

Housing Contract Terms & Conditions
Department of Housing and Residence Life
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

1. Purpose

This contract specifies the terms and conditions for all students residing in campus housing at the University of Southern Mississippi ("University") for the academic year. Resident must execute this housing contract via electronic signature through the student housing portal. If resident is under the age of eighteen (18), resident's parent or legal guardian must also execute the contract. This housing contract is legally binding and effective when fully executed by resident and resident parent or legal guardian, if required. The contract constitutes resident's agreement to reside in campus housing during the fall and spring semesters of an academic year.

This contract may only be canceled, terminated or modified as stated below.

This contract is not a lease and is not subject to Mississippi landlord-tenant laws. It is a license to occupy institutional housing as part of the academic community that the University has created as an integral aspect of the academic experience. A license is a revocable contract, and as such, the University retains the right to revoke the right to occupy University residences. This contract does not grant possession of a particular room or residence or type of housing (further references in this contract to "room" shall mean a room, apartment, and/or suite). Individual students have no entitlement to live in a specific residence. Students may be temporarily or permanently relocated to other housing or denied the privilege to live in any University housing at any time in accordance with University policies.

2. Eligibility

Resident must be at least sixteen (16) years old, on or before the first day of occupancy, to reside in campus housing. Acceptance of this contract by the University does not constitute a commitment of admission or continuing enrollment at the University. Resident must earn admission to the University and must remain admitted, enrolled, and registered for classes during the entire length of the housing contract. Balance must be paid in accordance with University requirements. A resident does not become ineligible for campus housing, nor is the housing contract otherwise void or terminated, if during the term of the contract resident switches from full-time to part-time enrollment or enrolls in online courses.

3. Contract Term

The duration of the housing contract is for the entire academic year (both fall and spring semesters), or if entered into after the beginning of the academic year, for the remainder of the academic year (both semesters).

This housing contract does not provide for campus housing during breaks between semesters. Housing and Residence Life may offer break housing to residents at an additional cost.

4. Housing Processing Fee

All contracts submitted require a \$75.00 non-refundable housing processing fee. This fee shall be paid to the University when a new contract is submitted.

5. Housing Policy

All residents are responsible for knowing and abiding by the rules and regulations contained within the housing contract and the Housing and Residence Life Handbook. Strict compliance with these rules and regulations are a continuing condition of occupancy by the resident. By residing on campus, the resident agrees to the following: utilization of University email address (activated through iTech), issued on-campus post office box, and the required meal plan by Eagle Dining. Further, as a condition of campus housing occupancy, the resident agrees to abide by and comply with all institutional policies and regulations, including but not limited to the Student Code of Conduct, as revised from time to time.

6. Occupancy

This housing contract is for space within the University owned residence hall system, apartments and Greek houses. The housing contract is not for a specific building or room and may not be transferred or assigned to another person. The space may not be sublet, leased, or rented to anyone else for any period of time. The resident agrees not to allow any persons other than the assigned roommate to live in assigned space. Violation of this restriction will be considered serious and may result in fines, eviction from the residence halls, apartments or Greek houses, or other disciplinary action as sanctioned by the University.

If any resident or their guest occupies a room or residence without authorization, the student will be charged an administrative fee for unauthorized occupancy for each day or portion thereof until the space is completely vacated. This includes unauthorized occupancy any time before or after contract dates, termination of occupancy dates, or after eligibility for housing has ceased.

In order to take occupancy of a space, the student must be enrolled in the current term for a minimum of 6 hours (ex. Move in for Fall, must be enrolled in Fall).

7. Rental Rates

Since it is not possible at the time of contracting to determine projected utility or housing fee increases, the University reserves the right, subject to approval by the Board of Trustees of Institutions of Higher Learning, to raise, lower, or modify fees without notice. Rental rates will be billed per semester (fall and spring). Approved rates will be available at <https://www.usm.edu/housing-residence-life/apply/housing-rates.php>.

8. Assignment Process

All residents must be admitted to the University for assignment eligibility and enroll and maintain throughout the semester at least six (6) credit hours. Students with a housing assignment for the fall semester must be enrolled in a minimum of 6 hours by July 15th OR be registered to attend orientation session by July 15th (for incoming 1st years students and incoming transfer students) in order to keep their fall campus housing assignment. Students who are not enrolled or registered for an orientation session by July 15th risk losing their fall campus housing assignment. If a student loses their fall campus housing assignment, it will only be reinstated as space allows and may not be in the original assignment, and/or residence hall, apartment or Greek House. Students who are not enrolled in six (6) credit hours will not be able to move in for either fall or spring semester.

