



Universität Hamburg

DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

FACULTY

OF MATHEMATICS, INFORMATICS  
AND NATURAL SCIENCES



*my doctoral degree*

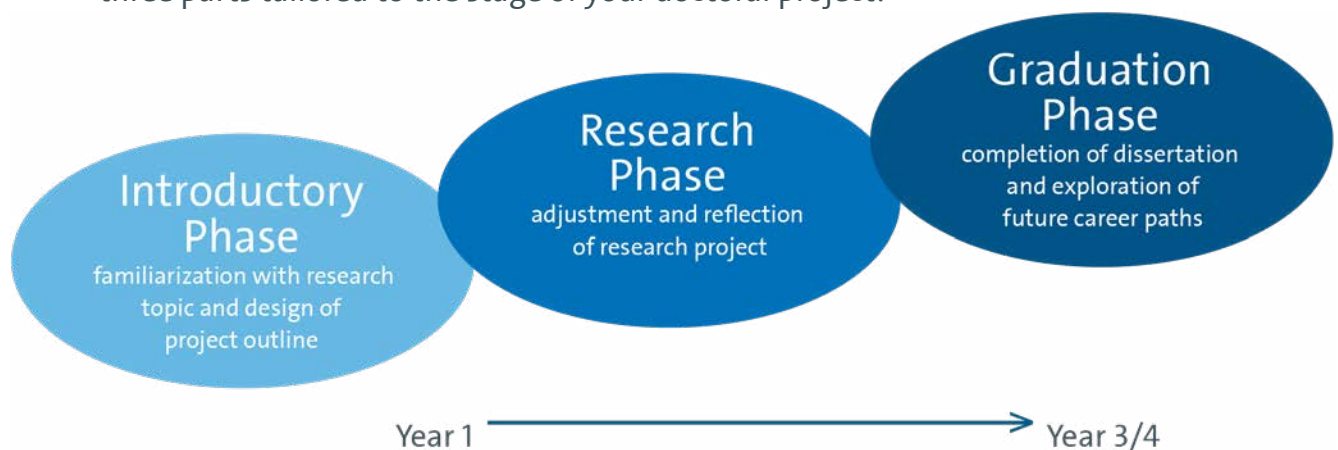
**I**NDIVIDUAL  
**D**EVELOPMENT  
**P**LAN

As a doctoral candidate, you own your education!

Obtaining a doctorate degree requires autonomous and independent research that provides new insights.

The success and the quality of your research depends on your ability to actively receiving training and career guidance. Therefore, we encourage you to regularly analyze and monitor your progress with the help of this Individual Development Plan (IDP) and to share it with your supervisor(s).

The IDP, which is readily available for you in digital form on our website, consists of three parts tailored to the stage of your doctoral project:



Based on your self-assessment, we will be able to provide you with guidance in soft skills and specialized qualification programs. Please, check the given hints in the IDP and make use of the offers proposed by Universität Hamburg (UHH) and others for your personal development. The competences and qualifications that you gather during your doctoral education will open up a wide range of career paths.

Take the chance: record things you have already achieved, receive feedback, and set goals for your future.

---

## HOW CAN I DEVELOP MY IDP?

### 1. Get an IDP template for yourself!

It is easy to get lost in details; however, it is essential that you always keep the bigger picture in mind. Use the questions in the IDP template to specify key points for yourself and to foster a mentoring relationship with your supervisor.

### 2. Meet your supervisor.

You should initiate requests for advice and criticism. Please contact your supervisor(s) and schedule a first meeting for the discussion of your IDP in order to develop a roadmap for your professional development.

### 3. Jointly discuss and refine your personal IDP.

The IDP highlights core issues that will most likely arise during your doctoral training. You may use it to structure and promote honest and open exchange with your supervisor(s).

### 4. Establish clear steps and implement your plan.

The last section of the IDP invites you to specify and note concrete objectives for the upcoming year. Keep this plan at hand for reference and assess your development in comparison to previous achievements.

#### WHY?

#### BENEFITS of the IDP

With the help of the IDP you can

- identify short-term goals to speed up the PhD process
- clarify expectations as well as responsibilities to reduce conflicts
- jumpstart long-term career planning

## YEAR 1: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

### What are central questions and hypotheses for my doctorate?

Set main goals, structure the project into small steps and develop a clear plan how to proceed in the first year.

