

SHBT Predoctoral Student Individual Development Plan (IDP)

The SHBT Individual Development Plan (IDP) aims to encourage honest and open communication between students and mentors regarding graduate training and long-term aspirations and goals.

Instructions for students:

Step 1: Conduct a self-assessment

Begin by assessing your knowledge, skills, talents, strengths, and interests. Complete the self-assessment given in Appendix 1, or another self-assessment you find relevant to your aspirations and/or stage of training, e.g., the AAAS myIDP (<http://myidp.sciencecareers.org/>), or the National Postdoctoral Association Core Competencies Checklist (<http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/competencies>).

Step 2: Identify areas for development

After completing a self-assessment, take time to reflect. Consider where you are now, and where you want to be. Think intentionally about your graduate training. What do you want from your education? How can your advisor and other sources of support assist you?

- **Allow yourself to think broadly and creatively about your aspirations**

Think broadly and creatively about your aspirations. In considering your professional goals, for example, think beyond specific or narrowly-defined jobs, positions, or fields. Think about the kind of contribution you want to make, or the kind of problems you want to solve. Can you identify strengths, passions, and interests that could be utilized and fulfilled in a variety of positions or career areas?

- **Establish actionable, achievable goals**

Translate your long-term aspirations into actionable, short-term goals or steps. Make use of the IDP goal-setting worksheet given on the following page, establishing as many goals in each area (academic, career, personal) as you wish. For help with goal setting, refer to the guidelines given in Appendix 2.

- **Identify timepoints and methods for assessing your progress**

Establish a time frame and a method for assessing progress for each goal you define.

Step 3: Discuss your self-assessment and goal-setting worksheet with your mentor

Use your completed self-assessment and IDP goal-setting worksheet to guide discussions with your mentor. After meeting with your mentor, send an email documenting the date the meeting occurred to shbt_program@hms.harvard.edu. (The dialogue regarding the IDP remains confidential between you and your mentor.) The program requires at least one meeting devoted to discussion of your IDP with your mentor every year.

Step 4: Implement your plan, revisiting, refining, or revising as needed

Over the course of the year, refer to your plan on a regular basis. Assess your progress towards each goal within the pre-established time frame. If you find you are not making progress towards a goal, identify why not. Are obstacles getting the way, or is it a wrong goal for the moment? Re-commit to the goal, or release it, and define and implement a new goal.

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Goal-setting worksheet

	What actions or steps will be taken towards accomplishing this goal?	What is the time frame for accomplishing this goal? This action or step?
Academic goals		
1.		
2.		
3.		
Career goals		
1.		
2.		
3.		
Personal goals		
1.		
2.		
3.		

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Appendix 1: Self-Assessment

An important part of your PhD training is to develop a skill set transferable beyond graduation. Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses in relation to where you think a student at your stage of graduate training should be, noting the skills or areas you would like to target in the coming year. Ask your mentor how he or she agrees or disagrees with your self-assessment.

	Current ability level					Target skill for this year
	Needs improvement		Highly proficient			
Core scientific knowledge						
Knowledge of concepts and literature in the field	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Knowledge of concepts and literature related to thesis project	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Critical reading of scientific literature	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Research skills						
Analytical skills						<input type="checkbox"/>
Problem solving/troubleshooting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Experimental or study design	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Data quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Analysis and interpretation of data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Creativity/development of new research directions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Responsible conduct of research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Scientific and interpersonal communication						
Writing for a scientific audience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Writing for a lay audience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Oral presentation and digital multimedia skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
One-on-one and informal interactions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Seeking advice from peers, advisors, and mentors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Project management and leadership						
Planning and organizing projects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Managing data, time, and resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Delegating responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Providing instruction and guidance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Providing and receiving constructive feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Working with diverse teams/groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Teaching and mentoring						
One-on-one teaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Leading small groups (e.g., discussion section or lab)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Lecturing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Serving as a teaching fellow	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Serving as a mentor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Volunteer and outreach						
Participating in public or community service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Participating in a professional society or institutional service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Career advancement						
Identifying and exploring career options	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Preparing a CV or job-talk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Establishing a professional network	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

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Appendix 2: Possible themes and topics for the IDP goal-setting worksheet

Academic goals

- Is there academic coursework or training you need to complete?
 - Have you completed (or have a plan to complete) your core and elective coursework?
 - Are there workshops or tutorials you would like to pursue with mentors or advisors?
 - What disciplinary or specific knowledge do you need to acquire to support your thesis research?
- What specific skills, methods, or techniques do you need to acquire to pursue your research?
 - Is there coursework that would help you to acquire these skills?
 - Would work with other students, postdocs, or faculty members help you to acquire these skills?
 - Would collaborating with another laboratory help you to acquire these skills?
- Would you like to gain experience in teaching?
 - Are there specific teaching opportunities you are aware of? How can you obtain them?
 - Is there formal or informal training that may help you feel more confident teaching?
- What presentations do you anticipate giving?
 - Do you plan to attend or present your work at scientific or professional conferences?
 - Do you plan to present your work to your mentor or dissertation committee?
- Do you plan to submit any journal articles for publication?
 - Are there certain journals you are targeting?
 - What are the anticipated topics/titles of the manuscripts? What are the anticipated dates of submission?
 - Will the publications be co-authored?
 - If you anticipate co-authorship, do you need to reach out to or follow-up with potential collaborators?
- Do you plan to submit applications for funding?
 - What are the sources of the funding and what type of award will you seek?
 - When are submission deadlines? What are next steps to prepare to submit?

Career goals

- What are your career aspirations, in the long-, mid-, and short-term?
 - Where do you see yourself working, and in what capacity, in 10 years? (long-term)
 - Where do you see yourself working, and in what capacity, in 5 years? (mid-term)
 - What do you want to accomplish towards reaching your career goals in the next year? (short-term)
- Are there relationships with mentors, advisors, or faculty you hope to cultivate?
 - What steps can you take to make these connections?
 - Are there letters of reference you hope to obtain before you are on the job market?
- Are there professional development workshops or training you hope to attend?
 - What are the topics? (e.g., ethics, leadership, management, collaboration, mentoring)
- Are you interested in setting up informational interviews, job shadowing, or internships?
 - If so, when do these activities fit into your plans?
 - What organizations are you interested in?
 - Do you have any contacts within these organizations?
 - Are there upcoming events where you can make contacts?

Personal goals

- Are there things you need or want to do to keep balance in your life?
 - Would you like to establish goals around fitness, healthy eating, contemplative time, community service?
 - Do you want to have more time with a partner, friends, or family? How can you create time in your schedule for this?
- Are there financial goals you hope to reach, or debts or loans you hope to repay by a certain time?
- Is having a child or children important to you? If so, how might this fit into your plans?