

Divinity School Faculty Research Leave Policy

Purpose

Faculty members in the Divinity School 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 Divinity 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

All tenure-track faculty members (Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and full Professors) in the Divinity School will be eligible to apply for a Faculty Research Leave after three consecutive years of full in-residence service, meeting their future teaching responsibilities. The Divinity Schools' standard Research Leave consists of two quarters out-of-residence and a reduction of two courses; absent any extension of a Research Leave, faculty members will be expected to teach the remaining two courses in the third quarter.

Faculty members may request to extend their formal research leave to a full academic year (three quarters) in one of three ways:

1. by securing external fellowship or grant support that provides either
 - at least 50% of annual base salary (excluding benefits);
 - a minimum award of \$50,000;
2. by accepting a 50% reduction in base annual salary; or
3. by accruing six consecutive years of full in-residence service.

Faculty members seeking external support should begin applying for fellowships by September 1 in the year before their anticipated Research Leave. Faculty members are strongly encouraged to apply for external support.

Applications for Research Leave are due by December 1 and 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. 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 must return to full in-residence service, meeting the expected teaching and service responsibilities for at least one full academic year following a Faculty Research Leave and prior to departure from the University.

Elaborations

External Funding: The Divinity School 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 Divinity School 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 Divinity School 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 teaching responsibilities. Upon return from a Faculty Research Leave, the accrual of service is reset to zero. For the purposes of implementing this policy, accrual counting began for all faculty with the academic year 2015-16.

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 Dean will evaluate the faculty member’s request on a case-by-case basis. This is done solely at the discretion of the Dean. Realizing that external fellowship opportunities are not always predictable, the Dean may exercise discretion in the timing of a leave. But a minimum of two years of service in-residence 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 during leaves 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 Divinity School for all salary, benefits, and other funds the School 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.

Faculty research leaves should not be unduly disruptive. Faculty members are responsible for formally consulting with their Area colleagues to evaluate and coordinate curricular needs during their leave. If a faculty member's research leave is delayed due to administrative, teaching, or service needs, the Dean will attempt to avoid delaying eligibility for future research leaves as a result.

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 Divinity School 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 Dean no later than 1 December of the prior year, using the application form. The application should address:

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

Dated: November 2018, amended December 2019