

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS AND PROCEDURE OVERVIEW FOR OBSERVERS & TRAINEES (OTVS)

DEFINITIONS

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) welcomes visiting colleagues and students from across the United States and around the world for research and educational collaboration, observation, and study.

A **Visitor** is an individual who, though **uncompensated by UTHealth**, may be given access to UTHealth property, facilities and/or information systems, at the discretion of UTHealth, for a specific period of time for collaborative or educational purposes. Visitors may not perform any patient care. Visitors are **not considered employees and are not entitled to wages or benefits**. There are five categories of Visitors to UTHealth: Guest, Observer, Pre-Baccalaureate Trainee, Professional Trainee, and Visiting Student Trainee.

- A **Guest** is a Visitor who is at UTHealth **for a short term** (generally less than one week) and a **specific event** (e.g., serving as a guest lecturer, site visitor or similar event) at the invitation of UTHealth. The intake and supervision of Guests is a school responsibility. Schools are not required to submit an application to the UTHealth administration for Guests. Guests may **not** be issued an access badge and must be escorted by UTHealth employees while on campus. The host department should inform the guest of possible exposure risks, protective measures, and personal responsibility for any costs of needed healthcare.

To apply for one of the following Visitor categories, the Applicant must first identify a Faculty Sponsor at UTHealth. The Applicant and Faculty Sponsor must complete this Application, receive departmental and school approvals, and submit it to the UTHealth administration for review and approval:

- An **Observer** is a Visitor who observes UTHealth operations for educational purposes. The observer's experience is strictly to watch, listen and learn. Observers may not provide clinical care and may not participate in or perform research, data collection or other hands-on activities. The duration of the observation period is limited to no more than two months in any one department/division. Observers may observe in up to three different divisions/departments, for a cap of six months in any five-year period. A non-refundable \$750 USD (\$775 USD if paid by wire transfer) application processing fee is required for a foreign* Observer.
- A **Pre-Baccalaureate Trainee** is a Visitor who is a high school or undergraduate student seeking non-clinical hands-on training at UTHealth. The main purpose of the training is to learn how to conduct research, data collection, and participate in other non-clinical hands-on activities, appropriate to their educational qualifications. Pre-Baccalaureate Trainees may observe clinical practices but *cannot* provide patient care or have any type of direct patient contact (i.e., taking patient history, etc.). The duration of training is limited to no more than four months in any one division/department. Pre-Baccalaureate Trainees may train in up to three different divisions/departments, for a cap of twelve months in any five-year period.
- A **Professional Trainee** is a Visitor who holds an undergraduate or higher degree and is seeking additional non-clinical hands-on training. The Professional Trainees' experience is mainly to receive specific training in research and health education, appropriate to their educational qualifications, such as to learn how to conduct research, data collection, and participate in other non-clinical hands-on

activities. Professional Trainees may observe clinical practices but cannot provide patient care or have any type of direct patient contact (i.e., taking patient history, etc.). The duration of training is limited to no more than four months in any one division/department. Professional Trainees may train in up to three different divisions/departments, for a cap of twelve months in any five-year period. A copy of the applicant's diploma (highest degree) must be submitted with the application. A non-refundable \$750 USD (\$775 USD if paid by wire transfer) application processing fee is required for a foreign Professional Trainee.

- A **Visiting Student Trainee** is a Visitor who is currently enrolled in an undergraduate, graduate, or professional degree program at another institution of higher education while seeking non-clinical hands-on training at UTHealth, *and who is not registered and enrolled in an official course at UTHealth. The training at UTHealth must fulfill an educational requirement of the program in which the visiting student trainee is enrolled.* The main purpose of the training is to learn how to conduct research, data collection, and participate in other non-clinical hands-on activities. Visiting Student Trainees may observe clinical practices but *cannot* provide patient care or have any type of direct patient contact (i.e., taking patient history, etc.). A letter from the applicant's home institution confirming the applicant's enrollment, good standing, and educational requirement must be submitted with the application. An Agreement may be required before the visit can begin. UTHealth will make this determination during the application review process and will advise if required. The duration of training is limited to no more than one year in any one department/division.

