



ACADEMIC MENTORSHIP POLICY

Policy number:
AP-OPS 4

Policy group:
Academic Operations

Effective:
01/11/2024

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PURPOSE

Mentorship is an important part of academic progression. Academic mentorship at UGHE aims to:

- Cultivate a supportive learning environment which supports students from diverse backgrounds to reach their potential in the higher education learning environment.
- Provide a space beyond the classroom for the students to explore and discuss their academic and professional goals, as well as challenges, with a supportive professional in their area of study.
- Support students to identify and address challenges during their studies.

Academic mentorship embodies the Partners in Health and UGHE philosophy of accompaniment, where an experienced mentor accompanies a student through their personal, professional and academic journeys at UGHE. A good mentor is one who walks alongside their mentee, prompting them to explore solutions and strategies to overcome challenges and achieve their goals. A good mentee is one who is honest, open, receptive and enthusiastic for personal, professional and academic growth.

This policy outlines the mentorship program procedure, and the responsibilities of mentors, mentees, and the UGHE Educational Development and Quality Center (EDQC), which manages the academic mentorship program.

DEFINITIONS

Academic mentorship: a collaborative and dynamic relationship between a mentor (experienced faculty or staff member) and a mentee (student) aimed at providing guidance, support, and encouragement in academic and professional endeavors.

Mentorship program: an organized initiative facilitating the pairing of mentors and mentees based on shared academic interests, goals, and backgrounds.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all UGHE academic mentors and students engaged in academic mentorship relationships. All students on all degree-granting academic programs receive a mentor for the duration of their studies.



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PROCEDURE

The academic mentorship program is devised around the following steps:

Step	Activity	Responsibility
1	Recruit mentors/volunteers Vetting of mentors/volunteers	EDQC, with support from the Academic Divisions
2	Mentor/mentee matching	EDQC
3	Orientation and training of mentors	EDQC
4	Orientation of mentees	EDQC, with support from the Academic Divisions
5	Introduction between mentors and mentees	Mentor and Mentee
6	Mentoring • Provide professional support in relation to the identified goals • Provide support and perspective with intent to foster long-term growth, development, and success	Mentor and mentee, with support from EDQC, Academic Division Head if required
6	Track progress of the mentorship. Evaluations will be conducted annually to track the progress of the mentorship. Mentors and mentees will be asked to complete periodic evaluations assessing their experience of the mentorship program and to solicit feedback on mentor training, recruitment, allocation of mentors and mentees and other aspects of the mentorship program.	EDQC
7	Annual mentorship report	EDQC

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Recruitment of mentors

- Every UGHE full-time faculty member will serve as an academic mentor to at least 2 students each academic year.
- Faculty will serve as mentors within the Program and Division or Option they are designated to.
- Before the beginning of the academic year, prior to the allocation of mentors and mentees, the Program or Division Chair will provide the EDQC with a list of full-time faculty who will serve as mentors within the division.
- Program or Division Chairs will also consult with their part-time, adjunct and visiting faculty to see if any such faculty members are willing and able to serve as a mentor. The Program or Division Chair will provide the EDQC with a list of part-time, adjunct and visiting faculty who are willing and able to serve as a mentor for the duration of the academic year.
- The EDQC will create and maintain a master list of all academic mentors at UGHE, and their primary academic program and division or option. They will work with Program or Division Chairs to keep the master list updated on an annual basis, and will reallocate students accordingly if a faculty member, for any reason, is unable to fulfil mentorship responsibilities.

Allocation of mentors

The EDQC is responsible for the allocation of academic mentors to students. A master list of all academic mentors at UGHE, and their academic program and division will be maintained by the EDQC.

- All students undertaking degree-granting academic programs at UGHE will be allocated an academic mentor at the beginning of their program.
- Depending on the program students may receive a different academic mentor for different stages of their program
 - This applies to the MBBS/MGHD program, where students will receive a different mentor at the beginning of each main phase:
 - Preparatory phase
 - Basic medical sciences phase
 - Clinical phase
 - The mentor allocated at each phase will be a faculty member or expert working within each phase.



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As far as possible, there shall be equitable distribution of students among faculty, determined by the EDQC. Any faculty member unable to take on mentorship responsibilities for a given academic year (that is if they will be on academic leave or sabbatical for a substantial period during the academic year) must communicate this in advance of mentor-mentee allocation to the EDQC. The EDQC may consult with the faculty member's Program Chair and, if necessary, the Dean of the School of Medicine and Health Sciences in cases where a faculty member has informed the EDQC, they are unable to take on mentorship responsibilities.

If a mentor is on leave for more than a month during the academic year, the EDQC will reassign a new mentor for the students concerned. This mentor may act in a temporary capacity until the mentor has returned from leave. If a new faculty member joins a Program or Division, the EDQC shall allocate them mentees only at the beginning of the next academic year, so as not to disrupt ongoing existing mentorship relationship. New faculty members may also serve as stand-in or temporary mentors if faculty members go on leave for more than one month (see above point).

If a student wishes to change their mentor, they must make a request to the EDQC and provide a reason why they wish to change mentor. The EDQC will consult the master list of mentors and if there are available mentors within the relevant Program and Division or Option, they will reallocate the student to a new mentor. If concerns are raised by students about a mentor, the EDQC will consult with the relevant Program or Division Chair and, if necessary, the Dean of the School under which the program sits. Students are discouraged from changing their mentor and are encouraged to foster a successful mentor-mentee relationship by engaging regularly with them and being open, receptive and honest with each other.

