

## Independent Study Task Force

Report April 10, 2012

**Task Force Members:** Allen Anderson (Music), Deborah Jones (Psychology), Erika Lindemann (English and Comparative Literature & Undergraduate Education), Danielle Heider (Romance Languages [French] and Linguistics, Class of 2012), Bobbi Owen, Chair (Dramatic Art & Undergraduate Education), Gary Pielak (Chemistry), Lillie Searles (Biology), and Heather Williams (History).

**Additional Review by:** James Grinias, Graduate and Professional Student Federation (GPSF) representative to Educational Policy committee (EPC); Lily Roberts, Student Government representative to EPC; Bill Andrews, Senior Associate Dean for the Fine Arts and Humanities, Mike Crimmins; Senior Associate Dean for Natural Sciences and Mathematics; and Jonathan Hartlyn, Senior Associate Dean for Social Sciences and Global Programs.

**Meetings:** September 27, November 10, November 22, 2011; January 12, 2012; with the Administrative Board of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Administrative Board of the General College (Administrative Boards), January 24, 2012; February 23, 2012; with Administrative Boards, February 28, 2012; March 15, 2012; with Administrative Boards, April 17, 2012.

**Process:** In a letter dated September 9, 2011, Karen Gil, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, requested that Bobbi Owen, Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, ask the Administrative Board of the College of Arts and Sciences to develop guidelines for undergraduate independent study courses and directed readings courses. Dean Owen soon began to form a task force, drawing largely on members of the Board but also inviting other faculty to join, particularly those from departments where independent study is well established. Beginning in late September 2011, the task force began developing guidelines for independent study that would include the following information:

1. Expectations concerning student assignments and contact hours with the instructor.
2. Conditions under which an active (approved) traditional course might be taught in a different format (such as directed readings, independent study).
3. Conditions under which a course might be taught as a directed readings course before being submitted for a permanent course number.

### Executive Summary

The task force reviewed current University policies concerning independent study courses, as well as existing protocols related to enrollment and assignment of faculty to independent studies courses. The members also studied enrollments and grades for the Fall 2011 semester for those undergraduate students enrolled in course sections broadly defined in the Standard Course Numbering System as "independent study for undergraduates."

The members of the task force expressed strong support for the benefits of independent study, undergraduate research, and honors thesis courses for undergraduates, and also for the value of internships and service learning for these students. The task force provided detailed recommendations concerning independent studies, special topics courses, use of the standard course numbering system,

and honors theses, and suggested that many of the recommendations contained in the full report could be useful across the campus. The task force was careful to make it clear that its recommendations are not intended to reduce the number of students who are able to participate in undergraduate research and to graduate with honors or highest honors – both of which are valuable experiences at the heart of the mission of a research university. At the same time they acknowledged that the continued and projected growth in the undergraduate student population at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill combined with faculty turnover, retirements, and new hires, make it important to have – and follow in a consistent manner – guidelines for undergraduate independent studies.

The following recommendations concerning independent study were developed:

**Independent Study Courses.** Expectations concerning student assignments and contact hours with the instructor should be recorded in a formal learning contract for independent studies, and standard forms for these learning contracts should be made available digitally and online (see Appendix D). Such contracts would stipulate the same information that appears on a syllabus for a regular lecture or seminar course (i.e., effort expected, meetings with the instructor, assignments and due dates, grading information, etc.) and have a formal approval process. Limits should be placed on the number of independent studies that a faculty member should supervise in each term, and active (approved) courses should not be taught in an independent study or directed readings format unless unusual circumstances exist. Standard usage should be adopted for the many terms that are used – some appropriately and some not – for “independent studies.”

Honors theses should be recognized as a specialized form of independent study with a faculty member, although the limits for counting independent studies toward graduation should not include registration for an honors thesis. However, registration for an honors thesis should conform to one of the two models currently in use at the University.

**Special Topics.** Special topics courses should not be seen as independent studies. Sometimes referred to as “experimental courses” or “directed readings,” these courses allow new and/or visiting faculty to offer new courses quickly. But it was the belief of the task force that these courses need to include an actual course title (not simply “Special Topics in...”), and should not generally be offered more than twice as special topics courses. A course description and/or tentative syllabus should be made available prior to the registration period so that students can make more informed choices about these courses.

**Standard Course Numbering System.** The Standard Course Numbering System should be followed, not only in the College of Arts and Sciences, but also campus-wide. This will necessitate renumbering some courses, expanding those numbers that are to be used in reserved sequences, and establishing specific numbers to identify internships and service learning courses. Data collection, analysis, assessment, and reporting will be clearer as a result of such changes in course numbering.

# Report

The task force reviewed the following materials:

1. Current protocols related to enrollment and assignment of faculty to independent study courses in the College of Arts and Sciences and in Professional Schools with undergraduate degree programs;
2. Existing policies related to independent study;
3. Fall 2011 enrollments for 2,355 students in 421 courses numbered below 700 and currently broadly defined in the Standard Course Numbering System as “independent study” and grading patterns in them.”

