

Policy and Application Form for Practicum and Directed Research Courses

(4111, 4315, 5315)

Department of Communication Studies

A course designed as either a practicum or an independent research courses can be taught as an organized class or as an independent offering for an individual student or small group. When taught as organized courses in which enrollment meets minimum requirements (10 students for undergraduate, 5 for graduate; see [AA/PPS No. 02.02.02: Small Class Report](#)) and there is a single instructor teaching from a common syllabus, the course should adhere to standard policies for conduct and planning of courses (see [AA/PPS No. 02.03.01: Conduct and Planning of Courses](#)). These policies and expectations address the role of the instructor, grades, contact hours (or equivalent), syllabi, and so forth. When taught as independent offerings for either a single student or a small group, students and faculty should discuss the goals of the practicum or independent research, develop a plan for assignments and projects, and develop a shared understanding of the evaluation criteria. The forms on the pages that follow provide a format for summarizing the nature of the independent study courses and make it possible to provide documentation of the rigor, time commitment, and achieved learning outcomes for these courses. When completed, this documentation would serve the same role as a course syllabus, which is a publicly accessible document, and might need to be posted on a public-facing website. To comply with accreditation requirements, faculty should not agree to serve as the instructor for a practicum or independent research course unless they have completed content-related coursework or have engaged in an appropriate level of research to prepare for the course and content.

The goals of practicum and independent research formats differ in the degree to which they focus upon either practical experience or content that is not found elsewhere in the curriculum. A practicum (4111) typically provides a student with a hands-on experience in the field. In these courses, the instructor serves as the liaison between the university and the individuals with whom a student is as well as to assure that basic learning objectives are achieved. However, the majority of hour allocation for students in a practicum is typically focused upon participation in the approved activities (e.g., speech and debate activities, assisting with instruction of a course, coaching presentation skills in Comm Lab). Practicum credits are not appropriate in student employment arrangements in which they might receive compensation for participating in the activity (e.g., if a student is being paid to work in the Comm Lab, as a teaching or research assistant, or for field work, time is being compensated financially; in a practicum, time is compensated with experience and learning outcomes).

Independent research courses (4315, 5315) have the primary purpose of being a means for students to gain expertise about subject matter that is not included elsewhere in the Communication Studies curriculum. Independent research experiences may either be guided by a faculty member or originate in an idea being developed by the student and completed in an autonomous, albeit supervised, manner. In general, these courses may meet at times that can vary with the schedules of the student and faculty member, but the time spent working on the content or research project must be equivalent to that of a standard course consisting of the same number of credits. Independent research courses should not be arranged when there is an existing course that addresses either the same or similar content.

To assure the documentation of these activities, participating students and faculty members should establish a plan for supervision and an agreed-upon definition of responsibilities associated with these courses prior to the end of the second week of the semester of enrollment. The faculty member should prepare a curriculum vitae (CV) that is attached to the form. After the form is completed, it should be submitted to either the Undergraduate Program Director (for undergraduate courses) or the Graduate Program Director (for graduate courses), and the Department Chair. Students should keep a copy of the document because it serves as a syllabus that outlines the expectations for satisfactory completion of a course.

The course configuration and details are typically negotiated between each individual faculty member and students enrolled in the course. The content provided on the form should include:

1. A description of the practical experience or directed research. For practica, this section should identify the

Faculty should attach a copy of their CV when submitting the document.

primary activities the student will complete, any organized learning activities facilitated by the instructor, and so forth. For independent research, the description should focus on the content that is being studied, primary projects/assignments that are being evaluated for credit, hours allocated, and so on.

