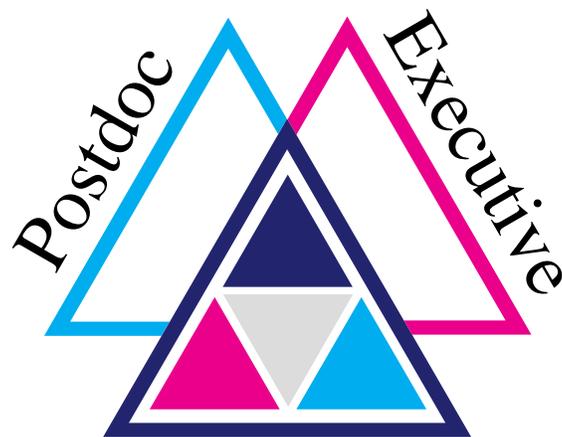


# Postdoc Secondary Mentor Program

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

## *Mentee Guide*



Committee

# ISMMS

Congratulations and welcome to the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai!

This guide is meant to help you navigate your road to success as a postdoc by establishing a tailored secondary mentoring experience. You already have a primary mentor (or mentors) in your PI(s), but by developing a relationship with one or more secondary mentors you can gain access to expertise and knowledge in specific areas you want to develop further.

This document has been compiled by the Postdoctoral Executive Committee, in partnership with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and the Office of Academic Enhancement & Mentoring (OAEM) and with input from the OAEM Steering Committee, a diverse group of individuals dedicated to helping you achieve professional and personal satisfaction at Mount Sinai. Take a few minutes to read over this Guide. Please reach out to the OAEM, via Elizabeth Urbanski at [elizabeth.urbanski@mssm.edu](mailto:elizabeth.urbanski@mssm.edu); [facultydevelopment@mssm.edu](mailto:facultydevelopment@mssm.edu), the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs via Theresa Scarabino at [theresa.scarabino@mssm.edu](mailto:theresa.scarabino@mssm.edu), or our Postdoc Advisor Charles Mobbs at [charles.mobbs@mssm.edu](mailto:charles.mobbs@mssm.edu) if you need additional information.

- ISMMS Postdoctoral Executive Committee
- Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
- Office of Academic Enhancement and Mentoring

*This document is adapted from the Faculty Mentoring Scheme document produced by the Office of Academic Enhancement and Mentoring, with special thanks to Elizabeth Urbanski.*

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## **GETTING STARTED: MENTORING CHECKLIST**

Here are the basic steps to beginning your secondary mentorship.

- Find your secondary mentor
- Review your role as a mentee
- Complete Self-Assessment
- Create a Personal Development Plan (PDP)
- Meet with your secondary mentor
- Review and adjust your PDP after discussing it with your secondary mentor

As you continue through the guide there will be tips and tools for how to complete each step listed above.

## I. INITIATION

This section will introduce you to the basics of being a mentee.

### A. Finding Your Secondary Mentor

You are encouraged to find a secondary mentor within 6 months of your hire date, but mentors can be helpful at any point in your career. Think about one or more specific areas of your life as a postdoc in which you need additional mentoring and support. This process will help you find a faculty member or postdoc peer who can help with these specific areas and spend up to 4 hours per year with you. The next section is designed to help you identify these areas.

To find your mentor, search the Postdoctoral Secondary Mentor database:

<http://postdoctoralmentorship.mssm.edu>

Faculty members in the database are aware of the postdoc secondary mentoring initiative and understand that they may be asked to be a mentor. You may discuss with them the time they have available and decide together if they are able to make a full commitment of up to 4 hours per year. Once you have selected your secondary mentor, reach out to them to set up your first official meeting.

If you are having difficulty getting started, seek input from your department Mentoring Leader. [Click here to find your department Mentoring Leader.](#) Departmental Mentoring Leaders are senior faculty members responsible for creating, implementing and tracking a department's mentoring and career development program.

