

MSEG policy on dismissing students from research groups

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Sometimes, a research group assignment does not work out well, and an advisor may wish to dismiss the student from the research group based on research performance (e.g. insufficient progress or an inability to complete tasks on time). Prior to dismissing a student for poor performance, the advisor must provide written notice to the student as to their concerns and how they can be remedied (i.e. a performance improvement plan) at least 3 months before the proposed dismissal date. This allows the student time to improve their performance. This performance improvement plan should be shared with the Graduate Program Director (or Chair) and Graduate Program Coordinator, who may share it with Graduate College staff as necessary. If the student has not met their advisor's expectations by the end of this period, they will be dismissed from the research group. Students may discuss the performance improvement plan individually with the Graduate Program Director (or Chair) if needed.

Proposed dismissal dates are at the discretion of the advisor but should consider student contract dates to the maximum extent possible. The advisor will provide support until that dismissal date and students will be expected to work on research until that dismissal date. Students who have received this notice also have the option to seek another research group during that time period and can switch groups at any mutually agreeable date. If the student's performance has not improved (to the satisfaction of the advisor) by the dismissal date and the student has not found a new research group to support him/her, no further financial support will be provided following the dismissal date.

An advisor may dismiss a student immediately in the event of egregious research or academic conduct violations, such as repeated or severe safety violations, harassment, continued unexcused absence, or academic misconduct. In case of dispute, the Department Chair shall have the final authority as to whether the problems are egregious enough to warrant immediate dismissal. In these cases, the department may not be able to provide any support for the dismissed student.

MSEG procedure for students changing research groups

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Sometimes, a research group assignment does not work out well, and a student may wish to switch research groups. We hope, of course, this happens infrequently. In general, we expect students to give their assigned research groups at least a semester to determine if the fit is reasonable, though exceptions are possible in extenuating circumstances.

Students who wish to change research groups should first have a conversation with the Graduate Program Director about the circumstances that result in the desire to change groups. This conversation can be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible. (Recall, for

example, that the Graduate Program Director is a mandated reporter under Title IX.) If the Graduate Program Director is involved (either as the previous advisor or a potential new advisor), students should instead meet with the Chair. After that conversation, a student can approach potential new research advisors, but as long as they are being supported by their current advisor, they are expected to be making progress on the project through which they are funded. If a new research advisor is identified, the student and advisor should again talk to the Graduate Program Director to ensure as smooth and positive a transition as possible.

This policy does not apply to students who are seeking a co-advising relationship. Those cases only need approval from the assigned advisor and the proposed co-advisor, but students are encouraged to notify the Graduate Program Director and Graduate Program Coordinator after such a relationship is established.