

# The Individual Development Plan (IDP) FOR POSTDOCS



# The Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Our lives are extremely busy and especially while in graduate school. Consequently, we do not take the time to sit down and reflect on our goals, successes, challenges, needs, and current status. The IDP has been designed to assist you in addressing many topics that influence your well-being and career goals. Taking the time to reflect and complete your IDP followed by discussions with your mentors will lead you to the successful career.

## What is IDP?

The Individual Development Plan (IDP) is an essential tool designed to help you:

- Identify professional goals and objectives
- Assess current skills
- Communicate with your mentors to develop an action plan to achieve short- and long-term objectives

The IDP is a document you will want to revisit again and again, update and refine as your goals change and/ or come into focus and track your progress and accomplishments.

## Who to use this IDP

This IDP aims to promote successful career pathways in academia for postdocs. This resource is designed to be customizable. The general version IDP for graduate students is also available. To download it, please go to the website of the Center for Teaching Excellence for more information:

<https://cte.tamu.edu/Communities,-Programs-and-Models/Mentoring/Mentorship-Resources>

<https://vpr.tamu.edu/research-resources/postdoctoral-scholars/>

<https://careercenter.tamu.edu/>

## How to Create Your IDP



Developing your IDP and implementing your plan occurs one year at a time. Within a year, you need to complete the following:

1. To create an action plan for the coming year, you should make appointments with your mentors to discuss your IDP.
2. Before the IDP discussion, you should reflect on several components such as 1) Research Progress, 2) Teaching Progress, 3) Progress and Challenges, 4) Development Activities, 5) Skills, 6) As a Mentor, 7) Wellness, and 8) Preparation for the Next Plan.
3. During the discussion, your mentor(s) will go through your IDP and create an action plan with you. Your decision will be logged on the last section of the IDP – 9) Action Plan.

4. After the IDP discussion, you need to implement the action plan for the coming year. Your mentors will continue to follow up your progress until the next IDP discussion.

## Acknowledgements

This manual was adapted from the following resources:

- The IDP for the AGEP TxARM (Texas A&M System Research Model) Alliance  
<https://sites.google.com/site/txarmidp/>
- The general version IDP for TAMU graduate students:  
[https://cte.tamu.edu/getattachment/Graduate-Student-Support/Transformative-Doctoral-Education-Model/Fillable-Forms-IDP-for-TAMU\\_v6.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US](https://cte.tamu.edu/getattachment/Graduate-Student-Support/Transformative-Doctoral-Education-Model/Fillable-Forms-IDP-for-TAMU_v6.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US)
- Florida State University Graduate School IDP:  
<http://gradschool.fsu.edu/Professional-Development/Individual-Development-Plan-IDP>
- Stanford Biosciences IDP:  
<http://biosciences.stanford.edu/current/idp/process.html>
- Wisconsin-Madison Graduate School IDP:  
<http://grad.wisc.edu/pd/idp>
- Self-reflection:
  - Ash, S. L., & Clayton, P. H. (2009). Generating, deepening, and documenting learning: The power of critical reflection in applied learning. *Journal of Applied Learning in Higher Education*, 1, 25-48.
  - PHC Ventures. (2013). *The Deal Model for Critical Reflection*. Retrieved from <https://curricularengagement.com/handouts/>

## Feedback on Post-doc IDP

If you have any feedback on the IDP, we would like to hear from you.

- Clint Patterson ([capatterson@tamu.edu](mailto:capatterson@tamu.edu))
- Debra Fowler ([dfowler@tamu.edu](mailto:dfowler@tamu.edu))
- Andreea Trache ([trache@tamu.edu](mailto:trache@tamu.edu))

# The Individual Development Plan (IDP)

## FOR POSTDOCS

### Postdocs

**Your Name**

**Mentor Name**

**Meeting Date**

## Checklist

### Before the IDP meeting

- |   |    |     |     |     |
|---|----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. Do you know who your mentors are?                          | No | Yes |     |     |
| 2. Have you scheduled an IDP meeting with them?               |    | No  | Yes |     |
| 3. Have you completed the self-assessment before the meeting? |    |     | No  | Yes |

### During/after the IDP meeting

- |  |    |     |     |  |
|--|----|-----|-----|--|
| 4. Have you met with them to discuss your IDP?     |    | No  | Yes |  |
| 5. Have you created an action plan?                | No | Yes |     |  |
| 6. Have you started to implement your action plan? |    | No  | Yes |  |
| 7. Do your mentors check your progress?            | No | Yes |     |  |

## Take Time to Reflect

You hear all the time, from multiple sources, to take the time to reflect. So, how do you reflect? What do you reflect on? What do you consider when you reflect? All important points to consider!

The first step in reflection is to stop...just stop! Stop and allow yourself to think, notice, consider, percolate on the deliberate prompts provided throughout the IDP and the experiences you have had in relation to those prompts.

The development of your IDP is not a box to check, but an intentional time for you to take stock of where you are in your academic journey, anchored in your experiences and the reflection on those experiences to progress your personal and professional development. To do so requires you to stop, think, and reflect.

As you work through your IDP, please consider the DEAL structure below to help you reflect and formulate meaningful prompt responses:

1. Describe, in objective detail, the learning experience. The 5 W's will help here.
  - a. When?
  - b. Where?
  - c. Who was involved and/or not involved?
  - d. What?
  - e. Why?
  - f. How?
  
2. Examine the learning experience.
  - a. What were you feeling?
  - b. What was beneficial and/or not beneficial?
  - c. What academic skills did you use?
  - d. What disciplinary content was relevant?
  - e. In what ways did the experience align with your current knowledge base? In what ways did the experience not align?
  - f. Why is this experience noteworthy?
  
