

Individualized Development Plan (IDP) – Postdoctoral Researchers

The Faculty of Graduate Studies' IDP is a tool to assist postdoctoral researchers, like you, to identify and develop your goals during your fellowship. When creating an IDP, with the help of a mentor, you can enhance your professional growth and skills by:

- **Setting and communicating goals** related to teaching/mentoring, research and/or professional development with your supervisor and other relevant individuals
- **Identifying ways to learn or improve your competencies** to be used during your fellowship and within other professional spaces
- **Identifying your strengths, talents and passions**, as well as opportunities to use them during your fellowship and in your future professional endeavours while building an effective support network

The development of an IDP is a cyclical process. You are encouraged to revisit it over the course of your fellowship as interests and long-term goals evolve. The five steps in working with the IDP are as follows:

1. **Self-Assessment/Reflection:** looking back while planning for the future
2. **Setting Goals:** clarifying the knowledge and skills you need
3. **Exploring Opportunities:** developing a strategy for realizing your plan
4. **Engagement:** acting on your plan to achieve your goals
5. **Check-in:** revisit to update your goals and engagement activities

Further information, resources and relevant contact information can be found on the [Individualized Development Plan \(IDP\) - Postdoctoral Researchers webpage](#).

Self-Assessment/Reflection

To begin, reflect on the following areas. These will most likely change and evolve during your fellowship, but you can use it as a guide as you progress.

What are my...	My Response
... short- or long-term goals for current and future career success?	
... current areas of strength? Where do I want to improve?	
... self-improvement goals? What new skills do I want to acquire?	

Career Exploration and Planning

There exist a variety of versatile career options for those with advanced degrees. Learning the tools required to evaluate career options, and the skills needed to enter those careers, will help you transition to new opportunities.

- Are there any opportunities for partnerships or collaborations with groups outside the university that you would like to pursue in the coming year, e.g., networking, relationship building?
- What kinds of experiences would you like to have related to your research and its intersection with future opportunities in the coming year?

Example:

- *Previous opportunities:* Publishing opportunity, collaborative or solo endeavour, work with partner organization/industry group, etc.
- *Future opportunities:* Assessing current network and connecting with leaders in a variety of industries or organizations

Opportunity/Next Steps	Lessons Learned	Notes

Communication

An important aspect of the expertise one refines as part of postdoctoral research is the ability to effectively communicate information through writing and other mediums.

What are some techniques for improving written and oral communication to professional colleagues or to laypersons?

- Are there areas related to writing you would like to gain more experience with or improve upon? Are there any aspects of your writing process that you dislike? (If you work with other media – e.g., video, audio – you may also discuss those.)
- Have you made any presentations on your research this past year? What did you feel was the most successful aspect of presenting in public? Were there any areas for improvement?

Example:

- *Past year experiences:* Better understanding on choosing visuals in presentations to engage audiences while not undermining the impact of the findings
- *Areas for improvement in writing:* Understanding the differences in tone of a scholarly article versus a grant application

Opportunity/Next Steps	Lessons Learned	Notes

Health and Wellness

A variety of campus and community services are available to support and enhance the well-being of scholars during one's academic pursuits.

- What strategies do you use to improve how you feel physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually? How successful do you feel these strategies are?
- Are there any resources or services you feel would be valuable to support your well-being throughout your research pursuits?

Example:

- *Goals over the past year:* Maintained physical activity at least 3 times per week consistently throughout the year
- *Goals for the upcoming year:* Assessing work-life balance in relation to current priorities and responsibilities with personal interests

Opportunity/Next Steps	Lessons Learned	Notes

Managing Time and Resources

It is difficult to balance the demands of life and work, but there are strategies that can be used to help manage time more effectively.

- What strategies do you use for balancing the many priorities in your life?
- Are you satisfied with your current strategies for managing your time? What are some of the ways they are successful? What are some of the ways these have worked?

