

GUIDELINES FOR ORGSTUDY 499 INDEPENDENT STUDY

General Requirements for Independent Study:

- Can be designed as an academic research project, or taken in conjunction with an internship or field experience;
- Must be proposed and approved IN ADVANCE of the research or internship;
- Must be supervised by an approved faculty member;
- Can be taken for 1-4 academic credits (not counted toward OS major);
- Must involve 3 hours work per week per academic credit (doubled in half term);
- Must involve at least 5 pages of written work per academic credit;
- Must involve a minimum of 30 pages of reading per academic credit;
- Must include at least 3 hours face-to-face student/mentor meetings per credit;
- Must be elected for a grade.

These guidelines are designed to help you think about:

1. Whether or not to pursue an Independent Study;
2. If you decide that an Independent Study is right for you, how to create a proposal;
3. How to approach a faculty member and design an Independent Study;
4. How to complete your Independent Study project and receive academic credit;

What is an Independent Study?

An Independent Study allows students to extend their education beyond the courses that are offered at the University of Michigan. Independent Study projects are designed to allow students to work one-on-one with faculty members to explore a topic that is of interest and is not regularly taught in a class at the University. Independent Study projects can be based in academic research or they can draw from field experiences in organizations.

The most important aspect of an Independent Study is that it is carefully planned in advance, to create a unique learning experience. Independent Study credits cannot involve material that is duplicated by any course offered in the program. Independent Study projects must be conducted in conjunction with faculty members, who supervise and evaluate the students' work. Independent Study projects require advance planning and faculty approval before you may register for academic units.

Who can do an Independent Study?

Any Organizational Studies student can write a proposal for an Independent Study. Non-OS students may also be allowed to use OS 499 if working with an OS faculty member. Independent Study is particularly useful for:

- Students who want to pursue internships and extend their internships into field learning experiences by doing additional reading and writing;
- Students who are interested in applying to graduate school and/or who want to gain academic research experience;
- Students who want to demonstrate and document their competence in working independently and pursuing self-directed study.

How do I get ideas for an Independent Study?

Independent Study projects often develop from a course you are taking or from a field experience you are planning. The most common ways to get ideas for Independent Study are:

1. To develop research ideas with a faculty member who is interested in the same research topics;
2. To develop an idea for research in conjunction with a faculty member whose course you are taking;
3. To develop an idea for an extension of a course, covering topics not currently offered in the program;
4. To develop an internship or field experience into an academic project by adding additional reading, writing, and reflection.

How do I design an Independent Study for academic research?

You might want to gain **academic research experience** in order to understand the research process better. Anyone who is interested in applying to graduate school may want to get academic credit for research. An Independent Study project demonstrates on your transcript that you have engaged in research. Students who are working with a faculty member on an academic research project or in a research lab are eligible to get Independent Study credit for their work.

Academic research Independent Study projects often develop from:

- An idea that you have as you complete your coursework;
- Expanding on a paper or project you started in a course;
- Building on ideas related to faculty research topics or an internship experience;

Steps to take for pursuing an academic research Independent Study Project:

- *Fill out the Independent Study form and begin to outline an Independent Study Proposal.* Your proposal should end up being about 2 pages long. Developing the proposal will help you think through whether or not your curiosity is substantial enough to warrant an Independent Study project. It will also help you organize your ideas before you approach a faculty supervisor.
- *Identify a faculty supervisor*
You probably already know a faculty member or a GSI who taught a course related to your topic. Your faculty supervisor may come from any department. (If you are a non-OS student, your faculty supervisor must be from OS to use the OS 499 number).
- *Approach a faculty supervisor and complete the Independent Study Enrollment form*
Be sure to understand the faculty member's interests and needs as you think about designing an Independent Study project. Organize your ideas and be clear about what you'd like to do before you approach a faculty supervisor. Be open to new ideas or to changing your proposal based on faculty input and advice. In general, it is best to be prepared to present your ideas well, relate them to the faculty member's interests, and have ideas about the kind of paper or product you will create at the end of the project. This will allow the faculty supervisor to be better able to help you. (See "Tips for Approaching Faculty Supervisors" at the end of this document.)

