

# FACULTY HANDBOOK, SECTION 3

## HANDBOOK FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY

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## HANDBOOK FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY

### A. INDEPENDENT STUDY AT WOOSTER

The capacity for individual inquiry and expression is a mark of a liberally educated person. The objective of the Independent Study program at Wooster is to provide an opportunity through which this capacity may be nurtured in every student at the College. As President Lowry described the challenge of the program more than fifty years ago, "...it invites all students to come to their best in terms of their own talents."

The Independent Study program is not reserved for a few students; it provides all students the opportunity to engage in an activity which is both personally meaningful and appropriate to their individual fields and interests. As a student begins Independent Study, he or she is assigned a faculty adviser who serves as mentor and critic. Throughout the program, students work closely with their advisers through regularly scheduled conferences or seminars. These conferences and seminars are designed to assist, encourage, and challenge the participants and to afford both students and advisers an opportunity to share the excitement of discovery and expression in fields in which they have mutual interests. The program approaches learning as an exploration shared by student and adviser alike, neither having all the answers, but both enjoying immensely the opportunity to search for solutions.

Specific format and procedures vary from department to department. The Independent Study Guide for each major provides details on the format and procedures for Independent Study in a particular field. Students should request a current copy of the Independent Study Guide at the time of registration for I.S. 401 and I.S. 451-452. The first unit of Independent Study often consists of a seminar or a tutorial program, designed both to explore the possible range of research and creative projects in the chosen field and to initiate the student into a methodology of research or the techniques necessary for creative work. This introduction to Independent Study, usually elected during the junior year, stresses the development of the student's confidence and ability to carry out a more substantial project in the senior year. During the latter part of the first unit of Independent Study, a preliminary survey or exploration of the subject of the senior project may be undertaken.

In the senior year the student devotes the time equivalent of two courses to a major investigative or creative project which culminates in the writing of a thesis or the production of a substantial creative work. Attention is given to the method, form, and content of intellectual activity, and there is an emphasis on the communication of the results of the individual's own intellectual achievement.

At Wooster, Independent Study is the culmination of liberal education and provides the basis for independent learning throughout life.

## **B. OBJECTIVES OF INDEPENDENT STUDY**

The capacity for individual inquiry and expression is a mark of a liberally educated person, and the objective of the Independent Study program is to provide an opportunity through which this capacity may be nurtured.

Three elements of Independent Study 451-452 (thesis or equivalent project) are content, method, and form:

Content - Students differ in their individual interests and the requirements for various courses of study are not uniform; consequently, there are few rules for the proper choice of content for I.S. projects. A well-selected thesis or project should be governed by such consideration as the significance of the subject for personal intellectual development, the progress of professional understanding, and the needs of society. Given the constraints imposed by available resources and time, the manageability of the topic is also an essential consideration.

Method - Implicit in every inquiry is a method or plan which includes a logic, a design, or a deliberate conception of what is being attempted. The method selected will determine the techniques, devices, or tools appropriate for the project.

Form - The successful completion of the project requires the communication of what has been discovered or developed. Through the form of the thesis

or creative project, students share with others the results of their efforts. Whether by exposition or through an act of creative expression, the forms of communication should be consistent with the content and method and should be chosen carefully to communicate as clearly and forcefully as possible the results.

### C. GENERAL POLICIES APPLICABLE TO INDEPENDENT STUDY

1. All candidates for the B.A. degree at The College of Wooster are required to complete one course of Independent Study plus a two-course Independent Study Thesis (or equivalent creative project). The three Independent Study courses count toward the total number of courses required for a Wooster degree.
2. Creative projects which count as the Independent Study Thesis should be more than creative events and should result in a permanent record or critical appraisal of the work achieved.
3. The Independent Study Thesis must be done in the student's major unless the student has approval of the major department or program to register for the thesis in a different department or program.
4. A department may require a methods seminar or a one-semester Independent Study course before accepting direction of a student's Independent Study Thesis.
5. The student will be expected to register for the I.S. Thesis during the Fall and Spring Semesters of the senior year. Exceptions to this regulation will be rare and must be approved in writing by the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement prior to registration. **I.S. 451 and 452 cannot be taken concurrently.**
6. Students who have been approved for a double major must register for the Independent Study Thesis in one major during fall semester and in the

second major in spring semester. Each faculty member supervising a joint Senior Independent Study Thesis will receive teaching credit each semester.

