

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
Divinity School

AMRS and MA Student Handbook

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For further information
about any of the policies and procedures
outlined in this handbook, please contact:

Professor Jeffrey Stackert
Master's Program Director
stackert@uchicago.edu

Mimi Maduff
Dean of Students
mhalpern@uchicago.edu

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE OF STUDY	4
AMRS DEGREE REQUIREMENTS	4
COURSEWORK	4
ORAL EXAM	5
MA DEGREE REQUIREMENTS	6
COURSEWORK	6
LANGUAGE STUDY	7
AMRS AND MA ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES	9
ADVISOR	9
ANNUAL REVIEWS	9
ENROLLMENT AND REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS	9
COURSE REGISTRATION	10
LANGUAGE EXAM REGISTRATION	12
REGISTRATION AND YOUR STUDENT ACCOUNT	12
RESTRICTIONS AND REGISTRATION	13
WITHDRAWALS	13
GRADING	14
INCOMPLETES	15
TRANSFER AMONG PROGRAMS	15
GRADUATION	16
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	17
DEAN OF STUDENTS OFFICE	19
STUDENT GROUPS	20
CAMPUS RESOURCES	21
DIVINITY SCHOOL POLICIES	23
LEAVES OF ABSENCE	23
ADHERENCE TO UNIVERSITY POLICY	24
ADMISSIONS REVIEW SYSTEM	25
RECORDS MAINTENANCE	25
ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE	26

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE OF STUDY

Master of Arts in Religious Studies Program (AMRS)

The AMRS Program is designed for students interested in developing a broad basis of understanding in religious studies. It is often pursued by students who are established professionals in another field who would like to add specialized knowledge in the area of religion. The AMRS is a terminal degree and alone is not considered sufficient preparation for the Divinity School's PhD Program. Students interested in the doctoral study at the Divinity School should pursue either the MA or MDiv program.

Academic and Curricular Requirements

To earn the AMRS degree, students must satisfactorily complete (at least a B- or better) a minimum of 9 courses. Required coursework includes:

- **Foundation Courses:** All AMRS students must satisfactorily complete DVSC 30500 Introduction to the Study of Religion and DVSC 30600 Theory and Method. DVSC 30500 is offered every Autumn quarter and DVSC 30600 is offered every Winter.
- **Disciplinary Breadth:** All AMRS students must take courses in three of the four committees of the faculty.
- **Elective Coursework:** AMRS students elect their coursework for the degree. Any credit-bearing graduate-level course at the University may be counted toward the degree. AMRS students should consult with their faculty advisor about which courses would be most beneficial in determining the focus and direction of their work.
- **One-hour oral examination** based on a paper that represents the student's interests in the study of religion.

AMRS students may create independent reading or research courses with individual faculty members. These courses are credit-bearing and can last for one quarter up to an entire academic year. Students must consult with individual faculty members to create such a course, typically the term before the desired course will take place. If the faculty member agrees, the student will work with the faculty member to design a syllabus with goals and objectives of the course, the required reading list, meeting times, and any required assignments. This syllabus along with the Reading/Research Course Petition Form is submitted to the Dean of Students Office for processing. The petition form and accompanying syllabus are due by Wednesday of Week 3 of the quarter that the student is taking the course. If the course lasts for more than one quarter, the student must submit a new form for each quarter.

Reading Courses (DVSC 45100) allow students to craft a bibliography for advanced study in a particular topic in consultation with the sponsoring faculty member. Typically, students meet

with the instructor of record according to a mutually agreed upon schedule to work through the texts in the bibliography.

Research (or Independent Study) Courses (DVSC 50100) enable students to pursue formal individualized work under the direction of a member of the Divinity School faculty. Typically, students produce the equivalent of a seminar paper on the topic identified for the course. Reading and Research courses count as electives, not as Area distribution courses, unless approved by the program director.

Oral Examination

AMRS students must satisfactorily complete a one-hour oral examination based on a paper that represents the student's interests in the study of religion. The document is a revised version of a paper that the student wrote to complete the requirements of a course or independent research course in the Divinity School. The examination paper is chosen by the student, but it must be approved in advance by the faculty member under whose direction the paper was originally written. The student must identify two faculty members to participate in the oral examination, one of which must be the instructor for whom the paper is written. At least one of the examiners must be a faculty member in the Divinity School. If the student does not have a second faculty member, the MA Program Director will be asked to participate in the oral examination.

Students must apply to take the oral examination no later than Friday of Week 1 of the quarter that the examination is to take place. The student will apply to schedule the Oral by completing the Oral Exam Application Form and submitting the revised paper through the online form. If the student's application to hold the Oral is approved by the Director of the MA Program, the Dean of Students Office will schedule the Oral exam with the student's designated readers during weeks five through seven of the quarter.

At the beginning of the oral examination, the faculty examiners confer privately to develop questions of the student. The student is then admitted into the examination. The student is allowed to introduce themselves, their work in the AMRS program, and offers a 10-15-minute summary of the examination paper. The faculty examiners ask questions and offer comments. The total time of the presentation and questions and answer period should not exceed one hour. The faculty examiners then deliberate privately and complete the AMRS Oral Evaluation Form with the Dean of Students or designee. Afterwards, the faculty examiners inform the student of the results: Pass or Fail. If a student fails an AMRS oral examination, they will be withdrawn from the AMRS program. The AMRS Oral Evaluation Form is added to the student's file.

Language Requirement

There are no language requirements for the AMRS program. AMRS students may engage in language study as elective coursework that will count toward degree progression.

