

Frequently Asked Questions of UHAND Education Program **Applicants & Scholars**

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About our Scholars

What agency funds your fellowships?

The UHAND Partnership and its Educational Program are funded by a research grant award from the National Cancer Institute (Award#s P20CA221696 and P20CA221697 Drs. Lorna McNeill & Lorraine Reitzel, Principal Investigators).

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Eligibility Questions

What are the eligibility requirements for undergraduate and doctoral student UHAND Scholars within the UHAND Educational Program?

Please visit <https://www.uhandpartnership.com/>, select the Education/Training tab, scroll down and select “Apply” to be routed the UHAND Scholars’ web page which details specific eligibility requirements, application instructions, forms and other information.

Will you consider applications from those who are not majoring in a biomedical or behavioral science field?

Yes, as long as the applicant has an interest in cancer prevention and community research.

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Appointment Length

What is the maximum amount of time that a trainee can be appointed to the UHAND?

The maximum is two years (2) and is renewed annually pending research progress and availability of funds.

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Application Process and Phases

How do I apply for a fellowship?

Please visit <https://www.uhandpartnership.com/>, select the Education/Training tab, scroll down and select “Apply” to be routed the UHAND Scholars’ web page which details specific eligibility requirements, application instructions, forms and other information.

When are the deadlines?

The deadlines are listed on the web page of the UHAND Educational Program webpage at <https://www.uhandpartnership.com/apply-1>.

How many phases make up the application process to the fellowship?

Application Process: The application process consists of two (2) phases. See the Application Instructions for details.

What happens if I'm accepted?

Invitation to Submit Research Proposal

- Finalists will be invited to submit a research proposal. Details of the proposal expectations will be provided upon acceptance.
- Finalists are considered selected for the Program; however funding is contingent upon proposal approval by the Advisory Committee and Program Directors and receipt of additional paperwork, including official transcripts and vaccination documentation.

If I have already accepted another federally funded fellowship at my university, can I also receive funding from a UHAND Scholars fellowship?

No. Trainees are not allowed to receive any additional federal funding, from any other institution or mechanism during their fellowship. If you have any questions regarding additional concurrent funding received during your fellowship, you must immediately contact the Educational Program's Program Manager, Dr. Kamisha Escoto, or the Education Directors, Drs. Kayce Solari Williams and Shine Chang.

Do applicants who are currently doctoral students at the University of Houston need to submit their **GRE scores** and transcripts with the application?

Yes. Unofficial transcripts accepted with the application, but official transcripts and scores will be required if accepted.

GRE test scores, 5 years or older, are purged from the GRE system---Can I submit my application without GRE scores?

Yes. Please provide the reason why you are submitting your application without the GRE test scores in the space provided (next to GRE scores) on the application checklist and coversheet.

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Application Format and Submission

What is the application format?

The following format applies to the **Personal *Statement* of Professional Goals & Research Interests (Phase 1)** and all components in the **Research and Career *Proposal* (Phase 2 - by invitation only)**.

- **Margins:** 0.5 or 1 inch
- **Format:** Single-Spaced
- **Page-numbered format:** Lower center or Lower right corner of page.
- **Name & Current or Future Degree:** Top right corner of each page. Example: **Jane Doe, BS (expected 2018)** or **John Doe, PhD Candidate**
- **Standard Paper Size:** 8.5 x 11

- **Font Color:** Black
- **Font Size:** 11 or 12 point font
- **Preferred Font Types:** Arial, Times New Roman, or Georgia

Why do I need to include my name and the word UHAND at the top of my application?

This helps the staff readily identify your document in the event that your application has pages that are out of order or misplaced.

What happens after I submit my application?

Applicants will receive confirmation of receipt of their documents within two (2) business days of the deadline. Applications are reviewed by our Advisory Committee. Applicants will receive a decision via e-mail on the date posted on the fellowship web page (usually within 4 weeks of the application deadline). Successful applicants will be invited (via e-mail) to prepare and submit a full research proposal only if accepted. Details of the proposal requirements will be provided upon acceptance (see “Research Proposal”).

Why do I need to submit my application to UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org and not an individual or mail/deliver the application to your office?

The UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org is our Education Program's main e-mail address and serves as a centralized mechanism for communication. Your application and letters of support are less likely to be lost when sent to this e-mail address. Electronic submission ensures that your application is submitted and provides a receipt. If you were to hand deliver your application, or send your application in the U.S. mail, you will not have any record of sending your application, nor will we have record of receiving the application. This increases the likelihood of the application being lost. For your protection, we will accept electronic submission only.

