



### **POLICY: RESEARCH ROTATION POLICY**

Research rotations are mandatory components of the first year curriculum in the Integrated Ph.D. Program (IPP). This experience is intended to provide a student with insight into different approaches to scientific discovery and provide a basis for both the student and the Dissertation Advisor to reach an informed decision about where the student should conduct their dissertation research. The first-year Academic Advisor assigned to the student upon entry to the program will oversee the rotations. A faculty member hosting a rotating student in their laboratory will become a Rotation Advisor for the period of that rotation.

#### **Goals of the rotations:**

- 1) Allow the faculty to assess the student's potential for research.
- 2) Allow the faculty to evaluate the student's attributes and assess whether they would be willing to supervise this student's dissertation research.
- 3) Allow the student to learn about the type of research being pursued in each of the laboratories selected for rotation, as well as develop new research skills and techniques by performing experiments, reading relevant publications and participating in laboratory meetings.
- 4) Allow the student to select a particular laboratory to conduct dissertation research in based on interest in the research, compatibility with the faculty advisor, the intellectual and working environment, long term availability of funding, etc.

#### **Structure and format of the rotations**

Each rotation must be approved by the first-year Academic Advisor and the Dean. This approval will be based largely on the potential Rotation Advisor's ability to support the student's dissertation research project. If there is some level of uncertainty about this ability, it will be shared with the student before the rotation begins. In addition to selecting the Dissertation Advisor, rotations may be used to learn different techniques or explore different research areas, especially if they pertain to a potential collaboration with the eventual dissertation lab. Other factors may also enter into the decision to approve or deny a student's rotation choice.

Once a rotation is approved, the student and the Rotation Advisor shall submit, in writing, a list of the specific and measurable objectives and expectations for the rotation (preferably, within a self-contained short project, or to learn specific technique). This list of objectives should be prepared by the Rotation Advisor, discussed with the student, and countersigned by both. The list of objectives should be submitted to the GSBMS Dean's office and the first-year Academic Advisor one week after the posted start date of the rotation. It is allowable for these objectives to

be modified during the course of the rotation if, for example, there is a change in the direction of the planned research project.

IPP students are required to complete three research rotations in three different laboratories. Each rotation lasts approximately four months, corresponding to the academic semesters (1<sup>st</sup> mid-September through December, 2<sup>nd</sup> January through April, and 3<sup>rd</sup> May through August). Precise start and end dates will be announced each year. With the exception of extraordinary circumstances, it is required that IPP students undertake no more than two rotations in any one department. Any exceptions to the required number of rotations will be reviewed on a case-to-case basis by the first-year Academic Advisor, Program Director, and the Dean.

Under rare circumstances, a student can make a request to switch the rotation laboratory during the drop-add period (the first two weeks of each rotation). The request should be reviewed and approved by the first-year Academic Advisor and the Dean.

In order to minimize any academic deceleration during the first year, the Ph.D. student should consult with the first-year Academic Advisor prior to enrollment in courses. Students should be given sufficient time during the rotation to succeed in their academic courses.

It is understandable that the amount of time assigned to each rotation could be insufficient to complete an independent research project. Thus, a student can be assigned to assist with ongoing projects. The Rotation Advisor should guide the student's research activities and reading of relevant research literature.

The student should attend the journal clubs and research seminars of the department in which he/she is working during the semester of the rotation, but will not be required to enroll in any "Journal Club" course. Students should be allowed and encouraged to attend additional seminars in other departments on topics related to their rotation or of personal interest to them.

On the last day of each research rotation, students are required to submit to the Rotation Advisor and the first-year Academic Advisor a 1 to 2-page scientific abstract, summarizing the research project they participated in. The write-up should include brief descriptions of the working hypothesis, brief relevant background information and data, methods, implications of the actual or possible results with regard to the working hypothesis, and implications of the larger project to the overall biological process or disease state being studied. Each rotation course will be graded on a pass/fail basis and will not contribute to the student's GPA.

Each Rotation Advisor should submit a brief written report on the student's performance to the first-year Academic Advisor upon completion of each rotation (the evaluation form is attached to the end of the policy). After review, the report will be shared with the student.

Upon completion of the last rotation, the student should meet with the first-year Academic Advisor to review all submitted abstracts and faculty feedback, and to discuss any particular issues they encountered during rotations. The first-year Academic Advisor will then submit the abstracts, evaluation forms and their written comments to the GSBMS Dean's office. The course will be graded on a pass/fail basis and will not contribute to the student's GPA.

### **Obligations and commitments**

The Rotation Advisor is expected to interact with the student in a meaningful way, providing constructive feedback and honest assessment both to the student and to the first-year Academic Advisor. Accepting a research rotation student does not obligate the faculty member to accept that student as a dissertation student.

Students are expected to spend about 15 - 20 hours per week in the lab. Effort may vary based on exam schedules, holidays, etc. Students should be expected to spend more time on rotation activities during the summer rotation. The student and the Rotation Advisor should discuss the amount of effort that is expected.

**The submission of the *List of Objectives, Summary Abstracts and Faculty Evaluation forms* is an absolute requirement.**

## Faculty Evaluation of Student Rotation

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester:     Fall         Spring         Summer        20\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty member(s) making the evaluation: \_\_\_\_\_

First-Year Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

*Answer the following questions with either YES or NO.*

1. Did the student meet the goals and expectations you set for him/her?         YES     NO

2. Were you satisfied with the student's effort during this rotation?         YES     NO

3. Should the student be allowed to continue in the Ph.D. program?         YES     NO

*Answer the following questions with your own brief comments.*

**1. Any additional details about the student's performance or behavior during this rotation that are relevant to evaluation of the student's progress in the program.**

**2. What were some of the student's strengths or most positive characteristics?**

**3. What were some of the student's weaknesses, or areas that need some improvement?**

**4. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations as to how the student might address those areas that need improvement?**