

THE BAYLOR COLLEGE OF MEDICINE IDP PROCESS (for the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences)

I. Purpose of the IDP: The Individual Development Plan (IDP) is intended as a tool to enable each of our trainees to identify professional goals that match their interests and values for the purpose of identifying and developing the appropriate career specific skills. Encouraging discussions between students and mentors about career goals early in the training process, and implementing a course of action to achieve these goals, is expected to result in more successful outcomes, including improved communication skills, better time management, and increased productivity. The proposed IDP process for BCM will be accomplished through the implementation of three interactive steps. Each step, in addition to a proposed timeline for completion, is described below.

II. Description of the central interactive steps:

Step 1. Self Assessment. The trainee initiates the IDP process by performing a self-assessment to identify current scientific skills and knowledge, general interests, and personal values, using the web-based MyIDP Self-Assessment Tool (<http://myidp.sciencecareers.org>). The trainee will rate his/her proficiency in relation to six established core competencies that are expected for all PhD scholars. These include discipline-specific conceptual knowledge; research skill development; communication skills; professionalism; leadership and management skills; and responsible conduct of research. Each competency provides expectations appropriate for the trainee's level of experience. Additional questions will assess the trainee's general interests and values. The self-assessment tool is designed to evaluate the trainee's skills, knowledge, and interests in relation to those required in various science-related career paths. Resource materials describing each career path are also included. Following completion of this first milestone, the trainee should seek input from his/her mentors to arrive at a final, more accurate assessment of skills, knowledge, and interests in relation to his/her preferred career choice.

Step 2. Designing the plan. At this stage in the IDP process the trainee and mentor set goals to further develop the scientific skills and knowledge that are needed for acquiring proficiency in the core competencies and those that will allow the trainee to be competitive for opportunities in the chosen career path. Together they will develop a set of strategies to achieve short-term and long-term objectives consistent with achieving the trainee's career goals. For example, an ideal strategy might include a schedule for completing additional courses (if necessary), reading additional discipline-specific literature, participating in relevant journal clubs, attending and presenting at discipline-specific scientific meetings, submitting fellowship applications, etc., as ways to further develop scientific skills and knowledge appropriate for the chosen scientific career path. Deliberate participation in the numerous career development events, workshops, and courses sponsored by the BCM GSBS, specific departments and graduate programs, and other Texas Medical Center institutions would contribute to any successful strategy for professional skill development. The trainee and mentors can establish the "Plan" using multiple web-based IDP templates or a specific BCM-branded IDP template.

Step 3. Implementing the plan. After establishing the Plan, the trainee must put the Plan and its elements into action by implementing the proposed strategies. The

trainee and mentor should track progress toward achieving each goal at regular intervals to assess progress and monitor expectations. For areas in which there was insufficient progress, the trainee and mentor should clarify the problem and design a strategy to ensure future progress. Implementing the Plan will challenge the trainee and mentor to remain flexible and open to change. The Plan should be revised and modified as circumstances and goals change.

III. Proposed time frame: Considering career options early in a graduate student's training, and defining more specific career goals as appropriate during the following years, or at the outset of the postdoctoral appointment, are important for successful career development. Differences in the career paths chosen by our trainees will necessitate flexibility in how the IDPs are executed. However, to maintain continuity, each step should be accomplished within a time frame that closely complies with the following schedules.

For graduate students – The trainee should initiate the self-assessment step (step 1) after successful completion of the Qualifying Examination. At the first Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting, the student and mentors will mark a box on the student's Status Report to document that they have discussed the results of the self-assessment. If circumstances have delayed completion of self-assessment step 1, then the trainee and mentors should devise a strategy to ensure that missing component(s) are satisfied within a reasonable period, preferably before the next TAC meeting. The trainee should complete development of the Plan (step 2) within the next year, based on current career goals. The Plan's contents, including the proposed strategies to correct deficiencies, should be discussed at selected TAC meetings, where all members are encouraged to participate in the evaluation of the trainee's current status and the proposed course of action. The student and/or mentors may also seek input from the TAC regarding career goals and development. As before, if circumstances have delayed the development of the Plan, then the trainee and mentor should provide a strategy (and indicate it on the Status Report) to ensure that any missing component(s) are satisfied within a reasonable period, preferably before the next TAC meeting. During subsequent meetings, the TAC, mentors, and trainee should discuss progress toward achieving the proposed goals, evaluate the trainee's accomplishments with respect to her/his goals, and assist with revisions to the Plan. This regular series of interactions should continue until the student's dissertation defense, with the goal of assisting the transition to the next career phase.

For postdocs – We encourage that the self-assessment step (step 1) be completed prior to the BCM appointment. The postdoc should complete the development of a Plan, including strategies to accomplish selected career goals, within three months after initiation of the appointment. In the absence of a formal committee (unless one is chosen), the postdoc and mentors should meet regularly to discuss the achievement of goals proposed in the Plan and revise their strategies as needed. These interactions should continue until the postdoc is ready to transition into his/her next position.