* *"Foreign nationals" in this document refers to individuals who are not U.S. citizens or U.S. permanent residents.*

In addition, please note:

- UTHealth conducts security background checks on all applicants.
- Approval of this application is at the discretion of the Executive Vice President & Chief Academic Officer (EVPCAO) of UTHealth. A Visitor in any of the above categories may not begin their visit at UTHealth until the application is approved by the Office of the EVPCAO, and all intake processes are complete.
- **It is the responsibility of non-U.S. citizens/permanent residents to have a visa appropriate for the visitor category they are applying.**
- Foreign nationals, who are not U.S. citizens or U.S. permanent residents, must **check-in with the UTHealth Office of International Affairs with all original immigration documents to obtain appropriate written clearance to begin appointment.**
- **Applicants must be at least 16 years old on the start date.** Minors (individuals under the age of 18) must submit additional paperwork to be considered, as described in UTHealth's policy on Minors in the Workplace (<https://www.uth.edu/hoop/policy.htm?id=1448176>).
- Any Visitor participating in human subjects or animal research must complete the applicable, required UTHealth training.
- It is mandatory that all applicants submit the appropriate UT Health Form(s) fully completed and signed (with supporting documentation as requested on the form(s), including English translations, if applicable).
- All applicants who will be in a clinical setting and/or have access to patient information/records shall read and acknowledge the "[HIPAA Overview and Information Safeguards](http://www.uth.edu/evpara/otvs)" at: www.uth.edu/evpara/otvs.
- UTHealth schools and departments may charge separate fees to participate in the visitor program.

- *This process does not apply to individuals seeking an official medical elective or to current students who are enrolled through the Registrar of UTHealth.*
- ***For Visiting Scientist:*** please visit the following website for the procedure and applications related to Visiting Scientist appointments: www.uth.edu/evpara/vsc/index.htm

IMPORTANT NOTICE – Application Fees for foreign Observers and foreign Professional

Trainees:

- A processing fee of \$750 USD (if paid by money order) or \$775 USD (if paid by wire transfer) per application will be required to all foreign Observers and foreign Professional Trainees.
- This fee is non-refundable and non-transferable.
- The fee must be paid with the application to process the application. It can be paid using a money order drawn on a U.S. bank and made payable to “UTHSC-H.” Wire transfers can be done upon request; please contact the administrative coordinator for your Faculty Sponsor to receive the instructions. Applicants shall be responsible for payment of any wire transfer’s fees.

WHY THIS APPLICATION PROCEDURE IS IMPORTANT

The purpose of the *Application for Observe and Trainee (OTVS)* is twofold – 1) to collect information which allows UTHealth to evaluate the Applicant’s suitability for the association and comply with applicable regulations; 2) to provide clarity regarding each party’s rights and responsibilities. The application includes clauses that notify the Applicant about UTHealth and UT System policies and local, state, and federal laws which govern their visit to UTHealth. By signing the application, the Applicant agrees to abide by these policies. The application also advises Faculty Sponsors and their supervisors of their responsibilities to adequately monitor and oversee their Applicants’ activities and ensure compliance with these policies, regulations, and laws. Such considerations include but are not limited to: the ownership and non-disclosure of intellectual property, completion of safety and/or research training, observance of HIPAA rules, the Arms Export Control Act, U.S. economic sanctions, federal immigration regulations, and the Fair Labor Standards Act.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE – GENERAL

An Applicant may not participate in UTHealth activities unless and until all approvals in the application procedure are obtained and all intake processes are completed, as detailed below.

The Office of the Executive Vice President & Chief Academic Officer (EVPCAO) will review and process applications submitted by the department. Applications with missing information will not be processed until all required documents are received. Applications must be approved by the EVPCAO. At any point in this process, the application may be denied. The Faculty Sponsor will be informed as soon as the decision is made. All parties should allow at least eight to twelve weeks for the application process (which begins when the Faculty Sponsor submits a complete application – Step 7 in Application Procedure below). Please note foreign nationals should allow additional time to accommodate visa processing.

Applicants may not perform patient care. Applicants are not considered employees and are not entitled to wages or benefits. Applicants are not authorized to have business cards or to be issued property such as pagers, cell phones, and laptop computers or any other privileges normally associated with being an employee such as reimbursement for travel to attend conferences.

Depending on the nature, scope, and duration of the visit, the Applicant and his/her home institution may be required to sign an additional agreement (e.g., institutional affiliation agreement, program agreement, visiting student agreement, etc.) with UTHealth before the visit begins. The Office of the EVPCAO and the Office of Legal Affairs will determine when additional agreements are necessary.

The following individuals are not covered under this process:

- Visiting Students who are enrolled in a UTHealth course or educational program through the Registrar or the Office of Students Affairs at McGovern Medical School (elective)
- Individuals paid by UTHealth for their work (e.g., employees, contractors, etc.)
- Individuals with faculty appointments at UTHealth
- Postdoctoral Fellows (for application procedures: Office of Postdoctoral Affairs at 713-500-6612)
- Volunteers (defined as individuals who perform services at the university for charitable and civic purposes which augment the work of the faculty and staff but which are part-time, sporadic, non-essential and non-critical to the operations of the university and do not require special technical, research, or health care skills or abilities. Contact Human Resources at 713-500-3130 for application procedures.)