## 1. Current Protocols for Independent Study Courses

Forty-two units responded with copies of their protocols used for independent studies. Among the most elaborate ones – those containing carefully articulated guidelines and forms – were protocols from the Departments of Biology, Chemistry, Dramatic Art, History, and Psychology. Many units had some kind of process in place for independent studies, some more informal than others. Some units did not have a process at all; in a few cases some units developed one as a result of the request. The existing protocols being used in the College provided an excellent basis for developing a set of minimum guidelines that the task force recommends should be used throughout the College of Arts and Sciences.

## 2. Existing Policies related to and Governing Independent Study Courses

The *University of North Carolina Policy Manual*, section 400.1.6 (adopted 7/12/1996, amended 07/01/07) states: “All UNC campuses must ensure that every course offered for academic credit adheres to the standard of a minimum of 750 scheduled minutes of instructional time or the equivalent per credit hour. The time may include required examination periods, but may not include study days.” Implications of this policy statement for the campus include the following:

- Instructional contact minutes for one credit hour = 750 minutes (12.5 hours); for three credit hours = 2250 minutes (37.5 hours)
- For independent study, an equivalent is necessary. UNC General Administration, UNC-Chapel Hill, and the Federal definition of credit hour specify that an equivalent amount of work must be established for courses where the contact minutes do not apply), among them laboratories, internships, studio work, and independent studies.

The 2011-2012 edition of the *Undergraduate Bulletin* notes that “The University offers a variety of independent study experiences for students. Such courses, including directed readings and research courses for an individual student, are offered for academic credit through departments and curricula. Twelve hours of graded independent study credit may be counted toward graduation, though no more than six hours may be taken in any one semester. Students may participate in formalized programs, or they may make individualized contracts for work under the supervision of a member of the permanent faculty at the department/curriculum level. For information about independent studies courses in their majors, students should consult the director of undergraduate studies in their major department

or curriculum” (p. 53). According to this statement, “Independent study experiences” serves as an umbrella term for “directed readings” and “research courses” for individual students (or at most, small groups of students). It is also clear that current policy states that “No more than six hours may be taken in any one semester,” and that such work should be supervised by members of the faculty. The passage appropriately refers students to the directors of undergraduate studies for information about such courses and how these courses fit into major/minor requirements. That an individualized syllabus is provided is assumed, since one would be available for any other course offered by the University.

University Policy Memorandum #4, “Standard Course Numbering System,” last revised September 2006 (See Appendix C), reserves a series of numbers for independent study and related courses, including:

- 190, 290, 390 Undergraduate Special Topics Courses
- 195, 295, 395 Undergraduate Research Courses
- 196, 296, 396 Undergraduate Independent Study/Reading Courses
- 199, 299, 399 Undergraduate Experimental Offerings
- 496, 596, 696 Undergraduate/Graduate Independent Study/Reading Courses
- 499, 599, 699 Undergraduate/Graduate Experimental Offerings
- 691H, 692H, 693H, and 694H Senior (*Undergraduate*) Honors Thesis

Final examinations are required in all undergraduate courses offered at the University, including independent studies. Page 397 of the 2011-2012 *Undergraduate Bulletin* states: “Undergraduate courses taught on campus must include a final assessment (i.e., final examination) unless the provost grants an exception.” It also includes the provision that “Chairs (i.e., heads of instructional units) must give permission for faculty to use nontraditional examinations, such as a portfolio of a semester's work or a take-home examination.” **Thus, the role of final exams for independent study courses may vary based on the intended result for the semester. A department chair can approve a nontraditional final exam in such cases.**

Recent policies concerning the definition of credit hours also have a bearing on independent study courses at the University. UNC-Chapel Hill accepts the definition from the U.S. Department of Education, subsequently adopted by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), which accredits the University. On February 10, 2012, the Faculty Council adopted Resolution 2012-1, “UNC-Chapel Hill Credit Hour Policy” (See Appendix B). The resolution includes the following statements which reference independent studies and related coursework:

**“Section 1.** The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill hereby adopts the Federal Definition of a Credit Hour (described in *34 CFR 600.2*, effective July 1, 2011) as follows:

**Federal Definition of the Credit Hour.** For purposes of the application of this policy and in accord with federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates

1. Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for

one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, or

2. At least an equivalent amount of work as outlined in item 1 above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.”

The new federal policy contains two elements relevant to independent study courses. First, the statement that “not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work” makes it clear that **students should expect to devote a minimum of nine hours each week to each three-credit course** (the usual value) they take. Second, this standard applies to all courses, including “laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.”

