

Postdoc Secondary Mentor Program

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Mentor Guide



This guide is meant to serve as a tool to improve your experience as a postdoctoral secondary mentor and focuses on the three stages of mentorship: initiation, development, and advancement. As a secondary mentor you are not expected to replace their PI, but to add your expertise and support to a particular area they want to develop. For each postdoc you agree to mentor, you are expected to spend a maximum of 4 hours per year mentoring them.

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), with input from the OAEM Steering Committee, a diverse group of individuals dedicated to helping you achieve professional and personal satisfaction at Mount Sinai. Please reach out to the OAEM, Elizabeth Urbanski at elizabeth.urbanski@mssm.edu); facultydevelopment@mssm.edu), the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (Theresa Scarabino at theresa.scarabino@mssm.edu), or our Postdoc Advisor Deanna Benson (deanna.benson@mssm.edu) if you need additional information.

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

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GETTING STARTED AS A MENTOR: CHECKLIST

Once you have been selected as a postdoctoral secondary mentor keep the following in mind to make the most out of your own and your mentee's experience.

As a mentor, you are expected to:

- Be available (up to 4 hours a year per postdoc)
- Meet with your mentee and observe their progress
- Give feedback

I. INITIATION

This section will introduce you to the beginning stage of a mentoring relationship.

A. Volunteering to be a Postdoctoral Secondary Mentor

To volunteer for mentorship, please fill out the Postdoctoral Secondary Mentorship questionnaire at [XXXX](#). It takes two minutes to complete, and allows you to identify the areas in which you think you will be able to provide mentorship. Postdocs will find mentors for specific areas by searching the database.

Here is an extensive, but not exhaustive, list of topics you may be asked to provide mentorship on. You can also find this list in our online database where you can indicate your mentoring preferences. Note that specific questions regarding data and data analyses should *not* be the subject of these mentoring meetings.

1. Academic career paths
2. Non-academic career paths
 - Industry (Biotech/ Pharma)
 - Business/ Entrepreneurship
 - Science policy/ Government agency
 - Communications/ Science Writing
 - Foundations/Non-profit
 - Other (please specify)
3. Careers outside USA (please specify region)
 - North America
 - Europe
 - Asia
 - Africa
 - South America
 - Australia/ New Zealand
4. Teaching (eg. designing a class or test)
5. Technology transfer or patents
6. Work-Life balance
7. Project/Time Management
8. Oral communication (eg. Giving a talk, lecture or poster)

B. Being Asked to be a Postdoctoral Secondary Mentor

Postdocs are encouraged to find a secondary mentor within 6 months of their hire date. If a postdoc approaches you with a mentoring request, you should give full consideration to such a request. Make sure you:

- **Evaluate your skills and time:** Evaluate whether you are the right person for the job, in terms of both expertise and time. Also, keep in mind that while you cannot be everything to a mentee, it is likely that you will be able to perform a specific mentoring function. (Examples are: insights into industry jobs; academic life outside the US, issues regarding work-life balance, etc.)
- **If you want to say no:** If you are contacted and feel that you are NOT the best person, suggest someone else with expertise. Otherwise, recommend that they contact your departmental [Mentoring Leader](#) for a recommendation.

C. Your Role as a Mentor

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

- Be available.
- Be engaged: Be willing to give constructive criticism as well as praise and suggest options for "fixing" problems.
- Be courteous: Give sufficient notice before changing meetings. Respond to emails and telephone calls promptly.
- Be in touch: Try to keep in touch regularly through emails.
- Be honest about the relationship: Clarify your role and exactly what the mentee expects of you. Let your mentee know if you think the relationship needs to change, due to changes in their needs, time constraints on your end, etc.
- Play a role in career advancement: Talk about your mentee's accomplishments within the institution, introduce them to others, and recommend them for national events if applicable.
- Help establish goals: What do you and your mentee hope to accomplish?

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

D. Mentee Documents

Here is a list of the documents your mentee will prepare for the start of their mentorship. You may ask your mentee to review them prior to your first meeting so that you have a sense of what your mentee needs from you. Please keep in mind that the documents may not be finalized, as your mentee will be seeking your input on strategy and revisions.

