**Postdoctoral professional career development:**

**Self-assessment questionnaire**

This document is intended specifically for Postdocs. It is meant to facilitate an annual assessment of your current position, aid reflection on your accomplishments and help you identify what is required for progress towards your professional goals. It is based on the concept of an  ”*Individual Development Plan” (IDP*).[[1]](#footnote-2)

The eight main points in this document are meant to aid you in your self-assessment. For each point, different types of questions guide you through the process of reflection. It is not necessary to answer all the questions nor to fill every box (please refer to the document “guidelines and useful resources” for additional information on each area). As you fill out this document, keep in mind that it is personal and is meant to support the process (the subsequent private consultation and sharing of the experience), and it is informal (it will not be transmitted to the HR department nor to the Dean’s office).

This self-assessment and development plan should aid:

* evaluation of your current competencies;
* definition of your project and the degree of commitment necessary to be successful;
* awareness of the requisite competencies to develop for the achievement of your objectives;
* definition of how to improve and develop these competencies in order to achieve your goals;
* receive honest feedback in order to formulate realistic goals.

After you finish your self-assessment, it is recommended to discuss it with a resource person such as a department head, a project principal applicant, a professor, or a mentor. This is an effective way to receive feedback on your reflections and to define your professional development plan. To initiate this process, send your resource person a partial or complete version of this document in addition to your CV.

*During your career, there will always be aspects which are beyond your control (e.g., institutional issues, people involved in the recruitment process). The goal of this questionnaire is to help you examine personal attributes that are within your control.*

**Preliminary general questions**

Before you start asking specific questions, consider your general objectives in filling out this questionnaire:

* Define your working goals for the coming year, through the analysis of your current position?
* Think about how to evolve in your academic career?
* Assess your acquired competencies in terms of integrating into non-academic job markets?

1. **Publication**

* Do you feel confident in your writing skills? Did you receive any specific recommendations or critical feedback? Have you considered seeking additional training?
* What papers, articles, book chapters, or books did you write last year? Were they submitted, approved or published? Were you solicited to write them?
* What are your publication strategies (e.g., to be read, to vary the types of publication, publishing related to your preferred topics, consideration of national or international impacts, publishing exclusively in well-known journals or other mediums)?
* Have you published any articles for a non-scientific audience such as popular science publications?
* Have you been asked to review, analyze or critique the publications or research of your peers?
* What documents, articles, or books are you planning to write or contribute to this year?

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| *Accomplishments*  *Developed competencies* | *Areas I’d like to improve*  *Goals for the following year*  *Plan for achievement* |
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| *Questions and issues to discuss with my reference person* | |
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**2**. **Oral communication /Conferences**

* Have you participated in any conferences/seminars?
* Are you aware of any existing financial support opportunities for participation in such events?
* Have you ever been invited to present at any conferences/seminars? What type of presentation have you made? (e.g. poster, oral communication, workshop)
* What kind of feedback did you receive on the content of your presentation and your communication skills? Did you attend any courses to improve your public speaking skills or receive personal advice?
* Did you give a presentation in front of a large audience? (e.g. “Mystères de l’UNIL”)
* Are you planning to take part in any conferences/seminars this year?

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1. **Research project proposals (fundraising or fellowships)**

* Did you apply for fellowships or research grants? Were they funded (including for your current position)?
* Are you aware of current financial support opportunities for your research?
* If your application was rejected, are you planning to re-apply or to present your project to other institutions?
* Are you planning to submit a research project this year?

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**4. Teaching and supervision**

* What have you taught this year (e.g., courses, seminars, practical work)?
* Have you been invited to teach at other Swiss or foreign educational institutions?
* Do you feel adequately prepared to be a teacher?
* What feedback have you received, formal or informal, regarding the content of your course and your teaching skills?
* Would you like more, or less teaching hours, or to teach other subjects?
* Did you supervise students or PhD candidates? What feedback have you received on the quality of your supervision?
* Do you regularly update your teaching portfolio (e.g., course plans, pedagogical methodologies, reflect on student assessments)?

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1. **Knowledge and competencies**

* From subject concept to data analysis, how capable are you of conducting independent research  (scientific autonomy)?
* What are your abilities for motivating and inspiring your team? How capable are you of outlining a strategic vision? What are your team leadership competencies?
* What are your management competencies? How do you manage projects, people, and budgets? (project management)
* How knowledgeable are you on intellectual property issues such as copyrights, data sharing, or plagiarism?
* How knowledgeable are you on scientific ethics (e.g. human or animal research)?
* What other useful academic, or non-academic competencies have you developed at your current position?

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1. **Collaboration and networking**

* How satisfied are you in your relationships with colleagues and superiors at work?
* Do you receive comments and feedback about your work? Do you feel you receive the necessary support and recommendations?
* Do you collaborate or interact with colleagues from UNIL or other institutions (e.g., co-teaching, research projects, organize workshops)?
* Have you had the opportunity to meet other researchers who may be interested in your research and/or professional experience?
* Have you communicated your career and research interests to academics or non-academics who may be able to offer you career opportunities?
* With the goal of creating a new project or obtaining new skills, are there people your supervisor could help you contact?

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1. **Institutional, scientific and social involvement**

* Are you knowledgeable about the political situation and the degree to which it is effective within your institution and faculty?
* How are you involved at your institution? Are you a member of any scientific commissions (e.g nomination committee) or institutional committees (e.g. associations, advisory commissions)?
* Scientific involvement: are you a member of any associations or scientific communities within your field?
* Social involvement: How are you linked with your field in terms of knowledge sharing, cooperation with non-academic institutions or enterprises? Can you put your research into practice in a way that impacts the community at large?
* Recognition: have you been nominated, or received awards for your research?
* What are you linguistic skills? Is language a barrier to your institutional integration?

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**8. Careers: mid-term and long-term objectives**

* Do you have any scientific mobility projects? Do you encounter any obstacles related to mobility?
* Does your current position allow you a balance between your private and professional life?
* What are your main goals and priorities for the coming year?
* What are your long-term career goals (what kind of work would you like to do)? What is your plan to achieve these goals?
* What competencies, personal and professional, do you possess that give you an advantage? (think also about your non-academic activities)
* If your supervisor is not able to assist you in the achievement of your goals, who else may be able to help you?
* What other obstacles might you encounter? Do you have an alternative to your initial plan?
* Is your CV (academic and non-academic) ready to be sent to potential employers? If necessary, who could you ask for help?
* Are you ready for a job interview?

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| *My reflections* |
| *Questions and issues to discuss with my reference person* |
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**9. How to choose a person for your self-assessment discussion**

Choose three people with whom you would like to discuss your responses to the preceding questionnaire.

To choose who you would like to discuss your self-assessment with, consider the type of feedback you are looking for. For feedback primarily concerning your current position, you can request your supervisor or the head of your project. To discuss your broader range of career opportunities, contact people with whom you have a good relationship. You may talk to the same person, or look to non-academics, people outside of your field, or other people you respect. If you don’t know who you would like to talk to, you can ask the HR person responsible for your faculty (<http://www.unil.ch/srh>) or contact the “Dicastère Relève académique”/”Dicastère Recherche” who can help you find the best person for your needs

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Contact the first person from your list, and explain your needs, providing any applicable documents.

In case of refusal, an unsatisfactory meeting outcome, or if you would like a different opinion, proceed to the next name on your list.

1. The questionnaire is based on the following resources: <http://postdocs.usc.edu/mentoring/idp/> - <http://www.faseb.org/portals/2/pdfs/opa/idp.pdf> - <http://myidp.sciencecareers.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)