

MCLA Residence Area Occupancy Agreement Release **Petition Information and Guidelines**

Residence Life & Housing (RLH)

Townhouse #89

413-662-5249 (Phone) 413-662-5004 (Fax) reslife@mcla.edu (E-mail)

I. General Information about the Residence Area Occupancy Agreement

The *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement* (RAOA) is a contractual agreement between the resident student and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA). The term of the agreement is the full academic year - fall and spring semesters. A copy of your signed RAOA is available in your Self-Service THD account.

2. Petition for Extenuating Circumstances

Petitions for release from the *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement* can be made in accordance with the Petition grounds and guidelines outlined in this document.

Petitions must provide evidence of the existence of extenuating circumstances that personally impact the resident and cause the resident to have an inability to fulfill their *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement*.

Extenuating circumstances are defined as circumstances that:

- are not under the control of the student;
- were not reasonably foreseeable at the time of signing the *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement*;
- personally impact the student; and,
- result in a demonstrated inability to fulfill the *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement*.

Petitions on other grounds are not accepted.

Examples which may qualify as extenuating circumstances include, but are not limited to: certain medical or psychiatric conditions or unforeseen financial emergencies.

Supportive documentation that thoroughly demonstrates both the extenuating circumstances **and** the resulting inability to fulfill the terms of the *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement* is required.

It is important to remember that requesting a release from the *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement* does not guarantee that a release will be granted. Alternate housing arrangements (including signing a lease to live in an off-campus apartment) should not be made until you receive an official response regarding the outcome of your request. The College is not responsible for any financial obligations you may incur as a result of failing to heed this advice.

Last, it is expected that students participating in this process have already participated in the Returning Student Housing Assignment process which includes submitting an application on Self-Service THD. Petitions from students who fail to follow this requirement will not be considered.

3. Petition Deadline Date

All Petitions requesting a release from the *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement* are due as follows:

For a spring semester release: Friday, 12/10/21.

4. The Housing Petition Board

The Housing Petition Board (HPB) considers petitions for release from the *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement*. The HPB meets after the Petition deadline and provides a decision to the petitioning student no later than 10 business days after the deadline. All HPB communication is sent to the student's MCLA e-mail account. All decisions made by the HPB are final. (Please see Item #9 for information about the Appeals Process.) HPB decisions may only be appealed if the procedure outlined in this document was not followed and/or a substantial change in circumstance occurs after the submission of the Petition.

The HPB is comprised of representatives from Residence Life & Housing, Student Financial Services and Disability Resources (as applicable). The HPB is chaired by the Director of Residence Life & Housing or her designee. The HPB may, at their discretion, consult with other Campus professionals who have knowledge or expertise related to the Petition (e.g. Dining Services, Health Services, Counseling Services). The Board is instructed to treat all information submitted and presented with extreme sensitivity.

5. Petition Guidelines

To receive a release from the *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement*, the student must demonstrate both the extenuating circumstances and the inability to fulfill the Agreement. Extenuating circumstances must be beyond the control of and directly impacting the student.

Only the resident student may petition for a release from the *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement*. Petitions will not be accepted from other individuals on behalf of the student.

All information the student wishes to be considered must be submitted in writing with their completed Petition.

Petitions must be based on one of the following grounds:

- financial
- student medical condition
- student psychiatric disability

Interpersonal conflict, disputes with roommates or other interpersonal relationship issues, the desire to live with friends off-campus, signing an off-campus lease, the ability to live in lower cost housing and a desire to not be enrolled in a mandatory meal plan are not grounds on which a Petition will be accepted.

The student's written Petition, combined with the submitted supportive documentation must cite and demonstrate both the extenuating circumstances and the resulting inability to fulfill the terms of the *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement*. The student's written Petition must be substantiated by supportive evidence in the form of detailed written statements and applicable documents from appropriate sources. Additional guidance on supportive documentation is provided below.

Petitions must include a completed Petition form, a detailed statement of explanation and all supportive documentation. Incomplete Petitions will be returned to the student. Petitions that are not submitted by the student or do not meet guidelines outlined in this document will also be returned. Only complete Petitions turned in by the due date listed under Item #3 will be forwarded to the Housing Petition Board for review.

6. Is Your Petition Based on a Financial Reason?

Your Petition must demonstrate financial inability in accordance and consistent with Financial Aid guidelines and procedures. Financial Aid Counselors coordinate most reviews of financial inability in advance of the Board meeting. Generally, this means the student:

- Must have filed a FAFSA for the upcoming academic year;
- Must have accepted all financial aid awarded, including loans;
- Must submit all supportive documentation with the Petition.

