

2020 GRA Search Process

This page is intended as reference for future pikans who will be conducting a GRA search and candidate evaluation. Obviously you, reader, are in no way beholden to the process that we used and we do not even claim that our process is perfect. It seemed to work quite effectively, despite being conducted entirely remotely due to the 2020-2021 coronavirus pandemic. [The GRA position description at this time can be seen here](#). If the position has changed significantly in the time since, this page may be less relevant to you.

Step 0: Elect a GRA Search Chair

In order to serve as a point of contact with the MIT Housing Office, schedule our meetings, and poke people to do their evaluations, it is useful to have a single responsible person. If need be, make it a SHITS-exempt position for the duration of the search. MIT Housing will likely invite this person to attend sessions on how to interview and evaluate candidates. Our chair participated in this and shared helpful ideas with the rest of the house.

Step 1: MIT Housing Provides a Slate of Candidates

MIT Housing does a round of written applications and interviews themselves, prior to giving us any information. In addition to names and contact information, they also provide their CVs, written applications, and notes and scores from their interviews. [The rubric and interview questions that they used can be seen here](#).

Step 2: Decide Upon Evaluation Criteria

The GRA Search Chair arranged a meeting for us to discuss general evaluation criteria and questions. [This generated first a general list of questions and criteria](#), then a list of six/seven more specific criteria, listed here in no particular order:

1. would be down for cooperative and non-hierarchical living
2. will adapt to house culture rather than enforcing external norms
3. will treat housemates as equals rather than younger students
4. will be an enthusiastic and present member of the community
5. will be willing/able to handle conflict, crises and other difficult situations
6. enthusiastically supportive of minority groups
7. Misc. Comments

Step 3: Conduct Individual Evaluations Based on Written Documents

Each pikan interested in participating was assigned 6 of the 15 candidates, resulting in approximately 4 reviewers per candidate. Over the course of a week or two, these pikans evaluated their assigned candidates using the above criteria, collecting relevant quotes from the documents, and ultimately rating them as veto-negative-neutral-positive-enthusiastic. These scores were collected on a spreadsheet. [An example of this \(with made-up candidates and scores\) can be seen in the Aggregate tab of this spreadsheet](#).

Step 4: Select Which Candidates to Interview

The GRA Search Chair convened another meeting to discuss the results of the individual evaluations and select a subset of the candidates to conduct interviews with. MIT Housing allowed us to rank up to 4 candidates for our final selection, so we reached out to 7 candidates, so as to have some margin of choice. We selected these 7 as the highest average ranking, but only after some discussion.

Step 5: Select Questions for the Interview

Parallel to Step 4, pikans started proposing interview questions on an ethercalc spreadsheet, and other pikans voted on which ones they liked. [This can be seen in the Question Selection tab of this spreadsheet](#). After some number of days, a meeting was held at which we discussed these questions and selected a subset to actually ask the candidates.

Step 6: Interviews

The GRA Search Chair reached out to the selected candidates to schedule interviews. Interested pikans filled out a when2meet survey and the GRA Search Chair only offered times to the candidates that at least 5 pikans could attend. For each interview pikans signed up for the following positions:

- Lead Question Asker
- Lead Note Taker
- Secondary Note Taker

For the first 30-40 minutes, we asked the prepared questions, along with any relevant followups. Then we turned it over to the candidate to let them ask whatever questions they wanted. Notes were taken and then distributed to pikans afterwards.

Step 7: Final Ranking

A final meeting was convened at which all interested pikans ranked the interviewed candidates and a discussion was held of these rankings. This discussion yielded a consensus, ordered top 4 to be submitted to MIT Housing. [An example of this process, with made-up candidate names and scores can be seen in "Ranking" tab of this spreadsheet.](#) The house was also required to submit an explanation of their rankings. The GRA Search Chair drafted it, let pikans comment, and then submitted the following (edited to remove names and personal details) along with our rankings:

In determining our final ranking, we evaluated candidates on six main axes (listed here in no particular order): 1) willingness to live in a democratic, cooperative, and non-hierarchical environment, 2) willingness to adapt to house culture rather than enforcing external norms, 3) ability to treat housemates as fellow adults, 4) ability to be an enthusiastic and present member of the community, 5) ability to handle conflict, crises, and other difficult situations, and 6) enthusiastic support of minority groups. All four of our top candidates displayed these six characteristics, and we would be very happy to have any of them serve as pika's GRA.

That being said, CANDIDATE X far exceeded our criteria. We were very impressed by CANDIDATE X's well-thought-out answers, particularly their goal to be a "grounding, peace-bringing, generative presence" for students, their advocating for exercising "radical tenderness," their emphasis on democracy and togetherness rather than hierarchies, and their espousing "radical caring" that goes beyond institutional DEI structures. CANDIDATE X seemed very excited about pika and its culture, and we believe that they would be an excellent fit for pika.

CANDIDATE Y stood out in their application with their very well-thought-out mentoring philosophy and emphasis on inclusion and diversity. In their interview with us, they reiterated her passion for the work of community building, and added that they doesn't really see it as "work."

CANDIDATE Z stood out in their application with their many community-building ideas and emphasis on helping students be their authentic selves. In their interview with us, they stated that they thinks a lot about LGBT healthcare, and expressed they belief that we are all adults "opting in to this community."

CANDIDATE W stood out in their application as being very passionate about community-building and facilitating an inclusive, comfortable environment for students. In their interview with us, they expressed that they believed we should come from the starting place of "everyone's an adult."