

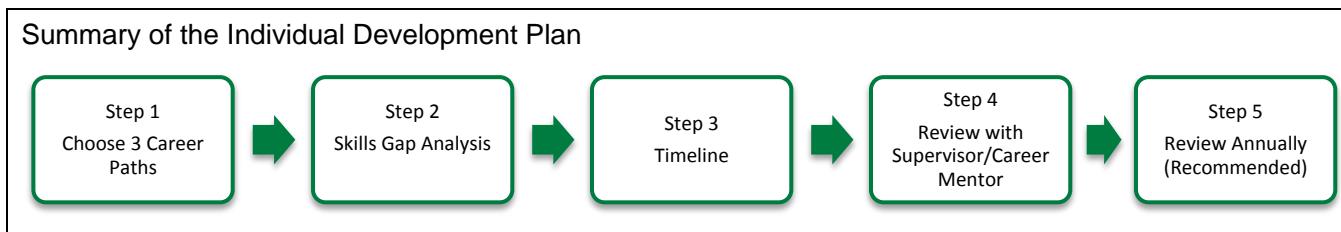
Individual Development Plan

Review Guide for Faculty and Mentors

Professional Development Requirement Overview

In November 2013, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research established the Professional Development Advisory Board, bringing together internal and external stakeholders to examine the issues relevant to careers for graduate students and post-doctoral fellows, and to develop a strategic plan for professional development at the University of Alberta. The strategic plan brought to FGSR Council recommended the introduction of mandatory professional development for all graduate students. The Graduate Student Association represented by two past GSA presidents and the current GSA Executive strongly supported this endeavor. On April 29, 2015, a motion was passed at FGSR Council to include a Professional Development Requirement for incoming students.¹

As of Fall of 2016, all incoming graduate students (Master's and PhD) are required to complete the Professional Development (PD) Requirement. There are two components included in the PD Requirement: 1) **Individual Development Plan (IDP)**; and, 2) **Eight hours of Professional Development (PD) activities**. The IDP has four main components and a recommended annual review:



Why implement the PD Requirement?

There is a need for professional soft skills not currently addressed:

Research shows that graduate students find it challenging to transition into non-academic careers due to underdeveloped professional/soft skills and network, as well as difficulty articulating the skills gained through their graduate programs. These challenges are persistent for all graduate students *regardless* of the discipline.²

Within the Canadian workplace, soft skills (self-management, intercultural competency, interpersonal skills, professionalism, collaboration, etc.) are considered to be of equal, if not greater importance, to hard/disciplinary skills.³

We have a moral obligation to prepare students for careers inside and outside of academia:

Traditionally, graduate programs prepare students for an academic career but the statistics show the majority of PhDs will be employed in a non-academic sector: In Canada, 40 % will work in post-secondary of which only 18 % will become full-time professors.⁴

It is an opportunity for stronger employer engagement:

Stronger employer engagement helps secure and retain grants and attracts development money. As students connect with employers through internship, mentorship and job shadowing programs as well as through career research, it serves to break down barriers and misconceptions about advanced degree holders. This is an opportunity for employers to see the skills and competencies students bring to the workplace.

¹*The calendar lists the faculties/programs that complete the PD requirement within their program. We hope all faculties/departments include information on their websites that describe which activities meet the PD requirement.

Why include an Individual Development Plan and require hours for PD activities?

The self-management skills that underlie professional skills (self-appraisal and knowledge of one's own values, abilities, aptitudes, and interests) are not only a key component of any graduate program, but also are a central part of career management. Research shows that students who combine self-management skills in conjunction with career building skills (finding and using information about careers, labour markets, exploiting career opportunities) experience "fewer mismatches between labour market supply and demand resulting in poor employment outcomes".⁵

Research suggests that an individualized plan developed in conjunction with the supervisor results in more satisfied students who have few conflicts with their supervisors.⁶

The Professional Development Requirement captures this research by asking students complete an IDP and to develop skills and competencies relative to their individual needs and career goals (eight hours of PD activities).

