

Policy Governing Visiting Researchers in UH Laboratories

Overview:

The purpose of this document is to define and clarify policies pursuant to which persons 18 years of age and above, not affiliated with the University will be allowed to visit, access, participate and/or conduct academic research at the University of Houston (UH) under the direction of a UH Sponsor. UH is committed to providing rewarding academic and research experiences to persons, not affiliated with the University, who may be visiting the campus under a mentorship program for educational purposes.

UH provides opportunities to such individuals to apply to enter a UH laboratory as part of an educational research experience under the mentorship of a UH Sponsor or researcher, not under UH employment or a UH student to gain experience in research laboratories for educational purposes.

This policy describes the requirements that must be fulfilled before the individual will be allowed to participate in different levels of laboratory activities. The objective of this policy is to protect the health and safety of the Visiting Researcher and to prevent injury arising from a potential exposure to harmful agents or hazardous conditions.

Definitions:

Visiting Researcher: A person, 18 years of age or older, who is not currently enrolled as a student or employed with the University, intending to participate in a research activity at UH laboratory.

Laboratory: For the purposes of this policy, “laboratory” refers to any part of the UH building used or intended to be used for scientific or technical activities which may involve hazardous materials or hazardous energy sources. These include teaching laboratories as well as research laboratories. Off-campus UH properties/facilities (e.g., Coastal Center, Technology Bridge, etc.), on-and off-campus clinical facilities, and fieldwork locations where the approved educational activity is conducted under the supervision of a UH Sponsor are also covered in this policy.

Sponsor: UH faculty member, Center Director or UH employee in a similar position who is directly responsible for administering the program under which the Visiting Researcher intends to take part in.

Sponsoring Department: UH Department where the program is administered.

EHS: UH Environmental Health and Safety

IACUC: Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

IBC: Institutional Biosafety Committee

IRB: Institutional Review Board

RSC: Radiation Safety Committee

Areas Affected by this Policy:

This policy applies to all laboratories at the University of Houston where hazardous materials, including but not limited to chemicals, radiation, biological agent and/or research animals are stored, housed, used or disposed of or could potentially be present. Certain locations like mechanical rooms, machine shops, electrical rooms, equipment rooms and other areas with potential for unusual hazards should be taken into consideration as well.

General Guidelines:

- Persons 18 years of age or older who are not employed or currently enrolled at UH may apply to enter a UH laboratory as part of an educational research experience under the mentorship of a Sponsor.
- The application must be reviewed by the Sponsor, forwarded to EHS for review of activities and recommendations before being sent to the applicable Department Chair, or College Dean (or designee) for approval. EHS will provide the Indemnification Form after review of the initial application form.
- The Release and Indemnification Agreement Form must also be completed and submitted to EHS after approvals.
- All proposed activities to be conducted by a Visiting Researcher at University of Houston laboratories must adhere to any requirements or restrictions imposed by the UH Environmental Health and Safety (EHS), the sponsoring department and other appropriate bodies within the University such as the IACUC, IBC, IRB and RSC.
- In addition, all required institutional trainings recommended by EHS, sponsoring department, and/or program coordinator must be completed by the Visiting Researcher prior to engaging in laboratory activities.
- The activities must be conducted under an appropriate supervisory plan developed by the Sponsor or designee and included in the application package.

Responsibility:

Sponsors or designees of the sponsoring laboratory or research group have primary responsibility to supervise all laboratory activities and to restrict activities, as necessary, depending on the nature of materials present in the laboratory (e.g. hazardous chemicals, research animals, radiological, biological, etc.). Responsibilities of the sponsor, the sponsoring department, the Visiting Researcher, as well as EHS are further defined in this policy.

Sponsor:

Faculty members and/or Research Center Directors sponsoring a Visiting Researcher shall be responsible for the following:

1. Submitting completed Visiting Researcher Application Form to EHS and applicable Department Chair/ Dean for comments, review and approval.
2. Arranging, in consultation with EHS for the Visiting Researcher to obtain necessary safety trainings, well in advance, prior to commencement of proposed laboratory research activities.
3. Forwarding approved Application Forms to the department's business office for the participant's UH identification. Individuals approved for participation will be assigned PeopleSoft number and email address to facilitate identification, Cougar Card ID access and communication from appropriate UH departments.
4. Returning all approved documents to EHS.
5. Arranging for (if needed), and ensuring payment for medical surveillance and immunizations as required for the Visiting Researcher.
6. Ensuring that the Visiting Researcher is appropriately supervised at all times.
7. Notifying the Department Chair/College Dean and EHS if the nature/scope of the Visiting Researcher's activities changes.

Sponsoring Department:

The Department sponsoring the "Visiting Researcher" shall be responsible for the following:

1. Providing administrative support to the Sponsor and Visiting Researcher to ensure that intended experiences are realized.

Visiting Researcher:

1. The Visiting Researcher will provide information required on the Application Form in entirety, obtain necessary approvals (if needed) and agree to work under the mentorship of the Sponsor of the research project intended.
2. The Release and Indemnification Agreement Form must be completed and submitted to EHS.
3. Adherence to rules and regulations as well as safety practices. They shall conduct themselves in a manner that will further their objectives.

Environmental Health and Life Safety (EHS):

EHS shall be responsible for the following:

1. Reviewing the Application Forms and proposed research activities and advising the Sponsor before the Visiting Researcher is notified of acceptance.
2. Recommending trainings and providing such in a timely manner to facilitate the objective of the program.
3. Reviewing any change in scope and providing advice to the Sponsor.

Note: EHS may inspect the proposed laboratory in which the Visiting Researcher is applying to before commencement and at any time while such activity is in progress. All laboratories determined by EHS as conducting higher-risk activities will be inspected prior to the commencement of the Visiting Researcher's activities. EHS has the authority to suspend the Visiting Researcher's laboratory activities if deemed unsafe, safety deficiencies not corrected or other violations related to stipulations made by EHS or other institutional compliance bodies. The IACUC, IBC, IRB and RSC or any other institutional compliance office or designee have the authority to oversee research in their areas of responsibility and to suspend activities when such action is deemed unsafe or inappropriate.

Please visit the EHS website at www.uh.edu/ehs or call 713-743-5858 for more information.

A. Review and Responsibility

Responsible Party: Applicable UH Faculty, Research Laboratory Managers/Research Center Directors, Supervisors as well as researchers who are required to ensure these guidelines are followed.

UH Environmental Health & Safety

Review of this policy will be conducted every even numbered year and as needed.

B. Approval

Approval Director, EHS

Date of Approval: June 1, 2011