Individual Development Plan

Being a postdoctoral researcher allows you to gain extensive research experience. However, this is a temporary position without a well-defined career path. Only **1 out of 6** postdoctoral researchers eventually get a professorship and another 1 out of 6 another permanent position in academia. Most of you build a career outside academia (public sector, government, NGO, industry, teaching, ...). By reflecting on your **career and professional development**, we want to increase the chance of realizing your ambitions, whether it be an academic career or not, **within 6 years** of obtaining your doctorate. Your Individual Development Plan (IDP) is an **iterative and dynamic process,** starting with a reflection stage in which you set goals and draw up an action plan. Optimal use of the IDP requires the involvement of your supervisor to **align** visions, **receive** insightful **feedback**, and **discuss support** options (dialogue stage) prior to taking action and tracking your progress (action stage). Since your work context, circumstances, and professional interests may change over time, we suggest you review your objectives and action plan on a regular basis, and **at least once a year**.

The IDP process over a 1-year period

The IDP process includes this template that you and your supervisor can use as a basis for conversation on **three topics**: 1) Research, 2) Career planning and 3) Development of (transferable) skills.

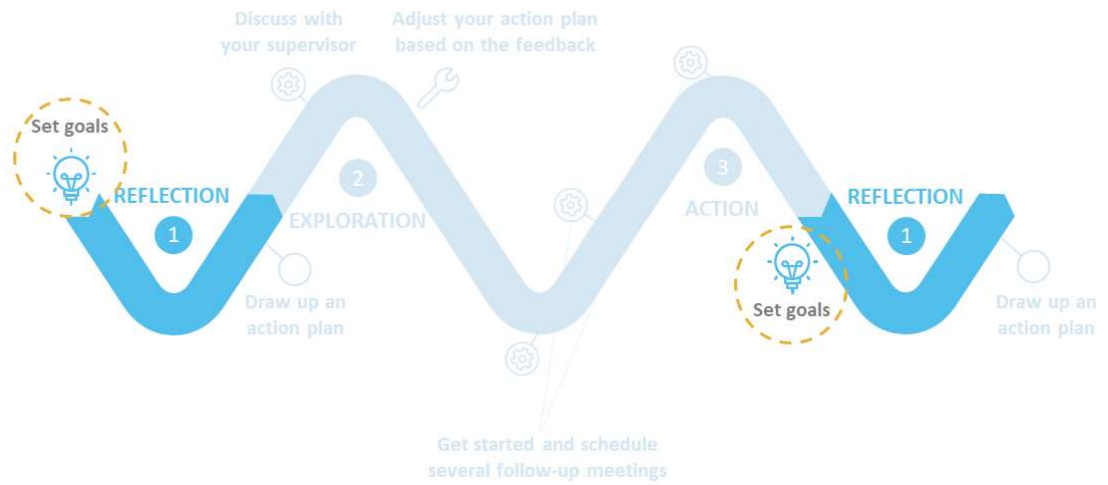More background information on the IDP can be found here.

Name of postdoc: Click and type name	
Name of supervisor: Click and type name	
Date: Click and select the date	

1   Goal setting

1.1 Research

- What are your main research project goals for the upcoming year?
  (in bullet points and keep it brief)

> Click or tap here to enter text.

1.2 Career planning

Taking time to reflect on your career goals on a regular basis helps you focus and be open to opportunities that might arise or to adjustments to your career path that might be necessary.

We challenge you to start thinking about your career plans with an open mind and to consider job opportunities both within and outside academia. Even if your main goal is to secure a professorship (ZAP) position, this reflection exercise encourages you to explore alternative career paths outside academia, so that you can make more informed career choices.

Some **questions** to ask yourself regarding your career.

- What long-term career path would you like to pursue and why?

> Click or tap here to enter text.

- What actions - other than publications - have you taken to prepare for this career path (networking, international/intersectoral experience, teaching/supervision, skills courses, career development courses)?

> Click or tap here to enter text.

- If you want to pursue an academic career, what is the cut-off period after which you plan to start looking for an alternative job? Are you aware of the KU Leuven selection criteria for ZAP staff (e.g. experience abroad, strong track record, ability to obtain funding, evidence of autonomy, etc.)? If not, look here.