Master of Arts in Divinity (MA)

The Master of Arts (MA) is a two-year program providing a foundation in the study of religion and its adjacent fields. It offers the freedom and the structure for students to develop their interests and hone their linguistic and analytical skills through course offerings within the Divinity School and across the University of Chicago's humanities, social science and natural science divisions as well as its other professional schools.

With a requirement of fifteen courses, including the completion of our two-course introductory sequence on theory and method in the study of religion, students will have the opportunity to study the cultures, languages, thought, practices, and institutions of religious traditions both ancient and modern.

We prepare our students for doctoral study in religion or related fields but also encourage the program as a means to pursue other professions or area of interest for which the study of religion is an important component. Our students go on not only to become professors at the nation's top universities, but also to careers in law, medicine, journalism, public policy, government, education, the non-profit sector, and the arts, among other fields.

Academic and Curricular Requirements

To earn the MA degree, students must satisfactorily complete (at least a B- or better) a minimum of 15 courses. Courses must include:

- **Foundation Course(s):** All MA students must satisfactorily complete DVSC 30500- Introduction to the Study of Religion and DVSC 30600 Theory and Method. DVSC 30500 is offered every Autumn quarter and DVSC 30600 is offered every Winter.
- **Disciplinary Breadth:** All MA students must take courses in three of the four committees of the faculty.
- **Elective Coursework:** MA students elect their coursework for the degree. Any credit-bearing graduate-level course at the University may be counted toward the degree. MA students should consult with their faculty advisor about which courses would be most beneficial in determining the focus and direction of their work. These could include courses that further emphasize breadth in the study of religion, courses in an Area of study that the student wishes to concentrate doctoral study, or language study.
- **Research competency in a modern research language.** See language requirements section below.

MA students may create independent reading or research courses with individual faculty members. These courses are credit-bearing and can last for one quarter up to an entire academic year. Students must consult with individual faculty members to create such a course, typically the term before the desired course will take place. If the faculty member agrees, the student will work with the faculty member to design a syllabus with goals and objectives of the course, the

required reading list, meeting times, and any required assignments. This syllabus along with the Reading/Research Course Petition Form is submitted to the Dean of Students Office for processing. The petition form and accompanying syllabus are due by Wednesday of Week 3 of the quarter that the student is taking the course. If the course lasts for more than one quarter, the student must submit a new form for each quarter.

Reading Courses (DVSC 45100) allow students to craft a bibliography for advanced study in a particular topic in consultation with the sponsoring faculty member. Typically, students meet with the instructor of record according to a mutually agreed upon schedule to work through the texts in the bibliography.

Research (or Independent Study) Courses (DVSC 50100) enables students to pursue formal individualized work under the direction of a member of the Divinity School faculty. Typically, students produce the equivalent of a seminar paper on the topic identified for the course. Reading and Research courses count as electives, not as Area distribution courses, unless approved by the program director.

Language Study

A foundational commitment of the Divinity School is the notion that academic citizenship requires multilingual proficiency. The Divinity School therefore requires all its MA students to demonstrate academic reading comprehension in a modern research language. MA students may elect from the following languages: French, German, Modern Arabic, Modern Chinese, Modern Hebrew, or Spanish. Modern research languages enable students to engage with scholarly literature across the field of religious studies.

To meet the language requirement, students may take either the Academic Reading Competency Assessment (ARCA) or a Reading for Research Purposes course (e.g. FREN/GRMN/SPAN 33333) offered by the University of Chicago Language Center. Students who wish to satisfy the requirement with Modern Arabic or Modern Hebrew must take the ARCA. The Modern Arabic and Modern Hebrew Reading for Research Purposes courses do not satisfy this requirement. Students taking the ARCA exam must earn a grade of Pass (P) or higher to satisfy the language requirement. Students who elect to take a Reading for Research Purposes course must earn a grade of A- or better to satisfy the language requirement.

Texts for the ARCA language exams have been selected by the Divinity School faculty. The texts are not particular to a student's Area of study or academic concentration. Instead, the texts selected for the language exams are centered in the theories and methods in the academic study of religion.

If an MA student elects a language that is not assessed through the ARCA or Reading for Research Purposes course, the student may petition to have coursework or an exam administered by a Divinity School faculty member fulfill the language requirement. The petition is subject to approval by the student's faculty advisor and MA Program Director. Students must earn at least an A- in all coursework counted toward the language requirement. Approved petitions must be submitted to the Dean of Students Office.

Students in the MA program may not use prior language coursework or native fluency in a modern research to waive the language requirement. The language requirement must be completed no later than the quarter before the anticipated graduation term. Failure to do so may result in delayed graduation.

Language Exams

The ARCA is administered once per quarter, with fixed examination dates and times in Autumn, Winter, and Spring quarters:

- German: Monday, Week 5, 6:00pm
- French: Monday, Week 6, 6:00pm
- Spanish and other languages: Monday, Week 7, 6:00pm

Please note that certain exams are offered only by request (such as Arabic, Chinese, Turkish), dependent upon two conditions:

1. The student requests the test by emailing gradreadingexams@uchicago.edu **before Week 3 of the quarter preceding the administration of the test.**
2. OLA is able to hire qualified test developers who can create and grade the exam in that language.

