

Group Joining Process – Fall 2025

<https://col.st/Mp2VT>

CSU Chemistry Department Group Joining Goals:

1. Students join the research group that they are most excited about.
2. The long-term success of the department depends on maximizing the number of vibrant research groups.
3. Students and faculty have sufficient time and engagement opportunities so both parties can make informed choices about group joining.

Group Rotation Guidelines and Procedures:

The Graduate Operations Committee (GOC) has developed a group joining process that facilitates (1) faculty-student interactions; (2) informed student choice; and (3) the discovery of the perceived best student/faculty fit. Research rotations are a key aspect of this process. In each rotation, students spend time gathering in-depth knowledge of each group's research objectives and culture/environment. The GOC compiles all group rotation information throughout the group joining process. The Department Executive Committee (DEC) reviews the group rotation data and makes a final decision (see FAQ section below on decision-making procedures).

- GOC assigns students to their first two rotation choices, considering student preferences as well as faculty preferences and availability/scheduling.
- GOC assigns students to their third rotation choice based primarily on student preference, but also considers faculty preferences and scheduling.
- During the rotations, students and faculty members agree at the outset on the requirements for a satisfactory rotation. The rotators' research priorities are with the rotation group; the students will not engage in research outside of their rotation assignment but may attend outside meetings/functions if they do not interfere with the current rotation assignment. Among other things, faculty may request that rotation students present or write up materials related to a project that they might pursue in that group.
- Students must satisfactorily complete 3 rotations before they can bid to join any research group.
- Chemistry research at CSU in the summer prior to matriculation may be counted as one group rotation.

The timeline below provides an overview of major activities and dates for the group joining process.

Timeline	Activities, expectations, and responsibilities
Week 0-1 (Aug. 18-29)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Attend all pitches and poster sessions (Aug 18-22)2) Students email at least 3 faculty members and set up meetings to discuss expectations and responsibilities for the rotation experience. (Aug 18-28)3) Faculty can email students to discuss the possibility of research rotations. Note, students are not obligated to perform research rotations with a faculty member who reaches out to them. (Aug 18-28)4) Rotation forms due Thursday Aug. 28 by noon

Weeks 2 – 4 (Sept. 1 - Sept. 19)	Rotation #1
Weeks 5 – 7 (Sept 22-Oct 10)	Rotation #2
Week 7 Oct 6-10 **GOC CHECK IN** ROTATION EVALUATION	Students submit Rotation #1-2 evaluation forms by 12 PM on Oct. 8. See FAQ section below on why the Dept. values students taking the time to reflect on the rotation experience. Students attend GOC's group joining "check-in" meeting from 12-1 PM on Oct. 10 in Eddy 100.
Week 8 Oct 13 - 17	BREAK WEEK Students submit Rotation 3 request form by 12 PM on Oct. 16
Weeks 9 - 11 (Oct. 20- Nov. 7)	Rotation #3 Students submit Rotation 3 evaluation form by 12 PM on Nov. 6
Week 12 GROUP JOINING DISCUSSIONS Nov 10 - 14	Starting on Nov 10, faculty and students can contact each other to set up one-on-one meetings. This is where students and faculty meet, review the student's career goals and research interests, review the rotation experience, review the advisor's expectations and mentoring style, and exchange information, views and concerns. They will discuss all aspects of the advisor/student relationship and experience moving forward—with the overall goal of placing each student in the group that is best for them.
FINAL GROUP JOINING REQUESTS DUE Nov 14	Students request groups by providing a ranked list of (3) research advisors to the Graduate Operations Coordinator by 12 PM on Nov 14
DECISION DAY Nov. 20th	Our goal is to notify students about group joining decisions before the Fall break.

****4th rotations will begin on December 1st**

FAQ - Additional information regarding the group joining process:

What happens at Research "Pitches and Posters"? The presentations briefly highlight advisors' philosophies, research efforts and opportunities for incoming students. Following the pitches, students have an opportunity to discuss research projects with faculty and students.

What is the rotation evaluation form and how does the Dept use the information? Taking the time to reflect on the rotation experience is an important part of group joining. We encourage students to perform a critical analysis of what they enjoyed about the research activities, their understanding of the research project, what they enjoyed and didn't enjoy about group culture and dynamics. The information gathered by GOC remains anonymous to the faculty and GOC, and will not be analyzed by GOC.

When can I discuss group joining possibilities with my potential advisor? Faculty and students can engage in group joining discussions during "Group Joining Discussion" week. Remember, a faculty member cannot promise you a position in their group because the DEC makes final group joining decisions.

How does the DEC make their decision? The GOC makes preliminary group joining assignment recommendations to the DEC. Next, the DEC considers the following in order of importance (#1) student preference, (#2) faculty preference, (3) ability to support students, and (4) past recruiting history. Note, the DEC especially considers (#3 and #4) when i) more than 2 students wish to join the same group; or ii) student preference is split between multiple groups.

Why does the DEC consider more than 2 students joining the same group to be a special case? Faculty members reasonably aim to ensure the transfer of knowledge from one generation of PhD students to the next. Since not all entering graduate students complete PhD degrees, faculty members need to recruit multiple students into their groups each year to average 1 student/year to avoid gaps in knowledge transfer. Given historical PhD attrition rates ranging between 20% and 50%, the DEC considers 2 students/year as a reasonable starting allocation for a faculty member for knowledge transfer purposes. That doesn't mean that faculty members are entitled to any students, or that they are prohibited from recruiting more than 2 students.

In the interest of supporting all research groups, the DEC considers additional factors (e.g., ability to support students and past recruiting history) when a faculty member requests more than 2 students/year, OR when a student's preference is split, and a faculty member faces the prospect of getting no students in a particular year.