### B. Tips on Initiating a Mentoring Relationship

For the initial contact and to start the mentoring relationship, you need to clarify the specific area in which you are seeking advice. This helps both your secondary mentor and yourself to determine the possibility of a mutual relationship. You should evaluate as soon as possible whether the person will be a good fit for your needs: how difficult/easy it was to meet the mentor, the value of the mentor's feedback, and the ease of interaction.

#### ***Initial contact***

Decide whether email or a phone call is best.

**E-mail (or mail):** Recommended if the person is not well known to you. If you do not get a response, follow up in a week with another E-mail or a phone call.

- In subject line of the E-mail, indicate your specific subject (e.g., "mentorship").
- By way of introduction, say why you are emailing and how you got the person's name (e.g., the Postdoctoral Secondary Mentor database, recommended by someone)

- Be prepared: Be specific & brief in the purpose of your message.
- Be specific: Tell them what area you are requesting mentoring on.
- Clarify in advance that you expect that this will be a limited time commitment, not a long-term time responsibility. Secondary mentors expect to spend no more than 4 hours per year mentoring you.
- Ask the person if they are willing to do this, or if you should seek help elsewhere.
- Proofread your message before you send it!
- Include a "delivery receipt" on your e-mail if possible.
- Provide your complete contact information and the best times to be reached.
- If you wish to follow up with a meeting, suggest what days and times are good for you.
- Consider attaching a CV (e.g., [the School CV Format](#) or [NIH biosketch](#)) so they have some information about you.

**Phone Call:** If you know the person and are comfortable with them, you may wish to make a phone call. Most of the above suggestions for E-mailing also apply to phone calls. To highlight important points:

- Introduce yourself and state the purpose of your call concisely.
- Ask if this is a good time, and if not, ask when would be a better time to call.
- Be prepared: have specific questions ready.
- Give the mentor the opportunity to set a time and place to meet.
- Ask the mentor what materials you can provide to help with mentoring (e.g., CV, grant, manuscript).

*(Adapted from document prepared by A. Gore, Ph.D., M. Grace, Ph.D., K. Kaplan, Ph.D., and A. Wang, M.D)*

### C. Your Role as a Mentee

The following guidelines will help you understand what your role will be as a mentee and what you can expect from your mentor.

#### Guidelines for Mentees

- **Have realistic expectations.** Realize that one secondary mentor may not be able to help you with everything you need and you may need to find multiple mentors.
- **Establish the nature of the mentoring relationship.** This needs to be done in conjunction with the mentor:
  - Formal or informal
  - Set specific goals for the relationship – what will you get out of it?
  - Frequency of meetings (remember, secondary mentors are asked to spend no more than 4 hours per year mentoring you)
- **Ask for specific advice, and be receptive to input,** even if it is not what you want to hear.
- **Be critical of feedback and advice.** You may want to get a second opinion if you do not agree, or to discuss other options with your mentor.

- **Evaluate the relationship.** Is it difficult to contact the mentor? Do they cancel meetings at the last minute?
- **Take responsibility for the relationship.** You are responsible for contacting the mentor and setting up appointments. If possible, attend mutually interesting functions with your mentor, even if this is a way just to keep in touch.
- **Follow up.** If your mentor offers good advice, you need to act on it.
- **Keep in touch.** Be sure to communicate with your mentor. Give your mentor progress reports by email, meet for coffee, or try to see her or him at ISMMS functions.
- **Be considerate.** Be prompt to meetings. If you need to reschedule, give your mentor plenty of advance notice (at least 24 hours). Recognize that your mentor is busy, and respect their time.
- **Realize that relationships are dynamic.** Your relationship with your mentor may change over time, and be prepared to make changes if necessary.
- **Take advantage of opportunities to work with women and men.**
- **Confidentiality:** Your mentorship relationship is a personal one. You need to establish with your mentor the degree to which this advice is kept confidential. \*See confidentiality in data agreement on page 12
- **Appreciation:** Let your mentor know when they have helped you, and express appreciation for their guidance. Keep them updated if and when you move on from your postdoc at ISMMS.

