

Grow for **Tomorrow:**

Leader Guide to Development Conversations and Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

How to support meaningful, ongoing employee development

Development at UCalgary is continuous - not a one-time activity. This guide helps you lead high-quality development conversations using the **Individual Development Plan (IDP)**. Adapt it to your style; focus on enabling growth.

UCALGARY'S APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

Development is most effective when embedded in everyday work — not separate from it.

- Real work and new challenges
- Learning with and from others
- Formal learning and resources
- Reflection and application

WHAT THE IDP DOES

- Helps employees reflect on strengths, interests, and goals
- Identifies 1-2 development priorities
- Plans learning through work, relationships, and formal channels
- Tracks progress and supports ongoing conversations

ROLES & SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

EMPLOYEE (OWNER OF IDP)

- Initiates and owns their development plan
- Reflects on strengths, interests, and goals
- Identifies development priorities
- Drives development conversations
- Takes action and tracks progress

LEADER (COACH AND ENABLER)

- Creates space for open, future-focused conversations
- Provides feedback and perspective
- Connects development to real work and opportunities
- Supports ongoing growth and follow-up

SETTING THE TONE - SAY THINGS LIKE:

How you position development will shape engagement.

"This is about your growth, and not a performance evaluation"

"You don't need to have everything figured out right now."

"We'll build development into your day-to-day work"

"Everyone's growth path is different."

BEFORE THE CONVERSATION - PREPARE BY:

Create an environment where employees feel safe to reflect honestly and focus on what matters. Strong preparation keeps the discussion focused and practical.

- Reviewing the employee's IDP
- Reflecting on strengths with examples
- Identifying alignment with team priorities
- Considering stretch opportunities and connections

SUGGESTED CONVERSATION FLOW (45-60 MINUTES)

The time allocations below are approximate and intended to support a meaningful development conversation. Adjust as needed to allow for deeper discussion where it adds value.



Open the Discussion

(5 min) Set context and reinforce purpose. Focus on growth, not evaluation. Invite the employee to lead



Explore their reflections

(15 min) Let the employee walk through their IDP. You might ask: *"What stands out to you?", "What led you to these priorities?", "What feels most important right now?"*



Share your observations

(10 min) Reinforce strengths. Add perspective with specific examples. Build on their thinking — don't override it.



Identify priorities

(10 min) Reinforce strengths. Add perspective with specific examples. Build on their thinking — don't override it.



Define outcomes

(5-10 min) You might say: *"What would others notice if you're progressing?", "What will you be doing differently?"*



Agree on actions & support

(10 min) *"Where can you practice this in your current work?", "Who can support you?", "What's a strong first step?"*
Anchor learning in [the Continuous Learning Model](#)



Close the discussion

(5 min) Confirm priorities, agreed actions, your support, and follow-up timing.

HOW GREAT LEADERS APPROACH DEVELOPMENT

Shift Your Approach

Directing	→	Coaching
Telling	→	Asking
Evaluating	→	Partnering
Owning development	→	Enabling development

Put It Into Practice

- **Keep plans simple** — 1-2 priorities. Broad plans rarely get done.
- **Anchor in real work** — connect development to actual projects, not just courses.
- **Build on strengths** — start from what's working, not only what's missing.
- **Use questions to guide** — ask rather than direct to build ownership.
- **Revisit regularly** — brief check-ins keep momentum between formal cycles.

FOR QUESTIONS & RESOURCES

Contact your HR Business Partner for support with development conversations and the IDP process. Access the [Individual Development Plan](#) template, and other learning resources, through the [Professional Development Hub](#).