

## **DISSOLUTION OF A GRADUATE STUDENT/FACULTY ADVISOR RESEARCH RELATIONSHIP**

**Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, University of Maryland**

### **I. Overview**

The following policies have been jointly approved by the tenure track Faculty and the Graduate Student Organization of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry for the rare occasions when it becomes necessary to dissolve a graduate student/faculty advisor research relationship.

Either the graduate student or the faculty advisor may dissolve a student/advisor research relationship with which they are dissatisfied. It is important that both parties respect the needs of the other. The following policies are designed to help accomplish this outcome in a professional manner.

Cases that involve academic integrity violations or termination for cause are treated separately, in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Office of Student Conduct and the Graduate School at the University of Maryland. Standards for academic integrity are described in the University of Maryland Code of Academic Integrity.

### **II. Dissolution initiated by the student**

A student who wants to leave a research group is encouraged to discuss their concerns with their advisor and/or the Director of their graduate program before initiating the dissolution. Such a discussion can be confidential at the student's request.

1. A student who wants to leave a research group should give the faculty advisor at least 30 days written notice. During this period, the research work should be brought to a point where it could easily be passed on to a new person.
2. Students should be aware that it is not possible to make or break TA appointments in mid-semester and should plan accordingly.

### **III. Dissolution initiated by the faculty advisor**

A faculty advisor may wish to dissolve the student/advisor relationship for reasons that may include, but are not limited to, dissatisfaction with the research effort of the student, failure of the student to follow laboratory procedures as specified by the advisor and failure of the student to follow appropriate safety procedures. The advisor should make every effort at an early stage to communicate to the student the concerns he/she may have about the student's performance.

1. If the deficiencies persist after the initial communication, the faculty advisor should identify to the student in writing the unsatisfactory aspects of the student's performance and allow the student a reasonable time (at least 30 days) to correct the deficiencies. The student and advisor must then meet. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the document, identify the concerns, and describe the steps that must be taken to address them. The Graduate Program Director, or his/her designee, shall attend the meeting. A copy of this letter should be sent to the Director of the Graduate Program in which the student is enrolled.
2. If the deficiencies are corrected in the probationary period, the faculty advisor should

notify the student in writing that he/she is no longer on probation. A copy of the letter should be sent to the Director of the Graduate Program.

3. If the deficiencies persist at the end of the probationary period, it is the prerogative of the research advisor to terminate the student/advisor relationship. The procedure is as follows:
  - a. The faculty member must notify the student in writing, giving reasons for the dismissal and indicating a formal termination date at least 30 days after the date of the dismissal letter. A copy of the letter should be sent to the Graduate Program Director.
  - b. If the student is being paid as an RA, the student will be kept on the payroll for 30 days after the date of the dismissal letter to allow time for the student to obtain a new research director, unless a new research advisor agrees to put the student on payroll prior to the 30-day time period. Faculty should take into consideration that students generally cannot be assigned to a TA after the start of a semester and may need to delay the dismissal date for that reason.
  - c. If the student is being paid as a TA, the department will continue the current TA support until the end of the termination semester, contingent on the student meeting the obligations of the TA position.
  - d. Students who are dismissed from their research group may opt to obtain a Master's Degree if they meet the departmental and university requirements for that degree.

#### **IV. Procedures for students who change research groups**

A student who changes research groups must complete a new Advisor Selection Form, available from the Department's Graduate Office and Graduate Programs web-site. At this time, the student, in consultation with their new advisor, should reconstitute the student's supervisory committee if necessary, e.g. if they have switched primary research areas. If the student has already completed the oral candidacy examination, the student must submit to the thesis committee a brief (2-5 page) summary outlining the goals of the new thesis project and the methods to be applied, within four months of joining the new research group. Based on this preliminary information, the committee may decide to call for a brief oral presentation of the new project by the student. An oral presentation would be considered normal for a student who switches primary research areas or makes a substantial change in their research direction. Failure to obtain written approval from the supervisory committee within five months of switching advisors will result in loss of good standing for the student.

#### **V. Student obligations when changing research groups.**

It is the student's obligation to conclude their research in a professional manner that will allow the work to be continued by another researcher.

1. The student will give to the former advisor all data, notebooks, research materials, and research protocols in writing, arranged in a manner that enables continuation of the project.
2. All materials should be returned to the former research advisor before the student is put on another faculty member's payroll.

3. The student must prepare an inventory with the locations of research materials and this inventory should be given to the former advisor.
4. The student must clean their lab bench and/or research space and arrange for proper disposal of all chemical and biological waste.
5. Students must fulfill these obligations before they begin their research in a new lab group.

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