

# My research mentor is leaving OHSU...what do I do now?

Faculty change jobs and move to other universities. These negotiations can take 6-18 months, so there is usually plenty time to consider all your options and decide on your next steps. PhD students also switch labs, change mentors, and even transfer to other universities. All graduate programs and universities try to make these moves as painless as possible for graduate students. Graduate Studies will help you navigate your options.

## IS YOUR MENTOR MOVING TO ANOTHER UNIVERSITY?

yes

no

### Questions to raise in CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR MENTOR

Your options include:

#### 1. Remain at OHSU

- a. find a new mentor (go to 'steps to follow'; remember you are not on your own!).
- b. keep original mentor and find a co-mentor (same as above- go to 'steps to follow').

#### 2. Move with your mentor

- a. transfer your degree to new university (often possible to transfer classes and credits)
- b. remain enrolled at OHSU but complete research in mentor's new lab (often as a lab scientist at the new university; can hold DAC meetings remotely and return to OHSU to defend your dissertation.)

#### Notes:

Which option you choose depends upon where you are in the completion of your degree, whether you want to move, and whether you want to remain with your mentor.

**Graduate Studies** can give you advice, discuss the pro/con of the different options, submit all required information to the registrar and ensure your stipend, health insurance, fees and tuition are covered.

It is your **mentor's responsibility** to sort out a position for you if you transfer or move with them. If you move but remain enrolled at OHSU, there may be changes in which accounts will cover your stipend, fees, health insurance and tuition; and tuition remission. These may take a few weeks to sort out and Graduate Studies will work with your mentor to ensure a smooth transition.

If you remain at OHSU, it is primarily your **programs director's responsibility** to help you find a new mentor or co-mentor.

## If your faculty member is leaving OHSU (retired, resigned, died, left academia), DO YOU WANT TO COMPLETE YOUR PhD DEGREE?

yes

no

### Steps to follow

1. **Inform Graduate Studies** ([somgrad@ohsu.edu](mailto:somgrad@ohsu.edu)) you are changing mentors. We will meet with you to discuss options, and arrange to cover your stipend, health insurance, tuition and fees for a minimum of 12 weeks while you rotate in new labs to identify a new research mentor (see [PhD Student Stipend Policy](#)).
2. **Inform your Program Director.** They can suggest new mentors and help you make connections. They also need to approve any change in mentor.
3. **Inform your DAC.** They need to be aware as they can also suggest new mentors, but may also need to adjust your time line to completion, advise on research progress, and can offer advice about pending papers and projects.

Your options include:

#### 1. Switch to a masters

You can petition to change to a master's degree track. If approved, you have 6 months to complete and defend a master's thesis. (see changing major or degree in [Academic Regulations](#)).

#### 2. Withdraw

see OHSU Registrar's web pages for [information and forms](#).

## HOW FAR ALONG IS YOUR DEGREE PROGRESS?

### Pre-qualifying exam

Usually easiest time to switch mentors and begin a new project. Try to find a mentor with a 'shovel-ready' project that you can pick up and run with. Changing mentors early in your tenure here rarely has any significant negative impact on time to degree.

### In the middle

post-qualifying exam, but graduation feels a long way away.

Best option: find a new research mentor. The new project doesn't have to perfectly align with the current project- think about dividing the projects into discrete dissertation chapters. DACs rarely suggest a student start over, and can guide you in merging two projects into a defensible dissertation.

Students who change labs are always granted an extension if needed. Time to degree for students changing labs usually 6-12 months longer than students in same lab throughout.

### Almost ready to graduate!

It is usually best to find a co-mentor to help supervise so you can complete your ongoing research. First mentor can remain involved long distance, or new mentor take over completely.

Mentors usually make financial arrangements to cover graduate students they leave behind and who are still working on their projects. If not, the SOM may support students for longer than 12 weeks with approval of Program Director and Associate Dean Graduate Studies.

Time to degree is usually not affected.