Visiting Scholar and Visiting Researcher Guidelines

Section I. General Provisions

A. Purpose Statement

The University of Texas at Austin recognizes that individuals from other universities, institutions, and businesses may wish to visit the University for extended periods of time for reasons including, but not limited to, conducting research in a University facility, collaborating with University researchers on specific projects, and observing University faculty research. The University requires that such individuals be registered, that they undergo a background check, and that proper notification between the University, the individuals, and/or the individual’s sponsoring institution be properly exercised.

B. Scope

These guidelines apply to University faculty, staff, departments, colleges, and units that entertain requests from individuals from other universities, institutions, and businesses who are funded from sources external to the University and who wish to visit the campus and use University facilities to conduct collaborative research or observe research in University facilities. These individuals do not carry any official status of employment with the University and must have formal University sponsors.

C. Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to set forth procedures and processes for obtaining approval for and registering visiting scholars and visiting researchers. The guidelines address how such visitors may be issued a University identification card (“ID card”) and an electronic identifier (“EID”). The guidelines also address intellectual property issues and research laboratory access.

It is important that the University maintain a record of such visitors and review documentation in order to protect the University’s interests, including intellectual property. Federal agencies have placed great emphasis on regulating access to research facilities when that research access has implications under federal export control regulations.

D. Definitions

1. Visiting Scholar/Visiting Researcher Coordinator (“Coordinator”): University employee who coordinates the visiting scholar and visiting researcher program. This individual resides in the Office of the Vice President for Research.

2. Individual Sponsor: University faculty member, research staff member, or Code 1000 researcher who nominates a visiting scholar or visiting
researcher. The individual sponsor is responsible for facilitating the visit and ensuring that the visit concludes satisfactorily.

3. Department or Unit Sponsor: Department or unit within which the visiting scholar or visiting researcher will be working or collaborating. The department or unit sponsor is responsible for completing an assignment document and obtaining the signature of the visitor on the offer letter, as well as processing visa requests, if applicable.

4. Visiting Scholar: Scholar temporarily residing at The University of Texas at Austin with defined but unescorted access to University facilities. Visiting scholars do not receive a stipend for their activities at the University, nor does their temporary engagement imply a continuation of their relationship with the University. The designation of “visiting scholar” is ordinarily made for a minimum of two weeks and a maximum of one year, and requires a bachelor’s degree.

5. Visiting Researcher: Same as visiting scholar except that the visitor has the title “visiting researcher” and generally has access to University laboratory facilities.

Section II. Visiting Scholar and Visiting Researcher Designations and Appointments

A. Visiting Scholar and Visiting Researcher

Individuals established in their field who are visiting the University and are funded from external sources may be recommended by a University department or unit for the designation of visiting scholar or visiting researcher. Visiting scholars/researchers who wish to extend their visit beyond one year may request renewal on an annual basis.

B. Criteria for Designation as Visiting Scholar or Visiting Researcher

The following are the minimum eligibility criteria for a visiting scholar/researcher designation at the University:

1. The individual must be visiting from an outside (U.S. or foreign) university, institution, or business.

2. The individual must have a bachelor’s degree.

3. The individual cannot be compensated with and/or receive University funding.

4. The individual must undergo a background check, which the sponsoring department or unit initiates.
5. A University faculty member or research staff member and a University department or unit must agree to serve as the formal sponsors of the visiting scholar/researcher.

C. Application and Approval Process for Visiting Scholars and Visiting Researchers

When a University faculty member or research staff member wishes to sponsor a visiting scholar or visiting researcher, the sponsor or designee completes a visiting scholar/researcher position request in the Human Resource Management System (HRMS). A completed background check verification is required for this position, which is designated as security sensitive. Complete information about the process can be found at: http://www.utexas.edu/research/about/visiting-scholar-researcher-program. HRMS and background documents are forwarded to the appropriate department chair/unit director and/or dean's office for approval.

1. Eligibility requirements are: bachelor’s degree, two-week or longer length of stay, background check verification and Visual Compliance verification. If the proposed visitor meets the requirements and needs a visa, the sponsoring department will notify International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) in the International Office to begin the visa application process.

2. Visiting Scholar/Researcher Status: if the visitor’s research requires access to University facilities (beyond office- and library-use), and/or the visitor will be collaborating with a University researcher on University research activities, Export Control issues and research interests should be properly vetted by the Office of Sponsored Projects. The Chair of the Objectivity in Research Committee shall also be consulted on matters related to a potential conflict of interest. Once an assignment is approved by the HRMS document a visitor may request a University ID card (if applicable) and, if appropriate, a high assurance EID.

