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**CONTRACT APPEALS PROCESS (RELEASE WITHOUT PENALTY)**

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**Scope:** Residential Life  
**Issued :** June 1, 2012  
**Revised:** November 5, 2020

**I. Purpose**

**II. Policy**

**Owner:** Assistant Director, Conferences and Contracts

**Functional Areas Involved in Administering Process:**

- Communications and Administration
- Financial and Human Resource Services

**Goals:**

The goals of the Contract Appeals Process for the Louisiana State University Department of Residential Life are:

- To provide a process that provides the student a means for application for a release without penalty from the Academic Year Contract for Residence Halls and Apartments
- Insure equitable enforcement of the Academic Year Contract's rent penalty with input from functional areas within Residential Life and the greater university
- This process is applicable across Residence Halls and Apartment communities governed by Residential Life

**Process:**

The following appeal process must be followed to be released from an academic year **housing** contract. To apply for release from a **food service** contract, the student should contact the Tiger Card Office.

1. Student is informed of any rent penalty either before cancelling their assignment (informed at the time of cancellation by an Assignments representative) or after the rent penalty has been applied to the student's billing statement.
2. Due to the volume and straightforward nature of some cancellation/penalty situations, an Assignments representative will facilitate each component of the cancellation process when the following scenarios are applicable:
  - a. Students leaving for a co-op experience (COOP)

- b. Off-Campus Academic Program/Exchange students (EXCH)
  - c. Graduation (GRAD)
  - d. Relocation to Ed Gay/Nicholson Apartments (HAPT) *only if student is the renting student*
  - e. Students leaving for military reasons (MILI)
  - f. Withdrawal/Resignation from LSU (RESG)
  - g. Students transferring to another institution (UNIV)
  - h. Marriage
  - i. Pregnancy
3. For reasons listed in 2.a. through 2.i., the applicable Assignments representative will work directly with the student to communicate documentation required to support their cancellation reason and work with the student to receive said documentation. Once supporting documentation is received, the applicable Assignments representative will make a note on the student's record to prevent the penalty from being applied at check-out or to process a reversal of the rent penalty.
  4. For any reason outside of those listed above in section 2, a student must initiate an appeal for release from the rent penalty. Regardless of rationale, a student must establish through documentation two issues: 1) a change in circumstance creating a special need after moving into the assigned space and 2) LSU has no other form of housing that will meet this need. Common examples of appeals include medical and financial reasons.
    1. Student must initiate the appeal process. Due to FERPA regulations a parent/guardian cannot submit an appeal on behalf of the student.
    2. The student should meet with an Assignments representative in Grace King Hall. In instances where Assignments is unable to engage, this function will be facilitated by the Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Vice President for Residential Life. The Assignments representative will conduct the *Pre-Exit Interview*. During the interview, the Assignments representative will ask standard questions and record answers on the *Pre-Exit Interview* form.
      - a. The *Pre-Exit Interview* process will explore issues such as reasons for leaving campus, appropriate housing accommodations, Residential Life staff involvement and other issues involved with leaving on-campus housing.
      - b. The Assignments representative will determine if another form of housing exists that would remedy the change in circumstances as provided by the student via the *Pre-Exit Interview*.
      - c. If another form of housing exists, the Assignments representative will make recommendations during the *Pre-Exit Interview* process for accommodations and provide the student with a copy of recommendations.
      - d. The student will be asked to sign the completed *Pre-Exit Interview* form. A student's signature does not necessarily signify agreement with the Assignments representative's recommendations. However, it does affirm that the student has been apprised of recommendations. Likewise, the Assignment representative's failure to identify another form of housing in no way guarantees the student/applicant an automatic release without financial penalty.

