Combined Postdoc Individual Development Plan (IDP) and Performance Review V.3.4

*Introduction and overview.*

A discussed in Chapter 6 of “Lab Dynamics: Management and Leadership Skills for Scientists” (Carl M. Cohen and Suzanne L. Cohen, 3rd ed, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press 2018) a performance review is done periodically (annually or semi-annually) in conjunction with frequent and routine feedback on specific performance issues. The Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a communication and assessment tool aimed at improving the mentoring relationship between postdocs (or other trainees) and their mentors. When done together, the IDP review and performance review can be powerful tools to define short‐term research goals and long-term career goals as well as to give the postdoc guidance on their performance and progress. The following document contains both a performance review section and an IDP section.

Each *newly* appointed postdoctoral fellow should complete Sections B and C of the following document (initial research goals and initial IDP) within six monthsof appointment. Those sections should then get reviewed (by filling out Sections A and D) every six months to one year as part of the postdoc’s routine performance review.

The overall goals of this review process are to:

* Encourage constructive dialogue between postdocs and their mentors.
* Clarify responsibilities and performance expectations from both sides (mentor and the postdoc).
* Record information about performance and accomplishments and promote more effective performance.
* Provide postdocs with feedback on their performance and accomplishments during the previous review period.
* Identify goals for the upcoming period and specific plans to help postdocs meet those goals.

Goals of the performance review sections.

The performance review is different from routine feedback to the postdoc on their performance in the lab or workplace. Routine feedback gives the postdoc real time information on how they are doing relative to the goals the postdoc and mentor have set and on the mentor’s expectations for performance and behavior. By contrast, in a performance review the postdoc and mentor step back from day to day issues and make a global assessment of both scientific and behavioral performance. The format of the review is to focus on what is being done well and on what needs to be improved

Goals of the IDP section.

The IDP section will change with time since the postdoc’s needs and goals will almost certainly evolve. The specific objectives of the IDP section are to:

* Articulate the career objectives of the postdoc.
* Identify specific skills and strengths that the postdoc needs to develop in order to attain their career objective (based on discussions with the mentor).
* Identify approaches to obtain specific skills and gain strengths (e.g., courses, technical skills, teaching, and supervision) together with anticipated time frames.

Outline of the IDP process

The process is an interactive effort between the postdoc and the mentor.

Outline of Steps for Postdoctoral Fellows and Mentors

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Steps | For postdoc | For mentor |
| **Step 1** | Conduct a self-assessment.  | Become familiar with available career opportunities for the postdoc. |
| **Step 2** | Prepare the IDP, share with mentor and revise as needed. | Review IDP and help revise. |
| **Step 3** | Implement the IDP; Periodically update and revise as needed. | Establish regular review of progress; Help revise the IDP as needed. |

Postdoctoral Fellow Responsibility

Step 1. Define your goals and conduct a self-assessment

Outline your long‐term career objectives. Ask yourself:

* What type of work would I like to be doing?
* Where would I like to be in an organization?
* What is important to me in a career?

Assess your skills, strengths and areas that need development in order to attain those goals. Take a realistic look at your current capabilities. This is a critical part of career planning. Ask your peers, mentors, family and friends what they see as your strengths and your development needs.

Step 2. Prepare your IDP. Share with mentor and revise.

This takes place during the Performance/IDP review meeting.

Step 3. Implement the plan.

After you and your mentor agree on your IDP, start working on its objectives. Review your progress on and adjust these objectives at the next Performance/IDP review meeting.

Before you prepare your IDP, review career opportunities you have identified with your mentor. Ask for their ideas.

Mentor’s Responsibility

Step 1. Become Familiar with Available Opportunities for the Postdoc

By your experience you should already have knowledge of some career opportunities, but you may want to familiarize yourself with other career opportunities and trends in job opportunities (refer to sources such as National Research Council reports and *Science* career reviews).

Step 2. Discuss Opportunities with the Postdoc

This takes place in a private meeting distinct from routine research‐specific meetings but can be incorporated as part of a periodic performance review. There should be adequate time set aside for an open and honest discussion.