Keep it simple – note only key points.

☒

### What methods, skills and devices are necessary?

Most projects will develop over time and become more specific. Ask yourself if you have access to the required resources (e.g. lab space, appliances, software, and literature).

☒

### Who may be peers or mentors in the beginning? What is important for me in a mentoring relationship?

Establish your network. It may be helpful to seek advice from others e.g. “how to start...”, “who to contact...”, “where to find...” and try to figure out as well what kind of guidance you expect from your supervisor(s).

☒

### Do I know the rules of Good Scientific Practice (GSP) bylaws of UHH?

Get acquainted with the rules (e.g. clarify how you can properly store your data, who is writing and who owns the data, and where scientific misconduct starts). Talk to your supervisor(s), mentor and other doctoral candidates about it; participate in a course on good scientific practice.

☒

Yes  
No  
Not sure  
Attended a GSP course

---

### How do I finance my doctorate?

Doctoral students in Germany often work part-time as academic assistants or research associates. The different funding schemes have consequences for your personal workload and time line. Keep in mind, research project and doctoral project are not identical!

### Financial support provided through:



Institutional position  
Scholarship  
Third party funded position



Until:

Others (please specify):

### How do I want to publish my doctoral project?



Monography

Cumulative dissertation



Minimum peer review publications:

First authorship:

### What is the timeline for my doctorate?



Start:

Weekly working hours:

Expected end:

### What type of career do I desire?

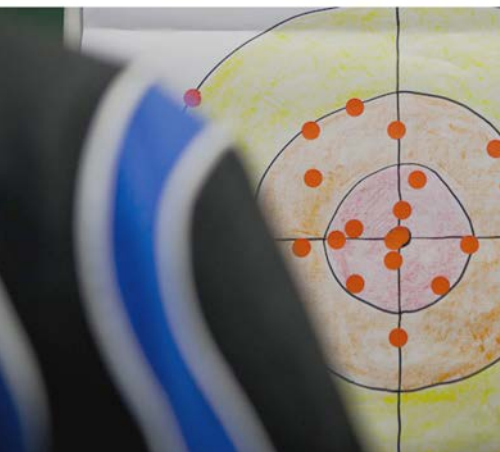
Teaching, consulting, non-academic research, writing, research management, others



## YEAR 1: ACADEMIC SKILLS

You gather relevant competences and skills besides scientific knowledge during your doctoral project.

Reflecting on these regularly is important to identify strengths and developmental needs.



Hit the mark! Set up target skills.

Take an honest look at yourself; compare your skills and qualities in relation with where you think PhD students ready to defend their dissertation should be. Use the given table to evaluate your personal, current ability level from weak (--) to strong (++). You may skip individual lines, if there is no basis for evaluation. Likewise, you can use the blank spaces to add other skills.

It is a challenging task to do this assessment, especially at the beginning of your research studies. Talking to mentors, peers, family and friends about their view, might be helpful. Ask your supervisor as well if she\*he agrees or disagrees with your judgement.

The table lists core competencies of successful scientists based on the so-called Researchers Development Framework (Vitae®). It is just one approach to group the multi-faceted skills and attributes of researchers. In fact, there are many other ways of clustering these competencies and the list is not comprehensive. However, it may give you an idea how broad the expertise is that you will most likely gather during your PhD training!

Visit [www.geventis.uni-hamburg.de](http://www.geventis.uni-hamburg.de) and register for courses intended for doctoral researchers.

	--	-	+	++
<b>Knowledge &amp; intellectual abilities</b>				
Subject knowledge				
Broad scientific knowledge				
Creative and innovative thinking				
Problem solving				
Analytical and critical thinking				

<b>Personal effectiveness</b>				
Identifying career opportunities				
Time management				
Networking				
Responsibility and self-reflection				
Keeping documents up-to-date				
Creating a work-life balance				

<b>Engagement &amp; Impact</b>				
Scientific writing				
Taking constructive criticism				
Presenting research				
Leading and motivating others				
Giving constructive feedback				
Teaching				
Public engagement				

<b>Professionalism &amp; Project Management</b>				
Understanding authorship practise				
Understanding data ownership				
Demonstrating responsible conduct				
Identifying/managing conflict of interest				
Upholding commitments/deadlines				
Project planning and delivery				

## YEAR 1: ACTION PLAN

### 1. Communication

What is the best way to set meetings?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	on request
	once a week	
	every half year	
	once a month/year	

### 2. Target Skills

What skills did you identify as important developmental targets for the coming year? Check your self-assessment and point out at least two targets.

