



The EECS Graduate Student & the EECS Graduate Counselor

As part of the PhD journey, graduate students will work closely with a research advisor who is a faculty member in the department, or who is a faculty member or approved research staff member at MIT. Such a research advisor/advisee relationship is very similar to an apprenticeship whereby a student learns to become an independent researcher. In the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) at MIT, a long-standing departmental philosophy calls for every new enrolling graduate student (SM and PhD) to be paired with an EECS graduate counselor. The role of an EECS graduate counselor is to serve the graduate student in a complementary manner to the role of the research advisor.

EECS graduate counselors are EECS faculty members, EECS lecturers, and research staff (who are approved research advisors of our graduate students); occasionally, administrative staff also serve as EECS graduate counselors. The EECS graduate counselor serves the graduate student beginning with matriculation and through graduation with the PhD degree, and hence the relationship is fostered over a number of years. Here, we offer the EECS department's view of the benefits provided by such a two-person advising philosophy for our graduate students.

Role of EECS Graduate Counselor

Some of the ways of engagement by the EECS graduate counselor include:

- engages with the student each fall and spring semester to complete subject registration,
- provides academic counseling for completing the PhD requirements,
- provides career advice and guidance regarding job opportunities,
- provides guidance regarding departmental and institute-wide resources that are available,
- provides assistance with personal issues as requested by the student.

Role of EECS Graduate Student

During the summer session, or semester, prior to a student's arrival at MIT, each graduate student is introduced to their EECS Graduate Counselor, via an email introduction. The match of graduate counselor with graduate student attempts to line up similar areas of work and interests whenever possible. Logistically, the fall or spring registration is completed during the registration period, and the graduate student/graduate counselor will meet one-on-one to begin the advising relationship. The graduate student is invited to reach out to their graduate counselor as desired. Beyond the registration meeting, the frequency of additional meetings, as well as manners of engagement or correspondence, are determined between the parties. Needs of the graduate student will vary in time and over time, and the graduate student is expected to initiate engagement when needed. As with any personal relationship, time and effort is needed from both individuals to ensure the relationship flourishes.

Occasionally, the graduate counselor and research supervisor turn out to be the same person, and in such a case, a new graduate counselor should be assigned. Additionally, if the personal relationship is not satisfactory, a different graduate counselor may be desired. For both circumstances, the EECS Graduate Officer will assist in selecting a new graduate counselor.

The expectation is that the journey of the graduate student as they work to earn their PhD degree is supported and improved with the advice and engagement provided by the EECS graduate counselor.