*(Adapted from document prepared by A. Gore, Ph.D., M. Grace, Ph.D., K. Kaplan, Ph.D., and A. Wang, M.D)*

## II. DEVELOPMENT

This section will help you assess your skills and goals.

### D. Creating your Personal Development Plan (PDP)

Postdocs are strongly encouraged to create and update a Personal Development Plan (PDP) within six months of hire. Based on skill assessment and self-reflection, a PDP is a written plan to achieve your goals. There is no right or wrong way to complete a PDP as it is your own outline, your own roadmap to success. You could use a [chart](#) or write out answers in [long-hand](#). It is a document that should be under constant revision, evolving as your career will. You do not need to share it with anyone, even your mentors, but complete it before you meet with your secondary mentor. Use it to help you meet your goals.

Keep the list realistic and use the outline below to help get you started:

1. Define your goal.
2. Is your goal long-term or short-term?
3. Assess the resources and skills needed to achieve set goal.
4. How do you obtain the necessary resources and/or skills?
5. How can your mentor help you achieve this goal?
6. Create a timeline for achieving your goal.

### E. Your CV

Keeping your CV up-to-date will keep you focused on your progress and prepared for meetings with your secondary mentor. Example formats include [the School CV Format](#) and [NIH biosketch format](#).

### F. Meeting with your Secondary Mentor

It is your responsibility to approach your secondary mentor and to set up meetings with them. Remember that they expect to spend no more than 4 hours per year with you so make sure you know what you want to talk about. This is your time, use it wisely and get the answers you need. For subsequent meetings come prepared with updates based on what you and your mentor discussed.

### E. Topics of Discussion

Here is a [list of questions](#) that can serve as a tool to help stimulate discussion.

## G. Skills Assessment

In order to move forward and make progress in a mentoring relationship, you must understand which of your skills are sufficient and which ones need improvement. Please use the chart enclosed here to identify areas in which you need mentoring.

Scale: 1=needs attention, 3=meets expectations, 5= extremely competent.

<b><u>DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE</u></b>						
Analytical approach to defining scientific questions	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Design of scientifically testable hypotheses	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Broad-based knowledge acquisition	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Interpretation and analysis of data	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
<b><u>PROFESSIONAL/RESEARCH SKILL DEVELOPMENT</u></b>						
Literature search strategies and effective interpretation	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Experimental design	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Statistical analysis	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Data analysis and interpretation	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Laboratory techniques and safety	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Principles of the peer review process	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
<b><u>COMMUNICATION SKILLS</u></b>						
Writing	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Speaking	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Teaching	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Interpersonal	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Special situations	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
<b><u>PROFESSIONALISM</u></b>						
Workplace	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Institutional	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Collegial	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Universal	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
<b><u>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS</u></b>						
<i>Leadership</i> – Strategic vision	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
<i>Leadership</i> – Motivating and inspiring others	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
<i>Management</i> – Project management	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
<i>Management</i> – Data and resource management	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
<i>Management</i> – Research staff management	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
<b><u>RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH</u></b>						
Conflicts of interest	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Data ownership and sharing	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Publication practices and responsible authorship	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Identifying and mitigating research misconduct	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Research with human subjects (when applicable)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Research involving animals (when applicable)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

### III. ADVANCEMENT

This section will introduce you to resources available to you.

It is your responsibility to know where you stand in your career. In addition to discussing it with your individual mentors, be sure you take advantage of the tools ISMMS offers to help you.

#### H. Seminars & Workshops

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs organizes regular career events and workshops. You can find the current calendar of events at the [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs website](#).