Students approved to do an independent study are expected to be self-motivated and largely self-directed. They should expect to spend at least three hours per week per credit hour working on an independent study. **Faculty members supervising an independent study must meet on a regular basis throughout the semester with each student pursuing an independent study under their direction.**

### **3. Fall 2011 Enrollments and Grades in “Independent Study” Courses**

The task force’s review of Fall 2011 registrations did not raise concerns regarding the pattern of enrollments, but did reveal inconsistent use of the University’s Standard Course Numbering System. At the time of the census, a total of 2,355 students enrolled in 421 courses numbered below 700, broadly defined in the Standard Course Numbering System as “Independent Studies.” A total of 2,330 grades were awarded in these courses. Credits varied from one- to three-hour increments. A close examination revealed the following:

- 201 registrations for traditional independent study
- 345 registrations for honors thesis
- 299 registrations for internships
- 472 registrations for undergraduate research
- 242 registrations for service learning
- 793 registrations for regular courses incorrectly numbered as independent work
- 3 registration errors (corrected)

Within the 201 “traditional independent study registrations,” the vast majority (84.9%) of grades assigned across courses were A’s, regardless of department. Less than 7% were B’s, and in total all other grades comprised less than 1%. The regular courses in the analysis (793 registrations) were characterized by a more typical broader distribution. In discussing these findings, the task force observed that faculty members are expected to have consistent grading standards – regardless of course content, level at which the course is taught, or the format of the course. Each syllabus should contain assessment information that must be followed, even for independent study.

The task force considered whether pass/fail was appropriate for internships, mentored undergraduate research, service learning, and traditional independent study. It was decided that letter grades were appropriate in these cases, except when a department wished to provide such a course on a pass/fail basis only. The pass/fail-only grading basis occurs most commonly at the University in the case of one-hour courses, typically internships and service learning courses. (Honors courses cannot be taken pass/fail.)

## Detailed Recommendations

- I. **Independent Study Courses.** The College of Arts and Sciences should:
- Adopt standard usage for the following terms, which are at present often used interchangeably: Traditional Independent Study, Directed Readings, Mentored/Directed Research, Honors Thesis, Internships, Field Work (aka Field Research), Practica, Service Learning, Special Topics, and Experimental Courses (as defined in Appendix A);
  - Adopt College-wide guidelines for independent studies that include a learning contract (see contents for contract in Appendix D). The contract can be completed as a paper process but would ideally be a digital template with routing by electronic means from the originator to the approver(s) and back. The learning contract would establish minimum expectations for both student and instructor while allowing departments to customize the agreement to suit their own particular needs and circumstances.
    - The learning contract stipulates the expected number of hours per week of work expected from the student; the number of required meetings between course instructor and student during the term; reading and writing assignments (and due dates for them); assessment information specifying how the final grade will be determined; a brief (100-word) work plan; and a formal approval process for the learning contract. When a department chair is involved, the Senior Associate Dean gives the approval. Departments may add additional information from the contract, but may not eliminate items from the template.
    - The faculty member is required to establish a regular meeting schedule with the student doing the independent study: for example, one hour per week or two hours every other week. (The specified hours could also be spread out over the length of the semester or summer session rather than occur weekly). However, contact between a faculty member and a student must be maintained throughout the course of the semester or summer session rather than merely at the beginning and end of it.
    - Registration for an independent study course (including the approval process) must be completed no later than the last day of "late registration" which is the end of the first week of classes in a fall or spring semester (or the equivalent date in each summer session).
    - The Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Chair of a Department or Curriculum have an important responsibility to review independent study learning contracts carefully, and to monitor the number of students being supervised by individual faculty members and within established research groups in their particular administrative unit.
  - Create "sections" of a course for each faculty member in a department/curriculum supervising traditional independent studies, internships, mentored research, directed

- readings, etc. (Separate sections for individual faculty members already exist at the graduate level, making it a familiar method to use.)
- Restrict the number of students a faculty member may supervise during a semester or summer session to a maximum of two students in traditional independent study courses, directed readings, or mentored research. Faculty members are expected to supervise honors thesis, independent studies, directed readings, and/or mentored research, all of which occur above and beyond their standard course assignments. The limitation on the number of students supervised does not apply to:
    - Formal research methods courses, such as ANTH/FOLK 675 “Ethnographic Method,” GEOL 501 “Geological Research Techniques,” and LING 422 “Research Methods in Phonetics and Laboratory Phonology,” each of which is taught according to the standard class time format. A syllabus serves as the learning contract for these courses, which traditionally have not been considered to be “independent study.”
    - Capstone courses, such as PLCY 698 and PHIL 698, where students working on an individual or group project register for a specific course (generally in their major or minor) taught by a faculty member in the normal course of his/her teaching responsibilities. The project may be under the supervision of the course instructor or another faculty member (in the latter case, such service is not considered part of their normal teaching responsibilities). As with the formal research methods courses, a syllabus serves as the learning contract for these courses, which traditionally have not been considered to be “independent study.”
    - Faculty research laboratories, research programs, or established research groups in departments where students are part of a research team. (However, the individual learning contract still applies in these situations.)
    - In cases in which mentored research is occurring for more than two students outside their department; for example, in the case of three or more students involved in mentored research at the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center. The individual learning contract, however, still applies; faculty members from the students’ department or curriculum must assign course grades.
    - Directed readings courses, in addition to faculty member’s standard course responsibilities, for a small number of undergraduate students pursuing the same reading list. The individual learning contract still applies.
  - Restrict offering active (approved) lecture or seminar courses as an independent study, except in unusual circumstances. “Tutorial Independent Study” may continue to be utilized for this purpose (see Appendix E) provided that all approvals are obtained, including from the Department chair and the Associate Dean (or Director) for Undergraduate Curricula. Registration for a traditional independent study in the department of the student’s major (under the College-wide guidelines above) might also be possible. Examples of appropriate use of this format include:
    - An individual student needing a specific course for graduation that is not likely to be offered in the immediate future.

