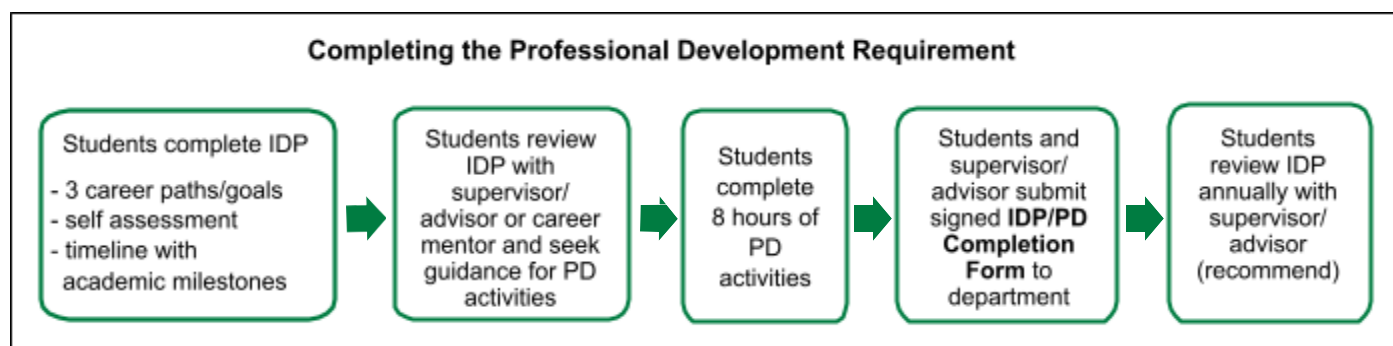


Individual Development Plan: A Review Guide for Faculty

Professional Development Requirement Overview

In November 2013, the Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) established the Professional Development Advisory Board, bringing together internal and external stakeholders to examine the issues relevant to careers for graduate students, and to develop a strategic plan for professional development at the University of Alberta. The strategic plan brought to the GPS Council recommended the introduction of mandatory professional development for all graduate students. The Graduate Student Association, represented by two past GSA presidents and the current GSA Executive, strongly supported this endeavour. On April 29, 2015, a motion was passed at the GPS Council to include a Professional Development Requirement for incoming students.¹

There are two components included in the PD Requirement: 1) **Individual Development Plan (IDP)**; and, 2) **Eight hours of Professional Development (PD) activities**. The process for completing the professional development requirement includes:



Why implement the PD Requirement?

1. There is a need for professional soft skills not currently addressed:

Research shows that graduate students find it challenging to transition into the workplace due to underdeveloped professional/soft skills and networks, as well as difficulty articulating the skills gained through their graduate programs. These challenges are persistent for all graduate students *regardless* of their discipline.² Within the Canadian workplace, soft skills (self-management, intercultural competency, interpersonal skills, professionalism, collaboration, etc.) are considered to be of equal, if not greater importance, to hard/disciplinary skills.³

2. We have a moral obligation to prepare students for careers inside and outside of academia:

Traditionally, graduate programs have prepared students for an academic career, but the statistics show the majority of PhDs will pursue careers beyond the academic sector: In Canada, 40 % will work in post-secondary education, of which only 18 % will become full-time professors.⁴

3. It is an opportunity for stronger employer engagement:

Stronger employer engagement helps secure and retain grants and attracts development money. As students connect with employers through internships, mentorships and job-shadowing programs, as well as through career research, their professional development activities serve to break down barriers and misconceptions about advanced degree holders. This is an opportunity for employers to see the skills and competencies students bring to the workplace.

**The calendar lists the faculties/programs that complete the PD requirement within their existing programs. We hope all faculties/departments include information on their websites that describes what training meets the PD requirement.

Why both an Individual Development Plan + 8 hours PD training?

The self-management skills that underlie professional skills (self-appraisal and knowledge of one's own values, abilities, aptitudes, and interests) are not only a key component of any graduate program, but also are a central part of career management. Research shows that students who combine self-management skills in conjunction with career-building skills (finding and using information about careers, labour markets, exploring career opportunities, etc.) experience "fewer mismatches between labour market supply and demand resulting in poor employment outcomes."⁵

Research also suggests that an "individualized development plan" constructed in conjunction with a supervisor/advisor results in more satisfied students who have fewer conflicts with their supervisors/advisors.⁶ The Professional Development Requirement responds to this research by asking students to complete an IDP and to develop skills and competencies relative to their individual needs and career goals (eight hours of PD activities).