#### I. Postdoc Resources

There are also a number of resources for postdocs including:

Connect with the Sinai Postdoc Community on your favorite **social media platform**:

**Twitter** (@MtSinaiPostdocs), **Facebook** (Mount Sinai PostDocs) or **LinkedIn** (Mount Sinai Postdoctoral Association).

**Alumni LinkedIn** (MSSM Postdoctoral Alumni Network): Keep in touch with postdoc alumni from Sinai and learn about careers.

**The Postdoc Executive Committee** (link to the webpage

<http://icahn.mssm.edu/education/postdoctoral-training/who-we-are/postdoctoral-executive-committee>): The mission of the Postdoc Executive Committee at ISMMS shall be to foster a sense of community among the postdoctoral research fellows at ISMMS and to advocate for and be the representative voice of the postdoctoral community at ISMMS. They meet once a month.

**Postdoc Periodical**: A monthly roundup of postdoc achievements and upcoming events.

**Postdoc-run Work In Progress (WiP) meetings**: (e.g., Cancer Group, Neurology WiP): For advice from your colleagues on how to improve your projects.

**Women in Science events** ([wism@mssm.edu](mailto:wism@mssm.edu)): Great career information for both men and women.

**Postdoc Writing Group** ([postdoc-writing@mssm.edu](mailto:postdoc-writing@mssm.edu)): Improve your writing, reviewing and editing skills at the Writing Group meetings and seminars (Twitter: @PostdocWriting).

To stay up to date on these and more, make sure you are on the postdoc mailing list (managed by [Theresa Scarabino](#)). Many of these resources are run by postdocs and offer a great opportunity to develop your professional skills outside the lab.

## **IV. CONFIDENTIALITY**

This section will provide you with basic guidelines to maintain confidentiality in the mentor-mentee relationship.

**Confidential Reporting of Scientific Misconduct.** In the rare event of suspected scientific misconduct, you are required to report it. You could bring your concerns to the attention of a responsible faculty member. Generally, this would be your mentor. However, in case of a potential conflict with your mentor or concern on your part about this channel of reporting, it is suggested you seek the advice of another trusted senior faculty member, such as Dr. Charles Mobbs ([charles.mobbs@mssm.edu](mailto:charles.mobbs@mssm.edu); who teaches Responsible Conduct of Research) or Dr. Reginald Miller ([reginald.miller@mssm.edu](mailto:reginald.miller@mssm.edu); Institutional Research Integrity Officer (RIO)). Any of these faculty members can review the situation in confidence and are not required to disclose any further information, if in their judgment, the situation does not require it. The institutional policies and procedures for reporting and handling allegations of scientific or research misconduct are outlined in the faculty handbook under Policies and Procedures for the Ethical Conduct of Research. Although written for faculty, these guidelines may be of benefit to you. Note: The Postdoc Secondary Mentor program currently does NOT include support for Conflict Resolution and Research Ethics.

**Confidentiality of Data.** Remember your Principal Investigator is personally responsible for all aspects of the laboratory, and has authority over decisions involving the laboratory. Although data produced in a laboratory is technically owned by the institution, the institution gives the PI full control over the data. Therefore it is essential to obtain permission from the PI before any unpublished data are divulged.

To ensure non-disclosure of research data discussed in the course of the mentoring relationship, bring two copies of the agreement (see below) to your first meeting with your secondary mentor so that both your mentor and you can keep a copy of the signed agreement.

## **Postdoc Secondary Mentor Program Confidentiality of Data Agreement**

I, the mentee, agree to limit discussion of any proprietary information unless absolutely essential to improving my identified mentoring need. It is my responsibility to obtain permission from my primary postdoc mentor to discuss proprietary information with my secondary mentor. I will disclose to my secondary mentor at the onset of the mentoring relationship whether any proprietary information will be included in the discussion.

Mentee Signature:

Mentee Name:

Date:

I, the mentor, agree to keep confidential any proprietary information discussed in the course of the mentoring relationship.

Mentor Signature:

Mentor Name:

Date: