

Individual Development Plans

Summary for Mentors

The Individual Development Plan

What is an IDP?

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) helps graduate students and postdocs assess skills, interests, and values; determine a plan for meeting academic and professional goals; and communicate goals with their mentor(s).

IDPs help mentees identify strengths and areas needing development and are consistent with studies showing the positive impact that goal-setting has on performance¹. IDPs allow mentees to be responsible for their own learning by setting clear and attainable goals. People are more likely to achieve goals when they have specific plans in place². IDPs also facilitate important discussions between mentees and mentors.

...for mapping your academic and professional development



Are IDPs required?

NIH-funded grad students and postdocs are required to have IDPs, and UW-Madison recommends IDPs for all grad students and postdocs, regardless of funding source. The full policy is available at grad.wisc.edu/pd/idp.

What is my responsibility?

While the onus is on mentees to initiate and implement IDPs, it is also important that you encourage them to discuss their IDPs with you for the valuable advice and support you can provide. They may choose to share parts of their plan with you and keep other parts private, and may come to you at various points in the process: after self-assessment, while writing goals, or before implementing the plan.

If a grad student or postdoc indicated you as a mentor in the **IDP Reporting System**, you'll get an email with instructions about how to report IDP activity. The system helps PIs and grants admins verify IDP use. It does not record IDP content, which is private to the mentee.

Where do I start?

Try these three easy steps:

- Point your mentees to the many online resources available to help them at grad.wisc.edu/pd/idp. The onus is on the mentee to initiate and implement the IDP; you'll come in when they are ready to discuss it.
- Take about 10 minutes to watch this video summarizing IDPs: youtu.be/HII-gSsNIXY.
- Read through Mentor Tips (grad.wisc.edu/pd/idp/mentortips) so you'll know how to guide and support your mentees when they come to you.

Where can I learn more about IDPs?

The webpage grad.wisc.edu/pd/idp gives an excellent overview for grad students, postdocs, mentors, PIs, grants admins, and grad program coordinators. Archived info sessions for PIs, faculty mentors, and grants admins are available here: kb.wisc.edu/gsadminkb/internal/page.php?id=44419 (netID required). And Graduate School staff are available by invitation to visit your department to give a talk about IDPs for faculty and/or mentees; if you're interested, contact Alissa Ewer (alissa.ewer@wisc.edu).

Research Mentor Training: UW-Madison is home to a nationally-renowned, evidence-based mentor training program, which includes guidance on IDPs. Try reviewing curriculum, hosting training in your department, or participating in training on campus. Learn more:

Websites - Designed to provide resources to improve research mentoring relationships, these sites provide curricula, assessments, and resources relevant for mentors and mentees, as well as those implementing training. See: mentoringresources.ictr.wisc.edu and researchmentortraining.org.
Training - The Delta Program in partnership with the Wisconsin Institute for Science Education and Community Engagement (WISCIENCE) and the Institute for Clinical and Translational Research offer training to members of the UW-Madison community. See: delta.wisc.edu/Courses_and_Programs/RMT.html and mentoringresources.ictr.wisc.edu/TrainingMain.

Who do I contact with questions?

Regarding policy: Bill Barker, Director, Research Policy, william.barker@wisc.edu

Regarding resources, workshops, or website: Alissa Ewer, Professional Development and Communications, alissa.ewer@wisc.edu

Additionally, the following faculty members are available to talk with you about their experiences using IDPs:

- Dr. Alan Rapraeger, Professor, Dept. of Human Oncology; Director, Office of Postdoctoral Studies, SMPH - rapraeger@humonc.wisc.edu
- Dr. Zsuzsanna Fabry, Professor, Dept. of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine; Cell. and Molec. Pathology Grad. Program Chair - zfabry@wisc.edu
- Dr. David Wassarman, Professor, Cell and Regenerative Biology; Chair, Grad. Program in Cell. and Molec. Biology - dawassarman@wisc.edu

References

¹Seijts G. H., Latham G. P. (2012). Knowing when to set learning versus performance goals. *Organizational Dynamics*, 41, 1-6.

²Gollwitzer P. M. (1999). Implementation intentions: strong effects of simple plans. *American Psychologist*, 54, 493-503.