

Dean's Notes Guidelines

Introduction for Fall 2024

The original intention of dean's notes was to provide timely support to students and their instructors by validating circumstances that may benefit from instructor's discretion without need for repeated disclosure of underlying circumstances (e.g., hospitalization, critical incident, loss of a close family member).

However, the current dean's notes framework has increasingly become a retroactive means for students who have missed assignments and exams. Their usage has expanded in number and frequency, especially as some instructors have agreed to grant flexibility contingent on receiving a dean's note. This, in turn, has led to a marked rise in requests for less serious situations (e.g., sleeping through an exam, stress from an assignment, lack of time to study for an exam or complete a paper), as well as situations when students have exceeded other forms of proactive flexibility provided by instructors. **Therefore, we ask for support from students and instructors to be judicious in their requests for and use of dean's notes.**

Faculty Discretion

- With the exceptions of [Conflicts Due to Religious Observance](#), [Excused Absences from Final Examinations](#), and [SAS Accommodations](#), **faculty have complete discretion and final authority over all academic practices within their courses**, including attendance, extensions, grading, and make-up policies.
- **With or without a dean's note**, faculty may – but are not obligated to – exercise additional flexibility with respect to course expectations.
- **A dean's note does not guarantee additional flexibility nor should it be required to provide flexibility**, because faculty have final authority over whether or how to approve a student's request for flexibility. Faculty are in the best position to assess the impact that flexibility granted to a student will have on course performance and learning goals.

What is a Dean's Note?

Deans in the [College](#) and [Student Support Services](#) may provide dean's notes to faculty on behalf of students who are experiencing an acute, urgent, and severe issue (e.g., incapacitation due to injury or illness, hospitalization, loss of a close family member) that interferes with their ability to perform academic work and participate in their classes for a period of two or more consecutive days. In addition, a dean's note may be provided to document absences related to the following unforeseen circumstances: a military commitment, court appearance, or University hearing not subject to the student's control.

Dean's Notes are intended to:

- Verify circumstances, documented if appropriate, while maintaining student's privacy & confidentiality;
- Convey support for flexibility within the instructor's policies or at the instructor's discretion; and
- Assure faculty that the student is being referred to support or resources, as needed.

Dean's notes **will not** be provided for other commitments, life events, or voluntary opportunities, including:

- attending or presenting at a conference
- extracurricular activities or club sports
- family occasions (e.g., sibling graduations, weddings, vacations, birthdays, etc.)
- job or internship interviews
- oversleeping
- political or artistic involvements
- mid-semester travel interruptions

Dean's notes will not be issued after the start of the final examination period. Students who are experiencing difficulties during this time may consider requesting a [Final Exam Absence \(ABS\)](#) or an [Incomplete](#) in a course that has a final paper, project, or presentation. Only faculty may grant an Incomplete, and only the College may excuse a student absence from a final examination.