

PROCEDURES AND POLICIES FOR RESEARCH INDEPENDENT STUDY IN PSYCHOLOGY

Courses entitled Research Independent Study (RIS) involve individual research in a field of special interest under the supervision of a faculty member, the central goal of which is a substantive literature review or write-up of an empirical study. Such Research Independent Study courses bear a Research (R) code and thus satisfy general education research requirements. One RIS may be approved for a Writing (W) code in addition to the R code, but no other curriculum code designations are permitted for RIS courses. For students who matriculated prior to Summer 2018, one RIS also may be used to fulfill the major's Depth Requirement (the Depth requirement does not apply to students who matriculated from Summer 2018 onward). Students should indicate on the proposal form (<http://bit.ly/RIS-Form>) if they would like the RIS course to count towards the Depth Requirement, as such credit will not be given automatically. Students who wish to request a W code for one RIS course must submit a request [form](#) to the Undergraduate Psychology Office (235 Soc/Psych), in addition to completing the proposal. All forms are due at least one week before the end of Drop/Add.

Students interested in completing a significant research project during their undergraduate career may want to consider the Graduation with Distinction Program (GwD). This is especially important for students planning to pursue graduate school in psychology, but is recommended for any student with a strong interest in research. The table on the following page offers a comparison of requirements for Research Independent Study and GwD.

Procedures

- Students wishing to register for a Research Independent Study first must make arrangements with a faculty member having expertise in the desired area. The student and faculty supervisor should agree on the course title, plan of study, objectives, and expectations, as well as on the nature of the final product and the criteria for evaluating it. This information will be specified on the application form.
- The student must submit the Research Independent Study proposal form (<http://bit.ly/RIS-Form>) at least one week before the end of Drop/Add for the term in which the RIS is to be taken. After the form is processed, the student will receive a permission number to register for the course.

Policies

Approval – The Research Independent Study proposal must be negotiated with/reviewed by the faculty supervisor(s) involved. There is no need to get the DUS's signature before submitting the proposal. If there is any problem with the proposal, the Undergraduate Psychology Office will get in touch with the student.

Faculty Supervisor – The Research Independent Study is generally supervised by a faculty member who holds a primary or joint graduate training faculty appointment within Duke's Psychology & Neuroscience Department. In some cases, a faculty member holding a primary appointment outside P&N may supervise the bulk of the RIS, either with special approval from the DUS, or with another faculty member serving as the "instructor of record." The instructor of record is responsible for submitting the final grade, and ensuring that the research supervisor adheres to the policies and procedures outlined in this document.

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

Work/Meeting Schedule – The student is expected to work an average of at least 10 hours per week on his or her project. Furthermore, the student and faculty supervisor must meet at least once every two weeks during the fall or spring semester, or at least once per week during the summer.

Final Product – The student will produce a final academic paper (e.g., empirical paper, literature review) before the end of the term. The specific due date will be negotiated with the faculty supervisor.

Grading – The faculty supervisor will evaluate the work the student has performed, including the final paper, and submit a grade at the end of the term. If the research supervisor is someone other than the instructor of record, this supervisor will communicate the final grade to the instructor of record, and the instructor of record will submit the final grade.

* For policies and procedures related to research independent study courses in Study Abroad/Away Programs, see the [Global Education Office \(GEO\) Semester Handbook](#) and the [GEO Summer Handbook](#).

Comparison: Research Independent Study and Graduation with Distinction

Getting Started	<p>Consider topics/areas that interest you most</p> <p>Learn about faculty research interests on the P&N website, 'People' tab</p> <p>Discuss possible projects with relevant faculty</p> <p>Establish an agreement for working together</p> <p>Complete the Research Independent Study proposal form</p>
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	Research Independent Study	Graduation with Distinction
Goals	Learn how to develop a research question, study it, and report the results	Develop an original research question, test it empirically (with data analysis), write a thesis for a professional audience and possible publication, and complete an oral exam
Duration	One or more semesters (only two count toward the major); Student and faculty supervisor meet at least every other week	Minimum of two semesters (only two count toward the major); Student and faculty supervisor meet at least every other week
Final Product	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.	
Types	Empirical Project , with original data collection and analysis; or secondary analysis of existing data; Literature Review (review and synthesis article)	Usually an Empirical Project , with original data collection and analysis; or secondary analysis of existing data; Full Literature Review and Synthesis also acceptable
Format	Usually APA style or similar; AMA style or similar if more relevant for medical journals	Usually APA or AMA style; in manuscript form or close, as for publication
Length (double spaced)	Empirical Project: approximately 15-25 pages of text, plus references and figures/tables as relevant; Literature Review: minimum 20 pages, plus references	Whatever length is appropriate, as determined in consultation with the faculty mentor; Typical manuscript length is 20-30 pages plus references and figures/tables
Literature Review	All papers must include a literature review that conveys what is currently known as well as any gaps in the research, and must reference at least 12 articles from peer-reviewed journals	Substantive literature review relevant to the research question plus additional citations as needed for the interpretation of results
Oral Exam	None	Minimum one-hour oral exam with committee (faculty supervisor plus two others); Focus = final paper (distributed to committee at least one week in advance of the defense)