

YOUR ADVISING TEAM

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Your Principal Research Advisor

During the admission process, you became associated with a **faculty sponsor** (or two co-sponsors) based on a variety of factors including convergence of research interests, preliminary discussions you had with that faculty member, and that faculty member's willingness to take on the responsibility. Typically, this person becomes your **Principal Advisor**, mentor, and eventually the Chair of your Master's or Doctoral committee. Students are required to have a Principal Advisor (or two co-Advisors).

The Principal Advisor's primary responsibility is to guide your academic development, monitor your progress, supervise, mentor, guide your research activities (possibly also support you with employment as a Graduate Student Researcher), and give you informed advice on meeting the goals of your program. In turn, you are expected to work with your Principal Advisor to achieve shared research goals, fulfill all Departmental and University academic expectations, and to maintain a healthy working relationship. This requires that you keep your Principal Advisor informed of your academic and research progress, and of any problem or obstacle you encounter. It also requires that you ascribe value to, and in general, heed the advice provided. You are not expected to blindly follow your Advisor's recommendations, but the academic process relies on mutual trust between student and advisor, including accepting that the guidance provided to you by your advisor is for your mutual benefit.

Changing Principal Advisor. Students typically keep the same Principal Advisor throughout their degree program. However, a doctoral student is permitted to change their Advisor when circumstances clearly warrant it, such as a change of research interest or an irreconcilable personality conflict. In such cases, a doctoral student may request that the current Advisor be replaced with one of their choosing, provided that both the rest of their current Doctoral Committee and the prospective Advisor have agreed. Changing advisors is a serious matter not to be undertaken lightly and should only be pursued when other options have been exhausted. Ph.D. students are encouraged to initiate informal discussions about the possibility of changing their Principal Advisor by contacting the Graduate Advisor or the Department Chair. Current and proposed Principal Advisors are also encouraged to confer with one another. The formal steps to obtain the Dean's approval for a change of Committee Chair require the approval of the Department Chair and that of the new Committee Chair, but does not require the approval of the Committee Chair being replaced.

Your Advisory Committee

Your Advisory Committee (often shortened to "your Committee") is composed of your Principal Advisor, plus two or more PhD-level scientists whose areas of expertise are relevant to your

research (see the Doctoral and MS sections of this handbook for detailed specifications for the makeup of Committees). Your Committee assists you throughout your graduate career by complementing the role of your Principal Advisor: providing additional advice, feedback, scientific insight, fresh perspectives, and challenging your assertions when appropriate. Your Committee also serves as your examination board and the review panel for your thesis or dissertation writing (and for other writings or publications when appropriate). The membership of your Committee is chosen by you, in consultation with your Principal Advisor, and subject to the approval of the Department Graduate Advisor, the Department Chair, and the Graduate Dean.

It is not uncommon to make changes to your Advisory Committee as you progress through the program—often because of changes in the availability of a particular member due to the demands of field work or sabbatical periods. The key to a well-executed committee change is to consult with all members and keep them informed of changes.

The Advisory Committee of an MS student is also known as the Master's Thesis Committee. The Advisory Committee of a Doctoral student is also known as the Doctoral Committee. The terms are essentially interchangeable.

Note that other departments use the term “PhD Thesis committee” instead of “Advisory committee”. We have intentionally chosen “Advisory Committee” to emphasize that the committee's mission is not limited to evaluating a student's thesis (a product that is generated at the end of your program), but more widely pertains to advising you in your research and professional development (a process that spans the entire duration of your program and goes well beyond the thesis itself). Students are strongly encouraged to reach out to all members of their committee for guidance throughout their time here; they should not wait until they have a draft thesis in hand.

The Departmental Graduate Program Coordinator

The Graduate Coordinator, a staff member (currently Quinlan Dougherty), advises students and faculty on administrative matters, serves as liaison between the Department and the Graduate Division, administers TAs and Associateships, and generally supports the Graduate Program. The Graduate Coordinator works with the Faculty Graduate Advisor in monitoring the students' progress towards their degree and completion of all required administrative steps along the way. Faculty and students rely on the Graduate Coordinator for information, but ultimately, it is the faculty who are responsible for graduate student academic advising.

