

MD/PhD Mentorship Responsibilities

This document is intended to be an outline of responsibilities for faculty who mentor MD/PhD students

Initial Draft: Lindsay (Lou) Vinascik, Elisabeth DeMarco, Di (Andy) Wu, May 2023

Last updated: October 2023

Approved by the MD/PhD Steering Committee 10/12/2023

Expectations for mentoring MD/PhD students in **pre-clerkship** years

- The MD/PhD program requires students (as of Summer 2023) to rotate in two different labs in their first and second summer rotations, as a breadth of experience is likely to result in a best fit for doctoral studies.
 - The mentors of these rotations should be aware that one of the two labs will be the permanent home for the trainee during their PhD years.
 - Consider this when formulating projects (that is, summer rotations should not necessarily be understood as the beginning of a doctoral project)
 - For students who join the HCOR or HCE programs, these first 2 summers look different– students and mentors in these programs should establish clear expectations around when commitment to the program is required
 - Mentors will create a written agreement for adding coursework credits accrued prior to matriculation into the PhD program.
- The MD/PhD program does not require nor expect trainees to be in the lab during medical school enrollments. Some students may opt to engage in a research elective in their preclinical years, but others will want to take advantage of other electives, so any research completed during preclinical training should be understood as fully optional.
 - If students choose to engage in research electives, mentors are expected to assist with completion of any paperwork needed to gain medical school credit for these experiences.
- The MD/PhD program director will coordinate with department chairs to ensure that mentors taking on students for summer rotations are equipped to support the student through a PhD should they subsequently choose to stay in that lab. That is, students should not be put in a position where they complete a summer rotation in a lab which would not have capacity to host them as a full-time student when they begin G1.

Expectations for mentoring MD/PhD students in **PhD** years

- Current trainees have identified two documents which provide a sound basis for mentorship expectations in the MD/PhD program, which is applicable to all graduate students:
 - [Appropriate Treatment of Research Trainees](#) (published by the AAMC)
 - In particular, we ask that SLU MD/PhD mentors take note of the sections: Shared Principles, Incompatible/Inappropriate Behaviors, and Addressing Inappropriate Treatment.
 - [Compact Between Biomedical Graduate Students and Their Research Advisors](#) (published by AAMC)
 - In particular, we ask that SLU MD/PhD mentors take note of the section on Commitments of the Research Advisors
- A list/calendar of MD/PhD Program commitments (including colloquiums, Research Day, and the annual retreat) will be distributed to mentors. Mentors should collaborate with students regarding experiments, teaching responsibilities, etc. to ensure their students' attendance at all program events.
- *Mentors must facilitate students' completion of their PhD in a timely manner.* It is important to be aware that MD/PhD students will need to complete the remaining 2 years of medical school and multiple years of residency following the completion of their PhD.
 - The timeline and development of dissertation projects should be intentional and well thought-out, with the aim of graduating the student after 3-5 years in the PhD program.
- Pre-transition year– the last year of PhD training for MD/PhD students is the most significantly different from their peers (in terms of career development/planning), and mentors are expected to consider and facilitate experiences designed to ensure student success during the transition period.
 - Students and their mentors must agree on a detailed timeline that includes goal/target dates to return to medical school at least 6 months before this occurs. There is very little flexibility in the timeline once it is committed to, and students must return to medical school when clinical rotations begin.
 - As re-entry to clinical rotations approaches, students will have various administrative and clinical obligations, for which some time must be protected (paperwork for onboarding, ungraded preceptorships, etc.). Students and the MD/PhD program director will collaborate with mentors to create an individualized plan for these re-entry activities as needed.
- Students may benefit from the presence of clinical faculty on their thesis committees, who can additionally serve as their advocates and mentors upon return to medical school. When appropriate, inclusion of clinical faculty on committees should be facilitated and encouraged.

Expectations for mentoring MD/PhD students in **clinical** years

- After students complete their PhD, the program does not require nor expect them to continue their research.
- If students are continuing to write manuscripts or submit publications affiliated with the lab after their completing their PhD, very clear expectations and deadlines should be established, as clinical clerkships are rigid and time-consuming
 - Students may elect to enroll in formal research electives either during career exploration blocks during the required clerkships (Family Medicine and OB/GYN) or as 4th year electives. Designating time in these blocks may be part of mutually established expectations to complete manuscripts or publications. Mentors are expected to assist with completion of any paperwork needed to gain medical school credit during these experiences.
- Mentors and students should maintain a good working relationship, with the expectation that a time will come for students to ask for recommendations and continued professional assistance.
 - Furthermore, [qualitative study of those factors deemed most important by PSTP admissions committees and program directors](#) underscores the key role of the mentor letter.