

MENTORING SPARK

Quick ideas to light up your doctoral conversations.

► LIFELONG LEARNING



SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Students often struggle with knowing where their skills are in terms of **novice**, **intermediate**, and **expert** levels; their exposure to date may cause them to over-assess their skills. When students overestimate their skill level, it can be stressful to hear that more depth of knowledge, research, analysis, etcetera, is needed. It can also cause conflict between a student and advisor if the way the information is communicated is such that each person is “talking past” the other person.

Using tools such as an Individual Development Plan (IDP) and growth goals can help students accurately assess their knowledge and skills, and document a plan for growth opportunities to aid in their lifelong learning.



LEVEL 1: TAKING STOCK

LEVEL 2: GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

LEVEL 3: FLIPPING THE SCRIPT



FACULTY FYI

This **Spark** is focused on key competency areas for a student to improve while a graduate student, and on areas to strengthen after graduation. The competency areas will vary for every student. This Spark introduces the Individual Development Plan (IDP) as a method to track growth opportunities.

As students graduate and begin (or continue) to build their reputation as an expert, regardless of it being within higher education, industry, or some other sector, it is a reflection on the advisor, and advancing knowledge in their area of expertise. Thus, it is to the advisor's advantage to help students be equipped for success regarding their lifelong learning and growth skills.



ACTIONS FOR FACULTY

- Revisit the competency wheel from **Level 1** if necessary. Explain how those skills, and improving them, can translate into an Individual Development Plan (IDP).
- Discuss the difference between a competency wheel and what the department's or research group's standard IDP entails. Discuss how they interrelate. (If a standard IDP does not exist, see the exercises below.)
- Work with students on what novice, intermediate, and expert looks like for each competency wheel area they developed during the first **Spark**. Discuss any gaps between the student's perception and yours.

Consider the potential value of having an IDP and growth goals.

A RESOURCE FROM:



Use this QR code to access this and other *Mentoring Spark* tip sheets:



CONTINUED ...



DIGGING DEEPER

- **Growth Goals:**
 - Long-term goals for one to three years out. They tend to move from **learner** to **independent researcher**.
- **Individual Development Plan (IDP):**
 - Includes goals and areas to improve over the next one to three years.
 - Lists potential educational courses to take as part of the development.
 - May assess level of proficiency (*novice, intermediate, expert*) for key competency areas.
- **Reflection as a Tool:**
 - Visit your IDP on a regular basis.
 - Take stock of what is in your IDP. Is it satisfactory for all of your expectations?

Please visit the RDI Mentoring Sparks website for examples and links to these tools and resources!



EXERCISES FOR STUDENTS

1. Students should work with their advisor to develop the components for a competency wheel based on an agreed-upon topic (*such as their area of research*).
2. Students should self-evaluate their level of competence for each area within the competency wheel.
3. Students and advisors should review the self-assessment and come to agreement on the final evaluation. If differences are difficult to resolve, students should seek an independent review from other students or faculty.
4. Students should develop a plan to improve their competency in areas that need improvement in order to graduate. If no areas need short-term improvement, a shift towards long-term goals should be discussed with the advisor.
5. The outcomes from item three and four should be migrated into an IDP.

Semi-annual reviews... are tools to support students' development, and not tools to surprise students with an unexpected review.

For more information: www.therisingdoctoralinstitute.com/sparks/



ACTIONS FOR FACULTY

- Support students as they fill out an IDP in terms of setting goals and determining what training or skills should be included. Discuss how often meetings should occur to help ensure the IDP is successful.
- Help the student understand the purpose of semi-annual reviews – that they are tools to support students' development, and not tools to surprise students with an unexpected review.
- **GOAL Setting:** Suggested goals for this **Spark** include one related to the student's current competency versus desired future competency, as it relates to their area of study, or one related to their IDP.

Students should develop a plan to improve their competency...



REFLECTION & NEXT STEPS

- **Student and Faculty:** Consider the potential value of having a competency wheel and IDP to serve as a roadmap for lifelong learning.



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