

How to change lab groups

I am having some issues in my group or with my advisor.
Where do I start?

What does this document contain?

Graduate school involves more interpersonal connections than many people initially realize. You may find yourself in conflict with members of your group or even your advisor. This guide is designed to help you find the resources to navigate these conflicts.

In this guide, you will find:

- how to officially change groups within Caltech
- who to talk to if you're having issues with your group or advisor but don't feel you can approach your advisor with your concerns

How should I navigate conflicts with my advisors?

Conflict within a lab or between a student and advisor is one of the more sensitive topics in graduate school. As in any relationship, there will always be some things over which you will disagree with your advisor. Some of these conflicts may be minor. If you feel comfortable, the good first step is to talk to your advisor directly about any concerns you have. A short, polite conversation can help mitigate issues before they become larger problems.

Sometimes you may have concerns that may be more difficult to bring up with your advisor. In this case, it can be incredibly helpful to ask a friend in your lab or a different lab for help. A reality check ("Is this normal?") can clarify if something you're experiencing is outside the norm. In addition, post-docs, who have had a different experience with their own graduate advisor at a different institution, are good resources for advice.

However, sometimes the norm for one lab may not be the right fit for you. In this case, you might want advice from a faculty member or administrator as to how to proceed. Many faculty members are very happy to help a student work through a difficult situation.

Who should I talk to about any issues I am having?

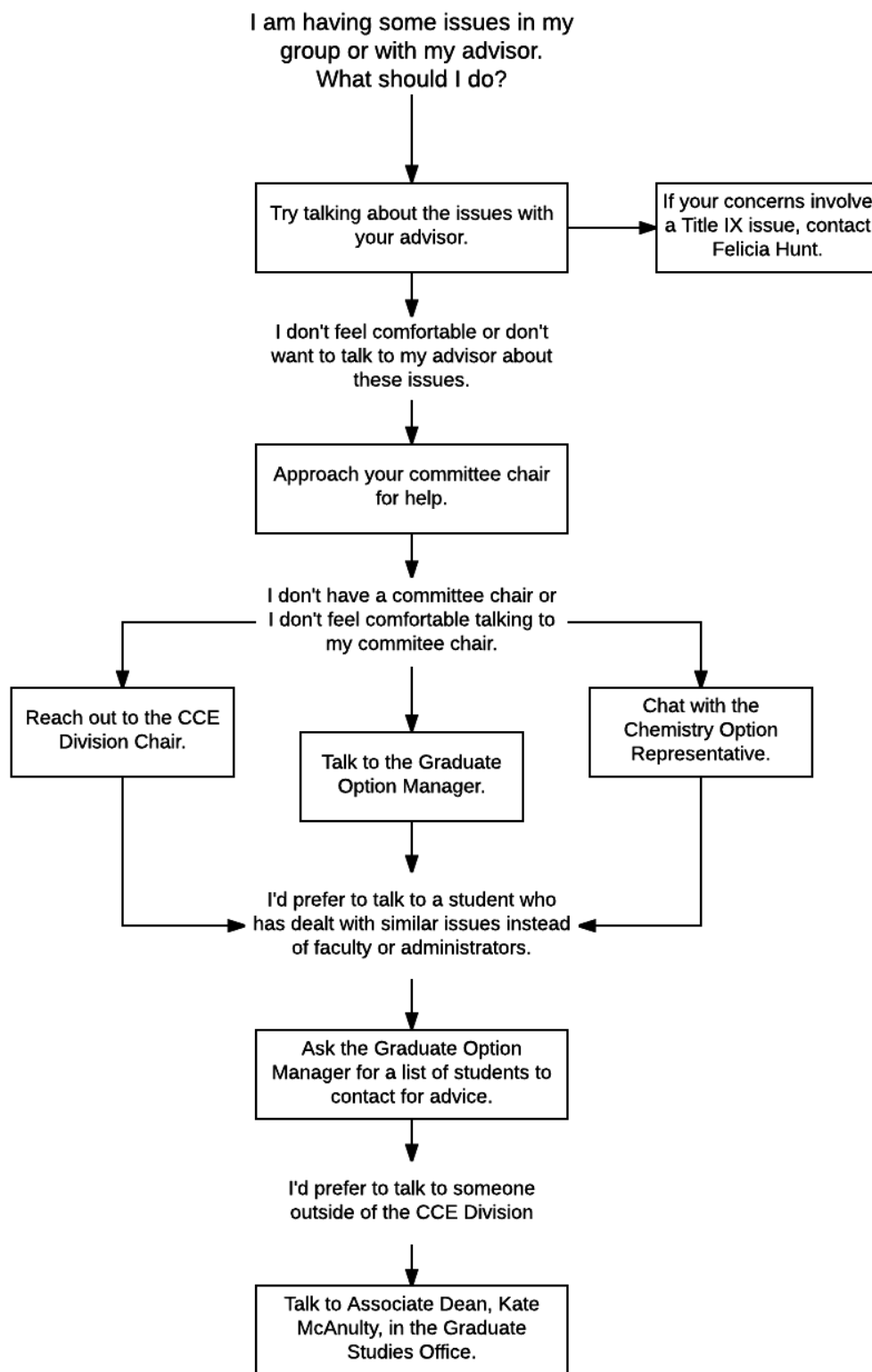
To simplify the process of identifying a contact on campus, we have created a flow chart of on-campus resources, which you can find on the next page. In short, people you can reach out to include your committee chair, a faculty member you trust, the chemistry option representative, the chemistry executive officer, the chemistry graduate option manager, and many others. Check out the next page for more guidance and contact information.

I'm considering changing groups. What should I know about changing groups?

As you think about changing groups, make sure you consider:

- research compatibility with a new group
- compatibility with a new group dynamic and a new advisor's personality
- availability of funding in a new lab

Remember the grass always looks greener on the other side so things may seem better in different lab even if they are quite similar to your previous lab. Take time to consider if a change is right for you.



Contact information for Chemistry resources

CCE Division Chair

Option Rep.

Executive Officer

Graduate Option Manager

Jackie Barton (jkbarton@caltech.edu)

Brian Stoltz (stoltz@caltech.edu)

Sarah Reisman (reisman@caltech.edu)

Alison Ross (aross@caltech.edu)

To officially change groups:

1. Fill out the [Change of Advisor form](#) on the Graduate Studies Office website under *Current Students, Forms, Petitions*. This form needs to be signed your new advisor and the Chemistry Option Representative, Brian Stoltz.**
** You can have the Chemistry Executive Officer, Sarah Reisman, sign your form in lieu of the Option Rep's signature.
2. Submit the completed and signed form to the Graduate Studies Office (2nd floor, Center for Student Services).

Contact information for additional resources

Caltech Counseling Center

626-395-8331

1239 Arden Road, Pasadena CA

<http://www.counseling.caltech.edu>

Caltech Center for Diversity

626-395-6207

2nd Floor, Center for Student Services

<http://diversitycenter.caltech.edu>

Caltech Title IX Office

626-395-3132

2nd Floor, Center for Student Services

TitleIXCoordinator@caltech.edu

<https://titleix.caltech.edu/>