3. Articulate Learning
  - a. "I learned that"...
  - b. "I learned this when"...
  - c. "This [learning or experience] matters because"...
  - d. "In light of this [learning or experience]"...

# Research Progress



- What questions does your current research intend to answer?

- In regards to the literature on this topic, what do you already know and what is missing from your knowledge base? What is current?

- What are the global and/or societal impacts of this research?



- What is the current timeline for this research? Publication and dissemination?

- How confident are you in your ability to complete research and submit publications on schedule?

- What are your near-term research goals? How does interdisciplinarity fit into your plans?

## Teaching Progress



- How have you advanced your teaching skills?

- What could you use assistance with in advancing your teaching skills?  
Professional development? Experience teaching? Observation of your teaching?

- How have your long-term teaching goals changed if at all?

- What do you enjoy about teaching? Or not enjoy about teaching? How can you realistically change or enhance those feelings?

- What do you know about how students learn? How do you address how students learn in your teaching or mentoring?

- How do you create an inclusive teaching environment? What could you do differently this year?



## Progress and Challenges



- How do you feel your research is progressing?

- What are your strengths in conducting and disseminating your research? Are these qualities valued in your lab? By your colleagues?

- Describe any challenges you experienced in the past year.

- What strategies do you use to empower yourself to deal with the challenges that you are confronting?

- What has helped you most in generating publications?

- What are your writing and publication goals over the next year?

## Development Activities



- Which experience(s) have been most valuable to you, your research, and your professional goals?

- How have those experiences shaped your thoughts and expectations of becoming a faculty member?



## Identity Development

- How has your conceptualization of what it means to be a post-doc member changed since finishing your advanced degree?

- Does it align with that of your colleagues? Mentors?

- Are there aspects of the post-doc experience that enhance or conflict with your cultural/professional identity? How are you addressing? What support would help you?

## **Mentorship**

- What mentoring experiences are you gaining? Who/what?

- What is your mentoring style? Has it changed since your advanced degree?

- Does the IDP enhance or deter from your mentoring style? How?

- In terms of your mentoring, what do you think you're doing well? What are some things that you could improve?

# Skills



## Research Development Skills:

	Weak (1) to Strong (5)						Target skills I want to improve this year	
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Scientific method	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Analytical skills/ Data analysis & interpretation	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Problem-solving	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Creativity / Developing new research directions	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Search strategies & critical evaluation of the literature	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Grant applications	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Scientific publishing processes	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Broad-based & cross-disciplinary knowledge acquisition	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Interdisciplinary collaboration	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Project management	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Budgeting	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Organizing a research team	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Data Management	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Technical Skills	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Other:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No

## Communication Skills:

	Weak (1) to Strong (5)						Target skills I want to improve this year	
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Writing for a general audience	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No

• Writing for a discipline-specific audience	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Oral presentation to a general audience	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Oral presentation to a discipline-specific audience	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Social media communication & etiquette	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Email communication & etiquette	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Networking inside your home department	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Networking outside	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Connecting with mentors	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Ability to give constructive feedback	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Ability to receive constructive feedback	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Other:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No

### Collaboration:

Weak (1) to Strong (5)

Target skills I want to improve this year

• Respecting contributions of others	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Demonstrating cultural competence	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Working with diverse groups	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Avoiding conflict of interest	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Demonstrating responsible academic & professional conduct	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Creating an inclusive and professional environment	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Motivating others	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Assuming leadership positions & time	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Participating in service opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Other:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No

### Teaching:

Weak (1) to Strong (5)

Target skills I want to improve this year

• Mentoring	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Tutoring	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No

• Using your discipline’s teaching pedagogy	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Leading discussion section or lab	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Lecturing	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Serving as teaching assistant	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Other:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No

**Emotional Intelligence:**

Weak (1) to Strong (5)

Target skills I want to improve this year

• Intrapersonal skills:								
a. Emotional awareness	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
b. Controlling your emotions	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
c. Self-confidence	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Interpersonal:								
a. Ability to work with others	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
b. Empathy and concern for others	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Adaptability								
a. Creative problem-solving	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
b. Flexibility	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Stress management								
a. Self-care	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
b. Stress tolerance	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No

**Career Planning:**

Weak (1) to Strong (5)

Target skills I want to improve this year

• Establishing career goals	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Awareness of career opportunities in your field	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Attending career-oriented professional development workshops	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Exploring career-focused academic certificates	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No
• Networking	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Yes	No

- |                     |   |   |   |   |   |     |     |    |
|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|----|
| • Leadership skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A | Yes | No |
| • Other:            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A | Yes | No |

**Job Preparation:**

Weak (1) to Strong (5)

Target skills I want to improve this year

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |     |     |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|----|
| • Academic job search                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A | Yes | No |
| • (Salary) Negotiation skills              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A | Yes | No |
| • CV writing                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A | Yes | No |
| • Interview skills                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A | Yes | No |
| • Identifying/accessing relevant resources | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A | Yes | No |

## As a Mentee



- Are there any factors that you are concerned may negatively affect your progress? How could your mentor help?



## Wellness



- What do you consider to be the most important factors in establishing a healthy work/life balance?

- What are your concerns related to your current work/life balance?

- Do you have a mentor with whom you feel you can discuss questions related to establishing a healthy work/life balance?

- Does your current institution offer resources aimed at establishing a health work/life balance? What are they?

## Preparing for the Next Step



- Have you begun searching for faculty positions?

- What resources do you have to help you find available positions?

- What types of institutions are you applying to?

- What experiences/skills/assets do you possess that would be valuable for holding an advancing position at that/those institution(s)?

- What would be the timeline for you to earn a faculty appointment?

## Action Plan

The action plan is to be developed jointly by the post-doc and mentor during or after discussion.



- Describe your action plan