General Information for Toxicology students participating in rotations.

Who can I do rotations with? You may contact any Toxicology faculty member regarding rotations. You are now a graduate student and it will be up to you to contact faculty in whose research you are interested. We recommend you speak with at least 3 to 5 faculty before deciding on your first rotation. We will provide guidelines, but ultimately you are responsible for contacting and setting up your own rotations. Faculty funding resources change throughout the year so do contact those toxicology faculty in whose research you are interested even if they are not listed below.

An important concept to consider when participating in rotations is that it is a two-way interview. You are trying to decide which lab will be your research home for the next five years, which area you will be trained in and that you will become an expert in. You are finding out which lab culture is the best fit for your personality and interests. The faculty member and his lab are interested in hard-working graduate students. Your work ethic and ability to work well with others in the lab will dramatically influence that lab's success. Your rotation in a lab does not happen in a vacuum; a faculty member may talk with other faculty with whom you rotated and members of his/her lab before making a decision. Please treat each rotation as an important part of the overall decision process, both for you and for the lab you wish to join.

We have asked the toxicology faculty to do the following regarding rotation students:

- ask you to present at the end of your rotation to the lab group (you will get better at this from the first to the third rotation).
- not ask you to stay beyond the time (8 weeks maximum) because it can affect other rotation opportunities or decision deadlines
- give as clear of an idea to you, if possible, if they would welcome you to return to discuss joining the lab after you finish rotations. Faculty may only have one position and have several students rotating; the best they may be able to do is let you know to come back and speak with them when you have finished all your rotations regarding joining their lab.
- to let you know if they had concerns about your rotation in their lab with the idea that you could use this information to improve in your next rotations.

If you decide that you would like to do a rotation with an ISU faculty member outside of Toxicology, please talk with us.

When should I set up the 2nd and 3rd rotations? This is tricky! Some faculty want to know within a few weeks of your arrival if you are interested in doing a research rotation with them so that they can schedule your rotation and design a project for you to work on. They will have other students meeting with them as well and they may only wish to have one rotation student at a time so as to be able to interact with you a reasonable amount during your rotation. We encourage you to talk with as many faculty in whose research you are interested as early as possible.

Okay, I have my two (fall only supported) or three rotations (fall and spring supported) set, but now I have learned about a lab that I might prefer to do a rotation in; what do I do now? Go ahead and talk to the faculty member about the possibility of a rotation, then decide if you would like to do the rotation and if so, where it would best fit (2nd or 3rd). Contact the faculty member whose lab you originally planned to do the rotation with and let them know as soon as possible of this change.

I started my rotation and it has been two weeks, and I know I will not select this lab; should I continue in the rotation? No. Begin looking for other lab rotation possibilities. As soon as you have located another lab you are
interested in, let the faculty member whose lab you are doing the rotation in know you are not that interested in the lab’s research and begin the other lab rotation.

**What if the rotation project I am working on runs longer than expected?** The purpose of rotations is for you to discover if the lab you are working in—the major professor, lab mates, lab culture, and the research projects are a good fit for you. By eight weeks you should have a good idea about this. Do not stay in the lab rotation for longer than 8 weeks; this may mean that you leave without completing the project assigned. Faculty are aware that you need to continue with your rotations since you are required to complete 2 or 3 and must make a decision regarding your lab by a specific date. Staying beyond the outlined lab rotation dates could mean that you will miss out on an opportunity in a lab where a decision is being made.

For students participating in 3 rotations: I really liked my second rotation and I let the faculty member know that. I am worried that if there is only one opening in the lab that unless I tell the faculty member I will take it, the faculty member will give the slot to someone else. I still have my third rotation to go. Most faculty members will allow you to finish your last rotation (as long as you are on schedule) before they make a decision as to whom to offer the opening in their lab to. Let the faculty member know you are beginning your third rotation and that you need to be in that lab for at least six weeks before you can make a final decision. Ask them by what date they will be making the decision. Most faculty will work with you. If they have other students rotating in their labs, they likely will not be able to make a decision until the last student has completed their rotation.

I really liked my second rotation and nothing could be better. I told the faculty member I would be back after my third rotation. Only now I really really like my third rotation and I want to stay with this faculty member and research project. We remind the faculty that they should not put pressure on the students to make decisions prior to the end of their last rotation, but sometimes it happens. If you change your mind, let that faculty member know. If you feel you need assistance in talking with a faculty member, talk with your temporary advisor or contact the Chair of the Toxicology program.

Finding my second or third lab is hard. I can’t seem to find one that meets my interests, indicates they have funding to support me, and is available during one of the lab rotation periods. As a graduate student it is your responsibility to keep looking and talking to potential faculty about research projects. You can contact your temporary advisor for advice and you can contact Linda Wild regarding potential faculty rotations. You are responsible for making the most of the time you have to participate in rotations. Students who have not found a lab in which they are interested and which is interested in them will need to make an appointment with the Chair of the Toxicology graduate program to discuss the situation.

