

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

College of Arts & Sciences

Advising & Career Services

Dean's Certification

About Dean's Certification

A Dean's Certification is an official statement from your undergraduate institution identifying your academic and disciplinary standing at the time of graduation. It takes into consideration whether you've ever been suspended, placed on academic or disciplinary probation, disciplined, expelled, or requested or advised to resign from any post-secondary school, college, university, professional school, or law school.

Each school has its own requirements. Several law schools are phasing out their mandatory Dean's Certification forms. These schools are now requiring the supplementary form only if you answer "yes" to any variation of the following questions on your law school application: "Have you been placed on academic probation or been required to withdraw from any school for academic reasons? Have you ever been subject to disciplinary action for academic or other reasons at any of the colleges or graduate schools you have attended?" If the answer to any of these questions is yes, you will be directed to obtain a completed Dean's Certification form with a written explanation from the school at which the incident occurred. Some law schools may only request the form from admitted applicants.

Completing Dean's Certification Forms

1. Download the form from LSAC/CAS under the "Supplemental Forms" button for each law school.
2. Complete the top half of the form (the candidate or applicant portion) with your information, and then sign and date the completed form. Indicate whether or not you waive your right of access to the form and the information SU will provide to the law school. By waiving your right of access, you are effectively making the document confidential. Typically, confidential documents are considered to be more credible therefore we recommend that students waive their right of access.
3. Either mail or hand-deliver the signed form(s) to the Office of Advising and Academic Support, located in 323 Hall of Languages. (You may also fax the form to 315-443-9397, attention: Pre-Law.) If you submit your form(s) in person, you will be asked to complete a brief information sheet about your law school intentions. After receipt, the Director of Advising and Academic Support will complete the form(s) and write a letter to the law school(s) on your behalf.
4. When submitting Dean's Certification forms you are also asked to sign a [Consent and Waiver to Obtain Judicial and Academic Records](#). The signed release form authorizes us to obtain from SU's Judicial Affairs office any record of incidents under your name and, if such records exist, to release the information to the law school(s) to which you are applying.
5. If you know or suspect that you have an incident on file with Judicial Affairs, make an appointment with that office to review your file. Once you are reacquainted with the facts of the incident (e.g., date

of occurrence, nature of infraction, sanctions, etc.), then make an appointment to discuss the matter with the Director of Advising and Academic Support. At that time, the Director will assess the possible effects the incident may have on the application process, including whether in your particular case the Director will report or comment on your violation. In addition, the Director will suggest strategies for you to address the record.

6. The Office of Advising and Academic Support will then complete the Dean's Certification form and forward it to the law school. Please note: Due to the volume of requests for completion of Dean's Certification forms during the fall and spring semesters, the Office of Advising and Academic Support will typically need up to a two-week period between the day you submit the form and the day we mail it to the law school. Please submit your forms to us at least one month prior to the stated application deadlines, and pay attention to the law school's deadlines to provide adequate notice to our office to process your request.

Student Supplementary Statement

Any student with an academic or disciplinary record is strongly encouraged to submit a supplementary statement in addition to the Dean's Certification letter. Admissions committees are typically very receptive to a student's first-hand account of the details of the incident and the surrounding circumstances surrounding. The most costly mistake a student can make is to deny or withhold information about the incident; the second most costly mistake is to communicate to the committee defensiveness or victimization. To optimize chances of admission to law school, we recommend that you follow these guidelines:

- Describe the specific nature of the incident briefly but in detail
- State the charge brought before you and the sanction issued by the appropriate authority
- Take responsibility for the incident; do not blame others or claim to be a victim of circumstance
- Indicate that you learned a lesson, and state clearly what it is
- Conclude—if you can—with the statement that no further incidents have occurred and that your record has been cleared

You are encouraged to submit a supplementary statement of this nature not only to those law schools that require a Dean's Certification form, but also to those schools that ask about your academic or disciplinary record in their application questions.

Additional Resources

Pre-Law Advising (<http://casadvising.syr.edu>)

LSAC (www.lsac.org)

American Bar Association (www.americanbar.org)