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Description automatically generatedThe Individual

Development Plan

For mapping your academic and professional development

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) helps you:

* assess your skills, interests, and values,
* make a plan for achieving your academic and professional goals,
* and communicate with your mentors about your evolving plan and needs.

There are many different ways to write an IDP, but the central concept is consistent: the IDP is a process through which you reflect, plan, and discuss in order to achieve academic and professional goals. The onus is on you to develop and maintain your IDP. And since it is your IDP, you choose which parts to share with your mentors.

This document is one example of an IDP tool from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Graduate School. It includes step-by-step instructions, a self-assessment questionnaire, and forms for writing goals. Some departments or programs may use different instructions or templates so it is important to check you are using the right documents before starting this process.

You’ll want to revisit your IDP at least annually to update and refine it as your goals change or come into focus, and to record your progress and accomplishments.



# Basic steps of the IDP

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **for graduate students** | **for mentors** | | 1 Conduct a self-assessment. | | 2 Write your Individual Development Plan. |  | | 3 Discuss all or part of the IDP with your mentor.  Update your information in the IDP reporting system, which helps PIs and staff verify IDP use. | Review goals and help mentee revise as needed | | 4 Implement the plan. |  | | 5 Revise and update your IDP as needed. | Regularly review and provide support. | |
|  |
|  |

# STEP 1: Conduct a self-assessment

Start the IDP process by taking some time to reflect on your skills.

Static self-assessment option (located in this document): On pages 4 through 8, rate your confidence in your ability across nine areas of professional development. These areas, or “facets,” are from the DiscoverPD professional development framework.

Inquiry, discovery, and creation

Disciplinary expertise and interdisciplinary connections

Leadership

Career development

Managing projects and people

Communication

Value for diversity and inclusion

Interpersonal effectiveness

Personal effectiveness

Remember to focus not only on improving weaknesses but also on continuing to grow in areas where you are strong.

## Inquiry, discovery, and creation

Inquiry, discovery, and creation describe characteristics of higher order thinking embodied by graduate students, including analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Create, invent, or produce new and innovative concepts or products |  |  |  |  |  |
| Evaluate information, critique, and make judgments based on internal or external evidence |  |  |  |  |  |
| Pursue answers to complex questions |  |  |  |  |  |
| Think and act innovatively to create opportunity |  |  |  |  |  |
| Challenge conventional thinking |  |  |  |  |  |

## Disciplinary expertise and interdisciplinary connections

Core to graduate education, disciplinary expertise and interdisciplinary connections inform solutions to complex problems and creating new knowledge.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Achieve the learning outcomes of my academic program, as well as those defined for BSGP graduate students |  |  |  |  |  |
| Acquire depth and breadth of knowledge in my subject area |  |  |  |  |  |
| Develop advanced skills in my subject area |  |  |  |  |  |
| Work with peers and colleagues across disciplines |  |  |  |  |  |
| Embrace the values of my profession |  |  |  |  |  |
| Employ critical and analytical thinking and problem solving |  |  |  |  |  |
| Obtain funding for my research or project |  |  |  |  |  |
| Conduct myself ethically and professionally |  |  |  |  |  |
| Seek and utilize information and technology resources appropriate to my discipline |  |  |  |  |  |

## Leadership

Leadership occurs at all levels of successful organizations, regardless of formal authority or management role.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Guide strategy and vision (e.g., on team projects) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Move ideas into action |  |  |  |  |  |
| Inspire others to new ways of thinking or acting |  |  |  |  |  |
| Foster creativity and innovation in people around me |  |  |  |  |  |
| Understand the dynamics of organizations |  |  |  |  |  |
| Be proactive and take risks |  |  |  |  |  |
| Acquire resources (e.g., get financial support from leadership, or collaborative support from others) |  |  |  |  |  |

## Career development

Career development is a lifelong, proactive process of planning and implementation toward evolving, personally-defined career goals.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Assess my skills, values, and interests |  |  |  |  |  |
| Obtain mentorship |  |  |  |  |  |
| Explore careers (e.g., conduct informational interviews) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Market myself (e.g., utilize LinkedIn or other online platforms) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Interview for jobs successfully |  |  |  |  |  |
| Apply for job openings (e.g., writing a cover letter, resume, and/or CV) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Participate in professional service |  |  |  |  |  |
| Build and communicate my transferable skills to potential employers |  |  |  |  |  |
| Take a lifelong approach to managing my career (e.g., utilizing an IDP, implementing both short- and long-term professional goals) |  |  |  |  |  |

## Managing projects and people

Managing projects and developing people’s potential requires an understanding of systematic approach methods, evaluation, and effective use of resources.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Manage projects effectively by setting goals and monitoring results |  |  |  |  |  |
| Supervise and/or mentor others |  |  |  |  |  |
| Provide constructive feedback to others |  |  |  |  |  |
| Manage financial resources (e.g., reading financial statements or budgeting) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Employ systems and technology for productivity |  |  |  |  |  |

