



PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY

Residential Life

University Center 161 (253) 535-7200 rlif@plu.edu

2020 - 2021 Academic Year

UPDATED as a component of PLU's COVID-19 Response Plan

Residential Life is working on multiple approaches to creating safe and healthy living environments, including enhancing physical distancing, in the residence halls. This temporarily updated University Policy is one component of PLU's response to public health directives, made in recognition of the unique and evolving impact of COVID-19 on individual lives and the student experience during the 2020 - 2021 academic year. The updates - removal of the driving distance limitation on approved home locations and an expansion of who may be considered a parental figure with whom a student lives - are being made for the upcoming year only at this point in time, and will be assessed in light of future conditions.

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

Pacific Lutheran University requires that all full-time (enrolled in 12 or more semester hours) students live in University housing unless:

- a) The student lives at home with parent(s)*, spouse, or child
- b) The student is 20 years of age or older on or before:
September 1, – Student exempt for the academic year.
February 1, – Student exempt for spring semester.
- c) The student has achieved Junior status (completed 60 semester hours) prior to:
September 1, – Student exempt for the academic year.
February 1, – Student exempt for spring semester.

At Pacific Lutheran University, we describe ourselves as a residential university with a strong commitment to the residential experience. We have this University Policy in place because we care deeply about student success. Both national research studies and PLU data clearly indicate that students who live on campus are more likely to succeed at higher levels than students who do not live on campus in three important areas: Grade Point Average, Retention and Graduation. Additionally, residential students feel a greater sense of Connection, Belonging and Satisfaction with their educational experience.

A successful residential life program includes a variety of experiences and a diversity of students, for students often learn best from one another. This is one reason why we work so hard to attract and retain first-year students, sophomores, juniors and seniors. Residents can learn from one another and grow together in community. This policy is in place to benefit the individual and our community of learners.

A decision to attend PLU involves a commitment to adhere to all University Policies, including the Residency Requirement.

Standard Exceptions

For the 2020 -2021 Academic Year, the standard exceptions are being temporarily revised to offer necessary flexibility as a component of the University's COVID-19 Response Plan. The policy updates include the following standard exceptions for the 2020-2021 academic year: when living at home with parent(s)*, spouse or child. **As part of our temporary response, distance limitations on the location of home will be suspended, and a process for designating a "proxy parent" has also been established.**

Documentation verifying these circumstances is required.

Students meeting one of these requirements must request and complete a *Confirmation of Living at Home* form from the Department of Residential Life. Even though PLU stresses the importance of the residential experience, these standard exceptions are in place to assist with needs we may not otherwise be able to address. PLU does not currently offer housing suitable for students with children and only very limited options for married students. Finally, we recognize that some students' personal circumstances may require them to live at home with parent(s) and we prefer they have the option of a PLU education over a local community college alternative.

The standard exceptions have been expanded for the upcoming academic year with the understanding that the impact of COVID-19 on individuals and their families is varied and fluid. The distance limit is traditionally in place to address the concern that it is not in a student's best interest to spend excessive amounts of time commuting to and from campus. While the academic concern remains, this parameter has been rescinded for the 2020 - 2021 Academic Year with the expectation that students and their families use their best judgement to determine their safest living option under the current health threats.

*Process for Identifying a "Proxy Parent"

Under our current health circumstances it is understandable for a student whose permanent home address is not within proximity of campus to desire to live with an extended family member or longtime family friend who serves in a parental role for the student and their family.

- 1) Student must submit a letter or e-mail to Rebecca Rumpza (rumpzari@plu.edu) with this request.
 - a) Only written requests for a Proxy to be identified will be considered.
 - b) While it is understood that parents assist their students in many ways, including financial, it is the student who enters into a contract with the university and agrees to abide by university policies; therefore, this request must come from the student.
 - c) The request must include a description of circumstances requiring a Proxy (e.g. permanent family home is in Montana and Aunt/Uncle live in Puyallup) and the following:
 - i) Proxy Name
 - ii) Proxy Address
 - iii) Proxy Relationship to Student
 - iv) A letter from Proxy indicating their acceptance of this role and their agreement to submit a completed *Confirmation Of Living At Home* form with the student should this request be granted. (If desired, this letter may be emailed directly to Rebecca Rumpza with student copied.)
- 2) Rebecca Rumpza will reply to the request within three weeks of its receipt as to whether the request meets the criteria for the revised standard..

The following list is provided as context to assist students whose individual circumstances do not match the standard exceptions and may be considering seeking a waiver of the policy. Individual circumstances are weighed along with university mission and values, which includes the need to administer policies equitably for all students.

Commonly Denied Requests

- Twentieth birthday is close to September 1st for the academic year or February 1st for Spring semester. This standard is clear, easy to remember and consistently enforced.
- Student has accumulated almost 60 semester hours necessary for junior status. This standard is clear, easy to remember and consistently enforced.
- Student has already signed a lease on an off-campus apartment or house. Student actions contrary to this policy are the responsibility of the student.
- Difficulty with food options offered through University meal plans. Campus Restaurants will work with a student on individual needs, and when appropriate, grant a waiver of the meal plan requirement.
- Ability to find off campus living options that cost less than on campus. Any financial issues experienced by

a student should be addressed with Financial Aid if a student is to successfully continue at PLU.

Exceptions to this policy are rare. A successful petition for an exception must go beyond personal preference and demonstrate that a student has needs that cannot be met through any of our varied living options.

Process for Applying for a Waiver

Students seeking to be released from this University requirement must demonstrate to the satisfaction of Residential Life that some aspect of their personal situation precludes them from successfully living on campus and attending PLU despite accommodations made on their behalf. Residential Life has been able to work with students on alternative housing assignments including single rooms if appropriate.

- 1) Student must submit a letter or e-mail to Rebecca Rumpza (rumpzari@plu.edu) detailing personal circumstances and the need for being released from this PLU requirement.
 - a) Only written requests for a waiver of this policy will be considered.
 - b) While it is understood that parents assist their students in many ways, including financial, it is the student who enters into a contract with the university and agrees to abide by university policies; therefore, this request must come from the student.
- 2) Rebecca Rumpza will reply to the request within three weeks of its receipt as to whether the request merits consideration.

**A student enrolled at the university and living off-campus in violation of this policy without the approval of Residential Life for their specific living arrangement, will be held responsible for the room and meal charges for that period and will be required to move on campus for the remainder of their time under the requirement.