

Grant Policy

last updated: April 2, 2021

Purpose

The Division of the Social Sciences' grant policy is designed to provide faculty with the freedom and flexibility to pursue lines of inquiry wherever they may lead, to sustain an institutional environment capable of catalyzing and advancing field-defining research, and to balance the pursuit of faculty research opportunities with other responsibilities (teaching, student advising and mentorship, and departmental service), while at the same time ensuring compliance with University and governmental regulations.

In cases where research is supported by extramural funding, the Division's policies and practices also provide strong pre-award and post-award support, proper institutional oversight, and align the facilities and administrative (indirect) cost allowance to the full scope of the Division's considerable research investments.

Policy

Any grant proposal on which a faculty member with primary academic appointment in the Division of the Social Sciences serves as Principal Investigator must be submitted through the Division of the Social Sciences.

Responsibility for setting the course of research at the University of Chicago is [vested with the faculty](#). Full-time, salaried faculty members are eligible to serve as principal investigator (PI) on proposals submitted to external funding agencies in support of research, training, or other sponsored activities. On sponsored awards, the PI bears responsibility for:

- directing the project's research activities
- overseeing the scientific integrity of the project
- financial oversight and regulatory compliance, including:
 - authorizing spending of funds
 - addressing potential conflicts of interest or allegations of academic fraud
 - ensuring proper access controls for use of restricted data, and
 - ensuring that research activities with human and animal subjects meet standards of ethical treatment

In order for the Division of the Social Sciences and the University to support the PI across the range of roles and responsibilities, and to provide strong facilities and administrative support, faculty members must conduct their sponsored research activities primarily within the Division.

Proposal Preparation, Review, and Submission

The SSD Research Development team and pre-award administrators support Division faculty in all steps of proposal preparation including initial preparation, project development, proposal review, inputting proposals into AURA and sponsor grant systems, and routing the proposal to URA for [review, endorsement, and submission](#).

Research grants and subawards generally require institutional endorsement and must be reviewed by [University Research Administration](#) (URA) via the [AURA grants system](#) for compliance with University and funding agency guidelines.

Full review:

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To ensure compliance, investigators are encouraged to begin working on proposals with the RD Team and/or unit pre-award administrators [months in advance](#), and to finalize all components aside from the main proposal narrative two weeks before the deadline. Preparing proposals and routing them well in advance of the deadline ensures that time is available to address any unanticipated issues, so that proposals may be successfully submitted by the deadline.

Proposals must be routed for URA review at least **5 business days prior to the sponsor's deadline** for full compliance review, which includes review of the guidelines, the complete proposal application, relevant waivers and approvals, assurances and certifications, and any errors/warnings that may prevent submission.

Principal Investigators must address all compliance issues identified by URA and submit the final proposal narrative to the Research Development team/unit pre-award administrator by **3PM Central Time one business day prior to the proposal due date**. The PI will have the opportunity to review the final version of the proposal before confirming that it is ready to submit.

Contingent review:

Research grant proposals that are routed for URA review **less than 5 business days prior to the sponsor's deadline** receive a contingent review. A contingent review will largely focus on ensuring the proposal meets institutional requirements; the Principal Investigator will be responsible for ensuring the proposal meets sponsor requirements.

Submission Policy

Principal Investigators must send all final proposal materials to the Research Development team/unit pre-award administrator by 3PM Central Time, one business day prior to the proposal due date. Materials received after that time may not be submitted to the sponsor.

Faculty Salary Support

In a research proposal, the University requires that at least one PI has some committed effort in the form of salary support. This effort can be provided at any time within the fiscal year: summer months, academic year, or both.

Summer research:

The Division anticipates that faculty members conduct much of their research activity during the summer quarter (July-September). Grant-funded summer research may include up to **2.5 months'** additional compensation from grant funds, commensurate with the effort committed. Compensation over 2.5 months' salary (up to 3 months) is only allowed with prior approval from the Dean.

Academic-year research:

All faculty members have discretion to dedicate effort toward their research program during the 9-month academic year (October-June). As it is difficult to segregate academic year grant-funded research from the PI's other areas of research, SSD will only approve [voluntary cost-sharing](#) if required by the funding agency.

During the academic year, SSD expects a faculty member's extramurally-funded research activities will be managed in balance with departmental and other University responsibilities. When allowable in accordance with the sponsor's policies, a PI may budget **up to three months** of her/his base academic year salary and

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benefits on a grant; in such cases, the Division will provide the PI with **new discretionary research funds** in an amount equivalent to fifty percent (50%) of the academic-year salary relief (not including benefits) provided by the grant. This research funding is provided in the following fiscal year.

Course Buyouts: A PI may buyout a limited amount of teaching responsibilities using grant funds in cases where the research agenda demands more effort than can be managed in balance with full teaching responsibilities. The PI must consult with his/her chair and request approval of the buyout from the Dean. Requests are reviewed by the Dean of the Division of the Social Sciences and the Master of the Social Science Collegiate Division. The request must describe measures the faculty member will take to maintain advising responsibilities to his/her students, as well as measures the department will take to meet its curricular and governance needs. Generally, course buyouts are **limited to one per year**, although in select cases approval may be granted for two course buyouts in a single academic year.

