

**Suggestions on making advising committees more effective**  
**Columbia Physics Graduate Council**  
**July 28, 2020**

Below, you can find suggestions that we have made in the past to the graduate committee, which we would like to see implemented to make sure students are getting at least minimum advising as they come close to defending their thesis.

- 1. Send another email to the student population with instructions and details about how the advising committees work and what the roles of each professor in it should be. An email could come from the graduate committee and another one from the PGC.**

This email should detail the role of the advising committee, how often it meets, how many faculty members should be in it and what role each one will have: the advisor, the external faculty member (if applicable) and the physics faculty member who is responsible for submitting the meeting summary to the graduate committee. The PGC email should include suggestions on how to pick these members.

The email should also include:

- Deadlines for different groups of students (see item 2 below).
- Members of the graduate committee, and the specific point of contact responsible for answering students questions in case something doesn't work with their advising committee.
- Responsibilities of the student, which are to form the committee and to schedule a meeting with the committee. In addition, the student is responsible for updating the graduate committee on changes to their advising committee or to their scheduled meeting.
- Responsibilities of the student's advisor, which are to help the student form their committee and make sure the meeting happens.
- Include the forms that will need to be filled out by the student and the faculty member responsible for the meeting summary (see item 2 below).

- 2. Advise second years/rising third years in advance that they should form their committees. Put a deadline on forming their committees and on scheduling their meetings.**

For example, potential deadlines for students to form their committees are August 15th, 2021 for second years and September 15th, 2020 for rising third years and above. For any students in their fourth or fifth year without a current committee, they too should have a September 15th deadline.

We suggest the creation of two online forms:

- One to be submitted by the student by the deadline of committee formation with committee members (identifying who the advisor is and who will be responsible for the meeting summary).
- One to be submitted by a committee member other than the student's advisor with a meeting summary once the meeting happens.

### **3. Advisors should be requested to be more active in the process**

Advisors can suggest committee members if the student needs help. They should also help the student schedule their meetings and coordinate with other faculty. Once the meeting has been scheduled, the advisor should send reminder emails to the full advising committee as the meeting date comes up. In addition, after the annual meeting, a committee faculty member from the department who's **not** the student's advisor should complete a form summarizing the status of the student's progress, including any concerns they may have about the student completing their dissertation in time.

### **4. Students AND advisors should receive a reminder from the graduate committee if they do not have a meeting up to a month after the assigned date**

If the graduate committee does not receive a meeting summary by the end of the month after it is supposed to take place, the graduate committee should reach out to the student and its committee about it.

The student is responsible for updating the graduate committee in case there are any changes to their advising committee or if their meeting has to be moved. The graduate committee might also send reminder emails to the student and their advising committee when their scheduled meeting date approaches.

### **5. The graduate committee should follow up with the student if necessary**

The feedback form from the faculty members of the committee should be saved by the graduate committee. If the form signals that a student may be behind on their work towards their dissertation, then the graduate committee may schedule a meeting with the student to ask what additional resources the student may need. This can include mental health resources or asking the advisor to meet more frequently with the student. Of particular importance is that this meeting is not punitive, but rather supportive of the student.