

**Campus Alert:**

The Graduate Housing Self-Selection process will be available within the Housing Portal (<https://mit.starrezhousing.com/StarRezPortalX>) from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm ET on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week through October.

(<http://web.mit.edu>) (/)

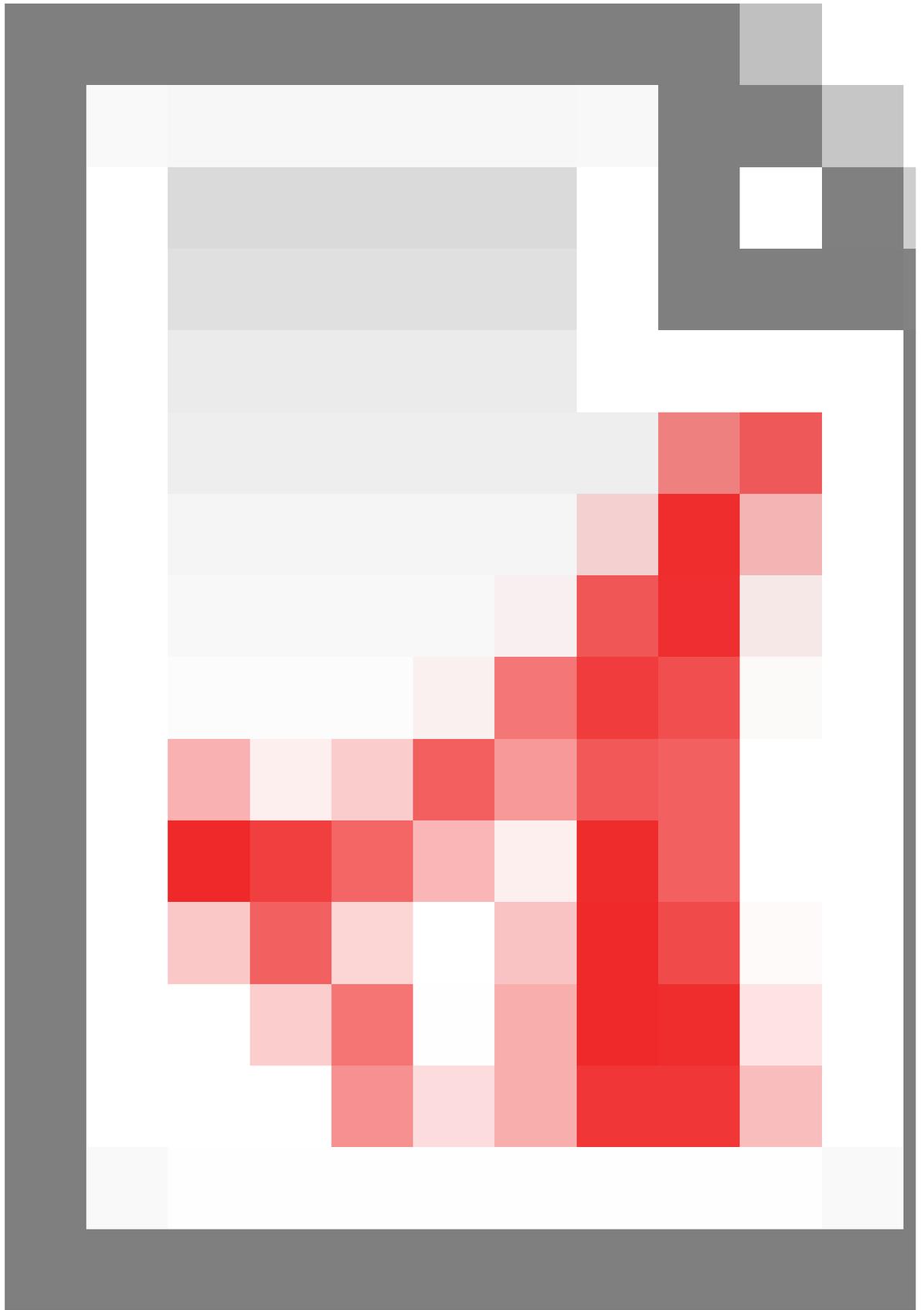
**Housing & Residential Services (<https://studentlife.mit.edu/housing>)****Section Menu**

## Mural Policy

Murals are permitted in East Campus and Random Hall. Before any alterations are made to a living space, the resident must consult with the House Operations Manager or Area Director to discuss changes and alterations. Each House Government develops its own guide which may be displayed within the residence. In general, residents are not permitted to:

- alter or add to any part of the building structure or mechanical and electrical systems
- place, affix, hang, or extend any materials on any exterior surface of an MIT residence, including rooftops.

