

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EXCEPTION REQUEST PROCESS

Who reviewed the exception requests? The COVID-19 Exception Review Team was made up of professional staff from the Division of Student Life, the Office of the Vice Chancellor, and MIT Information Systems & Technology with significant experience in student support and crisis management. As part of their role at MIT, many of these staff members deal daily with student issues relating to accommodations, mental health needs, financial hardship, visas and other urgent concerns.

How were exception requests managed? MIT Information Systems & Technology staff set up a ticketing system to manage requests for emergency housing and funds for travel changes and other urgent needs for students who wished to leave campus. Each student was contacted as quickly as possible by a staff case manager to acknowledge receipt of the request and, when necessary, to establish two-way communication about support options to help students with their needs.

What were the principles of the exception review process? The review was guided by two core principles:

- Responding appropriately to the pandemic threat being faced by MIT and the greater Boston region by significantly decreasing the number of students living in residence halls and FSILGs, which will limit the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus; and
- Working compassionately with students seeking emergency housing on campus or financial support for move-out.

Each case was painstakingly reviewed by staff members. For particularly complex cases, senior staff conducted a second review. An appeal process was also established for students who were not approved for emergency housing. Two faculty members and student leadership shaped the appeal process: the faculty chair of the Committee on Student Life, a Head of House representative to the Student and Residential Life Emergency Preparedness Working Group, and an Undergraduate Association officer.

What were the criteria for exception requests? Exception requests were reviewed and granted based on the following criteria:

- International students who have concerns that they would not be able to return to MIT due to visa issues;
- International students who will have difficulty returning to their home country if it has been hard hit by COVID-19; and
- Students who do not have a home to go to, or for whom going home would be unsafe given the circumstances of their country or home life.

What was the final deadline for appealing an exception decision? Students had until 9 pm on Saturday, March 14, to appeal their exception decision, and a small number of appeals were submitted. The Chancellor reviewed each appeal, and the vast majority were approved because new information was submitted.

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How were students who appealed an exception decision supported? Students who choose to appeal their decision were offered the opportunity to be matched with a faculty member advisor from the Committee on Student Life. Appeals were being considered based on the following criteria:

- Significant new information affecting the decision that was not available at the time of the original request for an exception; and
- An exception denial was substantially at odds with the stated criteria for exceptions to be granted.

What were the results of the exception application process review? As of Sunday, March 15, the numbers for this process are as follows:

- Roughly 700 submissions from undergraduates for either financial assistance to leave, requests to remain in on-campus housing, or other questions were received.
- About 260 of the individuals who contacted us ultimately left campus, and many of them requested and received financial assistance with moving. The financial support we offered these students is in addition to the substantial moving and travel reimbursements we are offering all undergraduate students who relocate off campus.
- Just over 400 undergraduates received approval to stay in on-campus emergency housing (about 40 of these students are staying for two weeks or fewer). We are observing students changing their minds so the total number of students in emergency on-campus housing will be significantly lower than the initial number approved.
- About 30 undergraduates did not receive approval because they did not meet [the criteria](#) we established at the outset of this process.
- We set up an appeal process for these students, and only a small number of appeal requests were submitted. The vast majority of appeals included new information meeting the criteria so these requests have been approved.

What are next steps for students who received an exception? Students whose exceptions were approved were asked to read and agree to the rules for living in emergency housing by signing their exception offer electronically. The agreement includes the following terms:

- Housing and Residential Services will relocate students currently living in residence halls and FSILGs to another residence hall on campus to lower the density of students in our buildings and to consolidate security, food service, and staff support.
- Students were asked to provide emergency contact information, and it was explained that staff would notify their emergency contact of the student's decision to stay on campus.