Summer Language Institute

[The University of Chicago's Summer Language Institute](#) typically offers the following languages:

- Ancient Languages: Introductory and Intermediate Ancient Greek and Latin
- Modern Intensives: Introductory American Sign Language (ASL), Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Korean, Japanese, Spanish; Intermediate Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, Turkish
- Reading for Research: French, German, Italian, Spanish

Registration typically opens in early March. For questions regarding how to enroll in these courses, please contact the Student Affairs Manager.

Classes begin in mid-June, and are 6 to 8 weeks in length, depending on course. Each 300-unit intensive course provides the equivalent of a full year of language instruction. Divinity School tuition scholarships are applicable to the summer term applied in the same percentage as other quarters. Stipend support is not awarded in summer.

AMRS AND MA ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Advisor

All AMRS and MA students are assigned a faculty advisor to assist them in determining a cogent course of study. Faculty advisors are assigned before matriculation in the program. Students typically meet with their advisor once per quarter. Students may elect to change their faculty advisor by submitting the Change of Advisor Form on the Forms for Current Students website.

Annual Reviews

The Dean of Students monitors academic progress for AMRS and MA students and provides annual reviews and progress reports for AMRS and MA students every winter quarter. Any student who fails to make satisfactory academic progress as evidenced by failing to meet the enrollment and registration requirements or by failing to earn the sufficient quality grades as outlined above must develop a completion plan in conjunction with the faculty advisor, MA Program Director, and Dean of Students.

The student will be given a completion plan in writing that outlines what is required to regain good academic standing and the deadline for doing so, normally 1-2 quarters. If a student has more than three incompletes, they may not be allowed to register for courses. Instead, the Dean of Students will place the student on leave until the student is able to meet the terms of the completion plan. Students may petition the Dean of Students to take a required course while completing outstanding coursework. Failure to meet the terms of the completion plan will result in the student's withdrawal from the program.

Enrollment and Registration Requirements

AMRS students may enroll full-time (3 or 4 100-unit courses) or on a part-time basis (fewer than 3 100-unit courses). Students are not permitted to take more than four courses per quarter. The maximum registration enrollment limit for the AMRS Program is 3 academic years. Students studying full-time are expected to complete the program requirements in one (1) academic year. Students studying part-time may take up to three years to complete the program. After 3 academic years, students are administratively withdrawn from the program and will need to reapply for admission to continue the program. Students must be enrolled in at least 2 courses to be eligible for federal financial aid (loans and work-study).

AMRS students are expected to register in consecutive quarters of the academic year (Autumn, Winter, Spring). Students may take a leave of absence for a maximum of four consecutive quarters, including the Summer quarter. Students who do not register for four consecutive quarters will be withdrawn from the program. Administratively withdrawn students must submit a petition to resume studies. Petitions must be approved by the MA Program Director and the Dean of Students.

MA students are expected to enroll full-time (3 or 4 100-unit courses) each quarter for six consecutive quarters, thus completing the program in two academic years. Full-time summer enrollment may count toward the residency requirement. Students are not permitted to take more than four courses per quarter.

MA students must petition the Dean of Students Office to register for fewer than three courses in a given quarter. If approved, the student will be given an updated degree progression plan.

Students who wish to take more than four courses, either for credit or as an auditor, must petition the MA program director and the Dean of Students for approval. Students registered for more than 400 units in a given quarter will be dropped from the additional courses if they do not have an approved petition.

Full-time International Students on F-1 or J-1 visas must register for at least 300 units each quarter. To maintain F-1 or J-1 status, federal immigration regulations require students to be enrolled full-time for all quarters listed on the I-20/DS-2019, with the exception of the vacation quarter (usually summer).

International students seeking authorization to drop below full-time enrollment **must** contact the Office of International Affairs about reduced course load options.

Students studying on a full-time basis are expected to complete the program in two academic years. After two academic years, students are administratively withdrawn from the program and will need to reapply for admission to continue the program. Students must be enrolled in at least two courses to be eligible for federal financial aid (loans and work-study).

AMRS and MA students may withdraw from the program at any time. Students wishing to withdraw from the program should consult with the Dean of Students Office.

AMRS and MA students who have completed all program and residency requirements are expected to graduate. Students who are ineligible for graduation but will no longer take additional coursework (e.g. finishing incomplete coursework, exams, fieldwork, etc.) may enter Extended Status for up to two consecutive quarters, including Summer.

Extended Status confers no privileges such as registering for courses, borrowing federal loans, student loan deferment, access to health insurance, or access to the Student Wellness, and carries no tuition charges. Access to university e-mail accounts is maintained in Extended Status. Students who have not graduated at the end of the two quarters of Extended Status will be administratively withdrawn from the program. Students administratively removed may petition to graduate once all degree requirements are met.

Course Registration

Courses offerings for the academic year may be found on the Divinity School website.

Registration opens for graduate students the week before classes begin in Autumn, during 8th week of Autumn for Winter Quarter registration, and 8th week of Winter Quarter for Spring Quarter registration. The graduate registration schedule may be found [here](#).

Quarterly Registration Timeline for Graduate Students

- **Sixth Week:** [online course time schedules](#) for the next academic quarter are published
- **Eighth Week:** Divinity graduate students register for next quarter's classes
- **Tenth Week:** Registration temporarily closed
- **First Week:** Add/Drop Opens
- **Wednesday of Third Week:** All registration changes must be submitted to the Dean of Students Office to ensure processing before registration closes on Friday of Third Week.