**Exception:** During undergraduate orientation (the period between August 15 and undergraduate registration day), residents may safely affix banners to their residence hall with the approval and assistance of the Area Director. All banners must be safely removed by undergraduate registration day.



See also: Policy on Murals in First Year and Transfer Rooms

(<https://studentlife.mit.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Policy%20on%20Murals%20in%20First%20Year%20and%20Tr>

- Murals (paintings, drawings, or sculptures) are an integral part of student culture in many MIT living groups. These expression and define a culture.

- MIT is committed to a respectful and welcoming living, learning, and working environment for all community members.
- Therefore, murals in shared space in any MIT residence must not contain material that has the intent or effect of discriminating against an individual or group's educational or work performance at MIT or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or otherwise unwelcoming work, or living environment.
- Unacceptable material includes images or language that is derogatory on the basis of race, color, sex, orientation, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin.
- Murals must comply with individual living group policies, MIT Policies and Procedures, the MIT Mind and Hand Book, and the MIT Mural Policy.
- Each living group must have clear procedures to help the community decide whether proposed murals are acceptable and how existing murals remain acceptable.
- A mechanism to allow concerns to be raised confidentially should be in place.
- Existing murals may be covered during deliberations as to their acceptability.
- Some relevant parameters to consider in evaluating the appropriateness of a mural include context of the mural, whether in a shared or more private space.
- When a living group cannot reach an agreement on acceptability of a mural, a panel of faculty and students, the Title IX Coordinator (if appropriate), and a representative of the Division of Student Life will make the relevant decision.
- In case of gender or LGBTQ issues, if the panel cannot reach consensus or an independent decision, the Title IX Coordinator will make the final decision regarding the mural.
- In contrast to murals, graffiti are writings or scrawlings that can contribute to a hostile environment, and are not covered by the Mural Policy.

## MIT Residence Hall Mural Policies and Protocols

### Section I: Background

While most universities do not allow murals on walls of living spaces, MIT allows designated undergraduate residences to display murals in the form of murals or sculptures (East Campus and Random Hall). This is a privilege given to students. The purpose of the Mural Policy and protocols (the 'Mural Policy') is to outline how to balance the interests in allowing such freedom of expression and the need to maintain a discrimination- and harassment-free educational, work, or living environment.

#### Section I, Subsection I: Definition of Murals vs Graffiti

A mural is a permanent painting, drawing, or sculpture that is intended to be permanent and contribute to a positive living environment. Murals differ from graffiti, posters, and flyers. Graffiti are writings, drawings, or scrawlings without permission on a permanent surface that is not protected by this Mural Policy.

Graffiti can contribute to a hostile environment, and may be reported to the House Team, DSL, or MIT Police. If it is not clear whether something is a mural or graffiti and whether the community will be upset if something is removed, community members are encouraged to exercise caution and promote discussion. Disagreements as to whether a particular work is a mural or graffiti will be resolved under the Mural Policy below.

Posters and flyers are also impermanent, and are subject to specific poster policies at MIT, for example, <http://web.mit.edu/eventguide/advertising/asaposter.html> (<http://web.mit.edu/eventguide/advertising/asaposter.html>)

#### Section I, Subsection II: The Purpose of Murals

- Murals are an integral part of student culture in many MIT living groups, and can serve several useful purposes as:

- Allow for creative self-expression of students
- Create a greater sense of comfort, "home"-ness, and connection to the dorm by giving students the opportunity to their living space
- Foster camaraderie and bolster support networks by allowing students to collaborate in defining and designing the
- Contribute to MIT's broader image of creativity and innovation
- Help sustain lasting culture

## **Section I, Subsection III: Contextualizing Murals**

### **1. Mural context**

All murals are placed in a residence in a certain context that is with some purpose or motivation. This could include promoting a specific topic, adding to an existing theme or highlighting an aspect of society, recalling a story, or adding an attractive visual element. A specific motivation for a mural may thus provide context for images present in murals.

Some murals are located in specific areas of a residence that are relatively private and contribute to a local culture of a floor. The specific location of a mural may thus also provide context for images present in murals.

### **2. Responsibility regarding mural context**

A visitor to a dorm, such as a parent or visiting student, will not necessarily understand the context of a mural. While any murals must be treated with utmost seriousness, in some cases, providing information about how a mural fits into dorm life and appropriate context to the visitor and offset concerns.

- It is the responsibility of a dorm to be able to explain its murals to the visitor.
- Explanatory material such as a printout or something more permanent can be affixed to a mural.
- Alternately, murals can be listed in one document and their motivation briefly described. This is readily done for murals required for approval of new murals (Section II, Subsection I).
- A representative list of murals, together with individual living group policies and this Mural Policy should be prepared.