Step 3. Review IDP and Help Revise

Provide honest feedback to help the postdoc set realistic goals. Agree on a development plan that will allow them to be productive in the laboratory and adequately prepare them for their chosen career.

**Combined Postdoc Individual Development Plan and Performance Review Form**

Available for download in Word format from www.sciencema.com/resources

Each *newly* appointed postdoctoral fellow should complete Sections B and C of the following document (initial research goals and initial IDP) within six monthsof appointment. Those sections should then get reviewed jointly reviewed by the postdoc and mentor (by filling out Sections A and D) every six months to one year as part of the postdoc’s routine performance and IDP review.

Postdoc Name:

Mentor/Adviser name:

Date of this review:

Process

1. The process starts with the postdoc filling out Sections A, B and C.
2. Postdoc then forwards the document to their mentor who comments on sections A, B, and C where it says, “Mentor comments.”
3. The mentor completes Section D (Personal Characteristics).
4. Mentor and postdoc meet face to face to review and/or edit each element of the document. Mentor gives feedback and guidance on what is being done well and should be continued, and what can be improved, covering both scientific accomplishments (progress towards goals) and attitudes and behaviors (personal characteristics).
5. After the meeting the postdoc will be responsible for making any agreed upon changes to the document (e.g. in goals or development plans for the coming period) and will provide a final version to the mentor.

**Section A. Review of past period.**

Part 1. To be completed by postdoc.

1. Research goals for the period under review (these should be the same as the goals you set with your adviser/mentor at the beginning of this period). For each goal, indicate whether it was, Completed, In progress, or Not started. Skip this section if this is the first time you are setting goals.

|  |
| --- |
| Goal 1.Check one: \_\_\_ Completed \_\_\_ In progress \_\_\_ Not started |
| Goal 2.Check one: \_\_\_ Completed \_\_\_ In progress \_\_\_ Not started |
| Goal 3.  Check one: \_\_\_ Completed \_\_\_ In progress \_\_\_ Not started |
| Goal 4.Check one: \_\_\_ Completed \_\_\_ In progress \_\_\_ Not started |
| Goal 5.Check one: \_\_\_ Completed \_\_\_ In progress \_\_\_ Not started |

1. Mentoring. Describe your interactions with your mentor. Are you getting enough time with your mentor? How frequently do you meet? How could your mentoring experience be improved?
2. Skills. Describe what new scientific skills or techniques you learned during this review period.
3. Describe any unusual or unanticipated challenges you experienced during this review period in trying to accomplish your goals. What actions have you taken to meet these challenges? How can your mentor help you?

## Part 2. Mentor comments:

**Section B. Research goals for next period. To be filled out by postdoc and discussed and revised with mentor during review.**

## Part 1. To be completed by postdoc

1. List scientific research goals for the coming period (include specific research and publication objectives). The postdoc should make a first pass at this section, but completion of this section is a collaborative effort between the postdoc and their adviser and can be done during the review meeting. Make sure each goal is SMART (see Appendix).

## Part 2. Mentor comments:

**Section C: Individual Development Plan: Goals for next period. To be filled out by postdoc and discussed with mentor during review.**

## Part 1. To be completed by postdoc

1. Describe your current career goals and objectives.
2. Describe your career development or training goals (include both scientific and extra-scientific) for the coming period. You can include new techniques or skills to be learned and publication objectives.
3. Will the development program described in 2 get you to your career goals? If not, what is needed or missing? What additional skills or training will you need to accomplish your career objectives?
4. Are there opportunities that will assist you in reaching your career objectives? (e.g., meetings, courses or workshops.) Identify specific events if possible.
5. What assistance can your mentor prove you in accomplishing the above objectives?