<input type="checkbox"/>	
--------------------------	--

### 3. Activities

What meetings, workshops and conferences do you plan to visit?

<input type="checkbox"/>	
--------------------------	--

Do you plan a research stay during your doctoral project?

What teaching or comparable activities do you plan to do?

What summer schools, soft skill courses and/or seminars do you plan to attend?

What collaborations or internships do you plan to initiate?



#### 4. Funding

Do you need additional financial support for consumables, for your planned activities such as research stays abroad? Are you aware of the many different funding options? Check out the [MINGS](#) website for further information.



#### 5. Additional actions

There are numerous other options you can take to make the most out of your doctorate such as (online) networking, involvement in outreach work, work-shadowing at Universität Hamburg and so on. Start to think about these little extras and list here things you would like to try.



#### 6. Follow-ups

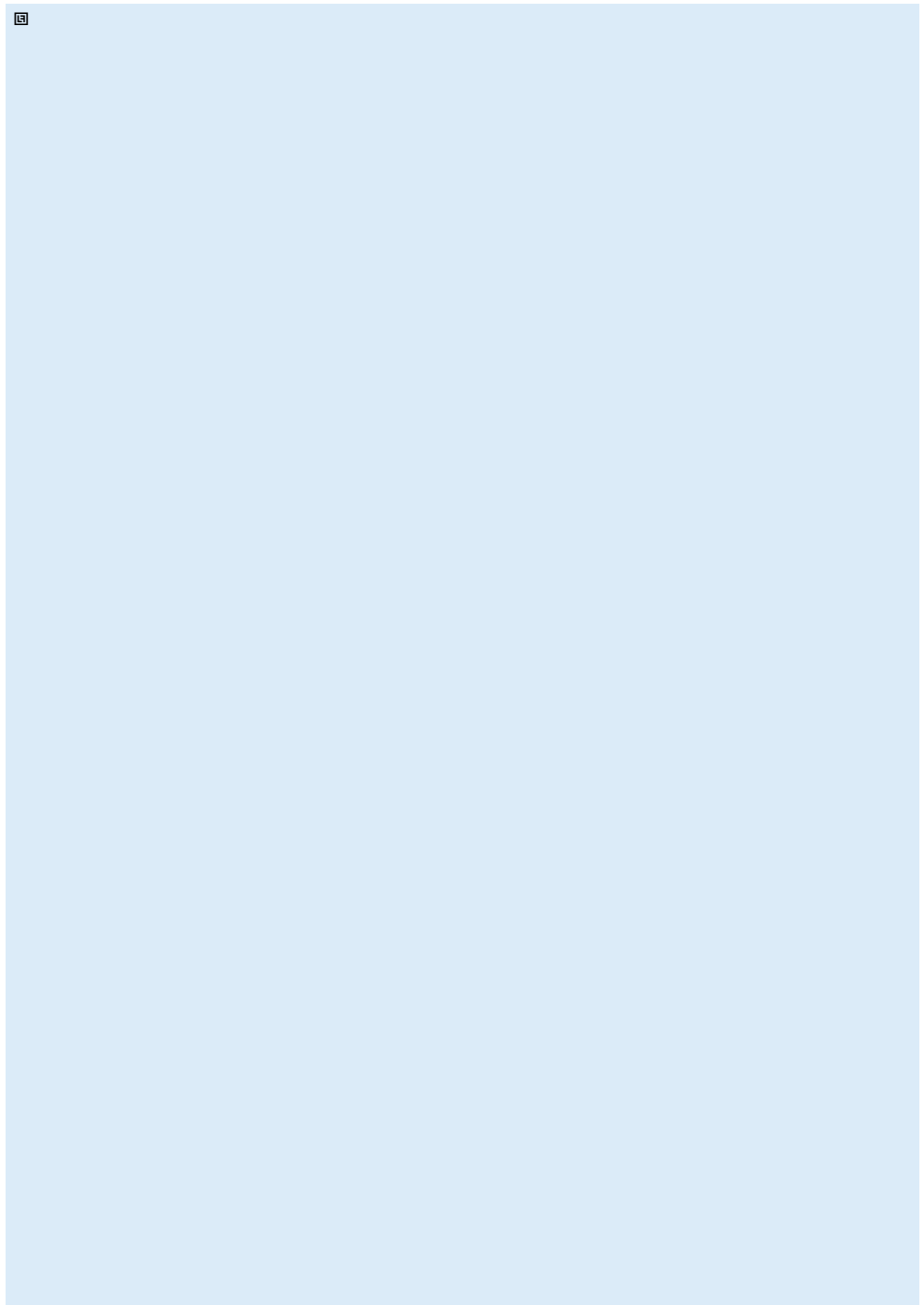
How often do you and your supervisor(s) meet?  
When are you going to discuss the next level IDP?