APPLICATION PROCEDURE - STEP BY STEP

Steps of the application procedure are:

1. **Applicant** must identify a Faculty Sponsor.
2. **Faculty Sponsor** agrees to host Applicant, provides, to the Applicant, the OTVS application form and indicates which health forms are required.
3. **Applicant** completes the *Applicant Section of the OTVS Application* and submits it to the Faculty Sponsor with supporting documents (as indicated on the application checklist).
Minors (individuals under the age of 18) must also submit additional paperwork to be considered, as described in UTHealth's policy on Minors in the Workplace ([HOOP Policy 164](#)). The Faculty Sponsor will provide this additional paperwork when applicable.
All Applicants **must** read the "[HIPAA Overview and Information Safeguards](#)" (www.uth.edu/evpara/otvs/).
4. **For foreign nationals – Processing fees** *All foreign Observers and Professional Trainees must also include a non-refundable application processing fee of \$750.00 USD paid by money order drawn on a U.S. bank and made payable to UTHSC-H (\$775.00 USD if paid by wire transfer, instructions are available upon request).*
5. **Faculty Sponsor** completes the Department Section of the OTVS Application, plus the one-page *Trainee Plan* only for Pre-Baccalaureate and Professional Trainee Applicants and, if needed, the *Clearance Request for Minors in the Workplace* (for minors). The Faculty Sponsor then obtains the approval of the Department Chair.

6. **Faculty Sponsor or the Department's Administrative Support Contact** submits the application with the appropriate health form(s) to UT Employee Health Clinical Services (EHCS), in a secure way (by fax 713-486-0983 or encrypted email), for review and health clearance. EHCS will contact the department if additional information is required. Once the applicant is cleared, EHCS will send a Health Clearance email to the department. The Administrative Support Contact must forward the Health Clearance email (not the health forms) to the Office of the EVPCAO.
7. **Faculty Sponsor or the Department's Administrative Support Contact** submits the OTVS Application, all supporting documents, health clearance email (the health forms are not to be included) to the Office of the EVPCAO by email (otvs@uth.tmc.edu), as well as the non-refundable application processing fee (if applicable) for processing.
8. **The Office of the EVPCAO** reviews all applications. If the application is incomplete, the Office of the EVPCAO will contact the Faculty Sponsor/Department's Administrative Support Contact, which will delay the process.
9. The Office of EVPCAO forwards the application to **Human Resources (HR)** to initiate a background check.

Applicants, with a Social Security Number, will receive an email from our background check vendor, Pre-Employ (RapidResponse@preemploy.com), with a secure link to enter information such as demographic information and to give consent for the background screen to be completed.

Applicants, without a Social Security Number, will not receive an email from Pre-Employ, as HR will handle the background check directly.

Applicants under the age of 18 years old will receive, from HR, a minor consent form prior to the background check being initiated.

Upon successful completion of the background check, HR signs off on the application and forwards it to the Office of the EVPCAO.
10. The Office of the EVPCAO and the Office of Legal Affairs determine whether a visiting agreement or institutional affiliation agreement will need to be signed between the Applicant, his/her Home Institution, and UTHealth. If an additional agreement is required, the Office of the EVPCAO and the Office of Legal Affairs will draft the agreement and send it to the Faculty Sponsor for forwarding to the Applicant. Please note that additional processing time will be required. (If no additional agreement is required, skip to Step 12).
11. **The Applicant and/or the Applicant's Home Institution** sign any additional agreement and return it to the Faculty Sponsor, who forwards it to the Office of the EVPCAO.
12. **The Office of the EVPCAO** reviews the application. If approved, the EVPCAO signs the application and any additional agreement.
13. **The Office of EVPCAO** notifies the Faculty Sponsor of the application's approval or denial. A scanned copy of the fully approved application is sent to the Faculty Sponsor and appropriate departments.
14. **Foreign nationals: The Office of International Affairs (OIA)** contacts the approved Applicant (and copies Faculty Sponsor) to provide instructional advisory regarding visa options and requirements.

PREPARATION FOR VISIT

For applications approved by the EVPCAO, the following process applies:

1. The sponsoring **Department** sends an Acceptance Letter (following the approved template, providing the approved dates and intake processes instructions) and a copy of the fully signed visiting agreement or affiliation agreement (if applicable) to the Applicant.
2. **Applicant** signs and returns the Acceptance Letter to the sponsored Department.
3. **For foreign nationals: Department** sends a copy of the signed Acceptance Letter and other required documents, as applicable, to OIA. **OIA** assists Applicant with visa arrangements and keeps Department/Faculty Sponsor informed of progress. **Foreign Applicant** schedules an appointment in advance with OIA for visa clearance upon his/her arrival at UTHealth.

