

Getting Started in Research & Innovation: Research Services Guide for New Researchers and Research Staff



The Research Services Guide is created by the Office of the Vice President Research & Innovation (OVPRI) for newly appointed researchers and research staff to help them get oriented to research administration resources and support services. It is designed to complement the general onboarding processes managed by Human Resources and your home department. This Guide provides a concise snapshot of all research related resources with links to more detailed information available on our [Research website](#) or [UnityNet portal](#).

Please contact VPRI@unityhealth.to if you have questions about the content of this document.

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1. Research Strategic Plan

A distinctive component of our success in Research & Innovation at Unity Health Toronto is our multi-faceted research ecosystem established on four scientific pillars of excellence: Critical Care, Urban & Community Health, Organ Injury & Repair, and Brain Health & Wellness. These four pillars are intended to be broad and inclusive of all research at Unity Health, while enabling us to better organize and support our researchers and their teams. Our [2021-2026 strategic plan](#) will ensure we are focused on our purpose, scientific pillars and strategic enablers.

2. Research Leadership Committee (RLC)

The Research Leadership Committee oversees all strategic and operational issues pertaining to research and innovation at Unity Health Toronto. RLC also supports the Vice President, Research & Innovation in optimizing operations, collaboration and communication among researchers, research programs, research administration, and hospital administration. Please visit UnityNet Research page to review the [RLC Terms of Reference and Records of Discussion](#).

3. Research & Innovation Support Services Structure

Research & Innovation support services within the OVPRI are split into five divisions:



3.1 Research Administration

The Office of Research Administration (ORA) is responsible for providing a full suite of administrative services to researchers and research staff described as follows:

Service	Contact
Mandatory Peer Review Process (MPRP) —facilitates the pre-submission peer review process (including requirements/timelines) whereby researchers must obtain expert feedback on their grant applications.	PeerReview@unityhealth.to
Compliance Review —reviews and approves the budget for all grant applications (a mandatory step), ensures adherence of the application to sponsor guidelines and submits completed applications to the funding agency.	Marianna.Betro@unityhealth.to
Research Contracts —initiates development and review of various types of research contracts and agreements related to awards, clinical studies, confidentiality, material transfer, basic science, privacy/data sharing, and service provider/independent contractors.	ResearchContracts@unityhealth.to
Research Employment —provides instructions and support to recruit and retain research employees (including postdoctoral fellows), engage students, volunteers and visitors, and amend existing positions. Related policies and templates are available on UnityNet portal (intranet).	Employee Requests: ResearchEmployment@unityhealth.to Non-Employee Requests: ORAResearch@unityhealth.to
Research Finance —helps researchers and research staff open new research activity accounts, find their designated Research Financial Analyst, request reimbursement and submit invoices. Please review the Research Finance Training videos for detailed information on various financial procedures.	ResearchFinance@unityhealth.to
Research Appointments—provides instructions on the process for issuing and managing research appointments made to the Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute (LKSKI) and the Keenan Research Centre for Biomedical Science (KRCBS) ORA, REO, REB and VPRI Staff Contact List	ResearchAppointments@unityhealth.to Email Dina.Coronios@unityhealth.to to receive an updated contact list
Research Policies —all corporate policies and procedures related to Research are available on UnityNet portal.	VPRI@unityhealth.to

3.2 Research Ethics

The Research Ethics Office (REO) and Research Ethics Board (REB) support high-quality research activities by providing ethics review and ethics oversight of all human participant research conducted under the auspices of Unity Health Toronto and ensuring that the research meets current relevant ethics, legal and safety standards.

Service	Contact
The Research Ethics Office and Research Ethics Board (REB) reviews all proposed human research from both scientific and ethical perspectives before the research starts. The REO and REB provide guidance to the research community in designing and carrying out ethical research and promotes research ethics education.	ResearchEthics@unityhealth.to
The Clinical Trials Ontario (CTO) Streamlined Ethics Review System (SERS) at Unity Health Toronto aims to decrease the time to getting clinical trials started by having ethics review completed by a single, qualified research ethics board performing the review for all sites involved in a study.	Elizabeth.Huggins@unityhealth.to

[ReQuIST \(Review of Quality Improvement Studies\)](#) is a process by which eligible staff and physicians at Unity Health Toronto can request and obtain a letter stating that their proposed Quality Improvement (QI) initiative has been reviewed by institutional authorities and does not require REB approval or written consent from participants. requist@unityhealth.to

3.3 Strategy & Commercialization

The Strategy & Commercialization team focuses on organizational strategy, equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and research commercialization support.