New residents (freshman and transfers): will complete the online housing application, sign the contract, and submit payment for the non-refundable housing processing fee. New residents will be given a designated time slot to participate in the online room selection process based on housing contract and fee payment date. Campus housing is offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Any new resident who does not sign a contract and pay the non-refundable fee by the priority window deadline understands that they may be placed on a waitlist for housing. (See waitlist, Section 10.)

Current residents: will participate in the online room selection process during their designated time slot. A current student understands that campus housing is not guaranteed but may be offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Resident acknowledges and agrees that housing assignments are not guaranteed. Any current resident who does not sign a contract and pay the non-refundable housing processing fee by the priority window deadline understands that they will be placed on a waitlist for housing. (See waitlist, Section 10.)

9. Right of University to Relocate Students

The University reserves the right to relocate students from one space to another when it is determined, in its sole and absolute discretion, that the move is in the University's best interest, including but not limited to renovation, maintenance, construction, roommate conflicts, campus emergency and disciplinary sanctions. Students who are not registered for SAS accommodations and are assigned to ADA Accessible spaces may be relocated at any time if an accommodation need occurs. Students who are relocated by the University must complete the move within 48 hours of notification.

10. Waitlist

Waitlist housing is processed by application completion date, eligibility for housing, and space availability. There is no guarantee that students on the waitlist will receive a housing assignment prior to the start of a semester.

11. Temporary or Overflow Accommodations

The University reserves the right to make assignments to temporary or overflow housing to accommodate requests for housing. The policies and procedures contained within this document are also applicable to overflow housing assignments, which may be made on a temporary basis at the beginning of each semester.

12. Empty Bed Space

Residents may be assigned a roommate, depending on the resident's specific housing assignment. If a roommate's housing contract is canceled or terminated, remaining resident must keep assigned room or apartment in a neat and orderly condition, so that it remains readily available for a replacement roommate. As space and time allows, a resident may be given an opportunity to identify a new roommate or request a room change through their residence hall staff. If resident takes no action, or demand dictates, Housing and Residence Life will designate the vacant bed space as available for selection by another student. Resident may not refuse or reject an assigned roommate and shall not engage in any conduct intended to deter a prospective new roommate from accepting the housing assignment. Residents who refuse to accept a roommate, or who impede the University's effort to make an assignment into a vacant space, will be subject to disciplinary action. Outcomes may include, but are not limited to, requiring responsibility for payment of both bed spaces or removal from the room and/or housing.

Resident may also request a private room for the rest of the academic semester if resident's roommate discontinues their housing contract or assignment. Housing and Residence Life, in its sole discretion, may grant or deny resident's request due to space availability. Resident will incur increased housing fees for a private room and all such fees will be charged to resident's student account if request is approved.

13. Cancellation by Student

a. A student has 5 calendar days from the date of the emailed assignment to cancel with no penalty regardless of when the assignment was made.

b. Cancellation Prior to the Start of a Fall Semester

The housing contract can be canceled by submitting the cancellation form within the student housing portal by June 1 without financial penalties. If canceled after June 1 thru June 30, the student will be assessed the cancellation fee of \$500.00. If canceled July 1 thru August 1, the student will be assessed the cancellation fee of \$750. Housing contracts canceled after August 1 will have a financial penalty of the full contract value. See section 15 for appeals process.

c. Cancellation Prior to the Start of Spring Semester (Spring Applicants Only)

Students who apply for spring term only, may cancel the housing contract by December 1 to avoid the cancellation fee. If canceled after December 1, the student will be assessed the cancellation fee of \$500.00. Spring only housing contracts canceled after January 1 will have a financial penalty of the full contract value. See section 15 for appeals process.

d. Cancellation After the Start of the Semester (Fall or Spring)

When a student needs to cancel the housing contract after August 1 or January 1 (spring only contracts), the student must submit a housing cancellation form. If they wish to appeal financial penalties, the student needs to submit the housing appeal application accompanied by supporting documentation (see section 15 about appeals). If canceling between August 2 and August 15, the cancellation fee will be the full fall housing charge. If canceling after August 15, the cancellation fee will be the full fall and spring housing charge. If canceling the spring only contract after January 1 while remaining enrolled at the University, the cancellation fee will be the full spring housing charge. If canceling the spring only portion of the contract after the fall move out date, a storage fee for the winter break until items are retrieved will be charged to the student account.

e. Cancellation of Spring due to December Graduation

A student who needs to cancel the spring portion of the housing contract due to graduation must submit a housing cancellation form by December 1.

