Choosing a Research Group: Rotations

*The choice of a research group is the most important decision you will make in your first semester of graduate school.* Get an early start on thinking about which groups you might want to join. Collect information from a wide variety of sources including the faculty, the graduate students, literature, websites, and faculty talks during Orientation. Carry out rotations in, and attend the meetings of, the groups in which you are the most interested.

You are required to carry out three rotations and interview at least five different faculty members before making your decision. As you narrow down your choice of groups, be sure to discuss with the faculty members whether they are taking students onto the projects in which you are interested. Let your top choice faculty know that you would like to join his or her group. Be sure to have a second choice in mind in case there is insufficient space.

Because of financial constraints within the department, you must join a group between Nov 2 and Nov 16. Your choice is not irrevocable. Should you later decide that you would prefer to work in a different group, you may switch groups upon mutual agreement with the new faculty.

**Rotation Schedule**

- Rotation 1: Aug 31 – Sept 18
- Rotation 2: Sept 21 – Oct 9
- Rotation 3: Oct 12 – Oct 30
- Rotation 4: Nov 2 – Nov 20 (optional)

Complete the [Rotation Selection Form](#) and email it to the appropriate path coordinator by 9 am on

- Wednesday, August 26 for the first rotation
- Wednesday, Sept 16 for the second rotation
- Wednesday, Oct 7 for the third rotation
- Wednesday, Oct 28 for the fourth rotation (optional)

After a group is chosen, complete the [Group Selection Form](#) and email it to the appropriate path coordinator. You will begin working in their new lab immediately.

To aid in the process of choosing a group, here is a list of questions you may wish to consider asking before you make your decision:

- Is the group right for you scientifically? Does the research interest you? Are you excited about the group’s approach to science? Are there several projects you would be eager to work on? Are there instruments or techniques that interest you?
- Does the professor communicate well with you? Do you like the professor’s management style? Will you work successfully with this professor as your research advisor?
- Is the group right for your personality? Is the group size comfortable for you? Is the group dynamic right for you? Are you comfortable with the people? (Keep in mind that groups change as students come and go; you will interact longest with students who are closest to you in terms of years in the program.)