

Individual Development Plan (IDP) for MIT Postdoctoral Scholars and Annual Review procedures Guidelines for Postdocs and Faculty

What is an IDP?

An Individual Development Plan is a mechanism to help identify the strengths and interests of a participant. As importantly, areas of little interest or weaknesses can be identified. A carefully worded questionnaire is generally part of the IDP. At the conclusion, a summation can help the subject decide on future career directions.

For MIT postdocs, an IDP is a personal assessment and planning vehicle that complements mentor plans and annual reviews (see MIT's [toolkit](#)). While all MIT postdocs are talented, each postdoc will have specific strengths. The IDP will help define areas on which a postdoc should best focus career sites. In conjunction with other [career planning resources at MIT](#), this can help optimize planning and trajectory.

Recommendations for postdoc IDPs at MIT

It is strongly encouraged that each postdoc complete an IDP after year 1 of the postdoc period, and for longer postdoc periods, as in the Life Sciences, additionally at the end of year 3 or 4. For postdocs with NIH funding (directly or from a sponsor's grant), see the related NIH notice.¹

Annual Review forms for postdocs are now augmented with a question as to whether an IDP was completed as indicated above (see the [toolkit](#)). The specific outcome of the IDP should be discussed by postdoc and mentor at the Annual Review meeting, but the IDP results are private to the postdoc and not documented as part of the Review.

How is an IDP template accessed?

Multiple online IDPs exist. There is no single recommended IDP for MIT postdocs at this time, however one reasonable option is the AAAS [MyIDP](#), a free, interactive career-planning website and collection of tools. [ImaginePhD](#) is a free, online career exploration and planning tool for postdocs and graduate students in the humanities and social sciences. The [University of Southern California](#) has models for the sciences, humanities, and social sciences. Other models include [University of Pennsylvania IDP for Postdocs](#); [University of Minnesota Medical School](#) and the pioneer [Individual Development Plan for Postdoctoral Fellows](#) from the Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology.

¹

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Issued by National Institutes of Health. NIH annual progress reports received on/after October 1, 2014 must include a section to describe how and whether individual development plans (IDPs) are used to identify and promote the career goals of graduate students and postdoctoral researchers associated with the award.

How does the IDP relate to other career planning resources available at MIT?

IDP outcomes may help a postdoc narrow down options for a future career path. MIT offers a huge number of workshops, talks and other opportunities to expose postdocs to various career options. These can be overwhelming, and the IDP may help a postdoc focus on specific opportunities and to be strategic in next steps. **A 'Career Planning Strategy' worksheet is available in the [toolkit](#).**

Summary Guidelines for faculty mentors regarding the IDP

- An IDP is recommended for all postdocs, and indicated for those supported by the NIH¹.
- It should be completed at the end of year 1, and at the end of year 3 or 4.
- An IDP is for the postdoc, and is a personal document, that does not form part of the postdoctoral record.
- However, it can be useful to discuss the IDP outcome as part of an annual review.

Summary Guidelines for postdocs regarding the IDP

- An IDP is recommended for all postdocs, and indicated for those supported by the NIH¹.
- It should be completed at the end of year 1, and at the end of year 3 or 4.
- Your IDP is specific to you; you will use the plan to identify and guide your career objectives, and update and revise it periodically.
- It is a private, individual document.
- However, it is often mutually beneficial to refer to it in communications with your faculty supervisor, including during an annual review conversation.
- In addition to discussions with your faculty supervisor, you are encouraged to have additional mentors to offer other insight into your career goals.
- **A 'Career Planning Strategy' worksheet interfaces with the IDP and your evolving career goals and is available in the [toolkit](#).**

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