

Individual Development Plan

For Postdoctoral Fellows



Overview

The beginning of your postdoctoral appointment is the best time for you and your adviser to outline your tenure expectations. Recent studies on postdoctoral experiences and outcomes have shown that a non-binding yet formal plan increases the productivity of the postdoctoral fellow and boosts the relationship between the postdoc and their adviser in terms of mutual expectations.^[1, 2]

Postdocs with a formal plan reported ^[2]:

- 23% increase in their publication rates in peer-reviewed journals
- 30% higher rate of first-authored articles
- 25% increase in grant proposal submissions

In describing the overall experience during their appointment, 20% of postdocs without a formal plan felt their advisers did not meet their expectations, while only 5% of postdocs expressed feelings of dissatisfaction with a formal plan in place ^[2]. Many reports and findings show that the overall postdoctoral experience is improved by access to additional training and opportunities.^[3, 4] In light of this, the University of Ottawa has made considerable training opportunities available for its postdocs. As a first step, the University of Ottawa Postdoctoral Association (UOPDA) developed this **Individual Development Plan (IDP)**, which is designed to help share and align the expectations of postdocs and their advisers.

The first step in filling out this plan is for you to reflect on the questions listed on the following pages and provide answers in the middle column. Since the role of a postdoc varies significantly between faculties, some questions may not be applicable. You then give the completed form to your adviser, so your adviser can review your responses and make additional comments in the right-hand column.

The **Past Experience** section is a summary of your activities before starting your postdoctoral research with your current group and gives your new adviser an opportunity to review your goals and your experience level in order to determine where it would be best for you to focus your attention or to assess the time you would take to attain your goals (in particular, teaching).

Before signing the form, it's important that you and your adviser meet to discuss your responses. We would like to emphasize that the IDP is a non-binding document and, as such, signing the IDP does not contractually oblige you or your advisor to meet any goals indicated in the IDP. Again, be aware that not all questions will apply to all postdocs.

[1] G. Davis, "Doctors Without Orders," *American Scientist* 93 (3, supplemental), 2005; **[2]** G. Davis, "Improving the Postdoctoral Experience: An Empirical Approach," (2006); **[3]** National Academy of Science, "Enhancing the Postdoctoral Experience for Scientists and Engineers: A Guide for Postdoctoral Scholars, Advisers, Institutions, Funding Organizations, and Disciplinary Societies," Washington, D.C., National Academy Press, 212 pages, 2000; **[4]** Association of American Universities, "Postdoctoral Education Survey: Summary of Results", October 2005

Research Goals

	Postdo	Advis
<p>Projects</p> <p>1) What is your main research project?</p> <p>2) Are you interested in doing secondary projects? If so, taking into account your knowledge of the research group, are there any projects of particular interest to you?</p> <p>3) Would you expect to lead or assist as a collaborator in your secondary projects?</p> <p>4) Are joint projects with external labs of interest to you (may include time spent in other groups)?</p>		
<p>Publications</p> <p>1) Which journals are you targeting for publishing your work?</p> <p>2) At what rate do you expect to publish?</p> <p>3) What is your authorship tradition (first author, last author expectations)?</p> <p>4) Do you intend to develop a book proposal or produce a book during your postdoctoral fellowship?</p> <p>5) Do you also want to pursue other avenues of publication, such as newspaper op-eds or articles in other mass or niche media?</p>		

<p>Conferences 1) What conferences would you like to attend?</p>		

Teaching Opportunities

	Postdoc	Adviser
<p>Gaining experience</p> <p>1) How important is it to you to get teaching experience during your fellowship?</p> <p>2) Which of the following teaching roles interest you?</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a) Guest lecturer (1-2 lectures: upper year/grad level)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">b) Lecturer for general public (organized by UOPDA)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">c) Mini-course lecturer (end-of-summer courses for high school students)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">d) full course (part-time professor; please review uOttawa's policies on part-time teaching)</p> <p>3) Does your funding source/agency limit any paid work (such as teaching) that is external to the fellowship?</p>		
<p>Other</p> <p>1) Are there other teaching opportunities you would like to pursue?</p>		

Administrative Skills

	Postdoc	Adviser
<p>Management and representation</p> <p>1) To what extent would you like to be involved in the management of the lab/group?</p> <p>2) Would you like to organize or assist in organizing events such as group meetings or interdepartmental reading or seminar groups?</p> <p>3) Would you like to be involved with external bodies? (UOPDA, representative on University committees, research or professional organizations, etc.)</p>		
<p>Other</p> <p>1) Are there other skills you would like to develop?</p>		

Career Development

	Postd	Adviser
<p>Communication skills</p> <p>1) Would you like to develop skills for communicating your research?</p> <p>2) If so, which of the following interest you:</p> <p>(a) <i>Specialized</i>: seminars, group meetings</p> <p>(b) <i>General, in-field</i>: informal seminars, guest lectures</p> <p>(c) <i>General</i>: public lectures</p> <p>3) Would you like to participate in writing grant proposals or receive training in award completing award applications?</p> <p>Training</p> <p>1) Do you intend to participate in the <i>Altitude</i> professional skills development program?</p> <p>2) If so, which of the following workshops interest you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Job application skills, CVs, cover letters, research plans, interviews b) Management and leadership c) Grant writing d) Techniques for effective teaching e) Communication skills f) Media training g) Developing a book proposal 		

<p>Professional skills</p> <p>1) Are you interested in mentoring junior group members?</p> <p>2) If so, how would you prefer to be involved: in a general informal way or in a co-supervisory role for a specific project?</p> <p>3) Are you interested in being an examiner for a master's thesis defense?</p> <p>4) Would you like to referee journal papers?</p>		
<p>Other</p> <p>1) Are there other avenues of career development that you would like to participate in?</p>		

Past Experience

How many times have you performed the following roles or tasks?

Teaching

Teaching assistant		Teacher-full course		Guest lecturer	
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Publishing research

Articles in peer-reviewed journals		Articles in conference proceedings		Other publications	
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Postdoctoral fellow

Primary investigator

Signature

Date

Signature

Date