## Part 2. Mentor comments:

**Mentor Section.**

Process for mentor:

1. Review the postdoc’s assessment of their progress towards goals in section A1. Comment and indicate any differences of views under “Mentor comments “. During the face to face performance review meeting review progress towards each goal and where appropriate provide feedback and guidance.
2. Review postdoc’s responses to items A 2, 3, 4. Comment as necessary under “Mentor comments” and discuss during meeting.
3. Review postdoc’s goals for coming period (Section B) and comment as necessary under “Mentor comments.” Edit, amend and discuss goals during meeting as needed.
4. Review postdoc’s IDP section (Section C), comment under “Mentor comments” and advise, clarify and assist during face to face meeting as needed.
5. Complete Section D (Personal Characteristics, below). During the face to face meeting with the postdoc review your ratings and provide feedback and guidance for improvement as needed. For guidance in how to provide useful feedback when improvement is needed in scientific progress and/or personal characteristics see Chapter 6 in “Lab Dynamics: Management and Leadership Skills for Scientists” (Carl M. Cohen and Suzanne L. Cohen, 3rd ed, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press 2018)

**Section D: Personal Characteristics. To be filled out by mentor and discussed with postdoc during face to face meeting.**

The following personal characteristics help define expectations for the postdoc’s work habits and behavior. For each entry check one: Up to Standards, Can be improved (add a descriptive comment or suggestion) or Not Applicable. Frame your feedback as: A) What they are doing well and should be continued and B) What Can be improved. Discuss the evaluation during the face to face performance review.

1. **Takes a thoughtful and rigorous approach to their scientific work.**

\_\_Meets standards \_\_Can be improved: (details below) \_\_Not applicable

1. **Seeks and responds to feedback.** \_\_Meets standards \_\_Can be improved: (details below) \_\_Not applicable
2. **Manages conflicts and differences of opinion with skill and sensitivity.** \_\_Meets standards \_\_Can be improved: (details below) \_\_Not applicable
3. **Able to manage emotions in tense or difficult situations.**\_\_Meets standards \_\_Can be improved: (details below) \_\_Not applicable
4. **Knows how and when to seek help and assistance in difficult scientific situations.** \_\_Meets standards \_\_Can be improved: (details below) \_\_Not applicable
5. **Is supportive of others in the group by being helpful and by sharing knowledge and resources.** \_\_Meets standards \_\_Can be improved: (details below) \_\_Not applicable
6. **Meets commitments and takes responsibilities (including lab responsibilities) seriously** \_\_Meets standards \_\_Can be improved: (details below) \_\_Not applicable
7. **Demonstrates ability to think independently.** \_\_Meets standards \_\_Can be improved: (details below) \_\_Not applicable
8. **Keeps abreast of relevant literature.** \_\_Meets standards \_\_Can be improved: (details below) \_\_Not applicable
9. **Possesses appropriate technical skills and abilities.** \_\_Meets standards \_\_Can be improved: (details below) \_\_Not applicable
10. **Demonstrates appropriate speaking and writing skills.** \_\_Meets standards \_\_Can be improved: (details below) \_\_Not applicable
11. **Skilled at managing or supervising others (if relevant).** \_\_Meets standards \_\_Can be improved: (details below) \_\_Not applicable
12. **Other (list)**

**Mentor comments for above items “a” through “m”.**

1. **Strengths include:**
2. **Areas of focus for improvement:**

**Appendix: SMART Goals:**

**Specific:** Goal objectives should address the five Ws… who, what, when, where, and why. Make sure the goal specifies what needs to be done with a timeframe for completion. Use action verbs… create, design, develop, implement, produce, etc. Example: Create cDNA library within two months.

**Measurable:** Goal objectives should include numeric or descriptive measures that define quantity, quality, cost, etc. How will you and your staff member know when the goal has been successfully met? Focus on elements such as observable actions, quantity, quality, cycle time, efficiency, and/or flexibility to measure outcomes, not activities. Example: Complete all HPLC sample analyses of pond water samples by June 2019.

**Achievable**: Goal objectives should be within the individual’s control and influence; a goal may be a “stretch” but still feasible. Is the goal achievable with the available resources? Is the goal achievable within the timeframe originally outlined?

**Relevant**: Goals should be relevant to the individual’s or group’s project. Why is the goal important? How will the goal help achieve objectives? Develop goals that relate to the person’s objectives or link with group or organizational goals.

**Time-specific**: Goal objectives should identify a target date for completion and/or frequencies for specific action steps that are important for achieving the goal. How often should the person work on this assignment? By when should this goal be accomplished? Incorporate specific dates, calendar milestones, or timeframes that are relative to the achievement of another result (i.e., dependencies and linkages to other projects).