Example:

- *Previous strategies:* Plan time required per task and distribute it throughout the week
- *Strategies to improve time management:* Work on communicating expectations with supervisor and/or team members

Opportunity/Next Steps	Lessons Learned	Notes

Research Dissemination

The importance of research isn't limited to other scholars. What are the tools and techniques that help translate academic work into other contexts?

- What opportunities did you have to share your expertise to a broader (not just academic) audience this past year (e.g., public presentations, lectures, social media)?
- What were some of the positive outcomes? What were some of the limitations you encountered in translating your scholarly activities into other contexts?
- Is this an area in which you would like to be more active?

Example:

- *Previous strategies:* Reviewed the social media activity of a prominent researcher for insights on effective means of communication with the public
- *Goals for the upcoming year:* Seek opportunities to reach different audiences to share research with

Opportunity/Next Steps	Lessons Learned	Notes

Teaching/Mentoring

The skills learned when leading a classroom or advising junior researchers (graduate students, undergraduate researchers, research assistants, etc.) are skills that can be relevant in many other contexts, such as public speaking, formulating plans and interpersonal skills.

- What kind of teaching/mentoring opportunities did you have in the previous year? What kind of feedback did you receive? Is this an area you would like more experience? What areas of your teaching/mentoring would you like to improve?

Example:

- *Opportunities in the past year:* Made a point of sharing research insights with undergraduate researchers in the lab
- *Goals for upcoming year:* Guiding master's and doctoral students in developing a skill of particular importance in your field

Opportunity/Next Steps	Lessons Learned	Notes

Setting Goals

Drawing on your answers to the self-assessment, this section of the IDP process asks you to lay out your **top four goals** and prioritize them in order of importance. Working with your supervisor, mentor and/or other resources across campus, use this process to develop a plan that will outline a strategy for achieving goals in both the short- and long-term. **Setting goals that motivate you, in addition to writing them down and talking about them with others, helps increase the likelihood that they are acted upon.**

Priorities for your Postdoctoral Position

Reviewing your answers to the previous self-assessment questionnaire, what are some of the primary skills that you are looking to acquire or improve? What is your current level of knowledge/expertise of these skills (expert to completely unfamiliar)? The **aim of this section** is to outline the **general skill** rather than the specific outcome (e.g., improving academic writing skills, rather than "publishing an article").

Priority/Goal	Skills/Expertise Area	Current Level of Knowledge/Confidence
1. (e.g., Engage with a non-profit and/or campus community)	(e.g., Relationship building)	(e.g., Satisfactory)
2. (e.g., Apply for grant/fellowship funding)	(e.g., Communication)	(e.g., Excellent)
3.		
4.		

Reminder: Postdoctoral researchers can view all professional skills opportunities and resources at York University – organized under the six competency areas of the IDP – on the [Graduate and Postdoctoral Professional Skills \(GPPS\) webpage](#).

Exploring Opportunities & Engagement

Set one to two concrete activities that will help you improve your expertise and confidence in the above-outlined priorities. These activities can – and should – take many different forms that will include new learning, but they will also provide opportunities to apply your skills. The tables ask you to outline the time frame. In some cases, this may go beyond 12 months; however, in each case, you are asked to specify the outcomes by which you will measure the extent to which you have been able to realize your goal.

A reminder that this is only a worksheet, so do not worry about writing and revising your goals in relation to each other as you work on your plan.

Skill/Expertise: (e.g., *Relationship Building*)

Activity/Experience	Time Frame	Outcome
(e.g., Joined a committee)	(e.g., Current academic year)	(e.g., Gained relevant governance experience while establishing relationships with others for future collaboration)

Skill/Expertise:

Activity/Experience	Time Frame	Outcome

Skill/Expertise:

Activity/Experience	Time Frame	Outcome

Skill/Expertise:

Activity/Experience	Time Frame	Outcome

Check-in

Revisit your IDP to update your goals and engagement activities throughout the year, at time intervals you/your mentor deem most appropriate.

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