

Creating a Directed Independent Study at the UNC CH School of Social Work

Occasionally students have a very specific interest they wish to pursue as part of their professional development plan, but there is no course at the School or University that they are able to take that covers the content. In such a case the student may wish to create a Directed Independent Study as a way to explore the topic. Students wishing to create a Directed Independent Study should sketch out an idea, and then seek out a faculty member to be their instructor for the study. There is no guarantee that a student will be able to create any Directed Independent Study they wish; students must identify a faculty instructor, obtain their approval, and obtain the approval of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Instructions for doing this are outlined below.

Students should have their Directed Independent Study written and approved as early as possible, and always **at least one week prior** to the close of registration for the semester when the Directed Independent Study will be completed.

A Directed Independent Study is designed for Advanced rather than Foundation Study; the credits are usually used in place of an elective.

The procedure for initiating a Directed Independent Study is:

1. **Prior to registration for the course**, the student and faculty member reach an agreement on:

Direction: the specialized topic the student wishes to pursue.

Learning Objectives: a statement of the specific, measurable learning outcomes for the course. (Use the learning objectives in a course syllabus as an example of how the objectives should be stated).

Content: the specific readings (or areas of literature to be reviewed) and assignments the student will complete to achieve outcomes.

Relevance: how the topic relates to the student's educational plan of study and career goals.

Evaluation Plan: the procedure for reviewing progress and measuring student achievement of outcomes. This includes specific assignments and the grade weights for each assignment.

Number of Credits: established on the basis of scope, time, and effort involved in the learning process (usually 1.5 or 3 credits).

2. The student **fills out the form found at**

http://ssw.unc.edu/files/web/pdf/Continuing%20Education/Directed_Independent_Study.pdf, which both the faculty member and student sign.

3. The student **submits this signed proposal** to the Associate Dean for approval.

4. The Associate Dean will review the plan and, if approved, the Registrar will assign a Special Topics" course number for the individual study, register the student for the course, and send a memo notifying the student of approval. Copies of the memo will be sent to the faculty member and placed in the student's file.