If a mentor wishes to change their mentee(s) or is underprepared or overburdened and cannot carry out their responsibilities of the mentorship program, they must make a request to the EDQC and provide a reason why they wish to change their mentees or opt out of the mentorship program altogether. The EDQC will notify the relevant Program or Division Chair that the mentor has requested to change mentees or leave the mentorship program altogether. The EDQC will consult the master list of mentors and if there are available mentors within the relevant Program and Division or Option, they will reallocate the mentee(s) to a new mentor.

Orientation and training of mentors

As part of ongoing professional development of UGHE faculty, all faculty will receive training on mentorship. An annual mentorship training will be organized and run by the EDQC. This training will



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hold Continuing Professional Development points as per Rwanda Medical and Dental Council requirements and will count as a professional development activity for faculty in attendance.

Mentors can also reach out to the EDQC for more guidance on mentorship, including additional resources, one-on-one support, and connection to experts in the field of mentorship. The EDQC will be responsible for ongoing communication, expectations, and evaluations of mentorship at UGHE.

Orientation of mentees

All students receive a general orientation to study at UGHE prior to starting their academic program. During that orientation, the EDQC will hold a short presentation on the UGHE Academic Mentorship program. Expectations of students will be communicated, as well as the matching and evaluation process.

Monitoring and evaluation of the mentorship program

The EDQC will conduct two evaluations annually with each student and each mentor to track the progress of the mentoring relationships and to solicit feedback to improve mentor and/or mentee support or address any concerns arising.

An annual report on the UGHE academic mentorship program will be produced by the EDQC for UGHE Academic Leadership.

RESPONSIBILITY

Both mentors and mentees, as well as Program and Division Chairs and the Educational Development and Quality Center, have the following responsibilities to develop and maintain the mentoring relationship to enhance the impact of the program.

Responsibilities of mentees

Mentees are expected to:

- Take advantage of the mentoring program for their academic and professional development and reach out to their mentor to arrange meetings on a regular basis.
- Set the agenda of each meeting and send it to the mentor in advance of their meeting.
- Include questions or discussion points in the agenda to ensure the mentor has time to prepare adequate responses.
- Attend meetings set with their mentor and take notes during each meeting.

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- Be open and receptive to the mentoring relationship and take feedback constructively.
- Discuss solutions to challenges: mentees should not expect mentors to provide solutions or answers to issues mentees face.
- Take advantage of contacts and/or opportunities the mentor may provide to mentees.

Responsibilities of mentors

Mentors are expected to:

- Clearly communicate their schedule constraints and availability when their mentee(s) reaches out to scheduled meetings.
- Establish a sustained connection with their mentee(s), clearly communicating their expectations when starting the mentoring relationship.
- Be available to mentees outside the classroom environment, and set aside at least 1 hour per month, per mentee. More time may be required for students in their first year of undergraduate study. Less time may be required for mentees who do not wish to participate or are otherwise not engaged in the mentorship program.
- Encourage mentees to identify and understand their strengths, academic and professional goals, and areas of improvement.
- Discuss academic and professional goals with the students and support them in building strategies of how they might achieve those goals.
- Support the mentee in developing learning strategies, study skills, and other generic or specific skills that will enhance their academic potential.
- Support the mentee in developing an academic or research portfolio.
- Understand and communicate any academic policy of UGHE that may be relevant to a students' query, including signposting the student to other departments at UGHE which may be able to support with specific queries, including the Career Services Office for career guidance, the Health Services Office for physical or mental health-related support, or the Office of the Registrar for concerns about grade appeals.
- Communicate any personal or safeguarding issues, such as mental health concerns, or discipline concerns, to the EDQC, who will, if necessary, refer the matter to other relevant departments at UGHE.
- If relevant, connect the student to experts who may be relevant to their academic or professional interests or goals, either within the UGHE community or within partner institutions of UGHE.



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- Maintain communication with the relevant Program or Division Chair for any concerns about attainment, attendance, or other academic issues that may arise during mentorship meetings.

Responsibilities of Program or Division Chair

Program or Division Chairs are expected to:

- Check in with mentors within their program or division regularly to ensure mentors feel adequately supported and confident in their mentoring relationships, particularly for new or junior faculty members undertaking a mentorship role.
- Communicate any academic concerns about a specific student to their mentor, for example low attendance or attainment in an assessment or module and check in with the mentor periodically to discuss student progress and any interventions, if necessary.

Responsibilities of the Educational Development and Quality Center

The EDQC will:

- Provide overall coordination and leadership of all aspects of the academic mentorship program at UGHE.
- Serve as the point of contact for all mentors and mentees for any query, concern or feedback regarding the mentorship program or anything else that arises during mentor-mentee meetings that the mentor does not feel able to handle.
- Monitor, evaluate and make recommendations to UGHE leadership to continually improve mentorship offerings at UGHE.
- Work with, consult, and solicit feedback from Program and Division Chairs, the Educational Development and Quality Center, and the Dean of the School of Medicine and Health Sciences to ensure a comprehensive and well-supported academic mentorship program.

MATERIALS/DOCUMENTATIONS

- **Mentor handbook** to provide detailed information on mentorship program
- **Goal setting templates** to help mentees set and track their academic, career and personal development goals throughout the mentorship period.
- **Feedback forms / Evaluation survey forms:** periodic feedback forms for both mentors and mentees to evaluate the effectiveness of the mentorship program and identify areas for improvement.

REVISION/REPLACING



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This policy shall be subject to review in **five** years (01/11/2029).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

This policy shall come into effect on the date of its approval by the Academic Commission of the University of Global Health Equity.

Approved by:

Date: 07/11/2024



Professor Abebe Bekele, MD, FCS, FACS, MAMSE

Professor of Surgery

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UGHE