

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for Students in their 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Years in Biology/Biochemistry

This document is a modified version of materials developed at Stanford University for graduate students in the Biosciences. Updated October 2019.

Steps in Completing the IDP

1. To evaluate your skills, interests, and career goals, take the on-line questionnaires at <https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/Overview/Summary>. (You need to register first for **MyIDP**, at the above URL, if you have not already done so.) Use the on-line questions as a starting point for self-reflection and for considering how to get the most benefit from the mentoring relationship with your advisor.

2. Fill out the forms below and include them as part of your written progress report for your thesis committee meeting.

3. Meet with your advisor to discuss your IDP prior to your annual thesis committee meeting.

You are responsible for scheduling a meeting with your advisor. You should share your completed IDP form with your advisor before the meeting.

4. Lead the discussion.

The IDP covers topics other students have found helpful, but you may have additional questions, ideas, or objectives related to your training. If so, this meeting with your advisor (and the subsequent meeting with your thesis committee) are great times to bring them up.

5. Complete the Action Plan and follow up.

The last page of the IDP encourages you to establish concrete steps in the meeting with your advisor. Complete the Action Plan together with your advisor and include it in the report to the thesis committee. Keep your Action Plan accessible and check on it every couple months to ensure that you are staying on track.

MILESTONES FOR YEAR 3-6

Year 3:

- student is intellectually engaged
- student continues to read relevant literature
- student continues to revise questions/hypotheses based on their results and new publications
- student has a solid plan for their thesis work and has made progress toward addressing the questions posed.
- student is spending adequate time on their research

Year 4:

- student is intellectually engaged
- student continues to read relevant literature
- student continues to revise questions/hypotheses based on their results and new

publications

- student has data that is likely to lead to a publication in the next year.
- student is spending adequate time on their research

Year 5:

- student is intellectually engaged
- student continues to read relevant literature
- student continues to revise questions/hypotheses based on their results and new publications
- student submits a paper for publication
- student is spending adequate time on their research
- student is taking steps toward post-graduation plans (postdoc, employment)
- student is on track to defend thesis by the beginning of sixth year.

Year 6:

- student is in final stages of making post-graduation plans.
- student completes a first author publication and, ideally, more than one.
- student is on track to defend thesis by the beginning of this year.

SELF-EVALUATE based on these milestones and discuss with your advisor

SCIENTIFIC/RESEARCH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Do you have a clear research plan and a well-defined endpoint for your thesis project?

What is your assessment of how well your project is progressing?

How confident are you in your ability to complete your project by the end of Year 5?

How firm a grasp do you feel you have of the field in which you work? If insufficient, what help do you need in identifying relevant readings or other means to be a true expert in your field?

Specify any areas where you need additional training or skill development to complete your thesis or to prepare for your future career. Include techniques you want to learn, collaborations, etc.

How much of your total time and effort, as a percentage, have you spent on each of these activities during the past year:

Research _____

Courses/Training _____

Teaching/Mentoring _____

Professional Development (workshops, internships, seeking a post-graduation position, etc) _____

Service _____

Which experiences have been most valuable to you, your research and/or your professional goals?

Are there any factors that you feel negatively affected your progress this past year, or may do so in the coming year?

SCIENTIFIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT

One important goal of PhD training is to develop a skill set that is transferrable beyond graduation.

Go to MyIDP at <https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/Overview/Summary> and register if necessary.

Take the “Self-assessment of Skills/Values/Interests questionnaire to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses relative to where you think a student at your stage should be.

List your skills that you think are relatively strong and those that you perceive to be relatively weak. Ask your advisor whether s/he agrees or disagrees with your assessment. This process will help you set goals for your training.

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Take the Career Exploration questionnaire at MyIDP:

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

Concisely summarize the types of careers that seem to be a good match for your interests/strengths/values at this time.

Which of these currently sound most appealing to you?

Are there other careers you are currently considering?

Concisely summarize your plans for professional development in the coming year, including activities such as teaching, mentoring, workshops, talks, internships, etc.

MENTORING

How often do you meet with your thesis advisor? Is this sufficient?

What other sources of mentorship do you take advantage of?

How often do you initiate such meetings?

What have you found most beneficial of the mentoring you have received?

Is there anything that would improve the effectiveness of the mentoring you receive?

ACTION PLAN

This plan is to be developed jointly by the student and mentor.

Describe the plan for regular communication between you and your advisor for the coming year (include one-on-one meetings, lab group meetings, written reports, etc).

What is the projected timeline for completing your current projects and publishing your work? In which quarter do you expect to graduate?

What skills did you identify as important development targets for the coming year?

List any activities in which you and your mentor agree you should participate to achieve your academic objectives in the coming year.

Are there any additional actions to aid your success that can be initiated or continued by you or your mentor?