

# BAKER HOUSE ROOMING POLICIES



Baker House

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# Table of Contents

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<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>1.0 PREAMBLE</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES</b> .....	<b>3</b>
2.1 Transparency of Rooming Regulations.....	3
<b>3.0 ROOM ASSIGNMENT COMMITTEE</b> .....	<b>4</b>
3.1 Members.....	4
3.2 Selection Process.....	4
3.3 Emergency RAC Appointments.....	5
3.4 RAC Chair.....	5
3.5 RAC Procedures.....	5
3.6 Member Expectations.....	6
3.6.1 Member Etiquette.....	6
3.6.2 Exec Meetings.....	6
3.6.3 Email Communications.....	6
<b>4.0 UPPERCLASSMEN ASSIGNMENT PROCESS</b> .....	<b>6</b>
4.1 Rooming Pools.....	6
4.2 Rooming Order.....	7
4.3 Pre-rooming Process Preparation.....	7
4.4 Room Preference Form.....	7
4.5 Rooming Meeting.....	8
4.6 Rooming Meeting - Remote Conduct.....	8
<b>5.0 TRANSFER ASSIGNMENT PROCESS</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>6.0 FIRST-YEAR ASSIGNMENT PROCESS</b> .....	<b>9</b>
6.1 First Year Temporary Room Assignment Process (Summer).....	9
6.2 Post-REX First Year Room Assignment Process.....	9
6.2.1 First Year Squatting Rules.....	10
6.3 First Year Single Room Guidelines.....	10
<b>7.0 SWITCHING</b> .....	<b>11</b>

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

RAC: (Baker) Room Assignment Committee	HOH: Heads of House
Exec: Baker House Executive Committee	GRA: Graduate Resident Advisor
RPM: (Baker) Residential Peer Mentor	HM: House Manager
REX: Residence Exploration	IAP: Independent Activities Period
AD: Area Director	

## 1.0 PREAMBLE

Research has shown that the assignment of rooms in a dorm has a very significant impact on the friendship and culture of a dorm.<sup>1</sup> Because of the impact of rooming, the rooming process is important to maintaining Baker culture. It is vital that the process operate well, reliably and equitably year after year according to the principles and processes agreed to by Baker residents and the Houseteam. We try our best to have a diverse group of residents involved in rooming and allow residents the capability to see exactly how the rooming process is implemented.

## 2.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In designing the rooming policies, the following guiding principles are followed:

- It is important for the process to be transparent and operate reliably from year to year.
- Residents, including first years, are put in the best position to submit preferences for their own roommates, neighbors, and room locations.
- The rooming process should not be purely mechanical; instead, RAC may assign rooms through a discretionary, holistic process.
- Rooms shall be assigned in an order based on seniority and role in the house. Exec, RPMs, and RAC members will have priority within their class.
- Rooming will be done to minimize the amount of movement while maximizing happiness (most applicable to REX movement and mid-semester moves)
- Baker House is a co-ed dorm. Students shall not be segregated by gender by either floor or section of the floor. Instead, efforts should be made to intersperse rooms of different genders.
- RAC shall be selected by an objective, holistic process, not by popular vote.

### 2.1 Transparency of Rooming Regulations

This document shall be posted on the Baker website as well as MIT Housing and Residential Services' "The Guide to Residences" website.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1950, a study by Festinger, Schachter, and Back at MIT, showed that friendships and information dispersal strongly correlated with the distance between apartments and the apartments a resident passes on the way in and out of the building.

## 3.0 ROOM ASSIGNMENT COMMITTEE

### 3.1 Members

RAC is composed of a maximum of five members. One of the five members will be the Internal President *ex officio*. The remaining members will be comprised of one to two from each of the (rising) sophomore, junior, and senior classes (*permanent members*).

### 3.2 Selection Process

Each year, a new member that is a rising sophomore (who intends to live in Baker the following year) is selected to join RAC. They are appointed to serve on the committee for the rest of their time in Baker (three-year term). If no rising sophomore applies for the position, any other Baker resident (i.e. rising junior or rising senior) may apply and be considered for the position.

Similarly, any vacancies on RAC due to a resignation may be filled by any eligible Baker resident (i.e. rising sophomore/junior/senior). In both such instances, the appointed member will fill out the term of the member they replaced.

