

Individual Development Plan Template for Doctoral Students

Adapted from the University of Maryland Graduate School

Your Individual Development Plan is a personalized and flexible plan for navigating your academic, career, professional, and personal development during each year of your doctoral program. Some general guidelines about IDPs are:

- an IDP is a process, not just a tool
- the specific goals included in the IDP support timely degree completion and preparation your for your future career path
- create a written plan for every year of your studies through graduation
- remember: the plan is yours! it is flexible and you can change it at any time
- you are encouraged to share your plan with others including faculty mentors and peers
- revisit your plan annually and after important milestones to update and revise your goals

Step 1: End Goals

Graduation Date (Semester/Year) _____

Intended Career Paths (List at least two. Be as specific as possible)

• _____ • _____ • _____

If you cannot list two or three: What were your reasons for enrolling in this PhD program?

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 2: Reflection Questions: The following questions will help you to get started with drafting your IDP.

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?
 - a. 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 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? Do you know the most effective job search techniques? Are your documents and interviewing skills strong?
4. Have your career goals changed in the past year? Have you researched new options? Or visited PDPA if unsure?

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 myself? 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 other 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 an advisor?
2. Have you read about and applied for any of the internal and external funding opportunities on the PDPA website?
3. Do you have a plan for managing student debt from previous institutions?
4. Are you making informed decisions with regard to a monthly budget and taking on additional debt?

Step 3: Plan by Year and Semester

Year 1 (for example, 2025-2026):

Goal Area	Fall	Spring	Summer
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Degree Completion			
Career Development			
Skill Development			
Personal Development			
Money/Funding			

Year 2

Goal Area	Fall	Spring	Summer
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Degree Completion			
Career Development			
Skill Development			
Personal Development			
Money/Funding			

Year 3: _____

Goal Area	Fall	Spring	Summer
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Degree Completion			
Career Development			
Skill Development			
Personal Development			
Money/Funding			

Year 4: _____

Goal Area	Fall	Spring	Summer
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Degree Completion			
Career Development			
Skill Development			
Personal Development			
Money/Funding			

Year 5: _____

Goal Area	Fall	Spring	Summer
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Degree Completion			
Career Development			
Skill Development			
Personal Development			
Money/Funding			

Year ____: _____ (Additional Year)

Goal Area	Fall	Spring	Summer
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Degree Completion			
Career Development			
Skill Development			
Personal Development			
Money/Funding			

Goal Area	Fall	Spring	Summer
Degree Completion	- 2 courses; TFin 111 - Make Orals reading lists, prep for Orals	- 2 courses; TF (class hasn't been assigned) - Take Orals/Qualifying exam (end of semester)	Write Prospectus
Career Development	- Apply for AIA (writing the abstract, submitting, presenting etc.) - Mentor new student in the department	- Present at AIA - Start reading potential topics for dissertation	- Teach AH111 myself if possible
Skill Development	- Improve on public speaking (it'll help with the 111 sections!) - Work on academic writing (find writing assistance)		- Work on notetaking skills so it'll be good practice for the dissertation
Personal Development	- Work on actually using my planner every day!	- Work on actually using my planner - Improve on time management	- Try to save money this summer!
Money/Funding	Department funding	Department funding	Need to either get summer teaching, research stipend funding, or ask about other funding options (get this set by April LATEST)

IDP Example

Year 6

Goal Area	Fall	Spring	Summer
Degree Completion	- Write Chapter 1	- Revise Chapter 1 - Write Chapter 3	- CATALOGUE!! Need to finish at least half of it before the fall - Revise Chapter 3
Career Development	- Publish an article! - Develop and fix up my writing program syllabus (make it work well for job market)	- Publish an article this semester! - Produce teaching portfolio through Writing Program	- Draft of generic cover letter for teaching - Major overhaul and update of CV
Skill Development	- Work on time management: creating clear blocks for my own dissertation writing, teaching prep, and grading. - Learn faster grading techniques - Develop mentors in the writing program!		- Talk to PDPA about both faculty tenure-track jobs AND alt-ac jobs
Personal Development	- Establish clearer work and no work boundaries - Turn off computer by 9:30PM	- Improve exercise schedule (just try to go out for a walk three times a week)	- Call my friends more often to check in on them as they have done for me!
Money/Funding	Writing Program	Writing Program	(See if the department has ANY summer funding for an 8 th year, teaching??) or check Writing Program