

**Absences and Verification Notices and Processes**  
**Office of the Dean of Students – Advocacy, Outreach & Support**  
**Effective September 1, 2026**

**Background**

The Dean of Students - Advocacy, Outreach & Support is seeking to streamline and minimize short-term medical verification requests that are often submitted with limited documentation, for repeated absences on exam days, or that do not necessitate the involvement of the Dean of Students - Advocacy, Outreach & Support.

The guidelines for 2026-2027 will not change our responsiveness to students dealing with extenuating circumstances or unexpected life challenges such as the loss of a parent, new medical or mental health diagnosis, hospitalization of a sibling, fire in the family home, homelessness, etc. For any of these types of life situations reported to an instructor, we ask that the student be referred to our office to schedule an appointment so we can provide the student with support, connect them to resources, and help ensure their retention and success, <https://studentsupport.rutgers.edu/requesting-assistance>.

Instructors may contact us directly, [deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu) and can find additional information on our website, <https://studentsupport.rutgers.edu/information-faculty>

**Note:** Students registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) and have approved accommodations for modified attendance and/or extended time should contact their ODS coordinator if their absences are related to their documented disability.

**Absences and the role the Office of the Dean of Students – Advocacy, Outreach & Support**

All students are expected to attend class and meet the requirements of each course, as outlined in the course syllabus. It is up to each instructor to determine attendance expectations, the notification process for absences, the number of absences permitted without penalty, and the number of absences that will prevent a student from fulfilling course requirements. This also pertains to the submission of late work.

The Dean of Students-Advocacy, Outreach & Support is a resource for students who find themselves dealing with unexpected health or life circumstances that create challenges affecting their academic success. The office often refers to these as when “life and academics collide” and will provide verification of absences or missed work that are **due to documented matters that may require protection of private information** such as medical/mental health diagnosis, unsafe home environment, legal matters, or a family emergency.

Instructors should make determinations on how to handle other matters that impact attendance or completion of coursework such as: Canvas issues, access to technology, a flat tire, minor car accident, weather incident, vacation travel, loss of internet access, etc. The Dean of Students - Advocacy, Outreach & Support does not provide an Absence and Verification Notice (AVN) for these matters.

## Guidelines

### One and Two-Day Absences

If instructors request notification of a one or two-day absence, students should complete the [University Self-Reporting Form](#).

They should **not** be referred to the Dean of Students - Advocacy, Outreach & Support for an Absence and Verification Notice (AVN) unless the student missed a substantial academic requirement that is **10% or more of the grade** and the absence was due to a documented medical/mental health, legal, family, or financial matter. Students must make requests for an AVN **within two weeks of the last day of the absence**.

### Extended Absences – Up to Two Weeks

If requested by an instructor, the Dean of Students - Advocacy, Outreach & Support will provide verification of absences or missed work that are due to matters that may require protection of private information such as medical/mental health diagnosis, unsafe home environment, legal matters, or family emergency. Documentation is maintained in a file separate from other academic records.

Students must make requests for an Absence and Verification Notice (AVN) **within two weeks of the last day of the absence**.

Instructors should make determinations on how to handle other matters that impact attendance or completion of coursework such as: Canvas issues, access to technology, a flat tire, minor car accident, weather incident, vacation travel, loss of internet access, etc. The office does not provide an Absence and Verification Notice (AVN) for these matters.

### Extended Absences – More than Two Weeks

Students frequently notify the Dean of Students - Advocacy, Outreach & Support of circumstances that will necessitate them to be out of class for more than two weeks. This can be for a surgical procedure and recovery, hospitalization, and travel out of the country for a funeral or legal/administrative process.

It is the expectation that students are in attendance to learn, and engage with course material, classmates, and instructors. Absences beyond two weeks are considered excessive and have an impact on learning.

Because each course is unique, it is not possible to know the implications of extended absences. Given this, students should discuss their circumstances with their instructor(s), and the instructor will determine if and how the student may complete course requirements.

If the course design provides flexibility or options for the student to complete course work, our office can send verification of the documented circumstances, if requested by the instructor.

If the absences will prevent the student from successfully fulfilling the course requirements, the student should be referred to the [Dean of Students-Advocacy, Outreach & Support](#) or to an [academic advisor](#) to discuss options.

Students who make repeated requests for AVNs, totaling more than two weeks of classes, will be expected to meet with a staff member in the Dean of Students – Advocacy, Outreach & Support.

## **Deadlines for Requests**

Requests for an AVN must be submitted within **two weeks** of the last day of the absence. After two weeks, verification of absences (AVNs) will not be provided. Consideration may be given to extreme life circumstances (loss of a parent, extended hospitalization, etc.) that delayed submission of the request.

