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.