2023 Application Fee Policy: Waivers, Refunds, and Levels
Effective August 1, 2023

For the 2024 admissions cycle, all centrally supported graduate applications will adopt standard fee levels and waiver and refund criteria. The fee waiver policy and categories will be implemented via a standardized fee waiver request form as part of the annual application review and revision process. Application fees are non-refundable and will be processed either by Graduate Admissions or eTech in the limited cases in which they are allowed. Programs or units which have altered their application fees from the levels previously set will return to those levels for the upcoming cycle. (See p. 4 for details regarding refund criteria and application fee levels.)

The new fee waiver request form is modelled on a previous standardized form, including the reintroduction of clear itemization of the categories of eligibility, and the separation of the fee waiver process from the application itself. Details of the eligibility categories are included below. The fee waiver request form will be available to applicants in their status portal after submitting their application. They may choose from a list of waiver categories available based on the program they are applying to and, if applicable, any other criteria, although most categories should not be subject to any additional limitations (e.g. citizenship). They will be prompted to provide documentation of their eligibility for the category of waiver they are requesting.

A few categories will include waiver automation, which will be regularly reviewed by Graduate Admissions to ensure that the documentation meets the requirements, and the waiver removed if the applicant was ineligible. Several categories will trigger emails to Graduate Admissions, as several units' requests already do, and the submissions will be reviewed and approved or denied. Any question or logic element that was added to the applications for the purposes of triggering or applying fee waivers has been removed, so that the application itself collects data points for tracking and analysis, while the waiver request form tracks the waiver categories and the basis on which each one is granted (or denied).

- UChicago degree program student or alumnus (optional; if used, no citizenship criteria)
  a. Applicants who have received or expect to receive a degree from UChicago.
      i. Eliminates waiver for anyone who has been here in other capacities.
      ii. Application Information page will still collect some data on prior applications or enrollment, which is used for fixing records caught in suspend. Anything that triggered a waiver there is removed.
  b. **Process**: Select school or division, enter degree program, date degree earned or expected, and upload copy of your transcript. Approval will be automated and audited.
- Current/recent participants in a qualifying program (some required, others optional; no citizenship criteria):
  a. This category is different than the Affiliated Programs prompt and list (new field).
      i. Affiliated Programs will remain on the application for applicant pool background data collection and analysis.
      ii. The new prompt is specific to the waiver request form, and so can/will have a different set of programs listed by unit beyond the central ones.
      iii. Application Information page changes:
          1. Y/N prompts that were for waivers are deactivated, and those programs moved to Affiliated Programs for data collection purposes (McNair, military).
          2. Other Y/N (Pell, FG) can stay here or move to the new Personal page.

iv. University-wide: UChicago is an institutional member of or participating site for certain programs and offers fee waivers to eligible participants: IRT, MMUF, and Leadership Alliance are specific examples.
1. Others will be unit-specific: Teach for America, PREP, PPIA, etc.
2. This category may include unique/specific but documentable program participations in non-degree programs, i.e., non-degree feeder programs like DPSS or SISRM.
3. Some centrally managed partnerships or outreach efforts, or programs which may not have documentable participation (e.g., SACNAS conference attendees, GEM fellowship applicant search) will be managed under the Waiver Codes category.
b. **Process**: Select a program, upload documentation. Approval will be automated and audited.
- Current undergraduates receiving need-based financial aid from a U.S. institution (optional; if used, no citizenship criteria)
a. Limited to U.S. institutions, and currently enrolled undergraduates.
b. **Process**: Confirm that the criterion applies to you and upload a document; notification to and approval by GRAD (verification that it is current undergrad, U.S. institution, and the attachment is an aid award or SAR).
- Valid fee waiver codes received from an authorized representative of the University of Chicago (some required, others optional; when used, no citizenship criteria):
a. Codes must be approved for use before distribution or they will not be honored.
i. The original (centralized) fee waiver process – particularly the use of codes - was designed to support specific recruitment efforts/initiatives, all of which were managed by the University's DEI recruiter and Graduate Admissions. For 2023-2024 (ET2024), we will not scale back to the original version of this process but will evaluate after this cycle and continue to tailor our approach to this category.
b. Centrally offered waivers (Graduate Admissions, GRAD Diversity Outreach Coordinator):
i. The following should be University-wide, as we are members of the consortia which they relate to:
1. Search-based: GEM (paid member), NNE (via CGS), McNair (via CGS), and occasionally attendees at large events such as SACNAS, California Forum on Diversity, etc.
2. Other: BTAA (member; may add restrictions), IRT (paid member; also category B), codes related to event RMIs from programs like Leadership Alliance, Ivy+ events.
ii. The following are strongly recommended, as we recruit at these events as "the University of Chicago" in the Provost's Office: McNair events, other pre-approved codes distributed by UChicagoGRAD's DEI team.
iii. GRAD (Admissions/DEI) will never distribute codes without an RMI (event, search, etc.), and only via email. Anyone with a code is an Inquiry who should have fed over to the unit and should have a verifiable interaction in AG.
1. We only distribute codes in specific contexts – not for all events, activities, interactions, or searches. RMIs from most grad school fairs, GRE search conversions, tour attendees, webinar attendees, virtual appointments, etc. do *not* receive fee waiver codes.

