Building an Individual Development Plan

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) provide a way for you to plan how you will develop professionally and prepare for the next steps in your career. An IDP should be flexible enough to suit your interests and personal working style, and it should be rigid enough to ensure that you make active progress toward your goals.

IDP Steps

Step 1   Consider the skills, experiences, and qualities that are valued in graduate school and in careers of interest

Step 2   Assess which of these skills, experiences, and qualities you want to improve long-term and short-term, and brainstorm specific experiences you can seek out

Step 3   Prioritize experiences to seek out and create SMART goals to ensure you make progress

Step 4   Discuss your IDP with mentors and colleagues to gather feedback

Step 5   Implement your IDP and revisit it every 3-6 months

Step 1: How do you want to develop professionally?

Answer the following questions with lots of specific details. You can also include learning more about something as a quality you want to develop. For example, you can add "explore non-academic careers" to your career list.

What skills are required to be a successful academic researcher or graduate student? What qualities are most valued?

What careers are you considering after graduate school? What additional skills and qualities are valued in these careers?

Careers	Additional Skills & Qualities

Step 2: Setting Priorities and Gaining Experience

From the lists from Step 1, choose which skills, experiences, and qualities you want to develop in the short-term (the next 3-6 months) and which you want to build in the long-term (the next 1-2 years). Then, brainstorm different ways for you to gain experience in these areas.

Short-term Priorities

Skill/Quality	Potential Experiences

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Long-term Priorities

Skill/Quality	Potential Experiences

Networking

Who Would Be A Helpful Contact?	Potential Ways to Meet

Career Exploration

What Careers Do You Want to Learn More About?	Potential Ways to Learn More

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Self-Care
Activity, creativity, community, and spirituality

Ways You Care for Yourself	Potential Ways to Learn More

Step 3: SMART Goals

SMART goals are specific, measurable, accountable, realistic, and time-bound. Use the table below to outline your SMART goals to help you develop as a professional.

Specific Goal	How Will Your Success Be Measured?	When Will You Complete This Goal By?	Who Will Hold You Accountable? How Will You Update Them on Your Progress?

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Step 4: Mentors' and Colleagues' Feedback

Gathering input from mentors and colleagues can help you gain insight and set more effective goals. Mentors can include your advisor, faculty members at Duke and other institutions, fellow students, university staff, and professionals in careers of interest. Seek out formal and informal mentors who can provide insight on the skills and qualities you want to develop (e.g., mentors for research, grant writing, teaching, and industry research).

Who could you recruit as a mentor for your short-term and long-term goals? When could you meet with them to ask for feedback?

Potential Mentors	When/How to Ask for Feedback

Step 5: Implement and Revise

Start using your IDP. Be sure to set a reminder to revise your IDP every 3-6 months and seek additional feedback from mentors and colleagues. You will likely need to revise and adapt some goals to better suit your needs along the way, which is perfectly fine and to be expected.

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Create a Graduate School Activities Overview (Short Example)

Contributors	Research
Contributors	Service/Teaching/Campus Involvement
Contributors	Career & Professional Development
Contributors	Self-Care
Contributors	IDP Goal 1
Contributors	IDP Goal 2

Contributors: who provides you with advice, feedback, support, mentorship for these activities? Who are you engaging with?

Tips for Using IDPs

IDP Resources

- myIDP online tool from AAAS and Science Careers: http://myidp.sciencecareers.org/
  - Twelve-part series of Science articles as guidance:
    http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2012/09/you-need-game-plan
- Duke Career Center Professional Goal Setting Guide:
  https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/guides/setting-professional-goals
- Duke OPTIONS from The Graduate School has a tool for planning your professional development:
  https://options.duke.edu/
- Office of Biomedical Graduate Education resources for career and professional development:
  https://medschool.duke.edu/education/degree-programs-and-admissions/career-professional-development

Career Resources

- Online Resources
  - Duke Career Center's Career Development Process: https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/career-development-process
  - Explore careers on the Duke Career Center website (the Specific Industry section on the right-hand side was written for graduate students) https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/explore-careers
  - Versatile PhD: learn about potential careers for graduate students and read stories of how students made the transition to different fields
    https://gradschool.duke.edu/professional-development/access-versatile-phd
  - Duke career panels and presentations: watch videos from past panels and workshops on a variety of careers https://www.youtube.com/user/DukePostdocServices
  - Science Careers: articles about academic and non-academic careers and advice from professionals
    https://www.sciencemag.org/careers
  - New York Academy of Science career videos: https://www.nyas.org/career-resources/
- Upcoming Duke Events
  - Duke Career Center- check weekly for employer events like Career Fairs, networking sessions, workshops, panels, alumni speakers and more: http://careerconnections.duke.edu/
  - Careers Beyond Academia series: https://sites.duke.edu/careersbeyondacademia/
  - 30-minute Alum/HR Zooms: https://sites.duke.edu/careersbeyondacademia/alum-zooms/
  - Academic Job Search Series: http://sites.duke.edu/academicjobseries/
  - The Graduate School PD events: https://gradschool.duke.edu/professional-development/events
- International Students
  - Interstride: global career opportunities, visa and immigration support, student resources and services, networking and mentorship, webinars and workshops https://student.interstride.com/
  - My Visa Jobs: see which employers have sponsored for visas based on this database of government visa data http://www.myvisajobs.com/
  - Lockin China: fins jobs in China and get career support https://chinaportal.guccu.org/duke/index