#### 7. Other

Show your project plan to other doctoral candidates, students or people in the department. Learn to ask for discussion, feedback and constructive criticism.





9

It's time to think about what you have accomplished so far. You are now probably familiar with your specific research topic and quite busy with data collection or analysis. Check again your tasks and aims; this will help you to remain focused despite the distractions of daily work. Compare your personal progress with those goals while updating your IDP.

Such a self-referential feedback process allows you to set up easily new targets and to reach your goals with greater accuracy.

## HOW DO I UPDATE MY IDP?

### 1. Check, compare and reassess your situation!

It is easy to get lost in details; however, it is essential that you keep the bigger picture in mind.

Use the questions in the IDP template to specify key points for yourself and to foster a mentoring relationship with your supervisor(s).

### 2. Meet your supervisor.

You should initiate requests for advice and criticism. Please contact your supervisor(s) and schedule a meeting for the discussion of your IDP in order to continue the roadmap for your professional development.

### 3. Jointly discuss and refine your personal IDP.

The IDP highlights core issues that will most likely arise during your doctoral training.

You may use it to structure and promote honest and open exchange with your supervisor(s).

### 4. Establish clear steps and implement your plan.

The last section of the IDP invites you to specify and note concrete objectives for the upcoming year. Keep this plan at hand for reference and assess your development in comparison to previous achievements.

## YEAR 2: RESEARCH PROGRESS

### What are the central questions and hypotheses for your doctorate?

Check your IDP Year 1 and, if necessary, modify the project plan according to your findings and expertise.



Light blue rectangular area for writing answers to the first question.

### Which goals were successful? Which were not? Why?

Evaluate the status of your work; identify what you can optimize.



Light blue rectangular area for writing answers to the second question.

### Who may be peers or mentors in the research phase?

Think about who may be interested in your research. Contact peers from your field and scientific community.



Light blue rectangular area for writing answers to the third question.

### Which accomplishments of the past year are helpful for your career development?

List here e.g. publications, articles, presentations, teaching and include mentoring of bachelor/master students as well.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- ...

Large light blue rectangular area for writing answers to the fourth question, including a numbered list.

---

**How satisfied are you with your achievements of the past year?**

List and scale 1-10, with 10 being highly satisfied and 1 highly dissatisfied. Think about what is necessary to increase the score of specific points.



Empty light blue rectangular area for response.

**Did you experience unexpected or unusual challenges?**

Describe potential difficulties and actions you may have taken to meet these challenges.



Empty light blue rectangular area for response.

**Are there any factors that you are concerned about or may negatively affect your project?**



Empty light blue rectangular area for response.

## YEAR 2: DEVELOPMENT

### What is your long-term career goal?

What would you like to do in 5-10 years?

Only a minority of PhDs stay in academia. There are plenty of other great career options!



### What type of career do you desire?

Do you have more than one idea?

Try to list plan A, B, C ...



### Have you started to think about steps helping you to reach these goals?

What are essential requirements for e.g. career paths in academia, administration or industry?

List thoughts and questions.



