

Appeals for Release from the University Housing License Agreement (housing contract) – General Instructions

Your Current Agreement

Your Mason Housing License Agreement (housing agreement) for the academic year is legally binding for the entire term of the agreement (through the end of the spring semester in May). You are responsible for associated rent charges through the end of the spring semester in May, whether or not you choose to live in your assigned campus housing accommodations.

If you are faced with an extreme, unforeseeable and uncontrollable problem that interferes with your ability to continue living in campus housing and for which Mason Housing is not able to provide a reasonable solution/alternative within campus housing facilities AND you will still be enrolled in classes at Mason during the academic year, you must submit a formal appeal for release from the License Agreement.

Appeal Review Process

- The Housing Agreement Appeals Committee, made up primarily of faculty and staff from outside Housing and Residence Life, reviews housing agreement appeals. Possible outcomes of their review include: (a) approving the appeal, (b) denying the appeal, (c) identifying on-campus housing options different from your current assignment that could satisfactorily and reasonably meet your needs or (d) holding off on a decision pending further documentation.
- You must submit a formal appeal in writing. The Appeals Committee will review only your written appeal and accompanying documentation. You will not meet with the Committee. While comments from your parents/guardians and/or other relatives/friends may be included with your appeal, you (the student) must complete the appeal form and write your statement.
- The Committee will not make a decision on your appeal if the documentation you provide is incomplete or otherwise deemed inadequate to make a final decision. The Committee may request further documentation from you and/or may consult with other University offices or departments.
- Mason Housing will notify you of the Committee's decision via your official Mason email address. If your appeal is approved, you remain financially responsible for all charges until you properly check out of your campus housing room/apartment with a Resident Advisor or Resident Director in your building.
- Mason Housing and the Committee will keep all information provided in and with your appeal as sensitive and will not share that information in most cases without your prior written approval.

Submitting an Appeal

Appeal submission and documentation requirements vary based on the reason for your appeal. You must complete and submit the *Housing and Residence Life License Agreement Appeal Form* (next page) along with your written statement and supporting documentation in accordance with the information found in the appropriate document below (all available on our website):

- *Appeal for Release from the Housing License Agreement – Medical/Psychological Reasons*
- *Appeal for Release from the Housing License Agreement – Financial Reasons*
- *Appeal for Release from the Housing License Agreement – Other Reasons*



Housing and Residence Life

Housing and Residence Life License Agreement Appeal Form

Your appeal for release from the University Housing License Agreement must include this completed form, your typed statement and supporting documentation, in accordance with the instructions applicable to the reason for your appeal. While comments from family or friends may be included **with** your appeal, the student named below must complete this form and write the accompanying statement.

Please print legibly

Mason G #: _____ Name: _____
(Last) (First) (M.I.)

Mason e-mail address: _____

Housing (on campus) Address: _____
(Hall/Building Name) (Room/Apt. #)

Permanent Address: _____
(Street Address) (City, State, Zip Code)

Telephone Number: Home: _____ Cell/Mobile: _____

Please check the primary reason for your appeal and attach your statement and appropriate documentation (see referenced documents for statement and documentation requirements).

- Medical/Psychological – See *Appeal for Release from the Housing License Agreement – Medical/Psychological Reasons*.
- Financial – See *Appeal for Release from the Housing License Agreement – Financial Reasons*.
- Not enrolled/Withdraw from the University
- Other – See *Appeal for Release from the Housing License Agreement – Other Reasons*.

By signing below, I attest that the information provided on and in conjunction with this appeal is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Your must deliver this form and all required documentation to the Housing and Residence Life Office located on the ground floor of Piedmont/Tidewater Hall. The mailing address is 4400 University Drive MS 3F6, Fairfax, VA, 22030-4444. The fax number is (703) 993-2744. Or via email to housing@gmu.edu

Office Use Only

Date received: _____ Registered units: _____

Check-out date (if already checked out): _____ Comments: _____

Appeal for Release from the Housing License Agreement Financial Reasons

The Housing Agreement Appeals Committee generally denies appeals for release from the License Agreement based on financial reasons unless students are in a state of compelling need. This is a situation where all possible resources (e.g., parents, your earnings, scholarships, need-based financial aid, etc.) have been utilized and you are still unable to meet housing costs and remain at Mason without relocating to less expensive housing. Educational loans are considered to be a reasonable means to meet the responsibilities of the License Agreement. Without compelling financial need, the Committee will not consider your appeal for release from the License Agreement based solely on the availability of less expensive housing.