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Application Review

What criteria will be used by the Advisory Committee to review my application?

The Advisory Committee will use the following criteria when reviewing applications:

1. **Relevance:** Are the career and research interests of the applicant clearly described in the personal statement
2. **Promise and educational benefit to the applicant's career development:** Will the program accelerate the applicant's interest in and career development toward becoming a researcher in cancer disparities? Do the letters of recommendation indicate knowledge about the applicant's capabilities and describe desirable attributes for a scholar and appropriate fit for the program's goals? Does the applicant have the intellectual capability and work ethic to benefit from the traineeship and eventually become a cancer disparities researcher?
3. **Availability of support:** Are the applicants' research interests aligned with those of the proposed mentors and existing resources?
4. **Minority Status:** Preference will be given to applicants who are underrepresented in the sciences.

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Research Proposal

NOTE: Successful applicants from the Phase 2 interview are considered to be accepted to the fellowship program and will be invited to submit a Research and Career Proposal. Funding will not become available until the proposal is approved by the Advisory Committee and the appointment paperwork is processed accordingly by the MD Anderson AVA Office.

What happens after I am accepted?

If you are invited to join the program, you will receive a formal invitation (via email) to submit a full research proposal. The email will include a checklist, detailed instructions and a deadline. The proposal deadline is usually four weeks. Additional details will be provided to you upon acceptance to help you navigate the next steps.

My e-mail says I have been accepted into the program, does this mean I will now start to receive a paycheck?

No. Applicants who are invited to submit a proposal are considered officially accepted into the program however, **your fellowship will not begin until research and career proposal is approved.**

Where is the info for postdoc applications?

Check our website for job postings

When can I start my fellowship?

Your fellowship will begin on the date specified in your appointment letter. **PLEASE NOTE: Doctoral students will begin in the fall (September) and undergraduate students will begin in the summer (June). Research funds will not become available until the proposal is approved.**

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Letters of Support and Letters of Recommendation

What is the difference between a Letter of Support and a Letter of Recommendation?

- A **Letter of Support** is provided by the prospective mentor(s) affirming that they are committed to supporting your proposed training. **This letter is only required for doctoral student applicants.**
- A **Letter of Recommendation** is a letter from external recommenders (not including those provided by your mentors) and is preferably from a professor who has taught or supervised the applicant for at least one year. We require letters from two external recommenders, at least one of whom should be from an academic institution.

How are Letters of Recommendation and Letters of Support to be addressed and submitted?

1. All letters should be addressed to:

Drs. Kayce Solari Williams and Shine Chang, co-Directors
UHAND Educational Program

2. All letters should be signed and on letterhead. **Electronic signatures are acceptable.**
3. **Original** Letters of Recommendation and Letters of Support **must** be emailed by the recommender or their support staff (not the applicant) directly to UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org. These letters may be included in the original application, but the application is not considered complete unless the letters are received directly from the recommender or their support staff.
4. **Descriptive subject line:** To identify your application, the subject line should include applicant name, fellowship and letter type. Example: Jane Doe, UHAND Scholar - Letter of Recommendation.
5. Letters submitted without these features may result in your application being considered incomplete and any incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

Why must the original Letters of Recommendation and Letters of Support be sent via e-mail to UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org and not via e-mail directly to either Dr. Solari Williams or Dr. Chang?

Letters of Recommendation should be sent to the UHAND central electronic mailbox, UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org, to prevent the document from getting lost or misfiled. For example, if your Letter of Recommendation is sent directly to Dr. Chang and she is out of the office, we will be unable to confirm receipt in a timely manner and that could result in the denial of your application.

Can I have fewer than 2 letters of recommendation OR more than 2 letters?

Fewer than 2 letters will render your application incomplete and your application will not be reviewed. More than 2 letters will not improve the chances of acceptance. However, it is acceptable to request more than 2 letters of recommendation in case one of your recommenders fails to submit the letter by the application deadline. As a reminder, all documents must be submitted by the application deadline including letters of support and letters of recommendation.

Can I submit copies of my letters of support and letters of recommendation with the application?

All letters of support and letters of recommendation **must** be submitted via email to UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org. This lets us know the letter is authentic. Typically, recommenders (which are usually faculty) and mentors do not like to provide letters to the applicant.