- An individual student prohibited from attending a regularly scheduled specific course needed for graduation due to residence far from campus (such as in another state).

**II. Honors Thesis.** Honors Carolina has a long-standing program of senior honors thesis work, a specialized form of independent study that allows students to graduate with “honors” or “highest honors.” The task force recommended that registration for honors theses should follow one of two formats:

1. Departments schedule a two-semester senior thesis sequence taught by a member of the faculty who serves as the department’s honors director. In the Department of History, for instance, those courses are HIST 691H and 692H. In this format:
  - The course size is generally between 10 and 20 students.
  - A syllabus is provided on the first day of classes.
  - The course is among the courses being offered by the department as honors courses, provided there are at least 10 students enrolled. If an individual thesis is supervised by another faculty member, it is in addition to his or her standard course teaching responsibilities.
  - Each student enrolled in the senior thesis courses also has a faculty adviser whose scholarly expertise encompasses the student's research topic. Service as a thesis adviser is an important responsibility but is generally in addition to the standard course assignments of an individual faculty member.
2. Each faculty member supervising an honors thesis is assigned a section of the course(s). In this format:
  - The number of students being supervised should be limited to two.
  - A learning contract similar to the independent study contract should be developed and used.
  - Supervising/advising an honors thesis is an important responsibility but is generally in addition to the standard course assignments of an individual faculty member.

**III. Limits on Counting Independent Study Credit toward Graduation.** Current policy states that “Twelve hours of graded independent study credit may be counted toward graduation, though no more than six hours may be taken in any one semester” (2011-2012 *Undergraduate Bulletin*, p. 53). The College of Arts and Sciences should:

- Exclude the six-hour registration (two three-credit courses) for honors from this total. Students enrolled full-time in supervised student teaching, in an approved study abroad program, or an off-campus internship should also be able to pursue an honors thesis and be able to graduate with honors or highest honors.
- Raise the limit within a Fall or Spring semester from 6 to 12 credit hours. Some students have course work that takes place completely in off-campus sites, for example student teaching and off-campus internships. Some of the practica and internship courses for which students can currently register and earn credit are for 12 hours. (Note that the federal definition of full-time enrollment is 12 credit hours.)
- This change would have to be approved by the Faculty Council through its Educational Policy Committee, after which the *Undergraduate Bulletin* would be revised to incorporate this new policy.



**IV. Special Topics.** Special topics courses should not be considered to be independent study. While special topics courses have appropriate uses (such as allowing new or visiting faculty to offer timely courses or develop new ones), topics courses should be avoided for long-term or repeated use. The College of Arts and Sciences should:

- Limit the number of times the same special topics course can be offered to no more than two occurrences. (Such a limitation would be similar to the policy developed for first-year seminar courses numbered “89.”)
- Require secondary titles for all special topics courses when they are established in the ConnectCarolina system, and make a course description and/or tentative syllabus available prior to the registration period, so that students might make more informed choices when selecting courses.
- Consider carefully the implications of including special topics courses in requirements for majors and minors: for example, approving courses based on their variable content would require making adjustments to individual students’ Tar Heel Tracker.
- Remind departments/curricula that special topics courses cannot fulfill General Education requirements because of their variable content (see [Criteria For General Education Requirements](http://www.unc.edu/depts/uc/Faculty/GenEd_criteria.pdf) at [http://www.unc.edu/depts/uc/Faculty/GenEd\\_criteria.pdf](http://www.unc.edu/depts/uc/Faculty/GenEd_criteria.pdf)).
- Add 490, 590, and 690 to the currently reserved numbers (190, 290, and 390) for Undergraduate Special Topics Courses. (Courses numbered 890-899 are already reserved for graduate-level special topics courses).

**V. Standard Course Numbering System.** The Standard Course Numbering System (see Appendix C) should be followed, not only in the College of Arts and Sciences, but also campus-wide. The following recommendations are intended for the University Registrar to implement with the help of the Office of Undergraduate Curricula. (It should be understood that there may be other issues to address, including the prohibition against reusing a number again within a five-year period.)