The Appeals Committee will not consider your appeal if you have not completed and submitted a **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** for the current academic year (<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>). Most students, regardless of family financial circumstances, are eligible for some amount of need-based financial aid. If you have not yet filed a FAFSA for this year, you should do so **BEFORE** submitting an appeal. Financial aid that might be available to you may solve your financial concern, making an appeal unnecessary. If you have questions about filing a FAFSA during the academic year, please contact the Office of Student Financial Aid (703-993-2353 or <http://financialaid.gmu.edu>).

If...

- 1) You have filed a FAFSA for this year, **AND**
- 2) Your financial circumstances have changed since doing so, **AND**
- 3) You have used all offered financial aid,

...you should contact the Office of Student Financial Aid, before submitting an appeal, to request a reevaluation of resources. Additional financial aid may be available to you to solve your financial concern, making an appeal unnecessary.

Student Requirements

Please type and deliver your appeal statement, with your completed *Housing and Residence Life License Agreement Appeal Form* and independently verifiable documentation supporting the reasons for your appeal to the Office of Housing and Residence Life on the first floor of Potomac Heights. Your statement should answer the following questions:

- 1) How have your financial circumstances changed since signing the License Agreement? Why is this problem significant?
- 2) Have you filed a FAFSA for this year? If not, why? If yes, have you used all financial aid offered to you?
- 3) If you have already filed a FAFSA for this year and your financial circumstances have changed since doing so, have you contacted the Office of Student Financial Aid to request a reevaluation of resources? If not, why? If yes, what was the outcome?
- 4) If you are released from your License Agreement, where do you intend to live?
- 5) What will be the monthly costs to you while living there?

General Information for Students & Healthcare Providers

To consider an appeal for release from the Housing License Agreement for medical and/or psychological reasons, Mason Housing and Residence Life (HRL) requires a letter documenting your current medical and/or psychological condition(s) from a licensed clinical professional or healthcare provider who is thoroughly familiar with your condition(s) along with a completed *Housing and Residence Life License Agreement Appeal Form* and your written statement (see next page).

Letters from medical providers and other medical documentation will be reviewed only by medical professionals on the appeals committee. To protect your privacy and in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), letters from healthcare providers and any additional medical documentation will be submitted to and retained by the Campus Health Services before and after their review by medical professionals on the appeals committee. These documents will NOT be reviewed or retained by Housing and Residence Life. Mason Housing staff and/or the other non-medical members of the Housing Agreement Appeals Committee will review only your appeal form, your typed statement, and the comments and recommendations provided by medical professionals on the committee.

Factors to Consider

Housing and Residence Life has a number of accommodations that meet the needs and requirements of many students with medical conditions or disabilities. Please direct requests for such accommodations to the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Upon review of your appeal and related documentation, the appeals committee may recommend relocating you to a different room, type of room or building as a reasonable and satisfactory accommodation of your needs instead of releasing you from the License Agreement. HRL will only consider release from the License Agreement if we are unable to offer accommodations recommended by the committee.

Many medical/psychological appeals relate more to the specific type of accommodation in which a student is living than to campus housing in general. In your statements/letters, you and your healthcare provider should include an explanation of why moving to different accommodations within campus housing is not a reasonable solution. Campus housing accommodations include:

- Smaller residence halls that are quieter and less distracting than larger halls.
- Rooms with attached semi-private bathrooms shared with another room.
- Rooms with private bathrooms.
- Triple, double and single occupancy rooms

Allergies

It has been said in Northern Virginia that if you don't have allergies when you get here, you'll get them sooner or later. Northern Virginia has ongoing humid temperatures with a large number of allergens; some common and others unique to this part of the country. These allergens are present virtually everywhere and in both on- and off-campus buildings and housing accommodations. Therefore, allergies are not a strong reason to appeal.

