



**Carleton**  
UNIVERSITY

Faculty of  
Graduate and  
Postdoctoral Affairs

# cuIDP

## An Individual Development Plan for Graduate Students



Faculty of Graduate and  
Postdoctoral Affairs  
Carleton University  
2020

[carleton.ca/gradpd](http://carleton.ca/gradpd)

# Introduction

## Why create an IDP?

Today's job market is challenging. You need a clear idea of the type of career you want and a strategy for success. Engaging in professional development activities while you are still in graduate school can give you an invaluable head-start in the job market and bring added focus and direction to your academic work.

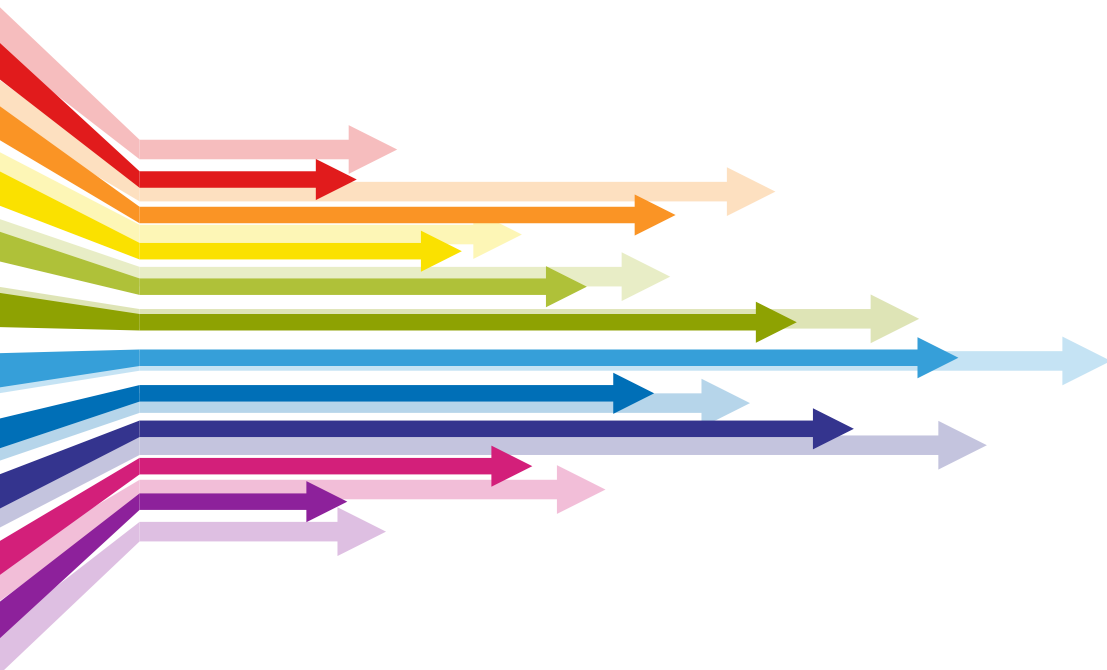
As early as possible in your program, you should set aside some time to evaluate and document your existing skills and set realistic short-term and long-term professional goals. One way to do this is through the creation of an Individual Development Plan (IDP).

An IDP is a document that describes your existing professional skills and qualifications, your career aspirations, and your professional development plan for the next year. You can share your IDP with others, or you can keep it private.

Your IDP should answer three questions regarding your professional development journey: 1) Who are you? 2) Where are you going? 3) How will you get there? Revisit your IDP every year and your career narrative will take shape.

► **If you are ready to start, then proceed to Question 1.**

Please note: as you go along, be sure to consult the "Examples and Ideas" section at the end, as it contains helpful information on how to complete your IDP.



# Question 1: Who are you?

## Self-assessment

You are the central character in your career narrative. So who are you? To answer this question, you will need to reflect on your interests, your values, and the professional skills you have acquired so far.

Self-assessment involves looking inward in order to establish future goals. A strong sense of identity and purpose is the engine that can propel your career, determining the professional development choices you make.

