

Dean's Notes

Introduction

With two exceptions, faculty have jurisdiction over academic practices within their courses, including attendance, assignment extensions, and make-up examinations. (See “Exceptions” section below, regarding in-class final exams and [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) accommodations.)

Deans in the [College](#) and [Student Support Services](#) may provide dean’s support notes on behalf of students who are experiencing disruptive medical or personal circumstances, including those related to Title IX situations, that affect their ability to do academic work in a timely way.

Students are encouraged to speak with their instructors about requested flexibility before consulting with a dean.

Policy Statement

Dean’s Notes to faculty from the deans of the [College](#) or [Student Support Services](#) are intended to:

- Verify circumstances, documented when possible, while maintaining student’s privacy and confidentiality
- Convey support for flexibility within the instructor’s policies and/or at the instructor’s discretion
- Assure faculty that the student is receiving the support or referrals they need
- Affirm that the instructor has discretion and final authority over whether or how to approve a student’s request for flexibility

On occasion, a dean’s note may be provided under the following, non-emergency circumstances:

- To verify that a university commitment, such as a rescheduled athletic competition or championship playoff that the student could not have identified at the beginning of the term, conflicts with a course meeting, assignment or exam.
- To document a military commitment, court appearance, or University hearing not subject to the student’s control.

In general, a dean’s note would not be provided for opportunities or commitments that are voluntary and are not part of a student’s course-related obligations. These might include:

- conferences
- job interviews
- family occasions
- political or artistic involvements

Faculty Discretion

- Faculty always have the option (but not the obligation) to exercise additional flexibility with respect to course expectations, with or without a note from a dean.
- Only faculty may award grades of Incomplete, and only if the remaining work is not an in-class final exam.

Two exceptions to the practice of recognizing faculty discretion in academic matters include:

- 1) Student Accessibility Services (SAS)-documented course accommodations
- 2) University scheduled final examinations

1) SAS Accommodations:

Dean's notes are not needed when a student is registered with SAS for the condition causing the impact. A student should follow up with SAS in case of a flare-up or change in their condition. Since SAS accommodations implement aspects of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), formal disability-related accommodations carry greater weight than deans' notes and should be used whenever appropriate. In general, faculty must accommodate students with the specified modifications the student needs. The SAS office can help with advice about implementing specific details of the accommodation.

2) Final exams: Faculty Rules and Regulations authorize designated deans of the College to approve excused absences from formally scheduled final exams.

- If a student is absent from a regularly scheduled final examination for a course and the absence is excused for reasons of medical or personal emergency by a designated dean, the student will be permitted to take a make-up examination at the start of the upcoming semester.
- The make-up examination will be administered by the Registrar, unless other arrangements are agreed to by the instructor and the student and communicated to the Registrar.
- If the absence from the final examination is not excused by a designated dean, the student will receive no credit for the course, or will receive the grade earned with a 0 on the final exam.

Procedures

A student requesting a dean's note may [speak with an academic dean](#), or with a [student support services dean](#).

Related Information

[Exam Excuses](#)

Policy Owner

Approved by

Deputy Dean of the College

Contact(s)

[Academic Deans in the College](#)

University Hall, 2nd Floor

[Student Support Services Deans](#)

Page-Robinson Hall, 5th Floor