

Appendix 5A: CREATING AN INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (SHORT FORM)

Making the most of your graduate or postdoctoral experience¹

Setting goals can help you be more intentional about the experiences you have in your training, and can provide key steps to head you in the right direction. The best goals are **SMART: specific, measurable, achievable (actionable), relevant, and timely**. They should also be aspirational, and move beyond merely a “to-do” list that becomes burdensome. Do you have role models? How did they get to where they are? Who do you want to become? Where do you see yourself heading? What experiences will help you get there?

1. **Perform a self-assessment:** What are your current skills, knowledge areas, talents, strengths, and passions and what do you see as your future direction? Think about what kind of contribution you want to make and what kinds of problems you want to solve. The AAAS has an on-line tools to help with self-assessment: <http://myidp.sciencecareers.org?>

2. **Identify areas for growth:** In what areas do you want to grow or develop further over the next year? What are your areas of weakness and what do you need to do to strengthen them? Focus on areas that will help you get where you want to be in the longer term.

3. **Define SMART goals:** In setting goals, consider what is possible, and even what is audacious. What aligns with your vision, values and commitments? If you are searching for areas in which to focus your energies, reflect on your various activities, role models and heroes. What do you wish you knew more about, had the capacity for, or aspire to? What concrete actions and experiences will help you get there? What would you do if you were 10% braver? Where do you get energy and satisfaction in your work and in your life? How can you cultivate more of that?

4. **Choose a mentor:** Choose someone to talk with about your goals and progress on a regular basis. It could be your mentor/supervisor, another faculty member, department chair, or a peer at a more advanced stage. Set up a schedule for these conversations. Being accountable to others can help you stay focused on your goals when new tasks and opportunities arise.

5. **Decide on an assessment timeline:** Identify points in time (once a month? every three months?) to assess your progress on achieving your goals. How will you measure progress? What new goals do you need to set? If you are not making sufficient progress on your goals, why not? Is something getting in the way, or is it the wrong goal for right now? Re-commit to your goal, adjust your strategy, or release your goal and start again if it is not working for you.

6. **Keep your goals visible:** How you manage your goals will be personal. Map out your goals and intentions for the year and post them where you can see them regularly. Keep your goals in your notebook or calendar to check on a weekly basis. Tape them above your desk or lab bench. Send yourself electronic reminders. The important thing is to choose a method that works for you that will motivate you and feel satisfying, and not just be another task on the to-do list.

It may be helpful to consider goals in the three areas below: (each illustrated with examples of goals)

¹ Adapted from the UW Graduate School Individual Development Plan.

² The AAAS has developed an exceptional and vetted tool for IDPs in the sciences (myIDP). You may want to use this tool for your entire IDP plan. The self-assessment section is excellent and provides a print out of skills and interests that can be used to plan or share with others.

A) Career advancement goals: Choose your graduate committee; schedule your qualifying exam; update your CV; attend a career workshop; explore potential funding sources; join a professional association; get training in the ethical conduct of research.

B) Skill and educational goals: Learn a new lab technique; take a course; mentor a student; prepare an oral presentation (ask to give a lecture for a class, a journal club talk or an extra lab meeting); get feedback; volunteer in a science class at a local school; review a manuscript or grant application.

C) Project goals: Complete a specific set of experiments or analyses; present your work as a poster or talk at a conference; write an abstract, manuscript, or grant; establish a collaboration.

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN for Trainee _____ Year

Goals:	Why is this goal important to you?	What help do you need to accomplish this goal? ³	What is your timeline for reaching this goal? ⁴
A. Career Advancement Goals			
1.			
2.			
3.			
B. Skill/Educational Goals			
1.			
2.			
3.			
C. Project Goals			
1.			

³ Consider what resources, experiences, and/or activities you will need to help you accomplish your goal.

⁴ How will you know when you are have reached this goal or how will you assess your progress toward this goal? If you find it difficult to answer this question, you may need to reframe the goal to be more concrete, specific and/or actionable.

2.			
3.			

Discussed with Adviser or Mentor: _____ Date: _____

Plan to revisit with Adviser (date or time frame): _____

Signature of Trainee:

Date:

Signature of Mentor:

Date: