

The University of Chicago Doctoral Funding and Program Support Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

General

What is the new framework?

The framework is a new approach to funding and supporting PhD education at the University of Chicago. Once fully implemented, it guarantees that PhD students in good academic standing in the Divinity School, the Division of the Humanities, the Division of the Social Sciences, and the School of Social Service Administration will receive funding for the duration of their programs. For students who matriculated in Summer 2016 or later, this new funding model replaces the Graduate Aid Initiative (GAI). Students that matriculated earlier will be eligible for additional support such as dissertation completion fellowships.

The framework also includes new academic and career support for students in all PhD programs (including those not currently funded by the GAI) and mentoring resources for faculty and students across the University.

Why is the University launching this new framework?

Our goals are to provide comprehensive financial, academic, and career support for PhD students and ensure divisions, schools, departments, and programs have the necessary resources and flexibility to achieve their academic goals. Doctoral students are essential members of the University's intellectual community, and this initiative demonstrates the University's continued commitment to the next generation of field-defining scholars.

How does the new framework address the recommendations from the Committee on Graduate Education report?

The Committee on Graduate Education's report called for a "holistic approach" to addressing challenges facing doctoral education, especially long time to degree and late attrition. Over the past seven months, faculty, graduate students, and administrators have been working together on many of the report's specific recommendations. The new framework aims to take up the report's recommendations related to financial security for students, appropriate pedagogical training, strengthening faculty mentoring, and actively preparing students for careers in academia, industry, nonprofits, and government.

In particular, the Committee noted that while the previous funding model, the Graduate Aid Initiative (GAI), provided critical funding, it did not succeed in shortening time to degree or reducing late attrition. The committee suggested one way to address these issues is to "fix the overall size of a program's graduate population" (p. 83), which the new framework does.

When will the new funding model start?

Full implementation will be in academic year 2022-2023. The new model will be phased in over two years prior to that, beginning in the 2020-21 academic year (AY21).

Over the course of the current academic year (AY20), schools, divisions, and departments will determine how best to implement the new model within their programs. Over AY21 and AY22, programs will transition to



the new total program size by focusing on helping students who matriculated before Summer 2016 to finish their degrees. The goal is for all participating units to be at their total enrollment size with all students receiving the guaranteed stipend level by the 2022-23 academic year (AY23).

Who will be eligible for the new funding model?

Eligibility will depend on the school or division where a student is enrolled and when a student first matriculated. The new funding model will replace the current Graduate Aid Initiative (GAI) and provide funding for students in the Division of the Humanities, the Division of the Social Sciences, the School of Social Service Administration, and the Divinity School -- the schools and divisions that are currently funded through the GAI.

Students in those divisions and schools who entered their PhD program in Summer 2016 or later and who are still enrolled in AY23 will be fully incorporated into the new funding model that year and will receive at least the guaranteed stipend level (subject to applicable taxes), full tuition coverage, and fully paid health insurance premiums for the duration of their program, as long as they remain in good academic standing. Students who matriculated before Summer 2016 will receive at least the funding they were offered at the time of admission and may be eligible for additional funding, such as dissertation completion fellowships. Over the past several years, the schools and divisions have increased investments in post-GAI funding to support students in degree completion. During the transition years of AY21 and AY22, we intend to offer expanded levels of this support toward degree completion.

What are the primary changes from the current Graduate Aid Initiative (GAI) model?

Element	GAI	New Model
Duration of Stipend, Tuition and Health Insurance Funding	Stipend for 5 years (6 in some units); health insurance premiums up to 7 years; full tuition for 5 years and highly subsidized tuition beyond year 5	Stipend, full tuition, and health insurance premium funding for the duration of the PhD program
Teaching Expectations	Students must generally earn 5 points through various teaching experiences	Teaching requirements will vary by program and will be structured as mentored teaching opportunities
Annual Funding Amount	Could vary depending on the timing of teaching experiences	Funding will always be at least the guaranteed level, subject to applicable taxes
Registration Cap	Depending on matriculation date, students have either 9 or 12 years to be registered (or fewer years depending on the program).	No change
Total Program Size	N/A	Each participating school and division will have a set maximum number of students enrolled across all PhD programs

What does “total program size” mean?

Total program size refers to the number of PhD students who can be enrolled in a school or division participating in the new funding model in any given year. It is set at the school or division level, not at the level of individual programs, and programs will vary in size. The initial program size model was determined by the Office of the Provost in consultation with the deans. Moving forward, program size will be evaluated in collaboration with the deans on an annual basis.

Who should I contact if I have additional questions about the new model?

Students should contact their Deans of Students, who will provide additional information and answer questions about specific circumstances. Faculty may contact their department chairs or Dean’s Office, and staff may contact staff in the Dean’s Office or in the Office of the Provost.

Total Program Size

Does a total program size model mean that the PhD programs are shrinking?

Overall, we expect a decrease in the total number of doctoral students once the framework is fully implemented. The goal behind a total size model is to have programs that are able to provide funding and appropriate faculty mentoring for each student for the duration of their program.

Pedagogy & Student Teaching

How does teaching impact the guaranteed funding amount?

It doesn’t. In the new framework, pedagogical training, including teaching, is a degree requirement. It does not change the gross annual guaranteed stipend amount students receive.

What is a mentored teaching experience?