Reviewing the IDP

While we recognize that some supervisors/advisors may be new to career planning conversations, you are asked to review the IDP with your students because your mentorship is central to their growth as scholars and as engaged members of society.⁷ Research suggests students are more confident and productive when they complete an IDP in collaboration with their supervisor/advisor.⁸ The discussion points given below are intended to be points of entry to frame your conversation. They also offer you, the supervisor/advisor, measurable outcomes to determine whether the student has spent sufficient time developing an IDP that is thoughtful and takes into consideration the various factors that impact its usefulness. The IDP was revised to take into account a more holistic approach to career development in recognition of Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Therefore, relationships with the land and community will resonate with FNMI students in how they approach each section, and the focus is not as much on what your strengths are, but what you bring to the table as a whole person.

Supervisors/advisors are not expected to cover all the questions given below. Instead, supervisors/advisors are invited to select comfortable discussion points. The Career Centre can also support the work of supervisors/advisors through advising and coaching appointments.

The "**Completing the Eight Hours of Professional Development Activities**" guide (Appendix A) outlines the eligibility criteria for professional development training that your student might pursue in fulfilment of this requirement. As departments have the final say around what will and will not "count," students and faculty are encouraged to consult with their graduate coordinator/chair to determine whether a learning opportunity can be used towards the requirement. The **Professional Development Workshop site** outlines numerous sessions available to students from GPS.

What resources are available to students?

Students can use the GPS **Comprehensive IDP Workbook** to complete their Individual Development Plan (unless the faculty/department has developed their own document). Students who are returning to graduate studies after years of professional experience, or who are in a professional program may wish to use the **Individual Development Plan for Professionals (IDP Pro) Workbook**. GPS offers a **two-part professional development requirement series** that orients students to the requirement and helps them complete their IDP. Students can also reach out to the Professional Development team at the GPS in person at 2-29 Triffo Hall or by email at grad.pd@ualberta.ca.

Record of meeting dates:

Step 1: Ideas Generation

Starting an IDP can be daunting, so a good place for students to begin is to think about the things they do, areas that need further development, what is important to them in their life, and where they want to have an impact. This will lead to thinking about their skills and about career paths that are a good fit (Steps 2 and 3). Students are given four areas to reflect on with a variety of guiding questions. The four areas align with the Indigenous-informed Lifelong Learning Framework⁹ and include:

- Understanding your motivators or purpose (Mind - to Know)
- Leveraging your knowledge, skills, attributes and competencies (Body - to Do)
- Your hope for future generations and your legacy (Heart - to Belong)
- Grounding Yourself (Spirit - to Be)

IDP Review: Measurable Outcomes for the supervisor/career mentor

Having students share personal experiences can be awkward, and you may need to share some of your own experiences to get the conversation started.

- Does your conversation show the student has reflected on who they are currently and their future self?
- What expectations does the student have for their graduate program?

Possible Discussion Points

- Have you thought about how this graduate program helps you achieve your goals?
- What are some activities you do in your spare time and how do you think they can fit into your future?
- What motivates you about the future?
- What would you say are your strengths or gifts?
- If you could do anything with your life, what would it be?
- If you could be remembered for one thing in your life, what would you like it to be?
- If you could have an impact on something or someone, what would that be?
- If you could inspire someone or something, what would it be?
- If you could change one thing in the world, what would it be?
- Are you connected to any communities that give you support?

Notes:

Step 2: Self-Assessment¹⁰

A study of PhD-educated employees reveals that the most educated members of the labour market often do not realize what skills they have obtained in their graduate training. Greater attention is needed to ensure a better match between the individual's skills and their career decisions.¹¹ The supervisor/advisor is often in the best position to offer feedback about their students' skills and competencies.¹² Step 2 of the IDP encourages students to reflect on their skills in relation to their interests and areas where they would like to have an impact, based on what they identified in Step 1 of their IDP. Step 3 has students explore three careers/goals that align with their interests and skills.

NB: Students can, but are not required to, share their skills assessment with their supervisor/advisor.

IDP Review: Measurable Outcomes for the supervisor/career mentor

If the student chooses to share the self-assessment with you, consider:

- Whether the student has given careful reflection to their past experiences (work life, leisure, learning, and volunteer work, experiences as a graduate student) and fully considered the level of their skills *relative* to the career paths they have selected.
- Can the student give examples that demonstrate competency of the skills?

