

Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

IDPs for graduate students provide a customized roadmap for a student's professional training & goals. IDPs assist students and their mentors (or supervisors) in developing plans that match goals and expectations.

Below is a checklist of the steps for graduate students to develop their own personalized IDP, and discuss their plans with their mentor. This process involves a candid self assessment and a thoughtful approach to one's own career aspirations and professional values.

(I) Student Self Assessment.

- What are my long-term career goals?
- What are my short-term needs and related actions?
- Skills assessment. What skills do I currently have? (abilities in research professional time management, interpersonal skills, management, leadership, etc.)
- Career Aspirations. What career pathways interest me? What do I like to do?
- Desired Skills. Set goals for the specific skills I want to develop.
- Professional Development. What support can I benefit from?

(II) Guidelines.

Student

- Conduct a self assessment
- Survey opportunities with mentor(s)
- Write an IDP, share it with mentor, and revise
- Implement the plan, revising as needed

Mentor

- Become familiar with available opportunities
- Discuss opportunities with student
- Review IDP and help revise
- Establish regular review of progress; help with continued revisions

(III) Student Survey.

1. SKILLS ASSESSMENT – What skills do I currently have?
2. CAREER ASPIRATIONS – What career pathways interest me? What do I like to do and what do I value about my work environment?
3. DESIRED SKILLS – Setting goals for the skills I want.
4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – What support can I take advantage of?

(IV) Mentor Survey.

1. SKILLS ASSESSMENT – What skills does my student currently have?
2. CAREER ASPIRATIONS – How can I support my student's career goals? What does my student like to do?

3. DESIRED SKILLS – Helping my trainee set goals for the skills they need to be successful.
4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – What support can my student take advantage of? How can I best advocate for my student?

(V) Student Reflection.

How do your strengths align with your current role? Where are the gaps?

If you are unsure of what career path is of interest to you, how can you apply your strengths towards career exploration?

How can your responses be used to prioritize the goals that you set?

(VI) Mentor-Student Relationship Discussion.

What are the barriers to successful mentor-student conversations?

What strategies can you use to work around those barriers?

What do you think “productive conflict” means?

How can you establish goals when you and your mentor disagree?

What should the next steps be after the initial discussion?

How can you follow up with your mentor?

Additional IDP Resources.

<https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/>

<https://www.purdue.edu/science/graduate/idp.html>

<https://grad.wisc.edu/professional-development/individual-development-plan/>

<https://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/sites/ctmh/docs/idp-worksheet.pdf>