7. Students should enroll in no more than three full courses per semester, excluding the thesis, during the Fall or Spring Semester of the senior year. The maximum load permitted while enrolled in I.S. 451 or 452 is 4.250 courses.
8. As part of the Independent Study Thesis requirement, all students will be expected to present a successful defense of the thesis (or project). The defense must be completed by the deadline specified by the department. The defense of the thesis will involve an oral and/or written examination which will cover the thesis (or project) itself as well as the relation of the thesis to the broader questions of the discipline. A department may choose not to schedule an oral defense if the written thesis does not meet the "passing" criteria.
9. All grades for the Independent Study Thesis must be submitted to the Registrar by the last day of classes of the Spring Semester in which the student expects to graduate unless a later date has been approved by the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement.
10. The Independent Study Thesis will be graded No Credit, Satisfactory, Good, or Honors. The final grade will be decided on the basis of the work accomplished during each of the semesters, on the basis of the completed Thesis, and on the basis of the defense of the Thesis. Each Thesis will be evaluated by at least two faculty members, and the two will jointly assign the grade.
11. With the approval of the department chairperson and the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement, one course taken at another institution may be accepted by Wooster as Independent Study (other than for thesis credits) if the work in the course corresponds to a one-semester Independent Study course at Wooster and if the appropriate department at

Wooster certifies the grade when the work is completed. The Independent Study Thesis courses must be supervised by a College of Wooster faculty member.

12. A student may register for Senior I.S. 452 after a gap of five semesters or more, if all of the following conditions are satisfied: (i) continuation of the same topic of the Independent Study; (ii) demonstrated proficiency equivalent to Senior I.S. 451 (the departments may determine the criteria); and (iii) availability of a faculty adviser for the topic.
13. In evaluating the Independent Study Thesis, the faculty member should consider the three elements of Independent Study (see objectives above) and the manner in which these are combined in the realization of the project:

Content - The choice of the Independent Study Thesis topic should reflect a considered judgment as to the significance and manageability of the subject, and the completed project should represent a serious and systematic attempt to deal with it by having used effectively the available resources. An awareness of what has and has not been accomplished should be part of the presentation of the project.

Method - The method chosen should be stated and followed. The choices involved in the design should be made clear, and an appreciation of its uses and limits should be one of the results of the project.

Form - Form is an essential element of clear expression. The project should reflect explicit attention to the requirements of form for a given discipline, field, or mode of expression.

#### D. INDEPENDENT STUDY AND DOUBLE MAJORS

Students with double majors may complete their Senior Independent Study requirement, either by doing two separate theses/projects or through a joint thesis/project. If a student chooses the latter model, the relevance of using the two different methodologies to study the project should be clear in the proposal to the two departments. The Independent Study project of a double major should be formulated to reflect an interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary approach in a manner that represents four years of disciplinary engagement in each department/program. The student and advisers should have a joint meeting to establish the process for the project. The Double Major I.S. Agreement should be completed following this discussion with the advisers and submitted to the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement as soon as possible but no later than the end of the fourth week of the semester in which I.S. 451 is undertaken. Advisers should sign the document indicating their approval.

The goal of a joint Senior Independent Study thesis/project should be to examine a topic using approaches and methodologies of the two disciplines. If it is not possible to accomplish this goal, the student should complete two separate Senior I.S. projects rather than joining two separate pieces of work into one final project.

#### **E. INDEPENDENT STUDY THESIS DEADLINES**

1. For Independent Study theses completed in the Spring Semester, two bound copies of the Independent Study Thesis and two unbound title pages are due in the Registrar's Office by 5:00 p.m. on the first day of classes following Spring Recess. In the case of a project, two copies of a written synopsis of the nature of the project and of a statement that the I.S. has been presented in its final form are due in the Registrar's Office at the time specified.

