

Dean's Notes Policy

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

Deans of the College and Student Support Services may provide 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. These notes 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

Important notes

- 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.

Exceptions

There are two exceptions to the practice of recognizing faculty discretion in academic matters:

- 1) SEAS (Student and Employee Accessibility Services)-documented course accommodations
- 2) University scheduled final examinations

1) SEAS Accommodations:

Dean's notes are *not* needed when a student is registered with SEAS for the condition causing the impact. A student should follow up with SEAS in case of a flare-up or change in their condition.

- Since SEAS 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 SEAS 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.