As the first step in your self-assessment, write a paragraph in the text box below that answers the question, “Who are you?” This is a big question, and you may wish to structure your answer as a series of responses to smaller questions, such as:

- What program are you enrolled in, and what is/are your area(s) of special interest?
- How would you describe your personal values and beliefs?
- What are some of your interests outside of school? Do you have any hobbies that you are passionate about?
- What would your ideal job be like? How would you describe your ideal work environment?
- What are your criteria for “success” and “happiness”?
- Is there a particular field of work that you find interesting?

If you are having trouble with your self-assessment paragraph, you may wish to consult the [Career Values Checklist](#) on the Career Services website. I also highly recommend visiting Carleton’s Career Services for drop-in coaching or consulting or to schedule an appointment for career counselling.

As the second step in your self-assessment, list your academic and transferable skills in the section further down the page.

## Your self-assessment paragraph:

Write a paragraph in this text box that answers the question, "Who are you?"



## Academic skills

Create a bullet list showing each of your existing academic skills, along with evidence for these skills.

Examples:

- Citation management: attended Library's Citation Management workshop
- Conference presentation: presented paper at the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities

Stuck? Check out the Examples and Ideas section at the end of this collection for a list of academic skills.

## Transferable skills

Create a bullet list showing each of your existing transferable skills, along with evidence for these skills.

Examples:

- Project management: completed two-day Mitacs course, "Project Management I," last winter
- Sales: spent last summer working at a retail clothing store

Stuck? Check out the Examples and Ideas section at the end of this collection for a list of transferable skills.

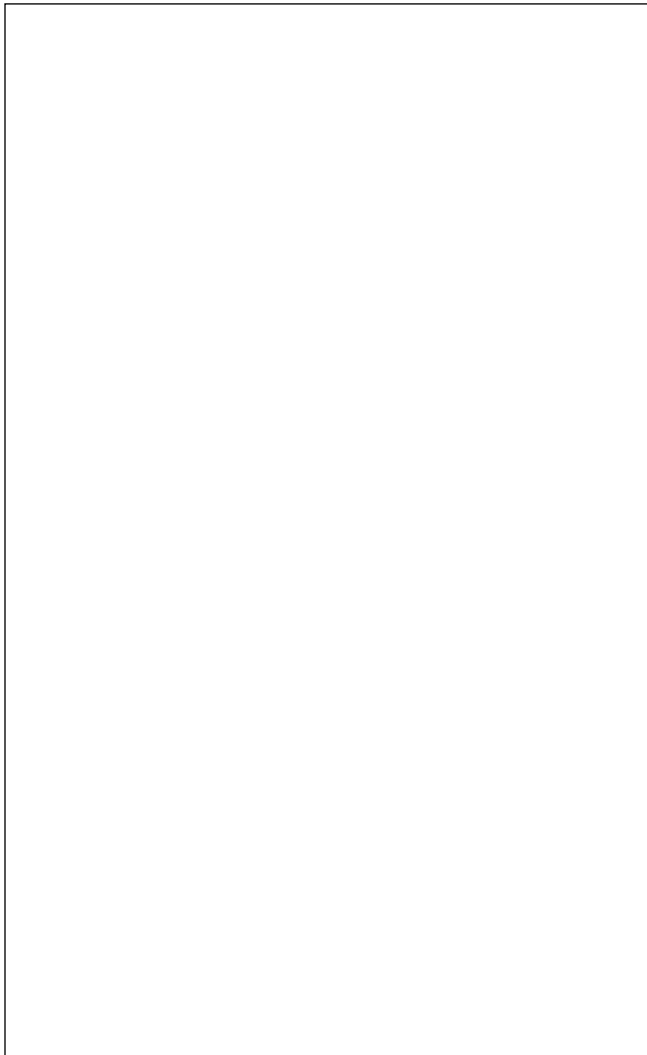
# Question 2: Where are you going?