2. Codes we distribute are sent later in a follow-up email (event RMIs) or as part of a post-event email differentiated by attendance recorded in Slate (no-shows do not receive codes).

c. Requesting codes for local use:

    i. Please request codes or approval for a code well in advance of your event or campaign. Unapproved codes will not be honored, though applicants may submit a request under a different category.

    ii. In planning your code usage, and in requesting them, please use some of these criteria to evaluate which events, campaigns, or organizations specifically should qualify for a waiver code.

        1. Why are you uniquely interested in this group of attendees or inquiries?

        2. Is the interaction attractive to applicants for the benefit they receive, such as attending an application how-to workshop?

        3. If the fee waiver offer is designed as an incentive to collect their contact information (RMI), do you also offer other incentives, such as signing up to receive specific application tips or graduate school preparation strategies?

        4. Would students still attend the event or provide their information (e.g., by registering for the tour) even if not offered a waiver?

        5. How many attendees, RMIs, registrants, etc. has this event or activity had historically?

        6. Did most of them fall into key target audiences or populations for your applicant pool development?

        7. Was conversion from the activity unusually high or low, and the intention is to maintain or grow it, or is there another reason a code will improve attendance or data collection?

    iii. Unique codes will be generated by UChicagoGRAD and assigned to each event, activity, or category of interaction.

        1. Fee waiver code tracking will no longer be through an open-access spreadsheet.

d. **Process**: Requests for code-based waivers will be processed by Graduate Admissions.

- Financial Hardship (optional; may apply restrictions over and above the central policy, e.g., to be granted only if the applicant is FAFSA-eligible, only available to applicants to PhD programs, etc.):

a. Central criteria: Applicants must submit a written statement explaining their financial hardship and explaining their plans for funding their program. Depending on whether the unit has placed additional restrictions or not, the criteria will be:

    i. Applicants to **doctoral programs** may be approved for waivers with a submitted statement that includes an explanation of a plan robust enough to support, at minimum, the expenses involved in beginning a graduate program which will not provide any funding until after the start of Autumn Quarter.

    ii. Applicants to **master's programs** may be approved for waivers with a submitted statement that includes information about their plans to fund their education which indicates a clear understanding of the costs involved and, except in rare instances, does not include a reliance on receiving an unrealistic amount of funding from the program itself. International applicants must indicate some source of funding and/or plan to apply for identified sources of funding for consideration.

b. **Process**: Graduate Admissions will process.

- Approved unit- or program-specific criteria (optional; most should not have citizenship criteria):
    a. Examples of criteria that you might include here are: MSI graduates; current UChicago employees applying to certain programs.
    b. **Process**: Units or Graduate Admissions (for units who channel all waiver requests through us) will approve after ensuring the applicant meets the criteria.

Refunds: Application fees are non-refundable.
- Only fees charged in error, or paid more than once, will be refunded
- Units should direct requests for refunds to either gradadmissions@uchicago.edu or slatehelp@lists.uchicago.edu; Graduate Admissions will process refunds in Stripe, and eTech will process refunds in CashNet
- Units may not offer, promise, process, or request refunds outside of these parameters

Withdrawal of an application, submission of multiple applications to the same program, failure of the program to render a timely decision, or later granting of a fee waiver request are <u>not</u> valid reasons for a refund. This includes applicants eligible for a fee waiver who pay the fee prior to submitting a fee waiver request, or who pay the fee without waiting for their request to be processed.

Application fee amounts: The University of Chicago's 9 centrally supported graduate units have two application fee levels. The application fee for the Divisions and PME is $90. The application fee for the other Schools – Divinity, Crown, Graham/UCPE, and Harris – is $75, unless they choose to adopt the $90 level for one or more programs.