

VA Memorandum of Understanding Guidelines for Investigators Conducting Sponsored Research at the University of Massachusetts Medical School

General:

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) requires that investigators with joint University and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) appointments maintain a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU outlines the duties and effort to be committed by jointly appointed investigators at both the University and the VA. In addition, the MOU certifies that there is no possibility of dual compensation for the same work, or an actual or apparent conflict of interest regarding such work. The VA uses a 40 hour work week as the basis for calculating available effort for research activities. However, University Investigator appointments are not measured in terms of hours since the number of hours an investigator can work in a full-time appointment may vary significantly from investigator to investigator. Therefore, in accordance with OMB Circular A-21 and 45 CFR Part 74 University Investigator effort is expressed as a percentage distribution of total University activities.

Applicability:

All University investigators who hold a salaried VA appointment must have a completed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in place when applying for or participating in an NIH-funded award. University appointments are defined as those paid by the Medical School. The MOU must be updated at least annually either at the time of annual progress report submission or annual effort certification. Effort percentages should be based on a reasonable, justifiable work week, representing the professional responsibilities of the applicable appointments for the investigator. In most instances, a sixty-five (65) hour work week should be used.

A current MOU (endorsed within the previous year) must be submitted to the Office of Research Funding Services at the time of application or progress report submission. If significant changes occur during the interim period (i.e., changes in VA appointment or significant change of 25% or greater in research commitments), a revised MOU must be prepared and submitted at that time.

The Memorandum of Understanding allocates effort between VA and University activities. Because the VA will not authorize overtime hours, the VA appointment is based on a 40 hour work week. For example, a 3/8th VA appointment is equivalent to a 15 hour VA work week. Investigators with a 5/8 or less appointment may have a 100% FTE appointment with the Medical School.

Please consult with the Office of Research Funding Services in instances where the VA appointment is greater than 5/8^{ths}. Individuals with a VA salaried appointment of 6/8^{ths} or greater seeking a University appointment will not be allowed to receive a full-time appointment (1.0 FTE).

NIH Proposal Submissions:

Investigators with VA appointments must disclose their joint appointment in the budget justification of their NIH proposals, indicating the base salary used in the application represents only University salary and that the effort committed is related solely to the investigator's University appointment.

Please note that the NIH does not allow VA effort to be counted toward the fulfillment of effort commitments on career “K” development awards.

In preparing proposals, specifically budget justifications, University investigators who hold VA salaried appointments should include the standard statement (below) to disclose to NIH the basis for the effort percentage and salary request.

Dr. _____ has an appointment with the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) and the Veterans Administration (VA). This arrangement is defined in a formal UMMS-VA Joint Appointment MOU. The base salary used in this application represents only the salary from UMMS. Dr. _____’s university committed effort on this proposal is ____ calendar months, of which salary has been requested. Dr. _____ receives salaries from both the UMMS and VA ; there is no dual compensation from these two sources for the same work nor is there an actual or apparent conflict of interest regarding such work.

Non-NIH Proposal Submissions

University investigators with VA appointments that intend to participate in non-NIH funded research should consult with the University Office of Research Funding Services.

Resources:

[Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\) template and instructions for jointly appointed VA and UMMS investigators](#)

[NIH Grants Policy Statement \(Part II, Subpart B: Grants to Federal Institutions and Payments: VA-University Affiliations\)](#)

[NIH Grants Policy Statement \(Part II, Subpart B: Grants to Federal Institutions and Payments: Allowable and Unallowable Costs: Salary or Fringe Benefits\)](#)