



Faculty Research Leave Policy Revised October 2017

PURPOSE

In the words of the [Shils Report](#), “The tradition of The University of Chicago has defined it, primarily but not exclusively, as a research university of the highest international standing” (p. 3). In keeping with this mission, faculty members in the Social Sciences Division are given the opportunity to balance their institutional obligations with their own academic pursuits. Faculty members typically teach four courses per academic year, advise and mentor students, and perform departmental and other service, leaving the balance of the academic year to pursue their own research, writing, and publication.

The Faculty Research Leave Policy is designed to provide Social Sciences faculty members with additional time to focus on their scholarly interests, free from the usual responsibilities of teaching and service. It allows faculty members time to pursue their scholarship with greater intensity, to bring projects to fruition, and to embark upon new lines of inquiry. It is meant to provide greater predictability and more equal access, not limited by the availability and requirements of external funding, while still recognizing and rewarding initiative.

POLICY

The standard Research Leave consists of two quarters out-of-residence and a reduction of two courses (for faculty members in departments with standard teaching of three courses per year, the Faculty Research Leave comprises a one-course reduction and two quarters out-of-residence) [\[1\]](#)

All tenure-track faculty members (Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and full Professors) will be eligible for a Faculty Research Leave after three *consecutive* years of full in-residence service, meeting their full Departmental and Collegiate teaching responsibilities. Applications for Research Leave will be reviewed by the Dean and awarded based on the faculty member’s proposed plan of research, as well as on evidence of productive use of previous Research Leaves [\[2\]](#) Faculty members are not eligible for Research Leave 1) during the year in which their tenure decision is made, 2) during the year prior to retirement, or 3) during the half-time retirement period.

Faculty members may request to extend the Research Leave to a full academic year—full release from teaching and all three quarters out-of-residence, at full academic-year compensation—in one of three ways:

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1. by securing external fellowship or grant support that provides either of the following:
 - a. at least 50% of annual base salary (excluding benefits);
 - b. a minimum award amount of \$50,000 [\[3\]](#)
 2. by accepting a 50% reduction in base annual salary up to a maximum of \$50,000; or
 3. by accruing six consecutive years of full in-residence service as defined above.

Faculty members are strongly encouraged to apply for external support regardless of their Research Leave plans^[4].

Faculty Research Leaves should not be unduly disruptive. Faculty members are responsible for consulting with their Department Chair(s) to confirm that their plans will not negatively impact their Department(s). If a faculty member has teaching obligations in more than one Department, each Department Chair must be consulted. In turn, Chairs are responsible for consulting with the Dean and College Master to determine whether their faculty's proposed Research Leaves will fit the curricular and governance needs of the Department; in general, the Division does not provide funding for replacement teaching. If a faculty member's Research Leave is delayed at the explicit request of the Chair or Dean for administrative, teaching, or service reasons, the administration will do its best to avoid delaying future Research Leaves as a result (e.g., if a faculty member plans to take Research Leave in 2016-17 and 2020-2021, but has to delay the first Leave to 2017-18 at the explicit request of the Chair or Dean, he or she may still be eligible for a Leave year in 2020-21).

Faculty members must return to full in-residence service, meeting the expected teaching and service responsibilities in their Departments, for at least one full academic year following a Faculty Research Leave and prior to departure from the University. Thus, the year of a tenure decision and the final pre-retirement year are excluded from Research Leave eligibility^[5].

ELABORATIONS

External Funding: The Division does not "top off" external awards that provide less than 50% of a faculty member's annual salary or minimum award of \$50,000. If a faculty member receives an award that provides less than the 50% salary or \$50,000 threshold, the faculty member may elect to take a reduction in pay in order to secure the third quarter off.

All and any funding secured by a faculty member in support of a Research Leave must be paid to the Division even if it exceeds the threshold for securing the third quarter off. Fellowships that provide more than 50% of a faculty member's annual salary or more than the minimum required award amount of \$50,000 shall not entitle that faculty member to additional salary, additional financial support for research, additional teaching relief, or additional time out-of-residence. The benefit the faculty member receives from external awards is an extension of the Faculty Research Leave. The benefit the Division derives is the ability to maintain a generous Faculty Research Leave policy.

Service toward eligibility: Faculty members accrue service for each *consecutive* academic year spent in-residence meeting their full departmental and Collegiate teaching responsibilities. Upon return from a Faculty Research Leave, the accrual of service is reset to zero.

Faculty members should begin applying for external fellowships by September 1 in the year before their anticipated Research Leave.

Faculty members are expected to synchronize plans to accept external fellowships with their period of eligibility for Research Leave under this policy. If a special opportunity arises on short notice and outside of the standard schedule, the Department and Division will evaluate the faculty member's request on a case-by-case basis. This is done solely at the discretion of the Chair and the Dean. A minimum of two years of in-residence service must accrue between Research Leaves, no matter how they are funded and regardless of special circumstances.