- e. Upon completion of the *Pre-Exit Interview*, the Assignments representative will extend to the student the *Guidelines for Louisiana State University Application for Release Without Penalty from the Residence Halls Academic Year Contract*.
3. The student must complete the *Application for Release Without Penalty from the Residence Halls Academic Year Contract* and return it to the Assignments representative that conducted the Pre-Exit Interview. The document can be returned to another Assignments representative in the absence of the individual that conducted the Pre-Exit Interview.
  - a. The Assignments representative will review the application and identify any missing documents.
  - b. In the event that the application is not complete, the Assignments representative will work with the student to produce the necessary documentation.
4. When an application is completed, the Assignments representative will attach the *Pre-Exit Interview* form and submit all documentation to the Assistant Director, Conferences and Contracts.
5. A Contract Release Committee will review all applications and appropriate documentation no later than two weeks following complete submissions. The committee is comprised of the following members:
  - Assistant Director, Conferences and Contract (Chair), Department of Residential Life
  - Associate Director, Housing Operations, Department of Residential Life
  - Designated Residence Coordinator (RC), Department of Residential Life
  - Designated student employed by the Department of Residential Life
  - Designee from the Office of Disability Support Services
  - Designee from the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships

Committee meets in-person weekly mid-November through February unless prohibited by holiday schedules. Committee meets as needed during other months of the year.
6. The committee will render a decision of financial responsibility.
7. The Assistant Director, Conferences and Contracts for the Department of Residential Life will write and sign the letter to the student, outlining the decision of the committee. This letter will be sent to the student's LSU email address.
  - a. Committee finds student has no financial responsibility and is released from the rent penalty
    - i. Assistant Director, Conferences and Contracts notifies the Associate Director, Financial and Human Resource Services, Department of Residential Life, that the student is released from financial responsibility/rent penalty.
    - ii. The Associate Director, or designee, will issue a credit to the student's account in the amount of the financial responsibility/rent penalty, **process is complete**.
  - b. Committee finds student has financial responsibility and is **not** released from the rent penalty.
    - i. Student agrees with Committee decision; financial responsibility stands and student waives right for appeal, **process is complete**.
    - ii. Student does not agree with Committee decision; student appeals decision to Director, Communications and Administration or designee.
      1. Appeal must be in the form of a written document addressed to the Director, Communications and Administration, Department of

Residential Life, within five (5) business days of receipt of the Committee decision.

- a. Document should clearly state the specific actions or recommendations that are being appealed.
  - b. Document should clearly present specific reasons and grounds for appeal.
  - c. Document must be signed by the person making the appeal.
8. The Director, Communications and Administration for the Department of Residential Life, or designee, will review all files and schedule a meeting with the student appealing the decision. A meeting with the student will generally take place within one week of receiving the appeal in writing.
9. The Director, Communications and Administration, or designee, renders a decision and will write a letter outlining the decision. This letter will be sent to the student's LSU email address.
- a. Director, or designee, finds student has no financial responsibility and is released from the rent penalty
    - i. Director notifies the Associate Director, Financial and Human Resource Services, Department of Residential Life, that the student is released from financial responsibility/rent penalty.
    - ii. The Associate Director, or designee, will issue a credit to the student's account in the amount of the financial responsibility/rent penalty, **process is complete.**
  - b. Director, or designee, finds student has financial responsibility and is **not** released from the rent penalty.
    - i. Student agrees with Director's decision; financial responsibility stands and student waives right for appeal, **process is complete.**
    - ii. Student does not agree with Director's decision; student appeals decision to Assistant Vice President, Department of Residential Life.
      1. Appeal must be in the form of a written document addressed to the Assistant Vice President, Department of Residential Life within five (5) business days of receipt of the Director's decision.
        - a. Document should clearly state the specific actions or recommendations that are being appealed.
        - b. Document should clearly present specific reasons and grounds for appeal.
        - c. Document must be signed by the person making the appeal.
    - iii. Appeal will be considered if one of the following events has occurred:
      1. Evidence of bias on the Director, or designee.
      2. Failure to follow Contract Appeals Process procedures.
      3. New information has become available since the appeal meeting.
      4. An appeal, which does not clearly raise one or more of the three issues raised above, shall be dismissed without further consideration. The appeal shall be limited in its review to the issue or issues raised in the written appeal.
10. The Assistant Vice President of Residential Life, or designee, will obtain files for the student appealing decisions of financial responsibility.

