

Recommendations from IPN supervisors on how to find a good lab for your training.

A. Don't commit to a lab just because they offered you a position – you may feel grateful to have been offered a position but you owe it to yourself and your supervisor to make sure it is a good fit and that your expectations will be met.

B. Don't assume that you can make yourself tolerate what you perceive to be a problematic lab environment. Some of the most formative and influential years of your life will take place in that lab. Your happiness and the feeling that you are a valued member of a team will make an enormous difference.

C. You should definitely meet or contact at least 2 trainees in the lab. If the PI is reluctant for you to speak candidly with lab members, this may be a red flag (but might just reflect a new or small lab). When you meet with the students:

1. Ask them to tell you about the lab's culture. Is there a good, respectful, collaborative atmosphere?
2. Would the students still join this lab if they could turn the clock back?
3. Does the PI only focus on experiments getting done or does he/she provide a training environment that goes beyond work in the lab (ie. access to workshops, opportunities to give talks, understand that courses and conferences are part of the graduate experience, etc.).

D. Read the LOU carefully and don't be afraid to request reasonable modifications. A caring supervisor will put careful thought into filling out your LOU. Some PIs may have lab manuals or guides that they can direct you toward as well. Ask about these.

E. Questions to ask the supervisor when choosing a lab to ensure they can help you achieve your mid/long-term goals and that you will be well-supported:

- 1) What is your leadership style? (note that there is no right or wrong answer, but it should match your own needs).
- 2) How will I receive training in techniques that will be necessary for my research?
- 3) If I give you written work, how quickly can I expect feedback?
- 4) Do you have regular lab meetings? One-on-one meetings with students? How are they organized?
- 5) Will I get opportunities to present my work locally and at international conferences? For the latter, how often?
- 6) How would you describe the lab culture? What is the culture of collaboration?
- 7) How well do your grad students get along with one another?
- 8) Can you tell me what happens to your students when they graduate from your lab? Provide some examples of successful former students?
- 9) What are lab policies on publication and authorship?
- 10) What is the lab policy on stipend levels, fellowships and top-ups? Are these set by lab policy or by the whim of the supervisor?