---

### **When will you start to search for a job or apply for a postdoc position?**

It is advisable to explore favourite career options early!



### **What training or skillset is required to approach your plans?**

Are you aware of the workshops and trainings for doctoral candidates at Universität Hamburg or the Hamburg Research Academy?



### **How may your supervisor help you to achieve your goals?**

For example, talk with your supervisor(s) about personal career journeys. Ask for insights and take advantage of experiences.



## YEAR 2: ACADEMIC SKILLS

You gather relevant competencies and skills besides scientific knowledge during your doctoral project.

Reflecting on these regularly is important to identify strengths and developmental needs.

Take an honest look at yourself; compare your skills and qualities in relation to where you think PhD students ready to defend their dissertation should be. Use the given table to evaluate your personal, current ability level from weak (--) to strong (++). You may skip individual lines, if there is no basis for evaluation. Likewise, you can use the blank spaces to add other skills.

The table lists core competencies of successful scientists based on the so-called Researchers Development Framework (Vitae®). It is just one approach to group the multifaceted skills and attributes of researchers. In fact, there are many other ways of clustering these competencies and the list is not comprehensive. However, it may give you an idea how broad the expertise is that you will most likely gather during your PhD training!

Take the chance and use online resources such as [MyIDP](#) to further analyze and strengthen your professional development or check out these career-planning tools:

[www.nationalpostdoc.org/page/CareerPlanning](http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/page/CareerPlanning)

[www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development)



Write it down! Make a plan.



	--	-	+	++
<b>Knowledge &amp; intellectual abilities</b>				
Subject knowledge				
Broad scientific knowledge				
Creative and innovative thinking				
Problem solving				
Analytical and critical thinking				

<b>Personal effectiveness</b>				
Identifying career opportunities				
Time management				
Networking				
Responsibility and self-reflection				
Keeping documents up-to-date				
Creating a work-life balance				

<b>Engagement &amp; Impact</b>				
Scientific writing				
Taking constructive criticism				
Presenting research				
Leading and motivating others				
Giving constructive feedback				
Teaching				
Public engagement				

<b>Professionalism &amp; Project Management</b>				
Understanding authorship practise				
Understanding data ownership				
Demonstrating responsible conduct				
Identifying/managing conflict of interest				
Upholding commitments/deadlines				
Project planning and delivery				

## YEAR 2: ACTION PLAN

### 1. Timeline

When do you plan to finish your doctoral project?



Disputation:  
(Month/Year)

### 2. Target Skills

What skills did you identify as important developmental targets for the coming year? Check your self-assessment table from last year and point out at least two targets.



### 3. Activities

What meetings, workshops and conferences do you plan to visit?



Do you plan a research stay during your doctoral project?

What teaching or comparable activities do you plan to do?

What summer schools, soft skill courses and/or seminars do you plan to attend?

What collaborations or internships do you plan to initiate?

#### 4. Funding

Do you need additional financial support for consumables, for your planned activities such as research stays abroad? Do you need to request for extension of your funding or submit progress reports?



#### 5. Additional actions

There are numerous other options you can take to make the most out of your doctorate such as (online) networking, involvement in outreach work, work-shadowing at Universität Hamburg and so on. Start to think about these little extras and list here things you would like to try.