3. Once an HRMS assignment is approved, the sponsoring department may issue an offer letter. An offer letter template is provided below.

Section III. Visa Requirements; Rights and Privileges of Visitors

A. Visa Requirements (J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa)

The J-1 exchange visitor classification is the status most commonly used by international visiting scholars/researchers. Under the exchange visitor status, scholars, professors, researchers, and others may come to the United States for defined periods of time for the purpose of educational exchange. Any international visitor who has sufficient academic training to benefit from an
academic or professional program at a U.S. college or university may be eligible for this status.

To obtain a J-1 visa for a visiting scholar/researcher, the individual sponsor and the sponsoring department/unit must agree to:

1. Make a reasonable effort to determine that the English proficiency of a proposed visitor is sufficient to allow meaningful interaction between the individual and University faculty/staff and the greater community.

2. Guarantee workshop, library, and computer access.

3. Assist a visitor in obtaining visiting scholar/researcher benefits if the proposed visitor title is approved.

4. Provide cross-cultural interaction between a visitor and the department’s or unit’s faculty and/or staff (or engage the visitor in cross-cultural exchanges with faculty and/or staff in the department or unit).

5. Show active interest in the research or activity being undertaken by a visitor and have the visitor participate in research and other activities of the department or unit.

6. Designate a University faculty member, or research staff member, as the individual (formal) sponsor of the visitor.

The Board of Regents requires that all J-1 visa holders (as well as the accompanying spouse and dependents of J-1 visa holders) be adequately covered by health insurance. Any visitor whose DS-2019 Form for a J-1 visa has been processed by International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) is eligible for the same type of insurance that is available to students. The insurance program is an important matter covered in the orientation program offered to international visiting scholars/researchers.

The J-1 visa process is explained at http://www.utexas.edu/international/isss/dept/J1.shtml, and this website links to the necessary paperwork required for a J-1 visa.

B. Rights and Privileges of Visitors

Visiting scholars/researchers are not employees of the University, and the title may not be used for personnel or payroll purposes. If a department or unit wishes to make a special payment to a visitor for participation in a seminar or similar contribution, payment should be made through an Authorization of Individual Services form (formerly Authorization of Professional Services). If a visitor is asked to make a short-term contribution to a research effort, and
payment of consulting fees is necessary, payment should be arranged through an Authorization of Individual Services form.

Although visiting scholars and visiting researchers do not receive either University compensation or the full range of other benefits available to regular staff, faculty, and students, they are eligible for the following courtesy benefits:

- Office space, if deemed appropriate by the sponsoring department/unit. The department or unit is responsible for issuing a request to Key Inventory authorizing issuance of an office or laboratory key(s). Departments and units should be cognizant of the need to be cautious about issuing such authorization and ensure that the visitor is routed through the HRMS process.

- University EID, which is a unique electronic identifier.

- University Identification Card (ID card), paid for by the sponsoring department or unit, the primary purpose of which is to enable visitors to use University public domain facilities, such as the library. It will allow the visitors to have access to the following:

  1. University libraries and other public buildings.
  2. Recreational Sports facilities. Visitors are eligible to use University gyms or other recreation facilities. There is a usage charge, which must be paid in advance by the visitor.
  3. University Health Services (call 475-8349). Visitors are eligible to use University Health Services by presenting a letter from the sponsoring department or unit and paying a nominal fee.
  4. Authorization to apply for an “A” parking permit. If a visitor wishes to park an automobile or motorcycle on campus, he/she must obtain a parking permit. This can be arranged by the sponsoring department or unit by writing a letter on the visitor’s behalf to Parking and Transportation requesting consideration of an “A” parking permit. The visitor may be responsible for the cost of the permit.
  5. Discounts on campus events similar to those available to University employees.

Section IV. Responsibilities
A. Coordinator

The Coordinator is responsible for disseminating and clarifying guidelines, and acting as liaison for departments/colleges/schools/units in resolving issues related to assignment of Visiting Scholars/Researchers, including Visual Compliance.

B. Individual Sponsor

The University sponsoring faculty member, research staff member, or other Code 1000 researcher must ensure that the HRMS on-line application form is completed for individuals who seek to be visitors falling under these guidelines. The individual sponsor must agree to facilitate the visit and provide ongoing oversight in conjunction with the sponsoring department or unit. At the conclusion of the visit, the individual sponsor is responsible for notifying the host department of the visitor’s departure from the University. If the visitor’s stay is cut short, an assignment amendment must be completed via HRMS.