## Occupational field 1

Choose an occupational field that interests you. If no fields come to mind, you may need to engage in some exploration of existing fields of employment. Once you have chosen a field, research it online to determine the skills and credentials required and the current and forecasted job market conditions. Then write a brief paragraph or series of point-form notes describing your findings.

At least one of your chosen two fields for this section of your IDP should be non-academic.

Stuck? Check out the Examples and Ideas section at the end.

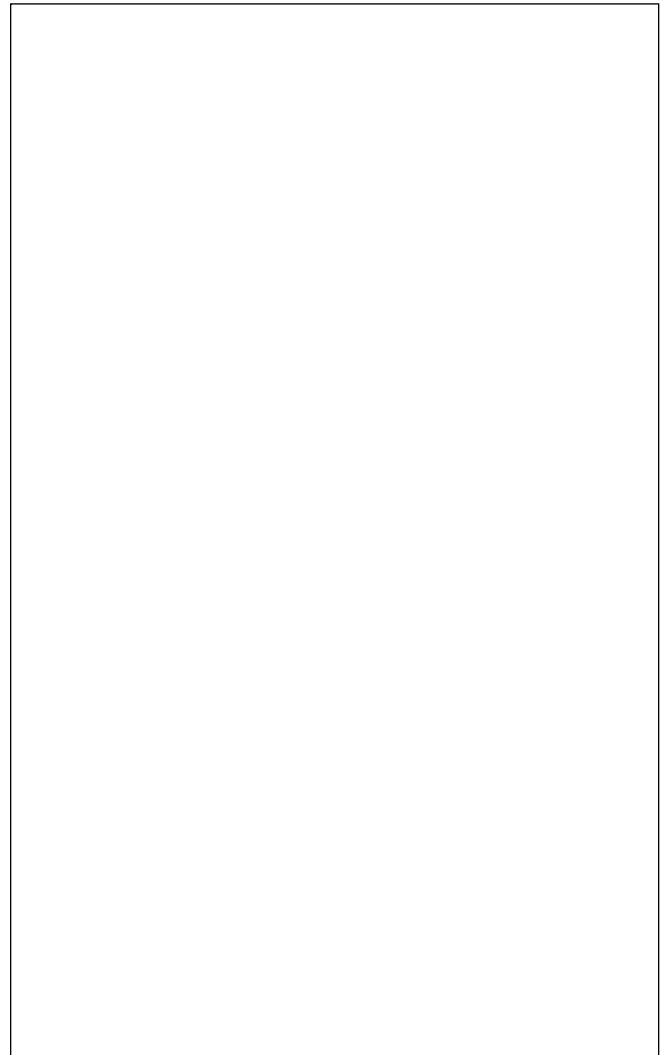


## Occupational field 2

Choose an occupational field that interests you. If no fields come to mind, you may need to engage in some exploration of existing fields of employment. Once you have chosen a field, research it online to determine the skills and credentials required and the current and forecasted job market conditions. Then write a brief paragraph or series of point-form notes describing your findings.

At least one of your chosen two fields for this section of your IDP should be non-academic.

Stuck? Check out the Examples and Ideas section at the end.



# Question 3: How will you get there?

## One-year action plan, academic

Use the text box below this one to create a bullet list documenting your academic professional development goals for the next year. Determine a skill to improve, and then specify a concrete action that will help you develop that skill. Be realistic about what you can accomplish, and remember that setting even two or three professional development goals per year is far better than ignoring your professional development entirely.

Keep in mind that the courses in your program can be a source of professional development opportunities. Think about the skills you will be acquiring in your required courses. When you are choosing electives, consider whether these courses might provide you with learning opportunities that could help you in the future. Many academic job ads call for well-rounded candidates with multiple areas of expertise. Find out what academic employers are looking for, and plan accordingly.

Examples:

- job market awareness: review the Canadian academic job listings at [University Affairs](#) and/or [AcademicWork.ca](#) at least once per week
- facilitating discussion groups: attend the EDC Teaching Skills Workshops “Incorporating Activities in Discussion Groups” and “Art of Conversation: Facilitating a Discussion Group,” both advertised on [Grad Navigate](#)

Stuck? Check out the Examples and Ideas section at the end.

