

**Combined Degree Student: 3rd Year****Your Name:****Advisor (or 'Advisory Committee'):****Date:**

Setting goals and taking stock of your accomplishments are essential to meaningful progress in both scientific training and professional development. An important tool toward this end is the Individual Development Plan (IDP). The IDP is intended to help you *i*) design, monitor, and measure progress in training, *ii*) articulate short- and long-term goals, and *iii*) identify relevant developmental activities. Your advisor, or your advisory committee, is an invaluable resource in this process, providing feedback and helping you to generate an action plan.

## HOW TO COMPLETE YOUR IDP

### 1. Step back and assess.

It's easy to lose sight of the big picture. An IDP is designed to provide perspective – perspective on your progress as a researcher, on your development in general, and your goals. The more thought given the IDP, the greater the return, so be sure to give sufficient time and reflection to the process.

### 2. Download this form to complete the first three sections.

This IDP form is a fillable PDF document. The first three sections cover your pre-thesis research, research skills, and professional development.

### 3. Use the link within this form to access the fourth section ('Achievements').

The fourth section of the IDP pertains to your achievements over the past year. You'll need to access and complete this section online. Once completed, this section will be accessible to your advisor(s), graduate group, and the BGS office. It will also be used by you to certify that all but the Action Plan has been completed and that a time has been scheduled to meet with your advisor(s) to complete the Action Plan.

**Note: BGS requires certification by August 1.** Your graduate group may require you to complete the IDP before this date, however, for example to fit advisory timelines.

### 4. Complete the Action Plan.

With the Achievements section now available to your advisor(s), please send her or him a copy of the IDP form with the completed first three sections. You will review all the sections and complete the last page of the form, the Action Plan, together.

## Who sees your IDP?

- The IDP, with the exception of the Achievements section, is a confidential document between you and your advisor or advisory committee. If you wish, you may share the IDP with others, for example your graduate group chair, thesis committee, other faculty, and students – this is your choice.
- The Achievements section is completed online through a link in this document. The information, as part of the IDP, will be included with what you share with your advisor. It will be available to your graduate group and the BGS office as well.

PRE-THESIS  
RESEARCHRESEARCH  
SKILLSPROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

ACHIEVEMENTS

ACTION PLAN

**Combined Degree Student: 3<sup>rd</sup> Year**Student: [Student Name]  
Advisor: [Advisor Name]  
Date:

This section of the IDP focuses on the objectives and challenges of your proposed thesis research. Its primary intent is to encourage you to define the details and scope of what will be needed for beginning a successful thesis project.

**OBJECTIVES RELEVANT TO PROPOSED THESIS RESEARCH**

What specific question is your proposed thesis work attempting to address, and in what way – in your estimation – will the anticipated answer advance your field?

What is the starting point for your thesis project, and are you sufficiently comfortable with it?

What challenges/setbacks do you foresee during the first-year of your thesis work? How will you attempt to address them?

Have you identified resources in addition to scientific literature that might help you in thesis work and/or general development as a scientist, for example journal clubs, other groups, or mentors?

What thoughts have you and your thesis advisor(s) given to the composition of a thesis committee?

Is there anything your advisor(s), advisory committee, and/or other mentors can do differently to help you plan and achieve your objectives in thesis work?

**Combined Degree Student: 3<sup>rd</sup> Year**

Student: [Student Name]  
 Advisor: [Advisor Name]  
 Date:

The attainment of skills relevant to scientific inquiry is at the heart of PhD training and is central to the pursuit of career opportunities following graduation. Use this worksheet to rank your skills **from weak (1) to strong (3)** as you currently perceive them relative to those you think a student at your level should have; **leave blank if not applicable**. Mark as well any skills you wish to target for improvement over the next year.

Detailed resources for many of the skills itemized here can be found at the BGS Career Development website.

RESEARCH SKILLS & SCIENTIFIC THINKING				Target skill	PROJECT MANAGEMENT				Target skill
	1	2	3			1	2	3	
Broad-based knowledge of science	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge of current discipline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Breaking down complex tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Critical reading of scientific literature	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Time management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Experimental design	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Managing data and resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Basic bench skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interpretation of data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Computational analysis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>MENTORING/TEACHING</b>				
Statistical analysis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Delegating; providing instruction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Troubleshooting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing constructive feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data management (notebook)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Setting expectations for others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creativity and innovation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initiative/independence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>PROFESSIONALISM</b>				
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identifying and seeking advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>WRITING</b>					Upholding commitments/deadlines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grammar/structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Networking/collaborations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarity/precision/intent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dealing with conflict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For a research proposal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lab citizenship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For a scientific publication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work ethic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>ORAL COMMUNICATION</b>					<i>Other skills, or comments?</i>				
One-on-one	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Lab meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
English fluency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					

**Combined Degree Student: 3<sup>rd</sup> Year**

Student: [Student Name]  
Advisor: [Advisor Name]  
Date:

Graduate training provides preparation for a range of career paths in science, technology, and innovation. As professions value the skills and traits cultivated in PhD training, the ability to identify and explore interests during this period of time is especially worthwhile.

You should know that BGS provides a variety of resources relating to careers and professional development in and apart from academia as does [Penn's Career Services](#). The Combined Degree office discusses specific aspects during each phase of training.

What are your long-term goals, in the sense of what kinds of activities you might want to be engaged in after you complete PhD training?

What factors inform these goals (e.g. skills, interests, values, colleagues, current activities)?

Are you currently most interested in a specific career or set of careers, whether in or apart from academic research? If so, which?

For each of the long-term goals or, if listed, careers above, identify one or two short-term objectives that may be important to their exploration and/or achievement.

Are you getting the support and resources you require to satisfactorily explore career options?

Has anything negatively affected your progress in development?

The fourth section, 'Achievements,' is completed online through this link (<https://www.med.upenn.edu/apps/bgs-forms>, then "New Forms" > "Individual Development Plan") to enable access not only to your advisor(s) but to your graduate group and the BGS office as well.

(Note: Once you've saved any content in the Achievements section, you can access it again through the same link, but using "My Forms" instead of "New Forms.")



When you have completed the Achievements section, please certify in this section (i.e., online) that this and the first three

sections of the IDP have been completed and that you have set up a time to meet with your advisor(s) to discuss these sections and the Action Plan.

Remember to forward to your advisor(s) the IDP form with the completed first three sections.

PRE-THESIS  
RESEARCH

RESEARCH  
SKILLS

PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

ACHIEVEMENTS

ACTION PLAN

**Combined Degree Student: 3<sup>rd</sup> Year**Student: [Student Name]  
Advisor: [Advisor Name]  
Date:

The action plan will help you set goals and plan as you enter your thesis work. Take this time to set reasonable goals for your thesis work and discuss with your thesis advisor(s). It is to be developed jointly by the student and the advising committee during or after the discussion.

**PROJECTED TIMELINE**

Where do you expect or would like to be in a year in your thesis project?

**TARGET SKILLS**

What skills did you identify for improvement over the next year?

**ACTIVITIES**

What are your identified objectives regarding long-term personal and/or career goals, and how might these be pursued in the coming year?

**ADDITIONAL ACTIONS**What additional actions that should be initiated by *i*) you, *ii*) your advisor(s), and *iii*) other mentors in order to facilitate your success?**FOLLOWING UP**

Future IDPs will be completed with your thesis advisor(s). Have you considered a meeting schedule that will work for both you and your advisor(s); an annual meeting is only the minimum required.

**OTHER**

Are there any items you would like to discuss with your advisor(s) or other mentors at this time?