

Rotation Guideline for Neuroscience PhD Students

The goal of the rotation is to find a lab. It is NOT to generate a figure for the PI, nor is it to start and complete a stand-alone project. It is an opportunity for you to evaluate whether the lab environment, the scientific questions and approaches, the mentoring and support style, the other lab members, the “vibe” are all conducive to your ability to thrive in your thesis research.

A “match” between student and lab is defined as an offer from the PI for the student to join the lab. This may be a hard yes, or could be pursuant to other conditions, such as the outcome of other rotation students in the PIs lab.

Mount Sinai students matriculating from PREP or MSBS (Master’s) now in our PhD program can use their research time in lieu of a rotation. Ex-SURP scholars who have spent two summers at ISMMS can use that research time in lieu of a rotation once they join the PhD program.

Staff who become PhD students may not rotate in the lab they worked in until they have completed a rotation in another lab.

1. Students are encouraged to use web resources, the current student body and/or the MTA director to explore possible labs.
2. All students will work with their first-year advisor/MTA Director to select labs they are interested in *that have sufficient financial resources to take a new student*. This means that a potential preceptor MUST have minimally 2-3 years of funding to support you. If a preceptor does not have the funding, **you should not rotate there**.
3. Starting in week 3 of the rotation, the PI and student should review progress and the possibility of joining that lab on a weekly basis during the rotation. This does not have to be a detailed conversation each week, but can be a simple update: yes, no, or possibly, and could be an email. The outcome of these discussions should be conveyed by the students to their first year advisor/MTA director.
4. In cases where either the student or PI expresses the lack of a match, the rotation terminates and an assessment is filed with the Graduate School (GS). For these, there is no minimum time after the first discussion at 3 weeks. For students saying no, they should email/visit their advisor/MTA director, state why and briefly discuss, which may be simply “this is not a match for me”. Alternatively, your advisor/MTA director can also help you convey this information.

5. In cases of a common match, the minimum time of rotation is 6 weeks; the minimum is to avoid “changed minds”. Again, an assessment report is submitted to the GS. Please work on this with your PI, and make sure this goes to the GS.

6. The maximum time spent to make a decision should be around 6-8 weeks. There is flexibility for this, but best to try for 6-8 weeks. This will mean that some rotations will span the winter break, the time off (generally ~3 weeks) doesn't count towards the rotation. This means four rotations can be completed (if needed) by spring break, but likely 3 as transitioning from one lab to another is not always immediate. These times could be shortened further if the student is not taking classes while rotating.

7. While it is acceptable to join a lab after 1 successful rotation, you are encouraged to find two matches before terminating your rotations and joining a lab.