Service	Contact
<p>The Strategy team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversees the development of research strategic plans and annual objectives, including monitoring the progress of research corporate objectives and the annual Research Action Plan Supports the work of the Research Leadership Committee (RLC) Coordinates implementation of EDI initiatives, including those recommended by the Research Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Task Force (REDI)—an advisory group with a mandate to provide guidance to the Research Leadership Committee on the EDI-related barriers that exist in research, and to recommend initiatives aimed at removing these barriers and promoting equity, diversity and inclusion among our research community. Please visit UnityNet REDI page to review the Terms of Reference, Records of Discussion and other resources. 	<p>VPRI@unityhealth.to</p> <p>ResearchEDI@unityhealth.to <i>(use this email to ask institutional EDI questions, share EDI initiatives and events, or get in touch with REDI)</i></p>
<p>The Commercialization team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scouts and evaluates technology developed at Unity Health Manages Unity Health’s Intellectual Property (patents, trademarks, copyrights) portfolio Delivers educational resources on IP, commercialization, entrepreneurship, etc. Facilitates and supports the research commercialization process (including start-ups) Provides information on how to navigate Unity Health’s Intellectual Property Policy, how to submit an invention disclosure form, or any other commercialization related queries 	<p>Dennis.Ng@unityhealth.to Samar.Saneinejad@unityhealth.to</p>

3.4 Funding Strategy & Stewardship

The Funding Strategy & Stewardship team provides pre-award funding support to researchers and facilitates the research fundraising activities with all three Foundations of Unity Health Toronto.

Service	Contact
<p>The Grants & Awards team is your partner for research success, with expertise in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding the appropriate funding and potential partners for research projects Assisting researchers with proposal development, institutional signatures and support letters Facilitating the nomination of distinguished researchers for prestigious awards and honours Identifying and supporting research chair nominations across the spectrum, including the Canada Research Chairs at Unity Health Toronto. Providing tools, communications, workshops to increase awareness of opportunities and deadlines. 	<p>VPRI@unityhealth.to</p>

- [Funding Opportunities Calendar](#)
- [Awards and Honours Opportunities Calendar](#)
- [Grant Writing Resources](#)
- [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Research Grants](#)

The Research Stewardship portfolio enhances fundraising efforts to support and advance our scientific pillars of excellence in addition to coordinating the following events:

Erica.Conte@unityhealth.to

- [Angels Den](#)—an annual medical research competition where top Unity Health scientists pitch their game-changing ideas to win funding.
- Internal Funding Opportunities—conducts open and transparent calls of internal funding opportunities as they arise.

3.5 Research Facilities

The Research Facilities unit supports our researchers with infrastructure, facilities and space needs.

Service	Contact
<p>The Keenan Research Centre for Biomedical Science is home to six Core Facilities, including Flow Cytometry, Histology, Genomics/Molecular Biology, Imaging, Microfabrication, and Vivarium.</p> <p>The Research Facilities team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides service analysis, equipment and technology access, and expertise researchers require • Manages Equipment Booking—The Research Facilities Business Management System (RFBMS) manages the day-to-day operations of Research Facilities including: billing, access to research areas, equipment booking and course registration • Plans, coordinates and facilitates construction, renovation projects and relocations within Research • Administers badge access to research spaces, including access to the Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute, 193 Yonge St. and 250 Yonge St. • Manages the Biosafety Program to protect the Research community and the environment from the risks that may arise in the handling of potentially hazardous biological materials. It also ensures that all work is conducted in compliance with applicable federal, provincial and institutional guidelines. 	<p>ResearchFacilities@unityhealth.to</p>
<p>Unity Health Biobank is dedicated to supporting translational innovation by providing access to clinical research samples, sample processing and dedicated sample storage in research dedicated freezers.</p>	<p>Valeria.DiGiovanni@unityhealth.to</p>

