

## **Protocol 1025 Supervisory Committee**

**Protocol Number: 1025**

**Effective Date: 6/1/16**

**Revised Dates: 6/19/17; 4/27/18; 03/02/20; 06/08/2020; 10/05/2020**

### **Protocol**

#### **Committee's Roles and Responsibilities:**

Predoctoral researchers are expected to complete their thesis within approximately 5 years of matriculation, and the Supervisory Committee plays a key role in guiding this process. Committee members serve as mentors and should be available to the predoctoral researcher for consultation, as needed. The Supervisory Committee is key in the following areas:

1. **Supervisory Committee Meetings.** Meetings are required once a year and are recommended two times each year.
  - Attend oral presentation by predoctoral researcher
    - GSSIMR faculty: Attend all meetings
    - Committee member from outside the Stowers Institute for Medical Research ("SIMR"): Participate in person, by phone or virtually, or through consultation apart from the committee meeting
  - Evaluate predoctoral researcher's progress and provide recommendations and feedback on their project(s)
  - Provide feedback and participate in discussions about professional development and career path
2. **Qualifying Assessment.** The Qualifying Assessment occurs within the first two years of thesis research (by the end of the spring term of the third year in the program).
  - Read proposal turned in by the predoctoral researcher in preparation for Qualifying Assessment
  - Attend oral presentation by predoctoral researcher
  - Evaluate predoctoral researcher
  - Additional information about the Qualifying Assessment requirements and meeting can be found in Protocol 1026 (Qualifying Assessment).
3. **Thesis Defense**
  - Read thesis prepared by the predoctoral researcher
  - Attend oral presentation by predoctoral researcher
  - Evaluate predoctoral researcher to determine if requirements for the Ph.D. degree in Biology have been met
  - Additional information about the thesis defense requirements and meeting can be found in Protocol 1027 (Ph.D. Thesis).

**Committee Formation:**

A Supervisory Committee is formed after the predoctoral researcher enters the thesis lab in June of the first year. Each Supervisory Committee is comprised of a minimum of four faculty members, one of whom is the thesis research advisor. The remaining members (at least one of whom is an Investigator or Associate Investigator at SIMR) are appointed by the thesis research advisor and predoctoral researcher and approved by the Dean. One of the committee members may be faculty from outside SIMR.

The predoctoral researcher notifies the Associate Dean for Administration of the committee members by October 1<sup>st</sup> of the second year. If the predoctoral researcher is unable to assemble a Supervisory Committee with two members, in addition to the thesis advisor, they must request an extension. The request for an extension must be submitted by the predoctoral researcher and thesis advisor in writing five business days prior to the October 1 deadline. The request is submitted to the Associate Dean for Administration who provides it to the Dean for approval. The extension request must contain a paragraph of justification of why a Supervisory Committee could not be formed and a plan to resolve the issue before December 31 of that year. The Associate Dean for Administration adds the extension request to the predoctoral researcher's Fall Term Report. If a Supervisory Committee is not formed by December 31, the predoctoral researcher receives a failing grade for the fall term.

**Departing Faculty:**

When a GSSIMR faculty member retires from the Stowers Institute for Medical Research they are granted emeritus status with GSSIMR. Emeritus faculty should continue to serve on supervisory committees of which they were members prior to retirement (but not serve on new supervisory committees as GSSIMR faculty after retirement).

If a faculty member leaves their position at SIMR for reasons other than retirement, their continued service on supervisory committees will be at the Dean's discretion and handled on a case-by-case basis. The Dean will make individual determinations in consultation with the thesis advisors.

**Travel Expenses for Outside Committee Member:**

GSSIMR covers the costs for the travel, meals and accommodation for the Supervisory Committee member who is from outside SIMR, as follows:

- For the Qualifying Assessment
- For one Supervisory Committee meeting each year (optional; determined by each committee)
- For the Thesis Defense

If a Supervisory Committee member's visit to SIMR is extended for purposes unrelated to the committee meetings, GSSIMR works with the relevant members of SIMR to determine the fair distribution of expenses.

The administrative assistants for the relevant laboratory and GSSIMR coordinate the division of duties to arrange the travel for each meeting.

