

Student Name:

Advisor Name:

Date:

Graduate school is about training you to ask and address new questions and discover your passion. Having honest and open discussions with your advisor is an important part of your training.

As a grad student, you own your education. That means not only being responsible for your dissertation, but also actively getting the training you need and seeking guidance from your mentors, who will support you as partners in your training. Fill out this form and share it with your PI/advisor within the first month of joining the lab, using the questions to clarify approaches to your student/mentor relationship.

## KEYS TO A GOOD MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

### Think intentionally about your training

You will find it helpful to think through what you want to get out of your training and how your advisors and other sources of support can help you achieve your goals.

### Have open and direct dialogue

Starting off with strong, supportive communication is a fundamental part of getting continual advice that will help guide you throughout your life.

### Establish clear expectations/steps

The IDP covers topics that students have found essential to discuss with their mentors. If you have additional questions or objectives related to your training, these meetings are a great time to bring them up and set action steps.

## HOW TO COMPLETE YOUR IDP

1

### Step back and self-assess!

It's easy to lose sight of the bigger picture. Fill out this form, using the questions as a starting point for your mentoring relationship with your advisor.

2

### Set your first meeting with your advisor.

You are responsible for scheduling and meeting with your advisor within 30 days of joining your thesis lab. (It's best to share your completed IDP form with your advisor before the meeting.)

3

### Lead the discussion.

The IDP covers topics students have found helpful. If you have questions or additional objectives related to your training, these meetings are a great time to bring them up.

4

**Complete the "Action Plan" and follow up.** The last page of the IDP encourages you to establish concrete steps in the meeting with your advisor.

5

**Follow up.** Keep your Action Plan accessible and check on it every couple of months.

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**STUDENTS:** Read the following responsibilities in advance of your meeting, and discuss with your advisor any questions you may have. This list is intended to help you understand where you should take ownership over your graduate training and how your advisor can support you with your goals.

### STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- ... take the primary responsibility for the successful completion of my degree.
- ... meet regularly with my advisor and provide her/him with updates on the progress and results of my activities and experiments.
- ... work with my research advisor to develop a thesis/dissertation project and select a committee.
- ... initiate requests for feedback and seek advice from my advisor, committee, and other mentors.
- ... be knowledgeable of the policies and requirements.
- ... attend and participate in lab meetings, seminars, and journal clubs.
- ... keep up with original literature in my field.
- ... be a good lab citizen, maintaining a safe and clean space and working collegially with everyone.
- ... maintain a detailed, organized, and accurate lab notebook.
- ... discuss policies on work hours, sick leave, and vacation with my advisor.
- ... discuss policies on authorship and attendance at professional meetings with my advisor.

### ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- ... be committed to your education and training as a future member of the scientific community.
- ... be committed to helping plan and direct your research project, allowing you to take ownership of your research while setting reasonable goals and establishing a timeline for completion.
- ... provide and seek regular and honest feedback on an ongoing basis.
- ... be committed to improving as a mentor.
- ... be open, encouraging you to come to me with concerns and helping to find acceptable solutions to problems as they arise.
- ... be knowledgeable of, and guide you through requirements/deadlines.
- ... advise and assist with your thesis committee selection.
- ... lead by example and facilitate your training in complementary skills needed to be a successful scientist, such as communication, writing, management, and ethical behavior.
- ... discuss authorship policies, acknowledge your scientific contributions to my lab, and work with you to publish your work in a timely manner prior to your graduation.

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### TRAINING/MENTORING

1. What requirements do you need to complete, and what is your plan to fulfill them?
2. What fellowships are you applying to, and have you been able to get the guidance you need?
3. What are your primary goals in your academic training?
4. What resources or support will most help with your transition to grad school?
5. What actions can be taken to make sure these needs are met?
6. What is important to you in a mentoring relationship?
7. What features of the lab group and your relationships with colleagues are most helpful and supportive to your wellbeing?
8. Are there any factors that you are concerned may negatively affect your progress?
9. What help can your advisor or other faculty/staff provide regarding professional development and graduate training?
10. Your success as a student is tightly linked to your wellness. What are you doing to tend to this?

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One of the most important parts of your grad training is to develop a skill set transferrable beyond graduation. Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses below relative to the where you think a student at your stage should be, checking the boxes for skills that you would like to target in the coming year. Ask your advisor how s/he agrees or disagrees with this assessment. An honest self-assessment and discussion will help you set goals for your training.

*Mark your perceived current ability level.*

### RESEARCH SKILLS & SCIENTIFIC THINKING

**1** (weak)      (strong) **3**

**Target skill  
for this year**

Broad-based knowledge of science

Critical reading of scientific literature

Experimental design

Statistical analysis and interpretation of data

Creativity and innovative thinking

Understanding of submission/peer review process

Identifying and seeking advice

Time management

### COMMUNICATIONS

Writing for a research proposal or publication

Writing with appropriate grammar and structure

Speaking to a specific audience

Communicating one-on-one

English fluency

Working with constructive criticism

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**THIS ACTION PLAN IS TO BE DEVELOPED JOINTLY BY THE GRADUATE STUDENT AND THE MENTOR DURING OR AFTER THE DISCUSSION.** Keep it accessible for your yearly IDP meetings and potential monthly check-ins, as determined by the two of you.

1

**Communication**

What is the best way to set meetings and communicate regularly?

2

**Target skills**

What skills (~1-2) did you identify as important development targets for the coming year?

3

**Activities**

List any activities in which you and your mentor agree you should participate to achieve your academic objectives in the coming year.

x

4

**Financial support**

If you know, what will be your financial support for the next year?

5

**Additional actions**

In order to aid your success, are there any additional actions that can be initiated or continued by you? By your mentor?

6

**Following up**

How often do you and your advisor plan to meet?

7

**Other**

Is there anything else you would like to discuss with your advisor/mentors at this time?