HOUSING CONTRACT APPEALS PROCESS & GUIDELINES

The Office of Residence Life, in conjunction with the Dean of Students Office, has established a Housing Contract Appeals Process to hear the appeal of students who would like to break their housing contract but have not met the applicable criteria. The Assistant Dean of Student Affairs and/or his/her designees hear the initial appeal; in addition, information from the Financial Aid Office is often used to determine a student’s "need".

Housing appeals must be made within four weeks of cancellation. After the fourth week appeals will not be accepted unless extraordinary circumstances exist.

There are certain assumptions made concerning your housing at the University:

1. All students have read their contract and have a full understanding of the terms and to what they have committed themselves.

2. The room change process allows students to change rooms on a first come first serve basis based on the availability of request. This allows students to change a potentially uncomfortable situation.

3. That students have availed themselves of the options open to them, and that moving out of on-campus housing is a "necessity" and not a "convenience".

If you have experienced a change in your financial status, or would like to withdraw from the halls for a reason you believe qualifies as an exception to the rule, please complete the following process:

1. The student should write a letter of appeal to the Housing Appeals Committee, appealing the charges to which you are obligated (ask what this is if you are not sure or check your housing contract). This letter should explain what the situation is and why this should entitle you to release from the charges and from your housing contract. Be as specific as possible.

2. Documentation that will prove your claim must be submitted with the appeal letter; for example, a letter from a doctor for medical concerns, an unemployment check stub for a lost job or lay-off, a letter from Financial Aid stating a loss of, or significant change in, aid.
a. Appeals based on financial circumstances should be concerning a "change in the financial status of the student or family that is unforeseeable." This means that you should not have been able to anticipate this change; for example, losing one's job, a parent's loss of employment, unanticipated cuts in a financial aid package, etc. are all unforeseeable events.

Credit card bills, a car loan, care insurance, a lease for an off-campus apartment, etc. are not documentation of financial changes; these are foreseeable expenses that should have been anticipated or taken into consideration before signing your contract.

b. Medical appeals MUST include documentation from a doctor stating both that living at home would be medically more beneficial than living on campus, and why this is true. We may ask that our Director of Health Services verify this information with the doctor.

3. Provide information as to where you will be living; if you will be living at home, a letter of support from your parent(s) or guardian would be helpful. The commute should be a reasonable one; traveling to Lowell from the Berkshires or the Cape is not considered as truthful representation of one's future living arrangements.

4. Mail all of this information to the address listed on this memo, or bring this information to the Office of Residence Life.

5. Appeals are processed on a case-by-case basis depending upon the number of appeals pending. Once a determination has been made the student will be notified in writing, by email. This information will not be released over the phone for privacy reasons; further, information concerning a student over 18 years of age cannot be released to the parent(s) or guardian as this information is covered under FERPA (the Privacy Act).

6. If the decision is not in favor of release without obligation, and the student wishes to further appeal these charges, s/he may schedule an appointment with James Kohl, Associate Dean of Students. At that time the student should bring in additional information and/or documentation to be considered. If there is no further documentation or information available the decision will not be overturned. The decision of the Associate Dean of Students is final.

Please note: Unless s/he is not physically or mentally able to do so, this process should be initiated and completed by the student. Questions concerning this process should be directed to the Office of Residence Life at 978-934-5160.