Regardless of whether the student shares their self-assessment, as the supervisor/advisor, you can review the PD Activities proposed by the student. While this conversation may not be as rich in the absence of the student's self-assessment, you can still provide valuable feedback:

- Do the PD activities planned align well with the career paths/goals identified in Steps 1 and 3?
- Has the student sufficiently considered the various PD opportunities available on campus (and those that may be available through your department or professional associations)?

Possible Discussion Points

- What did the self-assessment reveal to you about your strengths/gifts?
- Can you give specific examples of the skills where you gave yourself a high rating? Can you explain why you gave yourself a low rating?
- What did the self-assessment reveal to you about the kinds of activities/roles to which you are drawn?
- What are the skills you need to develop to be competitive/competent in your chosen career paths/goals?
- Do you see patterns in your strengths or skills gaps? How do you plan to fill your skills gaps?
- Have you looked in campusBRIDGE, the GPS workshop website or the graduate student digest to select your activities?
- Are there opportunities for skills development that you, as the supervisor/advisor, could point your student to or help facilitate?

Notes:

Step 3: Choose Three Career Paths (IDP)/goals (IDP-Pro)

Research shows that clearer alignment between skills, career decisions and the demands of high-level professions are needed for graduate students to successfully transition into the workplace.¹³ Step 3 asks students to choose three career paths (IDP)/goals (IDP Pro) that are of interest to them. This process invites them to consider their long and short term goals; to consider what a sustainable career path looks like; and to determine the skills/gifts needed to be competitive in their chosen fields.

IDP Review: Measureable Outcomes for the supervisor/career mentor

- Has the student chosen three paths/goals that are of interest to him/her?
- Has careful consideration been given to the career choice or goals outlined in the IDP?
- Can the student explain why they've chosen the three career paths/goals?
 - e.g. How do their proposed career paths/goals align with personal ideas of career success?
 - e.g. How do their proposed career paths/goals align with their work and personal values?
 - e.g. How does their chosen discipline and/or degree set them up for work in these fields?

Possible Discussion Points:

- What did you do to research your three career paths/goals?
- Did you use the career search resources outlined in the IDP workbook?
- What resources did you find most helpful/least helpful when choosing your 3 career paths/goals? Why?
- Why do these career paths/goals appeal to you?
- Were there challenges/surprises you encountered when researching your career paths/goals? If so, what were they?
- As the supervisor/advisor, is there a person with a related or similar career path you could connect your student with to gain their perspective of skills and knowledge needed for that position? (The Career Centre offers graduate students numerous opportunities for career exploration.)
- If you, as a supervisor/advisor, have insights into the student's career paths/goals, please share your knowledge on how the student may approach building their CV/résumé. (The Career Centre also offers CV/résumé review for graduate students.)
- Are there PD activities that you as the supervisor could present/offer to your student? (e.g. assist with networking opportunities, academic reviewing of a manuscript for publication, paying for training)?

Notes:

Step 4: Timeline

Step 4 of the IDP asks students to develop a timeline for completing their program, while taking into consideration academic milestones, career goals, and personal factors. The timeline should include plans for how their program will be tailored to develop the skills and competencies or goals outlined in Step 3.

IDP Review: Measurable Outcomes for the supervisor or advisor

- Has the student fully considered academic (course work, ethics and PD requirement, candidacy, etc.) and personal (family, work outside of program, life-work balance, etc.) factors that impact the timeline?
- Does the student have a strong sense of the scope of their thesis/capstone project and is this appropriately considered in their timeline?
- Has the student allotted time for publications or other measures of academic performance (e.g. exhibitions/performances)?
- Has the student considered when and how much time they will devote to professional development?
- Has the student considered alternate paths should the timeline not unfold as anticipated?
- Is the timeline realistic?

Possible Discussion Points:

- What factors/commitments did you consider when creating your timeline?
- How did you ensure that you considered all the factors that impact your program completion and professional development?
- Is there information you still need to gather/require to make your timeline more accurate (e.g. funding, issues related to research, factors related to your personal life)?
- What add-ons would make your thesis/capstone project truly outstanding in the field?
- What is the minimum path to thesis and or program completion?
- Is it realistic to expect a clear path forward at this point? If not, what factors could impact your plan?
- What are your alternate plans if one path does not work out?
- What are your next steps in moving towards the goals laid out in your IDP?
- When will the IDP be revisited to measure progress and to reassess?
- Do you have questions or concerns about your next steps?
- Is there further support you require from me as your supervisor/advisor?

