

Frequently Asked Questions: Independent Study Requirement

1. Does my project have to be done in the summer? No. Opportunities exist during the academic year as well, although a summer is a good time for this. Remember that a summer project is best done after the first year and before the end of the second year (if you plan to do one while studying for Boards) as the rest of your summers will be taken up with 3rd and 4th year requirements.
2. Do I have to work in a laboratory? No. Many of the projects can involve patient-related studies that can be done in a clinic/out-patient setting, at a community facility, etc.
3. Does my project have to be published? No. Of course, if it is, that's a nice outcome. What is expected is a short report (15 pages or so – not a fixed number) describing the nature of the study, tools used to carry it out, data acquired and conclusions.
4. Will I get a stipend during the time I am doing my independent study work? In general, no. However, some laboratory-based work may carry a stipend if the mentor feels it appropriate.
5. How much time will this take? This is dependent to a certain extent on the nature of the study and the efficiency with which you work on it. Expect to spend about 50 hours (6 to 8 weeks) worth of effort.
6. Suppose I don't get data that allows for any conclusion to be drawn. Do I fail? Many experiments yield inconclusive results. If the experiments are well designed and controlled, even negative data can be useful.
7. How do I find a mentor? A mentor list is available on the web site – includes areas of specialization for each faculty member or department listed. Should you like to work with someone who is not currently listed, check with Ms. Judy Blooms for approval. Include the mentor's name, specialty, place of employment, where you will be working, and the project proposal.
8. When must this be completed? By December 1 of your final year.
9. Who approves my report? Initial check-off is by your mentor and then by the oversight committee.
10. Where do I find the forms I need for the proposal and the evaluation? On the webpage, <http://www3.georgetown.edu/som/curriculum/independentstudyrequirement.html>.