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## Guidelines for VSP Application: Visiting Scientist

UTHealth Houston has long recognized the benefits of collaboration in the academic, research, and clinical arenas. The purpose of the Visiting Scientist Program is to bring to UTHealth Houston established and accomplished scholars who can contribute to and enrich the university's research, intellectual, and academic endeavors. This program provides a unique opportunity for visiting scientists appointed at and paid by other institutions to collaborate and participate in university research and educational programs of mutual interest under the supervision of a UTHealth Houston faculty member.

### Purpose:

- To participate in collaborative projects, conduct collaborative research, and other non-clinical hands-on activities.
- The Visiting Scientist may observe clinical practices but cannot provide patient care or have any type of direct patient contact (i.e., taking patient history, etc.).
- All individuals appointed under the Visiting Scientist Program are subject to and required to observe all applicable federal, state, and local laws, including but not limited to export control laws and regulations, and requirements of UTHealth Houston rules and regulations, including Intellectual Property Rights and Obligations.
- Visiting Scientists are not employees of UTHealth Houston but are appointed for a defined time period in academic departments and/or school-based centers and institutes.
- Note: It is not designed for those in the early stages of their career.

### Eligibility:

- Visiting Scientist must remain employed, appointed at, paid by other institutions, and holding an appointment comparable to UTHealth Houston faculty. Most Visiting Scientists are granted sabbatical leave from their home universities or research centers.
- A terminal degree is required: M.D. (or equivalent), DDS, DrPH, DNP, DVM, PharmD, DPT, EdD, DSci, and/or PhD.
- Financial support from the home institution must meet the minimum living wage in Houston of \$30,000 per year.
- Proficiency in English is required for all Visiting Scientists. Visiting Scientists are expected to speak, read, and understand English in an academic environment.
- All Visiting Scientist appointments require approval from the appropriate Chair or Director of a Center/Institute, the appropriate Dean, and the Senior Vice President of Academic and Faculty Affairs (SVPAFA).
- A Visiting Scientist Agreement with the applicant's home institution is required. The agreement will be sent to the department/applicant by VSP during the review process.

### Duration:

Minimum appointment is 6 months; maximum initial appointment is 12 months, with approvals required at the time of any reappointment up to a total of 24 months. Requests for an extension beyond a one-year appointment must be submitted at least 60 days prior to the approved end date by the department, along with an updated letter from the applicant's home institution, to be reviewed/approved by VSP and SVPAFA.

Appointments can be terminated by UTHealth Houston at any time.

### Fee:

A **non-refundable and non-transferable application processing fee of \$5,000.00 USD** is applicable to all Visiting Scientists (Gulf Coast Consortium institutions exempt).

This fee is required for final approval of the Visiting Scientist appointment. It may be paid by the sponsoring faculty, hosting department, and/or school (state funds cannot be used by the sponsoring department).

**Application Process:**

To apply as a Visiting Scientist, the Applicant must first identify a Faculty Sponsor at the university who is collaborating with and agrees to host them. Once the Faculty Sponsor's department coordinator initiates the application in the VSP system, the applicant will receive a unique link to their online application. The applicant must complete all required fields, upload necessary documents, and submit the application. The application will then be forwarded to the department for completion. After the departmental and school approvals, the application will be sent to the VSP Office for review and processing, which can take several weeks.

A Visiting Scientist Agreement executed between UTHealth Houston, the applicant, and the applicant's home institution is required; it will be sent to the department/applicant by VSP during the review process.

The applicant will receive an email with instructions for the payment once the application has been reviewed by VSP.

The applicant will receive an email from the VSP once the application is approved. All parties should allow at least twelve weeks for processing the application, starting from when the VSP Office receives the application after departmental and school approval. Processing time might take longer as an agreement is needed. Foreign nationals should allow additional time for visa clearance. The application may be denied/canceled at any point.

Applications must be approved by the VSP and SVPAFA, and all clearances, as well as onboarding processes, must be completed for applicants to start their visit.

**Onboarding:**

- All non-U.S. Citizens and non-U.S. Permanent Residents must receive clearance from the Office of International Affairs before beginning the appointment
- UTHealth Houston ID badge
- Departmental orientation
- Complete institutional compliance training online prior to or within the first weeks (link will be provided in a separate email after the application is approved)
- Complete required training, if applicable (AWC-animal research, CITI-human research, etc.). It is both the Faculty Sponsor's and Visiting Scientist's responsibility to ensure that any such training is completed promptly.
- It is the responsibility of the Sponsoring Faculty/Department to supervise and monitor the Visiting Scientist during their approved appointment. Activities must be limited to those approved in the application.

