

Frequently Asked Questions for Faculty with VA Appointments and Externally Funded Research

Introduction

This document provides guidance for faculty members who hold appointments with both the University of Maryland Baltimore (UMB) and the Veterans Administration (VA), and who participate in externally funded research activities.

Topics include:

Appointment Issues

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2. Is there a university-approved Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)?
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1. How are 8/8ths appointments handled?
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Appointment Issues

Why is VA salary not included in Institutional Base Salary (IBS)?

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) defines Institutional Base Salary according to federal grant policy requirements.

VA compensation is paid separately through the federal government and is typically expressed in eighths (8/8ths). Because it is issued separately from University compensation, VA salary is not included in UMB Institutional Base Salary calculations.

Is there a university-approved Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)?

Yes.

Faculty with VA appointments are required to complete and submit a VA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at least once each year.

The MOU documents effort commitments associated with:

- The Veterans Administration (VA)
- University of Maryland Baltimore (UMB)
- University Physicians, Inc. (UPI), when applicable

The School of Medicine provides a standard format for these agreements.

What happens if my VA eighths allocation changes during the year?

VA eighths allocations may change at any time based on operational or funding needs.

If your VA allocation changes:

- Your UMB appointment may also change.
- A revised appointment letter will be issued.
- A new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be prepared.
- Your Institutional Base Salary (IBS) may be updated.

The revised IBS must be used for future grant proposals.

For active awards:

- Salary charges must reflect the updated IBS.
- Effort calculations may need to be revised.
- Sponsors should be notified if committed effort levels are affected.

Can I reduce grant-funded salary support to accept additional VA eighths?

Yes.

If you accept additional VA eighths, your UMB appointment and Institutional Base Salary may change accordingly.

When this occurs:

- A revised appointment letter will be issued.
- A new MOU will be completed.
- Existing grant effort and salary allocations may require adjustment.

Sponsors should be informed if previously committed effort levels are affected.

Proposal Issues

Should VA salary be included in proposal salary requests?

No.

VA salary is excluded from the University's definition of Institutional Base Salary.

Salary requests on university proposals must be based only on:

- UMB salary
- UPI salary, when applicable

VA compensation should not be included in proposal salary calculations.

Is there approved language for budget justifications and Other Support documents?

Yes.

Faculty with VA appointments should include explanatory language describing:

- How Institutional Base Salary is calculated
- How effort percentages are determined

Sample Language for Faculty with UMB, VA, and UPI Appointments

“Dr. _____ has appointments with the University of Maryland Baltimore (UMB) and the Veterans Administration (VA). This arrangement is documented through a formal UMB-VA Joint Appointment Memorandum of Understanding. The institutional base salary used in this application represents the combined salary from UMB and University Physicians, Inc. It does not include salary from the VA appointment. The percentage of effort in this application reflects UMB effort on the proposed project relative to the combined professional effort for the UMB and UPI appointments.”

Sample Language for Faculty with UMB and VA Appointments Only

“Dr. _____ has appointments with the University of Maryland Baltimore (UMB) and the Veterans Administration (VA). This arrangement is documented through a formal UMB-VA Joint Appointment Memorandum of Understanding. The institutional base salary used in this application represents only the salary from UMB and does not include salary from the VA appointment. The percentage of effort in this application reflects UMB effort on the proposed project relative to professional effort for the UMB appointment.”

Should VA-funded research be included in Other Support documents?

Yes.

All research support must be disclosed in Other Support documentation, regardless of funding source.

This includes:

- VA-funded research
- University-funded research
- Other externally sponsored projects

When reporting effort:

- Total professional effort should be identified.
- University effort should also be reported separately when applicable.

University effort calculations must match the effort committed in proposal budget documents.

Can faculty with VA-funded research also hold NIH awards?

It depends on the type of VA award.

Faculty with VA Career Development Awards may not hold NIH awards simultaneously.

Faculty with other VA research awards, such as:

- Merit Awards
- Career Scientist Awards
- Center of Excellence Awards

may also hold NIH awards.

Faculty should consult the VA Research Service before submitting applications involving both VA and NIH support.

Which salary should be used for VA research applications?

Questions regarding salary calculations for VA research applications should be directed to the VA Research Service.

Effort Certification Issues

Should VA-funded research effort be included on UMB effort reports?

No.

VA-funded research effort should not be included on UMB effort certification forms because VA salary is not part of Institutional Base Salary.

Clinical VA activities should also be excluded from UMB effort reporting.

NIH Salary Cap Issues

How is the NIH salary cap applied to faculty with VA appointments?

The NIH salary cap calculation is based only on University Institutional Base Salary.

VA compensation is not included when determining whether salary exceeds the NIH salary cap.

K-Award Issues

How is effort calculated for K-Awards?

K-Awards generally require a specific percentage of total professional effort.

To meet NIH requirements:

- The faculty member must maintain a full-time UMB appointment.
- The required percentage of university effort must be devoted to K-Award activities.

VA research effort cannot be used to satisfy the required K-Award effort commitment.

8/8ths Appointments

How are 8/8ths appointments handled?

8/8ths appointments are strongly discouraged because they create significant administrative and compliance complexities.

Faculty considering or holding an 8/8ths appointment should consult the appropriate institutional offices for guidance and additional documentation.