- a. Assistant Vice President, or designee, will review the request for appeal and if appropriate meet with the student within two weeks of receiving the appeal in writing.
- b. The Assistant Vice President, or designee, will render a decision and will write a letter outlining the decision. This letter will be sent to the student's LSU email address.
  - i. Assistant Vice President upholds Committee/Directors or designee's decision, **process complete**.
  - ii. Assistant Vice President modifies Committee/Directors or designees decision.
    - 1. Assistant Vice President notifies the Associate Director, Financial and Human Resource Services, Department of Residential Life, that the student is released from financial responsibility/rent penalty.
    - 2. The Associate Director, or designee, will issue a credit to the student's account in the amount of the financial responsibility/rent penalty, **process is complete**.

**The decision by the Assistant Vice President, or designee, concludes the appellate process for the specific Contract Appeal.**

**Guidelines for Louisiana State University Application for Release**

**Without Penalty from the Residence Halls Academic Year Contract**

**Attention First Year Students:** *This process is separate from the First Year Housing Expectation (FYHE). You must first receive an exemption from the FYHE before submitting a request for release without penalty.*

(Note: All guidelines for residence halls also apply to East Campus, West Campus and Nicholson Gateway Apartments) The housing contract is issued for the full academic year. The contract is strictly adhered to with exceptions made only under special circumstances. A request for a release from the contract does not constitute an automatic release nor should acceptance of this form be construed as a commitment to release. Consideration for adjustments is made in cases of necessity as determined and approved by the Department of Residential Life. **Residents requesting a release without penalty must establish through documentation, two issues:**

- 1) A change in circumstance creating a special need after moving into the assigned space, and
- 2) Residential Life has no other form of housing that will meet this need.

**Process for Requesting a Release Without Penalty**

- a. In order to receive an Application for Release without Penalty from the Residence Halls Academic Year Contract, a student must complete a Pre-Exit Interview with a member from the Assignments team in Grace King Hall.
- b. Upon completion of the Pre-Exit Interview, the Assignments representative will furnish the student with an application for completion.
- c. Student should return the Application for Release without Penalty from the Residence Halls Academic Year Contract, **and all necessary documentation** listed below, to the Grace King Front Desk where the student will be advised appropriately.
- d. Contract Release Committee will review the completed packet.
- e. A decision will be rendered and a notice of decision will be emailed to the student's LSU email address.

**Necessary Documentation**

The following is a list of documentation that must be provided in support of the resident's application for release without penalty:

- a. **Medical:** Once the Application for Release without Penalty is returned to the Assignments representative, a complete explanation of medical condition by the treating qualified professional will be requested by Residential Life. A medical form will be issued to the applicant for completion by their treating qualified professional (per information provided on the Application for Release without Penalty). It must be completed and returned in order for an appeal to be considered. Medical documentation from family members will not be considered.
- b. **Financial:** Financial reasons for release will only be considered if it can be verified that a significant change in the financial status of a resident's family or background has occurred since the date the resident moved on-campus. Examples might include a death of a parent, permanent lay-off of a parent, family bankruptcy, etc. A release will not be granted for the sole reason to move into off-campus housing, fraternity/sorority houses, to secure less expensive housing, to commute from home, or live in a newly family purchased, non-permanent residential property. Documentation to be provided must include:
1. Photocopies of federal or state income tax returns
  2. Proof of outstanding debt and loan contracts
  3. Verification of income
  4. Photocopies of current savings and checking account statements
  5. Parents' financial documents are required as well if the resident is a minor/dependent.
- Students requesting release for financial reasons must also complete the Financial Evaluation Application for Release without Penalty.
- c. **Other:** For reasons other than those listed, resident must be very specific and extensive in his/her explanation. Additional documentation may be required. In these instances, documents will be photocopied and the original returned to the resident at the time it is presented. If original documents are attached to the application, they become a part of the University's permanent records and may not be returned.

### **When and how will I know that my appeal has been granted?**

The Contract Release Committee meets on a weekly basis November - January unless prohibited by holiday schedules. The committee meets every two - three weeks or as needed during other months of the year. Therefore, you may not receive a decision from the committee for 2-3 weeks after submitting an appeal application. For questions regarding the status of your appeal, please contact Jule Rich in Louise Garig Hall Room 103 at 225-578-4886, or via email at [housing@lsu.edu](mailto:housing@lsu.edu).