

Chemical Engineering Department Policy on Change of Graduate Advisor

When this policy applies:

This policy applies when a chemical engineering graduate student changes advisors during a degree program. This policy does not apply when a student completes a degree with one advisor and then starts a new degree with another advisor. For example, a student may complete an M.S. in chemical engineering with one advisor and start a Ph.D. in chemical engineering with another without penalty. This policy does not apply if the change is forced by extreme circumstances, such as the advisor leaving the chemical engineering graduate faculty. Also, a student may change advisors within a center or institute without invoking this policy, although the student or either advisor may request that the Graduate Program Chair invoke this policy in such a case.

This policy affects student support from department, college, or university resources administered by the department or an associated research center (e.g., research assistantship funded by grant to faculty member, Stocker fellowship/associateship, department graduate assistantship). This policy does not affect support from stipend or fellowship funds granted directly to the student by an entity outside the department and its associated research centers (e.g., University named fellowship, National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship).

Policy for a student who changes advisors more than once during a degree program will be decided by the graduate committee in accordance with the spirit of this policy.

Rationale:

A student – advisor relationship is a professional commitment that should not be dissolved lightly by either party.

Graduate students may have legitimate reasons for changing advisors during a degree program. The management style of the advisor and the work style of the student may be incompatible. A student may find, having embarked on research in a particular area, that it does not match his/her interests or abilities as he/she had expected. It should be possible for a student to change advisors for a legitimate professional reason.

The chemical engineering department has legitimate concerns about students changing advisors. Faculty members invest time and money and future plans in their students, making commitments to funding agencies and coworkers based on those students finishing their degrees. Aside from the lost investment, a student leaving disrupts the project and the research program. The department has a strong interest in discouraging “stipend shopping”, and in encouraging students to select an advisor and research project primarily for reasons of professional interest, since this will promote quality in thesis/dissertation research.

Rules for Changing Advisors

In general, advisor changes will be initiated by the student. If a faculty member wishes to cease serving as advisor to a particular student, he or she must provide a written explanation to the Graduate Program Chair. In such a case, the graduate committee will determine whether there should be any penalty to the student or the advisor.

A student who engages in unsafe or unethical behavior or fails to make satisfactory academic or research progress will normally be dropped from the program, not assigned a new advisor.

A student may approach a prospective advisor to inquire whether he/she would be accepted as a student. A prospective advisor is not obliged to inform the student's current advisor, regardless of the answer. The prospective advisor may consult the graduate chair about funding and stipend levels prior to answering the student. If a student approaches multiple faculty about changing advisors, the Graduate Program Chair may conclude that the student is "stipend shopping" and notify the current and prospective advisors.

The student must inform his/her current advisor of his intention to change advisors. The student may do this either before approaching prospective advisors or within one working day after accepting a position with a new advisor.

The student must inform the Graduate Program Chair when he/she has changed advisors. The Graduate Program Chair will notify the college and university of the change when the next Advisor Report is generated. Within three weeks of changing advisors, the student must schedule a meeting with the Graduate Program Chair and the new advisor to work out a revised timetable for procedural requirements (e.g., course of study, proposal, comprehensive exam). The timetable for the Ph.D. qualifying exam will not change.

During the first two quarters of a degree program in the department, a student may change advisors and be supported by the new advisor at whatever level the new advisor deems appropriate. Note that many offers of student support are conditional upon the student working in a particular research area or for a particular advisor. When a student violates the conditions, such as by changing advisors, the offer becomes void.

After the third quarter of a degree program in the department begins, a student who changes advisors must be penalized with a period of reduced stipend/fellowship support from department, college, or university resources. A student who changes advisors within the third or fourth quarter of a degree program will receive one quarter of reduced stipend/fellowship support. A student who changes advisors within the fifth or sixth quarter of a degree program will receive two quarters of reduced stipend/fellowship support. A student who changes advisors later than this will receive 4 quarters of reduced stipend/fellowship support. The reduced level cannot exceed 50 % of the previous stipend/fellowship level or the amount to trigger a tuition scholarship, whichever is larger.

The prior advisor is entitled to compensation for loss of the student, if he/she was paid from one of the advisor's research accounts. The amount of compensation is the difference between the prior stipend level and the reduced stipend level. The new adviser should contribute in this amount from a research or Research Incentive account to support a student selected by the prior advisor. If the new advisor does not have sufficient funds, the new advisor shall forfeit current or future departmental support in the appropriate amount, and the prior advisor shall receive current or future departmental support in the same amount. The Graduate Program Chair shall decide when compensation thus organized with department funds shall be paid.