## **Section I, Subsection IV: Material in Murals Relating to a Welcoming Environment**

The opportunity for self-expression through murals comes with a responsibility to ensure standards that promote a welcoming environment for residents, staff, and visitors. These standards should be mindful of MIT policies as well as all relevant laws.

- Thus, it is MIT policy that murals on any MIT building must not contain images or language that has the intent or effect of interfering with an individual or group's educational or work performance at MIT or that creates an intimidating, hostile, educational, work, or living environment.
- This policy applies to murals in shared spaces, including those shared with a roommate.
- Murals must comply with the MIT Mind and Hand Book, individual dorm policies, MIT Policies and Procedures, and other relevant policies.
- Murals that would violate these policies include, but are not necessarily limited to, those with images or language that discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, or national or ethnic origin.

## **Section II: Creating New Murals**

When residents want to create a new mural in any shared space, the following steps must be taken.

### **Section II, Subsection I: Shared and More Private Spaces**

- Residences are required to consider and codify which spaces are shared, and by whom.
- While there is more flexibility in more private spaces such as dorm rooms, there is responsibility to restrain presence may be offensive to other residents or visitors in all areas
- In all cases, including shared dorm rooms, new murals should be discussed among members of the living community Team, before execution.
- Following an objection, existing murals in shared dorm rooms should immediately be covered or temporarily removed (Section III, Subsection I) while the conflict is resolved.
- In the case of summer visiting students, murals that may be objectionable could be covered or removed.
- The artist who created the mural should be identified by name.

## **Section II, Subsection II: Responding to a Mural Proposal**

Each residential group must develop a process for community approval. The 'community' includes student residents, as well as House, GRTs, RLAD (the 'House Team'), and other residential staff. The development and implementation of this process is consistent with the residential mural policy. Discussion around murals can provide an opportunity for students to consider and learn how to discuss a controversial topic.

At a minimum, the following procedure should be followed, and each dorm is responsible for maintaining and informing policy.

### **1. Conception of the mural**

Residents of a dorm should be apprised of the MIT policies on harassment and nondiscrimination in order to understand considerations underlying mural design. Thus, it is the responsibility of the mural designer to consider whether a mural is in a community that will be frequently exposed to the mural. At the time of conception, opinion might be sought from within the House Team around the idea in mind. The Title IX Coordinator may also be consulted.

### **2. Notification and presentation of mural design**

All community members who will be exposed to a new mural (either whole dorm, or those living in the area/floor for which the mural must be notified of a proposed mural, provided with a written and schematic description of the proposed work, and the location and significance of the mural.

### **3. Handling objections to murals within a residence**

- Students and the House Team must be given a stated, sufficient period to consider the mural, as well as an opportunity to voice concerns or objections. Members of the community are encouraged to work collaboratively to attempt to resolve concerns.
- If any member of the community has a concern that they do not wish to resolve by informal discussion, they must provide an explanation to the House Team that describes the objection to the mural. The explanation should provide reasons requested, the identity of the person raising a concern will be kept confidential by the House Team. Alternatively, a community member can contact the Title IX Coordinator (in case of gender-related concerns) or other MIT personnel in the Office of Student Conduct, with relevant expertise.
- The residential community should follow a defined house process to come up with a suggested modification that the mural artist(s) and objector(s). As necessary, this process should include the following steps:
  - Consultation of the GRT in that area/floor, who should lead a community conversation about the mural in that area.
  - If concerns are not resolved on the floor level, the GRT should engage the House Team, House Government, and other residents to reach consensus on an appropriate outcome.

- If a complaint is made by a resident or nonresident to the Title IX Coordinator, DSL, a member of the House or a person or group outside of the community responsible for the mural, the complaint should be referred back to the housing the mural, unless doing so would otherwise violate MIT policy (for example, in certain cases involving concerns).
- In cases where concerns are not resolved, a professional mediator may be employed.
- Any decision made concerning a disputed mural by the House Team and House Government should be consulted with the proposer(s) of the mural and the complainant(s), and any recommended modifications to the mural design or the mural is put up.

#### **4. Input of an external panel**

If agreement cannot be reached within the residential community, the proposed mural will be submitted to a panel of faculty and staff (with the suggestion that these members be of the Committee on Student Life), the Title IX coordinator (for complaints that the mural violates MIT's sexual misconduct policy or is otherwise gender-based), MIT personnel with other relevant expertise and a representative of Student Life (with the suggestion that this person is a member of Housing & Residential Services), who together will make a decision on whether the mural should be allowed. The panel will convene as needed.