Reviewing the IDP

While we recognize that some supervisors may be new to career planning conversations, as a supervisor/career mentor, you are asked to review the IDP with your students because your mentorship is central to their development as scholars and as engaged members of society.⁷ Research suggests the development of an IDP in collaboration with the supervisor results in students who are more productive.⁸

The discussion points given below are intended to be points of entry to frame your conversation. They also offer you, the supervisor /career mentor, measureable outcomes to determine whether the student has spent sufficient time developing an IDP that is thoughtful and takes into consideration the various factors that impacts its usefulness. ***Supervisors/career mentors are not expected to cover all the questions given below. Instead, supervisors/career mentors are invited to select discussions points they feel most comfortable engaging.*** The **Career Centre** can also support the work of supervisors/career mentors through advising and coaching appointments.

The **Completing the Eight Hours of Professional Development Activities** guide outlines the various types of professional development your student might pursue in fulfillment of this requirement. As departments have the final say around what will and will not "count," students and faculty are encouraged to consult with the graduate coordinator/chair to determine whether activities outlined can be used for the requirement. The **Professional Development Opportunities Guide** outlines numerous campus resources available to students, which support career management and professional development. Supervisors/career mentors are encouraged to point their students to this resource should there be components of the IDP they do not feel adequately prepared to discuss.

What resources are available to students?

Students will use the **FGSR's IDP Workbook** to complete their Individual Development Plan (unless the faculty/department has developed their own document). FGSR offers a **three-part IDP/PD series** that orients students to the requirement and helps them complete their IDP. Students also have access to many resources that will assist them in completing the IDP, including:

- **Individual Development Plan Tip Sheet**
- **Individual Development Plan Timeline Tip Sheet**
- **PD Opportunities Guide**
- **FAQ for Students**

Record of meeting dates:

Step 1: Choose three career paths

Research shows that clearer alignment between skills, career decisions, and the demands of high-level professions are needed for graduate students to successfully transition into the workplace.⁹ Step 1 asks students to choose three career paths that are of interest to them. This process invites them to consider their long and short term goals; to consider what a sustainable career path looks like; and, to determine the skills needed to be competitive in their chosen fields.

IDP Review: Measureable Outcomes for the supervisor/career mentor

- Has the student chosen three paths which are of interest to him/her?
- Has careful consideration been given to the career choice outlined in the IDP?
 - Can the student explain *why* they've chosen the three career paths?
 - e.g. How do their proposed career paths align with career goals and personal ideas of career success?
 - e.g. How do their proposed career paths align with their work and personal values?
 - e.g. How does their chosen discipline and/or degree set them up for work in these fields?

Possible Discussion Points

- What did you do to research your three career paths?
- Did you use the career search resources outlined on in the **IDP workbook**?
- What resources did you find most helpful/least helpful when choosing your 3 career paths? Why?
- Why do these career paths appeal to you?
- Were there challenges/surprises you encountered when researching your career paths? If so, what were they?
- As the supervisor, is there a person with a related or similar career path you could connect your student with to gain his/her perspective of skills and knowledge needed for that position? [The **Career Centre** offers graduate students numerous opportunities for career exploration as well as guidance on **information interviewing**.]
- If you as a supervisor have insights into one of the student's career paths, please share your knowledge on how the student may approach building their CV/résumé. (The **Career Centre** also offers CV/résumé review for graduate students.)
- Are there PD activities that you as the supervisor could present/offer to your student? (e.g. assist with networking opportunities, academic reviewing of a manuscript for publication, paying for training)?

Notes:

Step 2: Skills Gap Analysis¹⁰

A recent study of PhD educated employees reveals that the most educated members of the labour market often do not realize what skills they have obtained in their graduate training. Greater attention is needed to ensure a better match between the individual's skills and his/her career decisions.¹¹ The supervisor is often in the best position to offer feedback about their students' skills and competencies.¹² Step 2 in the IDP encourages students to reflect on their skills as it relates to their chosen career paths identified in Step 1. NB: **Students may wish to share their skills assessment with their supervisor/mentor; however, they are not required to do so.**

IDP Review: Measureable Outcomes for the supervisor/career mentor

If the student chooses to share the skills gap analysis with you, consider:

- Whether the student has given careful reflection to their past experiences (work life, leisure, learning, and volunteer work, experiences as a graduate student) and fully considered the level of their skills relative to the career paths they have selected.
- Can the student offer examples that provide evidence of the skills?