How to Register for Courses and Make Registration Changes

- Course offerings are published every quarter by the [Registrar](#).
- Students who do not register before the first day of the new quarter will be assessed a late registration fee by the Office of the Bursar.
- Instructions for [adding, dropping, and swapping classes](#) can be found on the [Registrar's website](#). All students may make registration changes in my.UChicago through Friday of Week 1. After Friday of first week, Master's students may request additional registration changes by submitting the [registration adjustment form](#).
- All registration changes sent to the Dean of Students Office must be submitted by 5 pm on Wednesday of Week 3 using the [registration adjustment form](#). Please submit a new form for each adjustment that you wish to make. Due to the accelerated nature of the quarter system, students are strongly encouraged to finalize their registrations by the end of first week of the quarter whenever possible.
- Students registering for a course that requires instructor consent should contact their instructor for written consent and submit the consent along with the registration adjustment form. Requests to be registered for a closed course require instructor consent. Please submit the [registration adjustment form](#) and include written instructor consent.
- Requests to take course on a **P/F** or as an **Audit** require instructor consent. Please submit the [registration adjustment form](#) and include written instructor consent.

Note on P/F Grading: Before discussing pass/fail grading with instructors, students should check with the Dean of Students to determine whether a grade of "P" will be allowed to count towards their degree requirements. A grade of P can be awarded when the instructor determines that the student has submitted sufficient evidence to receive a

passing grade. A grade of P confers credit but does not carry any point value and will not impact a student's GPA. *Note: In courses that normally assign quality grades, you must have the instructor's permission to take the course pass/fail. Instructors are permitted to deny this request.*

Note on Auditing Courses: Courses taken for a formal audit appear on a student's transcript with a grade of "R."

- Students may not register for more than **five** courses during the shopping period. If you are enrolled in more than four courses without special permission from the Dean of Students, at the end of the add/drop period, you will be administratively dropped or withdrawn from your fifth course by the Dean of Students Office.
- **Reading and Research Courses:** To register for a Reading/Research Course, please submit the signed Reading/Research Course Petition Form to divinitydos@uchicago.edu along with a course reading list or Syllabus. If the Reading/Research course is not in the Divinity School, please complete this same petition and include the department in which you wish to complete the Reading/Research course.
- **Chicago Booth Course Registration**
Divinity students may only register for a Chicago Booth course if the course is appropriate to the student's program of study (i.e., approved by a faculty adviser in the department). Registration for business school courses that are open to non-Booth students does not take place until the second week of the quarter. Therefore, it is advisable for Divinity students to also attend a non-Booth alternative or back-up course. Information about taking courses at Chicago Booth is available [here](#).
- Master's students who plan to take courses during Summer Quarter must self-term activate.

Registration for Language Exams

The deadline to submit the request to register for the ARCA is Friday at 3PM of the third week of the quarter.

Late submissions for the language exam must be approved by the Office of Language Assessment and are not guaranteed registration for the language exam. If a late submission is approved by the Office of Language Assessment, a \$30 late registration fee will be assessed.

Late registration for the reading course is not allowed.

NOTE: It is strongly encouraged that your first attempt of the language exam or reading course occurs at least two quarters before your scheduled graduation. This will give you the opportunity to re-take it, if necessary, without delaying graduation.

The Divinity School will pay the \$90 fee for the ARCA. If you see the charge on your bill, please notify the Dean of Students Office.

Registration and Your Student Account

- Students may see anticipated tuition aid on their accounts before registration. Tuition aid is only disbursed after enrolling in courses.
- AMRS tuition is assessed on a per-course basis. You can review the tuition costs on the Bursar's website.
- Please make sure to enroll when registration opens each quarter. Adding and dropping courses will cause your student bill to fluctuate. You should generally allow 1-2 business days to see updated totals on your student bill after making registration changes.
- Students can avoid late registration fees by taking registration action prior to the first day of the quarter. Fees are not assessed for changes made during add/drop.

Restrictions and Registration

- All students are responsible for checking their accounts for restrictions (Bursar, Library, Student Loan Administration, Real Estate Operations, Immunization, Office of International Affairs, etc.) before registration. **A student cannot register until all restrictions are cleared.**
- Graduate students who are restricted from registering must clear their restrictions by the end of the third week of the quarter or they will be put on an administrative leave of absence in that quarter. At the beginning of the next quarter, if the student has failed to clear all restrictions, the student will be administratively withdrawn from the University by their Dean of Students (unless the student is on a documented non-administrative leave of absence).

Withdrawing From a Course

- Students who do not wish to complete a course after Friday of third week of a quarter may request a withdrawal ("W") from the course. Withdrawals will ordinarily be granted except in cases of academic dishonesty. A withdrawal may not be granted after completion of the course (typically the last day of a quarter).
- A grade of "W" appears on the student's transcript. A "W" does not carry any point value and will not impact a student's GPA. A grade of "W" does not confer credit and may thus impact progress towards degree.
- Withdrawals will not result in any changes to a student's tuition bill.
- Course changes made prior to the end of the third week of a quarter will not result in a grading penalty since these are enrollment changes made during the "add/drop period."

Procedures to Request a Withdrawal

1. Students must request a withdrawal before the final exam has been given or before the final project due date.
2. Students should contact the Dean of Students to request withdrawal. Students are also strongly encouraged to notify their instructor that they have chosen to withdraw from the course.
3. Students can verify that the Withdrawal took place by checking their current quarter enrollments in my.uchicago.edu.

Students with questions about whether a withdrawal will impact their financial aid or student visas should contact the Graduate Financial Aid Office or the Office of International Affairs, respectively.