Examples of reasons which typically do not qualify as extenuating circumstances for financial reasons include: wanting to move off campus, engagement, siblings attending/planning to attend college, preference to live at home, opportunity to save money and a preference to not accept student loans.

7. Is Your Petition Based on a Medical Condition and/or Psychiatric Disability?

Petitions on the grounds of a **medical condition** must be accompanied by detailed supportive documentation from an appropriate, qualified medical professional (e.g. physician, nurse practitioner) who has direct knowledge of the student and the stated condition.

Petitions on the grounds of **psychiatric disability** must be accompanied by detailed supportive documentation from an appropriate, qualified mental health professional (e.g. psychiatrist, psychologist, licensed social worker) who has direct knowledge of the student and the stated condition.

Supportive documentation must additionally include the following elements:

- A statement that clearly describes the relationship between the condition and the student's ability to reside in on-campus housing; and,
- Evaluation of the medical or psychological consequences to the student if the student is not released from the *MCLA Residence Area Occupancy Agreement*.

The petitioning student must be registered with Disability Resources. If the student is not currently registered with Disability Resources, the student should schedule a meeting with the Disability Resources Coordinator prior to submitting a Petition. Last, the petitioning student must consent to having the documentation shared with the Housing Petition Board members who are reviewing the Petition.

8. Petition Submission Procedures

The Housing Petition Board reviews Petitions from students requesting a release from the *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement*. Individuals filing a Petition need to follow the procedures found in this packet and complete the "MCLA Residence Area Occupancy Agreement Release Petition" form below. This form and the required documentation should be returned directly to the Residence Life & Housing office in a sealed envelope by the deadline date.

The HPB will review your written Petition and supportive documentation. If the Board requires further clarification on the written Petition, you will be contacted directly. The Board's decision will be sent to the student's MCLA e-mail account no later than 10 business days after the posted deadline. **At the Board's discretion a Petition may also be continued pending submission of additional requested information or documentation.**

If you have any questions regarding Petition procedures or guidelines, please e-mail Dianne Manning, Director - Residence Life & Housing at dianne.manning@mcla.edu or contact Residence Life & Housing at 413-662-5249 to schedule an appointment with the Director.

9. Appeal Process

Decisions reached by the HPB may only be appealed if the process outlined in this document was not followed and/or a substantial change in circumstances occurred after the initial Petition was submitted. Disagreement with the decision reached by the HPB is not a valid reason to request an appeal.

Appeal requests should be directed to the Director of Residence Life & Housing. The request should be in writing and must address in what way the procedure outlined in this document was not followed and/or what substantial change in circumstances occurred after the initial Petition was submitted.

MCLA RESIDENCE AREA OCCUPANCY AGREEMENT RELEASE PETITION

Residence Life & Housing (RLH)
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA)

PART I: Your Personal Information

Name: _____ "A" Number: _____

Residence Area Room Assignment: _____ MCLA P.O. Box Number: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____

Class Status: FR SO JR SR Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____

Permanent Address: _____

What was your first semester at MCLA? Fall 20__ or Spring 20__ Expected Graduation Date? _____

Were you an entering freshman or a transfer student? _____ Entering Freshman _____ Transfer Student

If you were a transfer student, how many credits did you transfer in? _____

Please indicate your reason(s) for requesting a release from your *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement*:

_____ Financial Inability (Note: You must have a current FAFSA on file in Financial Aid to choose this reason.)

_____ Medical Inability (Note: You must be registered with Disability Services to choose this reason.)

_____ Psychiatric Inability (Note: You must be registered with Disability Services to choose this reason.)

Part II: Your Personal Statement

I have attached a separate sheet(s) explaining, in sufficient detail, both (a) the extenuating circumstances personally impacting me that form the basis of this Petition; and, (b) my resulting inability to fulfill the terms of my *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement*.

Part III: Your Supporting Documentation

I have attached the required documentation (as described in sections 6 & 7) for each reason I am requesting a release from my *Residence Area Occupancy Agreement* as checked above. **I understand that all documentation related to this request must be submitted at the time I submit this Petition.**

Part IV: Your Signature

I have reviewed and understand this document and I give consent for records relative to my Petition to be disclosed to members of the Housing Petition Board and campus professionals reviewing my Petition.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Received By: _____ Date: _____ RR: _____ Disposition: _____