Regardless of whether the students shares his/her skills gap analysis, as the supervisor you can review the PD Activities proposed by the student. While this conversation may not be as rich in the absence of the student's self-assessment you can still provide valuable feedback:

- Do the PD activities planned align well with the career paths identified in Step 1?
- Has the student sufficiently considered the various **PD opportunities** available on campus (and those that may be available through your department or professional associations)?

Possible Discussion Points

- What did the skills gap analysis reveal to you about your strengths?
- Can you give specific examples for the skills where you gave yourself a high rating? Can you explain why you gave yourself a low rating?
- What did the skills gap analysis reveal to you about the kinds of activities/roles to which you are drawn?
- What are the skills you need to develop in order to be competitive in your chosen career paths?
- Do you see patterns in your strengths or skills gaps?
- How do you plan to fill your skills gaps?
- Have you reviewed the **PD Opportunities Guide** to assist you in directing your activities?
- Are there opportunities for skills development to which you could point your student or assist in facilitating?

Notes:

Step 3 Timeline

Step 3 in the IDP asks students to develop a timeline for completing their program, while taking into consideration academic milestones, career goals, and personal factors. The timeline should include plans for how their program will be tailored to develop the skills and competencies outlined in Step 2.

IDP Review: Measureable Outcomes for the supervisor or career mentor

- Has the student fully considered academic (course work, ethics and PD requirement, candidacy, etc.) and personal (family, work outside of program, life-work balance, etc.) factors that impact the timeline as outlined in the **IDP Timeline Tip sheet?**
- Does the student have a strong sense of the scope of their thesis/capstone project and is this appropriately considered in their timeline?
- Has the student allotted in time for publications or other measures of academic performance (e.g. exhibitions/performances)?
- Has the student considered when and how much time they will devote to professional development?
- Has the student considered alternate paths should the timeline not unfold as anticipated?
- Is the timeline realistic?

Possible Discussion Points:

- What factors did you consider when creating your timeline?
- How did you ensure that you considered all the factors that impact your program completion and professional development?
- Did you use the **IDP Timeline Tip sheet** when developing your timeline?
- Is there information you still need to gather/require so to make your timeline more accurate (e.g. funding, issues related to research, factors related to your personal life)?
- What add-ons would make your thesis/capstone project truly outstanding in the field?
- What is the minimum path to thesis and or program completion?
- Is it realistic to expect a clear path forward at this point? If not, what factors could impact your plan?
- What are your alternate plans if one path does not work out?
- What are your next steps in moving towards the goals laid out in your IDP?
- When will the IDP be revisited to measure progress and to reassess?
- Do you have questions or concerns about your next steps?
- Is there further support you require from me as your supervisor?

Notes:

Step 4: What's Next?

- Once the students complete the IDP, they keep it for personal records and are encouraged to revisit it on an annual basis with his/her supervisor/career mentor. The department **does not** keep a copy of the IDP in the student's records.
- The IDP should lay out plans for how the eight hour PD activities will be fulfilled. Once the student has completed the IDP *and* the required eight hours, the student fills out the **Individual Development Plan and Professional Development Form** and has their supervisor/career mentor sign it. The form then goes to the graduate coordinator/administrator who will then sign it and file it in the student's department records. This form **does not** get submitted to FGSR.
- Still have questions? The **FAQ for Faculty and Staff** answers a variety of questions about the administration of the PD requirement.

Step 5: Annual Review (Recommended)

A student's IDP will be most impactful when it is revisited regularly to assess program and reevaluate. Students are encouraged to review their progress for themselves on a regular basis, such as at the end of each semester. While it is not a requirement, students are strongly encouraged to review and revise (as needed) their IDP on an annual basis with their supervisor/mentor. FGSR invites you to have these conversations with your students during their annual committee meeting or at another suitable time.

Below are questions that can guide the regular review of a student's IDP:

- What is working well in the IDP plan? What needs to change?
- Are expectations being met as laid out in the IDP?
- Is the student on track with the proposed timeline? Do adjustments need to be made?
 - If the timeline is off track, what are the underlying reasons and how can this be addressed? (e.g. re-evaluation of projects/activities; development of self-management skills; factors out of the student's control)
 - If the student is ahead of their proposed target, should new opportunities/skills development be explored?
- Are there changes that need to be made to reflect a shift in personal/career goals, circumstances, or new opportunities?
- What is the status of the student's skills development? Are there new skills that need to be developed?