- All courses that are standard offerings but are currently incorrectly numbered should be renumbered as soon as possible (likely summer 2012).
- The sequence of numbers for special topics courses should be expanded to 490, 590, and 690, in order to accommodate special topics courses that can enroll both undergraduate and graduate students.
- The sequence of numbers currently used for undergraduate and graduate “experimental offerings” should be eliminated and repurposed. These courses are actually special topics courses. Very few departments (Anthropology, City and Regional Planning, and Economics) use the “experimental numbers,” and even these are willing to renumber their experimental courses as “special topics” courses.
- A series of numbers should be identified – and used – for internships and service learning. (The task force recommends use of the repurposed experimental numbers). More detailed analysis may be required, but task force members recommend the following:
  - Proposed internship numbers: 299, 499, and 699. (Note that several departments use numbers ending with 93, and that additional analysis is necessary by the University Registrar prior to renumbering any courses.)

- Proposed service learning numbers: 199, 399, and 599.
- The sequence of numbers for undergraduate research courses should be expanded to 495, 595, and 695. The reserved numbers for undergraduate research do not identify all courses that have a research basis, nor do they indicate courses taught for one hour of credit, three hours of credit, or variable credit.
- The ConnectCarolina system of “tagging” courses should be employed to identify all courses that are research-intensive, leaving the reserved numbers ending in 95 for those courses specifically related to undergraduate research.

## **VI. Implementation**

1. The task force recommends that this report be provided to the Educational Policy Committee for its review, and that its recommendations be considered for possible adoption campus-wide.
  2. The task force recognizes that some of the recommendations will require the following: coordination with other parts of the University; revision of policies and development of new ones; creation of new electronic forms; and the launching of a communications effort. Efforts should be made to implement as many of the recommendations of the task force as possible by the beginning of the Fall 2012 semester, with the remainder being implemented by the start of the Fall 2013 semester. For example:
    - The elements of the independent study learning contract, including the approval process, do not require an electronic form to be implemented. A paper form can be used until the electronic one is available.
    - Revising the Standard Course Numbering System should occur as soon as possible to avoid adding to the confusion in course numbering that already exists.
- Renumbering courses may take additional time to accomplish campus-wide, but plans for such a project could be developed in summer 2012.

## Independent Study Definitions

### I. Independent Study

Independent study provides a mechanism for a student to work on a specific topic with a faculty member for academic credit. Topics are focused rather than general and are typically those not generally pursued in scheduled courses. A final written paper (the standard used for courses fulfilling General Education requirements is a minimum of ten pages), report, or artistic product is required. At least three hours of independent work per week is required for each unit of credit.

Independent study is organized under five categories: Traditional Independent Study, Directed Readings, Directed and/or Mentored Undergraduate Research, Internship/Practicum, and Honors Thesis.

*Traditional Independent Study:* The pursuit of a topic of interest by a student (generally in their major or minor), under the supervision of a faculty member with expertise related to the topic.

Examples:

HIST 296 Independent Studies in History

MATH 290 Directed Exploration in Mathematics

*Directed Readings:* Systematic analysis of an approved bibliography in the student's area of interest.

Examples:

ART 396 Directed Readings in Art History

BIOL 296 Directed Readings in Biology

SLAV 244 Directed Readings in a Slavic Language

Examples combining categories 1 and 2:

ANTH 396 Independent Reading or Study in Anthropology

SOC 396 Independent Study and Reading in Sociology

*Directed and/or Mentored Undergraduate Research:* Investigative, fact-finding work supervised by a faculty mentor and conducted outside a conventional classroom -- in a laboratory, in field sites, in a library, or in other places in which research activity takes place.

Examples:

CHEM 395 Research in Chemistry for Undergraduates

FREN 396 Research for Advanced French Students

GEOG 295 Undergraduate Research in Geography

PSYC 395 Independent Research in Psychology

*Internships/Practica:* Supervised work experience designed to give students first-hand knowledge of the practice of a discipline. In a practicum students are likely to be supervised by faculty

members or academic practitioners; in an internship students tend to work under the direction of a permanent employee in a corporation, governmental entity, or other institution outside the University. In either case, students participate in a supervised, reflective experience that encourages them to integrate classroom and work experience in ways that help them develop a professional identity.

Examples:

AMST 397 Internship in American Studies

COMP 392 Practicum in Computer Science

DRAM 395 Professional Theatre Laboratory

HIST 297 Internship in History

*Honors Thesis:* Two semesters of independent research for which the student, under the guidance of a full-time faculty supervisor, is responsible for designing and completing a research project or creative activity, in accordance with the guidelines jointly established by Honors Carolina and the academic unit.

## **II. Service Learning**

Service Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful, supervised community service – usually off-campus – with instruction and reflection in order to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

Examples:

COMM 668H The Ethnographic (Re)Turn

DRAM 288 Theatre for Social Change: Latina/o Performance Traditions

HBHE 610 APPLES Alternative Spring Break

PSYC 294 Service Learning in Psychology

## **III. Special Topics**

A placeholder course that permits departments and curricula to offer specialized courses for which: (1) there may be only occasional demand, or (2) to develop new courses. In the latter case, the department/curriculum should apply for a permanent number for the new course after it has been offered twice as a “Special Topics” course. A Special Topics course may also be known as an “Experimental Course.”

