

Principal Investigator (PI) Eligibility Policy

Policy

Chapman must consider an individual to be Principal Investigator (PI) eligible based on the criteria below before they may lead a sponsored project, Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), or Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) study. This Policy sets forth the eligibility requirements for a PI at Chapman University (CU). This Policy also describes the processes for requesting and approving exceptions to the PI eligibility requirements.

Definition of Principal Investigator

A Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for the intellectual direction, design, scientific or technical conduct, administrative conduct, fiscal management, and reporting of a research, training, or public service project. In short, the PI is responsible for all aspects of a project. As such, the University recognizes one individual as the PI, and they must personally participate in the project to a significant degree and provide oversight on project activities. In addition, all PIs must follow the responsibilities set forth by the sponsor and the University when managing sponsored projects or performing work overseen by regulatory compliance committees.

Who can be a Principal Investigator?

- Faculty with Full-time (>30 hours) status, including tenure track, tenured, research, and clinical.
- Senior Leadership (e.g., Vice Presidents)
- Librarians, Associate Librarians, Assistant Librarians
- Provost
- Academic Professionals in the Research Scientist series (Sr. Research Scientist, Research Scientist)

Who can be a Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI)?

Persons eligible for designation as PI are also eligible to be designated as Co-PIs. Although the PI may delegate fiscal or administrative aspects of the project to a Co-PI or Co-I, the PI still bears primary responsibility for the project.

Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Scholars

Grants and Fellowship – Graduate students and postdoctoral associates may be named as the PI on external fellowship or traineeship applications for their support, with the approval of the Faculty Advisor and Dean. In such cases, the University may continue to name the Faculty Advisor on internal records. Colleges/schools should define their process for approving such requests. Electronic grant submissions routed to the Office of Research (e.g., through Cayuse) will be considered approved by the Dean. Criteria for requesting approval for other University personnel are described below. In the event of an apparent conflict between the policies of the University and the funding agency, the more restrictive policy shall be followed.

Studies Involving Human or Animal Subjects – Graduate students performing studies in a class or working on their dissertation project and postdoctoral scholars leading projects involving human or animal subjects may submit studies for their independent work with the approval of their Faculty Advisor and Dean to the IRB or IACUC. In such cases, the faculty advisor will be asked to accept responsibility for the mentee's research and further attest that they are fully aware of all the procedures to be followed, will monitor the study, and will notify the relevant committee of any significant problems or changes. Colleges/schools should define their process for such requests. Electronic study submissions routed to the Office of Research (e.g., through Cayuse) will be considered approved by the Dean. The IACUC and IRB encourage the faculty advisor to at least list undergraduate and graduate students and postdoctoral scholars as Co-Is on projects they lead wherever possible so they can learn the responsibilities and receive the appropriate credit for their work.

Who Needs to Request Approval for Principal Investigator Status?

The following individuals may request approval for PI status:

- Faculty with visiting appointments of less than the term of the grant if awarded.
- Faculty with Emeritus status.
- Presidential Fellows.
- All other full-time administrators.
- Affiliated Scholars with non-employee positions on courtesy appointments.
- Faculty with full-time positions who are identified as instructional faculty.
- Appointees salaried at less than full-time status, including part-time lecturers.
- Postdoctoral scholars and graduate students (except as described above).
- Research Associates.

Appointments That Are Non-Eligible for PI Status

- Others with University visitor appointments.
- Non-Chapman personnel.
- Graduate Students (except as described above).
- Research Assistants (except as described above).
- Undergraduate Students (except as described above).

How to Request an Exception for PI Status?

The individual must have the necessary experience and independence to compete for their sponsored program and to administer the project. In addition, they must have previous experience with similar research projects and the ability to comply with all the requirements of the award or project. Individuals must also have access to the appropriate personnel, facilities, and other resources to carry out the project. Requests for exceptions for such individuals must be approved by the Vice President for Research & Graduate Education upon the recommendation of the individual's Dean, Director, Provost, or Vice President before they may serve in the PI role.

To request an exception to the PI policy, a formal request must be made to the Office of Research and Graduate Education through [Formstack](#) at least 21 business days before the proposal deadline and include the following:

- Current Curriculum Vitae
- A copy of their Appointment Term or Faculty Contract
- Summary Statement of the proposed project, including funding agency and program
- Recommendation of Dean, Director, Provost, or Vice President. Recommenders should carefully consider whether the PI requesting an exception has the ability and experience necessary to administer the project if the exception is approved. If department or college/school resources are needed, assurance must be given that the necessary space or other resources will be provided or made available for the entire length of the project.

Revision History:

November 2023 – Reorganized the sections addressing eligibility for postdoctoral scholars and graduate students under a new heading.

September 2023 – Revised to permit graduate students and postdoctoral associates to be named as PIs on IACUC, IRB, and IBC studies, with their Faculty Advisors and Dean’s approval. Permits graduate students and postdoctoral associates to be named as PI on grant applications for fellowships or traineeships, with the approvals of their Faculty Advisors and Deans. Sets a time limit for PI requests for exceptions three weeks before the proposal deadline. Clarified that limited-term administrators may be PI with the Dean's approval. In addition, Deans or Provost must approve the PI status for Emeritus faculty and Presidential Fellows.

December 2016 – Original policy date