The cost for course buyouts are 12.5% base salary/benefits for a one-course buyout and 37.5% base salary/benefits for a two-course buyout¹

Note that academic-year salary buyout and course buyout may be combined; however, they are discrete – **grant funds used for course buyout are not eligible for 50% return of salary relief.**

Indirect Costs

Research funded by external sponsors typically includes Facilities and Administrative costs (referred to as “Indirect costs,” or IDCs). Indirect costs are not directly attributable to a specific sponsored research project but are essential for research and training (ex. costs associated with building operations, utilities, and administrative services). Indirect costs are calculated as a percent of a project’s total direct costs according to [rates negotiated by University Research Administration](#).

The Division of the Social Sciences does not share or return any portion of IDCs to investigators except in very rare cases when an enduring large-scale research enterprise requires specialized facilities and/or administrative support.

Collaborative research:

When a research project led by a faculty member with primary academic appointment in SSD benefits from facilities and/or administrative resources outside the Division, or is co-led with investigators in another Division/School, arrangements must be made to identify the responsibilities of each institutional partner and ensure an equitable assignment of IDC revenue.

Internal Collaborations: In the case of collaboration with University of Chicago investigators outside of the Division, these arrangements should be completed in advance of grant application. However, in the interest of meeting application deadlines on short-notice opportunities, an IDC-sharing agreement may also be negotiated following receipt of a grant award notice. **IDC-sharing arrangements must be agreed to by all parties before spending begins on a grant-funded project.**

In certain cases, the depth and frequency of SSD collaboration with other University and external partners is sufficient to merit negotiation of blanket IDC-sharing agreements; SSD currently has standing agreements governing SSD faculty members’ sponsored research activities with BFI, RISC, NORC, and Urban Labs.

¹ For faculty on a three-course teaching plan: 16.7% salary/benefits for a one-course buyout and 49.7% salary/benefits for a two-course buyout).

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External Collaborations: In the case of a research project with another university or research institution, the non-lead institution will complete a subaward agreement prior to the agency deadline. The agreement, specifying the work scope and budget (including IDCs) of the collaborating institution, will be signed by the Authorized Institutional Official.

Joint Appointments: Faculty members with joint appointments that cross Divisional lines should negotiate with their cognizant Deans prior to submitting any proposal for sponsored research, so that responsibility for facilities and administrative support and assignment of IDCs may be agreed to in advance.

Research for external organizations:

Faculty members have opportunities to participate in outside professional and commercial activities (compensated or uncompensated), subject to the University's [Conflict of Interest Policy](#). Provided the faculty member discloses the activity and receives prior approval from their chair and dean, these arrangements may be allowable in the following forms:

1. **Independent consulting agreement:** When the faculty member is providing limited subject matter expertise, no other University resources are involved in the activity (beyond the faculty member's effort), and the engagement is short-term (within the allowable limits under the University's [conflict of commitment policy](#)), the faculty member may enter into an independent consulting agreement directly with the sponsor. Note that faculty members are [required to disclose](#) all consulting activities before work begins.
2. **Inter-institutional Personnel Agreement or Salary Reimbursement:** If the work exceeds the allowable consulting days, the work may proceed under an agreement such as an Inter-institutional Personnel Agreement or Salary Reimbursement.
3. **Official contractual agreement:** When the contributions of a faculty member amount to intellectual leadership, or any time other University resources are involved (facilities, technicians, data management, student research assistance, administrative support, etc.), an official contractual agreement (subaward or grant agreement) must be filed between the funding party and the University.

Disclosure Policy

The University requires faculty to [disclose](#) significant outside financial interests (including from foreign governments, universities, and institutions). Faculty must disclose the following:

- All significant financial interests and sponsored travel (as defined in the University's [Conflict of Interest Policy](#)) to the University.
- All other appointments, academic or professional, paid or unpaid.
- All other support received for research activities (even if outside of your appointment period) including: (1) other grants or funding, (2) "in-kind" support, including paid or unpaid personnel and visiting researchers/scholars, and (3) use of lab space, facilities, and equipment.
- All foreign components, including: (1) collaborations with foreign investigators (e.g., potential co-authors), (2) use of laboratory space or equipment in a foreign country, and (3) receipt of financial support from a foreign entity or institution.

The SSD Research Development Team, together with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, can advise faculty on research for external organizations, including compliance with the University's [Conflict of Interest / Conflict of Commitment policy](#).

Fellowships

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Fellowships are awarded to faculty to enable advancement of a research agenda, typically in the form of a sustained period of research free from other commitments and often associated with a residency requirement. Unlike research grants, acceptance of a fellowship generally requires that the recipient take a leave of absence under the Division's [Research Leave policy](#). Faculty should discuss eligibility and terms with the Dean's office prior to fellowship applications if there is doubt about the leave of absence requirement.