Grading

All Divinity School courses are evaluated using quality grades (A, B, C, D, and F), all of which have + or - modifiers. AMRS and MA students must earn a grade of B- or better in courses that count toward degree completion. Courses grades of C+ or below and audited courses do not count toward degree completion.

Students may elect to take a course on a Pass/Fail basis. To earn a grade of Pass (P), students must earn an equivalent of B- or higher in the course to earn a Pass. Students must obtain instructor approval to take a course on a Pass/Fail. Once instructor approval is obtained, students must submit their request to the Dean of Students Office by Wednesday of Week 3 for processing.

AMRS and MA students may count only one (1) course graded on a Pass/Fail basis toward degree completion. The foundational courses DVSC 30500 Introduction to the Study of Religion and DVSC 30600 Theory and Method must be taken for quality grades.

Students may also elect to audit a course, which is indicated as (R) on the transcript. Students who audit courses typically complete assigned readings, participate in class discussions, but do not turn in assignments. Audited courses are not taken for credit and do not count toward degree completion; however, audited courses are billed the same as for-credit courses. Students must obtain instructor approval to audit a course. Once instructor approval is obtained, students must submit their request to the Dean of Students Office by Wednesday of Week 3 for processing. Students may request an Incomplete (I) for a course to allow additional time to finish work required for a quality grade. Students who wish to take an Incomplete grade for a course must make a formal request to the instructor of record for the course using the form available on the Forms for Current Students website. This form must be turned into the Dean of Students Office for processing.

AMRS and MA students have one academic year to complete and submit the unfinished coursework in Divinity School courses. After the year elapses, the *I* becomes permanent, and any grade submitted will be placed next to the *I* (e.g. I/B+). AMRS and MA students with three or more Incomplete or ungraded courses on their transcript at the beginning of the academic year may not register for classes and will not receive funding from the Divinity School. The student will be required to submit a completion plan and return to good academic standing before registering for classes. Should a student who is not in good academic standing need to register

for a required course, the student may petition the Dean of Students Office with a completion plan and a rationale for the need to register for one course.

NOTE: Students utilizing federal student aid should consult with the Graduate Financial Office to determine if and how a grade of “I” will impact loan eligibility.

Incompletes

A student may request a grade of “Incomplete” (“I”) if they anticipate not completing the course requirements before the end of a quarter but have: (1) participated actively in the course, (2) completed the majority of the requirements of the course, and (3) made satisfactory arrangements with the instructor to complete the remaining work by a specified deadline.

If the instructor agrees to assign an “Incomplete,” a grade of “I” will appear on the transcript. An “I” does not carry a point value and does not impact a student’s GPA. Once the student has completed the course requirements, the transcript will be updated to include the quality grade. If the grade is completed within one calendar year, the mark of “I” will be removed. After one year, the mark of “I” will appear on the transcript next to a quality grade to denote that the work was not completed within a single quarter (e.g. “IA” or “IB+”). Quality grades with an “I” carry the same transcript weight as quality grades without an “I.”

Because an incomplete is a formal agreement between an instructor and a student, failure to submit or complete remaining requirements by the agreed-upon deadline could result in assignment of a quality grade that the student earned based on requirements partially met in the course or a W.

Procedures to request an incomplete

1. Students should discuss the possibility of an incomplete with their instructor as soon as they become aware that they may not be in a position to complete all course requirements by the end of a quarter.
2. Students should discuss the timeline for completing the incomplete work for the course and detail in writing the date by which each assignment will be submitted to the instructor. The instructor should also note what grade will be assigned if the incomplete work is not submitted. This could be a “W” or a quality grade based on the work that has been submitted to date.
3. If an instructor agrees to an incomplete, students should submit the signed incomplete form to the Dean of Students Office.

Transfer Among Programs

Because a student’s academic and professional interests may change, students may transfer between the master’s degree programs at the Divinity School. Students may present transfer petitions at any time after matriculation to the program. Any petition by a student to transfer to

another program after admission, but before registration, is subject to review by the Masters Admissions Committee.

Petitions of enrolled master's student are subject to review by the student's faculty advisor and Faculty Program Director of the entering program. Students should complete the Petition to Change Programs Form which is available on the Forms for Current Students website. If a transfer petition is approved, the student will be given an academic plan for the new program, including an updated graduation date by the Dean of Students Office. Master's students maintain the same divisional aid tuition proportion when transferring programs.

Graduation

Students must apply to graduate in the term in which the degree is completed. The deadline to apply to graduate is Friday of the first week of the quarter. Students graduating in the Summer, Autumn, Winter or Spring quarter of the current academic year are invited to participate in annual convocation exercises in the Spring Quarter. Degrees are conferred in the actual quarter of graduation. The Registrar charges a degree cancellation fee for students who apply for graduation who are not approved to graduate. Students should consult with the Dean of Students Office about eligibility for graduation. Students who wish to participate in an internship in the summer after they complete their degree requirements may only participate in the Spring ceremony of the previous academic year if all degree requirements are completed by the graduation deadlines for the Spring ceremony of the previous academic year. Students holding summer internships with questions about eligibility to participated in graduation ceremonies should contact the Dean of Students Office.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Preparing for Doctoral Work

Statement of Purpose

The statement should articulate the questions or problems that motivate your pursuit of a graduate degree in a particular field, the aspects of your prior work (broadly construed) that suggest you'll be successful in the degree program, and the reasons you think the institution is a good place to do your work. The statement should be future-directed and inquiry-based. It should not be an exercise in intellectual or spiritual autobiography; it should convey the intellectual conversations you anticipate joining and your preparedness to undertake an intellectual project or research agenda.