## One-year action plan, non-academic

Use the text box below this one to create a bullet list documenting your non-academic professional development goals for the next year. Determine a skill to improve, and then specify a concrete action that will help you develop that skill. Be realistic about what you can accomplish, and remember that setting even two or three professional development goals per year is far better than ignoring your professional development entirely.

Keep in mind that the courses in your program can be a source of professional development opportunities. Think about the skills you will be acquiring in your required courses. When you are choosing electives, consider whether these courses might provide you with new transferable skills. Do you have a language requirement in your program? Learning a second language can expand your range of career opportunities, especially if you are willing to commit to a long-term study plan.

Examples:

- Networking: attend Mitacs Step workshop “Networking Skills” advertised on [Grad Navigate](#)
- Entrepreneurship: take an online course on Entrepreneurship at [LinkedIn Learning](#)

Stuck? Check out the Examples and Ideas section at the end.



# Examples and Ideas

## Question 1: Who Are you?

### Examples of academic skills

- academic blogging
- academic social media
- avoiding procrastination
- book review writing
- citation management
- citation methods
- classroom management
- conference panel organization
- conferencing technology (Skype, Big Blue Button)
- copyright
- cultural inclusion/sensitivity
- CV creation/management
- editing
- essay writing
- evaluation (marking)
- facilitating discussion groups
- foreign language skills
- grammar knowledge and practice
- grant proposal writing
- grant/funding/scholarship awareness
- interviewing
- job interview preparedness
- journal prestige awareness
- lab technology
- learning management systems (Moodle)
- notetaking
- peer review for journals
- poster board creation and presentation
- providing feedback
- public speaking
- research awareness/networking
- research ethics
- research technology
- responding to criticism
- statistics
- teaching and pedagogy
- teaching portfolio creation
- thesis/dissertation structure and formatting
- using research databases

For general guidance, you may wish to consult the [skills section](#) of the Government of Canada's Skills and Competencies Taxonomy, which is part of the [National Occupation Classification](#) (NOC).

### Examples of transferable skills

- accounting
- communication (oral and written)
- computer programming
- conflict resolution
- creativity
- delegation
- data management
- desktop publishing
- editing
- entrepreneurship
- French/English language skills
- foreign language skills
- fundraising
- graphic design
- interacting with media
- lab skills
- leadership
- letter or email writing
- LinkedIn profile creation
- marketing
- meeting deadlines
- motivation
- multitasking
- negotiation
- networking
- personal finance
- prioritization
- problem solving
- public speaking
- research
- resume creation
- sales
- self-presentation
- software (Excel, Photoshop, etc.)
- stress management
- security clearance
- teamwork
- time management
- web design

You may also find some inspiration and guidance in The Conference Board of Canada's [Employability Skills 2000+](#) list of skills, or Carleton University Career Services' [Your Degree, Your Future](#) list of skills by degree.

## Question 2: Where are you going?

To get an idea of the fields and job titles in today's workforce, you may wish to consult The Government of Canada's [National Occupational Classification](#) (NOC) and especially the [Hierarchy and Structure section](#). Just remember: keep an open mind, and don't judge a position by its title! Do some digging. Find out where graduates from your program are working. Look at the websites of the major companies or organizations in your area to see the range of positions in each. There are types of employment out there that few people are aware of, and which can only be found by doing some in-depth research.

If you don't know where to start, check out the [Job Search and Networking](#) page on Carleton's [Career Services website](#).

Try to think *horizontally*, focusing on occupational fields that extend across various sectors. Here are some examples of fields you might want to consider:

- Advocacy/non-profit
- Communications
- Educational development
- Entrepreneurship
- Market research
- Policy analysis
- Project management
- Research administration

Once you have determined your two occupational fields, look up job postings in those fields and take note of the credentials and skills that employers are looking for. Job databases are of limited value, so visit the sites of particular organizations to look for employment opportunities. Take careful note of any special requirements (bilingualism requirements, security clearances, etc.). If you can find blogs by people employed in those fields, they can sometimes provide valuable "insider" information. Consider contacting people working in these fields to arrange informational interviews.



