Possible Questions to Ask on Visit Day

Below are questions that past students have found useful to guide their research group search. Different questions will be important to you, so don't worry about getting them all answered. Also, many questions can be answered implicitly through conversation. This list is meant as a guide, not as an interview script.

Questions to ask potential advisors

• What are some typical research topics for this lab?
• How often does the group meet as a whole? How often are individual meetings?
• How important are (number of) papers, conferences and journals?
• Will I be able to go to conferences (if I don't have a paper)?
• What are typical project / degree milestones and when are they achieved?
• Who directly mentors new students?
• Is there an expected skill set or knowledge?
• What courses have students taken in the past to help with their research? Which did they take once they started at MIT?
• What are the computing / experimental facilities and how do students use them?
• When do students usually take vacation and for how long?
• Are there certain times of day when students are expected to be in the lab?
• What are your views on internships or studying abroad?
• Where do most students go after graduating (large company, startup, academia, etc)?
• Does the professor expect to take a sabbatical in the near future?
• How do collaborations within and outside the group work?

Questions to ask current students

• Does the professor take a more hands-on or hands-off approach with the students? What are the advantages and disadvantages of their approach?
• What courses have students taken in the past to help with their research?
• How many hours do you work in a typical week?
• What do you do for fun?
• What is the lab culture like? Are students competitive or collaborative? Do they interact socially outside of lab?
• What’s the breakdown of students in the group like? Are there senior students that you can ask for help, or is the advisor the main point of contact?
• How long does a PhD take in this group?
• Is the professor tenured? Does this affect how they interact with students?
• What is something you wish you knew before committing to this lab?

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