CV: A common question is “What is the required Icahn School of Medicine CV format?” You can direct them [here](#) for the institution’s template.

Skills Assessment: Metrics below are taken directly from the National Postdoctoral Association Core Competencies Self-Assessment Checklist. Encourage your mentee to complete the chart, use it as the basis of their action plan, and to discuss with you their strengths and weaknesses. They may share the chart with you to discuss specific areas identified from the chart that they need help with. The categories and sub-categories will remain constant but the examples on how to achieve a satisfactory rating are interchangeable.

Scale: 1=needs improvement, 3=satisfactory, 5 = highly proficient.

DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE						
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
PROFESSIONAL/RESEARCH SKILL DEVELOPMENT						
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
COMMUNICATION SKILLS						
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
PROFESSIONALISM						
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
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS						
<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
RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH						
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

Personal Development Plan (PDP): Postdocs are strongly encouraged to create and update a Personal Development Plan (PDP) within six months of hire date and review it with their mentors at least once every six months.

A PDP is a written plan for achieving goals, which is based on skill assessment and self-reflection. There is no right or wrong way to complete a PDP. The PDP is the mentee's own plan and will be constantly updated to evolve with developments in the mentee's career. The content of the PDP is based on the Skills Assessment and they have been given a [chart](#) and [long-hand](#) format to use if they choose. Your mentee may have several goals they are trying to accomplish. Be sure to check with your departmental [Mentoring Leader](#) if there are specific criteria set forth in the framework of your department's mentoring program.

Regardless of how the information is summarized, use the questions below to review their content. Discuss strengths, weaknesses and how you can help them achieve their benchmarks.

Did the mentee:

- Define their goals realistically?
- Categorize them as long-term or short-term?
- List resources and skills needed to achieve set goal?
- Brainstorm on how to obtain the necessary resources and/or skills?
- Ask you for help on specific tasks that will help them achieve this goal?
- Create a timeline?

II. DEVELOPMENT

Section II provides the tools to ensure that your mentee is asking the right questions, making progress, and that you are giving constructive feedback.

E. Topics of Discussion

Here is a [list of questions](#) that have been given to your mentee that will serve as a tool to help stimulate discussion. Take a moment to review them so that you may be prepared to address some challenging topics.

F. Tips for giving a positive critique

We have given you a set of guidelines in Section C to help evaluate your mentee's goals. When you are reviewing them, you are going to be critiquing their work and decisions he or she has made. Think about your own mentors, how pivotal they were in your career and what you learned from them.

Before you address a topic with your mentee ask yourself, whether your comments will help:

- Focus the direction of my mentee
- Assist in solving a specific issue
- Build confidence
- Integrate my expertise
- Stimulate creative thinking
- Provide insight that comes only with experience
- Acknowledge a challenging hurdle and give them the tools they need to overcome it in their given timeframe

III. ADVANCEMENT

The Icahn School of Medicine has a number of tools to help postdocs advance. Below are a few key resources that you could refer your mentee to.

G. 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](#).

H. Postdoc Resources

Other resources for postdocs include:

Social media platforms for connecting with the postdoc community:

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 departmental colleagues on how to improve research projects.

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

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

IV. CONFIDENTIALITY IN DATA AGREEMENT

This section will introduce you to the basics mechanism enforced to protect intellectual property.

Confidentiality of Data. Remember the Principle Investigator is personally responsible for all aspects of the laboratory, and therefore similarly 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.

Scientific Misconduct. In the rare event there is good reason to suspect scientific misconduct, you are required to report it. One method is by bringing this 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, it is suggested you seek the advice of another trusted senior faculty member, such as Dr. Barry Stimmel (barry.stimmel@mssm.edu; Ombudsperson); Dr. Charles Mobbs (charles.mobbs@mssm.edu; who teaches Responsible Conduct of Research) or Dr. Reginald Miller (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.

The mentee should bring two copies of the below agreement to your first meeting so that you and your mentee can keep a copy of the signed agreement.

Postdoc Secondary Mentoring Program Confidentiality

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: