Students are strongly encouraged to pursue every means possible to resolve a grievance informally before filing a formal request with the Disabilities Panel.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) protects individuals with disabilities against discrimination in such areas as employment, housing, public accommodations, education, transportation, communication, health services, and access to public services.

Please note that the burden of proof rests with the student filing the grievance to prove that she has been subject to unfair treatment and/or injustice, which has adversely affected the student’s status, rights, or privileges at the College. All grievance letters and supporting documentation must be filed within 60 working days of the alleged violation. Further, external deadlines (pending graduation, etc) will not factor into the grievance timeline or decision-making process. If there are extenuating circumstances that would warrant the grievance to be filed past 60 working days, this appeal would be submitted to the Dean of Students for approval. Students are encouraged to use reasonable and appropriate accommodations approved through Disability Services throughout the grievance process, when necessary.

Students are responsible for following the grievance procedure below if they are unable to resolve the situation informally.

I. Students are responsible for contacting the Counseling Center/Disability Services if reasonable accommodations are not implemented in an effective or timely way. The Counselor(s) will work with college personnel and students with disabilities to resolve the complaint.

II. If the issue cannot be resolved or the student is not satisfied with the outcome, the student can submit a formal written grievance to the Dean of Students following the guidelines published at the end of this document and on the Counseling Center/Disability Services web site at http://www.meredith.edu/students/counsel/disability/grievance.htm. Alternative formats of these procedures are available upon request in the Counseling Center/Disability Services.

III. The Dean of Students will work with the student to select 1-2 qualified members to serve on the Disability Grievance Subcommittee to hear the grievance. Qualified members include current and past members of the Disability Panel. In addition, the Disability Panel will appoint 2-3 qualified members to serve on the Disability Grievance Subcommittee annually. The Disability Grievance Subcommittee and the Dean of Students will select a member to serve as the Chair of the Subcommittee. Disability Panel members who are chosen to participate on the Disability Grievance Subcommittee reserve the right to opt out of serving on the subcommittee if they believe that their participation would create a conflict of interest.

IV. After the Disability Grievance Subcommittee has reviewed the formal written grievance, the student will be asked to appear in order to present her case and answer questions at a grievance hearing.
Students are expected to practice their self-advocacy skills throughout the disability grievance process. As such, students may choose to have a currently employed faculty or staff person serve as a support during the grievance hearing. This faculty or staff member may serve as a consultant to the student but is not permitted to speak on the student’s behalf. All other participants in the hearing will be persons who have been officially summoned by Disability Grievance Subcommittee. The Dean of Students will be present and will serve as a neutral party. As a part of the decision-making process, the subcommittee may ask Disability Services staff and/or other faculty/staff to submit information and/or present at the grievance hearing.

V. Grievance hearings will take place within 20 working days after the student files the formal written grievance. The subcommittee’s scope of review will be confined to the whether or not there is there clear and convincing evidence that the student has been treated unfairly because of a disability and/or whether or not the student’s rights, as an individual with a disability, have been violated. The subcommittee will take all information into consideration in making their decision about the proposed outcomes the student is seeking. The Grievance Subcommittee will make a decision which will be communicated in writing to the student, Dean of Students, and Disability Services. Decisions will be made within 10 working days, unless the process is delayed due to extenuating circumstances. The Grievance Subcommittee may, at their discretion, share the outcome of the disability grievance hearing with other key faculty/staff in an effort to provide more information and/or to inform other policies and procedures at the college.

VI. If the grievance is not resolved, the student will have an opportunity to appeal the subcommittee’s decision through the appropriate Vice President and/or Provost within 5 working days of the Grievance Subcommittee’s decision. The Dean of Students will assist the student in determining the appropriate Vice President and/or Provost based on the grievance issue. The appropriate Vice President and/or Provost will make a decision about the grievance and will communicate this decision in writing to the student, the Dean of Students, and Disability Services within 10 working days, unless an extension is warranted. The Vice President and/or Provost’s decision will be final.

Although students are encouraged to attempt to resolve complaints pertaining to disabilities by using this Grievance Procedure, they have the right to file a complaint directly with the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at ocr@ed.gov.

Grievance Letter Format:

On separate sheets of paper, please provide information relating to the areas noted below. The student should include all information she wishes to have considered by the Panel, including written witness statements and other supporting documents. It is also useful to provide a copy of the course syllabus where appropriate. Incomplete grievances will either be sent back to the student with a request for more information, or denied without further review.

The grievance should be formatted as follows:

- Date of act or decision you are challenging.
Briefly describe the alleged act or decision.

Explain the basis for your challenge. These are limited to:

- Academic grievances - give the course/department/college regulation or policy which you feel has been violated by the act or decision. Be sure to include a copy of the course syllabus and an explanation of the course requirements, grading criteria, etc…as appropriate.

- Non-academic grievances - state the college regulation or policy, individual right which you believe has been violated.

- For both academic and non-academic grievances, clearly and concisely state why you believe the act or decision being challenged is contrary to the policy, regulation, or right you have cited.

Provide the chronology in narrative form of all pertinent events leading up to the act or decision being challenged. Include names and dates wherever relevant.

Attempted Informal Resolution of Grievance:
- Describe your discussion(s) regarding the complaint with the person/office against whom the grievance is being filed. Include date(s) of discussion(s).

- Describe your discussion(s) regarding the complaint with the chairperson/supervisor. Include date(s) of discussion(s).

- Describe any other informal attempts to resolve the conflict.

State explicitly what outcome/action/remedy you are seeking via this grievance petition.

Provide any additional information that you believe is relevant to your grievance. Written statements from witnesses may be included. Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of those persons who have explicitly agreed to speak to the Disability Grievance Subcommittee on your behalf should also be included.

Include all documents and information you wish to have considered.