For the Independent Study thesis completed in the Fall Semester, the due date is four weeks prior to the end of classes.

For Independent Study theses to be completed during the Summer Session, the due date for the submission of the thesis will be the end of the eighth week from the beginning of the Summer Session. The faculty adviser will not

be expected to provide editorial comment, guidance, and advice on the thesis after the end of the sixth week of the Summer Session. Two copies of the thesis must be deposited in the Registrar's Office on that date, unless an extension has been arranged in advance with the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement. Grades for Senior I.S. 452 will be submitted no later than the end of the first week of classes of the Fall Semester.

2. In addition, each student completing Senior Independent Study (I.S.) is required to deposit a digital copy of their I.S. to the Libraries' digital repository. Receipt of the digital copy is a standard requirement of the I.S. submission process overseen by the Registrar.

Bibliographic information (*e.g.* student name, title, year, major, adviser, etc.) and an abstract, when available, will be added to the repository and be openly accessible for every I.S. The full text of the Independent Study and any associated files will also be added to the repository and, by default, made accessible online to The College of Wooster community only.

Exceptions to this general policy:

(1) Embargoes

The author, department, and/ or I.S. adviser may petition the Provost to embargo an individual I.S. and its abstract for a period not normally to exceed five years, due to pending publication, patent, or other sensitive research issues. Departments concerned with protecting sensitive research may also assign one of the two following embargo policies to automatically govern every I.S. submission for a departmentally predetermined period, normally not to exceed five years, after which the I.S. would revert to the general policy:

- a) a "partial embargo" whereby the abstract is hidden from public view, and no interlibrary loan request for the full text is offered, but the full text remains accessible to The College of Wooster community;

b) a “full embargo” whereby only the bibliographic information about the I.S. (e.g., author, title, advisor, major) appear on or off campus.

Access to embargoed materials, including the abstract and full I.S., will only be granted to repository administrators, departmental faculty, and individuals receiving the author’s or the Provost’s permission.

## (2) Exemplars

Departments, I.S. advisers and the Provost may also nominate individual I.S. projects as an exemplar. Exemplars will be made completely open access on the Internet, following the expiration of any applicable embargoes. These highly selective projects would serve as examples of the outstanding work done by our students during I.S.

Each student will be asked to accept the following two permission statements, independently, as part of the I.S. submission process:

*I represent that the I.S. project is my own original work, and does not, to the best of my knowledge, infringe upon anyone else’s copyright. I grant The College of Wooster and its designated employees a non-exclusive, perpetual, and royalty-free license to archive and provide unrestricted access to my I.S. project, in whole or in part, in any medium, to the College of Wooster community. I also authorize the Provost the right to distribute copies of my I.S. project to other individuals. I understand that I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my I.S. project.*

*Should my I.S. be nominated by my department as an Exemplar, I hereby grant the College and its designated employees a non-exclusive, perpetual, and royalty-free license to provide unrestricted world-wide open access to my I.S. project, in whole or in part, in any medium.*

3. In exceptional circumstances, a student may petition the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement in advance of that date for an extension of the deadline. Any extension to the Independent Study Thesis deadline can only be granted by the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement and only with the support of the I.S. adviser.

No thesis turned in after the deadline will receive a grade of Honors without the unanimous vote of the department and the approval of the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement.

3. Any delay in turning in a thesis (project) beyond the deadlines specified above automatically establishes the grade of 'I' for the thesis. The conditions for changing the 'I' to a passing grade will be established by the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement after consultation with the student's adviser. The 'I' automatically becomes 'NC' two weeks after the deadline for the submission of the thesis unless prior approval for an extension of the 'I' has been given by the Dean.
4. Procedures for changing the 'I' to a passing grade are as follows:
  - a. If a student has submitted an Independent Study Thesis/Project to the Registrar's Office in the two-week period after the deadline and the thesis/project has been given an 'I':
    - The student must write a petition to his or her Independent Study adviser and the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement indicating the reasons why the thesis/project was submitted late.
    - The Independent Study adviser must indicate in writing his or her support for the student's petition and submit this statement to the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement.
    - Upon review of the petition and statement of support, and if circumstances warrant, the Dean may approve the removal of the grade of 'I' and will indicate this to the Registrar, student, and adviser.

