Changing Your Advisor*

** If you are an international student, please contact the graduate student coordinator to confirm eligibility before considering any changes to your current program and/or advisor.*

As the advisor-student relationship is one of mutual agreement, it may be terminated by either party. If you decide that you would prefer working with a different advisor within the program, discuss this and funding opportunities with your prospective advisor before considering a change. You should also discuss this with your current advisor if it is an option, if you feel comfortable doing so. If you wish to transfer to an advisor in a different graduate program, you should contact your current program chair to learn more about their process. If your current advisor is the program chair, then contact the graduate program coordinator.

If you want to change your advisor, you must notify your graduate program coordinator and follow the procedures below. Please note that there is no guarantee in this process. Funding limitations and available faculty advisors may be limiting factors in being able to reassign you within the program. Please follow this process if you are eligible and decide to move forward with this change:

A. Reach out to your Department Chair, Graduate Program Chair and Graduate Program Coordinator to learn about possible solutions. If you are a member of the Department Chair's lab and you are looking to leave that lab then the specific degree program chair or graduate studies chair will be contacted instead by the graduate program coordinator.
B. If you are comfortable looking for a new advisor you may begin reaching out to faculty, if not, the Department/Program Chair may assist in helping you make connections.
C. If you find a faculty member willing to advise, ensure that they also have funding available. Before a transfer is finalized, a funding plan must be established that identifies the funding source and effective date for the new appointment, including any necessary transition funding. If the prospective advisor does not have funding but wants to advise, then inform the Graduate Program Coordinator and the Department Chair.
D. Before an agreement is finalized and the student is formally reassigned, the prospective new advisor will contact the current advisor to discuss the prospective transfer, including the timing of transition, research/project responsibilities and funding arrangements. The Graduate Program Chair will also notify the current advisor of the proposed change before the transfer is finalized
E. The student must notify the current advisor of the proposed transition before the transfer is finalized. If the student is not comfortable notifying their current advisor directly, then either the Department or Graduate Program Chair will work with the student to ensure the current advisor is notified before the transfer occurs. Once these notifications and the funding plan are complete and an agreement is reached with a new faculty advisor, the student will receive a new RA/TA letter for that lab and be formally reassigned. There are no restrictions on the time of year this can be done.

Every graduate student must have an advisor at all times, or the Graduate School may suspend them from their graduate study at UW-Madison. Be sure to follow procedures to select a new advisor

(described above) prior to finalizing the termination of your current advising relationship. You can confirm that the name of your advisor has been updated in the official record by looking in your Student Center on MyUW (my.wisc.edu) under "Academic Progress" and then "Advisors." Advisors are asked to continue providing the same level of funding for the student leaving their program for two months following notification of the advising change by the chair. The student will make every effort to continue to support the advisor's program during this time. If the existing funding source available to the advisor cannot be used to continue this support, the PBPG program will make every effort to cover the two-month funding gap.

Questions to Ask of Prospective Advisors

- What thesis projects would be available to me if I were to join your group?
- Would these projects expose me to a variety of different approaches?
- In general, how available will you be to answer questions I might have?
- What is your philosophy regarding the amount of guidance the advisor should provide to a student during preparation of the thesis proposal, literature seminars, thesis writing, etc.?
- What are your expectations for the amount of time I should spend each day/week in your group/lab?
- What regularly scheduled activities (e.g., group meetings, joint group meetings, research clubs) does your group participate in that provide an opportunity to get outside input on my research project and to hear about the work of other students and postdocs?
- Do you encourage your students to attend seminars and journal clubs, including those that may be outside of their narrow field of interest/research?
- Do students in your group/lab have the opportunity to attend professional meetings where they can interact with colleagues/researchers from other institutions?
- Do you include your graduate students in professional activities that will familiarize them with their field of interest/research, such as reviewing manuscripts and meeting with visiting speakers?
- How long do you think it should take me to get my degree?
- What are your former graduate students (if any) doing now?
- What is your general philosophy of graduate training and what goals do you have for your graduate students?

It is also a good idea to talk to current and former advisees of prospective advisors.

Policies

Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures