

Individual Development Plan Timeline Tip Sheet

Developing a Timeline | Factors for Consideration

The Individual Development Plan can be a powerful tool in completing your graduate studies and career management. To be really effective, though, you must develop a timeline that considers a variety of factors for completing your program of study and the professional development activities that develop the skills you'd like to strengthen. Having a broad view of the factors that influence when and how you will achieve your goals will assist you to develop a realistic and comprehensive plan that can be achieved within the timeframe laid out.

When developing your timeline, think about when you want to complete your program and work backwards. Consider both long (goals for the more distant future) and short-term (goals for the near future) goals. Completing your coursework, handing in your research proposal, and completing your professional development requirement are examples of long-term goals. Weekly goals such as working 3 hours per day on your research proposal, exercising three times, and spending a day with family/friends are examples of short-term goals. *As you develop your timeline, ask yourself these questions:*

1. **Course work:** What are the course requirements of my program? Are there required courses that are not offered on a yearly basis? How will I schedule my courses and when do I plan to have them completed?
2. **Supervision:** What are my supervisor's expectations around how I spend my time (e.g. being in the lab, research and writing activities, professional development activities, teaching)?
3. **Scholarship/grant applications:** What grant/scholarship applications will I put forward and how much time will I need to compile them? Are there activities I need to pursue to make my application competitive (e.g. leadership/research/volunteer/publication activities)? If I don't secure funding, how will this affect my timeline?
4. **Work outside of academic program:** Do I need to work outside of my program (e.g. employment on or off campus not related to TA/RAs)? How many hours per week will I work? Is there travel time involved with getting to my place of work?
5. **Teaching responsibilities:** Will I have teaching responsibilities during my program either as a TA or a principal instructor? How much time will I need to allot for course development, developing class sessions and assessments, grading, and meeting with students?
6. **Research Assistantship:** Will I work as a research assistant during my program? How many hours per week do I need to set aside for this work?
7. **Candidacy preparation and exam (doctoral):** What is the nature of candidacy exams in my department? How much time do I need to prepare for my candidacy exam? How long does the exam process take? When do I plan to take my candidacy exam?
8. **Research proposal:** What are the requirements for my research proposal? How long will it take me to complete the proposal before it can go to my committee for defense?
9. **Research Preparation:** Do you need human/animal ethics approval for your research project? Are travel visas needed? Do you need to take a course in order to carry out your research (animals, biohazards, or language courses). Do you need to secure funding for field travel? How will these factors affect your timeline? What is your contingency plan if things take longer than expected?
10. **Research:** How much time do I need for experiments, data collection, and analysis? Does my research depend on data/literature from other researchers/libraries/institutions? What are my contingency plans if I don't receive these materials when expected? Do I need permissions or travel visas to complete my research? What implications will this have for my timeline?
11. **Writing my thesis:** How much time do I need to complete my thesis draft? How much time will committee members want to review each chapter? How long will chapter edits take? When does the thesis need to be submitted to my committee and external examiner for approval to move to the final defense?

12. **Writing publications:** How will I schedule time to write for publication in my daily routine? How many publications do I want to have published/submitted for review prior to finishing my program?
13. **Final exam (defense):** What is the process for defense exams in my department? How much time will I allow for edits following the defense?
14. **Ethics Training requirement:** When and how will I fulfill the 8-hour ethics requirement for the completion of my program? Does my department have specific guidelines around how my ethics requirement is met?
15. **Individual Development Plan requirement (IDP):** When will I complete my IDP for the first time? How much time will I need to adequately explore the career paths that interest me? Will I set aside time to attend the IDP 3-part series offered by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research to assist me? How much time will I set aside to revisit my IDP on an annual basis to ensure that I am on track and to re-evaluate the goals I've laid out and the skills I'd like to develop?
16. **Professional Development (PD):** When and how will I fulfill the 8-hour PD requirement for the completion of my program? Will I participate in the Graduate Teaching and Learning Program or an internship or mentorship program? When and how will I develop my professional network? Does my department have specific guidelines around how I fulfill my PD requirement?
17. **Professional development activities:** Based on my IDP skills gap analysis, what is the nature of the skills I'd like to develop and how long will it take to develop them? What professional activities will I pursue to fill these skills gaps and when will I complete them?

Personal Considerations

18. **Children:** Do I have children or plan to have children during my program? How much time will I take away from my studies for maternity/paternity leave? What arrangements are/will be my childcare arrangements? Who will look after my child if s/he is sick? Do I have support systems to help me (daycare, family, friends)? What kind of support can I expect from my supervisor/department? How will I divide my time between my family and academic responsibilities? What implications do my family responsibilities have for the amount of time I can dedicate to my academic program and how I will schedule my time?
19. **Care for elderly parents:** Am I responsible for the care of elderly parents? Do I have support systems? What implications do these responsibilities have for the amount of time I can dedicate to my academic program and how I schedule my time?
20. **Spouse/partner:** Am I in a personal relationship that needs to be nurtured with my time and attention? How will I divide my time between spending time with my partner/spouse and my academic responsibilities? Does my relationship have implications for how I schedule my time?
21. **Personal goals:** What are my personal goals outside of my academic responsibilities (e.g. participate in a community project, travel, hobbies)? How much time will I dedicate to my personal goals and when will I schedule time for them?
22. **Exercise and healthfulness:** How will I allot time to exercise and take of my body in my daily routine?