New members are selected before the Upperclassmen Selection Process, which occurs in April. Current RAC members will issue an application and solicit responses (typically in February, with appointments made in March). RAC will decide on the criteria in which they will use to evaluate applicants. These criteria may include:

1. Understanding of Baker culture
2. Work ethic and responsiveness throughout the year, including the summer
3. Involvement in multiple diverse Baker communities
4. Knowledge of Database systems

In addition to these four explicit criteria, there are also criteria based on the composition of the RAC that should be followed when selecting a new member:

- RAC should, as much as possible, reflect the broad range of interests, perspectives, and diversity of the Baker community
- Gender equity on RAC should be attempted
- No more than 50% of the permanent members shall be members of the same athletics team

RAC will publish these criteria before the application period opens. RAC shall issue an application and solicit responses. The application shall be issued via the “baker-general” mailing list at least five days before applications are closed.

After applications are received, RAC will score and evaluate applicants based on the criteria that have been established. RAC will deliberate and agree upon candidate appointments. RAC will present their appointments at the next Exec meeting. Exec members may serve concurrently on RAC.

### **3.3 Emergency RAC Appointments**

In the event that an emergency RAC appointment is needed (i.e. a need to fill a seat on RAC outside the RAC application period due to a vacancy), the RAC Chair (see Section 3.4) can appoint a member to RAC with the full approval and consent of the remaining RAC members and the Heads of House (or Area Director). The same selection guidelines as outlined in Section 3.2 should be followed when making emergency appointments.

### **3.4 RAC Chair**

One member of RAC will be designated as the chairperson of the committee and main point of contact (point person) for the Housing Office and Division of Student Life. Members of RAC will nominate and appoint the chairperson of the committee. A member of DSL will always be available and responsive at all times for the Baker RAC to contact (24-hour response time will be expected at all times).

### **3.5 RAC Procedures**

A master document for rooming assignments (including summer rooming assignments) will be established using Google Sheets or a comparable file-sharing system. Limited sharing should ensure that this document will always be up to date and accurate. All rooming changes will be made in this master document, so no information is corrupted from passing conflicting versions of the document back and forth.

When a student requests a room change at any time of year, it must be put in writing to RAC with the Head of House, the Area Director, the House Facilities Manager and DSL Housing all copied. In response, RAC will inform the student (with all of the above copied in) that first and foremost, room changes are rarely approved. In addition, RAC will inform the student that room changes only occur under extenuating circumstances and require both the GRA and the Area Director to have met with the resident and any roommates. Last but not least, a room change will only proceed once the Heads of House have approved the move. Any approved room changes will generally be executed over IAP unless the Heads of House approve for the move to occur at a different time. The student should be informed that room changes may incur a cost.

RAC members can and should use the standard email templates from the RAC Google Drive to address these situations to ensure consistency in such situations.

## **3.6 Member Expectations**

### **3.6.1 Member Etiquette**

Any RAC member should not address resident concerns alone. RAC should always consult with other members of RAC and, as stipulated above, with the Area Director and Heads of House. RAC members may not make a decision that does not align with the principles and processes described above. Members have the option to sign emails and messages with their own names along with “Baker RAC;” however, it is up to member discretion about whether or not they include their name.

### **3.6.2 Exec Meetings**

RAC shall come to Exec meetings to keep Exec informed about the rooming process periodically and upon request. RAC should attend the Exec meeting before the Upperclassmen Selection Process commences.

### **3.6.3 Email Communications**

All resident recipients must be Blind Carbon Copied (BCC'd) to protect anonymity. RAC should be cc'd so recipients can “Reply All” to email all of RAC. Finally, the recipient (TO: ) should be left blank or sent to the RAC email.

## **4.0 UPPERCLASSMEN ASSIGNMENT PROCESS**

### **4.1 Rooming Pools**

RAC conducts three separate rooming processes on separate days (the rooming days). There shall be several calendar days between each rooming day. The three rooming pools are as follows (done in succession):

1. Rising seniors (current juniors)
2. Rising juniors (current sophomores)
3. Rising sophomores (current first years). Current seniors who will be 9<sup>th</sup> term seniors will be assigned after first year assignments, if there are still vacancies.

