2017-18 BBSP Rotation Calendar, Expectations, and Grade Guidelines

2017-18 Rotation Schedule
Fall: Monday Aug 28-Friday Nov 3 (Okay to start before Aug 29) | Rotation choice form due Friday August 25

Winter: Monday Nov 6-Friday Feb 9 | Rotation choice form due Friday Oct 16
NOTE: Two BBSP Breaks scheduled during this rotation: Nov 22-24; Dec 22-Jan 2. These are suggested holidays and represent the total amount of time BBSP extended the winter rotation to account for typical vacation/holiday requests. Total time out of lab and exact dates can be negotiated between student and PI.

Spring: Monday Feb 12-Friday Apr 27 | Rotation choice form due: Friday Jan 26
(note: this deadline is extended to Feb 2 if choosing thesis lab early)

Thesis Lab Choice Forms Due: Friday Apr 27 *summer rotation students joining early: due Feb 2
First Day in Thesis Lab: Monday April 30 *summer rotation students joining early: Feb 20, start of Spring rotation

Guidelines for setting BBSP Rotations
It is critical that we as a community do all we can to maximize students’ options at the end of the year. We have seen repeated instances of certain rotation choices that ultimately lead to a good student not finding a lab home. Below are some basic guidelines on accepting students for rotations that should help avoid some of these circumstances. The BBSP is similarly advising students on how to effectively choose rotations.

- **A student should not rotate in a lab they have no intention of joining.** If it’s clear to you that this is the student’s plan, you should not accept such a rotation. Examples of this type of rotation:
  - The student just wants to learn a technique from the rotation (even if they tell you they already have an offer from another lab).
  - The rotation is simply an ‘extension’ of a previous rotation (such as with a collaborator, often at the suggestion of the previous rotation PI) with the same or a closely related project. An exception to this would be if you fully intend on taking a student and the student is genuinely interested in joining your lab.
  - The student only wants to join one lab (either a lab in which they’ve already rotated and where they got positive feedback, or a lab they have yet to rotate in but is ‘the only one they want to work in’).
- **Faculty should not, under any circumstances, accept a rotation student if they have no reasonable possibility of financial support for that student beginning the following June** (this includes supporting them at the BBSP stipend level, which is currently $30,000).
  - It is okay to have a rotation student if you are waiting for a score of a submitted grant and, you want to take a student if the grant is funded. However, you should inform them upfront of these circumstances and expect that some may be uncomfortable with that level of uncertainty.
- **Faculty should avoid rotating many students in one academic year.** While there is no formal rotation cap, it is good practice to realistically scale the total number of rotation students to the number of slots you have available in the lab (2 students per funded slot for a student). It is important to be open with students if you anticipate a large number of rotation students, so they can make informed choices.

Two other notes regarding rotations.
1. If a student would like to rotate with you but you cannot accept them, many faculty will suggest similar labs for the student to consider. This is very helpful to the student and we encourage you to do so.
2. Students who rotate in the summer have the option of joining a thesis lab in February (after the winter rotation). Faculty are under no obligation to accept a student on that early timetable. If you have a rotation student lined up for the spring rotation and want to wait and make your decision in April, the student who did the summer rotation can do a spring rotation with no penalty to them.
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Minimum Rotation Expectations:

- Students should be in lab during normal working hours when they are not in class. Since science rarely fits into a 40-hr work week, successful students will often come in early, leave late, work on weekends, or work from home as their experiments and deadlines dictate. *(If personal issues, e.g. children, limit their schedule to a 40-hr work week, we have encouraged them to discuss this in advance with the PI, and to be fully engaged and productive while in the lab). It is good mentoring to talk to the student before the rotation begins about your expectations for the hours they are in the lab and to allow for flexibility around class schedules and personal needs (such as childcare or health concerns).
- Students should focus on science and experiments when in the lab.
- Students should prepare for their rotation by reading papers suggested by the PI, and continue to read papers during the rotation.
- Students should attend lab meeting whenever possible *(many PIs will move the time of their lab meeting to accommodate student class schedules).*
- Students should engage fully in their rotation project and in the overall research area of the lab.
  To be engaged, a student should:
  - Ask questions to clarify anything on their project that they don’t understand
  - Ask questions and be interested in projects other than their own.
  - Participate in scientific discussions with lab members, even outside of lab meetings
  - Strive to understand how a particular experiment fits into the context of the larger research question
  - Continuously think about “what’s next?” i.e. in what direction should their experiments go?
  - Process and think about their data before talking to the advisor/PI and suggest experiments that should be done next
- Students should make a strong effort to fully understand their project – the way it fits into the larger context of the lab, how to analyze and understand the data, and how to move the project forward.
- Students should work towards independence with respect to techniques required for the rotation – mastery is not initially required, but efforts to attain mastery are. A student should not ask multiple times how to do an experimental protocol.
- Students should exhibit good interpersonal and lab citizenship skills during the rotation.
- While generating publication-ready data are not a requirement of any rotation, putting forth good effort is. Students should work hard to get data and to troubleshoot experiments that may not be working.
- The student and PI should meet as often as is mutually desirable, but at a minimum there should be a midterm meeting to evaluate progress and an end of rotation meeting to discuss overall performance *(PIs – please do NOT avoid telling a student directly if they are not meeting your expectations. They need the honest feedback so they have the opportunity to improve.)*
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BBSP ROTATION GRADING AND EVALUATION INFORMATION

To help with advising and student lab placement, it is extremely important that we get an accurate rotation grade and useful evaluation (particularly written comments) to help us monitor student progress and mentor the student before getting too far into their other rotations. We will contact you and ask for further information if your comments are absent, minimal, or conflict with your grade selection.

