

Advisor Identification Policy

Identifying a research advisor and thesis project is one of the most important decisions to be made in the process of obtaining a Ph.D. in Chemistry, so it is essential that students approach the advisor identification process with care. The department requires that all graduate students adhere to the following policy in identifying a research advisor:

1. Each student must interview, either individually or by attending a group presentation, a minimum of six faculty members. **These six faculty members must include all Assistant Professors in at least one area specialty** (analytical, chemical biology, inorganic, materials, organic, or physical chemistry). The Chemistry Department provides a form to record your meetings.
2. A list of all faculty in addition to their major and secondary area interests will be provided. Students may interview any faculty members in the Department, irrespective of area.
3. Faculty will arrange and widely publicize formal research presentations or alternatively arrange to meet with interested students individually. Times and places of faculty presentations will be posted on the Departmental website.
4. For those faculty members in whom a student has significant interest, the student should plan to have more in-depth discussions and ask questions. It is also appropriate to have discussions with more senior graduate students in the research groups of those faculty members in which the student is interested.
5. Although students are encouraged to begin interviewing faculty members early, no student will be allowed to join a research group before the departmental group-joining date, which is set by the Department Head. **For the Fall 2026 semester, this date will be Friday, November 6, 2026.**
6. Once the Department's interview form is completed and the group-joining date is reached, students may join a group. Completed forms should be turned into the student's respective area office. The student speaking with the selected faculty member and securing their consent makes the formal commitment. Although students do not have to sign up on the group-joining date, such action should be taken as soon after the group-joining date as possible, but no later than the beginning of the second semester. This action will ensure that the student will receive good advice about second semester courses from a research advisor and will have the opportunity to begin research during the second semester.

The Department strongly encourages students to identify an advisor before the beginning of the second semester in residence. If this is not accomplished, the Head may elect to withdraw Department support until the student identifies an advisor. Students who experience difficulty in this process should speak with the area advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies, or the Graduate Program Coordinator for assistance.

Students may have two advisors who will jointly supervise the thesis work. Such an arrangement, however, should be entered into only after all parties involved have defined the nature of the work to be done and the remedies to be implemented should problems arise.

For information about identifying a thesis advisor from outside of chemistry, consult the Graduate Manual or speak with the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Questions students may pose prior to identifying a research group:

1. How interested am I in the research?
2. Is there a trend in the career path of recent graduates and is the career path I am thinking of entering after graduate school consistent with this?
3. Is the group culture one in which I feel comfortable working for an extended period of time?
4. Is the advisor's personality and philosophy on education and achievement consistent with my own?
5. Is the advisor's style ("hands-on" vs. "hands-off") consistent with my needs and preferences?
6. Is the graduation rate consistent with other groups in the department, i.e., rate of attrition, length of stay?
7. Do the comments of new and senior students in a single research group conflict with one another?
8. Do descriptions and opinions of a research group by members of other group's conflict with those of the members of that group?
9. How well-funded is the group, and how often are graduate students appointed to TA positions after their first or second year?
10. How do I rank the importance of the issues in these questions?