Stress, Anxiety & Depression

Stress, anxiety and depression are common among college students, especially new freshmen and those farther from home. Adjusting to the many significant changes as a college student away from home takes time. Residence Life staff and Mason Student Health Services are available to assist students as they make this adjustment. Moving off campus could, for some, result in further isolation from available support resources and exacerbation of these conditions.

Healthcare Provider Requirements

Please review the information on the previous page and provide your patient with a letter from you, on your office's official letterhead and in a sealed envelope, to be provided with her/his appeal for release from the Housing and Residence Life License Agreement. Your letter will be reviewed by medical professionals on the Housing Agreement Appeals committee. Your letter should include your name, title, answers to at least the following questions and your signature:

- 1) What is the student's medical/psychological condition/diagnosis?
- 2) How long has the student had this condition?
- 3) What is the severity of this condition?
- 4) How long is this condition likely to persist?
- 5) How long have you been providing care to this student related to this condition and when was the student last seen by you?
- 6) Please explain the medical/psychological reason for recommending that the student no longer live in campus housing and why relocation to a different type of accommodation within campus housing is not a reasonable solution for the student.
- 7) Please describe the living accommodations/environment you are recommending for your patient and the medical/psychological rationale for that recommendation.

Student Requirements

Please type and deliver your appeal statement, with your completed *Residence Life and Housing License Agreement Appeal Form* and letter from your healthcare provider, to the Office of Housing and Residence Life on the first floor of Potomac Heights. The letter from your healthcare provider should be in a separate, sealed envelope. Your statement should answer the following questions:

- 1) When do you wish to move out of campus housing (or when did you do so)?
- 2) What is the problem and why is this problem significant?
- 3) Has this medical or psychological issue started, or presented itself, after you signed the agreement?
- 4) Before submitting this appeal, what have you done to try to resolve this problem?
- 5) How will living in campus housing cause or contribute to your condition?
- 6) If you are released from your License Agreement, where do you intend to live?
- 7) What is different about your new living environment that will not cause or contribute to your condition as living in campus housing does?

Appeal for Release from the Housing License Agreement Other Reasons

The Housing Agreement Appeals Committee rarely approves release from the License Agreement for reasons other than medical, psychological or financial. Before submitting an appeal, you must first discuss your situation with your Resident Director or her/his supervisor (Assistant Director of Residence Life). S/he will work with you to find possible solutions for your concerns within campus housing. You are expected to consider and try offered solutions **BEFORE** submitting a formal appeal.

Invalid Reasons for Submitting an Appeal

The following reasons are not considered valid for requesting release from your License Agreement:

- Concerns with roommates and/or behavior in a resident hall/apartment – Residents are expected to resolve conflicts with one another, to request assistance from staff, and/or to relocate to another room, resident hall or apartment.
- Eviction for conduct reasons or other conduct-related sanctions – Appeals of conduct sanctions should be submitted to Residence Life’s Conduct Office in accordance with instructions provided with those sanctions.
- Health and medical conditions or disabilities for which reasonable accommodation can be provided in campus housing facilities – Residence Life and Housing has a number of accommodations that meet the needs and requirements of students with medical conditions or disabilities. Please direct requests for such accommodations to the Office of Disability Services (ODS). The Housing Agreement Appeals Committee will only consider release from the License Agreement if Housing and Residence Life is unable to offer accommodations recommended by ODS.
- Availability of less expensive housing – Without compelling financial need, appeals will not be considered based solely on the availability of less expensive housing.
- Do not want to obtain and pay for a required meal plan.

Student Requirements

If offered solutions have been tried and failed, or no reasonable solution was available to you, and you choose to submit a formal appeal, please type and deliver your appeal statement, with 1) your completed *Housing and Resident Life License Agreement Appeal Form* and 2) verifiable documentation supporting the reasons for your appeal to the Resident Director/ADRL with whom you worked. The Resident Director/ADRL will review your appeal, add a written statement describing her/his interactions with you and what s/he knows about your situation, and forward your appeal to Housing and Residence Life for Housing Agreement Appeals Committee review. Your statement should answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the problem and why is it significant?
- 2) How has your situation changed since your agreement signing date?
- 3) What efforts have you made to resolve the problem?
- 4) If you are released from your License Agreement, where do you intend to live?
- 5) In what way will your new living environment resolve the problem?