Examples:

ANTH 199 Experimental Course in Anthropology I

ENTS 490 Special Topics in Environmental Science and Studies

FOLK 690 Studies in Folklore

GEOG 390 Special Problems in Geology

HIST 490 Special Topics in History

PSYC 499 Current Topics in Psychology

## Appendix B

### Resolution 2012-1. On Adopting the Federal Definition of the Credit Hour.

The Faculty Council enacts:

**Section 1.** The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill hereby adopts the Federal Definition of a Credit Hour (described in *34 CFR 600.2*, effective July 1, 2011) as follows:

**Federal Definition of the Credit Hour.** For purposes of the application of this policy and in accord with federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates:

1. Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, or
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as outlined in item 1 above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

**Section 2.** This credit hour policy applies to all courses at all levels (graduate, professional, and undergraduate) that award academic credit (i.e. any course that appears on an official transcript issued by the University) regardless of the mode of delivery including, but not limited to, self-paced, online, hybrid, lecture, seminar, and laboratory. Academic units are responsible for ensuring that credit hours are awarded only for work that meets the requirements outlined in this policy.

#### **Section 3.**

1. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill adheres to the Carnegie unit for contact time (750 minutes for each credit awarded) in its official Academic Calendar
2. Additional guidelines and procedures for implementing and monitoring compliance with Federal requirements and accreditation standards related to credit hours should be recorded in a University Policy Memorandum (UPM) maintained by the University Registrar.

**Comment:** As outlined in the SACS/COC Policy concerning credit hours "Students, institutions, employers, and others rely on the common currency of academic credit to support a wide range of activities, including the transfer of students from one institution to another." In addition, "...the federal government has relied on credits as a measure of student academic engagement as a basis of awarding financial aid."

It is noted that Federal regulations provide institutions with some flexibility to take into consideration alternative delivery methods, types of coursework, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels when determining credits to be awarded for student work. The Federal definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work. Credits may be awarded on the basis of documentation of the amount of work a typical student is expected to complete within

a specified amount of academically engaged time. The basic requirement is that a credit hour “reasonably approximate” the minimum amount of work specified in Section 1, above.

## Appendix C

### Office of the University Registrar *UPM # 4 Standard Course Numbering System*

#### PURPOSE

Effective Date: September 2006

This memorandum is intended to clarify the standard course numbering system and to point out some variations and limitations.

#### 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

All courses authorized for degree credit must be numbered according to guidelines established by the University. The numbering schemes may vary by academic unit and may change over time.

#### 2. STANDARD COURSE NUMBERING SYSTEM

a. For all courses in the DN, LW, and MD academic units, and for courses in the GU academic units prior to Fall 2006, the numbers assigned to courses are normally categorized as follows:

- 001-049 Courses primarily for first and second year undergraduates
- 050-099 Courses primarily for third and fourth year undergraduates
- 100-199 Courses for advanced undergraduates and graduate students
- 200-299 Courses for graduate students only
- 300-399 Seminar and Research courses for graduate students
- 400-499 Numbers reserved for special categories of registration
- 600-699\*\*\* Interdisciplinary courses for undergrad and graduate students
- 700-799\*\*\* Interdisciplinary courses for graduate students only

\*\*\* Interdisciplinary numbers are assigned in sequence. Departments in the DN, LW & MD academic units should contact the University Registrar for the next valid number when establishing these courses. Course must involve two or more campus schools/academic units to qualify for interdisciplinary numbering.

b. For courses in the GU academic unit starting in Fall 2006, the numbers assigned to courses are normally categorized as follows:

- 000-009 Reserved for University Registrar
- 050-089 First-Year Seminars
- 009-399 Undergraduate Level Courses
- 100-189 Introductory Undergraduate Courses\*
- 190, 290, 390 Undergraduate Special Topics Courses
- 195, 295, 395 Undergraduate Research Courses
- 196, 296, 396 Undergraduate Independent Study/Reading Courses
- 199, 299, 399 Undergraduate Experimental Offerings
- 400-699 Courses for advanced undergraduates and graduate students
- 496, 596, 696 Undergraduate/Graduate Independent Study/Reading Courses
- 499, 599, 699 Undergraduate/Graduate Experimental Offerings
- 691H, 692H, 693H, 694H Senior (*Undergraduate*) Honors Thesis

- 697, 698 Capstone Courses (*Undergraduate*)
- 700-994 Graduate only courses
- 799 Graduate Experimental Offering
- 890-899 Graduate Special Topic
- 900-991 Graduate Research
- 992, 993 Master's Thesis
- 994 Doctoral Dissertation
- 995-999 Reserved for University Registrar

\* **Foreign Language Courses** should be numbered in this manner: 101,102 and 401, 402 - Beginning level; 203, 204 and 403, 404 - Intermediate level; 601, 602 and 603, 604 - Graduate foreign language requirement