*If you have questions about any aspect of the Professional Development Requirement, please consult the **FAQ for Faculty and Staff** or contact Deanna Davis, PhD. (deanna.davis@ualberta.ca).*

Resources:

- FGSR's IDP Workbook**
- Three-part IDP/PD series**
- Individual Development Plan Tip Sheet**
- Individual Development Plan Timeline Tip Sheet**
- FAQ for Faculty and Staff**
- PD Opportunities Guide**
- FAQ for Students**
- Career Centre**
- Information interviewing**

References

- ¹ The Professional Development Requirement was subsequently reviewed by University Governance (GFC, Board of Governors, Senate).
- ² "Preliminary Survey Report: The Skill Needs of Major Canadian Employers." Canadian Council of Chief Executives, January 2014.<http://www.ceocouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Preliminary-report-on-skills-survey-Jan-20-2014-2.pdf>, 7.
- ³ Jessica Edge and Daniel Munro, *Inside and Outside the Academy: Valuing and Preparing PhDs for Careers*, The Conference Board of Canada, 2015, accessed December 15, 2015, https://uwaterloo.ca/arts-graduate-careers/sites/ca.arts-graduate-careers/files/uploads/files/7564_inside20and20outside20the20academy_rpt.pdf.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ruth Bridgstock, "The graduate attributes we've overlooked: enhancing graduate employability through career management skills," *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28/1 (2009): 31-44.
- ⁷ Michael J. Platow, "PhD experience and subsequent outcomes: a look at self-perceptions of acquired graduate attributes and supervisor support," *Studies In Higher Education* 37/1(2012): 103-118. *Education Research Complete*, EBSCOhost, accessed January 18, 2017.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Findings from the 2005 Sigma Xi Postdoc survey also reports that postdocs who complete an IDP at the beginning of their appointment in collaboration with their advisors: 1) are 23% more likely to submit papers to peer-reviewed journals; 2) publish first-authored papers at a 30% higher rate; 3) submit grant proposals at a 25% higher rate, and 4) are 25% less likely to report that their advisor did not meet their initial expectations. ("Building Your Plan," University of Minnesota, accessed January 10, 2017, <https://www.grad.umn.edu/current-students-academic-professional-development-building-your-plan/plan>). See also: Rose. M., "Graduate Student Professional Development: A Survey with Recommendations," Prepared for The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Brock University, March. (2012), accessed January 5, 2017, <http://www.cags.ca/documents/publications/working/Report%20on%20Graduate%20Student%20Professional%20Development%20-%20A%20Survey%20with%20recommendations%20FINAL%20Eng.OCT%202012.pdf>; McCook, Alison, "Mentoring on the right path." *Nature*. 474 (2001):667-669.
- ¹⁰ Denise Jackson, and Grant Michelson, "PhD-Educated Employees and the Development of Generic Skills." *Australian Bulletin Of Labour* 42/1 (2016): 108-134. *Education Research Complete*, EBSCOhost, accessed January 18, 2017.
- ¹¹ In 2013 the University struck a committee that proposed the 7 skills and competencies that now appear in the IDP. Headed by Steven Dew (current Provost), and in consultation with student leaders (GSA and SU presidents), the committee looked at skills outlined in the graduate programs of other major universities. The 7 skills and competencies proposed attempted to capture the attributes that define University of Alberta graduates. The 7 skills and competencies then went to the Professional Development Advisory Board, which was comprised of stakeholders from academia, industry, not-for-profit, and government. In addition to the 7 skills and competencies proposed by the University committee, the PD Advisory Board consulted the skills considered to be important by the TRI-Council and CAGS (Canadian Association of Graduate Studies). The PD Advisory Board determined that there is no *single* list of non-disciplinary skills that can be pointed to and determined to use the 7 skills and competencies originally proposed by the initial University committee. *The University of Alberta Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Fellow Professional and Career Development Plan* outlining these skills and competencies was presented to FGSR council, Deans Council, and various levels of governance, including the Board of Governors, between January and March of 2015. The motion was presented to FGSR council in April 2015 and voted on in May 2015.
- ¹² Denise Jackson, and Grant Michelson, Phd-educated employees and the development of generic skills. *Australian Bulletin of Labour*, Vol. 42/ 1 (2016): 108-134.
- ¹³ Alison McCook, "Mentoring on the right path." *Nature*. 474 (2011): 667-669.