How do I design an Independent Study for an internship?

You might be preparing for an **internship or other field experience** and want to turn it into an Independent Study project. In order to do this, you need to identify what it is about the field experience that will help you learn about a specific organizational topic. Completing the Internship/Independent Study Workbook will help you organize your thoughts and move forward with the process (see Internship section of OS website for workbook link).

What are the requirements for an Independent Study?

In order to adequately fulfill the requirements for an Independent Study in Organizational Studies you must do the following:

- Work on the project **at least 3 hours per week per academic credit** that you are registered for Independent Study (doubled in spring/summer half terms).
- Meet with your faculty supervisor face-to-face for **at least three hours per academic credit**, to ensure adequate guidance and agreement on project work.
- Read materials related to your Independent Study topic. Reading material that is appropriate for your topic will be designed in collaboration with your faculty supervisor. **Suggested reading length is 30 pages per academic credit**, although length will vary according to the type of project.
- Write a summary of your Independent Study project or an academic research paper related to your topic. **Suggested length is 5 pages per academic credit**, but the format and length of your written summary will vary by project.

How many Independent Study units can I count toward my degree?

In LS&A generally, a combined total of 30 credits of experiential and Directed Reading/Independent Study courses may be counted in the 120 credits required for a degree.

How many Independent Study units can I count toward my OS Major?

Due to variability in topics and credits earned, OS 499 does not count toward the OS major. Students may submit a petition for OS 499 if they wish to receive credit toward the major (see petitioning instructions on the OS website), and the petition must be approved for credit to be granted toward the major. If you pursue an Independent Study project through another department, it must be petitioned and approved to count toward your OS major.

Can you be paid for an internship and still receive academic credit?

Yes. Since academic credit is awarded for your reading, writing, and reflection on an internship experience, it is possible to receive academic credit for paid internships. Academic credit will be awarded based on your performance on the requirements listed in your proposal, including time spent on the project, reading related material, and writing a summary paper. For information on how to combine an Independent Study project with an internship, please refer to the Internship/Independent Study Workbook in the Internship section of the OS website.

How do I register for an Independent Study?

There are a series of steps to follow in order to gain an approval to register for ORGSTUDY 499:

- Create a 2-page proposal that describes your intended Independent Study project;
- Identify a faculty supervisor who can help you form the project and evaluate your work;
- Approach your faculty supervisor with your proposal draft;
- Modify your proposal based on your faculty supervisor's feedback;
- Fill out the Independent Study Enrollment Form (available on the OS website) in conjunction with your faculty supervisor, and obtain their signature;
- Turn in your signed Enrollment Form and proposal at the OS Program Office;
- If approved, you will be issued a permission for your individual OS 499 section.
- Register online; remember that OS 499 must be taken for a grade

Tips for Approaching Faculty Supervisors

- Outline your ideas for an Independent Study proposal before talking with a potential faculty supervisor. Prepare a plan for the type of research you would like to conduct and the kind of paper you would like to write. The more prepared you are for your first conversation with your potential faculty supervisor, the more likely you will be to convince a faculty member of the merit of your ideas.
- Identify a faculty supervisor with shared interests. Faculty supervisors will feel more comfortable with projects when they have knowledge about the topic area.
- Be ready and willing to revise your proposal. A faculty supervisor will often give you new things to think about and new perspectives on your proposed topic. It is common to write several drafts of a proposal. Be willing to persevere!
- Don't expect to be able to answer all of the faculty member's questions in the first meeting you have. Some questions will take thought and research. It's okay if you don't have all the answers.
- Bring a copy of these guidelines and the enrollment form with you to give to the faculty member. He or she might not know all of the OS requirements