Grading Guidelines

H – High Pass: A top student you sincerely hope to recruit to the lab for a permanent position. A rotation student deserving of an H has many of the following qualities:

- Was fully engaged; mostly independent
- Was highly interactive; well prepared for your meetings
- Was able to analyze data and to think about ‘the bigger picture’
- Carefully read papers to prepare for the project and during their time in the lab
- Attended and participated in lab meetings; asked good questions

P – Pass: A good student who worked hard and has potential for success. A grade of P generally means this student at least met the minimum expectations of a rotation, even if you don’t plan to offer them a spot in your lab. A rotation student receiving a grade of P:

- May have needed regular input from the rotation supervisor but gained independence over time
- Was reasonably engaged in the lab—attended lab meetings, worked a reasonable number of hours, read papers
- Demonstrated understanding of their project in conversations or meetings with you, or in lab meeting presentations

We may contact you for further clarification if you award a grade of P but:

- State you will not invite the student back. Please clarify in your comments if the student performed well but:
  1. you believe they rotated outside their comfort zone
  2. their personality/needs are not the best fit for your mentoring style
  3. there was another factor affecting your decision for not extending an offer in your lab
- Your comments and evaluation of the student are not very positive. If there is a discrepancy between the grade and the evaluation, we will follow up to be sure we can best advise the student about their options.

L – Low Pass: A student whose performance falls well below the basic standards outlined above and who does not improve after feedback about their performance. If you see early on that the student is not meeting expectations, you owe it to them to intervene early and to give feedback so they have an opportunity to improve. It is very important that you explain why you are giving the L in your comments. Reasons for a poor performance could include:

- Wasn’t in the lab enough/didn’t work hard despite clear outline of expectations
- Didn’t seem to understand what was going on in the lab (due primarily to lack of engagement)
- Lacked focus
- Poor interpersonal skills causing friction/conflict with others in your lab

A note about the L grade: The Graduate School criteria for academic ineligibility are a single grade of F or ≥9 credit hours of L. Each rotation is 3 credit hours, so giving a student an L in a rotation almost certainly will not cause the student’s expulsion (unless it brings them to a total of 9 credit hours of L, in which case there are larger issues). A grade of L does, however, send a strong message that they need to start giving more effort and attention to their other rotations and is an important record of their performance.
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Sample BBSP Rotation Grade and Evaluation Form
(you will complete an online version of this form at the end of the rotation)

Student Name: ___________________________ Date: ______

Rotation Advisor/PI: ______________________ Rotation Period: __________

On a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being outstanding) please rate the student relative to other first year students in the following areas (use “NA” if you have no basis to judge):

__ Participation in lab activities (lab meetings, journal clubs, interaction with lab members)
__ Effort during rotation
__ Intellectual involvement in rotation
__ Communication with you during rotation
__ Scientific preparation (academic foundation)
__ Ability to analyze data
__ Oral presentation skills
__ Writing skills

How does this student compare to rotation students you’ve had this year or in the recent past?
Top 5%, Top10%, Top 25%, Top 50%, Bottom 50%, Bottom 25% ________________

What grade do you give this student for this rotation?
High pass (H), Pass (P), Low pass (L), or Fail (F) ______________

How likely are you to offer this student a spot in your lab?
__ Definitely (this is an excellent student that I sincerely hope to recruit back to the lab)
__ Maybe (I am interested, but I need to see about other rotation students before I decide)
__ Maybe (my funding situation is uncertain - please elaborate in the comments)
__ Maybe (have reservations about student - please elaborate in your comments)
__ No (this was a good student, but they are not a good fit for my lab - please elaborate in the comments)
__ No (the rotation went poorly and I will not invite this student back - please elaborate in the comments)

COMMENTS
This portion of the evaluation will not be shared with the student if requested below. However, please note that FERPA requirements must be adhered to in the unlikely event that a student requests access to his/her comprehensive academic record.

Sharing of Comments: I would prefer that my written comments below not be shared with the student. However, I am aware that these comments will become part of the student’s academic record and, in the unlikely event of a student’s request to view his/her record, FERPA requirements allow access to the complete record.
__ Do NOT Share Comments
__ Comments Can be Shared

Comments: Please provide additional comments. We encourage you to elaborate on the grade given and your response to whether the student is likely to be offered a spot in your lab.