14. Cancellation by University

a. Violation of Policy or Terms

The University reserves the right to refuse admission or readmission to University housing or to cancel the housing contract during the academic year if a student: 1) fails to comply with University policies, regulations, or the Housing and Residence Life Departmental Handbook; 2) is convicted of a felony by civil authorities; or 3) poses a threat to the health, safety and welfare of University community.

b. Sex Offender

The University has determined that convicted criminal sex offenders, regardless of whether they are required by state or federal law to register, pose a significant, clear and present danger to residents. Therefore, convicted sex offenders are not permitted to live in University housing. Cancellation of the housing contract for the above reasons may result in the removal of the resident within one to three (1-3) days' notice, except where the University determines that the continued residency of the student would pose a danger to either the health or welfare of the residential community. In this case, the student may be removed immediately. In either event, there shall be no refund of prepaid rent, and resident shall remain liable for any charges assessed to their student account.

c. Disciplinary Removal

If a resident is prohibited from residing on campus due to a disciplinary removal, the resident will be required to vacate the assigned room or apartment within 48 hours of notification of the disciplinary sanction. Resident is ineligible for a refund or credit of housing fees due to the disciplinary removal and shall remain liable for any charges assessed to their student account.

d. Destruction or Unavailability of Space

In the event the accommodations assigned to a student are destroyed or otherwise made unavailable and the University does not furnish accommodations, the housing contract shall terminate; all rights and liabilities of the parties hereto shall cease; and rental payments previously made shall be refunded on a prorated basis as of the date accommodations become unavailable.

15. Housing Contract Appeals

The Department of Housing and Residence Life offers a housing contract appeal process by which a student may request to be released from the academic year housing contract due to unforeseeable personal circumstances such as a severe medical condition or extreme financial hardship. Supporting documentation must be provided on all appeals. Appeals can be submitted throughout the year and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. The student will be notified in writing of the committee's decision. The committee's decision will be final and not subject to further review. Appeals will be granted at the discretion of the committee. The housing contract must be cancelled and the resident must move out of campus housing before their appeal can be reviewed by the appeals committee.

16. Withdrawal from the University

A signed and executed housing contract will be canceled for any full or partial academic semesters within the contract period if the student officially withdraws from the University. Official withdrawal occurs when a student who has registered and paid fees chooses to cancel their registration and formally withdraw. Students must vacate their residence hall, apartment, or Greek house within 48 hours of official withdrawal. Students with reserved or occupied rooms—whether physically present or with belongings left in the space—who withdraw or fail to enroll will be charged a nightly prorated rate. No refunds will be issued for withdrawals after the University's full-term/full-refunded add/drop deadline. If a student re-enrolls in the University during the original housing contract period, they will remain bound by the terms of the original contract for its duration.

17. Academic Program Exemption

A housing contract which has been signed and executed by a student will be suspended for those full academic semesters to live elsewhere in order to complete their academic program (student teaching, study abroad, internship, co-op, etc.). The student must complete the cancellation form within the student housing portal prior to the last day of class of the prior semester in which the student must complete the academic program requirement. Student must include official academic program documentation. The University cannot guarantee reassignment to a specific residence hall room for a student returning to campus housing from such programs.

18. Proration

If a resident chooses to cancel their housing contract and has officially withdrawn from classes before the university full term/full refund add/drop deadline, the resident's account will be prorated from the day the resident officially checks out of residence hall, apartment, or Greek house, through the end of the term per Section 16 Withdrawal from the University.

Proration of charges is not automatic in any other cases, including failure to enroll. Residents seeking reduced charges must complete the appeals process outlined in Section 15: Housing Contract Appeals. All decisions by the appeals committee are final.

In all cases, the resident must complete the online cancellation form to initiate the process.

19. Responsibility of Room and Room Condition

The resident is responsible for the accommodations assigned and shall reimburse the University for damages within or to said accommodations. Resident must complete a Room Condition Report (RCR) within three (3) days after official check-in to assigned space. Resident's failure to complete the RCR shall be deemed an acknowledgement that resident's room, including all furniture, fixtures, and appliances, are in good and workable condition, free from defect or damage. Charges for damages and/or necessary cleaning will be assessed to the resident(s) by the University and must be paid promptly.