It is important that you provide the Graduate Coordinator with copies of all relevant documents, as the Graduate Coordinator maintains graduate student admission, academic, and personnel records.

The Departmental Graduate Advisor

Every graduate program at UCSB has a Graduate Advisor (currently Prof. Lorraine Lisiecki)—a faculty appointed by the Dean of the Graduate Division, who is the official representative of the Graduate Council in matters affecting graduate students and the graduate program. The Graduate Advisor leads recruitment and admission efforts, counsels enrolled students, and guides decision-making for fellowship nominations and teaching appointments. It is the Graduate Advisor who reviews and approves students' examinations, advises them on advancement to candidacy,

considers their petitions to waive or substitute requirements or take leaves of absence, and takes other official actions. The Graduate Advisor's signature is the only departmental approval, other than the Department Chair's, recognized as official on forms and petitions presented by graduate students. Please note that some forms require the signature of your Principal Advisor (often as Committee Chair), while others require the approval of the departmental Graduate Advisor.

When you have a form that requires the signature of the Graduate Advisor, ask the Graduate Coordinator to prepare it for you (in either DocuSign or Gradpoint, as appropriate), so that it can be approved and properly added to your academic files in both the department and the Graduate Division.

The Departmental Graduate Committee

The Departmental Graduate Committee consists of approximately five members of the Earth Science faculty, plus the Graduate Coordinator and the Graduate Advisor. The Graduate Advisor is Chair of the Graduate Committee. The responsibilities of the Graduate Committee include reviewing applications to the graduate program, making admission recommendations to the Dean, conferring certain awards, making funding decisions, and determining policies and procedures for the graduate program.

The Earth Science Department Chair

Among other responsibilities, the Department Chair conducts academic planning, manages departmental resources (finances, space, equipment, etc.), and safeguards the welfare of students. Some graduate matters are referred to the Department Chair and certain graduate student forms require the Chair's approval.

When you have a form that requires the signature of the Department Chair, ask the Graduate Coordinator to prepare it for you (in either DocuSign or Gradpoint, as appropriate), so that it can be approved and properly added to your academic files in both the department and the Graduate Division.

The UCSB Graduate Division

The [Graduate Division](#) provides student services for all graduate academic and professional programs at UCSB. Its major subdivisions include the:

Admissions, Outreach & Diversity unit that administers all phases of recruitment and admission.

Academic Services unit (3117 Cheadle Hall) that monitors and encourages successful progress toward degree completion, enforces academic standards, responds to students' problems, and processes students' petitions and forms. Graduate students do not typically interact directly with Graduate Division's Academic Services until they file their thesis or dissertation. However, [Ryan Sims](#), Graduate Division's Academic Counselor (805) 893-2068, is an excellent resource for all graduate students. He can provide you with academic support, time management strategies,

effective communication skills, an ear when you feel stressed by your new academic environment, and referrals to campus services.

Financial Support unit (3117 Cheadle Hall) that administers student fellowship programs, certifies student eligibility for fellowship funding and graduate student academic appointments, and administers the remission process which pays for students' tuition, fees, and health insurance. The Department Graduate Coordinator is your intermediary to the Graduate Division Financial Support unit.

Career and Professional Development unit (1215 Student Resources Building) that designs and runs a vibrant program of workshops and events, fields a team of graduate student peer advisors, publishes the [GradPost](#) web site, and more.

The UCSB Graduate Council

The Graduate Council is a standing committee of fifteen members of the Academic Senate, plus the Dean of the Graduate Division and a representative from the Graduate Students Association (see Chapter 12). The Graduate Council sets campus policy for graduate education in graduate admissions, distribution of fellowship funding, appointments for student academic titles, degree milestones and degree requirements, and master's and doctoral committee service. Specific graduate student actions that require Graduate Council approval include (a) any student request that involves exceptions to Academic Senate policies governing graduate education, and (b) nomination of non-ladder faculty, such as lecturers, researchers, visiting faculty, and adjunct faculty, to serve on thesis or dissertation committees.