## Communication

Communication is a bidirectional exchange of information, effective through understanding the intersection of media, audience, and message.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Select and utilize optimal media for a particular message (e.g., when to use written, oral, visual, digital, smart media) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Write for experts in my discipline |  |  |  |  |  |
| Write for a lay audience (i.e., those who are not experts in my discipline) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Creatively engage with the public about my scholarship or research |  |  |  |  |  |
| Write effective grant proposals |  |  |  |  |  |
| Utilize effective technical writing skills for my discipline |  |  |  |  |  |
| Navigate the academic publishing landscape in my discipline |  |  |  |  |  |
| Consult and listen well |  |  |  |  |  |

## Value for diversity and inclusion

True learning calls for free and open debate, requires respect of all individuals and ideas, and prepares students to live and work in a world that speaks with many voices and from many backgrounds and experiences.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Learn from and work effectively with people from cultural backgrounds different from my own (i.e., demonstrate cultural competence) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Learn from and work effectively with people from international backgrounds (i.e., demonstrate global competence) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Demonstrate equitable and inclusive leadership skills |  |  |  |  |  |
| Promote equitable, inclusive, and respectful workplaces and/or classrooms |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cultivate relationships with people from different backgrounds, experiences, and cultures |  |  |  |  |  |
| Recognize differences and similarities as they enhance and enrich experiences for all |  |  |  |  |  |

## Interpersonal effectiveness

Interpersonal effectiveness entails recognizing and assessing the impact of one’s behavior on others, as well as understanding and cultivating positive relationships - e.g., with peers, coworkers, and advisors.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Form teams and collaborate |  |  |  |  |  |
| Appreciate, embrace, and/or foster the diverse perspectives of people around me |  |  |  |  |  |
| Network effectively with others in a professional setting |  |  |  |  |  |
| Negotiate (e.g., among people with conflicting ideas, salary negotiation) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Resolve conflict between people or groups of people |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mentor others (e.g., help to train undergraduates in my discipline) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Help create a positive climate (i.e., a classroom or workplace where everyone feels comfortable and appreciated) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Work effectively with my faculty advisor, mentor, and/or supervisor |  |  |  |  |  |

## Personal effectiveness

Personal effectiveness describes a set of attitudes and attributes that are needed for lifelong career success.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Maintain an openness to new ideas and perspectives |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cultivate an attitude of curiosity and joy of discovery |  |  |  |  |  |
| Stay motivated |  |  |  |  |  |
| Demonstrate resilience |  |  |  |  |  |
| Demonstrate integrity |  |  |  |  |  |
| Think introspectively |  |  |  |  |  |
| Engage in activities that improve conditions for others or help shape the future of my community (i.e., civic engagement) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Be healthy physically, emotionally, and financially |  |  |  |  |  |
| Manage my time effectively |  |  |  |  |  |
| Stay organized in my academic, employment, and personal responsibilities |  |  |  |  |  |

# Interpreting your responses to the self-assessment

Take a moment to consider your responses on pages 4 through 8. Note sub-areas where you feel most confident (rated 4 or 5) and least confident (rated 1 or 2). Circle any to which you feel committed to developing; these will be used in the goal-setting exercises on pages 11, 12, and 13.

# Self-assessment

What are your current responsibilities and requirements?

As part of the self-assessment process, ask yourself some questions related to your current responsibilities and requirements. Doing so will lead you to actions or goals to incorporate into your plan. Your aim is to develop skills that will lead to your success in your current position.

What are the requirements and responsibilities you must meet during the next year? Two years?

Are there particular technical skills or discipline-specific knowledge that you need to develop?

Are there scholarly activities you would like to accomplish or work toward during the next year? Two years? (Examples: join a professional organization, present at a conference, co-author a paper…) Other?

Comments:

# Self-assessment

What are your career aspirations?

In preparation for creating a truly individualized IDP, ask yourself some questions related to your career goals. Consider using various resources to see how your values and interests align with potential career goals.

What type of work would you like to do? What is important to you in your future career?

What competencies are required for your chosen career?

How well do your current skills match the competencies required for your chosen career?

What are your short-term goals related to career exploration? (Examples: learn about science writing, conduct informational interviews, find out where graduates in my field are working/finding careers…) How will you develop contacts--a network--related to your career exploration goals?

Other?

Comments:

# STEP 2: Write the IDP

The IDP helps you map out the general path you want to take toward achieving your goals. The goals you include in your IDP are based on the strengths and weakness that you identified in step 1, together with the milestone activities that mark successful progress through your program (e.g., preparing for qualifying exam), plus any other specific skills and knowledge needed to prepare for your career.

