

Individual Development Plan

Overview

The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine has developed a range of graduate training programs that offer the Ph.D. in the basic biomedical and translational sciences. The goal of these programs is to train the next generation of outstanding scientists who actively generate and apply new knowledge toward understanding human biology and disease. We accomplish this goal by selecting and supporting qualified trainees, offering relevant didactic coursework and providing a strong research environment with a dedicated faculty who are skilled mentors and accomplished researchers in the biomedical sciences.

It is a fair statement that the majority of students who apply and enter our Ph.D. programs indicate a strong interest in pursuing a career as an independent investigator in an academic or institutional setting. That said, advances in the biomedical sciences over the last decades have allowed for the creation of new opportunities for pursuing challenging and rewarding careers in the private and public sector. These include positions in biotechnology firms, the pharmaceutical industry, science policy, science writing, teaching and communications, and intellectual property. We are also aware that the economics of research funding and the long-term strategic plans of research-intensive institutions have altered the landscape for pursuing the traditional independent investigator track. Therefore, it is incumbent on the graduate programs in the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine to not only rigorously train our students in the art of research, but to also help prepare them for the diversity of career opportunities that are available in the biomedical enterprise. It is in this spirit that we make the following recommendations regarding annual mentorship and the implementation of individual development plans (IDPs).

Mentorship and IDPs

Effective mentoring is a key component of Ph.D. training. When effective it can generate a win-win situation for the mentee, mentor and the mentor's laboratory and research program. Essential components of the mentoring plan should include not only research intensive advice but also provide opportunities to assess the unique needs and goals of each trainee, examine and discuss in a honest and confidential fashion strengths and weaknesses, describe short- and long-term research objectives, discuss short and long term career objectives and identify professional development activities needed to reach these goals. The mentoring plan should also be done in a manner that facilitates communication between mentees and mentors and set the stage for ongoing constructive dialogue throughout the training period.

Recommendations

1. Each program should require each trainee to annually utilize the resources at myIDP <http://myidp.sciencecareers.org/>. This is a recently developed individual online tool to allow trainees to examine their skills, interests, and values, provides advice on career paths, as well as set tractable goals. The expectation is that this information obtained will be part of the annual mentoring meeting (below) and form the basis for continued conversations with the mentor.
2. Each graduate program should require a formal annual mentoring meeting between the trainee and mentor. This meeting can be facilitated by completion of an evaluation questionnaire that asks for input on project progress, mentoring, lab environment and career objectives. A sample template is provided below and includes an opportunity for

input from the myIDP exercise. The outcome of this meeting should be a series of action items with a reasonable timeline for implementation. The detail of this meeting should be kept confidential but documentation that this formal meeting has taken place should be sent to the program office and placed in the student's folder.

3. At the Institutional level, resources should be generated to interrogate the SOM-specific data collected by myIDP. This website was launched in the fall of 2012 and is intended to be an evolving resource available for education based research. Based on communications with the authors (via Cynthia N. Fuhrmann, Ph.D., now Assistant Dean, Career & Professional Development in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Medical School) the site has been heavily utilized but to date no data extraction or analysis has been done due to limitations in resources. Preliminary discussions with the developers indicated a willingness to share institution-specific data using key identifiers that maintain anonymity. In this manner we would be able gain insight into our trainee's outlooks on their skill levels, interests and values. This information could be tracked over time and used to see how they change as our students' progress in their training. In addition, such data could be used to advocate for educational resources to enhance key skill sets found lacking and allow the School of Medicine to be proactive in the development of new training opportunities in line with student values and interests.
4. Dedicate resources to develop new initiatives related to career development for trainees. This may take the form of a workshop for trainees focusing on the IDP. This workshop can incorporate an invited lecture/seminar by an IDP developer as well as small group sessions discussing how to best utilize myIDP or other career planning resources/tools, strategizing on challenges and setting/achieving goals. Initiatives such as these may be developed by the Professional Development Office and implemented with the help of key faculty.

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Annual Progress Evaluation and Mentoring Session

Name: _____

Date of Meeting: _____

Arrival date in the lab: _____

Year of Study: _____

Prepared by: _____

Please read and answer the following questions in a few sentences before coming to our annual meeting. Please be honest and forthright as this information will be treated as confidential. I will also fill out the relevant sections on the same form and we will discuss our answers together, review the progress made in the last year and develop a action plan for the future.

A. Mentoring

Would more regular formal feedback (i.e. monthly or weekly ~ 1hr meetings) be helpful for you? If so, how frequently should we meet?

Name two things that I, as your mentor, could do better that would help you.

Name two things that you as a trainee could do better.

B. The Lab Environment

What is the larger focus of the lab? Where does your project fit in? Describe your view of the lab's future direction.

Do you have concerns about the lab? Do you have any suggestions for how the lab could run better or more smoothly?

C. Your Project

What is the long-term goal of your project? How does it fit into the overall plan of the lab?

Describe experimental and professional accomplishments from past year.

What are your experimental goals for the next twelve months? How will you accomplish these goals? Are there new techniques would you need to learn to accomplished these goals?

What do you need to achieve these goals?

D: Long Term Career Goals.

When do you hope to graduate? If you are close to graduation, what do you need to accomplish to graduate?

Have your used the website myIDP(<http://myidp.sciencecareers.org/>) or other similar site? Have you found that helpful? Is there anything that you have learned from that exercise that you wish to discuss?

What are your long-term career goals?

In addition to carrying out your project, what are your professional goals for the next twelve months? For example, are you planning on attending a scientific meeting or taking a professional development course, (see opportunities at <http://www.jhu.edu/~pdo/>)?

Signature or Mentor

Date

Signature of Student

Date

Date of IDP meeting

Please return this signature page to the Pathobiology program office in Ross 558.