 104 units in the college departments. For students graduating with a minor or second bachelor's degree, this minimum is reduced to 96 units. Exceptions will be considered by the dean of undergraduate programs.

Students who are completing major degree programs in a professional school, but whose degree is conferred by the college, are exempt from this policy.

Substitutions of general education requirements and skill level requirements are generated in the student's academic unit and submitted to the dean of undergraduate programs. Substitutions of foreign language requirements are also generated in the student's academic unit and submitted to the American Language Institute.

IV. Grading Issues

Correction of Grade

A student who believes an error was made in the assignment of a grade should consult directly with the instructor of the class. The instructor may request from the Grades Department and submit to CAPP a Correction of Grade form with appropriate endorsements. This process is initiated by the professor's department's grades coordinator.

A full description of the actual error will be required of the instructor. General descriptions such as “clerical error” will not be accepted. CAPP considers grade changes on the basis of the explanation given, but may void a request involving any of the following circumstances:

- A request to change a grade of IN unless all work was completed prior to the end of the semester involved.
- A request to change a grade to any other mark than IN when work was completed subsequent to the end of the semester involved.
- A request that is missing the required endorsements (instructor, department chair and dean).

Missing Grades (MG) Defaulting to Unofficial Withdrawals (UW)

Students have 1 year, from the end of the semester in which they were assigned a mark of MG, to resolve or clarify the mark of MG. (Note: Marks of MG assigned PRIOR to fall 2005 are not bound by this policy.) Missing grades can be resolved by the instructor of the course through the department’s grade coordinator. The Grades resolutions are handled by the Grades Department, (213) 740-5586, Hubbard Hall 106.

Failure to resolve the mark of MG within the one-year limit results in the assignment of the mark of UW (Unofficial Withdrawal). A mark of UW is a failing grade and will calculate in the student’s GPA the same way that a grade of “F” is calculated in the GPA. Courses graded Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) in which a mark of MG is not resolved will result in a mark of NC. Students who have elected to take a course on a Pass/No Pass (P/NP) option and do not resolve the mark of MG will be assigned a mark of NP.

4. Timeline for Degree Progress

All undergraduate students must make reasonable progress, each year, toward their degree objectives.

- I. All students are required to record their primary major through their academic advisor, by the start of the junior year (on completion of 64 semester units). Supplemental or secondary majors may be added after junior standing has been attained. Minors may be added at any time.
- II. While there are no specific limits for completing bachelor’s degrees (except in the case of discontinued programs), many departments change their major requirements over the years based on changing technology, etc. Occasionally, general education requirements are changed as well. Therefore, students who do not complete their academic degrees within six consecutive years from the beginning of the semester of their first completed USC course work will not be allowed automatically to continue following the pre-major, major, and minor requirements. (This time limit includes semesters during which students were not enrolled.) The pertinent department chair will decide what pre-major, major and minor requirements each student must follow and communicate the decision to the student in writing.

Students who do not complete their degrees within 10 consecutive years from the beginning of the semester of their first completed USC course work will not be allowed automatically to continue their general education requirements. (This time limit includes semesters during which students

are not enrolled.) The General Education Office will decide what general education requirements each student must follow and communicate the decision to the student in writing.

Changes in certain university-wide regulations, policies and procedures are immediate, regardless of the degree requirements in effect at entrance or transfer.

Students pursuing degree programs which the university discontinues may be required to immediately change majors and pursue other degrees. Some departments may allow students already in the program to complete the degree within a specified time limit, not to exceed five years. Beyond that time, such degrees will not be awarded.

5. Health Leave of Absence

The University of Southern California recognizes that students occasionally have health needs that interfere with their ability to remain in their academic program. It is the University's goal to support students in these circumstances so that they are able to address their health needs and return to complete their program. As such, the University has two types of health leaves, a Voluntary Health Leave of Absence and a Mandated Health Leave of Absence. Both types of health leaves, and the process for returning from leave, are described in detail in the University's Health Leave of Absence Policy, available at policy.usc.edu. The policy applies to all the University's programs, whether on-campus or online. Each student requesting a health leave of absence will be assigned a Health Leave Coordinator who will administer the leave and support the student through the administrative and logistical issues associated with a leave.

6. Student Education Records

The University of Southern California maintains the privacy of student education records and allows students the right to inspect their education records consistent with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The following is a summary of rights afforded students regarding their own education records. The entire text of the university's policy concerning student education records is located at <https://policy.usc.edu/student-records>.

- I. A student has the right to inspect and review education records pertaining to them, within 45 days after the day the university receives a request for access. Should a student wish to inspect a particular education record, a request to do so should be made in writing to the university office maintaining that record. Certain records (or information contained in records), such as parental financial records and information to which the student has waived access (e.g., confidential letters of recommendation), are excluded from the student's right to inspection. Excluded categories of records and information are specified in the university's policy concerning the privacy of student education records.
- II. A student has the right to request an amendment of their education records that the student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA. Should a student believe their education record is inaccurate or misleading, a request for amendment or correction should be addressed, in writing, to the university office maintaining the record in question. The custodian of records for that office may correct or amend the record in question or may determine that the record is accurate as it stands. In instances when a dispute cannot be resolved between the student and the office maintaining the record in question, the student may request a formal hearing by the university to resolve the issue. Questions about, and requests for, a formal hearing should be directed to the Office of the General Counsel.