## **Supervisory Committee Meetings:**

The objective of the Supervisory Committee meetings is to evaluate the predoctoral researcher's progress, provide recommendations and feedback on their project(s), and assist with their professional development. Predoctoral researchers are required to meet with their Supervisory Committee once a year (and generally meet with them twice a year) to give an oral presentation of their progress.

### **Meeting Preparation:**

#### *Scheduling:*

Scheduling of the meetings is done by the predoctoral researcher and thesis research advisor, at times of year that are agreed upon in advance by the committee members. The suggested meeting time is two hours. The predoctoral researcher informs the Associate Dean for Administration of the meeting at the time it is scheduled, and the Graduate School office assists with meeting arrangements.

#### *Summary for Committee:*

One week (seven days) prior to the Supervisory Committee meeting, the predoctoral researcher completes the Predoctoral Researcher Supervisory Committee Meeting Form and sends it to the committee members and Associate Dean for Administration. This form includes the summary of the previous Supervisory Committee meeting, objectives for the upcoming meeting, and summary of progress since the previous meeting (two to three pages, double spaced). The objectives can include topics such as a request for advice on a particular aspect of a project, review of soon-to-be published material, or discussion about readiness to defend a thesis.

#### *Preparing the Presentation:*

1. The predoctoral researcher should carefully consider their presentation so that it is the most effective use of their time with the committee.
  - a. Predoctoral researcher should talk to their thesis advisor about the information to present.
  - b. Allow for at least half of the committee meeting time to be discussion. Extra slides can be prepared to illustrate answers to questions, if necessary.
  - c. Consider the most important experiments/points for the committee to see and discuss.
  - d. Prepare the talk in advance to allow time for revisions.
  - e. Practice the talk and time it.
2. A presentation should include:
  - a. Some background: Background information should be tailored to the committee and the familiarity they have with the project. Predoctoral researchers often spend too much time on background. Make the introduction as short as will make sense to the committee. Extra slides can be placed at the end to answer members' questions.

- b. Recap of previous meeting(s): This should be included as part of the background and should reiterate what was written in the summary. It will be critical for orienting the committee as to what has been done and discussed.
- c. Data: Make sure that data is presented in the clearest manner possible. Label all the graphs, figures, and images. Ask someone to review it for clarity. Do not use a figure from a paper because it is hard to follow. Break it up into easily readable sections.
- d. Conclusions/Future Directions: Clarify the next steps.

*Meeting Protocol: (suggested times are in parentheses)*

1. Paperwork: The predoctoral researcher takes to the meeting a blank copy of the Supervisory Committee Meeting Report document.
2. Prior to Start: At the beginning of the meeting, one committee member (not the thesis research advisor) is appointed as chair of the committee to complete the Report (see below). (5 minutes)
3. Meeting: The predoctoral researcher presents their talk and should expect extensive questions and discussion throughout the presentation. (1 hour, 10 minutes)
4. Meeting Conclusion:
  - a. Thesis research advisor steps out of the meeting. Committee discussion without the thesis advisor to speak directly to the predoctoral researcher. (15 minutes)
  - b. Thesis research advisor returns to the meeting and predoctoral researcher steps out of the meeting. Committee discussion without predoctoral researcher. (20 minutes):
    - i. Committee discusses what should be included in the meeting report
    - ii. Committee completes the Supervisory Committee Evaluation form
    - iii. All committee members sign the first page of the report which is given to the Associate Dean for Administration following the meeting
  - c. Predoctoral researcher returns to the meeting. Committee and predoctoral researcher review the summary and next steps that will be included in the meeting report. (10 minutes)

*Meeting Report:*

Within one week of the Supervisory Committee meeting, the predoctoral researcher completes a summary report of the meeting. The predoctoral researcher should include the feedback provided by the committee members at the end of the meeting including next steps. The predoctoral researcher then sends the report to the chair to finalize. Within three days of receiving the report from the predoctoral researcher, the chair completes the Supervisory Committee Meeting Report and emails the completed report including the completed Supervisory Committee Evaluation to the Associate Dean for Administration and copies all committee members.

Additional information about the Qualifying Assessment requirements and meeting can be found in Protocol 1026 (Qualifying Assessment). Additional information about the thesis defense requirements and meeting can be found in Protocol 1027 (Ph.D. Thesis).