

Guidelines for Independent Study for the Ph.D. in Education Program (EDUC 897)

Download the individualized section form: <http://registrar.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/IS.pdf>. The form must be completely filled out and signed by your Chair. Please bring or mail one hard copy of the form and proposal to the Ph.D. in Education office no later than one week before the start of classes.

Guidelines for the Proposal

Independent study courses are integral elements of a student's Ph.D. in Education program. These are doctoral-level courses designed by a student with the advice of an instructor. They do not duplicate courses that exist as regular university course offerings.

All Ph.D. in Education independent study courses must meet accepted standards of doctoral study and inquiry. Such courses should involve analysis, synthesis and/or evaluation of research, theory and/or exemplary practice in an area of inquiry or scholarship approved as part of the student's program of doctoral study. As a minimum, an independent study reading course must include a culminating project or paper, or other suitable product(s) which communicates the key learnings developed by the student. Where an independent study seems to parallel or include an existing 500- level (or lower) course offered as a regular class, the course description/proposal must clearly describe what distinguishes the independent study from this regular offering to make it a doctoral level course and worthy of being an independent study.

To be applied to the student's program of doctoral study an independent study in any area of study must be approved in advance by the course instructor, student's faculty advisor and the Ph.D. in Education Director. Courses not approved in advance by the prescribed deadlines will not be accepted as meeting Ph.D. in Education program requirements.

An independent study course may be primarily a reading or a research course. Proposals for each of these kinds of independent study courses use the same cover sheet but differ in structure, as follows:

1. Reading course proposals should describe:

- a. general theme or topic
- b. relevance to the student's program
- c. learning objectives to be achieved (listing what the student is to know or be able to do by the conclusion of the study that is not known or cannot be done--as well--now)
- d. learning activities to be undertaken or performed
- e. procedure(s) to be followed
- f. tentative reading list
- g. paper(s), project(s), or other product(s) to be prepared
- h. tutorial schedule to be followed
- i. evaluation procedures

2. Research course proposals should describe:

- a. goal of the research
- b. need/significance of the project
 - background of the problem
 - summary of previous related research
- c. schedule for completion of research
- d. any special sources to be consulted
- e. tutorial schedule with an instructor
- f. evaluation procedures

g. research design

- **problem/question (specific)**
- **hypotheses/questions**
- **procedures:**
 - data collection and analysis methods to be used**
- **anticipated results**
- **types of interpretation sought**
- **limitations anticipated**

Independent study courses are designed by a student with the advice of the course's potential instructor and, where appropriate, with the consultation of the student's doctoral program of study advisor. In addition, for each independent study course students must prepare a two to four page course proposal in accord with the guidelines presented here. Once approved and signed by the course's instructor-to-be, one(1) copy of the signed proposal must be submitted to the student's doctoral advisor. Upon approval and signing by the advisor, the signed copy of the course proposal and the individualized section form is submitted to the Ph.D. in Education Director for final approval.

Due date for proposal submission is no later than one week before the start of the semester.