Is it better to have 3 letters from the same institution or 2 letters from the same institution and one letter from another institution but from a junior faculty or boss?

It doesn't matter if all the letters come from the same place as long as they are the strongest letters from people who know the applicant and know whether he/she is well suited for the opportunity he/she seeks. We suggest that the recommenders talk to each other (if possible) about what aspects they focus on so that they do not all sound the same, except for singing his/her praises.

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Immunizations

Why do I have to get an immunization?

The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center department of Employee Health and Well-being requires all educational trainees (excluding GSBS GRA) to provide documentation of immunizations or serological proof of immunity.

What immunizations are required?

All immunizations (MMR, Chicken Pox, TB Skin Test, Tdap) must be current. The TB Skin Test must be current within one year of the application submission date. Upon acceptance, specific details on what immunizations are required and how to submit proof of immunizations will be provided.

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Visa Information

I am currently on a J-1 visa and I want to apply to the UHAND Education Program. Can I apply?

No. The UHAND Education Program is unable to accommodate applications from individuals currently on visas; only US citizens and permanent residents are eligible for this funding award from the National Institutes of Health.

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Proof of Enrollment

What is proof of enrollment?

Proof of enrollment is a statement verifying that a student is enrolled in classes during a given term.

Why do I need to submit documentation to MD Anderson AVA?

UHAND Scholars will need to obtain appointment with both the University of Houston and MD Anderson and, therefore, will need to provide the necessary documentation to enroll in MD Anderson.

What documentation will MD Anderson AVA accept as confirmation of enrollment?

MD Anderson AVA will accept the following documents:

1. A signed letter on institution letterhead sent directly from the Registrar, Student Affairs Office, or the Dean's Office
2. Transcripts that confirm enrollment during the trainee's period of appointment. Must be an official copy and accompanied by a certified translation if in a language other than English. ***NOTE:** Official transcripts are submitted to show proof of enrollment. Official transcripts are not required during the application process.*
3. Verification of Enrollment Form (VOE)
4. National Student Clearinghouse Verification Certificate

What documents are NOT accepted by MD Anderson AVA?

The following are not accepted by MD Anderson AVA:

- Letter from faculty member or committee member
- Computer print-outs
- Admission letter

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Questions about Mentors

Do I need a mentor to apply?

Doctoral students require a mentor to apply. If you are having problems locating a mentor, contact our office as soon as possible (preferably no less than 30 days prior to the application deadline) and our UHAND directors will be able to suggest mentors based on your research interests and goals. Undergraduate applicants should have researched potential mentors from <https://www.uhandpartnership.com/mentors> and submit names of potential mentors based on common interests.

What are the mentor selection requirements for the UHAND Scholar applicant?

Doctoral applicants must apply with the support of faculty who have agreed to serve as mentors. **Undergraduate applicants must apply with potential mentors of interest listed in their Research and Career Statement.** If you need help or are unable to identify suitable mentors, contact the UHAND office immediately for suggestions. Doctoral applicants are responsible for contacting faculty directly for discussions about mutual interests and securing their support as mentors. Please see application instructions for further information.

How can I search for a mentor?

We recommend that you search for mentors at <https://www.uhandpartnership.com/mentors>

What if I want to work with a mentor who is not listed on the UHAND website?

Please contact us via email at UHANDPartnership@mdanderson.org with this request so that we may properly address your request.

I am having difficulty locating potential mentors. Many that I've contacted have not responded or have stated that they're not interested at this time. What should I do?

Please e-mail the complete list of faculty members that you have contacted & the contact results to UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org and we will forward your information to our training program directors to assist.

Do all mentors have to submit letters of support?

Yes. ALL Mentors must submit a letter of support (for Doctoral Students only). Please see the Application Instructions for details.

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Stipend (Salary), Direct Deposit and Other Benefits

What is a STIPEND?

The word "Stipend" is the same as "Salary" or "Pay", within UHAND. These terms are synonymous and are commonly used interchangeably.

How much are UHAND Scholars paid?

UHAND undergraduate student scholars will be paid \$10/hour for a maximum of 20 hours per week for time spent working on mentored research projects and an expectation that students will work ~20 hours per week. UHAND doctoral student scholars receive stipends for time spent working on their mentored research projects and engaging in other UHAND programming. Fringe benefits include a health insurance stipend (paid monthly). UHAND tuition and fee waivers may be available depending on UH departmental affiliation. The monthly stipend for doctoral students varies based on UH departmental affiliation and year within the doctoral program, but can range from \$1061 to \$1261 monthly.

