OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND VICE-PRESIDENT (ACADEMIC)

TO: University of Guelph Faculty and Other Instructors
FROM: Charlotte Yates, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
CC: Student Wellness Services
DATE: Thursday, September 13, 2018
SUBJECT: Medical Slips: Documenting Students’ Illnesses

Annually this office writes to all faculty members asking for assistance in reducing the pressure placed on our doctors in meeting the student demand for health care. Although we have a strong complement of doctors, there is still a challenge meeting the demand, particularly at high peak times. At times ill students cannot be seen due to insufficient availability of physician time and/or students have to wait significant periods of time at the walk-in clinic.

To help ensure that our resources are directed to those who need care, we urge faculty to use discretion when requesting medical documentation for missed work. Adhering to the Senate Policy for Medical Slips is extremely helpful in this regard:

“Faculty members are urged to exercise discretion when requiring certification of illness and, in particular, are encouraged not to require certification of illness affecting semester work when the assessment in question constitutes a small proportion of the course grade, or when alternative means for carrying out the assessment are available. (Undergraduate Calendar, Section VIII)"

I recognize that documentation requirements are becoming increasingly complex, not just for illness but for accommodation purposes. Teaching Support Services has some helpful tips on universal design approaches to teaching and assessment that can reduce the need for documentation. You can visit the OpenEd website for more information about Universal Instructional Design. There are currently discussions with the Director of Wellness and the Academic Policy and Procedures Committee to begin a pilot project that will initiate change for the current procedure in providing medical slips that will streamline processes to provide a system that works more effectively for both faculty and students. In the interim, I thank you for your continued help in finding alternative ways of accommodating students without requiring a medical slip, where appropriate. Such action will help Student Health Services devote its health-care resources to aiding students who are more seriously ill and in need of attention.

Thank you for your continued efforts.