

These self-study questions are a narrative approach to self-assessment, allowing trainees to think about their goals, activities, skills, and progress toward achieving their goals in a holistic way. Responses to these *thought questions* will provide a basis for writing an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for the next year.

How to use this document:

1. **Do not answer every question.** The questions here are to get you thinking and assessing your goals and activities, but are not the substance of your IDP and do not need to be shared.
2. Avoid full sentence answers.
3. Jot in the margins or in the text.
4. Skip questions that don't apply or are irrelevant.
5. Start with Values & Interests and Career Goals.

Acknowledgements: These questions were adapted from "The Individual Development Plan for Graduate Students at the University of Minnesota" (<http://www.grad.umn.edu/news/news2012/idp/>).

Values & Interests

- What is important to you in your future career?
 - What is your favorite kind of work?
 - What kind of physical space do you thrive in?
 - How much autonomy do you need?
 - Do you want a large salary or are other rewards more important to you?
 - How important is prestige or status? How important is job stability?
- Do you have a chosen career? If so, how certain are you that you want to follow that path?

Career Goals

- What is your first choice of career?
- Do you know the next steps for moving toward that career goal? What are the intermediate (short-term) career goals along the way?
- Are you considering other possible careers?
- What new information do you need to help you decide which career you would prefer?
- Do you want to do more exploration of possible career options? If so, what do you want to learn?
- What did you do last year to help develop contacts relevant to your short-term or long-term goals? Did you have opportunities to network with individuals from institutions or companies you feel may be a good fit for your future career aspirations?

Time Allocation

Think back over the past year and the relative amount of time you spent on the following activities. Which activities took more time than you think they should have? On which did you not spend enough time? How would you change your allocation of time and energy on these activities for the coming year?

- Coursework
- Professional development workshops/trainings
- Research
- Dissertation writing
- Grant writing
- Attending research-related meetings or seminars
- Background reading
- Presenting at conferences or professional meetings
- Writing for publication
- Course development (for instructors/TAs)
- Teaching
- Job search process such as CV/résumé building and formatting, interviewing, etc.
- Student mentoring/advising
- Attending career development workshops
- Exercising or other pursuits to promote your health and well-being
- General downtime (yes, including sleeping)

Research

- What research questions have you developed in the past year? How can you continue to build on those questions? Are there other related questions to develop?
- What research-related skills have you acquired (e.g., technical skills, lab skills)? What feedback have you received on your research skills? What further skills do you need to acquire to be successful with your research and future career? How will you gain exposure to these skills and evaluate your competency?
- What research collaborations have you established? Are they successful and beneficial to your scholarly or scientific work? If so, how can you continue to build on those successes for the coming year? If they have not been successful, how can you improve on your collaborative research skills?
- How much time do you spend on experiments or projects that did not work? Are you continuing to solve problems with the experiments or projects, or could there be more important work to consider for this year? If so, how will you identify such experiments or projects?
- What research-related seminars did you attend? Were they beneficial to your work? What seminars do you need to attend this year?

Dissertation Writing (graduate students)

- How much time have you spent narrowing the scope of your dissertation topic or drafting parts of the dissertation?
- Have you developed a schedule this year to meet with your advisor(s) regarding the dissertation? If you are just beginning your graduate program, are you familiar with your program's process to move students from the coursework to the dissertation defense? If not, who can you ask?
- Do you have a writing support group or resources where you can get feedback on your work? If not, how can you join a group?
- How productive were you last year with writing the dissertation? What are your writing strengths and areas needing improvement? How would you seek assistance?

Papers and Publications

- What papers did you author or co-author in the past year? Were any of the papers submitted for publication? If not, could any of those be submitted for publication this year, or do you need to write different papers? How will you identify potential publishing venues?
- What types of feedback, formal or informal, have you received on your writing skills? What specific areas of writing do you need to improve?

Teaching and Mentoring

- Did you do any teaching in the past year (courses, seminars, laboratories)? Would you like additional opportunities to teach? How will you find these teaching opportunities?
- How will you ensure that your teaching reflects your expertise and strengths as a scholar/researcher?
- What sorts of feedback, formal or informal, have you received on your course content, syllabi, pedagogy, consideration of diverse learners and overall teaching abilities? In which areas do you need to improve? How will you improve your teaching and what resources are available?
- Were you involved in advising or mentoring any students or trainees in the past year? If not, how could you identify new opportunities to do so in the coming year? Are there any improvements you would like to make in your mentoring skills and knowledge?

Professional Service

- What opportunities have you had this year for professional service (e.g., proposal review committees, journal reviewer, campus committees, professional society leadership, journal editor, student organization leadership, seminar coordination)?
- What types of opportunities will you continue or seek out in the next year?

Leadership and Management

- What leadership experiences have you had that allowed you to identify objectives, implement plans and acquire decision making skills?
- What positions (within and outside the University) can you pursue this year to enhance your leadership skills?
- What opportunities have had to develop skills related to conflict management? How could you enhance your abilities to manage conflicts?

Presentation and Communication

- What presentations (lab meetings, journal clubs, seminars, professional meetings or conferences) did you make in the past year? Are there other sorts of presentations (K-12 outreach, media, public talks) that you would like to give?
- What sorts of feedback did you receive on the content of you presentation and your presentation skills?
- Are there specific presentation skills you would like to improve? How will you do so and what are your resources?
- What presentations would you need to make this year?

Fellowships and Grants

- What fellowship or grant proposals did you write? Were they funded? If yes, how will you assure that you make progress on these projects this year? If the proposal was not funded, what can you do to improve the application for future submission?
- What feedback have you received on your grant writing skills? Are there specific areas you need to develop to attract potential funders? How will you improve your skills and what resources are available?
- What grants do you need to write this year?

Budget Management

- How much experience do you have with budget management? Do you need to gain more experience managing a research or project budget?
- How will you accomplish this?

Responsible Conduct of Research

- Have you completed any necessary trainings in the responsible conduct of research for your field? Are your trainings up-to-date? Are you aware of resources at your institutions for when ethical questions arise?
- Have you ever reviewed the ethical standards promoted by your professional societies or other relevant organizations?

Job Searching

- Do you have a CV and a separate resume? How up-to-date are they? Have you sought feedback on either from a mentor or peer?
- How much experience do you have with interviewing? Are there opportunities you could seek out for additional experience, such as mock interviewing or workshops on interviewing?
- Have you ever conducted an informational interview? Can you think of any informational interviews that could help you to identify additional career paths or opportunities?
- Have you written a teaching statement or developed a teaching portfolio? If your direct teaching experience is limited, how can you leverage your other experiences for a strong teaching statement?
- What steps have you taken this year to maintain your existing professional network? What else can you do to maintain and expand your professional networks? Do you have business cards?

Work-Life Balance

- What interests and activities outside of work are important to you? Are you comfortable with your work/life balance?
- Are there any changes you would like to make for the coming year?