This FAQ focuses solely on International Medical Graduates (IMG's) who seek a short-term visit to UTHSCSA and our sister institutions, the UHS and the VA. The UTHSCSA Visiting Resident Program, which includes medical residents who are participating in ACGME-accredited training programs in the U.S. and medical residents and clinical fellows who are in training programs abroad, does not pertain to and does not include any international MD who is beyond the training or fellowship phase. It also does not include international medical students. A GME program abroad, like its U.S. counterpart, is often inclusive of both medical residents and clinical fellows and may include Doctors of Osteopathy and Podiatry.

INTERNATIONAL RESIDENT-OBSERVERS

What is an International Resident-Observer?

An International Resident-Observer is a medical resident or clinical fellow who is actively engaged in a graduate medical education abroad.

What can International Resident-Observers do?

International Resident-Observers may “observe the clinical practice” and nothing more. They may not do the following:

- engage in clinical ("patient") contact
- provide any form of patient-care services
- engage in research
- teach
- “try out” for a UTHSCSA medical residency or clinical fellowship program

Do International Resident-Observers need to be officially appointed?

Yes. Every international person visiting UTHSCSA for professional purposes must hold a bona-fide academic, clinical, educational, training-related, or research-related title/role. Without having both an appointment via the hosting department and GME, the International Resident-Observer will be unable to receive security clearance prior to arrival or an ID badge after arrival.
Who is responsible for appointing the International Resident-Observer?

The hosting department is responsible for 1) requesting the appointment via the Office of Graduate Medical Education, and 2) working with the OIS regarding visa sponsorship requirements. Hosting departments should seek initial visa guidance from the OIS while they are also working on the appointment process with GME. Under no circumstances will the OIS issue visa documents, if the Resident-Observer hasn’t first been properly appointed via GME.

What does the OIS need to know “initially”?

The OIS needs to know if the prospective International Resident-Observer is engaged in a bona-fide GME program abroad at the time of the planned visit. The OIS also needs to know the citizenship/nationality and current location of the prospective Resident-Observer.

Can International Resident-Observers engage in clinical observation at the UHS or VA?

Yes, provided that the UTHSCSA hosting department or division complies fully with the UHS or VA Observer Policies for those institutions.

Why can’t hosting departments use the “Person-of-Interest” category to host these visitors?

Effective July 2010, the POI category is no longer used to sponsor any international activity at the HSC. The POI category has also been significantly changed so that its usage on the campus at large is no longer as common as before.

Can we pay International Resident-Observers, or reimburse travel expenses?

No.

Can International Resident-Observers self-fund the visit?

Generally, yes. The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program guidelines indicate a material preference for institutional or extramural support for exchange visitor program activities. This is why the OIS asks for international visitors to provide a “funding letter” from the home institution or school, the training program, or the employer.

UTHSCSA will not compensate or otherwise financially sponsor International Resident-Observer activities. The OIS recommends that hosting departments obtain a letter of sponsorship or funding, on the letterhead of the employer of the Resident-Observer. This kind of letter will provide an indication of material support for the prospective Resident-Observer and his/her UTHSCSA activities.
**How long can an International Observer visit?**

GME policy allows for a maximum of two (2) one-month observerships per individual, which may not be extended.

Please refer to the GME Resident Observer Policy for more information. [http://www.uthscsa.edu/gme/Policies/4.4.1%20Visiting%20Res%201%20- %20Observerships%202009-12.pdf](http://www.uthscsa.edu/gme/Policies/4.4.1%20Visiting%20Res%201%20- %20Observerships%202009-12.pdf)

**What visa type do we use to host International Resident-Observers?**

We use our institutional J-1 Exchange Visitor Program (short-term scholar category) to host International Resident-Observers. International Resident-Observers may not participate in the program using a B-1 or the equivalent “WB” tourist visa status.

**Who sponsors the visa status?**

The UTHSCSA department or division, via the Office of Graduate Medical Education, sponsors the J-1 visa status.

**How long does it take for visa paperwork to be completed?**

The OIS requires at least 90 days in which to review a request for sponsorship and issue J-1 visa documents to the International Resident-Observer. The 90-day period does not include the visa application process abroad. In some cases, a prospective International Resident-Observer will need several weeks or even a few months in which to apply for and be issued a J-1 visa at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate having jurisdiction over their place of residence.

*Please Note: the International Resident-Observer may not determine the dates of the visit; all requests for visa sponsorship are reviewed at the OIS on a first-come, first-served basis. Requests for International Resident-Observer sponsorship will not be expedited nor will the requests be put ahead of other service requests that are already pending at the OIS. Hosting departments are encouraged to Plan Ahead!!*

**Do International Resident-Observers need to check-in with the Office of International Services (OIS) upon arrival to UTHSCSA?**

Yes. All international visitors, irrespective of visa status or purpose, must enter the University via the Office of International Services. They must check-in with the OIS within 3 business days of campus arrival. Because the OIS does not accept walk-in appointments; a scheduled appointment time is preferred.

Hosting departments are also required to inform the OIS when the International Observer completes the visit and leaves UTHSCSA.
INTERNATIONAL VISITING RESIDENTS

What is an International Visiting Resident?

An International Visiting Resident is an MD who is participating in a graduate medical education program within the U.S., Puerto Rico, or other U.S. dependency. This programmatic umbrella may include international residents or fellows who reside in Canada or Mexico for their training; special visa rules will apply.

International residents are typically sponsored by ECFMG, the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates, and hold J-1 visa status. International residents who hold H-1B visa status with another hospital or training employer and who want to visit UTHSCSA for the purpose of rotation may not do so unless they have received prior permission from both the Department of Labor and the Department of Homeland Security. Contact the OIS for more information about the requirements for hosting H-1B medical residents for clinical rotation.

What can Visiting International Residents do?

International Visiting Residents can be clinically active as per the guidelines of the Office of Graduate Medical Education and their specific training program.

Do they need to be appointed?

Yes. Every international person visiting UTHSCSA for professional purposes must hold a bona fide academic, clinical, educational, training-related, or research-related title/role. Without the appropriate appointment via the hosting department and GME, the International Visiting Resident will be unable to receive security clearance or an ID badge.

Who sponsors the J-1 visa?

ECFMG is the visa sponsor and the location of the primary clinical training is the visa host. Special visa rules may apply for Canadian and/or Mexican medical residents.

Do International Visiting Residents need to check-in with the Office of International Services (OIS) upon arrival to UTHSCSA?

Yes. All international visitors, irrespective of visa status or purpose, must enter the University via the Office of International Services. Hosting departments are also required to inform the OIS when the International Visiting Resident departs the HSC.