### 3. AVAILABLE SUFFIXES

a. For all courses in the DN, LW, and MD academic units, and for all courses in GU academic units prior to Fall 2006 the following suffixes may be used:

- A - First part of a series of courses, or an advanced course
- B - Second part of a series of courses
- C - Third part of a series of courses, or correspondence course
- E - Denotes elective credit for the Dental School
- H - Honors course or course for advanced students
- L - Credit-bearing laboratory course
- M - Open to majors only
- R - Denotes a review course
- X - Denotes no graduate credit. Satisfies language reading knowledge examination. For undergraduates, denotes an intense language review course

b. For courses in the GU academic unit starting in Fall 2006 (*with the exception of subject = MBA\**), the following suffixes may be used:

- H - Honors course or course for advanced students
- L - Credit-bearing laboratory course
- I - Interdisciplinary course

\* **MBA courses** may use any other suffix not listed above, but should not use the suffixes H, L or unless they are used for the specific course content as designated for each suffix.

### 4. LIMITATIONS ON NUMBERING AND SUFFIXES

Alphabetic suffixes are limited to one. More than one suffix and hyphenated course numbers are incompatible with the system now in use. A course number should not be reassigned to another course having a different content until at least five years after the previous course was taught. This is to prevent the same course number from appearing twice on a student's record representing two different courses.



**Appendix D**

Note: This contract eventually will be developed as an electronic form that can be customized and routed. This is a list of minimum contents and contains areas where pull down menus would be useful.

**INDEPENDENT STUDY LEARNING CONTRACT [department name] [course #]**

Prerequisites: [each dept. lists here]

(Note that faculty members are restricted to no more than two students per semester or summer session.)

**APPLICANT INFORMATION:**

Student Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ PID: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Application: \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Hours: \_\_\_\_\_ (each dept lists range)

Semester Requested: FALL  SPRING  SUMMER I  SUM

Bottom of Form

Class: FIRST YEAR  SOPHOMORE  JUNIOR  SENIOR

Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Current GPA: MAJOR \_\_\_\_\_ OVERALL \_\_\_\_\_

Prerequisite(s): [COURSE #] \_\_\_\_\_ SEMESTER/YEAR \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

**INFORMATION ABOUT INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**COURSE CONTENT:** Please describe the course requirements (or attach a syllabus containing ALL these required elements). This is considered a contract between the instructor (advisor/sponsor) and the student. Deviations from this contract should be updated and documented to the extent possible by the instructor and student.

a) Hours per week (e.g., 9 hours per week if 3 credit hours): \_\_\_\_\_

- b) Meeting requirements (e.g., individual meetings, lab meetings, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Reading assignments (and due dates, if relevant): \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Written assignments (page requirements/limits and due dates, if relevant): \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Other assignments (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_
- f) Assessment (e.g., % of course grade based on each requirement) including final examination (or alternate format): \_\_\_\_\_
- g) Other information: \_\_\_\_\_
- h) Work plan (100 words maximum): \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:**

I have read the responsibilities of the instructor and agree to undertake these responsibilities.

Instructor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the responsibilities of the student and agree to undertake these responsibilities.

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**\* INDEPENDENT STUDY COORDINATOR:**

This application for Independent Study has been reviewed. The proposal is

- APPROVED AS IS
- REQUIRES MORE INFORMATION (provide details and return to instructor and student)
- NOT APPROVED (provide rationale)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 School/Department/Program Independent Study Coordinator Date

\* If the Independent Study Coordinator is not the Department/Curriculum Chair, the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS), or another Faculty Designee of the Chair, then the Chair or the DUS must also approve this contract.

**\*\* DEPARTMENT CHAIR OR DIRECTOR OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES (whichever is applicable):**

This application for Independent Study has been reviewed. The proposal is

- APPROVED AS IS
- REQUIRES MORE INFORMATION (provide details and return to instructor and student)
- NOT APPROVED (provide rationale)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Chair/Director of Undergraduate Studies/Faculty Designee Date

\*\* If the Chair is the student's Independent Study instructor, this form should be signed by the Chair's Senior Associate Dean.

Note: Departments should maintain copies of this contract for a minimum of two years.

## Appendix E

### Tutorial Independent Study



UNC  
THE WILLIAM AND IDA FRIDAY  
CENTER FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

THE FRIDAY CENTER  
CAMPUS BOX 1020  
CHAPEL HILL, NC 27599-1020

fridaycenter.unc.edu

### Tutorial Independent Study

For UNC-Chapel Hill undergraduate courses not offered by Self-paced Courses, it may be possible to enroll in a tutorial arrangement through Credit Programs for Part-time Students. If special circumstances warrant, a student and instructor of a regular University course may adapt the course to a Self-paced Courses format. This arrangement is subject to the approval of the department chairperson, the appropriate dean, and Credit Programs for Part-time Students in the Friday Center for Continuing Education.