- As appropriate, the adviser may take the late submission into consideration in assigning a final grade to the Independent Study Thesis/Project.
- b. If a student has not submitted an Independent Study Thesis/Project to the Registrar's Office in the two-week period after the deadline, the student must submit a petition to his or her adviser and the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement during that period to propose the establishment of a new deadline. The process for the submission and approval of the new deadline is the same as described in the preceding paragraph.
5. Departments and advisers may impose deadlines for the purpose of commenting and advising when the work is in progress. The student may not expect editorial comment, guidance, and advice on drafts of the thesis or versions of the project submitted after the eighth week of the semester in which the student enrolls in I.S. 452.
  6. In performance or other departments where special equipment or facilities are needed, a department may require the completion of the project by the last day of classes prior to Spring Recess.
  7. When the Independent Study Project involves the scheduling of a dramatic or musical performance to occur beyond the deadline, the Department must request approval by the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement for extending the deadline for completion of the project.

## F. EVALUATION OF INDEPENDENT STUDY THESIS OR PROJECT

1. Independent Study Thesis/Project is graded as follows:

Honors - Outstanding in terms of content, method, and form.

Good - Significantly above average in terms of content, method, and form.

Satisfactory - Acceptable overall in terms of content, method, and form, though consideration may be given to balancing weakness in one area by strength in another.

No Credit - Seriously deficient in content, method, or form with no compensating strengths in other areas.

2. Adviser's Evaluative Statement

The adviser or the second principal evaluator of the thesis or project will submit a written evaluation of the work to the student. A copy of this evaluation will be filed with the chairperson of the department or interdepartmental program.

The written evaluation of the project should address specifically the elements of content, method, and form and the manner in which these have been combined in the realization of the project.

**G. DEPARTMENTAL HONORS AND INDEPENDENT STUDY THESIS**

A graduating senior will receive departmental honors by attaining all of the following:

1. A cumulative grade point average of 3.500 or better for all courses completed in the major department.
2. A cumulative grade point average of 3.200 or better for all courses completed at the College.
3. Honors for the Independent Study Thesis or the unanimous vote of the department that the student's overall performance in the major is of the quality to merit departmental honors.

## H. INDEPENDENT STUDY THESIS, GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS, AND THE WOOSTER TRANSCRIPT

1. In calculating the total number of courses for graduation, the two-unit Independent study Thesis will be counted as two courses, I.S. 451 and 452.
2. The Independent Study Thesis will be identified on the transcript by department, "I.S. Thesis," number and title.

## I. DEPARTMENTAL INDEPENDENT STUDY GUIDE

1. Every department and interdepartmental program will provide a written guide to its Independent Study program. Explicit attention will be given in the I.S. Guide to the steps by which the student's training in the dimensions of content, method, and form will proceed and any schedules for conferences and for the submission of drafts required by the department. Each department will file a copy of the latest edition of the I.S. Guide with the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement by no later than April 1. The departmental chairperson will give a copy of the I.S. Guide to each student at the time he or she declares a major. All I.S. Guides should include a statement that the department reserves the right to make changes in the next edition of the I.S. Guide.
2. The Departmental I.S. Guide should include a statement about potential Independent Study Thesis areas that can be supported by existing staff, library, and other resources. Where relevant, indications should be made of the course work that would provide background for these areas. Students should be encouraged to select Independent Study topics which grow out of the previous course work and for which staff and research resources are clearly available.

A review of available resources should be a first priority upon the selection of a topic. If alternative sources of information are required for the

Independent Study, it must be clearly understood that the following rules apply:

- a. INTER-LIBRARY LOAN. The library is not obligated to pay for inter-library loans and will do so only when requests seem reasonable.
  - b. MICROFORM DISSERTATION COPIES will not be eligible for funding by the library unless the adviser, by signing a request form, indicates that the dissertation will be used with the same frequency as a book added to the collection.
3. The Departmental I.S. Guide should include a statement about the procedure to be used by the department in evaluating a student's Independent Study Thesis/Project and about the department's particular use of the College criteria of form, content, and method in making such an evaluation.