> Click or tap here to enter text.

- What **alternative career paths** would/do you consider and are you curious about? Think outside the box and brainstorm freely!

To get inspired, check out these links:
- Testimonials of alumni
- YouReCa Recordings Library
- Option Assessment Toledo module

> List 1 to 3 alternative career paths here.
> *E.g. research manager, an entrepreneur running your own business, bench researcher, senior consultant, policy advisor, editor of a scientific journal, teacher at university college or highschool…*
>
> Click or tap here to enter text.

- What do you still need to **develop** before embarking on these long-term career paths?

Experience, knowledge, achievement

What experience and knowledge should you have acquired? What achievements should you be able to put on a resume?

> List your goals here.
> *E.g. gain teaching experience, establish international collaboration(s), arrange stay abroad for X months, develop business acumen through bootcamp, manage a(n) (inter)national project, lead a team …*
>
> Click or tap here to enter text.

Network & visibility

How can you increase your visibility? Who needs to know you and your ambitions? What network do you need to build or lead?

> List your goals here.
> *E.g. achieve high visibility in your scientific community, follow leading organisations in your field, expand your LinkedIn network on a monthly basis by connecting with people in jobs/organisations that appeal to you, join a(n) (inter)national collaboration or consortium, become an executive member of an organisation (e.g. postdoc society), social networks (X/Twitter, Instagram…).*

> Click or tap here to enter text.

1.3 Development of (transferable) skills

> **Transferable skills** are 'generic' skills that can be transferred from one job to another. These skills not only enhance your work efficiency and effectiveness (professionalism) but can also boost your employability and versatility. Examples of transferable skills include communication, creative problem-solving, time management, analytical thinking, project management etc.

- What skills do you want/need to develop? Consider how you can develop your current abilities to the level required for your long-term career goals. Also, see our skills brochure. Regularly check the Doctoral School's website for a wide range of (mostly) free courses.

- As a LERU university, KU Leuven adopted the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF), an approach to support the researcher's development. See the introduction video.

List your goals here. *Do not only focus on areas for improvement but highlight your strengths as well! Your mentor / supervisor can also share his/her perceptions of your skills/strengths/weaknesses.*			
(Transferable) skill See RDF	Describe the level you want to achieve/progress you'd like to make	Target date	Why? State reasons for developing this skill and for setting this deadline.
E.g. Project planning and delivery	*Be able to select and use a range of project management techniques and tools and develop my own style.*	*June 202x*	*Be capable of managing complex projects; leverage performance within my current Marie Curie program; submit project proposals that demonstrate my autonomy.*
Text	Text	Text	Text
Text	Text	Text	Text
Text	Text	Text	Text

2   Action plan

- **Prioritize actions to support your research goals, skill development and career planning.** Now that you have reflected on your long-term career goals, what are your **short-term** priorities for your postdoctoral training period? Prioritize actions and transform them into *milestones*.

  Tip: if your long-term goal is a career in academia, this tool might help you to prioritize your research activities.

  Write your action plan here. Divide in blocks for example semesters, quarters, months…

R E S E A R C H G O A L S	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Support/resources to be provided by your supervisor: *E.g. share (international) network, support writing grand applications, …* Click or tap here to enter text.

CAREER PLANNING

Click or tap here to enter text.

Support/resources to be provided by your supervisor:
E.g. Give me the opportunity to co-supervise PhD researchers, involve me in / introduce me to activities of the x community, expand network with industry, follow someone in my potential favorite function through job shadowing

Click or tap here to enter text.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

E.g. Follow the course 'exploitation of research - technology & knowledge transfer' to enhance my business acumen; follow the workshop 'stress & resilience' to enhance your wellbeing; follow the course 'project management for postdocs' to become more efficient in writing, planning, realizing, and evaluating a project.

Click or tap here to enter text.

- What additional **general** support do you need from your supervisor? List here.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Comments from supervisor

- What recommendations do you have for the postdoctoral researcher to help her/him achieve her/his goals for the upcoming year? What support can you / would you like to provide? Do you have any other comments?

Click or tap here to enter text.

E.g. hidden talents, suggestions for improvement, recommended courses…