



Postdoctoral Career Mentoring Program

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What is a postdoc?

- National Institutes of Health and National Science Foundation (2007): “An individual who has received a doctoral degree (or equivalent) and is engaged in a **temporary** and **defined period** of **mentored** advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research independence needed to pursue his or her **chosen career path**.”
- National Postdoctoral Association (2007): “A postdoctoral scholar (‘postdoc’) is an individual holding a doctoral degree who is engaged in a **temporary** period of **mentored** research and/or scholarly training for the purpose of acquiring the professional skills needed to pursue **a career path of his or her choosing**.”
- Association of American Medical Colleges (2006): “Postdoctoral training is an integral component of the preparation of scientists for career advancement as scientific professionals. Postdoctoral appointees typically join an institution to further their training in a chosen discipline after recently obtaining their terminal degree (e.g., Ph.D., MD, DVM). This training is conducted in an **apprenticeship** mode where she/he works under the supervision of an **investigator who is qualified to fulfill the responsibilities of a mentor**. *The postdoctoral appointee may undertake scholarship, research, service, and teaching activities that together provide a training experience essential for career advancement.*”

SOURCES:

NSF: https://www.ninds.nih.gov/sites/default/files/Reed_Letter_508C.pdf

NIH: https://www.training.nih.gov/resources/faqs/postdoc_irp

NPA: https://www.nationalpostdoc.org/page/What_is_a_postdoc

AAMC: <https://www.aamc.org/download/49852/data/postdoccompact.pdf>



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What is an Individual Development Plan?

An *Individual Development Plan (IDP)* provides a planning process that identifies both **professional development needs** and **career objectives**. *The IDP is different from the annual evaluation required by the University.*

Goals:

- **Identify long-term career options** you wish to pursue and the necessary tools to reach your goals
- **Short-term needs for improving current performance** to keep you on the path to reach your career goals

Benefits for the postdoctoral scholar:

- Have a process that will assist you in developing long-term goals
- Define expectations and sets milestones along the way to achieve specific objectives
- Provides a communication tool between you and your PI/research advisor



Career Mentoring Program

(using the Individual Development Plan)

Step 1 – Take a self-assessment

- Assess your skills, interests, and values
- Take a realistic look at your current abilities (this is a critical part of career planning)
- Outline your long-term career objectives

Step 2 – Identify career opportunities

- Identify career opportunities and select the ones that interest you
- Identify development needs by comparing your current skills and strengths with those needed for your career choice
- Discuss your self-assessment and career goals with the **program mentor**

Step 3 – Write an Individual Development Plan (IDP)

- Establish effective dates for the duration of your postdoctoral appointment
- Identify specific skills and strengths that you need to develop
- Define the approaches to obtain the specific skills and strengths (e.g., courses, technical skills, teaching, supervision, conferences, grant writing, internships) together with anticipated time frames
- Discuss you draft IDP with your **PI/research advisor**
- Revise the IDP as appropriate

Step 4 – Implement Your Plan

- Revise and modify the plan as necessary, remaining flexible and open to change



Involvement of PI/Research Advisor

Step 1 – Review the IDP and help revise

The Research Advisor knows best their field of research and can provide the postdoc with key specific information for development and networking within that field

Step 2 – Establish regular review as necessary

Since the IDP is an evolving document that may change in time when the eventual career target changes, the document may require revision outside of the scheduled annual review of the postdoctoral fellow's performance required by the institution

Step 3 – Guide the postdoc in exploring his/her opportunities for career planning, including outside academia

Since the percentage of postdocs going into a faculty position is very small, it is important to explore careers outside academia

Benefits for the PI/Research Advisor:

- Enhancing individual professional growth increases productivity
 - Current IDP available for annual NIH/NSF grant reports
- Improving professional growth of the department and college