2. Explanation and justification of the practicum or independent research. The justification should clarify the nature of the practicum or directed research. Any directed research credits must indicate that content is either not covered by other available communication courses and/or that the independent study will proceed at a level of sophistication beyond that is demonstrably above that found in other courses. As noted above, independent study courses should not be used as an alternative to an existing course if other classes are full, nor should practicum or directed research credit courses be solicited, approved, or arranged to create accommodate a student's preferred schedule. Such courses will only be approved if it is clear that other course offerings do not address the topic of emphasis, that the independent study format is truly the appropriate instructional method for the course, and that the reasons for choosing the instructional format are not guided by schedule preferences;
3. Allocation of course hours. In accordance with university requirements (see AA/PPS No. 02.03.10 (4.11): [Instructional Contact Time and Academic Credit](#)), the explanation and justification should identify the approximate time requirements for completion of tasks. A one-credit course must equate to no less than 45 hours of class contact (e.g. 15 in class and 30 preparing for class, writing, etc.). A three-credit course requires no less than 135 hours per semester;
4. Qualifications, activities, hours, reading assignments, and other required preparatory materials, as appropriate. These materials consist of any items that for which a student must arrange access in order to complete the course. The explanation should describe the items necessary for effective participation and credit/course completion;
5. Definition and explanation of major student and faculty tasks and/or other responsibilities. These might include serving as a liaison with the field supervisor for a student or to explain the nature of the research activities to be completed (e.g., locating sources, coding data, conducting analysis, etc.);
6. Grading expectations and/or criteria for pass/fail. As with all courses, the grading scale of factors that distinguish between a pass or fail should be explained to students, with an opportunity for the student to ask questions. Both students and faculty should be equally aware of the requirements for achieving a either a passing grade or passing mark in the course.

Both the supervising faculty member and enrolled students are responsible for being sure the agreement meets the criteria listed above. Any student enrolled on an individual basis in a Practicum (4111) or Directed Research (4315, 5315) course should receive signed copies of the completed forms (found on the next pages). When completed, the form should be routed to either the Director of the Undergraduate Studies or the Graduate Program Advisor and the Chair of the Department of Communication Studies for approval. A copy of the agreement will be kept on file in the Department of Communication Studies with the copy of the faculty member's CV. Students and supervising faculty are responsible for arranging any course sections and assuring that the student is able to register for the class in a timely manner.

Failure to complete all forms and receive approvals by census date (12th class day of fall/spring and 4th class day of summer) will result in the student being recorded as "Never Attended" on the census roster, which will initiate an administrative withdrawal by the University Registrar.

Faculty should attach a copy of their CV when submitting the document.

Complete this page to be in compliance with AAPPS 02.03.01

**Agreement for Study
in an
Individualized Topic Course**

Course Number

Section

Course title

Semester/Term – Year

Department

Date

Name of Student

PLID

and

Name of Faculty Member

have agreed that the student will make an Individualized study of the following topic:

Title of the Study

Signature of Student

Signature of Faculty Member

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**Application for Independent Study 4111, 4315,5315, and Other Similar Courses
(not applicable to Internship or thesis credits)**

Student Name (print): _____
Student ID: _____
Professor/Supervisor (print): _____
Course Number: _____

[Continue on additional pages, if necessary]

1. **EXPLANATION/JUSTIFICATION AND WORK-CREDIT EQUIVALENCY (during the long semester, a 3-credit course should consist of approximately 135 hours of work):**

2. **ALLOCATION OF COURSE HOURS (SPECIFY 1, 2, OR 3 CREDITS AND HOW COURSE HOURS ARE ASSIGNED):**

3. **PRIMARY PREPARATORY MATERIALS (ARTICLES, READING, DATASETS):**

4. **A. TASKS AND/OR RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT (WORK TO COMPLETE, DUE DATES):**
B. TASKS AND/OR RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FACULTY MEMBER (CONTENT TO COVER, METHOD FOR PROVIDING FEEDBACK):

5. **EVALUATION CRITERIA (WHAT DISTINGUISHES A GRADE OF A FROM B, ETC. OR, HOW WILL THE INSTRUCTOR MAKE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN PASS OR FAIL?)**

Signature of Student

Date

Signature of Instructor/Professor

Date

Signature of Graduate or Undergraduate Director

Date

Signature of Department Chair

Date

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