C. Sponsoring Department or Unit

The sponsoring department or unit must ensure that all required documentation is prepared and submitted to appropriate offices, especially in the case of the issuance of a J-1 visa to foreign nationals, and HRMS procedures. This includes Visual Compliance. The sponsoring department or unit should ensure that a visitor is familiar with University policies and procedures. The sponsoring department or unit must also ensure that office or laboratory keys are returned if issued. The sponsoring department chair or unit head must ensure that authority for use of University facilities or access to University facilities is appropriate and issues the appropriate authorization letters.

D. International Student and Scholar Services - International Office (ISSS)

ISSS is responsible for reviewing all requests for J-1 visas and for their issuance.

E. Visiting Scholar or Visiting Researcher

A visiting scholar/researcher is subject to and required to observe all rules, regulations, and requirements of The University of Texas at Austin, The University of Texas System Board of Regents’ Rules and Regulations,¹ and all applicable State and Federal laws, including but not limited to conduct, confidentiality, conflicts of interest, ethical behavior, equal opportunity, compliance, safety, and health.

A visitor is a non-employee visiting scholar/researcher; he or she serves at the pleasure of the University, and the affiliation with the University may be

¹ http://www.utsystem.edu/bor/rules.htm#Top
terminated at any time, without cause and without recourse.

F. Office of the Vice President for Research

The Vice President for Research (VPR) or designee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of these guidelines. The VPR or designee is also responsible for resolving any disputes related to the approval of visiting scholars and visiting researchers.

For Assistance: Contact the Visiting Scholar/Researcher Coordinator in the Office of the Vice President for Research at 471-2877.
Addendum: Visiting Scholar/Researcher Offer Letter Template

[Delete this header before printing out on department letterhead paper]
Assignment notification letter (template): should only be issued after the HRMS assignment document has received final approval. In addition, for foreign nationals, after the International Office has issued the DS-2019.

You may add additional language to customize this letter for your area needs, but please do not delete any of the existing language in this template.

SAMPLE OFFER LETTER:

<Date>

XXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXX

Dear <Candidate’s name>:

Dear Visiting Scholar/Researcher:

I am pleased to assign you as a University Affiliate Visiting Researcher/Scholar, without pay, in the department of <<Name of Department/Unit>>, for the period of <<BegApptDate>> through <<EndApptDate>>, and welcome your participation in our scholarly community, as you conduct research in <<Purpose of Visit>>. Please bear in mind that Visiting Researchers/Scholars who plan to conduct research at the University for more than one year must annually renew their status with this office.

An identification card (ID) to entitle you to use the University’s facilities will be issued at the University ID Center, located at the Flawn Academic Center, 2400 Inner Campus Drive, Room FAC 102, telephone number (512) 471-4334.

Replace with this paragraph, if international visitor:
An identification card (ID) to entitle you to use the University’s facilities will be issued at the University ID Center, located at the Flawn Academic Center, 2400 Inner Campus Drive, Room FAC 102, telephone number (512) 471-4334.
Valid forms of identification accepted by the ID Center, which you will need to present if requesting your ID card, include: U.S. passport, U.S. or Canadian driver’s license, or a U.S. citizen ID card with Photo (INS form I-197).
To activate your library privileges, please take this letter as proof of your assignment to the Perry Castañeda Library, Circulation Services Department located in the PCL Building, Room 2.122, along with your UT identification card.

All individuals assigned under a University Affiliate research title are subject to and are required to observe all applicable federal, state and local laws, including but not limited to Export Control laws and regulations, and requirements of the University and The University of Texas System Board of Regents’ Rules and Regulations, within the meaning of Rule 90102, Intellectual Property Rights and Obligations. Furthermore, these research titles are not Academic Titles within the meaning of Board of Regents’ Rule 31001 - Faculty Assignments and Titles. Individuals assigned under any of these research titles are not eligible for the award of tenure within the meaning of Board of Regents’ Rule 31007 - Tenure.

I hope that your research goes well while you are here. If there is anything that my colleagues or I can do to assist you, please let me know.

Please indicate your acceptance of this assignment by signing the original of this letter and returning it to me. The copy should be retained for your records.

Sincerely,

<Name>
Nominator

XC: International office (The International Office’s Scholar Services needs a copy of this letter for international visitor assignments)

I accept this offer of assignment:

__________________________________________  _________________________________
<Name of candidate>                          Date

cc: Dean <Name>, <College/school>
    Department Chair/Program Director <Name>