



## Room Agreement FAQ

### PROCESS/TIMELINE

#### **Why was the process changed?**

The process was changed due to member requests. Feedback received from chapter members during the 2023-24 academic year indicated members needed to have the dollar amounts for living in detail before signing a Room Agreement. This made sense as no one should sign an agreement without knowing the associated costs.

Beginning with the 2024-2025 cycle, there will be one number ("housing fee") on the Room Agreement, which is inclusive of Rent, Chapter Obligation, Payroll, Board/Catering and Utilities. Chapter dues, social dues, pass-through fees, one-time fees stay within the Chapter Operation Budget.

To accommodate this change, the housing budget timeline had to be adjusted, meaning housing/house corporation budgets for FY 2024-25 must be approved during early fall 2023 so dollar amounts can be included in Room Agreements. This separation also allows acknowledgment of what "housing costs" are for each member. It provides members with clear data for comparison.

Over the past three years, chapters have repeatedly encountered members with signed leases a year (and, in some cases, more than a year) in advance. Early signing of outside living contracts significantly decreases the available numbers of members to live in the chapter facility.

As a result, houses do NOT realize the funds needed for ongoing maintenance and upkeep and getting any long-term projects accomplished. Finally, filling the house in a timely manner is considerate to all members who otherwise must wait until mid-year to sign any external contract and therefore have fewer choices.

#### **What do greekbill and invoicing look like for the 2024-25 year?**

All members will sign two contracts on greekbill:

- **Dues and Fees:** contract for chapter operations

- **Room Agreement OR Facility Use Agreement:** the Room Agreement is signed by a member who lives in a house. The Facility Use Agreement is for all chapter members who do not live in. See “Definitions” for further explanation.

A member will continue to choose their payment schedule (monthly/by term/annual pay in full) when signing the two contracts. All members will receive two invoices from greekbill:

- one for the Dues and Fees amount
- one for Room Agreement OR Facility Use Agreement charges

The payment timelines are the same for both invoices. Payment is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month and is considered delinquent after the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month. Delta Gamma policy will indicate that both invoices must be current for a member to remain in good standing.

- Honor Board will handle members who have not paid chapter Dues and Fees invoices in a timely manner.
- Office of Housing staff will oversee members who have not paid the Room Agreement OR Facility Use Fee in a timely manner.

The following procedures have been approved by Delta Gamma general counsel:

- A reminder from greekbill will be sent to the member on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month.
- Another reminder will be sent on Day 14 with a request for a payment plan.
- At 30 days past due, the housing debt will be sent to the collections process. These amounts fall outside the Dues and Fees contract and represent concrete services.
- Member vacates the premises at the end of the term if their housing invoices are not current.

### **What is the new process and timetable for signing room agreements?**

- **August 1**
  - Proposed budgets are sent to all housing (Fraternity House Corporation (FHC)/Fraternity Management Corporation (FMC)/Limited Liability Corporation (LLC)) entities with live-in members.
- **September 1 (chapters recruiting during August)**
  - All housing budgets must be completed/approved by the house corporation/Office of Housing and uploaded to Anchorbase. House corporations receive communication to hold a meeting during the summer which can be virtual in nature and must include collegiate voting members and the chapter's advisory team chair (ATC).
- **October 1 (chapters recruiting during September and October)**
  - All housing budgets must be completed/approved by the house corporation/Office of Housing and uploaded to Anchorbase. House corporations receive communication to hold a meeting during the summer which can be virtual in nature and must include collegiate voting members and the chapter's ATC.
- **September/October**
  - Using the approved housing budget, the Office of Housing calculates a room and board figure to be included in the Room Agreements (RAs). RAs are assigned no later than three weeks after Bid Day for fall recruiting chapters.

- **January/February (deferred recruiting chapters)**
  - For deferred recruiting chapters, RAs will be available this fall for sophomores and juniors to sign within three weeks of the beginning of school.
  - Please NOTE that many chapters are unable to rely solely on new members to fill the house due to quotas that are lower than the spaces available. Room Agreements for new members coming in during winter/spring recruitment will be available for signature on greekbill.
- **HC Budget NOT approved per timeline**
  - A housing budget not approved by September 1 for those recruiting in August or by October 1 for those recruiting in September/October will have Room Agreement amounts based on the proposed budget.
  - Given the need to have RAs carrying housing costs, there is no option for extensions.

*NOTE: For many with deferred recruitment, new members will most probably come to the chapter with their housing plans already in place for the following year and unable to commit to the house. It is incumbent upon chapter leadership to understand that this will make filling the house with only new members problematic.*

### **We never have a problem filling our house, why do we need to change our timetable?**

Filling a chapter house post-pandemic has become, for most, a challenge. With lower quotas, groups find that the new member class does not fill their facility.

