

BMI PhD Program rotation policy

Purpose

Research rotations are an important aspect of training in Biomedical Data Sciences. They engage students in active research projects over a short time period (one semester) and may involve a variety of research tasks from computational, statistical, or biomedical sciences. This is also one of the major ways by which students select a lab for their PhD work.

Procedure

1. Three rotations need to be completed in the first year, one each semester and one during the summer. If a student has made other arrangements for the summer (e.g. an internship), then it is possible to complete the third rotation in the following year.
2. The rotation will end with a presentation at the end of the semester.
3. Process of matching students with rotation mentor.
 - a. Faculty send projects to the program coordinator (Shelley Maxted) who shares with students. Alternately, if a faculty member and student have planned a project before the matching process for the semester, the faculty member should just indicate this to the PhD program director (Sushmita Roy) and coordinator.
 - b. Students select their rotation projects and contact the faculty member directly whose project they are interested in.
 - c. The program director or coordinator can provide any guidance to the student/faculty as needed.

Guidelines

Below are some strategies to maximize the rotation experience. The overarching goal is for mentors and mentees to effectively evaluate their compatibility. *These are only suggestions, and not directives for how PIs must configure or evaluate rotations.* These have been adapted from guidelines developed for the Molecular and Environmental Toxicology graduate program.

Suggestions for mentors of rotating students:

1. Articulate to students that the main goal of rotations is to ensure that you and student have sufficient resources to make an informed match.
2. Faculty are encouraged to define projects that are collaborative/interdisciplinary in nature. For example, carving out a project from a problem you might be working with a collaborator in our or another department.
3. Communicate with rotators frequently and schedule frequent meetings (e.g. weekly). Be available for questions.
4. Establish clear expectations and articulate them before the rotation begins.
5. Structure opportunities for rotating students to interact with other lab members, e.g. via lab meetings, journal clubs, informal get-togethers to enable your team members to interact with rotating students.
6. Plan an evaluation session for the last week of the rotation.

7. Discuss social distancing, maximum occupancy, occupancy times, and other policies related to COVID restart policies for your lab. Note that these may differ across labs and buildings, do not assume your rotator knows the rules for your school/building/lab.

Suggestions for rotating students:

Your major professor / advisor is going to play a critical role for you, not only during your time in graduate school, but for the rest of your life. Finding a major professor with a compatible mentoring style is critical for your success. We provide suggestions to maximize your experience:

1. Rotations should be planned and executed with the health and safety of the student in mind and accommodations made accordingly.
2. Understand that the main goal of rotations is to ensure that you and the PI can make an informed match.
3. Begin rotations by meeting with mentors and discussing expectations.
4. Find opportunities to interact with your mentors – schedule formal meetings.
5. Establish weekly goals and report them to your mentor at the beginning of each week.
6. Report your progress on research goals at the end of each week (written progress reports or in person or virtual meetings are effective ways to report progress).
7. Don't be afraid to ask questions, but also put in effort to find answers independently.
8. Find opportunities to practice writing (weekly lab reports, reviews of manuscripts, etc.) so that you can work with your PI to critically evaluate and improve writing.
9. Read recent papers from your rotating mentor's research group and the related field. Formulate questions and potential research directions, write them down, share and discuss them with your mentor. You will spend a lot of time writing with your mentor, and your rotation is a great opportunity to evaluate your compatibility.
10. Meet with your mentor at the end of the rotation to evaluate your performance and receive suggestions for improvement.
11. Ensure that you are aware of relevant social distancing, maximum occupancy, occupancy times, and other policies related to COVID restart policies for your rotating lab. Note that these are not the same for all labs, so please ask questions.