Coursework

For students who plan to apply to doctoral programs in Autumn of their second year of the program, it is recommended that students choose course work in the first year that will allow them to produce a writing sample and make progress on language preparation.

Letters of Recommendation

Approach potential letter writers a few months before the deadline to ask if they would be willing to write you a strong letter of recommendation. It is often helpful for students to take more than one course with faculty who will serve as recommenders to help them attest to your potential in doctoral programs. If the timing is over a holiday or a particularly busy period, you should allow additional lead time. If potential writers say no or seem hesitant, it is best to ask someone else.

When requesting letters of recommendation, it is helpful to consider which qualities and qualifications you wish to convey to the reading committee and to choose writers who can speak to those skills and characteristics (e.g., research and writing, language skills). Be sure to ask if the recommender will be able to write you a strong letter.

Ask your recommenders their preferences on which materials they'd like to see, timelines, reminders, etc. Generally, it is a best practice to provide recommenders with the deadline for submission, information about the opportunity or program to which you are applying, your statement of purpose or application essay, your resume/CV, a copy of your transcript, and any other information you think would be helpful for them in writing your letter. A week or two before the due date, it may be helpful to send a reminder about when the letter is due, but different writers have different preferences, so it is best to ask directly and establish expectations.

Summer Opportunities

Whether you plan to apply for further graduate study or pursue full-time work after graduation, you can find professional development workshops offered by The Divinity School and [UChicagoGRAD](#) throughout the year. Through participation in career development and fellowships workshops and [one-on-one advising](#), you can receive feedback on application or job documents, explore different professional opportunities, and learn strategies for success in networking and interview situations.

Moreover, it is never too early to start planning your summer. Many students in the Divinity School take language courses through the Summer Language Institute. The Divinity School also offers a number of internships cultivated through the Marty Center. The internships are open to all students in the Divinity School in good standing. The application deadline is typically in February.

In addition to the Divinity School internships, students have the opportunity to create their own project-based internship with an organization of interest through UChicagoGRAD's Advance Internship Program. The [Master's Advance](#) internship allows Master's students to craft an 300-hour summer experience in higher education, industry, nonprofits, or government and apply to receive one of a limited number of \$6,000 stipends. The funding supports projects that are otherwise unpaid and can be undertaken in the summer after graduation. The deadline to apply for Master's Advance is late February.

Students interested in applying for summer language courses to study languages that are not offered at the University of Chicago may apply for supplemental funding.

For questions about professional development opportunities, please contact the Assistant Dean of Students.

DEAN OF STUDENTS OFFICE

The Dean of Students supports Divinity School students from admission to graduation. Students can contact the Dean of Students Office via email divinitydos@uchicago.edu or phone at 773-702-8217. While we are all available to help you or connect you to the correct office on campus, you may also wish to reach out to one of us to address a specific need. Please see below for a list of our individual responsibilities.

Philip Guzman

Student Affairs Manager

guzmanp@uchicago.edu

Course Registration

Graduation

Newsletter

Orientation

Special Events

Supplemental Funding

Nathan J. Hardy

Assistant Dean of Students

njhardy@uchicago.edu

Applications to Other Graduate Programs

Career Planning

Professional Development

Recruitment and Admissions

Mimi Maduff

Dean of Students

mhalpern@uchicago.edu

BONDS Peer Mentors

Degree Requirements

Divinity School Policies

Financial Aid

Grievances

Student Status Changes

Teaching Appointments

STUDENT GROUPS

The Divinity Students Association (DSA)

The Divinity Students Association (DSA) is an organization run by and for the University of Chicago Divinity students. Every registered Divinity School student is automatically a DSA member. The organization contributes to many spheres of life in the Divinity School, including academic, professional, and social. Above all else, the DSA strives to foster a true community of Divinity students from every degree program. Founded in the early 1960s, the Divinity Students Association has operated as an independent nonprofit (501c3) within the Divinity School since 1968.

The DSA is focused on pursuing three goals:

1. To enhance student life and research
2. To foster collegiality and social cohesion
3. To work with the Divinity School administration in areas pertaining to student needs

Throughout the academic year, the DSA hosts 4-8s (whole school socials), Divinity Town Halls, and many other exciting big-and-small events to enrich student life from both individual and communal standpoints. The DSA also helps to support students financially through grants, including funding student-run clubs. Finally, the DSA serves as a liaison between the student body and Divinity/UChicago administration, always working to better the student experience.

BONDS (Building Opportunities and Networks for Divinity Students) Peer Mentors

The BONDS Peer Mentorship Program is designed to help incoming University of Chicago Divinity School students with the transition to graduate school and to build community both within the new cohorts and across the Divinity School. Peer mentors engage with incoming students through office hours, one-on-one meetings, regular email check-ins, and social events. BONDS mentors are always available to answer questions about campus and student life, moving to Chicago, experience with courses, languages, etc, or to connect students to other resources in the Dean of Students Office or the University.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Academic Support Resources