**Offboarding:**

- Upon completion of the visit, the Faculty Sponsor/department is responsible for ensuring that the Visiting Scientist's authorization end date is observed.
- Sponsoring Department must collect the Visiting Scientist's UTHealth ID badge and/or any other items.
- Sponsoring Department must deactivate the guest email account and any other system/program (if applicable).
- If Visiting Scientist is a foreign national, Visiting Scientist must complete a checkout with OIA.
- It is recommended that each Department have an evaluation system in place to collect input from Visiting Scientists about their experiences at UTHealth Houston.

**Notes:**

- "Foreign nationals" in this document refers to individuals who are not U.S. citizens or U.S. permanent residents.
- Application approval is at the discretion of the Senior Vice President of Academic and Faculty Affairs.
- It is recommended that applicants don't finalize any travel plans until they receive the approval email from the VSP.
- UTHealth Houston conducts security background checks on all applicants.
- All applicants shall read and acknowledge the "HIPAA Overview and Information Safeguards" included in the application.
- It is the responsibility of Foreign Applicants to have the appropriate visa to be a Visiting Scientist. They must check in with the Office of International Affairs (OIA) with all original immigration documents to obtain appropriate written clearance to begin their visit.
- UTHealth Houston schools and departments may charge separate fees to participate in the program.
- Sponsoring faculty are limited to no more than two Visiting Scientists in any academic year.

# Checklist for Visiting Scientist

VSP requires at least 12 weeks to review & process (begins when VSP Office receives the application)

Application should be submitted no more than six (6) months prior to the proposed dates.

## Required Documents

### Copy of photo identification

For U.S. citizens: Copy of federal or state-issued photo identification

For U.S. permanent residents: Copy of Permanent Resident Card (Green Card)

For non-U.S. citizens/permanent residents: Copy of passport identification page, U.S. visa stamp, Immigration forms (I-20, DS-2019, I-797, etc.) and Form I-94 (if applicable)

**Curriculum Vitae** (in English, listing academic history, certifications, licensures, employment, and training experience)

**Letter from the Applicant's home institution:** *must be in English, on official letterhead, dated, and signed*

- verifying employment, detailing financial funding, and confirming the degree verification

**TOEFL Score - for applicants who are not U.S. citizens and/or who did not obtain a degree from a U.S. institution**

English proficiency through TOEFL (scores of 95 or better, plus verbal validation)

**Photograph (Headshot) for the UTHealth Houston ID badge** (Submit photo as PDF or JPEG file)

- MUST resemble a passport photo or driver's license photo; the photo must be color
- Taken within the past 2 months, showing current appearance
- Full face, front view with a plain white/light solid background only, no trees in the background, filters overhead, no pictures taken in a car; No hats or headgear/coverage unless for religious reasons
- Photo must be taken in normal street attire; uniforms should not be worn in the photograph
- Clothing should be colored or dark; white apparel does not appear well on an ID badge
- If you normally wear prescription glasses, they should be worn for your picture
- Dark glasses or nonprescription glasses with tinted lenses are not acceptable unless you need them for medical reasons. A medical certificate may be required.
- Scanned or copied photos are acceptable as long as they meet the above criteria. You may also have your photo taken at an official Passport location.

**UTHealth Houston Financial Disclosure** Section in the online application

**J1 Biodata Form** if requesting Visa sponsorship at UTHealth Houston (for Foreign Applicants)

**Application Processing Fee non-refundable and non-transferable:** \$5,000.00 USD

Method of Payment: Do not send personal checks or cash

- Credit/Debit Card (American Express, Discover, Master card, Visa): using the link within the online application
- Money order, Cashier Check drawn on a U.S. bank and made payable to: UTHSC-H
- Wire transfer (*contact the department coordinator for your Faculty Sponsor to receive the instructions*)

## Additional steps

**Health Clearance:** Once the application is submitted to the VSP Office, the applicant will receive an email with a link to complete the Health History Questionnaire and upload the required health records.

**Background Clearance:** During the VSP's review process, the applicant will receive an email from the background check vendor, JDP ([rapidresponse@jdp.com](mailto:rapidresponse@jdp.com)), with a secure link to enter information such as demographic information and to give consent for the background screening to be completed.

Applicants without a Social Security Number will need to enter 999-99-999 as their SSN.

**Drug Screening Clearance:** The applicant will receive an email with the instruction to schedule the drug test will be sent from the vendor, JDP ([rapidresponse@jdp.com](mailto:rapidresponse@jdp.com))

**If Applicant is in the U.S.:** email will be sent at the same time as the background check request

**If Applicant is abroad:** email will be sent upon the applicant's arrival in Houston

If you have questions concerning the status of your application at any time,  
please contact the department coordinator for your Faculty Sponsor.