4. Information Technology

Service	Contact
<p>Research Software—licenses for the following software can be purchased through the Office of Research Administration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAS/SPSS • GraphPad Prism • iThenticate—a professional plagiarism detection and prevention tool 	<p>For SAS/SPSS and GraphPad Prism licenses: HelpDesk@unityhealth.to For iThenticate license: Dina.Coronios@unityhealth.to</p>
<p>General IT Support Services—all IT services (including purchasing computers, setting up a phone line and creating shared drives) are coordinated through the Corporate Information Technology.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have technical inquiries, please submit a ticket through the IT ServiceNow portal. • If you require IT hardware, products and/or applications, please submit an online request based on your site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - St. Michaels Hospital: submit a request through ShopIT - St. Joseph’s Health Centre: submit a request through this form - Providence Healthcare: submit a signed SARF PDF <p>Note: Only authorized staff can place orders. Managers or directors can let you know who is an authorized person to place an order for your department or program.</p>	<p>HelpDesk@unityhealth.to 416-360-4000 ext. 44357 (I-HELP)</p>
<p>Digital Tools—including Employee Self-Serve, Learning Centre, Resource Scheduler, etc.</p>	
<p>Forti Portal—accessing UnityNet portal, Outlook, paystubs, and WHSW Forms remotely from non-Unity devices (FortiToken required)</p>	
<p>Unity Health Secure File Transfer—a secure way to share large files</p>	

5. Communications

Service	Contact
<p>VPRI Update—a weekly newsletter to keep our research community informed about upcoming funding and awards opportunities, events, workshops, and announcements.</p>	<p>To subscribe, please send a request to VPRI@unityhealth.to</p>
<p>Research Community Forum (RCF)—quarterly/as-needed hybrid meeting for the Unity Health research community to hear general/institutional research administration updates, provide feedback and ask questions. RCFs are promoted in VPRI Update. Recording of the latest RCF is available on UnityNet Research.</p>	<p>To receive RCF calendar invites, please send a request to VPRI@unityhealth.to</p>
<p>Corporate Communications and Public Affairs—promotes interesting research stories, projects and results internally and externally. All media requests such as interviews, photo/video requests/opportunities (on-site & remote) must follow Media Relations Policy.</p>	<p>Marlene.Leung@unityhealth.to</p>
<p>Branding guidelines, logos and templates—any custom requests or inquiries related to usage should be consulted with Corporate Communications and Public Affairs.</p>	<p>Communications@unityhealth.to</p>
<p>Twice-A-Week Newsletter and Unity Health Events Calendar</p>	
<p>Research website inquires</p>	<p>LKSKI-related inquiries: LKSKIResearch@unityhealth.to</p>

	KRCBS-related inquiries: KRCBSResearch@unityhealth.to WebRequest@unityhealth.to
UnityNet portal (intranet) inquiries	

6. Continuing Education and Professional Development (CEPD)

Service	Contact
<p>The Continuing Education and Professional Development (CEPD) Office is a strategic hub for the design, delivery, and management of CEPD programs at Unity Health. CEPD serves to maintain, develop, and/or increase the knowledge, skills, and professional performance of our physicians and staff, in the latest updates in the provision of care.</p>	<p>LeadershipOD@unityhealth.to Hailey.Garcia-Gonzalez@unityhealth.to</p>
<p>The CEPD program offers continuing education funding support for permanent full-time or part-time employees to study on a part-time basis, offered by recognized universities, community colleges, and other post-secondary educational institutions. Other trainings such as courses, webinars and conferences must contribute to job performance, career development and the hospital’s overall goals. Funding for CEPD is approved by Leadership and Organizational Development in collaboration with the Education Portfolio and the employee’s manager. The CEPD Policy provides detailed information on the available funding programs.</p>	

7. Resource Guide for Patient & Community Engagement in the Design & Implementation of Research Studies

Service	Contact
<p>The Patient & Community Engagement Resource Guide has been developed by Unity Health Toronto’s Research community. This three-level Resource Guide is tailored to any researcher who intends to start learning or expanding their knowledge of equitable patient and community engagement in the design and implementation of research studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1: Learn—introducing patient and community engagement in the design and implementation of research studies • Level 2: Apply—learning how to implement best practices for equitably engaging patients and community partners in designing and implementing research studies • Level 3: Transform—learning how to further advance patient and community engagement practices with an equity, diversity and inclusion lens 	<p>LKSKIResearch@unityhealth.to</p>