Center for Identity & Inclusion- <https://inclusion.uchicago.edu/>
Chicago Center for Teaching and Learning- <https://teaching.uchicago.edu/>
Housing Resources- <https://grad.uchicago.edu/life-at-uchicago/housing/>
DDH Housing- <https://ddh.uchicago.edu/community/student-housing/>
UChicago Residential Properties- <http://rp.uchicago.edu/> Office of International Affairs-
<https://internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/> Spiritual Life- <https://spirit.uchicago.edu/>
UChicago Bursar Office- <https://bursar.uchicago.edu/divinity-school-2-3/> UChicagoGRAD-
<https://grad.uchicago.edu/>
Academic Exchange Programs- <https://grad.uchicago.edu/academic-support/academic-exchange-program/>
Career Development- <https://grad.uchicago.edu/career-development/>
Council on Advanced Studies Workshops- <https://grad.uchicago.edu/academic-support/council-on-advanced-studies-workshops/>
Diversity & Inclusion- <https://grad.uchicago.edu/life-at-uchicago/diversity/>
English Language Institute- <https://esl.uchicago.edu/>
Family Resources- <https://grad.uchicago.edu/life-at-uchicago/family-resources/>
Fellowships Office- <https://grad.uchicago.edu/fellowships/>
Library Services <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/> ID & Privileges Office <https://ipo.uchicago.edu>
Email: ipo@uchicago.edu
Office of International Affairs <https://internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu>
Student Disability Services <https://disabilities.uchicago.edu>
Writing Support <https://grad.uchicago.edu/academic-support/writing-resources/>

Health and Wellness Resources

Chicago Student Wellness: 773.834.9355
Nurse Advice Line (after UChicago Student Wellness business hours): 773.834.9355
24/7 Therapist-on-Call: 773.702.3625
Healthiest You 24/7 Doctor: 855.866.0895
UChicago Medicine Emergency Room: 773.702.6250
Spiritual Life <https://csl.uchicago.edu/life-on-campus/spiritual-life/>
Timely Care Mental Health Support On-Demand: timelycare.com/uchicago

Safety and Security Resources

University of Chicago Police Department (UCPD) From a campus phone: 123; From any phone: 773.702.8181
Dean-on-Call: Call the UCPD at 773.702.8181 or text via the [UChicago Safe App](#)
Sexual Assault Dean-on-Call: Call the UCPD at 773.702.8181 or text via the [UChicago Safe App](#)

Office for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Support, Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Students:
titleix@uchicago.edu

Jeremy Inabinet, Associate Dean of Students in the University for Disciplinary Affairs:
773.834.4837

Bridget Collier, Associate Provost for Equal Opportunity Programs Title IX Coordinator for the
University: 773.702.5671

Bias Education & Support Team (BEST): [Report](#) Online

Emergency Assistance

The University of Chicago understands there may be additional unanticipated and unexpected costs you will need to manage during your academic career beyond those accompanying enrollment.

Emergency Assistance Programs are available to assist only currently matriculated degree-seeking students through the [Office of the Bursar](#).

The Emergency Assistance Program includes three types of assistance:

1. Emergency Grant
2. Living Expense Advance
3. Emergency Loan

All Emergency Assistance Programs can be applied for at my.UChicago.edu. Go to Finances -> MyAccount-> Emergency Assistance.

Emergency Assistance applications are reviewed for each type of assistance and awarded dependent on eligibility criteria, award funding availability, and if required, student acceptance. If an application does not meet any of the eligibility criteria for any of the available funding types the application will be denied.

All applications will be reviewed by the Bursar within 2-3 business days. Any incomplete requests for outstanding information required for awards for more than 5 business days will result in cancellation of your application.

Notice of the status of your application and the funding type you have been awarded is sent via your UChicago email. All funds are distributed via [my.UChicago](#) Direct Deposit System. Please review your enrollment at my.UChicago > Account > Direct Deposit after completion of your application.

DIVINITY SCHOOL POLICIES

Leaves of Absence

The University recognizes that there may be times when students have compelling reasons to interrupt their studies to focus on other activities, such as attending to a serious health issue, caring for a new child, or completing mandatory military service. In these instances, students should consult the Dean of Students, who will help them determine whether a voluntary leave of absence is appropriate. All leaves of absence must be approved by the Dean of Students in advance of the student's break in their studies.

Students who are approved for a voluntary leave of absence may qualify for a full or partial tuition refund according to the schedule published by the Office of the Bursar (<http://bursar.uchicago.edu/tuition-refund-schedule>).

Availability of student health insurance (U-SHIP) during a leave of absence will be governed by the student health insurance policies at the time the leave is taken. Other University privileges, facilities, and services are not available to students on leaves of absence, unless otherwise indicated. Students on a voluntary leave of absence cannot hold work-study or maintain University student employment positions.

Students may apply for a personal leave of absence for any reason. A student may be approved by their Dean of Students for a leave of absence of up to four academic quarters.

Students may apply for a medical leave of absence if temporarily unable to continue in their program due to illness or injury, or a mental health condition that significantly interferes with their ability to participate in the academic environment safely and successfully at the Divinity School. A student may be approved for a medical leave of absence by their Dean of Students for up to four academic quarters.

A medical leave allows students time away from the University for treatment and recovery, with the goal of restoring health. Students are not expected to complete academic work during a medical leave. While on a medical leave of absence, students are eligible to maintain university health insurance (U-SHIP) for up to four quarters. Students on MLOA with U-SHIP will have access to UChicago Student Wellness.

When submitting a request for MLOA, students are required to submit a letter of support from a managing medical professional. This letter should state that the student is under care for a medical condition that is negatively affecting the student's ability to participate in graduate study. The letter should also indicate the period of leave required for treatment and recovery. Please

note that this letter should NOT disclose any medical diagnosis, treatment plans, or any other confidential medical information.

Students taking medical leave may elect to resume academic studies once the underlying condition has been resolved or successfully managed. The Dean of Students Office may ask for supporting documentation from a managing physician when a student requests to return from leave.

