

TRAINEE NAME:

ADVISOR NAME:

Postdoctoral Fellowships are about training you to ask and address new questions and prepare you for the scientific workforce. Having honest and open discussions with your advisor is an important part of your training.

As a postdoctoral fellow, you own your experience. This differs from your graduate education in two important ways. First, you are now responsible for seeking out and receiving the training and guidance you need to safely and ethically conduct your research. Second, you are responsible for fostering relationships with various mentors, including your advisor and committee, who will support you as partners in your training. To help accomplish these tasks, fill out this form and share it with your advisor ahead of your first annual mentoring meeting. The goal of this form is to facilitate dialogue and clarify approaches with your mentor(s).

**KEYS TO A GOOD
MENTORING
RELATIONSHIP**

**Think intentionally about
your training**

You will find it helpful to think through what you want to get out of your training and how your advisors and other sources of support can help you achieve your goals.

HOW TO COMPLETE YOUR IDP

1

Step back and self-assess!

It's easy to lose sight of the bigger picture. Fill out this form, using the questions as a starting point for your mentoring relationship with your advisor.

2

Set your first meeting with your advisor.

You are responsible for scheduling and meeting with your advisor within 30 days of joining your lab. (It's best to share your completed IDP form with your advisor before the meeting.)

3

Lead the discussion.

The IDP covers topics trainees have found helpful. If you have questions or additional objectives related to your training, these meetings are a great time to bring them up. You are not limited to what is on this form.

4

Complete the "Action Plan" and follow up.

The last page of the IDP encourages you to establish concrete steps in the meeting with your advisor. Keep your Action Plan accessible and check on it every couple of

5

Submit required documentation.

Submit your completed IDP to your advisor.

**Have open and direct
dialogue**

Starting off with strong, supportive communication is a fundamental part of getting continual advice that will help guide you throughout your academic and professional life.

**Establish clear
expectations/steps**

If you have additional questions or objectives related to your training, these meetings are a great time to bring them up and set action steps.

Trainees: Read the following responsibilities in advance of your meeting, and discuss with your advisor any questions you may have. This list is intended to help you understand where you should take ownership over your graduate training and how your advisor can support you with your goals.

Student Responsibilities:

- *Take primary responsibility for the successful completion of my fellowship progression and career preparation.*
- *Meet regularly with my advisor and provide her/him with updates on the progress and results of my activities and experiments/research endeavors.*
- *Work with my research advisor to develop a postdoctoral fellowship project and identify necessary collaborators.*
- *Identify my needs in mentorship, including faculty and peers, and seek out those individuals whose mentoring styles are a good fit for my needs.*
- *Initiate requests for feedback and seek advice from my advisors and other mentors.*
- *Be knowledgeable of the policies and requirements of my postdoctoral fellowship program.*
- *Be responsible for maintaining up-to-date safety protocols and trainings.*
- *Attend and participate in lab meetings, seminars, and journal clubs, as relevant to my research interests.*
- *Keep up with original research in my field.*
- *Inquire about Professional Development Opportunities within NSoE and across Duke and pursue those opportunities that mesh well with my goals and program expectations.*
- *Be a good citizen, maintaining a safe and clean space, working collegially with everyone, and looking to participate appropriately in the intellectual life and collective governance of my program, school, and wider university.*
- *Discuss policies on work hours, sick leave, and vacation with my advisor.*
- *Discuss policies on authorship and attendance at professional meetings with my advisor.*

Advisor Responsibilities:

