

## Individual Development Plan – Guide for Supervisors

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### What is an Individual Development Plan?

An individual development plan (IDP) is a personalized tool to help graduate students identify skill strengths and gaps, develop and prioritize goals, and map out an actionable strategy to achieve their goals. The IDP offers students an opportunity to think about how they will complement the disciplinary knowledge they develop through their program with skills, competencies, and experiences academic and non-academic employers are looking for.

Students who actively focus on developing self-management skills with career building skills experience have “fewer mismatches between labour market supply and demand” (Bridgstock, 2009). An individualized plan, developed in conjunction with one’s supervisor increases student satisfaction and productivity while reducing student-supervisor conflicts (Platow, 2012; Rose, 2012).

IDPs are increasingly common across Canadian institutions, including at UBC, McGill, and the University of Alberta. In the US, IDPs are now required for all postdoctoral researchers and graduate students supported by the National Institutes of Health.

How does it help students?	How does it help supervisors?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify their professional development and career planning needs, and communicate them to others, including their supervisor</li> <li>• Ensures that expectations (both student’s and supervisor’s) are clearly defined and aligned</li> <li>• Improves career success and satisfaction (Bridgstock, 2009)</li> <li>• Offers a structured way to implement frequent self-reflection practices, which will improve self-awareness, learning, and ‘big-picture thinking’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the most of limited time by clearly outlining student needs and expectations, and pairing them with actions</li> <li>• The IDP’s evidence-based framework provides a platform for communication, facilitating supervisors’ support</li> <li>• Empowers students; they are responsible and accountable for their own development. This supports autonomy and self-directed learning for students, which can improve student progress and success when added to the mentorship the supervisor is already providing</li> </ul>

## What's involved?

The following table describes the 3 major phases of the IDP. In addition to these activities, it's recommended that you hold semi-structured conversations throughout the year to monitor short-term progress. This structure is not set-in-stone – you are encouraged to adjust the program to fit within your preferred supervisory processes (e.g. meeting frequency, level of preparation, depth of conversation).

Phase	Student Activities	Time (Hours)
1 Beginning of Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student completes 'Vision' section of IDP Workbook (<b>4 hours</b>)</li> <li>Student and Supervisor meet to discuss the plan and make any necessary revisions – see below: <i>'Part 1: Discuss Career Paths, Skills, and Goals'</i> (<b>1 hour</b>)</li> <li>(Optional) Monthly check-in – October &amp; November (<b>30 min each</b>)</li> </ul>	5 – 6
2 Middle of Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student and Supervisor meet for a Mid-Year Review – see below: <i>'Part 2: Mid-Year Review'</i> (<b>1 hour</b>)</li> <li>Student completes mid-IDP survey (<b>1 hour</b>)</li> <li>(Optional) Monthly check-in – January to April (<b>30 min each</b>)</li> </ul>	2 – 4
3 End of Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student and supervisor meet for Year-End Review (<b>1 hr</b>)</li> <li>Student completes post-IDP survey (<b>1 hr</b>)</li> </ul>	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9 – 12</b>

Phase	Supervisor Activities	Time (Hours)
1 Sept – Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student and Supervisor meet to discuss the plan and make any necessary revisions – see below: <i>'Part 1: Discuss Career Paths, Skills, and Goals'</i> (<b>1 hour</b>)</li> <li>(Optional) Monthly check-in – October &amp; November (<b>30 min each</b>)</li> </ul>	1 – 2
2 Dec – Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student and Supervisor meet for a Mid-Year Review – see below: <i>'Part 2: Mid-Year Review'</i> (<b>1 hour</b>)</li> <li>(Optional) Monthly check-in – January to April (<b>30 min each</b>)</li> </ul>	3 – 6
3 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student and supervisor meet for Year-End Review (<b>1 hr</b>)</li> </ul>	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5 – 9</b>

## How to Have IDP Conversations with your Student

This section provides examples of discussion points and outcomes to support your three main IDP conversations – the initial conversation, the mid-year, and year-end reviews. Again, these conversation timepoints are suggestions; you may decide on a different schedule for your check-in meetings.

