

Student guide to the independent study

M.S. in Information Design and Communication
English, Technical Communication and Media Arts Department
Southern Polytechnic State University

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Introduction

What this document is about

This document describes the independent study course in the MS in Information Design and Communication program at Southern Polytechnic State University.

This course is taught under the following course designation: IDC 7503, Independent Study.

Who the information is for

The information in this document is for graduate students in the MSIDC program who want to study a topic in technical communication or information design that is not offered as a regular IDC course. It is also for graduate students who want to study a topic in greater depth than it is covered in one of the regular IDC courses.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to tell you what an independent study is, how to get one approved, and the requirements for completing one.

Organization

This document is organized into three major sections:

- what an independent study is
- how to get an independent study approved
- the requirements for completing an independent study

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What an independent study is

Introduction This section describes what an independent study is.

Advantage You can do an independent study after completing the program prerequisites (IDC 6001, IDC6030, and IDC 6002). An independent study can serve as a springboard for a master's thesis by allowing you to start exploring relevant subject matter not covered in the course work early in the program.

Definition An independent study is the study of a specific area in technical communication or information design that

- covers subject matter that is either not offered as a regular course or that is only briefly covered in a regular course
- you design and complete under the direction of an IDC professor
- covers subject matter that you would like to know more about
- culminates in a scholarly paper, including a literature review
- will enhance your capabilities as a technical communicator or information designer

What's next The next section tells how to get an independent study approved.

How to get an independent study approved

Introduction To get an independent study approved, you design an independent program of study with an IDC professor and get the Graduate Program Coordinator to approve it. This process requires that you complete several steps. These steps are described in the following procedure.

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How to get an independent study approved, cont'd

Rules

Before proceeding, consider the following rules:

- You can do *only one* independent study as part of your master's program.
- You cannot apply more than **nine** hours from combined **independent study and transfer courses** toward your degree.

For example, if you have nine hours of transfer credit that you are applying toward your degree, you cannot apply the credits from an independent study, also.

Approval procedure

To get an independent study approved, complete the following procedure.

Step	Action
1	Discuss your topic with an IDC professor and get his or her agreement to direct your study of it.
2	Write a proposal describing your independent study. In the proposal, you must <ul style="list-style-type: none">• describe in detail the topic you plan to study• describe how the study will enhance your technical communication skills• provide a plan of study, including a schedule and a bibliography of sources that you will use in the study• state what type of scholarly paper you will produce (i.e., a formal research paper, etc.)

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How to get an independent study approved, cont.

Approval procedure, cont.

Step	Action
3	Give your proposal to the professor who agreed to direct you for his or her approval.
4	<p>Does the professor approve your proposal?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, continue to step 5. • If no, revise your proposal according to the professor's suggestions. Return to step 3.
5	Give your proposal to the Graduate Program Coordinator for his or her approval.
6	<p>Does the Graduate Program Coordinator approve your proposal?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, give your proposal along with the name of the professor who agreed to direct you to the Department program assistant. <p>Result: The program assistant will register you for an independent study using a special course designation, IDC 7503.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If no, revise your proposal according to the program head's suggestions. Return to step 5.

After approval

After your independent study is approved, you can begin working on it. The next section describes the requirements for completing an independent study.

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Requirements for completing an independent study

- Introduction** This section describes what you need to do to successfully complete an independent study.
- Requirements** In order to successfully complete the independent study, you must
- work out a study plan with your professor
 - write a progress report that includes an updated schedule and bibliography by the fourth week of the semester
 - meet as agreed with your professor to discuss your progress
 - successfully complete the course of study that you and your professor agreed to
- Course credit and grading** You will receive a letter grade.