



# RESEARCH VISITORS

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## Policy/Procedures

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### I. Introduction

Northwestern University values Research Visitors and their contributions to the research enterprise. Welcoming Research Visitors to campus, however, presents some level of risk for the University. Consequently, schools, departments, and research centers/institutes should vet all such invitees carefully prior to approving the visit. As described below, in pursuing and ultimately appointing Research Visitors, the Office for Research (OR) recommends a number of steps to ensure that Research Visitors can engage in research and related activities openly and in compliance with all regulations. Each school may have additional requirements and offer further guidance in this area. (See McCormick School of Engineering “[Research Visitor Vetting Checklist](#)”; Feinberg School of Medicine “[Research Visitors](#)” website; Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences “[Research Appointment Process](#).”)

### II. Categories of Research Visitor Appointments<sup>1</sup>

#### Visiting Predoctoral Fellows

An individual who is a current doctoral degree-seeking graduate student from another institution who is studying at Northwestern for a short period, working with faculty to learn research techniques or to use specialized facilities. Visiting Predoctoral Fellows are not employed or paid a salary by Northwestern, nor do they have Northwestern student status. In some cases, a living allowance may be provided.

#### Visiting Postdoctoral Fellows

An individual with a recently granted degree of PhD, MD, or the equivalent professional degree. To be considered Visiting, the individual must hold a postdoctoral appointment at another institution or university. Visiting Postdoctoral Fellows are not employees of the University and are unpaid. They must receive their funding directly from their home institution. Visiting status is only approved upon receipt of documentation of external (to Northwestern) appointment and support.

#### Visiting Research Collaborators

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<sup>1</sup> This guidance does not address appointments through the Northwestern University Argonne National Laboratory Institute of Science and Engineering (NAISE); for NAISE appointments please see: <https://www.naise.northwestern.edu/>.

An individual who may periodically visit Northwestern in order to learn research techniques, use specialized facilities and/or collaborate with Northwestern faculty. A Visiting Research Collaborator must have current, paid employment at the start-up company of an existing Northwestern faculty member. A Visiting Research Collaborator cannot simultaneously have Northwestern faculty, staff or student status. Visiting Research Collaborators are appointed for only one year at a time and must show documentation of paid employment at the time of initial appointment. These appointments are renewable; the Visiting Research Collaborator must provide updated documentation of paid employment at the Northwestern faculty start-up company prior to each reappointment.

#### Visiting Scholars

An individual sponsored or employed elsewhere, usually by another university, industry or government agency. Visiting Scholars typically hold a PhD, MD, or equivalent terminal degree in their discipline or have received equivalent professional recognition. Visiting Scholars are at Northwestern for one year or less; this appointment may be renewed. Visiting Scholars are not paid a salary or employed by Northwestern. Visiting Scholars are usually paid by their sponsoring organization. In some cases, a living allowance may be provided.

### **III. Appointment Requirements**

Research Visitors are neither employees nor students of Northwestern University; Research Visitors can never hold any other concurrent position at Northwestern. Research Visitor appointments requiring co-terminus employment by, or sponsorship of, an external entity must be terminated as soon as such employment or sponsorship ends. There may be additional restrictions on appointments for individuals who are foreign nationals,<sup>2</sup> depending upon the individual's visa status, her or his affiliation(s) with foreign entities, or other issues (see, e.g., "[Guidance Regarding Foreign Influence and Involvement in University Research](#)" and "[Frequently Asked Questions – Foreign Influence August 2019](#)"). Under certain circumstances, Visiting Scholars and Visiting Predoctoral Fellows may be provided with a living allowance,<sup>3</sup> although such funding may never be tied to services rendered to Northwestern. Visiting Research Collaborators and Visiting Scholars may not receive a living allowance.

Although not Northwestern employees, Visiting Predoctoral Fellows may be supported by sponsored program funds provided by Northwestern to their home institution through a subcontract. See "[Visiting Pre-doctoral Students from Other U.S. Institutions of Higher Education and Northwestern Sponsored Programs](#)" for additional information.

#### **A. Foreign Nationals**

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<sup>2</sup> A foreign national is an individual who is not a United States citizen, permanent resident alien of the United States (i.e., "green card holders"), lawfully-admitted temporary resident alien or refugee, or other protected individual as defined by 8 U.S.C. 1324b(a)(3).

<sup>3</sup> A living allowance is funding provided to a Research Visitor to assist in covering the cost of living while resident at Northwestern University during the Research Visitor appointment. A living allowance is never tied to services rendered to Northwestern and is usually paid from non-restricted funds. A living allowance may be paid from restricted funding only when explicitly allowed by the sponsor or donor.

If the appointee is a foreign national, the individual must have an appropriate visa as required by the U.S. Department of State. This visa must be active for the entire time the Visitor will hold a Northwestern appointment. [The Office of International Student and Scholar Services \(OISS\)](#) provides assistance in obtaining the necessary visa to extend an offer for a foreign national to be appointed as a Research Visitor. As obtaining a visa is a lengthy process, OISS should be contacted as early in the appointment process as possible.

#### B. Background Checks and Restricted Party Screening

Conducting individual background checks helps to ensure the protection of the University community, and property and information of the University. Research Visitors may be subject to background checks, including:

- Federal, state, and local criminal checks
- Sex offender registry check
- Education check
- Restricted party screening

Northwestern reserves the right to limit or refuse access to Research Visitors based on the results of background checks.