How often are UHAND Scholars paid?

Once a month (the first of the month).

Do UHAND Scholars work full time or part-time?

All UHAND Scholars are expected to be enrolled full-time and participate in relevant UHAND research activities 20 hours per week.

Do UHAND Scholars receive holiday pay?

Yes.

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Appointment Process

What is the appointment process?

Once invited to join/accepted to the UHAND Scholar program, students will be required to complete additional paperwork, including, but not limited to, the Discover Application and immunization certification at MD Anderson. The MD Anderson Academic & Visa Administration (AVA), which is similar to a Registrar's Office, will process the bulk of these documents.

Why do I need an appointment at MD Anderson?

This program is a partnership between the University of Houston and MD Anderson. Scholars will be attending events, taking classes, and receiving intellectual benefits from both institutions and therefore must have appointments at both institutions.

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Parking

Will the UHAND reimburse me for parking?

No. Parking fees are not covered by the grant or our program. Parking expenses are the responsibility of the UHAND Scholar.

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Dress Code

What is the dress code for trainees?

UHAND dress code is business casual. Clothing does not need to be formal. Most thermostats within the buildings are set at 75 degrees, but will seem much cooler. Sweaters, pashminas or jackets can be kept at your desk in case you are cold while indoors. Consult your mentor regarding any additional dress code requirements set by the department, including casual Fridays (some departments allow jeans on Fridays, while others do not).

Acceptable attire

- Trousers/Slacks/Khakis
- Knee-Length Skirts
- Casual Dresses
- Polo or Button-down shirts/Blouses
- Blazers/Sweaters, Pashminas, Jackets

Unacceptable attire

- Shorts, Torn or Frayed Jeans
- T-shirts with slogans or advertising
- Flip-Flops, Hats
- Mini-skirts
- Revealing or bare midriff tops

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Trainee Research Expenses and Reimbursement

Can a trainee be reimbursed for using local public transportation (i. e., the Metro Rail or Metro Buses) when traveling from the institution and back again for business purposes (attending a course, class, workshop, conference, etc. in Houston, TX)?

Please consult the UHAND Education Program Directors. Generally, these types of fees are not covered by the grant.

What is the policy to get the out-of-state tuition waived?

To be eligible for a tuition waiver, the "Scholar" must be enrolled in a degree program and pursuing a degree related to the research performed. Please consult the UHAND Education Program Directors for more information.

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Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)

What is Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)?

Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) is defined by the National Institute of Health (NIH) as "the practice of scientific investigation with integrity." It involves the awareness and application of established professional norms and ethical principles in the performance of all activities related to scientific research.

Why is RCR required?

NIH policy requires participation in and successful completion of instruction in **Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)** by individuals supported by any NIH training/research education/fellowship/career award (NOT-OD-10-019).

What are basic principles and best practices of RCR?

According to the NIH, the following principles are based on several key concepts about responsible conduct of research and best practices that have evolved over the past two decades' experiences:

1. Responsible conduct of research is an essential component of research training. Therefore, instruction in responsible conduct of research is an integral part of all research training programs, and its evaluation will impact funding decisions.
2. Active involvement in the issues of responsible conduct of research should occur throughout a scientist's career. Instruction in responsible conduct of research should therefore be appropriate to the career stage of the individuals receiving training.
3. Individuals supported by individual funding opportunities such as fellowships and career development awards are encouraged to assume individual and personal responsibility for their instruction in responsible conduct of research.
4. Research faculty of the institution should participate in instruction in responsible conduct of research in ways that allow them to serve as effective role models for their trainees, fellows, and scholars.
5. Instruction should include face-to-face discussions by course participants and faculty; i.e., on-line instruction may be a component of instruction in responsible conduct of research but is not sufficient to meet the NIH requirement for such instruction, except in special or unusual circumstances.
6. Instruction in responsible conduct of research must be carefully evaluated in all NIH grant applications for which it is a required component.

Where can I find detailed information about research integrity and research misconduct?

NIH has information available on their [Grants Policy web page](#).

Where can I find examples of Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)?

See the UHAND website tab for Education/Training, and select Courses for examples.

Does MD Anderson host RCR seminars?

Yes. Go to www.MDAnderson.org and perform a keyword search for RCR Seminars.

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