- *Know my own teaching style and communicate that style clearly*
- *Be committed to my trainee's education and training as a future member of the scientific/social scientific community.*
- *Be committed to helping plan and direct my trainee's research project, allowing my trainee to take ownership of their research while setting reasonable goals and establishing a timeline for completion.*
- *Provide and seek regular, honest, and respectful feedback on an ongoing basis.*
- *Be committed to improving as a mentor, learning about school and university resources for postdoctoral trainees, and sustaining an inclusive intellectual community and welcoming climate.*
- *Be open and encouraging of my trainee, allowing them to raise concerns and helping find acceptable solutions to problems as they arise.*
- *Be knowledgeable of, and guide my student through, their program's requirements/deadlines.*
- *Advise and assist with my trainee's selection of collaborators and co-mentors.*
- *Lead by example and facilitate my trainee's training in complementary skills needed to be successful scientist or social scientist, such as communication, collaboration, writing, management, and ethical behavior.*
- *Discuss authorship policies, acknowledge my student's scientific contributions to my lab, and work with my student to publish their work in a timely manner prior to or directly after their graduation.*
- *Connect my student to individuals in my networks as appropriate, and facilitate an initial conversation about my student's career goals.*

1. What fellowship requirements do you need to complete, and what is your plan to fulfil them?
2. What future grants and fellowships are you considering applying for, and have you been able to get the guidance you need?
3. What are your primary goals in postdoctoral training?
4. What resources or support will most help with your transition to your postdoctoral fellowship?
5. What actions can be taken to make sure these needs are met?
6. What is important in your mentoring relationship?

7. What features of the lab group, or in the case of social scientists, other intellectual communities, and your relationship with colleagues are most helpful and supportive to your wellbeing?
8. Are there any factors that you are concerned may negatively affect your progress?
9. What help can your advisor or other faculty/staff provide regarding professional development and postdoctoral training?
10. Your success as a trainee is tightly linked to your wellbeing. What are you doing to tend to work-life balance and positive mental health?
11. How do you feel comfortable communicating with your advisor (e.g., email, phone-call, text)?
12. How comfortable do you feel talking to other members of your advisor's lab? What can be done to help facilitate feeling included in the lab?

One of the most important parts of your postdoctoral training is to develop a skill set transferrable beyond graduation. Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses below relative to the where you think a student at your stage should be, **marking your perceived current ability level from weak (1) to strong (3)**. Check the boxes for a couple of skills that you would like to target in the coming year. Ask your advisor how s/he agrees or disagrees with this assessment. An honest self-assessment and discussion will help you set goals for your training.

Research Skills & Scientific or Social Scientific Thinking

1 (weak)

3 (strong)

Target Skills
for this Year

Broad-based knowledge of science or social science

Critical reading of scientific literature

Experimental design, if relevant

Case study/ethnographic design, if relevant.

Statistical analysis and interpolation of data.

Qualitative research methods, if relevant

Creativity and innovative thinking

Understanding of submission/peer review process

Identifying and seeking advice

Time management

Communication

Writing for research proposal or publication

Writing with appropriate grammar and structure

Speaking to a specialist audience

Communicating one-on-one

English fluency

Working with constructive criticism

Translating complex ideas for a general audience

THIS ACTION PLAN IS TO BE DEVELOPED JOINTLY BY THE POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW AND THE MENTOR DURING OR AFTER THE DISCUSSION. Keep it accessible for your yearly IDP meetings and potential monthly check-ins, as determined by the two of you.

1

Communication: What is the best way to set meetings and communicate regularly?

2

Target Skills: What (~1-2) did you identify as important development targets for the coming year? What actions are you planning to take to gain experience?

3

Activities: List any activities, whether sponsored within NSoE, hosted by other Duke units, or provided by entities outside Duke in which you and your mentor agree you should participate to achieve your academic objectives in the coming year.

4

Financial Support: If you know, what will be your financial support for the next year?

5

Additional Actions: In order to aid your success, are there any additional actions that can be initiated or continued by you? By your mentor?

6

Following Up: How often do you and your advisor plan to meet and otherwise interact, as through regular email updates (reports on progress, challenges, and action items)?

7

Deadlines: Please list any known upcoming deadlines/manuscripts/projects that will require your advisor's review or feedback.

8

Other: Is there anything else you would like to discuss with your advisor/mentors at this time?