

## GRADUATE STUDENT APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES POLYMER SCIENCE & ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT (PSE)

Under normal circumstances, students who are making satisfactory progress toward their degrees are always fully supported on research assistantships (RAs) or on fellowships. The PSE department does not currently have Teaching Assistantships (TAs) with which to support graduate students. The stipend level (\$17,500 for the 2001-2002 academic year) is uniform for all students in the PSE Department regardless of which research advisor they work with and whether they are on a fellowship or RA. The stipend level is reviewed annually by the graduate program director (GPD) in order to ensure that it remains comparable with what is paid by competing programs. Adjustments in the standard stipend level are recommended by the GPD and approved by vote of the PSE faculty.

In January of every year, the GPD asks all the faculty in the Department to estimate how many new students they believe that they will be able to support in their research programs in the next year. This determines the number of students that the GPD will attempt to recruit the following spring for the next years' entering class. New students are only taken in the Fall semester, and they are generally supported on fellowships administered by the PSE Department in their first year. The duration of fellowship support in the first year depends on the funds available and fluctuates from year to year. The first year students chose a research project and research advisor at the end of the Fall semester. In order to help students make this choice, the PSE faculty give a series of seminars throughout the Fall semester in which they describe their research interests and programs to the first-year students. The students then fill out an advisor selection form in which they indicate their first and second choices. The faculty then attempt to match students to advisors and projects in accordance with the wishes of the students, to the extent that this is possible. Most students get their first choice, and some may have to settle for their second choice. However, due to funding constraints on individual faculty research projects, we cannot guarantee that students will get their first or second choice. On the rare occasions when a student's first and second choice cannot accommodate him/her, the student is given a list of faculty that still have space for new students. The student is then asked to choose an advisor from this list. A student's research advisor is responsible for RA support for the student once fellowship support is finished. There is never a gap in support between the expiration of fellowship support and the start of RA support. This RA support typically extends continuously until the student graduates.

The PSE Department guarantees support for all PSE graduate students who are making satisfactory progress for at least five years. Five years is the average time required to complete a Ph.D. in PSE, with 80% of the students finishing in between 4.5 and 5.5 years. Support is in the form of fellowships and RA appointments. The determination that a student is not making satisfactory progress will be made by the student's research advisor, thesis committee, the GPD and the PSE department head. Students who are not making satisfactory progress will first be given a warning and an opportunity to improve their work before termination of funding will be considered. A student may be supported as an RA after the fifth year in the program at the discretion of the research advisor. Practically, most students who have not graduated after five years continue to be supported, but this is not guaranteed. Students who leave the University and take paid employment while still working toward their degree will generally not be supported.

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