This provision for amendment does not apply to disputed grade information on academic transcripts. (See Disputed Academic Evaluation Procedures).

- III. A student has the right to provide written consent before the university discloses personally identifiable information from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. Exceptions are noted in the university's policy concerning the privacy of student education records and include:
- a. Disclosure of information to a university official having a legitimate educational interest in the specific education record. The criteria for determining who constitutes a university official and what constitutes a legitimate educational interest is set forth in the university's policy concerning student education records located at <https://policy.usc.edu/student-records>. A university official typically includes a person employed by the university in an administrative, supervisory, academic, clinical, research or support staff position, a person elected to the Board of Trustees, a student serving on an official committee, or a person employed by or under contract to the university to perform a specific task. A university official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility;
 - b. Disclosure of information in connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, when disclosure is necessary for such purposes as determining eligibility for, amount or conditions of the aid, or to enforce the terms and conditions of the aid;
 - c. Disclosure of information to comply with a judicial order or legally issued subpoena;
 - d. Disclosure to officials of another institution of postsecondary education in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer, subject to the requirements of FERPA; or
 - e. Disclosure concerning "directory information." The university has designated "directory information" to include a student's name, address (local and permanent), telephone number (local and permanent), university email address, student photo, USC attendance dates, USC degrees earned (with dates), academic honors, major/minor and degree objective, expected date of graduation, previous school attended, enrollment status, whether or not the student currently is enrolled, and participation in officially recognized activities and sports. The university is under no obligation to release directory information upon request. Students wishing to restrict release of "directory information" may do so by submitting their request to gtv@usc.edu from their usc.edu email address; or
 - f. any other disclosure of information permitted without obtaining prior written consent of the student under FERPA. Please note that the above exceptions represent a partial listing of those found in the university's policy concerning the privacy of student education records.

IV. A student has a right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the university to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The contact information for the Office that administers FERPA is:

Student Privacy Policy Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington DC 20202

V. Additional information can also be found by visiting the Registrar's FERPA website at <https://arr.usc.edu/records/ferpa/>.

7. Falsification of Financial Aid Information

The types of information covered by this policy include all documents and information submitted to apply for and/or receive need-based financial aid, scholarships and private financing funds. These documents and information include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- The Student Aid Report (SAR)
- The CSS Financial Aid/PROFILE Application and CSS Noncustodial Parent PROFILE Application
- Financial Aid Supplement
- Student and parent federal income tax forms, tax return information and other income documentation
- Documentation of U.S. citizenship or eligible non-citizen status
- Documentation of housing/living arrangements
- Academic documents relating to high school diploma or college course work
- Loan applications, promissory notes and related documentation
- Specific program applications
- Federal Work-Study time sheets
- Any university financial aid forms and related documentation
- Any written, electronic or verbal statements sent to or made to a university employee regarding the student's financial aid application or other related documents

The integrity of the documents and the honesty of the information presented through them are critical to the financial aid process. Students should be aware that they will be held responsible for the integrity of any financial aid information submitted either by them or on their behalf.

If the university determines that a student or a parent has provided falsified information, or has submitted forged documents or signatures, the following steps may be taken without prior notification to the student or parent:

- I. An incident report will be filed with USC's Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards following procedures outlined in the University Student Conduct Code. Pending resolution of the report, the Financial Aid Office may restrict the distribution of any further aid to the accused student.
- II. If the Financial Aid Office or the student conduct review process finds that a violation has occurred, the consequences may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - The student will be required to make full restitution of any and all federal, state, private and/or university scholarship, grant, loan, or work funds to which they were not entitled.
 - Until full restitution is made, all federal, state and university funds will be withheld from the student, including all funds disbursed in past or in current semesters.
 - No arrangements will be made with the Cashier's Office or Collections Office on the student's behalf to settle an account. The student will be responsible for all charges incurred on the student's account because of the loss of federal, state or institutional financial aid funds.
 - If the student is determined to be ineligible for financial aid, based on a basic eligibility criterion, no further federal, state or university funds will be awarded to the student in any future terms of enrollment at the university.
 - The student may become ineligible for future participation in some or all financial aid programs for a minimum of 1 year or longer. In some cases, the student will not be eligible to receive funds from that program in any future terms of enrollment at the university.
 - The student will not be awarded funds to replace those lost because of dishonesty.
- III. In addition to any consequences directly related to the student's financial aid, the student may be assigned disciplinary sanctions as described in the Student Conduct Code (see Section B.11.80).
- IV. As required by federal and state law, the USC Financial Aid Office will report any infraction to the appropriate office or agency. These include, but are not limited to, the U.S. Department of Education Office of the Inspector General, state agencies or other entities that may take whatever action is required by federal and state law. In this report, the Financial Aid Office will describe in detail the incident, the response of the Financial Aid Office and any additional actions taken by or pending with the university.