

IOWA Individual Development Plan for Graduate Students

The Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a personal and flexible planning tool designed to help graduate students plan and achieve their professional goals. Students use the IDP process to reflect, identify professional goals, create manageable plans, and get feedback from multiple mentors. IDP forms are confidential, and students can select what they want to share with mentors.

IDP TIMELINE

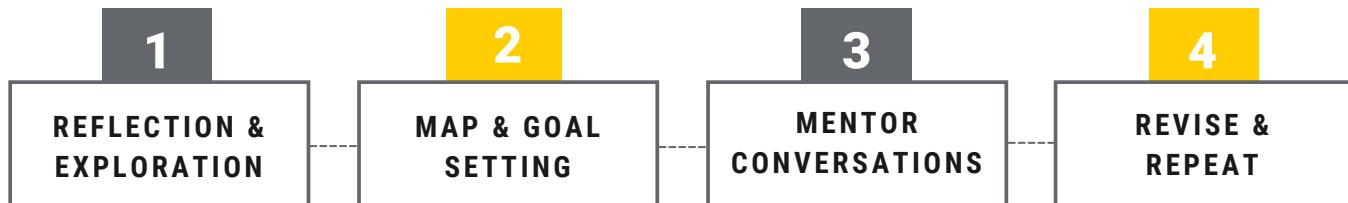
Think about the IDP process as cyclical and similar to the goal setting and performance review process that occurs in most jobs. You can meet with multiple mentors throughout the process.



IDP FAST FACTS

- The Graduate College encourages broad use of IDPs, but specific fellowships, faculty, programs, or colleges may require them.
- IDP mentor meetings should focus on support and resource sharing not evaluation of a student's career plans or choices.
- Students should try to enter some plans for every year of your studies through graduation. It is OK to have less clarity about later years in your plan since you will be updating the plan annually.
- If you are unclear about your intended career path or have not fully researched it, you should include goals in your plan that will enable you to clarify your targeted careers. You should fully research two or three target career paths and potential employers.
- The IDP is flexible and students can change it at any time, but keeping an electronic copy of each year's IDP for reflection and comparison during your annual updates is helpful.

IDP STEPS



Estimated Graduation Date (Semester/Year) _____

Intended Career Paths (List at least two and be specific as possible. [Explore career paths here.](#))

➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____

Geographic Regions and/or Countries I would like to possibly work in after graduation:

➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____

If you are an F-1 Visa Student, how many years of OPT will you have based on your degree program? _____

Note: International students should include seeking internship and employment in their home or other countries of interest in their plan.

STEP 1: REFLECTION & EXPLORATION

Reflection and career exploration are intertwined processes for graduate students. Reflective journaling on your experiences and conversations with individuals in careers of interest are classic examples of this process. You may also choose to use one of the following free IDP specific tools:

- [ImaginePhD \(Humanities/Social Sciences\)](#)
- [MyIDP \(STEM\)](#).

In addition, the following areas of reflection are effective for graduate students to write about or use in conversation with peers and mentors.

Academic Goals:

1. Have you carefully reviewed the academic requirements for your program in your department's handbook?
2. Are you confused or do you have questions about the order in which you must achieve program milestones?
3. Have you discussed and mapped out with your advisor the classes that you will take during each semester of your program? Are you on target to finish on time? Have you discussed any changes to the plan with your advisor?
4. If you are experiencing difficulties, have you sought out help in/and or outside of your program to overcome the challenges?

Career Development Goals:

1. Can you list at least two specific career paths you intend to pursue after graduation?
2. Have you done systematic research about your intended career paths? Have you read information about the required skills and qualifications? Possible employers? Industry trends? Salary information? Demand for the occupation currently and in the future?
3. Have you reviewed information about available career services, workshops, and networking events for PhDs? Do you know how to access these resources?
4. Do you know the most effective job search techniques? Are your documents and interviewing skills strong?
5. Have your career goals changed in the past year? Have you researched new options? Or accessed career advising if unsure?

Skill Development Goals

1. What are the top skills required to be a competitive applicant for your top two intended careers?
2. What "skills gap" exists between your current skills and what employers will be looking for in applicants?
3. Are you aware of and do you know how to access professional development opportunities and/or internships for students committed to preparing for a faculty job? Jobs in industry? Jobs in government?
4. What professional development activities did you do in the past year? What skills did you gain?

Personal Development Goals

1. How is your overall physical and mental health? Are you taking care of yourself? Is stress interfering with your performance?
2. Are you connected to other students you can socialize with and that get support from through challenging times?
3. Do you have clarity about your life goals and priorities? Are your priorities in conflict with others in your life causing worry/anxiety?
4. Has your stress level changed in the past year? What steps are you taking to stay well? Have you sought out assistance?

Money/Funding Goals

1. Have you explored and discussed fellowship opportunities related to your discipline with my advisor?
2. Have you read about and applied for any of the internal and external funding opportunities on the Graduate College's website?
3. Do you have a plan for managing student debt from previous institutions as well as from your doctoral program?
4. Are you making informed decisions with regard to a monthly budget and taking on additional debt?

STEP 2: MAP & GOAL SETTING

Use the SMART principle to break one of your professional goals into a concrete plan. What is a small step you can take in the next week? What could you plan to accomplish in coming months?

- **Specific** - is it focused and unambiguous?
- **Measurable** - define metrics to know whether the objective is achieved.
- **Action-oriented** - identify concrete steps to achieve the objective.
- **Realistic** - is the strategy feasible?
- **Time bound** - define a deadline.

Strategies and resources needed to achieve the professional goals stated above ([See ImaginePhD examples](#)):

➤ **1 Week:** _____

➤ **3 Months:** _____

Year (for example, 2021-2022): _____

➤ [Click here for the multiyear goal form](#)

Goal Area

ACADEMIC GOALS	
CAREER DEVELOPMENT GOALS	
SKILLS DEVELOPMENT GOALS	
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS	
MONEY/FUNDING GOALS	

STEP 3: MENTOR CONVERSATIONS

Building Your Mentoring Team

IDP career mentors are individuals that support your career goals. Brainstorm a team of three or more individuals that could provide your feedback on your IDP.

- Academic advisors
- Other faculty at Iowa or beyond
- Individuals working in sectors of interest
- Individuals with shared identity
- characteristics
- Career coaches
- Alumni
- Peers
- Others

List potential mentors who you can reach out to:



Define three things you want to talk to each mentor about:

	1) _____
MENTOR 1	2) _____
	3) _____

	1) _____
MENTOR 2	2) _____
	3) _____

	1) _____
MENTOR 3	2) _____
	3) _____

IDP Meeting Tips for Mentors & Students

- [IDP Meetings for Mentors](#)
- [IDP Meetings for Students](#)

STEP 4: REVISE & REPEAT