

Policy Title:	Directed Studies, Special Topics and Independent Guided Studies Policy
Policy Number:	1401

1. Purpose

To provide definitions and guidelines for the usage of the terms ‘directed studies’, ‘special topics’, and ‘independent guided studies’ and for the development and offering of ‘directed studies’, ‘special topics’, and ‘independent guided studies’ courses.

2. Scope

This policy applies to courses offered in undergraduate and graduate programs.

3. Policy Statement

The University recognizes and supports the fact that curriculum development and enhancement require opportunities to offer courses on specific, timely topics on a short-term basis and to provide students with opportunities to enhance their learning in a subject area with focused, individualized opportunities.

To support these imperatives, the University will provide three options for short term, focused study courses:

Directed Studies:

- an individualized course in which a student works directly with a faculty member on research, directed reading, or a project.
- courses are offered on an ad hoc basis to address a student-initiated area of interest.
- directed studies courses do not duplicate or replace an approved, credit course listed in the Academic Calendar.
- a student will be limited in the total number of directed studies they may count to their degree requirements.

Special Topics:

- a course taught on a specific topic by a faculty member for one or two terms that is not already offered as an approved course listed in the Academic Calendar.
- special topics courses do not duplicate or replace a course listed in the Academic Calendar.
- a student will be limited in the total number of Directed Studies they may count to their degree requirements.

Independent Guided Studies:

- a course section of an existing course offered for a student, or limited small group of students, to learn the course material on their own with the support and guidance of a faculty member.
- independent guided studies course sections are usually offered in formats different from the

regular offerings of the course.

All Directed Studies, Special Topics, and Independent Guided Studies course sections must be approved by the Vice President, Academic or designate before they are offered to students.

4. Regulations

The following requirements must be followed for the approved offering of a Directed Studies, Special Topics, or Independent Guided Studies course:

4.1. Directed Studies:

A directed studies course is initiated by a student or group of students, who identify a specific topic of interest to them and obtain the agreement of an instructor to act as a supervisor for the course.

The student(s) and/or the faculty member must submit a proposal to their department or program head for approval. The proposal must contain the following elements:

- A description of the topic to be addressed in the course.
- An overview of the project to be conducted.
- A description of the planned format for the outcomes of the project (e.g., journal article, oral or poster presentation).
- A description of the student and the supervisor responsibilities.
- An explanation of how student work will be evaluated for grading purposes.

The proposal must be approved in writing by the department or program head and submitted to the Vice President, Academic or designate.

A student may not enroll in more than one directed studies course in a term.

An undergraduate student may use no more than two (2) and graduate students no more than one (1) directed studies courses to complete their degree.

A student may not enroll in more than one directed studies course with the same instructor.

The Vice President, Academic or designate must approve any exceptions to this policy and approval must be obtained prior to the student enrolling in the course(s).

5. Special Topics

A special topics course is initiated by the instructor, who identifies a topic for the course.

An instructor who wishes to offer a new topic in a special topics course must submit a proposed course outline to their Associate Dean.

The course outline must contain:

- A rationale for the topic including an explanation of why the subject of the course is appropriate for a special-topics course.
- A description of learning outcomes for the topic in accordance with the approved learning outcomes of the course.
- A description of how student performance in the course will be evaluated, including weightings for evaluation components.

The approval of the department or program must be obtained for the topic offered in this special-topics course.

A student may use no more than two (2) special topics courses for degree program requirements.

6. Independent Guided Studies

An offering of an independent guided studies course should be initiated by the Associate Dean and discussed with the instructor involved.

The Department Chair (program head) and the Vice President, Academic or designate must give their approval for an independent guided studies section to be offered.

An independent guided studies course must have 3 or fewer students.

An independent guided studies course may be offered in a different format or delivery structure and with different evaluations than a standard course but must deliver the same learning outcomes.

7. Responsibility

The Vice President Academic is responsible for the administration of this policy. Responsibilities of others in the implementation of this policy are as outlined in the Regulations section of this policy.