



## The Individual Development Plan (IDP) and Annual Review Process for PhD Students

### *Purpose*

The University Doctoral Board requires that each doctoral student will be reviewed annually during each year of their doctoral program. This requirement is also in line with a 2014 National Institute of Health notice strongly encouraging the development of an institutional policy on IDPs for all graduate students supported by NIH funds.

The Individual Development Plan (IDP) addresses two needs. First, it provides a structure to systematically identify training needs and competencies, establish goals and take stock of year-by-year progress. Thus, IDPs help doctoral students stay on track with their research, paper and grant writing and skill development. Second, there are many career options for people who have obtained a PhD in Environmental Health. The IDP helps trainees plan and prepare for their post-PhD future. In both of these areas, IDPs can serve as a tool to facilitate communication between trainees and their mentors.

### *Goals and Benefits*

An annual IDP as part of a broader mentoring program will give the trainee a framework for self-assessment, planning, and communication:

- Assessing current skills, interests, and strengths and their progress in the program;
- Establishing target dates for academic and research milestones
- Developing a plan for skill development to meet academic and professional goals;
- Set goals and sub-goals for the next year, including how to spend your time
- Defining in detail the approach you plan to take in order to obtain the specific skills and strengths needed (e.g. courses, technical skills, teaching, supervision) along with an anticipated time frame for obtaining those skills and strengths
- Helping define career goals and create annual plans to reach your goals
- Providing a tool that can be used to provide structure for conversations between you and your mentor
- Communicating and collaborating with colleagues and potential employers about evolving goals and related skills
- You can use the IDP to make sure you and your adviser's expectations are clearly outlined and in agreement so that there are no big surprises, particularly at the end of your training
- The IDP is meant as a living document, to be modified as you move through the program and solidify your goals and plan

- Take advantage of this opportunity to reflect on your success and challenges from the previous year and anticipate any successes and challenges in the coming year(s).
- Use the questions in the IDP as a starting place for thinking; do not feel you need to respond to all, if some are less relevant for you, and feel free to also consider other aspects not included.

### *IDP and Annual Review Components*

The annual review will have three components:

1. Student self-assessment and Individual Development Plan (IDP)
2. Monitoring of progress in the program
3. Written feedback from the department to the student

### **Student Self-Assessment and Individual Development Plan (Form A)**

At the start of each academic year students will complete or update the self-assessment and IDP. They will meet with their adviser in person to discuss the IDP no later than the end of fall semester/2<sup>nd</sup> term. If insufficient progress is being made (failing grades), the student may be placed on probation prior to the start of the spring semester/3<sup>rd</sup> term.

Students in the second year and beyond will document their accomplishments from the past year and note specifically any accomplishment(s) and activities not presently reported (i.e. papers in review/published, posters presented, presentations or guest lectures given, and/or grant proposals in progress, submitted or funded). Students should note if they had any teaching assistant duties.

Students should include short- and long-term research/academic/professional goals, for the next year and beyond, how their progress in the past year has contributed to those goals, how their planned activities in the next year will contribute to their longer-term goals, and any impediments they see to reaching those goals.

Students should note issues that could impede their progress in the program or in terms of their broader professional goals. Students should also identify and discuss new activities and opportunities that could assist them in achieving their goals.

### **Monitoring student progress in the program (Forms B and C)**

If the student has not completed their qualifying exam, then the student will schedule an in person meeting with their adviser and another faculty member, if desired (e.g. co-adviser or program director), to review the IDP. If the student has completed their qualifying exam, then this meeting will be done in conjunction with a thesis advisory committee meeting.

There should be mention of a timeline for meeting program goals and degree completion; and any concern regarding performance. Funding, research changes, TA expectations should be confirmed and clarified as well. Concerns, questions, and needed clarifications should be

addressed in this meeting. If there are irreconcilable concerns, the program directors and/or Chair should be consulted.

After the meeting the student will write a brief summary of their goals and plans for the next year, and sends it to their adviser for their comments and feedback. The completed form is then emailed to the academic program administrator as documentation that the IDP was completed and discussed between student and adviser.

Students who have successfully passed the GBO/School-wide will meet with their thesis advisory committee every six months until program completion. A report of each meeting will be documented on Form C and submitted to the academic program administrator to be include in the students file.

### **Departmental feedback to the student**

Each year the department will provide written feedback to the student. Feedback will be in the form of a letter detailing the student's progress and deficiencies, evidence of completion of the IDP process and discussion, and summary of specific goals and expectations for the next year. Students will receive this feedback by August 1.

If a student has not made satisfactory progress in meeting program requirements or expectations, this can be an opportunity to place them on a probation. Any probation should be outlined in a separate letter with clear terms and deadlines.

### ***Reporting and Records***

The Department is responsible for initiating the IDP/annual review process and ensuring its completion even if a student or adviser does not comply or engage in the process.

If a student does not respond to requests to participate in the annual review process, a note will be placed with the department's tracking system citing that the student did not comply. Non-compliance will result in probation.

In the event the adviser is unable or unwilling to complete the annual review process the department will select another faculty member to complete the review. The Department chair will discuss the implications of non-compliance of faculty mentors with the IDP process.

There should be no mention of a student's mental or physical health or of any other students in any documentation created by the department/adviser/committee.