Use the table on pages 12 and 13 as a starting point. You can expand and modify it to fit your own list of goals and strategies. For example, some mentees have transferred and expanded the table into an Excel spreadsheet to track multiple evolving goals over time.

Be sure to identify specific and achievable objectives or skills, and write these in a way that makes very clear what you are going to do. Use a “S.M.A.R.T. Goals” format: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound.

A **specific** goal will usually answer the five "W" questions:

What: What do I want to accomplish?

Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal

Who: Who is involved?

Where: Identify a location

Which: Identify requirements and constraints

A **measurable** goal will usually answer questions such as:

How much? / How many? / How will I know when it is accomplished?

An **attainable** goal will usually answer the question:

How: How can the goal be accomplished?

A **relevant** goal can answer yes to these questions:

Does this seem worthwhile?

Is this the right time?

Am I the right person?

Does this match my/our other efforts/needs?

A **time-bound** goal will usually answer the questions:

When?

What can I do 6 months from now?

What can I do 6 weeks from now?

What can I do today?

And remember, your IDP is a living document that will and should be updated and changed as often as necessary

Meyer, Paul J (2003). "What would you do if you knew you couldn’t fail? Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals". Attitude Is Everything: If You Want to Succeed Above and Beyond. Meyer Resource Group, Incorporated.

# Self-assessment summary

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Confident  (4’s and 5’s on pages 4-8) | Unconfident  (1’s and 2’s on pages 4-8) |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

# Goals: current responsibilities

Define **approaches and strategies** below, and include a **timeframe** for beginning and completing these actions. Make sure to have an **outcome** statement that is clear enough to allow someone (including you!) to know if you’ve met your **objective**.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Objectives or skills to be learned | Approaches and strategies | | Timeframe | | Outcomes | |
|  | |  | |  | |  | |
|  | |  | |  | |  | |
|  | |  | |  | |  | |
|  | |  | |  | |  | |
|  | |  | |  | |  | |

Goals: career aspirations

Define **approaches** and **strategies** below, and include a **timeframe** for beginning and completing these actions. Make sure to have an **outcome** statement that is clear enough to allow someone (including you!) to know if you’ve met your **objective**.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Objectives or skills to be learned | Approaches and strategies | Timeframe | Outcomes |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

# Goal prioritization

Near term (within the next 6 months) Long term (more than 6 months away)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| High priority    Low priority | |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | |  |  | |



# STEP 3: Discuss with Mentor

Discussing what you discovered from your skills assessment, and talking about your career goals and interests with your mentor might help you identify developmental needs and areas to work on. By helping you compare current skills and strengths with those needed to achieve your career objectives, your mentor can be an important ally.

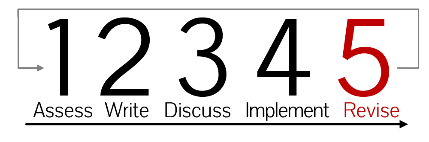
Some might feel it’s risky to share, for example, their weaknesses or their interest in a career outside academia with their mentor. While it’s not necessary to share all results right away, consider how the feedback from your mentor might support your plan, and provide insights and resource ideas.

It is strongly recommended that you discuss your plan with your primary mentor but also be creative about whom you approach for advice. You can get useful feedback from multiple people with a broad range of experiences and perspectives including friends, family, staff and faculty other than your primary mentor.

# 

# STEP 4: Implement the Plan

Put your plan into action. Stay organized and seek out the support you need to stay on track. Commit to the plan, but also remember that you will need to be flexible and modify your plan as your goals or circumstances change. Keep your IDP in a convenient place and check it often. Add your IDP deadlines to your calendar to integrate them with deadlines for other work and personal events.



# STEP 5: Review and Revise Your IDP

Review the IDP with your mentor on a regular basis (on a schedule decided upon together) and revise/update. At a minimum, you should revisit and discuss your IDP with your mentor annually.

And, importantly, celebrate your achievements!

Your name: Today’s date:

Adapted from:

Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology (FASEB) IDP for Postdoctoral Fellows[: faseb.org/portals/2/pdfs/opa/idp.pdf](http://faseb.org/portals/2/pdfs/opa/idp.pdf) myIDP website[: myidp.sciencecareers.org](http://myidp.sciencecareers.org/)

Individual Development Plan for UCSF Faculty

Individual Development Plan for Case Western Reserve University Postdoctoral Trainee[s postdoc.case.edu/current/careers.html](http://postdoc.case.edu/current/careers.html)

The National Postdoctoral Association Postdoctoral Core Competencies[: www.nationalpostdoc.org/competencies](http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/competencies)

University of Wisconsin-Madison Graduate School Office of Professional Development, DiscoverPD[: my.grad.wisc.edu/DiscoverPD](https://my.grad.wisc.edu/DiscoverPD)