Eligibility does not accrue during leaves of absence under the Parental Leave/FMLA policy or for any other purpose, such as to visit or teach at another university. A fourth quarter in-residence (i.e., summer) for teaching or administration does not advance eligibility for a Faculty Research Leave.

Return to Service: A faculty member must return to full, in-residence service for at least one year following a Faculty Research Leave and prior to departure from the University of Chicago. In the event that the faculty member does not return to the University following a Research Leave (e.g., for retirement or employment elsewhere), the faculty member (or his or her new employer) must reimburse the University for all salary, benefits, and other funds the University expended toward the Research Leave. The only exception to this is an Assistant Professor who, after being on a Research Leave during the terminal year of his or her first appointment term, is not renewed; in such circumstances, the Assistant Professor is not expected to repay any funds expended toward his or her Research Leave.

Appointments at Other Institutions: Faculty may not accept paid employment at another university during a Faculty Research Leave. Faculty members may extend a Research Leave to a third quarter by taking a visiting position at another university if the Division is reimbursed at least 50% of their annual salary.

HOW TO APPLY

Faculty members who wish to take a Research Leave in a given academic year should apply to the Department Chair [\[6\]](#) no later than 1 December of the prior year (e.g., Research Leave plans for 2016-17 should be communicated by December 2015, if not sooner). Discussion between the faculty member and the Chair should address the following:

- a. the faculty member's research plans during the Research Leave;
- b. what external funding he or she hopes to secure;
- c. what impact his or her absence will have on the Department; and
- d. what steps he or she will take to ensure that a Faculty Research Leave will not impede the progress of any student advisees.

At their discretion, Department Chairs may require in advance of the formal application a written elaboration of the faculty member's plans or any other supporting documentation they feel is appropriate.

Once a faculty member has discussed Research Leave plans with the relevant Chair(s), he or she should fill out the Application for Research Leave and submit it to the Chair(s) for approval. Each Chair should submit their Department's Research Leave requests, as well as a statement that details

the Department's plans for operating with a reduced faculty body, to the Dean by December 15. After approval by the Provost, the Dean will inform the Chairs in January or as soon as possible.

Faculty members interested in seeking external funding to support a third quarter of Research Leave should contact the SSD Senior Associate Director for Research Development, June Hou (juneh@uchicago.edu), for assistance in identifying opportunities. To ensure maximum eligibility, and in order to avoid missing the deadlines for major funding sources, this conversation should begin no later than May 1 in the year prior to the prospective Research Leave (i.e. sixteen months before the anticipated leave), although we welcome consultation at all stages during the development of a fellowship application.

RESEARCH LEAVE APPLICATION DEADLINES

Please note: these dates refer to the academic year *before* the desired Research Leave year; for example, faculty members requesting a Research Leave for Academic Year 2016–17 would need to apply in 2015 for approval in early calendar year 2016.

September 1: Deadline for contacting Grants and Fellowships Writer regarding fellowship funding

December 1: Deadline for submitting Research Leave request and plan to Department Chairs

December 15: Deadline for Department Chairs to submit Research Leave requests to Dean

ELIGIBILITY

The section below provides an overview of who is and is not eligible for Research Leave under typical circumstances.

For additional details, or to confirm eligibility for a specific faculty member, please consult with the Grants and Fellowships Writer.

Am I eligible for Research Leave?

I am a...

First- or Second-Term Assistant Professor

Eligible? *Yes*

Caveats and Clarifications: After two or more years of full residency and you are not up for tenure during your proposed Research Leave year and you have not previously had a leave.

Tenured Professor (Associate/full)

Eligible? *Yes*

Caveats and Clarifications: ...provided three years have passed since your last Research Leave and you are not retiring at the end of your proposed Research Leave year or currently on the half-time retirement plan.

- In exceptional cases, it is possible for only two years to elapse between Research Leaves; however, under no circumstances may a faculty member be fully in-residence for fewer than two years between Research Leaves.

Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Professors of Practice in the Arts, or any other academic appointee or employee.

Eligible? *No*

Caveats and Clarifications: The Research Leave policy is only applicable to tenure-track faculty members (Assistant, Associate, or full Professors).

FOOTNOTES

- [1] For faculty members teaching fewer or more courses than the standard four-course load, the course reduction will be determined on an individual basis but will not exceed 50% of the teaching load.
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- [2] Assistant Professors may be eligible to receive a first Research Leave in either the third or fourth year of the first term, depending on Departmental preference; however, no Assistant Professor may have more than one research leave prior to the faculty member's tenure decision regardless of the number of years at rank or stop-the-clock actions.
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- [3] This amount will be reviewed periodically against select external award benchmarks to which we intend our faculty to be eligible applicants.
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- [4] Please note that application for and/or receipt of fellowship funding does not ensure that a Research Leave request will be granted.
- [5] Faculty members on the half-time retirement option are not eligible for Research Leave.
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- [6] Faculty members with teaching responsibilities in multiple Departments will need to secure approval from all relevant and appropriate Chairs.