Even chapters that recruit what would be considered sufficient new members in the fall encounter problems if they fail to issue Room Agreements in a timely manner. Oftentimes, they discover new members have signed contracts to live in other facilities, as do initiated members. It takes only one vp: finance not following the Room Agreement timeline to make the house less than full, even for chapters who never have a problem.

## **ROOM AGREEMENTS/FILLING THE HOUSE**

### **What is the actual room agreement procedure?**

This can be found in the chapter bylaws and standing rules (BLSR). Here is the condensed version:

- Chapter knows they have X number of beds to fill and use the point system found in their BLSRs to generate a list of all members' eligibility to live-in
- Members are assigned RAs based on this list/point system
  - *NOTE: These last two steps may mean a chapter will need to reevaluate and USE its specific point system for housing.*
- Members sign the Room Agreement within ten days of issue
- Members honor the Room Agreement and move into the house

### **What is the procedure for being excused from living in?**

A member requesting to be excused from living in submits a Housing Waiver Request, which will be available on the member site and meets with Honor Board for consideration. Honor Board's decision is final.

### **What if a new member signs but is not initiated?**

This would depend on whether Initiation is being delayed or they have resigned. This concern is also why it is a best practice to have current, initiated members living in rather than depending on new members. The chapter is responsible for filling any opening created if a new member does not fulfill their Room Agreement.

### **Can I live in the house if I graduate mid-year or go abroad for part of the contract? What will I owe the chapter if I cannot fill my spot?**

- **Mid-term graduation:** A Room Agreement covers ONLY the term the member is an undergraduate. Once they graduate, they become an alumna. Delta Gamma policy is that non-members (e.g., not collegians) do not live in houses. This means the member cannot meet the terms of a full-year Room Agreement. Since a graduate cannot live in, their ability to honor a full year is a moot issue.
- **Mid-year transfer:** Member is responsible for finding another to take over their Room Agreement when they will not be in the house. In addition, this information should be included in the annual Member Budget Survey. If a member decides to transfer and has not completed the Survey, they must share this information as soon as possible with vp: finance.
  - *Note: A member who transfers and affiliates with another Delta Gamma chapter and lives in that chapter's facility will have the balance of her Room Agreement with the first chapter voided.*
- **Study Abroad:** See note below.
- **Split-agreement:** If there is an agreement with another chapter member to share the Room Agreement (one member lives in for fall with a Fall Room Agreement and one in the spring with a Spring Room Agreement), both members must execute Room Agreements on greekbill. This is a specialized Room Agreement, so the Office of Housing or Regional Housing Specialist (RHS) must create and upload it. The signed member will be liable for the full year if the two agreements are not signed.

Should a member be unable to fill her spot in the house, she owes the chapter for the term the space is unfilled for Rent/Payroll/Chapter Obligation per her Room Agreement contract.

*NOTE: Best practice indicates chapters should not offer live-in space to study abroad/early graduates/mid-term transfers unless the house is larger than can be filled with other members. Or, if two members want to share the year (e.g., one member signs Fall Room Agreement and lives in, and the second signs a Spring Room Agreement and lives in during the spring).*

### **What if we have more rooms than women in our new member class?**

In the past, many chapters could fill the house from the new member class alone. Post-pandemic, this is not the case for most groups, as quotas are now significantly lower.

For a chapter with more space than new members can fill, sophomores, juniors and seniors should help fill the gap. These members can honor their Oath of Responsibility and be fiscally responsible by living in to support the chapter in housing. There is no requirement in chapter BLSRs limiting the number of years a member can live in. Many assume one year, but this is not the case. Members live-in until the facility is full.

In addition, "sophomore success" programs can further limit the number of eligible members to live in and for any number of chapters, members going abroad for one or more terms also contributes to a smaller pool of candidates. All the more reason for each member to know they are expected to live in until the house is full.

### **What if we require officers to live in, but our elections are later in the semester?**

Room Agreement space for these officers is held. Should a member who has already signed a Room Agreement be elected as an officer, then there will be a space open for another member to fill, and the chapter can move forward through its point system process to find the next eligible member.

### **What if a member/new member refuses to sign a room agreement?**

The current BLSR for 2023-24 Standing Rules/Article VI/Section 10 states: "Failure to sign a Room Agreement within ten days of assignment will result in the vp: finance issuing a Statement of Obligation Review (SOR). A member in poor standing may attend only anchored events and cannot be elected to office, vote on chapter matters or attend social functions."

