

Guidelines for Independent Study Project

In broad terms, the goal of this project is to have the student undertake an in-depth study of a topic, obtain or analyze data (if appropriate) based on a hypothesis, evaluate results and reach conclusions. At first glance, this may seem like a prescription for a laboratory-based effort. True – however, the laboratory may be a set of patient records, a group of patients at a clinic setting, assessment of responses to disease itself, or, indeed, bench research in an active conventional laboratory. The student is encouraged to think broadly but to maintain the goal of doing independent, self-study. The following should clarify most issues –

1. The topic is to be selected by the student and approved/endorsed by a faculty mentor. The latter can be anyone on the University faculty (this could include individuals from the law school or business school, for example).
2. The faculty mentor has the responsibility to provide guidance as needed and to help the student focus.
3. A list of available faculty mentors will be provided shortly – it is not intended to be exclusive (refer to item 1) in that someone not on the list could still serve in this capacity.
4. The student should prepare a short (about one page) abstract of the proposed study – if appropriate (most cases), a hypothesis, method of data acquisition and proposed analysis and attach to proposal form.
5. Do the work – time investment? The equivalent of four to six weeks (could be done over a summer, during an elective period, or in parallel with ongoing classes).
6. Write a short summary report. In some cases (laboratory work, for example), the contribution of the student may result in published work. The latter would be seen as meeting the requirement.
7. How long is a short report? Generally, ten to fifteen pages but could be longer, may well include some tables or figures. As with any such document, a brief introduction to the problem, statement of goals, methods employed, results and conclusions.
8. Approval process is two-fold: Approval first by mentor; then through a review/check-off by faculty (member of oversight committee).
9. Opportunity to present orally at planned student symposium during fourth year.