Doctoral Degree: First Year of Study

Selecting Courses, Housing, and New Student Orientation

Over the summer prior to beginning their studies, students are given assistance in choosing the Autumn Quarter courses most relevant to their field of study, and also with other aspects, such as a housing network to help them find a place to live or a roommate. The new graduate student orientation in September primarily consists of training in how to be an effective Teaching Assistant (TA) and in lab safety procedures, with some social events mixed into the schedule.

Selecting Research Advisors

To help incoming students select a research advisor, there are three Thursday evening poster sessions during the Autumn Quarter where Chemistry faculty and research group members describe and discuss their current and future research projects. The atmosphere is informal, and food and beverages are provided. Concurrent with, and at the conclusion of the poster sessions, students are asked to individually meet with four to six faculty members whose research is of interest to them. Students are also strongly encouraged to sit in on group meetings and talk with current graduate students. By the mid-November to mid-January timeframe, students are asked to choose a first- and second-choice research advisor. Students almost always get their first choice, but in rare occasions, a student may join the group of their second choice. The wide range of research interests and activities of the Chemistry faculty provides most students with multiple options for advisor whose research interests match their own. However, if this is not the case, it is possible for a student to choose a research advisor outside of the Department of Chemistry, subject to the approval of the Department Chair.

Teaching and Research Appointments

Students in their first year of study usually serve as TAs for the three academic quarters. After the first year, most students will be TAs for some quarters and Research Assistants (RAs) in other quarters, depending on the funding situation of their group.

Deadlines and Satisfactory Progress

Students are expected to make satisfactory progress throughout their graduate studies. Certain deadlines have been set for the major milestones, such as required exams, and there are basic expectations established for other aspects of graduate student life, such as maintaining a GPA of at least 3.0 (please see Elements of Good Academic Standing for complete details). The Graduate Good Standing Committee meets on a regular basis to review the progress of each student, in an effort to maintain good communication and to help students stay on track for a timely graduation. It is extremely important that students who experience any kind of difficulty, especially if it leads to missing one of the deadlines, communicate early on with the Committee to ensure that extenuating circumstances will be discussed and a mutually satisfactory decision made.

Advising & Support

Professor Xiaosong Li, Associate Chair for Graduate Education, and our Graduate Program Coordinator, are always available to
answer questions, sort out difficulties, and listen to problems.

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