Within each rooming day, RAC divides the applicant pool into three sub-pools. RAC then rooms students in the following order:

1. Individuals with a role in the house (Baker Exec/RPM/RAC members)
2. General current Baker students
3. Students transferring into Baker.

## 4.2 Rooming Order

Following the sub-pool order for each rooming day, RAC randomly sorts the list of students within each sub-pool (the random ranking). The random ranking is an ordered list from 1 to N, where N is the number of students in that sub-pool. Students with valid medical or other requirements, filed through the MIT Housing Office, are given special considerations first.

<u>Day 1</u>	<u>Day 2</u>	<u>Day 3</u>
Rising Seniors (Exec/RPMs/RAC)	Rising Juniors (Exec/RPMs/RAC)	Rising Sophomores (Exec/RPMs/RAC)
Rising Seniors (Current Baker Residents)	Rising Junior (Current Baker Residents)	Rising Sophomores (Current Baker Residents)
Rising Seniors (Transfers)	Rising Juniors (Transfers)	Rising Sophomores (Transfers)

## 4.3 Pre-rooming Process Preparation

Before the rooming process officially commences, the House Manager will inform RAC of all rooms which are unavailable for the upcoming semester. RAC will also be notified of which rooms are protected for reasons designated by the House Manager. RAC shall post the list of rooms which are designated as unavailable by the House Manager, but may not necessarily post the reasons such rooms are unavailable.

## 4.4 Room Preference Form

Several days before the start of the rooming process, RAC issues a room preference form. All students interested in living in Baker must fill out and submit a preference sheet by the deadline expressed by RAC. The room preference form will contain a summary of the information presented herein, with a pointer to the full policy. The sheet asks students for their room preferences including but not limited to their desired floor, wing, neighbors, and room type. Residents will be able to indicate the relative preferences for each category. Students may also list a ranked order of specific rooms. The form also will ask for individuals' contact information, should RAC need to follow up on any submitted preferences during the rooming process.

Current residents of a particular room have no automatic right towards their current room for either themselves (ie. squatting) or others (ie. willing). The same sentiments are applied to a

resident and his/her current floor. Due to the ordering based on seniority, however, a resident may be able to keep his or her current room next year.

#### **4.5 Rooming Meeting**

On each rooming day, RAC enters a closed meeting (the rooming meeting) to conduct the rooming process. RAC reads each form in the order determined earlier via the sub-pools. RAC then evaluates each application holistically, taking into account various factors including but not limited to: the individuals' listed preferences; the balance and makeup of the dorm; and preferences expressed by the Heads of House, GRAs, House Manager, and Exec. Such preferences may include:

1. First year students should not be roomed in singles. Any proposed exceptions must be brought to the Heads of House for discussion and consideration and no first years may be placed in singles without Head of House approval.
2. First year residents should be roomed in approximately equal numbers across all floors.
3. Every attempt should be made to place quieter rooms in closer proximity to the Head of House and AD apartments.

If RAC has additional questions, they will attempt to contact the individual. If someone lists a preference for a roommate, they will be placed together, despite the roommate's place in the ranking and if the roommate may be in a different pool or sub-pool. RAC will attempt to room friends/desired neighbors near each other as much as possible.

At the end of each rooming day, RAC posts the assignment of rooms so far and the list of rooms still available. Once these assignments are posted, members of other rooming pools (that have not yet been roomed) can change their preferences accordingly to reflect the available rooms.

#### **4.6 Rooming Meeting - Remote Conduct**

The RAC Chair will conduct the meeting. The chair will assign roles to all of the members of the committee. This can be done through an informal document with names next to the task.

Tasks/roles include:

- Room type referencer
- Roommate request referencer
- Random sequence generator
- Artist marking names on the Baker layout pdf
- Recorder of names on a spreadsheet
- Recorder of who has been roomed thus far.



## **5.0 TRANSFER ASSIGNMENT PROCESS**

Transfers are defined as students who are moving into Baker House at a time other than the REX Assignment period or the period before the Upperclassmen Assignments Process. MIT Housing notifies RAC and the House Manager that such a transfer is moving into Baker. RAC will issue the transfer of a room preference form. Upon request, RAC will provide the new transfer with a list of available rooms. The House Manager and RAC will work to pick the best available room that matches both the transfer's preferences and housing logistics. Work should be done to smooth the logistical burden of the process, while maintaining flexibility for students.