#### J. INDEPENDENT STUDY ADVISERS

A student may select a major any time after the first semester of his or her first year and must select a major prior to the advising period for registration for their junior year. Students who wish to pursue a double major must declare their intention to do so no later than October 1 of the junior year. Assignment of Independent Study advisers is the responsibility of the department or curriculum committee chairperson, after consultation with the student and appropriate faculty and consideration of the topic the student wishes to investigate.

Responsibilities of the adviser are as follows:

1. to encourage the student to attempt an inquiry or project of appropriate rigor within the limitations of the student's potential, the time available, and the College's and the student's access to resources (library, laboratory, studio, computer, field work facilities, etc.);

2. to advise the student toward the successful completion of the chosen Independent Study, meeting the general College specifications as interpreted by the department;
3. to be available to meet regularly with the student and help guide the research process; while the length and structure of meetings will vary by discipline and for the individual student, on average faculty members should expect to be available for each advisee for between forty-five minutes and an hour each week;
4. to assist with the editing of the Independent Study thesis/project according to the following guidelines:
  - a. On all drafts of the thesis/project, including the final draft if received by the deadlines specified above, the adviser is responsible for indicating to the student typical errors of logic, style, mechanics, etc., which may occur. He or she is not required to edit and proofread these drafts paragraph by paragraph and sentence by sentence. The editing of any draft by the adviser does not imply the ultimate acceptability of the thesis.
  - b. After the completed Independent Study thesis/project is submitted and evaluated, the adviser is responsible for indicating to the student any specific typographical and mechanical errors that must be corrected before the document is filed with the department.
  - c. If the deficiencies in the final copy extend beyond "specific typographical and mechanical errors," then the student must re-enroll for I.S. 452 in a subsequent semester. Students who enroll for a ninth semester to complete I.S. 452 will be charged the current "ninth semester rate" as established by the College.

#### K. THE COLLEGE OF WOOSTER SEAL

The official seal of The College of Wooster is the symbol of the authority and corporate signature of the Board of Trustees and may be used in its printed, embossed, or electronic form only on diplomas, academic transcripts, enrollment certifications, or other official College documents. Such other documents include commencement or baccalaureate programs, proclamations, and policy and procedure guides. The seal should never be used for either personal or general departmental publications. The seal cannot be altered except by authorization of the Board of Trustees.

The office of the Secretary of the College has custody of the seal for the purposes described in this policy. Anyone who wishes to use the seal on an official College publication or document must seek permission from the Secretary of the College in writing with a clear indication of its intended usage.

#### L. HENRY J. COPELAND FUND FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY

To honor his presidency, Wooster's Board of Trustees established the Henry J. Copeland Fund for Independent Study and raised \$1 million in gifts to endow this program. Each member of the Senior Class is invited to consider how a grant from the Copeland Fund for Independent Study might enhance the senior project. In order to apply for grant assistance, seniors should discuss their needs with their advisers and complete a Copeland Fund Application. All grants from the Copeland Fund are determined by a faculty committee. Consult with the chair of the Copeland Fund Committee for further information. Information can also be found at this website: <http://www.wooster.edu/academics/research/is/copeland/>

#### M. POLICY ON PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

##### Purpose of the Policy

This policy's purpose is to protect human subjects of original research conducted either at The College of Wooster or by an employee or student of The College of

Wooster. It is intended to assure that subjects of research are aware of their rights and protections. Moreover, the College is required to assure the federal government that such safeguards are being provided and enforced. These safeguards are derived from ethical principles articulated in the Belmont Report issued by the national Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research in 1979. The Human Subjects Research Committee (HSRC) is the body charged with reviewing, prior to its commencement, all research, whether funded or not, involving human subjects conducted under the auspices of The College of Wooster.

The policy changes occasionally due to new federal regulations or for purposes of clarification or to handle new issues. Therefore, researchers should check the website (<http://www.wooster.edu/academics/hsrc/>) for the most up-to-date information.