

**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 forty 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 I.S. 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 I.S. Guide at the time of registration for I.S. 401 and 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 I.S. Thesis (or equivalent creative project) and may register for up to two additional courses of Independent Study. The I.S. courses, including the 2-unit I.S. Thesis, count toward the total number of courses required for a Wooster degree.
2. Creative projects which count as the I.S. Thesis should be more than creative events and should result in a permanent record or critical appraisal of the work achieved.
3. The I. S. 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 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 senior 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 I.S. 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 I.S. 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 I.S. 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, 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 I.S. 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. THESIS DEADLINES**

1. Two bound copies of the Independent Study Thesis are due in the Registrar's Office by 5:00 p.m. on the first day of classes following Spring Recess or four weeks prior to the end of classes for Spring Semester, whichever date is sooner. For Independent Study thesis completed in the Fall Semester, the due date is four weeks prior to the end of classes. 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 above.

In exceptional circumstances, and with the support of his or her adviser, a student may petition the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement in advance of that date for an extension of the deadline.

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.

Each student is required to submit to The College of Wooster a digital copy of his or her thesis for archiving, granting to the College and its employees a nonexclusive royalty-free license to archive it and make it accessible, in whole or in part, in any medium. The student retains all other ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis.

2. Any extension to the I.S. thesis deadline can only be granted by the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement in advance and only with the support of the I.S. adviser.
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. 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.
4. Conditions for changing the 'I' to a passing grade are as follows:

If a student has submitted an I.S. 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 I.S. adviser and the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement indicating the reasons why the thesis/project was submitted late.
- The I.S. 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 I.S. thesis/project.

If a student has not submitted an I.S. 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.

If a student does not submit an I.S. thesis/project during the two-week period and fails to win approval for the establishment of a new deadline, the grade for I.S. 452 will automatically be changed to 'NC.'

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 I.S. 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.

#### **E. EVALUATION OF INDEPENDENT STUDY THESIS OR PROJECT**

1. Independent Study Projects should be 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.

#### **F. DEPARTMENTAL HONORS AND I.S. 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.

#### **G. I.S. THESIS, GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS, AND THE WOOSTER TRANSCRIPT**

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

#### **H. DEPARTMENTAL I.S. GUIDE**

1. Every department and interdepartmental program will provide a written guide to its I.S. 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 Guide to each student at the time he or she declares a major. All 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 I.S. 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 I.S. 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 I.S., 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 I.S. Thesis or project and about the department's particular use of the College criteria of form, content, and method in making such an evaluation.

## I. I.S. 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. 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.

Double Majors: Students with double majors may complete their Senior I.S. requirement, either by doing two separate I.S. 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 goal of a joint Senior I.S. 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.

The I.S. adviser of a student completing a double major with a joint Senior I.S. thesis/project should meet with the student and the adviser from the second department on a regular basis. The reason for such regular meetings is to help the student develop the thesis/project from an interdisciplinary or a cross-disciplinary perspective. In the absence of such joint meetings, the student will not be able to develop a truly joint thesis/project that meets the guidelines for both majors.

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 I.S., 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 I.S. 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 I.S. thesis/project is submitted and evaluated, the adviser is responsible for indicating to the student any specific typographical and mechanical errors which 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 452 in a subsequent semester. Students who enroll for a ninth semester to complete 452 will be charged the current "9<sup>th</sup> semester rate" as established by the College.

#### **J. 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.

#### **K. 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.

## **L. 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 for the most up-to-date information.