

GUIDELINES FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY IN PSYCHOLOGY

The Psychology Department offers the opportunity for students to work individually with faculty members on projects that do not fall within the domain of research independent study in Psychology using courses entitled *Independent Study* (IS). Whereas Research Independent Study (RIS) courses culminate with a final written product, the final product for IS courses depends on the nature of the project and must be clearly described in the proposal. See the IS and RIS comparison table below.

Requirements for the Major: Up to two independent study courses (RIS or IS) may count toward the Psychology major or minor. Also, up to one independent study course (RIS or IS) may be used to fulfill the Depth Requirement for the psychology major. Students should indicate on the proposal form the depth area for the IS course, as such credit will not be applied automatically.

General Education Codes: IS courses satisfy the Small Group Learning Experience (SGLE) requirement, but do not bear any other general education code including Research (R) code or Writing (W).

Service Learning: One or more IS courses may be approved for the Service Learning (SL) code, depending on the nature of the project. Students who wish to request the SL code for one or more IS course in psychology must follow the [criteria](#) set by the Service Learning committee and describe these criteria in the description area of the IS proposal form. The Office of Undergraduate Studies in Psychology will submit the official SL request to the Service Learning Committee, after the proposal is approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Because the SL code requires more time to be approved, students considering this code should submit their IS proposals by one week before the last day of Drop/Add for the semester they wish to enroll.

Please note that Trinity College has general guidelines for students seeking Independent Study credits at Duke (see [here](#)). The guidelines provided in this document apply for students considering Independent Study in the Psychology Department.

Policies:

Faculty Appointment – The supervising faculty member must hold an appointment within Duke’s Psychology & Neuroscience Department (P&N). Students should contact psychologyDUS@duke.edu to consult with the Office of Undergraduate Studies in Psychology if they have questions about the possibility of working with a faculty member outside of P&N.

Meeting Schedule – In addition to the individual effort of the student (an average of 10 hours of work/week), the student will meet with his or her supervising faculty member at least once every two weeks during the fall or spring semester, or at least once per week during the summer.

Course Content / Quality – The Independent Study must provide a rigorous academic experience equivalent to that of any other undergraduate course at Duke. Independent Study courses may not duplicate available course offerings during the term in which the Independent Study is being taken, nor may Independent Study be used simply to provide low-level support for other projects or to observe or shadow the work of others.

Final Product – The final product depends on the nature of the project. If the student plans to complete the research over a period of two or more semesters, he or she must specify in each IS proposal the nature of the final product to be presented at the end of each semester. A copy of the student’s final product will be submitted to the instructor, and an electronic copy will be submitted to the Office of Undergraduate Studies at psychologyDUS@duke.edu. The specific due date will be negotiated with the instructor.

Grading – A final grade will be based on completion of agreed outcomes set forth in the proposal and will depend on the nature of the project, course goals, and the learning activities identified (e.g., reading, writing, volunteering, producing a creative piece, etc.).

Approval – Before submitting a proposal for Independent Study, students must meet with their supervising faculty member to make sure both parties fully understand the guidelines listed in this document, paying special attention to commitments related to meetings and progress on the final product.

Procedures - Students will submit their proposals online [here](#). Proposals are due by noon on the last day of Drop/Add for the semester the student wishes to enroll (unless they wish to add the SL code, in which case the proposal needs to be submitted one week before the last day of Drop/Add). While a signature from the supervising faculty member is not required, we expect students to follow Duke's honor code policy and not submit proposals without the supervising faculty member's consent. Proposals will be reviewed by the Director of Undergraduate Studies, and once the proposal is approved, the student will receive a permission number to enroll in the course.

For policies and procedures related to Independent Study in Study Abroad Programs, see the [Duke Abroad Handbook](#).

INDEPENDENT STUDY OVERVIEW

Getting Started	Discuss possible projects with relevant faculty Establish an agreement for working together Complete the Independent Study proposal form
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INDEPENDENT STUDY vs. RESEARCH INDEPENDENT STUDY

	Independent Study (IS)	Research Independent Study (RIS)
Goals	Develop skills in taking initiative, setting goals, communicating clearly, and thinking collaboratively with others, as applied to each specific project.	Learn how to develop a research question, study it, and report results
Duration	One or more semesters (only two count toward the major); student and instructor meet at least every other week	
Types	Depends on the nature of the project. For example, students may work with faculty to develop and facilitate an original course for their peers, create a new program or intervention for the community, or design a new resource that communicates psychological findings to the public.	<i>Empirical Project</i> , with original data collection and analysis; or secondary analysis of existing data; <i>Literature Review</i> (review and synthesis article)
Product	Depends on the nature of the project. If the student plans to complete the course over a period of two or more semesters, he or she must submit, a detailed progress report at the end of each semester to show evidence of partial project completion. Students must specify in each IS proposal what final product will be presented at the end of each semester.	<i>Empirical Project</i> : approximately 15-25 pages of text, plus references and figures/tables as relevant; <i>Literature Review</i> : minimum 20 pages, plus references. If the student plans to complete the research over a period of two or more semesters, he or she must complete a final paper to be graded at the end of each term. For example, a student completing an empirical project may submit the introduction and methods of research at the end of the first semester, and the final draft of the complete manuscript at the end of the second semester.
Prerequisites	Declared psychology major or completion of at least two courses relevant for the project if not pursuing the psychology major	
Course Numbers	Before Senior Year: 391 fall/392 spring During Senior Year: 491 fall/492 spring	Before Senior Year: 393 fall/394 spring During Senior Year: 493 fall/494 spring