8. Research Trainees

Service	Contact
<p>The Research Training Centre (RTC) provides support for graduate students (Master’s or Doctoral level) and Postdoctoral Fellows (PDFs), working under the supervision of Unity Health Toronto’s scientists. The RTC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Works with the Office of Research Administration in the Trainee Onboarding Process to manage trainee badge access, payroll and contracts.• Manages the RTC Registration Process and maintains a trainee registry. All trainees must formally register with the RTC. Only trainees registered with the RTC will be counted during the annual PI evaluation. Registration is required for scholarship applications and seat assignment in the Keenan Research Centre.• Organizes a yearly Orientation for new trainees (held in September) and provides the RTC Orientation Booklet.• Keeps trainees informed about events, funding opportunities, and relevant announcements through the RTC Staying Connected Newsletter.• Organizes academic events, including: monthly RTC trainee seminars; workshops, including the Essentials in Experimental and Clinical Research Workshop series; and the annual RTC Research Day.• Organizes internal award competitions and promotes external funding opportunities for trainees.• Provides resources for trainee support services available through Unity Health and the University of Toronto, including conflict resolution, career support, mental health resources, and information related to trainee-supervisor relations.• Provides resources for trainee education services, including information on the Unity Health Toronto’s Library, Keenan Research Centre Core Facilities, and career support resources.• Connecting Unity Health trainees with other hospital-based Research Training Centres across the GTA to share resources and opportunities, and to promote innovative partnerships• Maintains a list of Frequently Asked Questions.• Provides a point of contact and advocates for research trainees within the institution and beyond.• Supports the St. Michael’s Hospital Research Student Association (SRSA) and PDF community.• Provides support to trainees’ supervisors.	<p>rtc@unityhealth.to (Social Media: @smh_rtc)</p>
<p>St. Michael’s Hospital Research Student Association (SRSA) is a graduate student-run organization committed to representing the research students at Unity Health Toronto. Support services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SRSA Internal Peer Review Program—provides trainees with an opportunity to receive a full peer review of their scholarship applications prior to submitting to the granting agency.• Peer to Peer Trainee Mentorship Program—allows incoming graduate students to be paired with a more senior graduate student.• Trainee Events• SRSA Weekly Newsletter with trainee opportunities and upcoming events	<p>SRSA@smh.ca (Social Media: @stmichaels_srsa)</p>
<p>Guidelines for Postdoctoral Fellows Applying for Specific Research Grants—Postdoctoral fellows with an appointment at Unity Health Toronto can apply for and hold select research grants provided that they meet certain criteria as explained in the internal guidelines.</p>	<p>Marianna.Betro@unityhealth.to</p>

9. Applied Health Research Centre (AHRC)

The Applied Health Research Centre (AHRC) provides a full spectrum of expertise in clinical trials, observational epidemiology, qualitative research, data management and research informatics, and patient and community engagement in clinical research. Core services include:

Service	Contact
<p>Clinical Trials Coordination—works with trial sponsors to develop trial methodologies and implement trial operations for clinical research projects. Services range from full study coordination (project management, developing study protocols and consent forms, coordinating REB applications and managing study budgets) to multi-site management.</p>	<p>Hub.Research@unityhealth.to Gurpreet.Lakhanpal@unityhealth.to</p>
<p>Observational Epidemiology Research—provides support on longitudinal studies, patient registries, and population based studies using data from administrative databases. Services range from multi-site management, methodology input on proposals, creation of study materials, and budget preparations.</p>	
<p>Qualitative Research, Patient and Community Engagement in Research—offers support on qualitative and post-qualitative methodologies* as well as strategic direction on developing research partnerships between stakeholders for patient and community engagement.</p> <p><i>*Services include data collection and analyses (thematic, reflexive thematic, narrative, grounded-theory, multi-sensorial), reporting and dissemination of the results.</i></p>	
<p>Research Methods and Biostatistics—houses leading research methodologists and statisticians with distinct expertise in both randomized and non-randomized clinical research designs, and qualitative research methodologists for mixed methodologies.</p>	
<p>Research Information Systems—provides Electronic Data Capture (EDC) platform solutions such as REDCap Academic and REDCap Cloud (including database design, build and validation), data management services, Statistical Analysis System (SAS) scripting and reporting. AHRC offers access to the REDCap Academic environment to Unity Health researchers with a one-time fee.</p>	
<p>Quality Assurance & Monitoring—provides support on developing quality assurance plans, and conducting quality control activities to ensure compliance with standards and sponsor/regulatory requirements.</p>	

10. MAP Survey Research Unit (SRU)

The [MAP Survey Research Unit \(SRU\)](#) is part of the MAP Centre for Urban Health Solution with expertise in health equity research data collection as well as recruiting and interviewing diverse populations.