Notes:

Step 5: Annual Review (Recommended)

A student's IDP will be most impactful when it is revisited regularly to assess progress and to reevaluate expectations, goals, and milestones. While it is not a requirement, students are strongly encouraged to review and revise (as needed) their IDP on an annual basis with their supervisor/mentor. GPS invites you to have these conversations with your students during their annual committee meeting or at another suitable time.

Below are questions that can guide the regular review of a student's IDP:

- What is working well in the IDP plan? What needs to change?
- Are expectations being met as laid out in the IDP?
- Is the student on track with the proposed timeline? Do adjustments need to be made?
 - If the timeline is off track, what are the underlying reasons and how can this be addressed? (e.g. re-evaluation of projects/activities; development of self-management skills; factors out of the student's control)
 - If the student is ahead of their proposed target, should new opportunities/skills development be explored?
- Are there changes that need to be made to reflect a shift in personal/career goals, circumstances, or new opportunities?
- What is the status of the student's skills development? Are there new skills that need to be developed?

What's Next?

- Once the student has completed their IDP, they keep it for personal records and are encouraged to revisit it on an annual basis with their supervisor/career mentor. The department **does not** keep a copy of the IDP in the student's records.
- The IDP should lay out plans for how the eight hours of PD training will be fulfilled. Once the student has completed the IDP *and* the required eight hours, the student fills out the **Individual Development Plan and Professional Development Completion Form** and has their supervisor/career mentor sign it. The supervisor/advisor submits the form to the graduate coordinator/administrator who will then sign it and file it in the student's department records. This form **does not** get submitted to GPS.
- Still have questions? The **FAQs for Faculty and Staff** answers a variety of questions about the administration of the PD requirement.

Resources supporting the Professional Development Requirement:

- **Individual Development Plan and Professional Development Completion Form**
- **Individual Development Plan (IDP) Comprehensive Workbook**
- **Individual Development Plan (IDP) Pro Workbook**
- **IDP Training for Students**
- **FAQs for Faculty and Staff**
- **The ABCs of the Professional Development Requirement**
- **Career Centre**

If you have questions about any aspect of the Professional Development Requirement, please contact grad.pd@ualberta.ca.

Appendix A

Completing the Eight Hours of Professional Development Activities

The University of Alberta Professional Development Requirement includes:

- 1) an individualized career plan document called an Individual Development Plan (IDP) and
- 2) the completion of eight hours of professional development training inspired by the career plan.

As students complete the IDP self-assessment of their skills and attributes, they should be able to identify their career goals and skill gaps. Students are encouraged to find professional development activities that align with their individual career interests to fulfil the eight-hour training requirement.

Professional Development Activities Guidelines

A professional development activity fulfils the University of Alberta Professional Development Requirement if it contributes to the acquisition of skills, knowledge or mindset and includes all of these three components:

- The PD activity must consist of formal training and include active learning, with an assessment component (self-assessment, reflection, quiz, write-pair-share or evidence of knowledge application). Learning activities under the tutelage of Indigenous elders fall under this component, where students may provide a self-assessment, application of knowledge, reflection or practice that aligns with the learning of Indigenous knowledge.
- The activity must fall outside of research methods training, capstone project, thesis or equivalent and required practicum. Practicums and internships that have assessment, reflection and feedback components can be applied toward the PD requirement (e.g., GSIP).
- The activity must support the career goals and/or seven skills and competencies identified in the IDP.

Graduate students who are members of university-sanctioned committees/boards (e.g., Graduate Students' Association, CTL Advisory Committee, Department Council) can apply to have two hours of PD credit for training achieved through their work experience.

The Seven Skills/Competencies (As outlined in the IDP)

Creativity	Confidence	Critical Thinking
Communication	Scholarship	Collaboration
	Ethical Responsibility	

What Activities Do Not Fulfill the Requirement?

The following (unless otherwise stated) do not fulfill the eight-hour requirement:

- Information sessions to highlight resources or programs
- Teaching Assistantships, Research Assistantships, mentorship
- Presenting a talk or poster

Reviewing the Eight Hours of Professional Development Activities

Students are expected to conduct their professional development activities with the same integrity they apply to all other areas of their graduate program. Students are responsible for keeping track of (and safeguarding) their own PD activities and for gathering the proof of attendance. Students can demonstrate that they have attended sessions through a variety of ways. Departments will determine what they consider acceptable evidence. Options include:

1. Students attending GPS sessions can take screenshots of their attendance recorded in campusBRIDGE. Sessions prior to 2020 provided students with emails confirming attendance.
2. Students can fill out a [Declaration of Attendance](#). The presenter at the session/workshop also signs the form to verify attendance.
3. Many online courses provide students with a certificate of completion/participation.
4. Departments may develop and use a PD record book that students can have signed by presenters.