INTAKE PROCESSES

Applicants can only start their visit, once the following steps are completed:

1. **The foreign national Visitor** checks in for his/her scheduled appointment with **OIA** (University Center Tower-UCT, 7000 Fannin Street, suite 130), who reviews the Visitor's visa documents. If the visa is in order, OIA sends the OIA Clearance Form electronically to the Department/Faculty Sponsor, Human Resources, and the Office of the EVPCAO. This form is the only acceptable confirmation that OIA has cleared the foreign national's visa status to start his/her visit at UTHealth. If the visa review is unsatisfactory, the start of the visit will be delayed until any issues are resolved. Once OIA visa clearance is complete, the foreign national Visitor can proceed with Step 2.
2. **On the approved start date (for foreign national upon OIA visa clearance), the Visitor must check in with Human Resources** (University Center Tower-UCT, 7000 Fannin Street, suite 150), who verifies the Visitor's identification, and takes a photo for the visitor's UTHealth ID badge.
3. After badge issuance (*and visa clearance for foreign national*), the visit may begin. All Visitors are required to display their UTHealth ID badges to identify themselves and their association with the university at all times while on campus or the premises of university-owned or leased space.

DURING THE VISIT/OBSERVERSHIP

1. The Visitor's activities must be limited to those approved in the application. Observers are permitted only to observe (i.e., "watch and listen"). Trainees are only permitted to do what is outlined and approved in their applications. A Trainee who will be performing human subjects research or handling animals must complete required research training. A Trainee who may be exposed to potentially hazardous materials must complete required safety training. It is both the Applicant's and the Faculty Sponsor's responsibility to ensure that any such trainings are completed promptly.
2. The Visitor's building access must be limited to what is absolutely necessary and approved in the application.
3. Upon completion of the visit, the Faculty Sponsor/department is responsible for ensuring that the Applicant's official end date is observed, collecting the Applicant's UTHealth ID badge, and returning it to Human Resources. It is recommended that each Department have an evaluation system in place to collect input from Visitors about their experiences at UTHealth.

RESOURCES

Contacts at UTHealth:

Human Resources Department (HR) Background checks, minors in the workplace, ID badges https://www.uth.edu/hr/documents/hr-forms.htm	713-500-3130
Office of the Executive Vice President & Chief Academic Officer (EVPCAO) OTVS Application process and review www.uth.edu/evpara/otvs/	713-500-3533 & 713-500-3422 otvs@uth.tmc.edu
Office of International Affairs (OIA) Visa clearance www.uth.edu/international-affairs/	713-500-3176
Office of Legal Affairs Export control issues, agreements	713-500-3268
Office of Research Training requirements, research protocols www.uth.edu/research	
Privacy Office HIPAA Overview and Information Safeguards	713-500-3391
Safety, Health, Environment & Risk Management (SHERM) Safety training requirements, minors in the workplace https://www.uth.edu/safety	713-500-8100
UT Employee Health Clinical Services (EHCS) Health clearance https://uthealthservices.com/	713-500-3254 fax: 713-486-0983

Web Links in Application:

Animal Research at UTHealth:

Animal Welfare Committee & Center for Laboratory Animal Medicine & Care

<https://www.uth.edu/animal-research/index.htm>

Arms Export Control Act

https://www.pmddtc.state.gov/?id=ddtc_kb_article_page&sys_id=b9a933addb7c930044f9ff621f961932

BIODATA Information Request: J-1 Exchange Visitor sponsored by UTHealth

<https://www.uth.edu/international-affairs/exchange-visitors-j-1/new.htm>

Export Administration Regulations

<https://www.bis.doc.gov/>

Policy and Procedure Manual for the Confidentiality of Health Care Information

<https://inside.uth.edu/hipaa/policies.htm>

Training required for human subjects research: CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

<http://www.uth.edu/cphs/>

U.S. Economic Sanctions

<http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Pages/Programs.aspx>

UTHealth Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOOP)

<http://www.uth.edu/hoop/>

UTHealth, HOOP Policy 160 – Criminal Background Checks

<http://www.uth.edu/hoop/policy.htm?id=1448168>

UTHealth, HOOP Policy 164 - Minors in the Workplace

<http://www.uth.edu/hoop/policy.htm?id=1448176>

UTHealth, HOOP Policy 206 - Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information

<http://www.uth.edu/hoop/policy.htm?id=1974558>

UTHealth Safety, Health, Environment & Risk Management (SHERM)

www.uth.edu/safety/index.htm

UT System Rules and Regulations

<https://www.utsystem.edu/offices/board-regents/regents-rules-and-regulations>