**Opportunities to meet with faculty about rotations:**

Talk with your temporary advisor about what you are interested in and let them help you find the research and researchers you are most interested in.

Linda Wild ([lmwild@iastate.edu](mailto:lmwild@iastate.edu)) will have listing of faculty looking for rotation students

Read about their research and contact faculty: [http://www.toxicology.iastate.edu/toxfac.html](http://www.toxicology.iastate.edu/toxfac.html) and [http://www.toxicology.iastate.edu/toxres.html](http://www.toxicology.iastate.edu/toxres.html)

Talk to the other graduate students. Sometimes you will hear things about a lab that are not positive. Make your own decisions; what was not a good experience for one student, might be a good fit for you.
Rotation Checklist

- Discussions with individual faculty members. Faculty can provide curriculum vitae and recent publication references. We would encourage you to contact and interact with a minimum of three to five different faculty during the rotation selection process.

  - __________________________
  - __________________________
  - __________________________
  - __________________________
  - __________________________
  - __________________________

- Sometimes research talks given by faculty various faculty seminar series through TOX and through the departments are available during your rotation period

Once you have decided with whom you would like to rotate, follow these guidelines:

- You need to personally ask the faculty member whether you can rotate in his or her laboratory and before committing to a rotation, ask whether the faculty member will be able to take on and fund additional graduate students that year.

- In consultation with the faculty member, decide on dates to begin and end your rotation in the lab. If your rotation includes holidays like Thanksgiving or Christmas you should ask about the work schedule during this time and indicate if you plan to take any vacation days.

- Discuss with the faculty member if there is an expectation of a presentation or short paper so you can plan for this during the rotation. Also discuss with the faculty members their expectations regarding your work schedule (arrival and departure times in the lab).

- Rotation schedules are somewhat flexible. However, if you decide to extend or to rotate in a different lab than you had originally planned, then you must notify any faculty member whose schedule may be impacted by this change.

- Ask who your main contact in the lab will be during your rotation.

- You do not have to stay past the agreed upon lab rotation completion date to finish a project.

- If you know after two weeks that this is not the area of research that you wish to pursue, you should work with faculty member and the rotation lab manager to terminate this rotation. The IG program is willing to assist you in this as well. This will allow you to do at least 3 full-term rotations in labs that perform research in your area(s) of interest.
You must meet with the faculty member at the end of your rotation. Topics of
discussion may include

Your research progress during the rotation (Your notebook should be complete and
legible.)

What you learned during the rotation.

Which questions addressed by the research group interested you the most.

If you are interested in joining the research group, you should state that after your
rotations are complete. You may also choose to discuss possible projects if you were to
join the lab.

You should not commit to a lab until you finish your rotations. The faculty member may
not be aware of your rotation schedule and may ask you to commit to a decision
prematurely. In this case, you may discuss your interest in the lab, but you must state, “I
can’t actually commit to a lab until my third rotation is completed.” Remember that as
great as your present rotation may be, there is always the possibility that the next rotation
will be even more interesting or promising.

On completion of each rotation, your performance will be evaluated and the faculty member
will provide a written evaluation to the Chair. These evaluations will be used in the annual
review of each student. Although research will be conducted during these rotations, the
completion of a project is not required. You will be asked to evaluate the rotation experience in
an interview with the program Chair at the end of the spring semester.

The Interdepartmental Toxicology graduate program recommends students upon completion
of all of their rotations to ask faculty the following questions. Faculty will be reminded that you
will ask these questions.

- Should I choose this lab, what do you believe my contribution will be to the lab?
- What is the average time to completion of a degree in your lab?
- How many publications on average do your students produce during their training?
- Will you as an advisor be fairly accessible?
- Will I have the opportunity and financial support to present at off-campus meetings?
  Regional, National, International. Frequency?
- Will I have the opportunity to help and be mentored in writing lab grant proposals?
- What would be my employment conditions: wage/stipend, hours expected in the lab,
  vacation & holiday?
- Is this stipend a Research Assistantship or a Teaching Assistantship?
- Should I expect to TA while I am in your lab? How many semesters?
- What other course requirements should I expect to take that are specific to your
  department or to this lab?
- Do you have other expectations for your students, for example a field season, or
  collection times?

Once a mutual agreement has been reached, please inform the
INTERDEPARTMENTAL TOXICOLOGY program chair and program coordinator. Students
should initiate a “Request to Establish a Home Department for Students Admitted to Interdepartmental Majors” form found at http://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/common/forms/files/Request_to_Establish_a_Home_Department_for_Students_Admitted_to_Interdepartmental_Majors.pdf and bring that form to the TOX administrative office (by campus mail to Toxicology, 2102 Molecular Biology).
We hope that your rotation experience is rewarding and beneficial.