## Question 3: How will you get there?

Here are just some of the resources that are available to you at Carleton University:

### Career Services

Visit Carleton University's Career Services to take advantage of the following services: resume and cover letter reviews; networking support; interview prep and mock interviews; LinkedIn profile reviews; CV and personal statement reviews; drop-in career coaching; career counselling

### Grad Navigate

Carleton offers a range of professional development workshops that are listed on our Grad Navigate website. All grad students are welcome to attend these workshops. *All workshops on Grad Navigate also count toward paid pedagogical training hours for TAs if completed during a term when you are working as a TA.*

Workshops are available under the following categories: Research and Writing. Professional Skills development, Career Planning, Teaching Skills, Wellness

### Online Professional Development Courses

Carleton University graduate students can take online courses through both Mitacs Training and LinkedIn Learning. *Please note that completion of online courses will not be credited toward TA training hours.*

### LinkedIn Learning

This service is free for Carleton students and offers a huge selection of online courses.

### Three Minute Thesis (3MT<sup>®</sup>) competition

The 3MT is a celebration of graduate student research that challenges graduate students to communicate the key concepts of their research in a compelling presentation of three minutes or less. Participation in the 3MT allows you to develop skills in communication and public speaking, and can also help focus your academic research. Winners receive cash prizes and the opportunity to represent Carleton at the provincial 3MT competition.

## One-year action plan examples

### Academic:

- academic social media: sign up for Twitter and start following academic Twitter feeds
- copyright: attend copyright workshop facilitated by the Library and the EDC
- CV creation/management: research how to craft a CV and find example CVs
- facilitating discussion groups: attend the EDC Teaching Skills Workshops "Incorporating Activities in Discussion Groups" and "Art of Conversation: Facilitating a Discussion Group," both advertised on [Grad Navigate](#)
- grant/funding/scholarship awareness: check the [Research Professional](#) search engine (available to Carleton students) regularly for funding opportunities

- job interview preparedness: research the required elements of an academic job application. Attend any open job talks in department.
- job market awareness: review the Canadian academic job listings at [University Affairs](#) and/or [AcademicWork.ca](#) at least once per week
- journal prestige awareness: research the prominent peer-reviewed journals in discipline and create a ranked list of the top five according their prestige
- public speaking (non-specialist audience): sign up for the [Three Minute Thesis \(3MT\)](#) competition
- research awareness/networking: keep an eye on departmental emails and [Grad Link](#) for opportunities, and attend research events on campus (even if outside home department)
- research technology: attend one of the Library's "Introduction to NVivo 11" workshops, advertised through [Grad Navigate](#) (NVivo is a powerful tool for qualitative research that is free or almost-free for Carleton students)
- teaching skills: attend the EDC's "Developing a Framework for Teaching" workshop, advertised through [Grad Navigate](#)

## Non-academic:

- communication (verbal): sign up for the [Three Minute Thesis](#) competition
- data management: attend the Library's "Data Management with Microsoft Excel" workshop, advertised through [Grad Navigate](#)
- entrepreneurship: take an online course on entrepreneurship from [LinkedIn Learning](#)
- interacting with media: attend one of the Department of University Communication's "Media Training" workshops, advertised through [Grad Navigate](#)
- LinkedIn profile creation: visit [Career Services](#) for drop-in career coaching for LinkedIn profile review
- motivation: read at least two books on career development from the [Library catalogue](#). There are many new books at the Library that are available for students to read online, through computers on campus or through the Carleton proxy server.
- resume creation: take the online course on writing a resume from [LinkedIn Learning](#) and visit [Career Services](#) for drop-in career coaching to review resume
- security clearance: acquire an understanding of the levels of security clearance required for jobs in the federal government, the military, and services like CSIS
- self-presentation: attend 1-day Mitacs workshop on "Career Professionalism," advertised through [Grad Navigate](#)



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[carleton.ca/gradpd](http://carleton.ca/gradpd)