20. Keys and Access Cards

Resident agrees not to loan/duplicate keys and/or access cards. Lost or stolen keys and/or access cards must be reported immediately. Resident may incur financial penalty for lost or duplicated keys and/or access cards. Keys must be returned when occupancy ends and access to space will be terminated.

21. Right to Entry of Space

In addition to all rights of entry University has by law and under other provisions of this contract, University or its agents may enter the housing contract space at any time for any of the following reasons:

- a. In case of emergency;
- b. To inspect the condition of the premises;
- c. To inspect for fire and health hazards and for health and safety violations;
- d. To make repairs, installations, additions, alterations, or paint to the rooms or to the building, apartment or house;
- e. To perform housekeeping and pest control functions;
- f. To remove personal property, equipment, placards, signs, fixtures, alterations or additions to the premises that are in violation of the provisions of this or any other applicable agreement, regulation or policy;
- g. To verify room occupancy; and
- h. To search by authorized University personnel when there is cause to believe that a violation of this contract or University policy or regulations is being or has been committed. Authorized University personnel include, but are not limited to, staff of: Housing and Residence Life, Student Affairs, Dean of Students, and, University Police. This provision is not intended to limit the right of University Police to enter any student's room in the performance of statutory duties and in accordance with legally defined procedures governing search and seizure when there is probable cause to believe that a violation of state or federal law is being or has been committed.

The University may, in its sole discretion, allow resident an opportunity to correct a violation that is not criminal in nature and does not present an immediate threat to the health and safety of residents and staff. If so, the resident will be granted a reasonable time to correct the violation. If it is not timely corrected, the resident will be subject to the housing student conduct process. Violations may result in judicial action and/or termination of the housing contract.

22. No Liability for Resident Property

The University is not liable and assumes no responsibility for any loss or damage to resident's personal belongings or property, whether arising from theft, fire, smoke, inclement weather, water damage, or any other hazard or casualty. Likewise, the University is not liable and assumes no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal belongings or property during such times when the resident is moving into campus housing or checking out of campus housing. Resident is advised to obtain and maintain the appropriate insurance at resident's expense to cover such losses.

23. State of Emergency or Communicable Disease; Force Majeure

Resident acknowledges and agrees that the University may take specific measures to protect the health of its University community and the surrounding community in response to a state of emergency, COVID-19 or another communicable disease, or other reasons deemed to be in the best interests of the University. Resident acknowledges and understands that these measures may include but are not limited to, termination of housing contracts, changing resident's housing assignment, closing of residence halls, apartments, or Greek houses. Refunds may not be granted for temporary suspension of housing services that result from an emergency, pandemic, epidemic, act of God, force majeure, or other exigency. For purposes of this contract, the term "force majeure" shall mean fire, earthquake, flood, act of God, strikes, work stoppages or other labor disturbances, riots or civil commotions, litigation, war or other act of any foreign nation, plague, epidemic, pandemic, power of government or governmental agency or authority, or any other cause which is beyond the control or authority of the University.

24. Official Check Out

Resident must comply with all check out procedures which consists of signing appropriate check out paperwork, removing personal belongings, cleaning the room/space, defrosting refrigerator, and returning keys (if applicable). Resident will be expected to schedule a check out inspection with residence hall staff or complete the express check out process. Failure to properly check out may result in improper check out fees. If choosing to do an express check out, student waives right to appeal damages.

If personal belongings remain in the assigned residence hall, apartment or Greek house space after check out, a professional staff member will collect all items and contact student via USM-issued email to retrieve items. A storage fee will be charged to the student account. Items are only kept on hand for 30 days.

25. Notices

Housing and Residence Life will email all housing-related notices and updates to resident USM-issued email address. These notices will include important and time-sensitive information, including pertinent dates, deadlines, upcoming events, required action by resident, housing processes, and fees. Resident is expected to timely check USM-issued email and will not be excused from any deadlines or requirements due to failure to read housing notices.

University reserves the right to make changes to this contract and supporting policies from time to time without prior notice. The contract in the form as it exists online is the governing document and contains the then-currently applicable policies and information.

If there is a conflict between the terms and conditions of this contract and any other applicable lease, agreement, policy or regulation, then the terms will be interpreted to give effect to all applicable provisions to the fullest extent possible. If the conflict cannot be so reconciled, the conflict will be resolved favorably to the University.

Student Name

Student Signature

Date

Student ID#

Parent/Guardian Name (if under 18)

Parent/Guardian Signature (if under 18)

Date