Service	Contact
<p>SRU provides full research management services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection • Project management • Recruitment and follow-up • Interviewing • Instrument development and programming • Secure data hosting and data entry • Quality control • Data analysis and reporting 	<p>SRU@unityhealth.to Cheryl.Pedersen@unityhealth.to</p>

11. Knowledge Translation Program (KTP)

The goals of the [Knowledge Translation Program \(KTP\)](#) are to:

- improve the quality of patient care and strengthen our health systems by partnering with knowledge users to co-produce knowledge and co-develop, implement and evaluate strategies that bridge the knowledge-to-practice gaps; and
- research the most effective ways to co-produce knowledge with knowledge users and translate that knowledge into practice and policy, thereby optimizing return on research investment, addressing health disparities, and strengthening the health system.

Service	Contact
<p>KTP provides a range of services on a cost-recovery basis. Industry-funded projects are not accepted. Examples of KTP projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of rapid, systematic reviews, meta analyses and network meta-analysis, economic analysis• Barrier and facilitator assessments and developments of implementation plans• Evaluations of implementation efforts (using various methods including economic analysis, mixed methods)• Development of knowledge translation (KT) tools and dissemination plans• Capacity building in KT including courses on knowledge synthesis (KS), Foundations of KT, Practicing KT, and Patient-Oriented Research (POR)• Facilitating the use of integrated KT for knowledge synthesis, dissemination and implementation• Facilitating the use of an intersectionality lens to support dissemination and implementation• Advancing the science for KS, dissemination and implementation, and POR	<p>Meghan.Storey@unityhealth.to</p>

12. Applied Education Research Operatives (AERO)

Service	Contact
<p>The Applied Education Research Operatives (AERO) team partners with clinical educators to enhance their innovations and research, and to mobilize the knowledge they generate. AERO develops contracted relationships with colleagues in need of AERO scientists' and investigators' services to support and coordinate their projects. Core services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project Visioning—clinical healthcare educators see opportunities to develop or improve methods of patient care taught to future healthcare professionals.• Project Design—AERO connects these educators with AERO researchers, who collaboratively design a project to enable scholarly investigation of the proposed innovation.• Project Accounting—AERO supports funding applications and creates and tracks budgets and measures of accountability.• Project Implementing—AERO supports project launch, including oversight of all data collection and analysis activities.• Project Mobilization—AERO and its partners collaborate to conduct and mobilize projects efficiently in educational and clinical sites.	<p>Ryan.Brydges@unityhealth.to Judy.Tran@unityhealth.to</p>

13. Interprofessional Practice-Based Research (IPBR)

The [Interprofessional Practice-Based Research \(IPBR\)](#) team partners with clinicians (typically nurses and health disciplines) across Unity Health to help them engage in practice based research in order to inform research based practice. IPBR provides various research and educational supports, from the point of idea development, through to knowledge translation and dissemination.

Service	Contact
<p>Research Consultation Services—available typically to nurses and health disciplines professionals across Unity Health Toronto to provide informational and methodological support related to research process, research resources, and research services.</p>	<p>IPBR@smh.ca (Social Media: @UHT_IPBR)</p>
<p>IPBR Small Grants—\$5,000 is awarded annually to interprofessional teams (including nurses and/or health disciplines professionals) to carry out a practice-based research project over a two-year period with the support of a mentor from IPBR.</p>	
<p>DSAA-IPBR Fellowship—in collaboration with the Data Science & Advanced Analytics (DSAA) team, IPBR offers nurses and health disciplines clinicians six month competitive research fellowships to carry out a data-driven study of relevance to their clinical units.</p>	
<p>IPBR Research Skills Workshop Series—prepares nursing and health disciplines clinicians to engage in practice based research and generate evidence for evidence based practice by providing strategies to devise a sound question, and create a study plan. Certificate of completion is available.</p>	
<p>Develop a Research Question—15 short modules that work through various phases of research question development to help nurses and health disciplines clinicians develop impactful research questions.</p>	
<p>Manuscript Writing Boot Camp—a peer-support forum designed to help our clinicians publish the results of their research and quality improvement initiatives in peer-reviewed journals. These regularly held three-hour sessions are intended to provide members with dedicated time and guidance to write up their work.</p>	
<p>Practice-Based Researcher (Status Only) Li Ka Shing Appointment—a formalized research appointment process for our health disciplines and nursing clinicians who are engaged in practice-based research or research related activities at Unity Health Toronto.</p>	
<p>IPBR-AFP Showcase—highlights and celebrates research, clinical, and educational projects carried out by nursing and health disciplines professionals across the hospital, as well as those research projects funded by the Unity Health AFP.</p>	
<p>IPBR Newsletter—highlights updates, IPBR-hosted educational opportunities and calls for research, upcoming conferences and grants, and more. Email IPBR@smh.ca to get subscribed to the newsletter.</p>	