RUTGERS
School of Graduate Studies

Faculty Guidelines for Laboratory Rotations in the Graduate Programs in Molecular Biosciences

Rotations provide one of the few opportunities for students to explore different fields of science before focusing in one area. Students anticipate learning how different laboratories approach scientific problems and how PIs and trainees interact. While recognizing that a nine week rotation may not be enough time to achieve a great deal in the laboratory, students are expected to put forth a reasonable effort to make the rotation experience valuable--both for the student and for the laboratory. Students understand that a rotation is an opportunity to evaluate the lab as a place to do thesis work, and a time for the lab to evaluate the student's ability and interest. For all these reasons, students are instructed to make good use of their laboratory rotations while striving to maintain a healthy balance between required course work and time in the laboratory.

First year students are assigned to a member of the First Year Advisory Committee. First Year Advisors meet regularly with their assigned students, monitor the student's academic performance and offer guidance and feedback as students select their rotation labs. In addition, students are encouraged to seek advice from other faculty in research areas of their interest.

Rotation Schedule for 2023 - 2024

Students in the Graduate Programs in Molecular Biosciences are required to do three laboratory rotations, according to the following schedule:

#	Rotation Form Due	Rotation Start Date	Rotation End Date	Rotation Summary Due
1	*September 22*	**September 25**	**December 1**	*December 8*
2	*December 1*	**December 4**	**February 9**	*February 16*
3	*February 9*	**February 12**	**April 12**	*April 19*

Note that a fourth rotation is OPTIONAL. Only when a student has not yet identified a thesis advisor should a fourth rotation be necessary.

On the Friday ***prior*** to each rotation, the student must submit a rotation form signed by the student, the faculty member with whom they will be doing their rotation, and their First Year Advisor. It is important for students and faculty to realize that any arrangements made prior to the official sign-up days for lab rotations are informal and that neither the student nor the faculty are bound by these informal arrangements until the form is signed. The purpose of this policy is to allow students flexibility when choosing laboratory rotations. If, through reading and coursework, students become interested in a new research topic, they will have the opportunity to pursue this interest by signing up for a rotation in an appropriate laboratory.

At the ***completion*** of each rotation period, laboratory rotation advisors are asked to fill out a Rotation Evaluation Survey. This information is crucial in helping the First Year Advisory Committee track student academic and laboratory performance. **A link for this survey will be emailed to the rotation PI and is to be completed by the PI. Questions regarding the survey should be directed to Laura Boyd (laura.boyd@rutgers.edu).** In addition, ***students are required to write a summary of their rotation, which should be signed by the PI and submitted to a Canvas site for the Lab Rotations course.*** The written summary is required for the student to receive credit for the rotation.

A few other points to keep in mind:

Each Principal Investigator is allowed to have no more than 2 rotation students per cycle, and a maximum of 5 rotation students per year.

Remember that students are also taking their first-year classes and will not be able to devote all their time to lab rotation research projects. **Students are advised to strike a balance between lab work and course work; please be mindful and supportive of this advice.**

Do not be offended if a student asks how you will support them financially and in terms of mentorship if they elect to do their Ph.D. thesis research in your laboratory – they are encouraged to do this!!

Previous rotation evaluations are available upon request from Monica Roth, Chair of the First Year Advisory Committee (roth@rwjms.rutgers.edu). A copy of a student's original application for admission is available upon request from either Laura Boyd in the Molecular Biosciences office (848-445-3430).

Finally, and IMPORTANTLY:
If you are willing to take a student for a laboratory rotation, then ***we assume you are aware of the mechanisms available to you* to provide financial support*** for a student in their second and subsequent years. **Therefore, please DO NOT take a student for a rotation only to tell them afterward that you do not have funding!** ***If you are not satisfied with the student's performance in the laboratory or believe the student is not a good fit for your group, please tell them so.*** The student will benefit from an honest assessment of their ability. The program will benefit in terms of credibility—when PIs put their names on the rotation list only to later deny a student a spot in their laboratory because they "don't have funding", the credibility of the system breaks down and the reputation of the program suffers.

* The mechanisms of support for student stipend and tuition vary depending upon the thesis advisor's primary faculty appointment. Faculty members are encouraged to discuss the available options for supporting students in the second year and beyond with their chairs, institute directors or deans as mechanisms vary by unit. While we encourage graduate students to TA, which provides 9 months of salary support and tuition and health insurance for a year, TA lines should not be used to support students for the majority of the graduate work (no more than 2 years).

AY 2023-2024 First Year Advisory Committee
Monica Roth, Chair
Annika Barber
Bonnie Firestein
Joe Fondell
Chiara Manzini
Vik Nanda
Karen Schindler