**Postdoc Mentoring Committees[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Department of Neurobiology and Anatomy**

**Preamble:**

The onus/responsibility for a successful postdoctoral experience and advance of the postdoc to their next desired career level lies primarily on the joint activities of the postdoc and their faculty advisor. Postdocs often lack formal mechanisms of support and mentorship available to graduate students or even faculty. As such, a postdoc mentoring committee (PDMC) can play a vital role in helping postdoctoral fellows be successful and integrate into the community. The sole purpose of the PDMC is to support the postdoc and to help them successfully navigate their career advancement.

Each PDMC consists of at least three faculty members chosen by the postdoc in consultation with their advisor, with the faculty advisor serving as the chair of the committee. PDMCs are established for all new postdocs recruited to the department. PDMCs will provide valuable advice and guidance throughout a fellow’s time in the department helping them to advance towards their career goals.

**Answers to the following questions define the PDMCs and their roles:**

**When should the PDMC be formed and first meet?** The faculty advisor should discuss the need for the PDMC with the postdoc before they arrive so that they can think about its composition. The postdoc and their supervisor will work together to establish the committee (3 members), and invite the members. The Neurobiology and Anatomy Postdoc Group (NAPG) will assist in introducing and suggesting committee members. The postdoc will complete the PDMC form, obtain signatures from the committee members agreeing to serve, and submit this to the department to be stored on BOX as a record of committee membership. The first meeting should take place within 6 months of postdoc arrival.

**What is the goal of the first PDMC meeting?** The goal of this meeting is to get acquainted with the postdoc’s career goals (including developing and Individual Development Plan), to answer any questions the postdoc may have, and to convey the contents of this document.

**How should the PDMC meetings be conducted?** The PDMC should meet formally once per year. Annual reminders will be sent by the department. Meetings of the PDMCs will be scheduled by the postdoc.

At the end of each PDMC meeting, the postdoc and committee should agree on an action list that the postdoc should work on in the coming year. These action items should be documented at the meeting using the PDMC meeting report form, and signed by the committee members. The report should be sent to the Department’s Director of Postdoctoral Studies (DOPS, appointed by Department Chair). Department staff will store the reports on BOX and oversee the process to ensure that reports are prepared and sent in a timely fashion, but the postdoc is primarily responsible for ensuring that this happens. Previous year’s action items should be shared with the committee prior to the next PDMC meeting.

**What are the responsibilities of the PDMC?** The primary responsibility of the PDMC is to be readily accessible to the postdoc, providing feedback in a timely manner. Typical roles of committee members are to read and offer advice on grant proposals, to discuss proposal strategies (how many proposals to write, research directions, and strategies for applying for career development and fellowship awards), etc.

* Feedback and advice from faculty members that will give complementary and alternative points of view in addition to your primary mentor in the following, but not limited to, key postdoctoral activities:
  + Research in Progress updates.
  + Seminars and talks.
  + Grant Applications.
  + Job Talks and Chalk Talks
  + When and how to apply for independent faculty or industry positions.
* Aid in informing postdocs about training and funding resources inside and outside of the University of Utah.
  + NIH/NSF other govt. sponsored fellowship awards
  + T32 Fellowships
  + Foundational Fellowships
  + Opportunities for International Postdocs
  + Academic courses and professional development training.
* Help the postdoc develop a mentoring plan: Setting timelines for attainment of publications, research, training, and fellowship funding goals, review of the postdocs annual update of their Individual Development Plan.
* Advise on setting up training activities and networking for career development
* Provide letters of recommendation or support in job applications for postdoc.
* Be available for counsel, which may be independent of the faculty advisor, in order to potentially defuse conflicts within the lab or with the PI.

**How should the PDMCs be monitored?** The DOPS will monitor the functioning of the PDMCs, and may advise the postdoc or faculty advisor to bring issues to the attention of the Department Chair, who may seek additional information from the PDMC Chair, or other members of the PDMC.

**Can changes be made in the PDMC membership?** Science and career trajectory may naturally evolve; the postdoc and committee can reformulate the committee’s membership or choose a new chair to ensure that the PDMC best meets the needs of the postdoc member.

**What are the responsibilities of the postdoc?** The primary responsibility of the mentored postdoc is to take ownership of their career development and success as a trainee, and to use the PDMC to enhance their career development. The postdoc should feel comfortable in requesting advice from the PDMC, Director of Postdoc Mentoring, Department Chair, and other colleagues whenever needed. Finally, the postdoc is responsible for keeping track of all of their activities and updating their CVs.

**Postamble**:

In summary, the function of the PDMCs is to provide a formal structure of mentorship in addition to the primary PI. The overall goal is to help the postdoc be successful in their careers, guiding them as they strive to achieve excellence in scholarship, education, administration/community service and career advancement. In doing so, this also helps create a thriving and supportive postdoctoral community in the department and University.

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1. Adapted from “Chair's Guidelines for Junior Faculty Members and their Mentoring Committees,” by Dr. Michael R. Culbertson, Chair, Laboratory of Genetics, University of Wisconsin, Madison. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)