

Policies and Procedures Involving Lab Changes By MCRO Students

For all lab changes:

- Student completes a one-month rotation in the new lab, funded by the department.
- Student, advisor, and Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) sign and submit new BBSP lab choice form for financial guarantee. Advisors outside of MCRO space sign MCRO Memorandum of Understanding regarding fees.

For second lab changes:

- The primary concerns are positioning the student for successful completion of their degree and avoiding another unsuccessful match.
- Encourage discussions with multiple potential advisors and even multiple rotations. We prefer that the student finds the best fit, instead of taking the first option out of desperation and potentially regretting it.
- The wisdom a student has accumulated from unsuccessful experiences in prior labs is likely to allow them to assess a new lab (particularly a poor fit) pretty quickly. Although the department mandates a full one-month rotation before joining a new lab, there is no reason to continue a rotation beyond the point that a student recognizes a poor match. The purpose of a rotation is to determine whether or not a lab is a good fit in both directions, so if one party figures out that the fit is poor then the point of a rotation has been achieved.

Prior to approving a new lab, the following additional actions must occur:

- The student discusses with the DGS their experiences with the advisor and other lab members during the rotation, including why they think the lab would be a good fit, how the advisor/lab meet their needs and expectations, etc. The student should be able to tell the DGS about their conversations with every member of the new lab.
- The new advisor discusses with the DGS their experiences with the student during the rotation, why they think the student would be a good fit, any suggestions they may have of how to promote the student's success, etc.
- A written document in which the student and their new advisor outline and agree upon their current vision for the dissertation project (e.g., a first author research paper), even if no experiments have been completed.
- A written document in which the student and advisor agree upon mutual expectations. This could be just the standard expectations for all trainees that is posted on the MCRO website and used by all BBSP-affiliated programs, it could be a lab specific document, or it could be a version of any such document specifically modified for the relationship between the particular student and their new advisor.

After the new lab is approved:

- The DGS will set a deadline for the student to choose an appropriate dissertation committee and Chair.
- The DGS will set a deadline for the student to hold their first committee meeting.
- The student will have committee meetings at least every six months.
- The DGS will check in with the advisor quarterly.
- We may impose other student-specific conditions/checkpoints as the situation warrants. For example, a student who has not had successful outcomes in two previous labs may be subject to evaluation by the advisor and DGS of the likelihood of success in the new lab after six months. A negative evaluation would mean switching to the MS track.

The goals are to (i) help the student complete their dissertation project as quickly as possible by providing multiple scientific perspectives and (ii) have sufficient oversight to intervene promptly if necessary to prevent little problems in the relationship between the student and their advisor/lab from becoming big problems.

There will be no third lab changes.