

**PhD Student: 1<sup>st</sup> Year**

**Your Name:**

**Advisor (or 'Advisory Committee'):**

**Date:**

Setting goals and taking stock of your accomplishments are essential to meaningful progress in both scientific training and professional development. An important tool toward this end is the Individual Development Plan (IDP). The IDP is intended to help you *i*) design, monitor, and measure progress in training, *ii*) articulate short- and long-term goals, and *iii*) identify relevant developmental activities. Your advisor, or your advisory committee, is an invaluable resource in this process, providing feedback and helping you to generate an action plan.

## **HOW TO COMPLETE YOUR IDP**

### **1. Step back and assess.**

It's easy to lose sight of the big picture. An IDP is designed to provide perspective – perspective on your progress as a researcher, on your development in general, and your goals. The more thought given the IDP, the greater the return, so be sure to give sufficient time and reflection to the process.

### **2. Download this form to complete the first three sections.**

This IDP form is a fillable PDF document. The first three sections cover your coursework/rotations, research skills, and professional development.

### **3. Use the link within this form to access the fourth section ('Achievements').**

The fourth section of the IDP pertains to your achievements over the past year. You'll need to access and complete this section online. Once completed, this section will be accessible to your advisor(s), graduate group, and the BGS office. It will also be used by you to certify that all but the Action Plan has been completed and that a time has been scheduled to meet with your advisor(s) to complete the Action Plan.

**Note: BGS requires certification by August 1.** Your graduate group may require you to complete the IDP before this date, however, for example to fit advisory timelines.

### **4. Complete the Action Plan.**

With the Achievements section now available to your advisor(s), please send her or him a copy of the IDP form with the completed first three sections. You will review all the sections and complete the last page of the form, the Action Plan, together.

### **Who sees your IDP?**

- The IDP, with the exception of the Achievements section, is a confidential document between you and your advisor or advisory committee. If you wish, you may share the IDP with others, for example your graduate group chair, other faculty, and students – this is your choice.
- The Achievements section is completed online through a link in this document. The information, as part of the IDP, will be included with what you share with your advisor or advisory committee. It will be available to your graduate group and the BGS office as well.

COURSEWORK/  
ROTATIONS

RESEARCH  
SKILLS

PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

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ACTION PLAN

**PhD Student: 1<sup>st</sup> Year**

Student: [Student Name]

Advisor: [Advisor Name]

Date:

This section of the IDP focuses on your objectives as they relate to coursework and laboratory rotations in the first year. Its primary intent is to help guide you in articulating your goals and aligning them with your training as you begin the transition into thesis work.

**OBJECTIVES RELEVANT TO COURSEWORK AND LABORATORY ROTATIONS**

What elective courses, if any, did you take your first year? What was your rationale in choosing them? Do you have any concerns regarding your performance?

What elective courses, if any, do you plan for your second year? Have your goals remained the same, or have they changed?

What laboratory rotations did you take your first year? What was your rationale in choosing them? Do you have any concerns regarding your performance?

What laboratory rotations or other research do you plan for the second year? Have you encountered any obstacles in choosing or arranging them?

What thoughts have you given to the choice of a laboratory for your thesis project? What are the important considerations for you in this regard?

Is there anything your advisor, advisory committee, and/or other mentors can do differently to help?

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The attainment of skills relevant to scientific inquiry is at the heart of PhD training and is central to the pursuit of career opportunities following graduation. Use this worksheet to rank your skills **from weak (1) to strong (3)** as you currently perceive them relative to those you think a student at your level should have; **leave blank if not applicable**. Mark as well any skills you wish to target for improvement over the next year.

**Please note** that some items in this worksheet, particularly those marked with asterisks, may not be applicable to you as a 1<sup>st</sup>-year student. They are included for consistency with IDPs you'll see in subsequent years of training.

Detailed resources for many of the skills itemized here can be found at the BGS Career Development website.

RESEARCH SKILLS & SCIENTIFIC THINKING				Target skill	PROJECT MANAGEMENT				Target skill
	1	2	3			1	2	3	
Broad-based knowledge of science	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge of current discipline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Breaking down complex tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Critical reading of scientific literature	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Time management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Experimental design	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Managing data and resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Basic bench skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interpretation of data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Computational analysis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>*MENTORING/TEACHING</b>				
Statistical analysis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Delegating; providing instruction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Troubleshooting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing constructive feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data management (notebook)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Setting expectations for others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creativity and innovation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initiative/independence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>PROFESSIONALISM</b>				
					Identifying and seeking advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					Upholding commitments/deadlines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>WRITING</b>					Networking/collaborations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grammar/structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dealing with conflict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarity/precision/intent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lab citizenship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
*For a research proposal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work ethic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
*For a scientific publication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>ORAL COMMUNICATION</b>									
Overall Scientific Fluency & Clarity					<i>Other skills, or comments?</i>				
One-on-one discussions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Lab meeting as a venue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Scientific Meeting as a venue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					

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The skills and traits cultivated in predoctoral training in the biomedical sciences are valued in a wide variety of careers. The IDP gives you a chance to begin collecting your thoughts in this regard. Note that BGS provides a variety of resources on careers and professional development relevant to PhDs in the biomedical sciences as does [Penn's Career Services](#).

What do you see as your long-term goals at this point in time, whether general or specific?

What factors inform these goals (e.g. skills, interests, values, colleagues, current activities)?

Are there short-term activities or objectives that might help in pursuing or better framing these goals?

Do you yet have interests in any specific types of careers, whether in or apart from academic research?

Is there anything additional you might need in the way of support or resources to pursue your goals or career interests?

COURSEWORK/  
ROTATIONSRESEARCH  
SKILLS**PROFESSIONAL  
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ACTION PLAN

The fourth section, 'Achievements,' is completed online through this link (<https://www.med.upenn.edu/apps/bgs-forms>, then "New Forms" > "Individual Development Plan") to enable access not only to your advisor(s) but to your graduate group and the BGS office as well.

(Note: Once you've saved any content in the Achievements section, you can access it again through the same link, but using "My Forms" instead of "New Forms.")



When you have completed the Achievements section, please certify in this section (i.e., online) that this and the first three

sections of the IDP have been completed and that you have set up a time to meet with your advisor(s) to discuss these sections and the Action Plan.

Remember to forward to your advisor(s) the IDP form with the completed first three sections.

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The action plan highlights your priorities in research and career development in the next year. It is to be developed jointly by you and your advisor or advisory committee during or after the discussion.

**PROJECTED TIMELINE**

When do you anticipate finalizing your choice of a thesis laboratory? Have you considered applying for a fellowship?

**TARGET SKILLS**

What skills did you identify for improvement over the next year?

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

What are your identified objectives regarding long-term goals or careers, and how might these be pursued in the coming year?

**ADDITIONAL ACTIONS**

What additional actions that should be initiated by *i*) you, *ii*) your advisor(s), and/or *iii*) other mentors in order to facilitate your success?

**FOLLOWING UP**

What is the schedule for you and your advisor(s) to meet and follow up on the action plan or other items of your IDP? (An annual meeting is only the minimum required.)

**OTHER**

Are there any items you would like to discuss with your advisor(s) at this time?