

Professional Development Plan – PhD

Session, 2 hours

This session introduces Personal Development Planning (PDP), a structured and supported process. Individuals:

- Reflect on their own learning, performance and achievements.
- Plan for their personal, educational and career development.

For doctoral students, the goal is to complete the PhD and progress towards research leadership as an independent researcher. This planning process reinforces students' capacity to review, plan and take responsibility for their learning and career advancement. It requires rigorous and frank assessment of one's strengths and weaknesses, underpinned by the agenda of lifelong learning and development.

Download this [curriculum](#) in full.

Outcomes

By the end of the session, students can:

- Identify their medium-term ambitions, including completion of the PhD.
- Plan steps towards achieving these ambitions.
- Use a template to develop their personal development plans.

Preparation

As the facilitator, summarise your own career path as a short introduction (Step 1). You might want to consult other references, such as:

- Verlejs, J. 2015. [Shape your career – design your professional development plan](#): rationale and workshop template. Rutgers.
- Das, D. [An Assignment on Personal and Professional Development](#).
- Hulme, C., Lisewski, B. (2010). [Support structures for facilitators of student personal development planning](#): lessons from two departmental case studies. Journal of Further and Higher Education, 34:2, 137-148, DOI: 10.1080/03098771003695429.
- Clegg, S., Bradley, S. (2006) [Models of Personal Development Planning](#): practice and processes, British Educational Research Journal, 32:1, 57-76, DOI: 10.1080/01411920500402003.

Review available options for PDP templates (Step 2) and share one or more with your students. Options include:

- [Interactive CPD Toolkit](#): A Step-by-Step Guide to Progress your Career and Record your Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Jobs.ac.uk2010).
- [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#) for Graduate PhD Students at UD. University of Delaware.
- Santosh, P et al. (2013). [Personal development plans – Practical pitfalls](#). Trends in Anaesthesia and Critical Care 3(4):220–223, DOI:10.1016/j.tacc.2013.04.003.

Steps

Time	Step	Who
20 minutes	1. Introduce the PDP	Facilitator
40 minutes	2. Fill in the template	Individuals
20 minutes	3. Describe and discuss PDPs	Students in pairs
20 minutes	4. Present the partner's ambitions	Students in plenary
20 minutes	5. Introduce the concept of a mentor	Facilitator

Step 1. Introduce the PDP

20 minutes

Present a summary of your own career path in the format of a PDP to introduce the concept. Keep it brief and allow time for questions.

Step 2. Fill in the template

40 minutes

Each student defines their own long-term ambitions and the knowledge and experience needed to achieve these ambitions.

Step 3. Describe and discuss PDPs

20 minutes

In pairs, each student takes a turn to describe their ambitions to their partner. Ask them to listen attentively and critically.

Step 4. Present the partner's ambitions

20 minutes

Back in the full group, each student gives a summary and critical analysis of their partner's ambitions.

Step 5. Introduce the concept of a mentor

20 minutes

How can a mentor help their mentee to develop? Give a short introduction to the concept of a mentor and invite questions and discussion. Afterwards, and where appropriate, contact potential mentors or encourage students to do so. Remind students to review their PDPs regularly over the course of their PhD journey.