I. PURPOSE

To provide guidance to Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine (JHUSOM) graduate students, faculty, and administrators in order to ensure adequate mentoring of graduate students (“trainees”) throughout their education at JHUSOM. The University policy on Mentoring Commitments for PhD students and Faculty Advisors provides an overview of each party’s responsibilities. Faculty mentors/advisors often serve as gatekeepers to the trainee’s future, and mentors have an obligation to be sensitive to the inherent power differential in the mentor/trainee relationship.

A primary goal of these procedures is to provide responsible oversight of the mentoring of trainees, acknowledging the vulnerable status trainees may have when disagreements and interpersonal conflict occur with advisors/mentors. These procedures aim to keep all parties informed throughout the process when problems are identified, while maintaining appropriate confidentiality and following institutional and program policies.

II. PROCEDURES

• All faculty are encouraged to adopt the attitude that training students is a privilege, not a right, which carries responsibilities for both the mentor and mentee. Monitoring these relationships is an important activity that benefits the University, faculty, trainees, and the research community as a whole.

• Mentoring is a critical dimension of faculty’s work at JHUSOM and requires a set of skills that are as complex and refined as those required for other professional activities, such as conducting research or providing patient care. As such, mentoring skills benefit from lifelong learning and require constant and vigilant cultivation.

• Frequent and open communication is at the core of a good mentoring relationship. Faculty and trainees are encouraged to discuss their expectations and each party’s responsibilities regularly, addressing any points of confusion or disagreement as soon as they arise. As outlined in the Guidelines for Conduct in Teacher/Learner Relationships, students are encouraged to discuss concerns directly with their mentor. If this is too uncomfortable, students are encouraged to seek advice from another faculty member with the goal of resolving the matter.

• Trainees are active participants in their graduate and professional training. They are expected to understand and meet program requirements described in the program policy handbook and follow the Academic Integrity Policy and the Student Conduct Code.

• In addition to the primary advisor/mentor, each trainee is encouraged to identify a co-mentor. Trainees are encouraged to meet with this co-mentor on a regular basis throughout the training period. Trainees and co-mentors are encouraged to develop a relationship that addresses the trainee’s scholarship and professional development needs.

Monitoring and Conflict Resolution Procedures:

1. When a trainee selects a faculty member as a thesis advisor, the graduate program director (PD) will inform the Director of the faculty member’s department. Whenever there is a change to the faculty thesis advisor, the PD will inform both the Director of the faculty member’s department and the Associate Dean for Graduate Biomedical Education (“Associate Dean”).

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2. Faculty members are encouraged to communicate regularly with PDs about the progress and performance of trainees. If problems occur and direct attempts to improve the situation do not result in improvement, faculty members are encouraged to consult with the PD or Associate Dean to discuss the situation.

3. On a regular basis, each PD will be responsible for reviewing information collected by the Office of Assessment and Evaluation (“OAE”) about mentoring/advising relationships and identifying any individual trainee who reports ongoing difficulties or problems in the mentoring relationship.
   a. OAE will refer matters to either the PD or Associate Dean, as applicable, in order to maintain confidentiality in matters where the PD is the mentor/advisor.
      i. Under limited circumstances (e.g., prolonged travel), the Associate Dean may designate another individual (e.g., the Assistant Dean for Graduate Biomedical Education) to perform the procedures outlined in this document.

4. When ongoing difficulties or problems in the mentoring relationship are identified, the PD or Associate Dean (or a designated representative) will meet with the trainee individually to discuss the situation.
   a. The initial meeting will begin with the PD or Associate Dean explaining mandated reporting requirements (e.g., Title IX), the extent to which the discussion can remain confidential, and the responsibilities all faculty and trainees have to maintain confidentiality and follow university policies regarding professional and research conduct and teacher/learner relationships.
      i. The primary goal of this initial meeting will be to assess the situation from the trainee’s perspective, address unrealistic expectations or misperceptions, and engage in advising and problem-solving to help the trainee increase confidence in handling the situation independently.
      ii. Where applicable, the PD or Associate Dean will encourage the trainee to talk with the co-mentor, possibly facilitated by, or along with, the PD and/or Associate Dean.
      iii. The PD or Associate Dean will recommend any other university resources that may be helpful to the trainee (e.g., Johns Hopkins Student Assistance Program and University Mental Health Services).
      iv. If the situation triggers review and/or mandatory reporting responsibilities under University or JHUSOM policies or procedures, the PD or Associate Dean will follow the applicable policies or procedures.
      v. If the trainee declines further discussion with the PD or Associate Dean (for example, due to concerns about mandatory reporting or the limits of confidentiality), the PD or Associate Dean will provide the trainee with information on appropriate resources available to help with the situation (e.g., University Mental Health Services, the Sexual Assault Help Line, the Compliance Line, or the Johns Hopkins Student Assistance Program).
   b. In discussing the situation with the trainee, options that may need to be considered include addressing trainee behavior or work habits, identification or greater use of the co-mentor, having the trainee change laboratories or PIs, or filing an official complaint with the applicable University or JHUSOM office.
   c. The PD or Associate Dean will follow up with the trainee in a timely manner (within one month, or sooner if requested by the trainee, if possible) and determine if the situation has improved.
      i. If the situation has improved, these procedures will terminate.
      ii. If the situation has not improved and the PD or Associate Dean determines that resolution of the conflict requires action on the part of the faculty advisor/mentor, the PD or Associate Dean will discuss with the trainee the next step(s), which may be for the PD or Associate Dean to discuss the situation with the faculty member.
         1. The PD or Associate Dean should seek the trainee’s consent before speaking with the faculty member.
         2. If the trainee does not provide consent to the PD or Associate Dean to discuss the situation with the faculty member, then the PD or Associate Dean will explain the limits of what can be expected and
5. When warranted as a result of these discussions with the trainee, the PD or Associate Dean will talk to the faculty member to obtain the faculty member’s perspective on the situation and work to facilitate resolution.
   