#### 6. Follow-ups

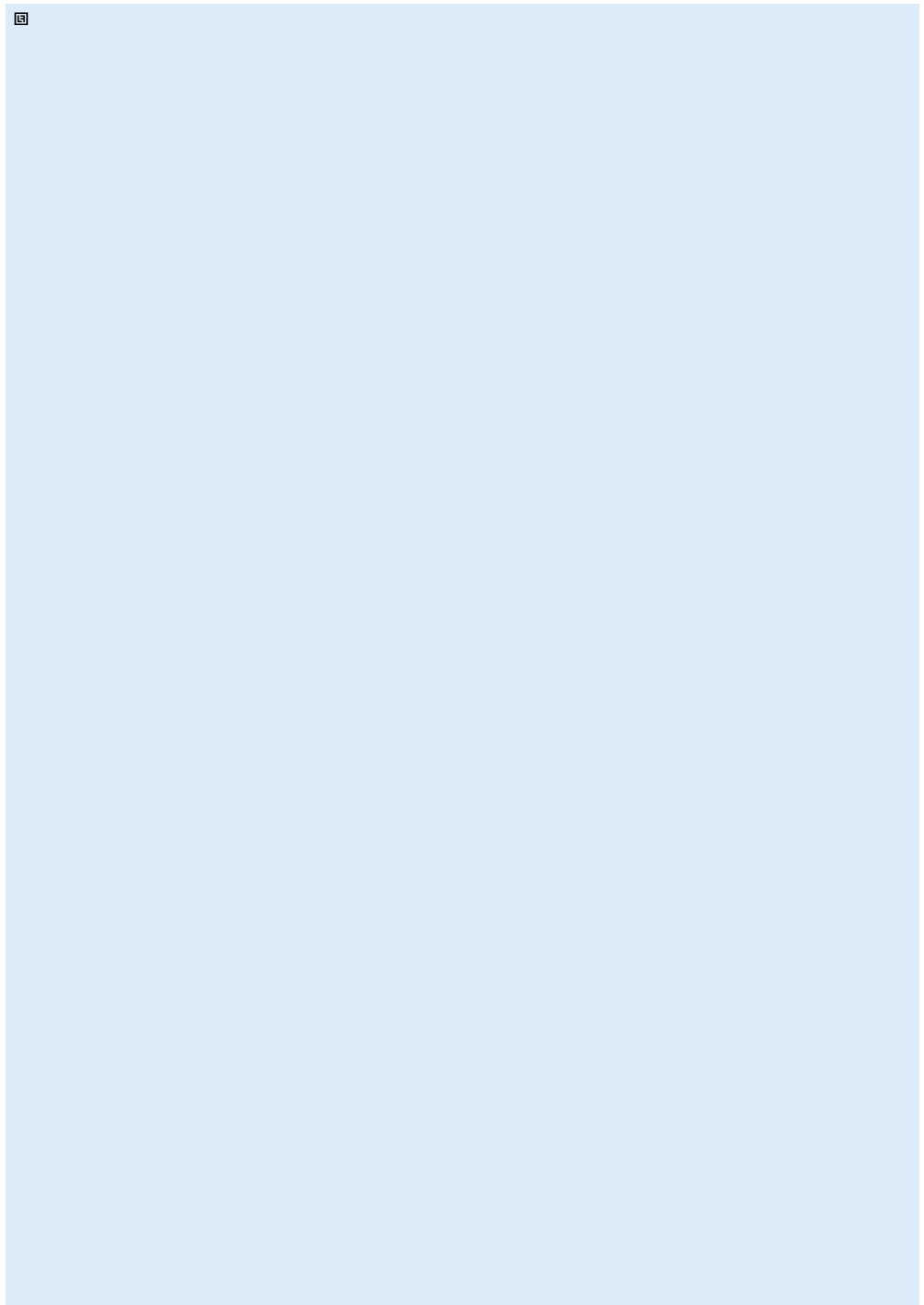
When are you and your supervisor(s) going to discuss your IDP and progress again?



#### 7. Other

Is there anything else you would like to point out?





9

Take the time again, to think about what you have accomplished so far. You are familiar with your specific research topic and you know how your project fits into your research field as a whole. Furthermore, you have probably taken the first successful steps for completing your dissertation. Check again your tasks and aims; this will help you to remain focused. Compare your personal progress with those goals while updating your IDP. Such a self-referential feedback process allows you to set up easily new targets and to reach your goals with greater accuracy. Keep in mind, planning and pursuing your ideas now – is not a waste of time! It is critical for a smooth transition into academia, industry and beyond.

## HOW DO I UPDATE MY IDP?

### 1. Check, compare and reassess your situation!

It is easy to get lost in details; however, it is essential that you keep the bigger picture in mind. Use the questions in the IDP template to specify key points for yourself and to foster a mentoring relationship with your supervisor.

### 2. Meet your supervisor.

You should initiate requests for advice and criticism. Please contact your supervisor(s) and schedule a meeting for the discussion of your IDP in order to continue the roadmap for your professional development.

### 3. Jointly discuss and refine your personal IDP.

The IDP highlights core issues that will most likely arise during your doctoral training. You may use it to structure and promote honest and open exchange with your supervisor(s).

