

Guidelines for Independent Studies for Professional Students
Department of Leadership, Policy, and Organizations
Revised Fall 2010

An independent study is a special project that a professional student proposes to complete within a single semester to fulfill an elective course credit in his/her program of study. Independent studies involve a student working one-on-one with a full-time faculty member in order to gain knowledge that extends beyond the courses offered in a particular area of study. Independent studies are not granted for work with adjunct instructors.

In order to be eligible for an independent study, a student must have completed at least two semesters, demonstrated strong academic performance—a B average with no Incompletes—and gained the approval of a sponsoring faculty member, the student's adviser, and program director. **Because we encourage sustained classroom interaction among students and faculty, there must be a compelling reason why the student should be granted an independent study, rather than enroll in one of the program's regular course offerings.** Therefore, there is no guarantee that an independent study will be approved at any given time.

Proposed Guidelines for Students

1. Students should request an independent study for *intellectual* reasons, not personal convenience (for example, scheduled courses do not meet at convenient times).
2. Under normal circumstances, the student should have taken an introductory course relevant to the topic, and ideally should have worked previously with the faculty member. The proposed independent study must not duplicate any course being offered in Peabody College.
3. A student should prepare a detailed outline of the proposed independent study that describes the nature of the project and the amount of credit to be earned. Proposals should be clear and explain the project, what the student hopes to gain, and provide a compelling rationale why the independent study deserves approval. Proposals should include key milestones, titles of books or articles to be read, the number and scope of papers/products to be developed, and other research to be conducted. The proposal should address how the project fits into the student's broader program of study and describe how it contributes to his/her intellectual and professional growth.
4. Before the end of the change period, an independent learning contract signed by the supervising faculty member and approved by the student's adviser and program director must be submitted to the LPO main offices.

Proposed Guidelines for Faculty

1. The independent study must be approved by the faculty member, the student's adviser, and program director.
2. The faculty member is expected to communicate often with the student to ensure that the work is at the same level of quality and quantity as any course offered for the same number of semester credit hours. Meetings may be in-person, by phone, or email.
3. Students requesting an independent study should develop a detailed independent learning contract that provides a clear statement of expectations and requirements, including the number of credits

to be earned, methods to determine progress, scholarly works to be read, time-line for completion, and a description of what the finished product will be. The faculty member and the student agree upon the contract, and it must be approved by the persons noted above before the project begins.

The contract must specify the number of credits to be earned. *General guidelines* for determining appropriate credit amounts are as follows:

One credit hour = 45-50 hours of work (including independent reading, writing, research, meetings with faculty member, etc.)

Two credit hours = 90-100 hours of work

Three credit hours = 135-150 hours of work

4. The purpose of an independent study is to support and enhance the intellectual and professional development of students, and should therefore be initiated by students.