For a complaint that the mural violates MIT's sexual misconduct policy or is otherwise gender-based, if the panel cannot reach an agreement, the Title IX coordinator will make a final decision as to what action, if any, should be taken.

#### **5. Additional path for raising complaint of violation of MIT Sexual Misconduct Policy/Title IX gender-bias**

If a complaint about a mural is one related to MIT's policy against sexual misconduct or other gender bias (<http://titleix.mit.edu>) the complaining party can report the concern directly to the Title IX Office.

The Title IX Coordinator will advise the complainant of all options for investigation and resolution, including those described in Section II, Subsection II:4. If the complainant prefers, the Title IX Coordinator will conduct an investigation that will include talking to members of the affected residential community. A fact-finding report will be presented to the panel (described in Section II, Subsection II:4) for consultation and recommendation. The Title IX Coordinator, who makes the final decision as to what action, if any, should be taken.

### **Section II, Subsection III: Painting the mural**

- Once community approval is gained, the mural can be painted according to residence policies. Each group is responsible for consulting with the residents about any such practices.
- Residents must follow appropriate procedures regarding allowed media before a mural can be effected (e.g. is painting on canvas? what types of paints are allowed, etc.) The House Operations Manager should be consulted about the appropriate procedures for the group.
- Additionally, each residential group may create supplementary practices, such as requiring a deposit to paint a mural or for appropriate painting supplies.

### **Section III: Existing Murals**

In particular residences, some murals have been in place for many years. While these may constitute a historical record or a right of current members to reconsider the presence of each mural. Other members of the MIT community or guests may have concerns about the appropriateness of a mural. Changes in opinion may affect whether a mural is appropriate for continued inclusion.

#### **Section III, Subsection I: Requesting Modification or Removal of Existing Murals**

If a community member (defined as in Section II, Subsection II), summer guest, or other person believes an existing mural environment or is otherwise a violation of an MIT policy or the law, the community member should either inform the Title IX Office (regarding gender-based concerns), the House Team, or House Government.

- Aspects of the mural in question should be covered by a temporary measure (e.g. a piece of paper or cloth) or tent case of a sculpture) until a conclusion is reached.
- The covering should be discussed with facilities to comply with safety considerations. A temporary solution should be made aware of by each residence, the House Operations Manager, the House Team, and House Government should be made aware during the process.
- If the objection is made within a residence, the protocols described in Section II, Subsection II, paragraphs (3) and (4) apply. If a complaint is made to an MIT office outside the residence, including the Title IX Office or DSL, the affected residence should participate in an investigation of the complaint that may result in a report to a panel (Section II, Subsection II). If a student alleges a violation of MIT's policy against sexual misconduct or other gender bias, the Title IX Office may investigate (Section II, Subsection II, paragraph (5)). In the case of other forms of discrimination, resolution by the Office of Student Life is applicable.

### **Section II, Subsection II: Mural Upkeep**

Each House Team and/or House Government is responsible for maintaining and communicating to students and staff a mural policy that addresses the following questions:

- Who is responsible for the upkeep of murals?
- If a mural is defaced/vandalized, who should take steps to restore the mural?
- If a mural must be removed for any reason, who is responsible for doing so?
- If public art supplies are available, who is responsible for maintaining them?

If Housing & Residential Services has planned renovation work that would disrupt or remove a mural, they should provide notice, so the community has an opportunity to preserve the mural in some way.

House Operations Managers should be made aware of the Mural Policy and apprise Facilities of these procedures during

### **EMERGENCY RESOURCES**

MIT Campus Police  
(617) 253-1212 or 100 from Campus Phones

Dean On Call  
\*5PM to 9AM on weekdays; 24 hours on weekends  
(617) 253-1212 or 100 from Campus Phones

MIT Medical  
(617) 253-4481

Violence Prevention & Response  
(617) 253-2300

## DIVISION OF STUDENT LIFE

[About DSL \(/about\)](#)

[Impact & Opportunities \(/impact-opportunities\)](#)

[Life On Campus \(/life-campus\)](#)

[Wellness & Support \(/wellness-and-support\)](#)

## QUICK LINKS

[Dates & Deadlines \(/dates-deadlines\)](#)

[Work for DSL \(/about/work-dsl\)](#)

[News \(/about/news\)](#)

[Website Accessibility \(https://accessibility.mit.edu/\)](https://accessibility.mit.edu/)

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

77 Massachusetts Ave

Cambridge, MA 02139

(617) 253-1000

Follow DSL:



<https://www.facebook.com/MITStudentLife>



<https://twitter.com/mitstudents>



<https://instagram.com/mitstudents/>