### 4. Establish clear steps and implement your plan.

The last section of the IDP invites you to specify and note concrete objectives for the upcoming year. Keep this plan at hand for reference and assess your development in comparison to previous achievements.

## YEAR 3/4: RESEARCH PROGRESS

### Do you have a precise plan and endpoint for your project?

Try to list all open tasks that are relevant for the finalization of your dissertation. Use deadlines for the individual steps and set as well a final date.



### How satisfied are you with your progress? Do you think you will be able to end the project in time?

Evaluate the status of your science; identify what you can skip or modify.



### Who can be your advisors in the graduation phase?

Share your results/thoughts, promote discussion and open up conversations. All of this will increase the value and impact of your research.



### Which accomplishments of the past year are helpful for your career development?

List here e.g. publications, articles, presentations, teaching and include mentoring of bachelor/master students as well.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- ...

---

**How satisfied are you with your achievements of the past year?**

List and scale 1-10, with 10 being highly satisfied and 1 highly dissatisfied. Think about what is necessary to increase the score of specific points.



**Did you experience unexpected or unusual challenges?**

Describe potential difficulties and actions you may have taken to meet these challenges.



**Are there any factors that you are concerned about or may negatively affect your project?**



## YEAR 3/4: DEVELOPMENT

### What is your long-term career goal?

What would you like to do in 5-10 years?  
Only a minority of PhDs stay in academia. There are plenty of other great career options!



### What type of career do you desire?

Do you have more than one idea?  
Try to list plan A, B, C ...



### Have you started to think about steps helping you to reach these goals?

What are essential requirements for e.g. career paths in academia, administration or industry?  
List thoughts and questions.





---

### **When will you start to search for a job or apply for a postdoc position?**

It is advisable to explore favourite career options early!



### **What training or skillset is required to approach your plans?**

Are you aware of the workshops and trainings for doctoral candidates at Universität Hamburg or the Hamburg Research Academy?



### **How may your supervisor help you to achieve your goals?**

For example, talk with your supervisor(s) about personal career journeys. Ask for insights and take advantage of experiences.



## YEAR 3/4: ACADEMIC SKILLS

You gather relevant competencies and skills besides scientific knowledge during your doctoral project.

Reflecting on these regularly is important to identify strengths and developmental needs.

Take an honest look at yourself; compare your skills and qualities in relation to where you think PhD students ready to defend their dissertation should be. Use the given table to evaluate your personal, current ability level from weak (--) to strong (++). You may skip individual lines, if there is no basis for evaluation. Likewise, you can use the blank spaces to add other skills.

Several facilities in Hamburg offer individual advising sessions, events and workshops for doctoral researchers:

UHH - Department 6: Human Resources

[www.uni-hamburg.de/uhh/organisation/praesidialverwaltung/personal/personalentwicklung/karriereentwicklung](http://www.uni-hamburg.de/uhh/organisation/praesidialverwaltung/personal/personalentwicklung/karriereentwicklung)

UHH – Department 4: Research Management and Funding

[www.uni-hamburg.de/en/forschung/nachwuchs](http://www.uni-hamburg.de/en/forschung/nachwuchs)

UHH – Career Center

[www.uni-hamburg.de/career-center](http://www.uni-hamburg.de/career-center)

HRA – Hamburg Research Academy

[www.hra-hamburg.de/en/promovierende](http://www.hra-hamburg.de/en/promovierende)

UHH – Konfliktprävention

[www.uni-hamburg.de/gleichstellung/gleichstellung/datenbank/organisationsentwicklung/konfliktberatung.html](http://www.uni-hamburg.de/gleichstellung/gleichstellung/datenbank/organisationsentwicklung/konfliktberatung.html)



Inform yourself! Take your chances.

