

Use of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Scholars

The Medical University of South Carolina has been at the forefront of providing mentoring and structured training experiences for the university's graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are one of the tools used to assist trainees with identifying their professional goals and objectives, assessing their skill set relative to their desired career goals, and developing a plan to acquire the skills and competencies needed to achieve both their short term and long term career goals. **In August 2014, the College of Graduate Studies, which oversees the education of the majority of predoctoral students, adopted the mandatory use of Individual Development Plans to guide the training and career development of all predoctoral students as described below; a similar mandatory policy is currently under consideration for postdoctoral scholars.**

IDP for Graduate Students

Implementation of IDP Requirement. The IDP format used for College of Graduate Studies (CGS) predoctoral students is an adaptation of the myIDP skills assessment promoted by AAAS to assess an individual's strengths and weaknesses. Results of this self-assessment are used to formulate a plan to establish goals, resources, milestones and responsibilities towards achieving the career objective. Graduate students who enroll in CGS712 are required to prepare a CGS IDP as part of their NRSA style predoctoral fellowship proposal. Graduate students that do not take CGS712 are required to prepare an IDP within 12 months of selecting a mentor. The purpose is to give students some initial feedback on expectations in the coming years of their training. After admission to candidacy, students prepare a revised CGS IDP to be discussed with their major professor and dissertation committee. Preparation and discussion of a follow-up CGS IDP is required every year thereafter until graduation. Completion of these requirements will be indicated on the student's annual evaluation form. The CGS IDP assessment is available on the College's website at http://academicdepartments.musc.edu/grad/curr_students/forms_guidelines.htm/.

Student's responsibilities. On the student's annual evaluation form maintained within the College of Graduate Studies, a box to be checked states the following, "I have taken the actions that I outlined towards the goals that I have set for my CGS IDP."

Mentor's responsibilities. The mentor is responsible for reviewing the CGS IDP annually with the trainee. In addition, since the student may have a weakness or career goal in an area in which the mentor does not have expertise, the mentor will help the student find the appropriate resource information to assist the student in achieving their full potential. On the annual review form, the mentor will check the box that says, "My trainee and I have discussed their CGS IDP."

Compliance Monitoring

College of Graduate Studies PhD and MS Students. To ensure that the CGS IDP is being reviewed and modified annually, when necessary, the registrar will notify the student's graduate coordinator if it has not been submitted.

College of Nursing (CoN) PhD Students. Student IDPs are maintained in RedCap allowing for access by both the student and mentor. The PhD program coordinator monitors compliance with the IDP policy, contacting both student and mentor if a deadline has been missed.

College of Health Professions (CHP) PhD Students. The program director will review the IDPs with the content mentors on an annual basis to ensure compliance and monitor student progress. It is the program director's responsibility to assist the content mentor and student with identifying all resources necessary to meet the career development objectives. Compliance with the IDP will be documented at the time of the content mentor/faculty annual performance evaluation.

IDP for Postdoctoral Scholars

MUSC postdoctoral scholars are required to prepare an IDP in collaboration with their mentor, and should include an assessment of goals and milestones, and strengths and weaknesses. Opportunities to do so include within the initial offer letter, at time of appointment or within 6 months of appointment, and annually within the reappointment letter when applicable. Expectations to be outlined in the offer letter may include

training objectives, duration of appointment, participation in the Responsible Conduct of Research and Career Development retreats, and the number of approximate hours per week to be dedicated to research and other career enhancing activities (e.g., teaching, workshops, seminars, etc.). The offer letter may also delineate publication expectations, authorship policy, laboratory duties, and mentoring philosophy. The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) will monitor compliance of IDP preparation and use in guiding the postdoctoral trainee's progression towards their career objective. Letters of reappointment, required 3 months prior to the anniversary date, must indicate that the postdoctoral scholar and mentor have discussed and made any necessary modifications or revisions to the IDP. The option to renew (or not renew) the postdoctoral scholar's appointment will be confirmed at that time as well, based on satisfactory progress and the availability of funds.

Summary of IDP Practices by MUSC College/Program

	CGS PhD	CGS MS	CHP PhD	CON PhD	Postdoctoral Scholars
Preparation of IDP	summer of 1st year	< 3 mo. after mentor selection	at initiation of coursework	< 1 mo. after completion of coursework	< 6 mo. after appointment
IDP review	< 1 mo. after advancement to candidacy; annually thereafter	annually	at end of each semester till graduation	at end of each semester until graduation	annually 3 mo. prior to reappointment