A student who becomes a parent during their program may request a one-quarter Parental Relief Leave of Absence to care for the new child, and pregnant students for whom it is medically necessary, may request a Parental Relief Leave of Absence during pregnancy. Such leaves may be granted by the Dean of Students. Students are still eligible for University privileges during a Parental Leave of Absence. (For more information, refer to the [Graduate Student Parent Policy](#).) Students may apply for a military leave of absence in order to fulfill service in armed forces. This includes students from countries outside the United States who leave for service in their country's armed forces.

Students may apply for a leave of absence to pursue another degree program that is integral to their study. The appropriateness, relevance, and length of time of the additional degree should be evaluated by the student's primary program and requires written endorsement by the program director. A student may be approved by their Dean of Students for a curricular degree leave of absence for up to three years.

The Dean of Students may withdraw any student in academic residence who does not register as required by third week of the quarter. In unusual circumstances, the Dean of Students may place a student on involuntary leave of absence for one quarter if the student has not registered as required by third week of the quarter.

Leave of Absence status carries no tuition charges and confers no privileges such as registering for courses, accessing the libraries, borrowing money, deferring loans, access to health insurance, or the Student Health and Counseling Service unless the student is on a medical or parental leave of absence. Access to University e-mail accounts is maintained in Leave of Absence status. Students who do not return from the Leave of Absence in the quarter following the approved leave will be withdrawn from the program.

Adherence to University Policies

All Divinity School students are held to all policies of the University of Chicago and the Divinity School. The [Student Manual](#) is the official statement of University policies and regulations and expected standards of student conduct that are applicable to all students. Any student conduct, on or off campus, of individuals or groups, that threatens or violates this commitment may become a

matter for action within the University's system of student discipline. Students should read and become familiar with the expectations outlined in the [Student Manual](#).

The University may place a student on an involuntary leave when the area Dean of Students (or designee) determines, after conducting an individualized assessment, that: (1) there is a reasonable basis to believe the student has engaged, or threatened to engage, in conduct that has caused or is likely to cause serious disruption to the learning, extra-curricular and/or living activities of members of the community or others, including by impeding the rightful activities of others; and/or (2) the student is unable to function as a student; and/or (3) the student's continued presence on campus poses a serious threat to the physical safety of any person or property.

Admissions Review System

The Divinity School's Admissions Committees (Masters and Doctoral) have the authority to defer or revoke admissions before matriculation to the School. Admission may be deferred or revoked for fraud, misrepresentation, material omission of fact, dishonesty, violation of University standards in the application for admission, violation of University academic standards, or any other pre-matriculation misconduct.

Generally, the person bringing the allegation of misconduct first will discuss the allegation with the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students will notify the admitted student of the alleged infraction, request a prompt written response to the allegation, and otherwise gather and review germane information. Based on the inquiry, the Dean of Students has the discretion and authority to dismiss the complaint, resolve the complaint administratively, or refer the complaint to the area Admission Review Committee.

If convened, the area Admission Review Committee will examine expeditiously the facts related to the allegation and the response. At its discretion, the area Admission Review Committee may seek additional information from others with knowledge about the alleged misconduct and may ask the admitted student and/or others to answer specific questions or meet with the committee. The area Admission Review Committee will determine the appropriate institutional action and/or discipline, including but not limited to withdrawal of admission, deferral of matriculation, educational or training program, etc. Matriculation may be delayed so that the area Admission Review Committee may complete its investigation and make a decision.

The decision of the area Admission Review Committee is final and unreviewable within the University.

Records Maintenance

A student's education records are defined under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 as including, subject to the limitations described in the Act, "records, files,

documents, and other materials which (1) contain information directly related to a student; and (2) are maintained by an institution or by a party acting for such institution.” At the University, a student’s education records are often maintained in a number of offices: the Office of the Dean of Students in the student’s academic unit, the student’s department (if the student is a graduate divisional student), and other offices across campus. A student’s official academic record is maintained indefinitely in the Office of the University Registrar. A student’s official admissions record is maintained in the Office of Graduate Admissions.

For student records, the Divinity School’s retention policy is as follows:

§ Academic Records (transcripts are permanent): 5 years

§ Discipline Records: 5 years from the last incident, permanent if involves suspension or expulsion

§ Student Affairs: 6 years

§ Disability Accommodation Records: 7 years

Policies governing the maintenance, review, and ultimate disposition of students’ education are governed by the [University record retention policy](#). Students’ rights to review their educational records are governed by the [University Inspection and Review of Education Records](#) policy.

Divinity School Academic Grievance

“The University of Chicago is a community of scholars dedicated to research, academic excellence, and the pursuit and cultivation of learning in an environment where the free and open expression of ideas and critical questions are paramount. Every member of the University—student, faculty, and staff—make a commitment to strive for personal and academic integrity; to treat others with dignity and respect; to honor the rights and property of others; to take responsibility for individual and group behavior; and to act as a responsible citizen in a free academic community.” (from the [Student Manual](#))

The University of Chicago Divinity School is committed to the highest ideals of our academic community. Respect, civility, and professionalism are essential to the Divinity School’s mission of advancing the academic study of religion and preparing students for careers in research, teaching, and public religious leadership. All Divinity School academic appointees and staff are responsible for creating and maintaining a learning environment in which every student can maximize their potential. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Divinity School students have a means and opportunity to resolve complaints alleging abuse of authority. [The policy may be found here.](#)