

Self-Assessment: Example

Which experiences improved your competencies to conduct research in your specific area of study?

Being involved in a multicenter study (...) which includes 58 hospitals all over Switzerland and sitting in the operative board (e.g. translating and preparing the questionnaires, randomization of the units, coordination of sending questionnaires to the hospitals, sending reminders) taught me how to manage a complex study in terms of planning, design and conduct.

Working with Prof. Zinkernagel and Prof. Ross, two leading researchers in the field of Immunology and Malaria, was highly inspiring and deepened my knowledge in these research topics.

I improved my technical writing competencies by writing a detailed research proposal. Especially the method section with a detailed data analysis plan improved my competencies in terms of quantitative methods. Furthermore, as being a peer review of the scientific manuscript "Specific cytotoxic T cells eliminate B cells producing virus-neutralizing antibodies" by Prof. Zinkernagel, was great opportunity for me to get insights into technical writing standards.

In order to address my findings to a certain audience I learned how to set up a scientific presentation. I like to bring complex scientific constructs into a clear and concise form and defend them with scholars from various worlds in conferences and workshops. My strength is to present facts attractively rather than just stating them.

In addition I participated in the STATA course in order to learn the basic statistics necessary to conduct my research. I also improved my writing skills by attending an Endnote course.

How could you acquire broader Public Health competencies?

In order to broaden my knowledge in Public Health I first started studying the textbook "The new public health" by Theodore Tulchinsky to refresh my basic knowledge in Public Health.

In addition I visited the "12th World Congress on Public Health" in Istanbul where I took the opportunity to listen to a subset of interesting talks held by keynote speakers from the field of Public Health. I gained in insights into various fields of Public Health and was impressed by the enormous variegation of the different research topics.

Last summer I participated in the workshops "Introduction to Health Economics" and "Vaccination Methods" organized by the WHO in order to deepen my knowledge in this particular areas, which are only partially part of my research project. In addition to what I learned, it was also a great opportunity to meet people from this research field and discuss relevant question concerning Health Care and Vaccination problems.

Attending regularly the weekly student seminar in our institute is once more a good opportunity to get insights in to various Public Health related topics. Our seminars are offering an excellent platform to discuss and exchange scientific knowledge and experiences of Public Health related studies.

Which personal competencies and soft skills could you develop?

Coming here from the USA to Switzerland and working for the Swiss TPH was challenging, but highly inspiring. It improved my personal and professional competencies starting with a completely new topic

outside the realm of my professional expertise. I had to read and process an enormous amount of new information, scientific literature regarding the study in general and the topic of my dissertation. Working with new colleagues and mentors within a highly professional environment improved my social and communication competencies to a great extent. The main difference to me

during my first year as a PhD student was the shift from the biochemical bench work, including molecular studies and sample collection, to place my scientific mind in the direction of Public Health. This transition was quite challenging as it required a new way of thinking and an adaptation to a new way of time management. I learned more and more to care for myself, to think in larger scales, than in the lab and to set priorities.

A special highlight of my first year PhD was the “World Response Conference on Global Outbreak H1N1+H5N1” in Delhi, India. This was my first trip to India and being exposed to a new culture in an international environment was first of all a personal enrichment.

Furthermore I learned that high quality research is always based on a well-designed project and excellent teamwork. Working with colleagues, being aware of my own strength and weaknesses makes one consider that there is only the professional way to handle the workload of such complex study.

Which experience improved your management and leadership skills?

Starting a PhD project also means to organize myself and my environment. Managing such a large study with all the professionals, interpersonal and ethical issues has been a great experience and improved my leadership competencies. In this respect I was responsible for a group of 12 people and had to coordinate the time line and location for the actual data acquisition.

Facing unexpected circumstances and finding an adequate solution was a special experience for me. Being put in this situation and showed me how to deal with troubleshooting and finally cracking down the problem in the realm of available possibilities.

Which gaps did you identify and which additional competencies do you need to acquire during the next reporting period?

Research oriented: Statistics, technical writing practice, scientific presentation training

Project Management oriented: Organization of peer groups, recruiting of people, personal teaching skills, international working experiences

Health Care oriented: basic Public Health knowledge, set up a better Public Health network

During my studies I used more and more advanced statistics and I would like to increase my knowledge in this. Visiting the course in “Basic Statistics for Epidemiologists” will definitely help me to get the necessary background information.

In order to improve my technical writing practice I will soon start writing my first paper in collaboration with the Department Development Policy and Practice, Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam.

To train my scientific presentation skills I am planning to apply for a junior talk at the 3rd BOTSWANA international HIV conference”. In addition I am listed for a progress report in our inhouse student seminar next month, where I am going to present my data for the first time to a broader audience.

As I am already involved as an assistant in the biosafety and ethics course I would like to further develop

my teaching skills in order to take more responsibilities in the upcoming years. In my second year of PhD would really like to supervise a master student who participates in my project.

Furthermore as the student representative I am working on the interface of student needs and academic set ups. This task will help me to build up a scientific network.

Set up a working plan and time lines for the next year.

Annual meeting with the PhD committee every June. Also a regular meeting with my supervisor Prof. Zinkernagel should take place to discuss planned manuscripts and general thesis logistics.

Jan –Feb: Quality check of entered data

March- April: Data cleaning, start writing the introduction of my manuscript

Mai-June: PhD committee meeting, complete the descriptive analysis for the publications

July-Aug: Summer School Lugano, vacation

Sept-Oct: Writing of the first paper, “3rd Botswana international HIV conference”, 13.10.2010, Gaborone, Botswana”

Nov-Dec: Presentation at the internal students seminar with follow up feedback from Prof.

Zinkernagel

Courses	Teacher	Location	Date	ECTS
Observational Epidemiological Studies	Joel Schwarz / Martin Rösli	Basel	01.01.2012	1
total				1

Publications during the PhD studies (Authors/ Title/ Journal/ Edition/ Pages) *related to PhD thesis	Status (submitted, accepted, published)
<i>Specific enzymatic amplification of DNA in vitro: the polymerase chain reaction.</i> Mullis K, Faloona F, Scharf S, Saiki R, Horn G, Erlich H.	Biotechnology. 1992; 24:17-27.
<i>Neighborhood Predictors of Dating Violence Victimization and Perpetration in Young Adulthood: A Multilevel Study.</i> Mullis K, Jain S Drph, Buka SL Scd, Subramanian SV Phd, Molnar BE	Am J Public Health. 2010 Jul 15. [Epub ahead of print]
<i>Strengthening health systems at facility-level: feasibility of integrating antiretroviral therapy into primary health care services in lusaka, zambia.</i> Topp SM, Mullis K, Chipukuma JM, Giganti M, Mwango LK, Chiko LM, Tambatamba-Chapula B, Wamulume CS, Reid S.	PLoS One. 2010 Jun 01 [Submitted]

Conference / Seminar / Doctoral Training / Workshop	Location	Date
World Response Conference on Global Outbreak H1N1+H5N1	Dehli	01.01.2012

Presentations / Talks / Poster / Journal Club	Location	Date
"Neglected Protozoan Disease"	Basel, FMI	01.01.2012

Teaching / Training	No of Students	Location, Date
"Scientific Presentation Course"	15	Basel, 01.01.2010
Supervision of Master Student	George Harrison	Jun 2009 - Jan 2010