

# Guidelines for Establishing and Operating Organized Research Units (ORUs) at UTHealth

## I. Overview and General Statement

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston ("university") encourages collaborative efforts among faculty to form collaborative units that are intended primarily to complement and/or enhance its research mission. Such units are most often formed to conduct activities that require or are enhanced by interdisciplinary collaborations, and are most commonly referred to as institutes, centers, or laboratories.

The University of Texas System Board of Regents has defined Organized Research Units (ORUs) as entities that meet two key criteria (see Regents' *Rules and Regulations*, [Rule 40602](#)).

- They are established primarily to conduct interdisciplinary research, and
- They have anticipated annual budgets of at least \$3,000,000 annually representing the sum of research grants and contracts managed through the unit's operations as well as institutional and other funding.

## II. Descriptions

ORUs are typically designated as Institutes, centers, or laboratories that are commonly described as below, but these are general descriptions rather than precise definitions and some flexibility in naming may thus be allowed if appropriate.

### 1. Institute

A major unit that performs, coordinates and/or promotes research, education, patient care, and/or public service activities on a continuing basis over a broad area that often extends across school, campus and/or institutional boundaries. The President or designee will have responsibility for institutional oversight.

### 2. Center

A unit that conducts research, education, patient care, and/or public service in a designated field that requires interdisciplinary participation or is established primarily to provide facilities, expertise and/or administrative support services for the work of programs, departments or other organizational units of the university. The President or designee will have responsibility for institutional oversight of a center.

### 3. Laboratory

A non-departmental unit that establishes and maintains facilities for research, education, patient care, and/or public service, often with the help of designated research staff appointed in accordance with university policies. The President or designee will have responsibility for institutional oversight of a laboratory.

These guidelines do not apply to a laboratory in which substantially all participating faculty members are from the same academic department or division, although the naming of such department laboratories must be approved by the President and relevant Dean.

The primary functions of ORUs are to conduct and/or support interdisciplinary research as part of UTHealth's mission. However, additional functions may be:

- disseminating information through conferences, meetings and other activities;
- providing intramural or extramural training opportunities and access to facilities for observers, visiting students, professional trainees and collaborators from other institutions and organizations as well as UTHealth faculty, students, and trainees;
- obtaining extramural funds; and
- providing public service related to UTHealth's mission and expertise.

The designation of an ORU as an institute, center, laboratory or other organized unit at UTHealth will refer only to an entity devoted primarily to a non-profit activity engaging faculty, students, trainees, staff and colleagues in activities related to the missions of the university.

In all cases, ORUs at UTHealth are subject to all policies and procedures of the university and the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System and may be subject to reporting and auditing requirements.

ORUs may *not* offer a degree or certificate program requiring Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) approval unless included on the THECB's Inventory of Institutional Administrative Structures. Faculty members of these units may participate in teaching in THECB approved degree and/or certificate programs of UTHealth schools (see *Section III.C. Faculty Membership* below).

Each ORU is headed by a director and will have an advisory committee/council that assists the director in setting the unit's goals and may assist by critically evaluating its effectiveness on a continuing basis. The creation of an advisory committee/council must be approved by the Board of Regents in accordance with Regents' *Rules and Regulations*, [Rule 60302](#).

### **III. Process and Procedures**

#### **A. Establishment**

Proposals for the establishment of an ORU must be made by the President, the Executive Vice President for Academic and Research Affairs (EVPARA) or a Dean, and should include the following information:

- a. The proposed name of the ORU;
- b. The purpose of the unit and how it will support and/or enhance the mission and goals of the university;
- c. The organizational and governance structure for the proposed unit, including a list of the head/director and others with significant administrative and management responsibilities;
- d. A description of the initial and any anticipated future activities, programs and functions of the ORU;
- e. A description of space needs and the commitments for their provision;

- f. A proposed budget and source(s) of support for start-up funding, commitments and anticipated sources of support for ongoing support, and an assessment of the prospects for sustainable funding;
- g. Criteria and eligibility for faculty membership, the appointment process, expectations for participation and a statement specifying periodic review for continued appointment;
- h. A list of participating faculty members;
- i. Any potential overlap or duplication of purposes and functions of the proposed unit with other university or school departments, divisions, or operating units including non-ORU Institutes, Center, or Laboratories; and
- j. Any potential overlap or duplication of purposes and functions of the proposed unit with other University of Texas System institutions or units.

Proposals shall be distributed by the EVPARA to the Executive Council, the University Leadership Council and the Inter-Faculty Council for comments. The sponsor may consider these comments for possible modifications of the initial proposal.

After comments and any revisions by the sponsor, the EVPARA will submit the final proposal to the Executive Council for consideration and a recommendation to the President who will make the final decision. A list of all ORUs at UTHealth will be maintained on the EVPARA's website.

## **B. Naming**

Proposals to name an ORU for an individual or non-university entity must comply with [HOOP Policy 65 Naming Policy](#).

## **C. Faculty Membership**

Prior to receiving an appointment in an ORU a faculty member must have an academic appointment in a department of a UTHealth school.

Recommendations for initial faculty appointments, promotions, and tenure (if applicable) must originate from the department(s) in which the faculty appointment is being proposed or in which the current faculty member holds an academic appointment. Requests for appointments, promotions, and tenure shall follow established department, school, and university processes.

The department chair(s) shall have overall responsibility for a faculty member's assignments and evaluations. Assignments for work within an ORU and any related salary support, space, or other resources must be mutually agreed upon by the department chair(s) and the head/director of the relevant unit.

## **D. Review of ORUs**

Periodic review of ORUs is necessary to ensure consistency with institutional goals and priorities and the institution's need to sustain a capacity to innovate. Each ORU should be reviewed at least every six years. Key considerations for the review include whether the goals of the unit remain relevant to the university, whether the unit is achieving its goals, and whether the unit is an efficient and effective use of university resources.

An ad hoc committee shall be formed to assess the ORU's original goals and objectives, its present functioning, recent accomplishments, future plans, adequacy of space and budget allocations, and future prospects to contribute to the institution's vision and mission. The committee's report will be forwarded to the president, who, in consultation with others, will determine whether the ORU should continue, be phased out, or be discontinued. The president shall forward the recommendation and ad hoc committee's report to the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs or the Executive Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs.

The periodic reviews of ORUs must be filed with the office of Academic Affairs or Health Affairs. Such office will maintain and make available to the Board of Regents an inventory of those organized research units throughout The University of Texas System.

(Approved by the Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic and Research Affairs, November 27, 2015)