Northwestern conducts restricted party screenings to ensure compliance with various federal regulations. Certain individuals as well as entities may be screened to ensure that extending an invitation to visit is appropriate and within the law. Principal investigators, departments, schools and/or research institutes/centers are advised not to extend any invitation to persons until they have cleared screening. [The Office for Export Controls Compliance \(OECC\)](#) conducts screening of both individuals and entities against all publicly-available restricted party lists and can be consulted for assistance. To request this screening, please submit the Research Visitor Appointment Recommendation/Screening Form to [researchvisitors@northwestern.edu](mailto:researchvisitors@northwestern.edu) (See Attachment 1).

In the event of a “match” against any of these lists, for either an individual or that individual’s associated entity, OECC will work with the department regarding any necessary steps to ensure Northwestern remains in compliance with applicable regulations. These steps may involve not moving forward on the visiting appointment or proceeding with an understanding that the responsible principal investigator, with oversight from the relevant department and/or school, exercise due diligence to ensure that the appointment is managed in compliance with the regulations. Additional information on the proposed Research Visitor may be required to confirm whether the “match” is valid. Additionally, there are restrictions upon activities involving certain countries subject to embargoes enforced by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. OECC should always be consulted to determine whether the citizenship or other ties of a Research Visitor to an embargoed country or a restricted entity implicate such restrictions.

#### C. Medical Insurance

All Research Visitors at Northwestern must have valid medical insurance throughout the term of their appointment. It is the responsibility of the department, school, or research institute/center

making the Research Visitor appointment to ensure the Research Visitor and any accompanying family member(s) have adequate medical insurance coverage during the full period of the appointment. International Research Visitors (excluding Visiting Postdoctoral Fellows) subject to the U.S. Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program may obtain medical coverage through the [Office of Risk Management's Visiting Scholar Plan](#). Domestic Research Visitors are not eligible for the Visiting Scholar Plan and must obtain appropriate coverage through their home institution, employer or other avenues (marketplace exchanges, Medicare, *etc.*)

All Visiting Postdoctoral Fellows are eligible for the [Postdoctoral Benefit Plans](#) offered through Human Resources.

All Research Visitors wishing to utilize their own medical insurance must submit a [waiver request form](#) to the Office of Risk Management for review and approval. Request are paperless, submitted via the VSP Portal. Any inquiry should be directed to Whitney Williams at 847.491.4134 or [vsp@northwestern.edu](mailto:vsp@northwestern.edu).

#### D. Benefits Eligibility

Research Visitors are not eligible for University employee benefits, including but not limited to paid holidays, paid vacation, paid sick leave, long- or short-term disability, life insurance, educational assistance and tuition plans, and/or retirement plans. Additionally, Research Visitors are not entitled to benefits as defined in the Illinois Workers' Compensation Act.

Research Visitors are eligible for a Northwestern NetID, email, [Wildcard](#), library privileges, reduced ticket prices for various athletic and cultural events, access to University recreational facilities and use of the campus shuttle service. Research Visitors are eligible to obtain a parking pass for access to University facilities pursuant to payment of University parking fees.

#### E. Research and Laboratory Safety

Northwestern is committed to providing a safe environment for all members of the community engaged in research. All Research Visitors, regardless of academic discipline, are required to complete assigned laboratory safety training prior to their start date. The [Office for Research Safety](#) (ORS) provides this training through LUMEN. If it is determined that the Research Visitor will be engaging in research requiring training in safe laboratory practices, ORS will require the Research Visitor to participate in the appropriate training before being allowed to enter a lab or perform any research. Research Visitors engaging in research within laboratories may also be required to sign a liability waiver/release.

#### F. Human and Animal Research

Additional policies and training are applicable to Research Visitors engaged in research utilizing human participants or animals. Visit the [Institutional Review Board Office](#) and [Institutional Committee on Animal Use and Care Office](#) for additional information.

#### G. Compliance with Northwestern Policies

Research Visitors are required to comply with, and should familiarize themselves with, all Northwestern University policies available here: <http://policies.northwestern.edu/>.

Two important compliance elements require the following:

- Research Visitors, regardless of citizenship or place of residence, **must complete** the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) [Mandatory Reporting form](#). This form acknowledges the individual’s status as a mandated reporter, indicating that he or she understands the requirement to make a report to the Illinois DCFS Hotline whenever there is reasonable cause to believe that a child known to the individual in his or her professional or official capacity, may be abused or neglected.
- To help keep the Northwestern community safe from sexual violence and sex discrimination, Research Visitors are expected to complete the University’s “[Harassment and Discrimination Prevention](#)” online course, available through [myHR Learn](#).

While at Northwestern, Research Visitors are also required to abide by all applicable policies of their sponsoring entity.

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## **Contacts**

If you have any questions on the Research Visitors Policy, you may inquire by sending email to <researchvisitors@northwestern.edu>

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## **Policy URL - Forms:**

<https://researchhradmin.northwestern.edu/research-visitors/index.html>

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## **History/Revision Dates**

Origination Date: December 6, 2016

Last amended Date: September 1, 2021

Next Review Date: September 1, 2024

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