

Predoctoral Student Individual Development Plan (IDP)*

*Adapted from IDPs published by the Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology (FASEB) (<http://opa.faseb.org/pdf/idp.pdf>) and the University of Minnesota (<http://www.grad.umn.edu/prod/groups/grad/@pub/@grad/documents/asset/idpgradpdf.pdf>)

Step 1. Conduct a Self Assessment.

A) Take a realistic look at your current skills and strengths and identify areas that need development. Also talk to your mentors, peers, family and friends about what they see as your strengths and needs. Some skills that are particularly relevant to scientific careers are listed below, but feel free to add additional ones.

Rate yourself in the following areas (strong, acceptable or needs improvement?):

• technical abilities/bench skills	
• knowledge/familiarity with scientific literature	
• logic and problem solving abilities	
• quantitative skills/statistics	
• social skills/networking/collaboration/conflict management	
• writing skills	
• oral communication skills	
• organizational ability	
• self-motivation	
• decision-making	
• creativity	
• work ethic	
• perseverance	
• ability/desire to take risks	

Some other resources that might be helpful:

Myers-Briggs personality test:

<http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp>

B) Think about how you allocate your time and effort. Over the past year, what percentage of your time have you spent on the following components of the graduate experience? How much time will you need to spend this year?

• Coursework	
• Research	
• Background reading	
• Grant writing	
• Paper writing	
• Dissertation writing	
• Attending research-related meetings or seminars	
• Presenting at research meetings	
• Teaching/TA'ing/Supervising junior students	
• Organizing group activities/serving on committees	
• Job search process	

C) Outline your short term (2-5 years) and long term (10-15 years) career objectives. Some questions to ask yourself include:

• What question do I want my PhD thesis to address? Do I have a clear plan for how to proceed?	
• How many research papers and reviews do I expect to publish from my PhD?	
• When do I want to finish my PhD?	
• What type of work would I like to be doing immediately after my PhD? (postdoc or other?)	
• What type of career do I desire? (academic research and /or teaching, non-academic research, non-research-related e.g. consulting, policy, writing)	
• What is important to me in a career?	
• What skills are most important in my desired career?	
• Who are my best role models for that career?	

Useful resources on career planning can be found at this link:

<http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/careers/career-planning-resources>

Step 2. Discuss Assessment with Advisor and/or Mentor

Make time for a dedicated discussion, separate from your research discussions.

Identify your developmental needs by comparing current skills and strengths with those needed for your career goals.

Prioritize your developmental areas and discuss with your mentor how these should be addressed.

Step 3. Write an IDP (see template on next page)

The IDP maps out the general path you want to take and helps match skills and strengths to your career choices. It is a changing document, since needs and goals will almost certainly evolve over time. The aim is to build upon current strengths and skills by identifying areas for development and providing a way to address these. The specific objectives of a typical IDP are to:

- Identify specific skills and strengths that you need to develop (based on discussions with your mentor).
- Define the approaches to obtain the specific skills and strengths (e.g., courses, technical skills, teaching, supervision) together with anticipated time frames.

Step 4. Implement Your Plan

The plan is just the beginning of the career development process and serves as the road map.

Now, put your plan into action!

Revise and modify the plan as necessary. The plan is not cast in concrete; it will need to be modified as circumstances and goals change.

Review the plan with your mentor on an annual basis. Revise the plan on the basis of these discussions.

Individual Development Plan for _____

Skill to develop	Action(s)	Time frame