Faculty Advisor Roles & Responsibilities

As a staff member of the university academic community and SPE, the Faculty Advisor (FA) provides a communications link between the student chapter (SC), the university & the SPE section sponsoring the program. (The term Faculty Advisor is interchangeable with Faculty Sponsor.) An FA can become one of your chapter’s most valuable assets, if he/she is utilized to their fullest potential, the students will forge a strong relationship with a member of faculty who will share their success and act as a resource when needed. The FA should be seen as the mainstay of the Chapter, representing continuity from year to year as chapter members change. It is the FA who transmits attitudes, values and behavioural norms to the students. He/she must create an environment of trust, open communication, creative thinking, cohesive team effort, in which the chapter can perform independently and effectively.

The Faculty Advisor (FA) must exhibit enthusiasm and interest in the group and its activities, as well as be open to feedback from the members (be available and accessible). It is the FA who counsels officers on plans and operations, attends meetings, provides motivation and inspiration, and offers information and general guidance. The FA must be genuinely engaged and committed to the success of the SC in order to be able to generate a values structure (excellence, integrity, professionalism, life-long learning, diversity, volunteerism, innovation, social responsibility) and transmit it with passion, in order to form and inspire the SPE vision in SC members and leaders. The Faculty Advisor:

- Serves as the official, recognized liaison between the chapter and the university, and the chapter and SPE (local section). Ensures that at least one meeting per year is held between chapter officers and the Department Head (or equivalent).
- Advises the chapter on the Mission & Vision of SPE and guides the formation and implementation of the chapter’s goals, objectives, and programs within those boundaries.
- Ensures that the chapter understands the role of SPE as a technical/professional organization and is aware of the wealth of information available on the SPE website of use/interest to students.
- Encourages the search for, collection and dissemination of technical and professional development information.
- Counsels/advises student chapter members in matters regarding society policies and society-sponsored meetings. To facilitate the foregoing, organizes an event (workshop) for the incoming chapter (officers) to bring them up to speed as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- Attends as many of the chapter meetings as possible, in particular those held early in the academic year (chapter season). In addition, is available to student chapter members as much as possible.
- Actively promotes interaction and cooperation with other “local” student chapter Faculty Advisers if applicable.
- Attends local SPE Section Board meetings whenever possible. If unable to attend, ensures all decisions made at board meetings impacting on the student chapter are fed back and acted upon.
- Ensures the maintenance of a chapter “operations manual” containing important contact information, “do's and don'ts”, best practices, sponsorship history. This is particularly important in the case of “one or two year” chapters where written handover is critical to the success of the incoming chapter.
- Ensures that the chapter treasurer is aware of the mechanics of financial record keeping and budgeting and be proactive in advising the chapter treasurer at the start of the year. Ensures that the annual reporting deadline of 1 April is met.¹

¹The current responsibilities published are brief and almost certainly written with undergraduate (multiyear) degree programmes in mind. The responsibilities of an advisor looking after chapters in universities offering one or two year Master's programmes will differ in that there is not the opportunity to get to know/work with groups of students remaining together for four or five years.

Master's level students will be several years older than their undergraduate peer group and the responsibilities of the Faculty Adviser/relationship with the students should reflect this.

In respect on one or even two year Master's level programmes, there is a complete turnover of student chapter members. The only continuity with the local SPE Section, industry, other Student Chapters, and School/Department Head is the Faculty Advisor.