This means that Honor Board is to review the situation with the member. After the conversation, a recommendation for poor standing may be made by Honor Board. Situations such as this should be few, if any, as it indicates the member is not honoring their Oath of Responsibility.

### **We haven't filled the house in the fall. Can we expect Continuous Open Bidding (COB) members to make the house full?**

The timelines indicated for securing signed Room Agreements do not include an extension since house corporation/housing budgets are due a year in advance. COB members may sign a Room Agreement, but a delay in securing needed RAs cannot happen. And many times, COB members come to the chapter with their next year's housing plans already in place. It is not advisable to depend on them to fill the house.

## **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

### **What if a member participates in a study abroad?**

Delta Gamma charges only pass-through fees and rent. There is no Payroll/Board/Chapter Obligation collected from a member who studies abroad. This is done to be consistent with

the intent of the status. Consequently, it is strongly recommended that housing positions are not offered to members who plan to study abroad before full-year live-in members.

### **What about members with professional school acceptance?**

They may live in the house as an active member if the program is on the same campus as the chapter facility. They are expected to meet all member responsibilities, both attendance and financial, as a collegian and they are not considered alumnae.

If they have graduated and the program is on the same campus as the chapter house, they may request a waiver to allow them to live in for the full academic year.

## **COLLEGIATE HONOR BOARD**

### **Is there a guide for Honor Board conversations about Room Agreements?**

This document is a starting point for engaging in Honor Board conversations regarding releasing a member from a Room Agreement.

### **We have members threatening to quit if they have to live in the house, so we usually excuse them. How do we have that conversation to fill the house and keep the member?**

Should a member threaten resignation rather than living in, it may be in the chapter's best interests to examine chapter culture. This type of action can indicate the chapter needs to work on rethinking what housing means:

- Is the property in need of work?
- Can capacity be reduced, and single rooms offered at a commensurate charge?
- Might some amenities be offered or added to make living-in more attractive?
- Are only newer members expected to fill the house rather than the entire membership?
- Is one-year-and-out thinking pervasive within the chapter?

Given the way numbers look, it may well be that "one year and out" is no longer viable for the chapter to remain fiscally solvent. And it points to holding challenging discussions with the entire chapter membership to rethink how housing fits.

### **We have members who give medical or mental health reasons for not living in. How do we navigate those conversations and still fill the house?**

The Housing Room Agreement Waiver Request will contain information that can help Honor Board narrow down these very broad topics.

### **When do we send these cases to a higher-level Honor Board? How do we do that?**

The establishment of a Room Agreement Appeal Board is in process. There will be an independent board in place to review requests for a waiver to the Room Agreement in the future.

### **Is there a waiver that can be filled out to go to Honor Board and get approved. Who receives those, and how are they maintained?**

The current process is found in chapter BLSR. Check the chapter-specific Standing Rules for any adjustments.

- Honor Board meets with members and reviews requests for a waiver
- Minutes are taken of the Honor Board meeting
- Honor Board makes the decision and shares it with the member
- Member follows Honor Board's decision

**If they aren't excused from living in, is there an appeal process? How does that work?**

The current process indicates Honor Board's decision is final.

**If a member finds a replacement to move in, she can be excused, right?**

Correct, but only if the other member who has agreed to move in executes a room agreement for the agreed-upon time frame on greekbill.

## Definitions

### Chapter Operations Budget:

Includes all chapter dues and fees for the operation of chapter programs, fees to Executive Offices, and social and sisterhood programming.

### Chapter Housing Budget:

- **Chapters with housing:** Includes all monies associated with running a chapter facility and administrative fees for the corporation overseeing the same. (Think insurance, etc.)
- **Chapters without housing:** Includes all monies associated with a group having a storage unit and administrative fees for the entity overseeing (think: insurance, etc.)

### Dues and Fees:

Monies charged individual members for operating the collegiate chapter's programming, social and Executive Office fees. All collegiate members pay dues and fees with the legal contract signed by chapter members to pay for chapter operation, programming, social and administrative costs.

### Housing Fees:

Monies charged individual members for the housing side. If a chapter is housed, these fees include rent, payroll, utilities, board or catering and chapter obligations. If non-housed, these fees support the rent (storage) and chapter obligation.

### Room Agreement:

The legal contract between the member and the Office of Housing to provide living space for the member for an academic year must be signed within ten days of issue by the chapter. The Room Agreement is available on greekbill.

### Facility Use Agreement/Live-Out:

Legal contract between the member and Office of Housing to allow use of the chapter facility (if housed) or to collect chapter obligation for unhoused groups.

*Note: this title may change in the future.*