DOCTORAL PROGRAMS
Guidelines for Choosing a Research Advisor and Committee Members

Program of Study
Your program of study is determined in consultation with the advisor who supervises your activities until the appointment of the doctoral committee. A doctoral program generally involves two stages.

The first stage requires at least three quarters of academic residence and is spent in fulfilling the requirements established by the Academic Senate and by ECE. When ECE considers that you are ready to take the qualifying examination, a doctoral committee is appointed. Immediately upon passing the qualifying examination administered by the doctoral committee, you advance to candidacy.

The second or in-candidacy stage is devoted primarily to independent study and research and to the preparation of the dissertation. A minimum interval of three quarters of academic residence must elapse between advancement to candidacy and the filing and final defense of the dissertation.

Doctoral Committees
A doctoral committee consists of five or more officers of instruction, no fewer than four of whom shall hold professorial titles of any rank. The committee members shall be chosen from two or more departments; at least two members shall represent academic specialties that differ from your field and one of these two must be a tenured UCSD faculty member from another department.

Selection of a committee needs to be made in close consultation with your committee chair. Selection of members should be from faculty who have similar research interests to you, and who will understand the research and be able to make positive contributions to it. Graduate Council policy states that the graduate research advisor should guide the search for other faculty to serve on a student's doctoral committee. In many instances, however, you will seek committee members on your own.

Your advisor recommends the proposed committee to the ECE Chair who, in turn, recommends appointment of the committee to the Dean of Graduate Studies. Once approved, you and the committee members will receive written confirmation. The ECE Chair may disapprove a doctoral committee.

Questions regarding the specific details of committee eligibility and selection should be directed to an ECE Graduate Student Affairs Advisor or to the academic affairs staff at the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS).

Doctoral Research Advisors
Selection of the doctoral research advisor is an integral step in your academic career. The advisor, who serves as chair of the doctoral committee, will guide you through your doctoral research to completion of the degree. You are advised to enter into the student/advisor relationship carefully and only after you have given considerable thought to your own advising needs. You are strongly encouraged to identify a faculty member willing to supervise your doctoral research by the end of your first year of study.

Several criteria may be used for selection of an advisor. It is best if you think out your expectations of an advisor before approaching the faculty member. The faculty member's intellectual and academic interests should closely match yours. The work style and personality of the advisor also needs to be compatible with yours. Students who want frequent contact with their advisor need to choose a person who is readily available. Some professors with greater status tend to have less discretionary time. The trade-off for working with them may be that you must work more on your own than preferred. Conversely, professors with greater status also have more contacts, both on and off campus and may be particularly helpful when it comes time for job placement.

When selecting an advisor, you should have several conversations with that faculty member to determine if the relationship is a good match. You also should talk to other students who have the same advisor, weighing their judgment carefully, as personality and work styles differ among students. Find out how problem solving, time, and conflict resolution have worked out with this advisor.