In Tutorial Independent Study, the student and faculty member agree on a program of learning activities that can be completed away from the University campus (although occasional conferences with the instructor may be arranged). Approval for Tutorial Independent Study is granted only in instances where a learning experience of high quality can be achieved through distance education methods.

The tutorial option makes it possible for students to continue their education despite special difficulties created by factors such as employment, travel, or illness. It is not recommended for students who can arrange to take the course through other means, and it may not be used as a means of attending a course offered on campus. The courses for which Tutorial Independent Study is appropriate are those having a clearly defined content rather than those bearing such titles as "readings," "topics," "seminar," or "individual study."

In order to enroll in a course through Tutorial Independent Study, the enclosed application form must be completed and signed by the student and the instructor. The signatures of the department chairperson and dean of the school or college offering the course must also be obtained before the form is returned to the Self-paced Courses office. To be considered eligible for NC tuition rates, the student must also complete and send in the enclosed Residency Status form. When final approval is given, the student should complete a Self-paced Courses application and submit it along with the tuition (current tuition rates) dependent on a student's NC residency status. An education and technology fee will also be charged. Upon payment of the tuition and fee, the course work agreed upon by the student and instructor may begin.

The policies governing Tutorial Independent Study are the same as those for regular courses in the Self-paced Courses program as described in the Self-paced Courses catalog. The instructor and student should be completely familiar with these policies before reaching a Tutorial Independent Study agreement.

In addition, the instructor is asked to become acquainted with the procedures outlined in the Self-paced Courses *Instructor's Guide*. Please note that the reporting of grades and credit is the responsibility of Self-paced Courses. The instructor should contact Self-paced Courses (919-962-1134, 800-862-5669) to find out about compensation for instruction. In instances where the tutorial student is submitting the assignments directly to the instructor, half of the payment to the instructor is initiated at the time the student enrolls and half at the time the student completes the course. If assignments are submitted and returned through the Self-paced Courses office, payment is made on a per-assignment basis and is determined by the number of assignments in the course.

9/26/2011

**Tutorial Independent Study Application Form**  
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

This form should be submitted to Academic Programs and Services at the Friday Center for Continuing Education.

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Course Number \_\_\_\_\_ Course Title \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Hours \_\_\_\_\_  
 Instructor's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Instructor's Social Security No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Faculty Rank \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_  
 Department Number (Function Number) \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_  
 Department Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Instructor's Campus Address (if different from above) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Instructor's Office Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Reason(s) that Tutorial Independent Study is requested. Please state specifically why Tutorial Independent Study is proposed as an alternative to classroom instruction.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

The work to be completed by the student in order to satisfy the requirements of the course will consist of the following. Please include the specific nature of the work to be undertaken.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Number of separate submissions to be made by the student \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one:

- Exam will be supervised by instructor.
- Exam will be supervised by other qualified individual.
- Exam will not be required.

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one:

- Assignments will be submitted and returned through Independent Studies office.
- Assignments will be submitted directly to instructor and returned through Independent Studies office.

I have read the attached statement on Tutorial Independent Study and understand its purpose and procedures. I am aware of the special responsibilities it places on the instructor and the student. In addition, I am familiar with the policies and procedures of Independent Studies as outlined in the Independent Studies catalog.

|   |            |   |            |
|---|------------|---|------------|
| Student _____                                 | Date _____ | Instructor _____                              | Date _____ |
| Approved: _____                               |            | Approved: _____                               |            |
| Chairperson, department offering course _____ | Date _____ | Dean, school or college offering course _____ | Date _____ |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>This section is to be completed by the Office of Independent Studies</b>  |   |
| Request for Tutorial Independent Study is <input type="checkbox"/> approved <input type="checkbox"/> not approved. |   |
| Comments _____   |   |
| Course Fee \$ _____  | Instructional Rate \$ _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assignments submitted to Independent Studies office                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Assignments submitted directly to instructor |
| Final examination \$ _____   | Payment upon student's enrollment in course \$ _____                  |
| Number of assignments _____  | Payment upon student's completion of course \$ _____                  |
| Payment per assignment \$ _____  |   |
| Student Services Representative<br>UNC-Chapel Hill Friday Center for Continuing Education                          | Date _____  |
| Student's enrollment date _____  | Enrollment number _____   |

**TO THE INSTRUCTOR:**

Once the Tutorial Independent Study application has been fully approved and the student has formally enrolled, you will receive a copy of this form. The student then may begin the agreed-upon course of study and submit assignments. You will receive assignments either directly from the student or from the Independent Studies office, depending on which arrangement has been specified. Payment will be made to you according to the schedule indicated above. Enclosed with the copy of this form will be a three-part "Examination Cover Sheet" to be used for reporting to Independent Studies the student's exam grade and final course grade; if no examination is required, simply use the sheet to report the student's course grade. Submit all copies to Independent Studies.

We encourage all instructors, and particularly those who are new to the Independent Studies program, to consult the information sheet accompanying the application, to request copies of the Independent Studies "Instructor's Guide," and to contact Independent Studies if you have questions.