

# Guidance for Proposing and Managing Commitments for Investigators with Joint UW and VA Appointments

## Background:

Some investigators at UW-Madison (UW) have split appointments between the University and the William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital (VA).

A key component of the VA appointment is that the VA will allow investigators to work on UW research while on VA time. This is referred to as “protected research time.” When considering this arrangement, it is important to note that an investigator only has a total 12 months of time they can commit to sponsored projects.

This guidance will assist research administrators who have A-Basis (12 mos appts) VA supported investigators to ensure commitments are proposed, tracked, and certified appropriately. This guidance is not intended for C-basis (academic or 9 month) appointments.

## Proposing Commitments:

An investigator submitting a proposal though the UW can only offer time they have available at the UW, unless they have written approval from a third party that will allow them to perform activities related to fulfilling the obligations of a sponsored project. **Written approval must be obtained, prior to proposal submission, to commit VA protected research time. This must be communicated to the sponsor in the proposal.** Furthermore, the UW can only request salary support from a sponsor for salary expenses that represent time that will be spent at the UW working on grant related activities.

Effort commitments should be proposed for individuals who have split UW/VA appointments as follows:

- 1) UW proposal submissions shall only include salary support for an individual’s salary that is paid by UW. The salary requested should be based on the actual UW compensation paid to the individual (UW Institutional Base Salary (IBS) x FTE percentage).
- 2) With VA approval, additional effort may be committed that will be paid for by the VA. This must be approved by the VA in writing and addressed explicitly in the budget justification.
- 3) The budget justification should clearly state what portion of the total effort commitment will be completed at the UW (the salary requested must be for UW supported time only) and what portion will be paid for by the VA. The salary amount paid by the VA does not need to be included, just the person month commitment.

## Proposal Example:

Dr. Nytes is submitting a proposal to NIH where he wishes to commit 2 months to the project. He currently has a 0.5 UW appointment and a 0.5 VA appointment. His institutional base salary (IBS) at the UW is \$100,000 annually. However, his actual UW compensation is \$50,000 a year as he has a 0.5 appointment. Dr. Nytes has obtained approval from the VA to use his time there to work on this project if funded.

The budget justification should include:

“Dr. Nytes has a dual appointment with the UW and the VA. Dr. Nytes will devote a total of 2 calendar months to this project. We are requesting salary support for 1 month while the remaining 1 month will be supported by Dr. Nytes’ protected VA research time.”

The salary requested here should be \$8,333, which would cover 1 month of his UW compensation. This is calculated using the following steps:

1. Calculate the actual annual UW compensation
  - a.  $\text{IBS} \times \text{FTE percentage} = \text{actual UW compensation}$
  - b.  $\$100,000 \times 0.5 = \$50,000$
2. Calculate the number of calendar months the individual works at the UW
  - a.  $\text{calendar months in year} \times \text{FTE percentage} = \text{UW months}$
  - b.  $12 \times 0.5 = 6 \text{ months}$
3. Using the results from steps 1 and 2, calculate the monthly rate of UW pay
  - a.  $\text{Actual UW compensation} \div \text{UW months} = \text{monthly UW pay}$
  - b.  $\$50,000 \div 6 \text{ months} = \$8,333/\text{mo.}$

In this scenario the investigator has a total commitment of 2 months. 1 month will be completed at the UW requesting \$8,333 in salary support. The remaining 1 month will be completed at, and paid directly by, the VA.

### **Award Set-Up:**

When awarded, ONLY the UW portion of the total proposed commitment will be entered and tracked in the UW systems. The VA portion of the commitment will **not** be entered into UW systems. However, RSP will include an 'Other' term (which will appear on the "Requirements" tab when viewed in WISDM) with a comment to flag that the remaining commitment will be covered by VA time, and tracked outside of ECRT.

### **Award Set-up Example:**

If Dr. Nytes' proposal is awarded, the commitment that will be entered at award set-up would be 16.66%. Remember, the UW tracks ONLY the UW commitment. The appropriate percentage can be calculated using the following steps:

1.  $\text{UW Commitment} \div \text{UW months available} = \text{Commitment percentage}$ 
  - a.  $1 \text{ month} \div 6 \text{ months} = 0.1666 \text{ or } 16.66\%$
2. RSP will add in an "Other" term, commenting that this is a VA effort situation where 1 month is covered by VA "protected research time".

### **Effort Certification:**

When it's time to certify the computed percentage on the effort card in ECRT, this project should reflect 16.66% if Dr. Nytes receives the full \$8,333 that was requested in salary support. However, this is only half of the total commitment for Dr. Nytes on this project.

To ensure the total commitment is accounted for, and certified properly, a note should be added to the effort card in ECRT to document that the total commitment has been satisfied. **The investigator may need to obtain documentation from the VA that verifies this.** The note added to ECRT should state:

*"[NAME] has a split appointment between the UW and the VA. The VA appointment allows this individual to work on UW research while paid on VA time. The VA considers this as protected research time which the VA grants to non-clinical investigators who have split appointments between the UW and*

*the VA. In addition to the effort covered by UW Madison for project # \_\_\_\_\_, [# of Calendar Months] months of effort were paid directly by the VA and completed while working at VA.”*

Please contact the RSP effort team ([effort@rsp.wisc.edu](mailto:effort@rsp.wisc.edu)) if you have any questions regarding this guidance.