***Please note, Career Services can also support the IDP process through individualized advising and counselling appointments.***

### Part 1: Discuss the Student's Personal Vision

In the first month, students complete the vision portion of the IDP workbook, and supervisors are asked to help them develop goals and self-development activities for each component.

**1. Career Goals and Vision:** Students are asked to choose four possible career paths.

- Can the student explain why they've chosen the four career paths? (e.g. How do they align with their personal values? How does their chosen discipline set them up for work in these fields?)

#### ***Discussion Prompts***

- "Why do these career paths appeal to you?"
- "What research have you done into these four career paths?"

**2. Assessing Skills and Experience:** Students are asked to reflect on their skills as they relate to their chosen career paths, and to determine the skills they will need to be competitive in their chosen fields.

- Has the student reflected carefully on their past experiences (job experience, education, volunteer work, experience as a graduate student, etc.) and fully considered the range and level of their skills as related to their chosen career paths?

#### ***Discussion Prompts***

- "Give me an example to support the ratings you've given yourself on \_\_\_\_\_."
- "How did you decide which skills to focus on? How do you know that you'll need them?"

**3. Setting Developmental Goals:** Students are asked to make developmental goals that support their academic success, scholarly impact, skill development, networking, and career development.

- Are the student's goals **SMART** (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely)?
- Has the student considered when and how much time they will have to devote to their IDP, included related activities (e.g., workshops, conferences, etc.)?

#### ***Discussion Prompts***

- "Have you spoken with peers, supervisors, and/or professionals working in fields of interest for suggestions?"
- "What factors could impact your plan, and how would you adjust?"

- “When will the IDP be revisited to measure progress and to reassess?”

**After your discussion, please sign off below to confirm your mutual agreement:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (supervisor – print name) and I, \_\_\_\_\_ (student – print name), agree that the steps discussed in the **Part 1** of the IDP align with the values, interests and goals of the student, and contribute positively towards their academic, career and developmental growth. We are mutually committed to the success of the IDP.

Student signature:

Supervisor signature:

Date:

Date:

## Part 2: Mid-Year Review

At the mid-year point, the student will have completed the vision stage of the IDP process and will be engaged in the action stage; you will have determined how they'll keep you informed of their progress. The outcome of the mid-year conversation should be a re-commitment to goals for the second half of the academic year.

- Has the student succeeded in their plan thus far?
- Can the student reasonably expect to achieve the goals they have set for the remainder of the academic year? (with adjustments if necessary)

### **Discussion Prompts**

- “Are you meeting your goals and/or have your goals shifted since the beginning of the year? What adjustments need to be made?
  - *If the timeline is off track, what are the underlying reasons and how can this be addressed? (e.g. re-evaluation of activities; development of self-management skills)*
  - *If the student is ahead schedule, should new opportunities/skills development be explored?*
- “Are there any changes that need to be made to reflect a shift in personal/career goals, circumstances, or new opportunities?”

**After your discussion, please sign off below to confirm your mutual agreement:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (supervisor – print name) and I, \_\_\_\_\_ (student – print name), agree that the steps discussed in the **Part 2** of the IDP align with the values, interests and goals of the student, and contribute positively towards their academic, career and developmental growth. We are mutually committed to the success of the IDP.

Student signature:

Date:

Supervisor signature:

Date:

### Part 3: Year-End Review

The student should now have completed the activities they outlined in their IDP workbook. At this stage, your discussion should reflect on the year's successes, what was learned, what worked and what didn't, and consider what adjustments can be made to scale up their success in the following year. The IDP is an iterative annual process, so this conversation should be recalled when developing the next year's IDP.

- Did you complete the goals you committed to in the IDP? Why or why not?
- Did those goals move you closer to achieving your academic and career success?

#### ***Discussion Prompts***

- "What did you learn about yourself this year?"
- "What do you consider to be your major successes?"
- "What adjustments can you make next year to build on and continue your career development?"

***Congratulations, you have completed your Individual Development Plan!***

Student signature:

Date:

Supervisor signature:

Date:

### The Queen's IDP

The Queen's IDP was developed by a committee comprised of representatives from the School of Graduate Studies, Career Services, Student Academic Success Services, the Centre for Teaching & Learning and the Faculty of Arts & Science.

Go to <https://queensu.ca/exph/idp> for more details