a. The PD or Associate Dean will attempt to resolve the situation through appropriate discussions with the faculty member and trainee.
   i. The PD or Associate Dean should consider bringing the trainee and faculty member together for a meeting if appropriate.
   ii. Both parties will be reminded about the university policy on Mentoring Commitments for PhD students and Faculty Advisors.
   iii. Both parties will be reminded that retaliation in any form, including withholding opportunities based solely on an issue related to the conflict rather than on performance, withholding data or other key information, discontinuing funding, or making false or defamatory statements about the other party in spoken or written communication is not tolerated and any indication of retaliation will be promptly reported in accordance with applicable university policies and procedures, which may include the Academic Integrity Policy for Graduate Students and the Procedures for Dealing with Issues of Faculty Professional Misconduct.

b. Because of the vulnerable nature of trainees, it is recommended that the PD or Associate Dean discuss specific topics privately with the trainee and develop a plan for supporting the trainee where appropriate. Potential topics that need to be anticipated include the following:
   i. The ramifications of these conversations and procedures for the trainee’s financial support, including issues of visa status for international trainees.
   ii. The potential impact on authorship or the research project.
   iii. The potential need for another faculty member to provide a letter of reference for the trainee. The PD or Associate Dean is encouraged to identify who will provide this letter (e.g., the co-mentor) and provide mentoring/advising while the trainee completes the program.
   iv. Whether the trainee perceives any form of retaliation, even subtle forms, on the part of the faculty member.
      1. Retaliation in any form, including discontinued funding as punishment, is not tolerated and any indication of retaliation will be reviewed for professional misconduct.
   v. Information on appropriate resources available to help with the situation (e.g., University Mental Health Services, the Compliance Line, and the Johns Hopkins Student Assistance Program).

c. Faculty members are encouraged to consult with the Director of their department and/or the Vice Dean of Faculty for guidance or support if necessary.

d. The PD or Associate Dean has a responsibility to follow up with both the faculty member and trainee to discuss and monitor how the situation is being addressed.
   i. If conflict resolution requires changes in the trainee’s behavior, this will be monitored.
      1. If the situation does not improve with these changes in trainee behavior, the PD or Associate Dean will work with the student to find an alternative mentor or placement.
   ii. If conflict resolution requires changes in the faculty member’s behavior, this will be monitored.
      1. If the situation does not improve with these changes in faculty member behavior, the PD or Associate Dean will determine whether further action is required.
   iii. If the situation improves, these procedures will terminate.
6. If the situation has not improved and it is determined that the faculty member’s behavior is the source of conflict, except with respect to matters within the purview of other University or JHUSOM policies or procedures, the PD and/or Associate Dean can initiate a review of the situation with the Director of the faculty member’s department.
   a. This review will be conducted in a meeting of the PD and/or Associate Dean and the Director at which the PD and/or Associate Dean will present the available information on the problems in the mentoring relationship.
      i. The faculty member will be invited to contribute information, either in person or in written form.
      ii. The trainee will be invited to contribute information, either in person or in written form.
      iii. If initiated by the PD, the Associate Dean for Graduate Biomedical Education will be notified that this review is to occur and will be invited to participate.
      iv. Best practices will include, as appropriate, including the President of the Graduate Student Association or their designee in this meeting.
   b. A timely decision will be made by the PD (or Associate Dean if the PD is the mentor).
      i. Remediation may be required on the part of the faculty member and/or trainee to address concerns regarding the mentoring relationship.
      ii. The faculty member may have their right to mentor the trainee suspended or removed or their right to mentor all program trainees suspended.
      iii. The faculty member may be removed from the training program. Removal will be based on the faculty member’s failure to meet participation requirements of the program or mentoring expectations as defined in the University policy on Mentoring Commitments for PhD students and Faculty Advisors.
      iv. The decision to suspend mentoring rights or remove from the program will be communicated to the Associate Dean prior to communication with the faculty member. The Associate Dean will identify any other ramifications of the decision.
   c. It is expected that the Director will document these communications
      i. If the Director becomes aware of a pattern of problems arising with a faculty member in the mentoring/advising of trainees, the Director will inform the Associate Dean which may prompt review under other University or JHUSOM policies and procedures such as the Guidelines for Conduct in Teacher/Learner Relationships and/or the Code of Professional Conduct for Faculty.
         1. These offices will keep records of these notifications in order to determine whether additional issues need to be addressed (e.g., trainee complaints regarding mentoring may stimulate a more detailed review of the faculty member’s mentoring of postdoctoral fellows and other populations)

7. If the resolution of the situation is not acceptable to either the trainee or the faculty member, either party can pursue the Grievance Procedure for the School of Medicine.

8. These procedures do not apply to matters within the purview of other University or JHUSOM policies or procedures.
   a. Matters involving potential academic integrity or research misconduct, professional misconduct, sexual misconduct, discrimination and harassment, and/or violations of other policy or procedures are not covered by these procedures and such matters shall be forwarded to the appropriate office for review.
   b. Information about behavior that is a violation of the Teacher/Learner or Professional Conduct policy will be referred to the appropriate Dean’s office.
   c. In addition, the Associate Dean and the Dean’s Office retain the discretion to act outside of these procedures in order to promptly address matters impacting graduate trainees and/or the University community.
III. REVIEWS AND APPROVALS

Reviewed by Faculty Senate: 12/11/2019

Reviewed by ABMF (Advisory Board of the Medical Faculty) 2/26/2020