Instructors who require verification of multi-day absences should remind students to request an AVN promptly.

We ask that instructors not refer students to the office in December or May for earlier absences in the semester (e.g. October or February) to make up missed work and improve their grade.

## **Email Communications to Instructors**

Sent from [Dean of Students](#) or from a specific staff member

Instructors can expect to receive communications from the Dean of Students - Advocacy, Outreach & Support with the following subject lines and purpose.

### **Email Subject: Verification of Absences or Missed Work**

The purpose of this communication is to only verify the documentation of dates and circumstances. Instructors may use an AVN to approve extension requests and makeup assignments/exams, but final decisions about missing work are ultimately up to their discretion.

### **Email Subject: Notice of Extended Absences**

Students who have been, or expect to be, absent for more than two weeks, will be referred to each of their instructors to determine if there are options to successfully fulfill course requirements. Instructors will be notified to expect the student to be in contact to discuss.

If the instructor provides written notification that the student can still fulfill the course requirements and requests verification of circumstances, the office will provide this verification to the instructor.

If the absences will prevent the student from successfully fulfilling the course requirements, the student should be referred to the [Dean of Students-Advocacy, Outreach & Support](#) or to an [academic advisor](#) to discuss their options.

### **Email Subject: Request for Support – Special Circumstances**

For students navigating complex circumstances, staff members may write directly to instructors to verify that they have met with the student to discuss and document extenuating life circumstances. This outreach to instructors may include a request to help the student fulfill course requirements. Requests for special arrangements may include:

- Allow work to be submitted late
- Allow a make-up exam
- Allow the submission of an alternative assignment
- Provide a temporary grade (only if absences affect the end of the term)

Because each course is unique, it is not possible to know the implications of absences or what options may be most reasonable. The suggestions for special arrangements are intended as examples of possible options. Instructors may develop their own options based on course design and departmental practices.

In addition, the office does not track students' overall attendance, and we only have the students' reported information about their participation or performance in class. Given this, if a request to allow the student to complete missed coursework is unreasonable based on the course design, departmental policies, or the student's prior attendance/performance, we welcome a conversation.

**Email Subject: Temporary Condition Notice** (previously Letter of Temporary Condition)

For students navigating a temporary condition, injury, or illness that may require additional support, staff members may write directly to instructors to verify the student's circumstances, explain the challenges they are experiencing, and outline recommended academic strategies to support the student's ability to fulfill course requirements. Recommended academic strategies may include:

- Providing additional time on timed exams
- Allowing a student to take breaks
- Ability to circle answers on exam in lieu of scantron

Temporary conditions can come with a long recovery period, which may take a student out of the classroom for longer than 2 weeks. The Dean of Students – Advocacy, Outreach & Support, will send a **Notice of Extended Absences** to instructors. If the instructor provides written notification that the student can still fulfill the course requirements and requests verification of circumstances and recommendations, the office will provide these to the instructor.

We encourage students with temporary conditions to work directly with each of their instructors. If the course design does not provide flexibility or options to fulfill course requirements, we ask instructors to explain this and refer the student to the [Dean of Students - Advocacy, Outreach & Support](#) or an [academic advisor](#) to discuss options that support their academic progress.

### **Guiding Questions in Developing Absence Policies and Syllabus Statements**

Does it clearly state:

- practices and policies regarding attendance for the course?
- the University Policy on attendance that includes religious observances or participation in university-sponsored intercollegiate athletics contests, practices, associated travel, and other similar obligations?
- when and how a student should provide notification of the need to miss a class, exam, or quiz?
- how many classes a student can miss without penalty and how many classes a student can miss before substantially affecting learning, engagement, and the final grade?
- options for submitting late work, and any penalties?
- how many times a student may reschedule a missed exam/quiz or how much time a student will have after the original exam date to take a missed exam/quiz?
- how students can access information shared during a missed class?
- if the class format and exams can be modified? Note: students registered with ODS for documented disabilities may have accommodations for modified course/exam format.

## Proposed Syllabus Statement

The Office of the Dean of Students-Advocacy, Outreach & Support is a resource for students who find themselves dealing with unexpected health or life circumstances that create challenges affecting their academic success. The office often refers to these challenges as when “life and academics collide” – medical/mental health diagnosis, unsafe home environment, legal matters, or family emergency that impacts engagement in and out of the classroom.

Requests for Absence and Verification Notices (AVNs) must be made **within two weeks of the last day of the absence**. Documentation is required.

AVNs will not be provided for one or two-day absences unless a substantial academic requirement (10% or more of the grade) has been missed.

Details about AVN guidelines, documentation requirements, and all services can be found at: <https://studentsupport.rutgers.edu>.