	--	-	+	++
<b>Knowledge &amp; intellectual abilities</b>				
Subject knowledge				
Broad scientific knowledge				
Creative and innovative thinking				
Problem solving				
Analytical and critical thinking				

<b>Personal effectiveness</b>				
Identifying career opportunities				
Time management				
Networking				
Responsibility and self-reflection				
Keeping documents up-to-date				
Creating a work-life balance				

<b>Engagement &amp; Impact</b>				
Scientific writing				
Taking constructive criticism				
Presenting research				
Leading and motivating others				
Giving constructive feedback				
Teaching				
Public engagement				

<b>Professionalism &amp; Project Management</b>				
Understanding authorship practise				
Understanding data ownership				
Demonstrating responsible conduct				
Identifying/managing conflict of interest				
Upholding commitments/deadlines				
Project planning and delivery				

## YEAR 3/4: ACTION PLAN

### 1. Timeline

When do you plan to finish your doctoral project?



Disputation:  
(Month/Year)

### 2. Target Skills

What skills did you identify as important developmental targets for the coming year? Check your self-assessment and point out at least two targets.



### 3. Activities

What meetings, workshops and conferences do you plan to visit?



Do you plan a research stay during your doctoral project?

What teaching or comparable activities do you plan to do?

What summer schools, soft skill courses and/or seminars do you plan to attend?

What collaborations or internships do you plan to initiate?

#### 4. Funding

Do you need additional funding? Is the financial support set until the end of your doctorate?



#### 5. Additional actions

There are numerous other options you can take to make the most out of your doctorate such as e.g. (online) networking, involvement in outreach work, work-shadowing at the Universität Hamburg and so on. Start to think about these little extras and list here things you would like to try.



#### 6. Follow-ups

When are you and your supervisor(s) going to discuss your professional development again?



#### 7. Other

Is there anything else you would like to point out?



Final Year! Fix deadlines and announce them to others!

	January	February	March	April	May	June
1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9
10	10	10	10	10	10	10
11	11	11	11	11	11	11
12	12	12	12	12	12	12
13	13	13	13	13	13	13
14	14	14	14	14	14	14
15	15	15	15	15	15	15
16	16	16	16	16	16	16
17	17	17	17	17	17	17
18	18	18	18	18	18	18
19	19	19	19	19	19	19
20	20	20	20	20	20	20
21	21	21	21	21	21	21
22	22	22	22	22	22	22
23	23	23	23	23	23	23
24	24	24	24	24	24	24
25	25	25	25	25	25	25
26	26	26	26	26	26	26
27	27	27	27	27	27	27
28	28	28	28	28	28	28
29		29	29	29	29	29
30		30	30	30	30	30
31		31		31		

Set dates for specific tasks (e.g. check formality x, get approval of y or write section z).

July	August	September	October	November	December
1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9
10	10	10	10	10	10
11	11	11	11	11	11
12	12	12	12	12	12
13	13	13	13	13	13
14	14	14	14	14	14
15	15	15	15	15	15
16	16	16	16	16	16
17	17	17	17	17	17
18	18	18	18	18	18
19	19	19	19	19	19
20	20	20	20	20	20
21	21	21	21	21	21
22	22	22	22	22	22
23	23	23	23	23	23
24	24	24	24	24	24
25	25	25	25	25	25
26	26	26	26	26	26
27	27	27	27	27	27
28	28	28	28	28	28
29	29	29	29	29	29
30	30	30	30	30	30
31	31		31		31

---

UNIVERSITÄT HAMBURG  
MIN GRADUATE SCHOOL

*“The individual development plan (IDP) is a career planning tool that aims to assist PhD trainees in self-assessing skills, exploring career paths, developing short- and long-term career goals, and creating action plans to achieve those goals.”*

(F1000Research 2018, 7:1132)

*“You can use the IDP to advocate for yourself and that puts you in a stronger position [...]”*

(Nature, Vol. 548, pp. 489-490)

References: This IDP is adapted from resources published by the Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology (FASEB), Science Careers, Stanford Biosciences and the National Postdoctoral Association (USA).

Contact: [probe.min@uni-hamburg.de](mailto:probe.min@uni-hamburg.de)  
Info: [www.promovieren.uni-hamburg.de/EN/MIN](http://www.promovieren.uni-hamburg.de/EN/MIN)

We thank the Joachim Herz Foundation for financial support.  
The project was realized in cooperation with the Hamburg Research Academy and the communication office of the MIN Faculty.



[www.min.uni-hamburg.de/en/  
min-graduierenschule](http://www.min.uni-hamburg.de/en/min-graduierenschule)

