

# Getting started:

## MCB and Neuro Rotation Reports at Brandeis University

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The information below was written by the Brandeis Science Communication Lab: [SciComm Lab](#)  
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*Welcome to Brandeis! This guide can be used as a starting place for a conversation with the PI of your rotation. Each PI is different, so it is important to ask what the expectations are for their lab and for your rotation. While current lab members may help you better understand the lab's culture, early and direct conversations with the PI about their expectations will help you have a successful rotation.*

- **Make a plan to work effectively**

- Identify the requirements and components of your program's standard rotation report format. Pay particular attention to the section names, length, and formatting requirements.
  - MCB: [2019-2020 MCB Phd Handbook](#)
  - Neuro: [2019-2020 Neuroscience PhD Handbook](#)
- Identify the date at which the report is due and start early: you will want to start writing well in advance of the deadline to produce a quality report.
  - The Introduction and Materials & Methods sections can be written before you have results.
- Identify people to help you write your report (Postdocs, Mentors, SciComm Lab Fellows, etc.) and make use of them.
  - Some resources, like the SciComm Lab, are better used early in the brainstorming process.
  - Other resources, like a proofreading classmate, are better used once the document is written. It is better to not pressure your later resources with a quick turn-around time. Also, buy people coffee and say thank you.
- Identify the resources from the lab to help you write your report (published papers from that lab, Ph.D. theses, lab website, etc). Read how the lab usually introduces, motivates, and explains similar work. Identify the lab's goals to help make your document in alignment with their research goals.

- **Understand the role of the rotation report for your PI**

- The PI wants to use the information in rotation reports (rationale, context for experiments, materials and methods, results, and analysis) to further the research goals of their lab. For this reason, it is imperative that your work is well communicated, comprehensive, and honest.
  - Explain how you planned your experiments and explain your troubleshooting process with such detail that a future researcher can replicate your work.
  - Make well formatted tables figures that accurately describe your results.
  - Use statistics to make claims based in reality. Do not overinterpret your data.
- The PI may use the rotation report as part of your "job interview" for a permanent lab position in their lab. For this reason, your judgement about your results and care put into the rotation report is much more important than just completing experiments.

- **Understand the role of the rotation report for you**

- The rotation report is an opportunity to forecast your potential as a scientist and science communicator. Attention to small report details may indicate your attention to the integrity of data.
- The rotation report builds your reputation in the research community. A strong and complete report communicates your potential as an independent scholar and researcher.