Mentored teaching experiences feature tailored pedagogical training plans and faculty engagement.

All teaching experiences (e.g., TA/CAsheps, writing internships, graders, graduate student lectureships) will be designed with pedagogical training goals in mind. As such, teaching expectations by program may contain most or all of the following elements: (1) a departmental statement of teaching expectations; (2) a pedagogical training course that can be developed separately or jointly by departments, divisions, schools, the College, or in conjunction with the Chicago Center for Teaching; (3) a mentoring plan associated with the teaching experience; and (4) regularized feedback and supervision by faculty or other academic appointees.

How many mentored teaching experiences do students have to complete?

Mentored teaching experiences will be degree requirements and, like other degree requirements, will be determined and set by the faculty who oversee each particular PhD program, with exact requirements varying by field and discipline. Each department or unit will create a teaching statement outlining the importance of pedagogy to the particular discipline and determine the type and number of mentored teaching experiences required to achieve its pedagogical goals.

Student Funding

Will every student be funded at the guaranteed funding level?

Students in the Divinity School, Division of the Humanities, the Division of the Social Sciences, and the School of Social Service Administration who entered their PhD program in Summer 2016 or later and are in good academic standing will be fully incorporated into the new funding model and will receive at least the guaranteed stipend level for the duration of their program, along with full tuition coverage and fully paid health insurance premiums. Students who matriculated prior to Summer 2016 will receive at least the funding that was offered at the time of their admission and may be eligible for additional funding, such as dissertation completion fellowships. Over the past three years, the schools and divisions have increased investments in post-GAI funding to support students in finishing their dissertation and graduating; during the transition years of 2020-21 and 2021-22 we intend to offer expanded levels of this support toward degree completion.

How much is the “guaranteed stipend level”?

The guaranteed stipend level for next year (2020-21) has not yet been determined, but will not be less than \$31,000, which is the total funding support for the current year.

Does the guaranteed funding include 100% coverage for tuition?

Yes. Students in the Divinity School, Division of the Humanities, the Division of the Social Sciences, and the School of Social Service Administration in good academic standing who entered their PhD program in Summer 2016 or later will be guaranteed to receive full tuition coverage for the duration of their program, in addition to the stipend and fully paid health insurance premiums.

Who is eligible for additional funding to complete their dissertation and program? What are the details and conditions of that additional funding?

Each school and division will determine how and the extent to which they can provide additional support to students who began their programs before Summer 2016. Please talk with your Dean of Students to understand what options may be available to you.

Do students still have to pay the student services fee?

The new model doesn't change existing school or divisional policy related to the student services fee. If students were required to pay it previously, that will remain the case.

Will the guaranteed stipend amount ever change?

GAI stipends have increased regularly. Under the new funding model, the goal will remain to provide regular increases to the guaranteed stipend amount; as under the GAI, however, any increase will be dependent on the overall University budget and determined annually.

Is any of the funding taxable under the new framework?

Nothing has changed related to tax law. As has always been the case, students are responsible for filing and paying any required state or federal taxes. We suggest students consult with a tax advisor who can provide specific advice for individual situations.

Time to Degree

Are students required to graduate in a specific time frame (e.g., 6 years)?

The new framework doesn't change previous registration rules. Individual schools and divisions continue to set registration limits for their programs.

Can students still complete the dissertation and receive the degree after they have been withdrawn from the program after having reached the maximum length of registration?

The new framework does not change existing policies on length of registration. Currently, students who are in candidacy when they reach the maximum years of registration are eligible to petition to defend a completed dissertation and graduate if successful.

Programmatic Support

Who is eligible for UChicago Launch?

UChicago Launch is specifically designed for students who are exiting a PhD program before completing the degree, or those who have earned a PhD and are interested in a career in industry, nonprofits, or government. UChicago Launch is open to PhD students from any program on campus.

What benefits or resources does UChicago Launch provide?

UChicago Launch will provide sessions of general career education, including industry overviews, micro-internships, job counseling, and interview skills. In addition, students will receive a summer stipend in connection with an internship opportunity.

When does UChicago Launch start?

UChicago Launch will begin with a limited pilot in Summer 2020, with a goal of scaling up to support all eligible PhD students by Summer 2021.

How do students sign up for UChicago Launch?

Students must notify UChicago Launch by February 15 if they would like to participate in UChicago Launch that summer.

What resources will be available for faculty around mentoring?

Vice Provost Melissa Gilliam is working on implementing a new model of mentoring. Tools and resources will be made available for all faculty to support students in making sufficient progress toward degree completion. Additional resources will be developed for students, as well.

A variety of resources will be developed including downloadable guides and handouts, in-person seminars and workshops, and other tools.

What resources will be available to help recruit a diverse doctoral student body?

UChicagoGRAD will partner with departments and schools to launch new programs designed to maximize our ability to recruit, yield, and retain the best students from around the world. These efforts include two new pilot programs to reduce out-of-pocket costs for campus visits and offer need-based funding for students relocating to Chicago. Also, UChicagoGRAD will hire current PhD students to serve as department Program Admissions Assistants who can provide field-specific information to prospective students from diverse backgrounds. In addition, in Spring 2020 we will launch an innovation fund. Programs, schools and divisions will be able to submit a proposal seeking funding for innovative ideas to develop best-in-class recruitment and yield initiatives.