

TSRI Individual Development Plan (IDP) for Graduate Students

This document is a career planning and self-assessment tool that can help you stay on track, conduct exceptional research, and know what to expect throughout your Ph.D. The IDP can help you meet the requirements necessary for the Ph.D. as well as determine what skills you will need for your future career. It is organized according to the two phases of a Ph.D.: the time prior to the qualifying exam (years 1-2), and the time after the exam up until the thesis defense (years 3-5).

Tips & Resources

Years 1-2

Summary of expectations and responsibilities:

- Establish a plan for success in the classroom
- Choose your laboratory
- Optimize your time management and multi-tasking skills
- Learn your environment and communicate effectively

Questions to ask yourself:

Which track do I want to be on and why? Will I customize my track? How will I effectively balance my rotation project with my coursework? Do I understand my PI's expectations? What do I expect of myself in terms of grades?

What do I want to get out of my rotation(s)? Will I do more than one? How will I choose my rotation labs? Have I discussed with my PI whether he or she has funds? Am I passionate about the research questions?

Who will be on my committee?

Which fellowships will I apply for and when are the deadlines? Who are my key contacts for editing and helping me think through ideas? Do I understand the RACO and submission process?

When will I take my qualifying exam? How and when will I identify the topics for my two proposals?

In terms of skills, where are my strengths and weaknesses? What skill sets would I like to improve and how will I develop them?

In what scientific subjects or techniques do I want to gain expert knowledge? Working knowledge? Conversational knowledge? What steps will I take?

What are my long-term career plans? What is important to me in a career?

You should become familiar with "Milestones for Completion of the Ph.D. Degree" and "Guidelines for Student Progression by Academic Year," found in the Grad Student Handbook and available on the Grad Program Web page.

For more info about choosing a lab, see the document "Choosing a Lab," available on the Grad Program Web page.

In addition to getting feedback from your advisor, you can use TSRI's peer editing service for manuscripts & fellowships. See the Career & Postdoc Office Web page.

Think broadly: writing, giving talks, reading papers critically, managing time, making decisions, networking, experimental techniques, etc.

If you do not have a career direction in mind, think about how you plan to clarify your options.

Tips & Resources

Years 3-5

Summary of expectations and responsibilities:

- Perform laboratory research at the highest level of which you are capable, generating and interpreting the data for publications and your Ph.D. thesis
- Practice your communication skills (oral presentation and writing)
- Become a specialist in your field while broadening your scientific culture
- Keep your long-term career goals in mind and prepare for your future

Questions to ask yourself:

Where am I now? Where do I want to be in five years and what will it take to get there? What do I want to do long-term?

Discuss your research ideas with your advisor, peers, and colleagues – anyone who will listen. Read extensively to know the background of a research area and identify missing information you can fill in.

What research topic will I choose? What will be my specific aims and experimental approaches? Does my project match my abilities, commitment level, and career goals? How does my project fit into the field? What is my backup plan if it does not work?

For instance, reading the literature, going to seminars and journal clubs, asking questions, publishing, attending a conference – be specific!

What are my plans for becoming active and known in the scientific community during the next year?

What are the research skills, techniques, or expertise I plan to learn this upcoming year? What are my plans for learning them? How will I measure my progress?

If possible, think in terms of publishable papers.

What are my project's milestones for the next year? Give an approximate timeline.

Am I satisfied with my professional skills development in the past year? Why or why not?

If you continue your science career with a postdoc position, it's in your best interest to think about your research, training, and career goals early. See the Career & Postdoc Office Web page for a list of articles about how to effectively choose a postdoc and sample postdoc IDPs.

Do I plan to do a postdoc? Why or why not? Is it necessary for my long-term career goals? If so, what steps do I need to take to identify the right lab?



**CAREER & POSTDOCTORAL
SERVICES OFFICE**

The Scripps Research Institute