## **6.0 FIRST-YEAR ASSIGNMENT PROCESS**

### **6.1 First Year Temporary Room Assignment Process (Summer)**

MIT Housing sends RAC a list of first years that have been assigned to Baker in the Summer Housing Lottery. MIT Housing also sends information about the student's preferences, as collected during the summer housing lottery, to RAC (the summer preferences). RAC shall assign first years randomly to temporary rooms, while avoiding clear conflicts of compatibility from the student's summer preference form.

Students will have an opportunity to remain with their temporarily-assigned roommates or find new ones during the Post-REX First Year Assignment Process (see 6.2). If a student requests a specific roommate, RAC will attempt to match them with that roommate. .

First year students should not be placed in singles unless required for a medical issue or disability. If this is the case, then students should contact HRS who will relay it to RAC without private information. First years should furthermore be distributed across all floors as evenly as possible with the understanding that 1W will continue to room more first years than other floors. First year students, as well as upper level students, should not be isolated among a homogeneous group on a floor – that is, floors should be as heterogeneous as possible while still respecting the desire of subgroups (teams and groups of friends) to room close to one another. RAC will also strive to maintain gender equity amongst the floors.

### **6.2 Post-REX First Year Room Assignment Process**

RAC advises first years to look for compatible roommates during the REX period. After REX, all incoming Baker first years (including those assigned to Baker in the Summer Housing Lottery and those assigned to Baker in the REX Lottery) will gather at Baker House at a designated time

as organized by the RAC Chair in conjunction with the entirety of RAC, Exec, and the House Team (Baker Rooming BBQ).

Exec and RAC will make it clear that first years should take their time to find the right roommates. First years are encouraged to pick roommates that share similar sleep schedules, work habits, and socialization expectations. At the Baker Rooming BBQ, every first year is then required to submit the Room Preference Sheet as a digital Google Form accessed by QR codes posted around the BBQ. If first years want to live together, they will be able to indicate their desired roommates on the form; however, each individual must still submit the form themselves to ensure their room placement in Baker, instead of just having one room representative submit the form.

RAC then enters into a Rooming Meeting, as described before. RAC begins by assigning first years with valid medical or other requirements, filed through the MIT Housing Office. Next, RAC assigns four-person groups to quads. Then, RAC assigns remaining students according to a holistic process. Applications are not reviewed in a specified order (unlike the Upperclassmen Process). Staple groups are not disbanded, but it may be needed for other first years to be added to a group (i.e. a two-person group may be assigned a triple with a third person). RAC then posts the finalized room assignments that night.

### **6.2.1 First Year Squatting Rules**

One goal of the rooming-assignment process is to help students find a good roommate(s) match. This can be more logistically complicated with quad and triple rooms. In keeping with the Housing Redesign Principles, in situations where some students living in a quad/triple wish to relocate, while others do not, the RAC and House team will work with students to find the most beneficial housing situation and rooming arrangement for everyone involved. Of course, preference noted on their REX forms will be taken into consideration as part of that move.

### **6.3 First Year Single Room Guidelines**

In the event that a first year student is moved into a single as cleared by the Heads of House (or placed in a single at the beginning of the year due to a medical reason or other extenuating circumstance), they should be placed in the "cozy" singles -- ideally on the west side if they are available, otherwise the far east side near the first year 46 quad: see above for restrictions on housing first years in singles.

## **7.0 SWITCHING**

Students will typically reach out during the fall semester regarding switching during IAP. These students are to be kept in a queue on a Google spreadsheet, in the order received. At the end of the semester they will be referred to the Heads of House and AD for consideration.

If students work out a mutual switch, RAC will try to honor the switch. Before making any changes to the current students' room assignments, RAC must check with the Heads of House, Area Director, and House Manager about the move. Following their approval, RAC should email Housing and the HOH, AD, and HM to confirm the move. All switches should be made between semesters, unless there exists an outstanding reason for needing the switch immediately.