Endnotes:

¹ The Professional Development Requirement was subsequently reviewed by University Governance (GFC, Board of Governors, Senate).

² "Preliminary Survey Report: The Skill Needs of Major Canadian Employers." Canadian Council of Chief Executives, January 2014.

<http://www.ceocouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Preliminary-report-on-skills-survey-Jan-20-2014-2.pdf>, 7.

² Jessica Edge and Daniel Munro, *Inside and Outside the Academy: Valuing and Preparing PhDs for Careers*, The Conference Board of Canada, 2015, accessed December 15, 2015, https://uwaterloo.ca/arts-graduate-careers/sites/ca.arts-graduate-careers/files/uploads/files/7564_inside20and20outside20the20academy_rpt.pdf

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ruth Bridgstock, "The graduate attributes we've overlooked: enhancing graduate employability through career management skills," *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28/1 (2009): 31-44.

⁶Michael J. Platow, "PhD experience and subsequent outcomes: a look at self-perceptions of acquired graduate attributes and supervisor support," *Studies In Higher Education* 37/1(2012): 103-118. *Education Research Complete*, EBSCOhost, accessed January 18, 2017).

⁷Ibid.

⁸Findings from the 2005 Sigma Xi Postdoc survey also reports that postdocs who complete an IDP at the beginning of their appointment in collaboration with their advisors: 1) are 23% more likely to submit papers to peer-reviewed journals; 2) publish first-authored papers at a 30% higher rate; 3) submit grant proposals at a 25% higher rate, and 4) are 25% less likely to report that their advisor did not meet their initial expectations. ("Building Your Plan," University of Minnesota, accessed January 10, 2017, <https://www.grad.umn.edu/current-students-academic-professional-development-building-your-plan/plan>). See also: Rose. M., "Graduate Student Professional Development: A Survey with Recommendations," Prepared for The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Brock University, March. (2012), accessed January 5, 2017, <http://www.cags.ca/documents/publications/working/Report%20on%20Graduate%20Student%20Professional%20Development%20-%20A%20survey%20with%20recommendations%20FINAL%20Eng.OCT%202012.pdf>; McCook, Alison, "Mentoring on the right path." *Nature*. 474 (2001):667-669.

⁹Indigenous Education Holistic Lifelong Learning Framework. (2022) Calgary Board of Education <https://www.cbe.ab.ca/about-us/policies-and-regulations/Documents/Indigenous-Education-Holistic-Lifelong-Learning-Framework.pdf>

¹⁰In 2013 the University struck a committee that proposed the 7 skills and competencies that now appear in the IDP. Headed by Office of the Provost, and in consultation with student leaders (GSA and SU presidents), the committee looked at skills outlined in the graduate programs of other major universities. The proposed 7 skills and competencies attempted to capture the attributes that define University of Alberta graduates. The 7 skills and competencies then went to the Professional Development Advisory Board, which was comprised of stakeholders from academia, industry, not-for-profit, and government. The PD Advisory Board also consulted the skills considered to be important by TRI-Council and CAGS (Canadian Association of Graduate Studies). The PD Advisory Board determined that there is no *single* list of non-disciplinary skills that can be pointed to and determined to use the 7 skills and competencies originally proposed by the initial University committee. The University of Alberta Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Fellow Professional and Career Development Plan outlining these skills and competencies was presented to GPS council, Deans Council, and various levels of governance, including the Board of Governors, between January and March of 2015. The motion was presented to GPS council in April 2015 and voted on in May 2015.

¹¹Denise Jackson, and Grant Michelson, "PhD-Educated Employees and the Development of Generic Skills." *Australian Bulletin Of Labour* 42/1 (2016): 108-134. *Education Research Complete*, EBSCOhost, accessed January 18, 2017.

¹²Alison McCook, "Mentoring on the right path." *Nature*. 474 (2011): 667-669.

¹³Denise Jackson, and Grant Michelson, "PhD-Educated Employees and the Development of Generic Skills." *Australian Bulletin Of Labour* 42 (2016): 108-134. *Education Research Complete*, EBSCOhost, accessed Jan 18, 2017.