

GSBSE Rotations – tips, suggestions, and a mentor-mentee compact

Purpose of rotations: One aspect that is critical for setting up successful rotations is to reflect on why you are beginning a PhD. PhDs are not particularly well structured, and it is important for students to know their goals because that will facilitate joining a lab that enables students to achieve their goals.

The main purpose of rotations is to understand how a potential student and the host lab/team work together, and whether a lab will enable you to be connected, engaged, and to flourish in graduate school.

It is thus important to understand your core values, so that when the lab values are communicated to you, you can determine whether a lab is a good fit. What are aspects of labs where you thrived, what was missing in labs where you didn't thrive? Thinking about these topics will help you assess potential rotation options as well as full rotations.

Pre-rotation:

1. Please set up 15-30 minute zoom meetings with potential faculty. Be prepared to answer questions about your values, work-life integration, why you are interested in particular research, and what your goals for your PhD are. You can also share with PIs what type of learner you are – how do you do your best work (For example, I have terrible procedural memory - I am very bad at watching someone do something and remembering how to do it myself. I used to take crazy detailed notes and drive people nuts asking them to slow down, nowadays I just take a video so that I can go back and make those crazy detailed notes).
2. During the meeting, ask faculty what their lab culture is, how much time *in* lab is expected, how much time *out of lab* is expected, how their lab views whether someone is a good fit for that lab. What does a successful rotation look like to them? Who will supervise your learning? How often will you meet with them?
3. Reflect on the interview and decide whether this is a good fit for you, then reach out to the PI and let them know.

During the rotation:

1. Keep an open mind throughout the rotation, get to know the lab environment in addition to learning about the research question.
2. Follow all lab rules and treat others with respect. Ask questions if you are confused – it doesn't benefit anyone if you pretend to understand. You are here to learn, it is ok to not know all the answers.
3. Follow the structure that has been set up for your rotation with you and the PI. Communicate clearly about expectations (from both sides) and whether these expectations are being met. This rotation is the opportunity for you and the PI to determine whether you communicate effectively, which is key for a successful PhD experience.

After the rotation: Reflect on your experience, write down your thoughts (this can be important so that the new shiny rotation doesn't eclipse the older, but better fit rotation). Some things to

consider: Do you understand your mentor's approach to teaching and does it fit with your learning style, is conflict in the lab effectively and equitably managed, is conduct in the lab appropriate and professional, is there appropriate feedback (note that appropriate can include corrective feedback such as please do this instead of that because), will you be able to meet your training and career goals in this lab?

Mentor-Mentee Compact:

Student expectations of mentor:

1. **Provide clear expectations** for the rotation and how the student will be evaluated as a potential fit for the lab.
2. **Clarify with whom the student will be training**, and how often they will meet with you and the student/tech/post-doc with whom they will be working most closely.
3. **Provide honest input**. Meet with the student at the beginning, middle, and end of the rotation to provide and receive input.
4. **Be supportive and respectful**. The mentor will work to support the student's goals for the rotation and communicate honestly and effectively.
5. **Contribute to an environment that is safe, equitable, and free of harassment.**

Mentor expectations of student:

1. **Take advantage of opportunities** during the rotation – training opportunities, participate in journal clubs as requested, be an enthusiastic learner.
2. **Follow lab rules** and respect this training opportunity, recognize that reagents and time are valuable, and treat them with respect. Treat others in the lab with respect and work collegially with everyone in the lab. Contribute to an environment that is safe, equitable, and free of harassment.
3. **Maintain detailed, organized, and accurate research records**. Good record keeping is essential for your PhD. Mistakes happen, acknowledge them, apologize, and take steps to ensure they do not happen again (for example I've learned to rely heavily on alarms to ensure I don't get distracted and I do things when I'm supposed to do them).
4. **Adopt a growth mindset**, be willing to hear constructive feedback, and improve.
5. **Communicate any planned absences in advance** as well as unplanned absences due to illness or other issues.

Sign and date below, and return completed form to GSBSE@maine.edu:

Mentor Name: _____	Mentee Name: _____
Signature: _____	Signature: _____
Date: _____	Date: _____