

Independent Study Courses

Independent Study courses are defined as courses focused on topics not currently available through existing courses but are to be offered only to a limited number of students (usually one or two). The Special Topics course title should be used where there is expected to be sufficient enrollment to warrant the scheduling of a regular section covering topics not available through existing courses.

Current courses whose titles do not match the generic title “Independent Study” but have had the same purpose should be re-titled. Current examples are courses titled “Independent Research” or “Directed Study”. Appropriate titles for research-oriented courses are described later.

Existing Courses, Low Enrollment

Existing courses that are expected to have a very low enrollment can be offered under the existing course number but with a unique section number identified with the faculty member. The section number would be the same as the unique section number that is used by that faculty member for supervision of items such as the Master’s Thesis or Doctoral Dissertation.

Independent Study Courses, Level and Grades

Independent Study courses may be offered at the master’s level or at the doctoral level. Those offered at the Master’s level should have a 600 series number and those at the Doctoral level a 700 series number. Existing university policy limiting the use of two doctoral level Independent Study courses toward the 700 level course requirements for doctoral students is reaffirmed. Department and programs may place additional restriction on the use of Independent Study courses toward degree programs.

Independent Study courses are graded using regular grades such as A, B+, B, C+, C, F, and I. The recommended course numbers for Independent Study, if not already used for other courses for a program, are 725, 726, and 727 at the doctoral level and 625 and 626 at the Master’s level. Only one Independent Study course may be used toward completion of the Master’s degree.

Research Course Title

Independent Study courses are not to be used as courses focused completely on research activity. Courses titles and numbers already exist for the purposes of providing credit for research activity at both the Master’s and Doctoral level.

Example course titles for research activity at the Master’s level are the existing 700, Master’s Project, and 701, Master’s Thesis. At the doctoral level, examples are 792, Pre-doctoral Research, and 790, Doctoral Dissertation. As noted earlier, titles such as “Independent Research” and “Directed Study” are not necessary.

Research courses are graded S, U, or P. The P grade is used only as the final grade after passage of the Thesis or Dissertation defense and acceptance of the documents in final approved form as determined by the research committee for content and the Graduate Studies Office for format. All grades prior to completion must be U or S.

Special Topics Courses

Special Topics courses are defined as courses on topics not available through existing courses and may be based on new scholarship or research discoveries. Information about the offering should be advertised in advance with the topics described. In offering a “Special Topic” there should be an expectation of sufficient interest and enrollment to warrant a regularly scheduled section.

Current course titles intended to serve the same purpose as a “Special Topics” course that do not match the “Special Topics” title should have the title revised to match the generic title. Examples are current courses titled “Selected Topics” or “Current Topics” or “Topics”. Current courses intended to serve the same purpose as Independent Study but whose titles do not match the generic title should have the title revised. Examples are courses titled “Independent Research” or “Directed Study.”

As noted earlier, the “Independent Study” title should not be used as a title for courses that would better be offered under the generic title of “Special Topics” and as a scheduled section. There is standing approval from the Graduate Council to allow departments and programs to offer courses under the “Special Topics” title with recommended course numbers of 698 and 699 at the Master’s Level, if those numbers are available in the inventory of courses for the program.

Course numbers 798 and 799 are recommended for “Special Topics” at the doctoral level if those numbers are available. The same Special Topics course offered more than once should be proposed to the Graduate Council under a unique course number and title. Special Topics courses are graded A, B+, B, C+, C, F, and I.

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