

SEAS Recommended process for resolving conflict between advisor and trainee SEAS Graduate and Postdoctoral programs

1. If a graduate group chair and/or Associate Dean and/or department chair becomes aware of a problematic advising situation, they must (a) develop a plan to assess the situation based on interviews with the student and/or advisor and (b) act on this plan to provide a provisional course of action.
2. As a first step, the graduate group chair should consider convening the thesis committee to meet with the student and the adviser and understand the situation, especially in the context of the science. The thesis committee should act as an independent body in reviewing the situation and delivering their recommendations.
3. At their discretion, the graduate group chair may elect to act rapidly without consulting the thesis committee. In such a situation, the graduate group chair should consult the department chair and associate dean of graduate research before taking additional steps.
4. Any information learned in these conversations needs to be documented in an email to another member of faculty leadership, preferably cc'ing the department chair. However, the department chair may not be included at this stage if the concern is determined as minor
5. Another member of the leadership team should also meet with the student expressing the concern, providing an independent assessment of the situation. At their discretion, the second faculty member may either reconfirm or refute the concerns and recommended course of action.
6. If there is a dispute on action, the issue should be brought to a member of the senior leadership team of the school. This may be the associate dean for graduate education (if they are not yet involved in the process) or the senior associate dean. The conversation of the issue and subsequent action will be recorded to file.
7. Before any action is implemented, the faculty member that is part of the concern/complaint must be informed of the concern and the recommended action
8. Depending on the circumstances, the faculty leadership has discretion on the actions taken. The action may involve a formal mediation process, a reassignment of the student to another lab, or a change in the graduate group membership of the affected faculty. The action taken should be consistent across the school, and the graduate dean for education should be consulted to ensure this consistency.

9. If the decision is made to offer the student a rotation period to find another lab, the school will provide bridge funds supporting this rotation. The rotation period should not last longer than one year from the date of reassignment. The student must be informed of the bridge support policy.

10. A summary of actions, including bridge support, will be archived by the graduate program leadership. This information will provide continuity in knowledge for graduate program leadership. A copy of this action will be provided to the associate dean for graduate education.

11. The graduate chair will inform the student of their options at the time of transfer. If the student decides to transfer to another graduate program, or to exit the graduate program, the school will provide 3 months of stipend support to facilitate the transfer.

12. If the graduate program develops a pattern of mentoring issues, they must provide a plan to the school to improve the advising climate in their graduate program. At their discretion, the senior leadership in the school may elect to request a plan from any graduate group in the school if they have valid concerns.

13. The bridge support policy provided to students by the school may be adjusted for a graduate program if there are continuing concerns about mentorship that are not adequately addressed by the graduate group.