

Section: Combined Clinical/Counseling Student Policies

Policy Number: 713.4

Subject: Combined Clinical/Counseling Policy on Changing Mentors

Combined Clinical/Counseling Policy on Changing Mentors

In the psychology department, PhD students are admitted to work with a primary advisor who supports professional growth and oversees the development of research skills. While it is rare, students can change their primary advisor/lab as they progress through the Program. This may be beneficial if a student's interests shift or there are issues in the student-advisor or student-student relationship. If there is a poor fit with a particular lab or primary advisor, students can explore the possibility of moving to a different lab without fear of retribution or impact on their good standing or on their funding status. A student's standing in the program is based on their progress and specialization rather than their fit with a specific lab or mentor.

There is an inherent power differential in the relationship between primary advisor and advisee. **Students have the right to mentorship or guidance from their primary research advisor that is free from exploitation or harm (e.g., sexual advances, inappropriate remarks, humiliation, appropriation of your work).** Faculty in the Clinical/Counseling Combined Program have the responsibility to provide that. Keep in mind, however, that there is a difference between exploitation and harm and the regular ups and downs of the student-advisor relationship. The student code outlines the procedures for initiating a grievance - <http://studentconduct.usu.edu/studentcode/article7> and the School of Graduate Studies provides guidance on [student rights and responsibilities](#). The [Civil Rights & Title IX Office](#) may also be an appropriate resource for problems that involve discrimination or Title IX issues.

Doctoral students must have a mentor in their program or specialization. Before they explore changing primary advisors, students should work with faculty (e.g., primary advisor, Program/Specialization Director, Department Head) to (1) identify reasons for wanting a change, (2) fully consider the implications of a change, and (3) create a plan for a successful transition.