



HARVARD
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Office of the Registrar

INDEPENDENT STUDY CONTRACT AND POLICIES
COURSE S-999, SPECIAL READING OR RESEARCH

Name of Student: _____ ID Number: _____

Degree and Program: _____

Supervising faculty member: _____

Term and year: _____

☐ individual work ☐ group instruction under reading course number

Brief subtitle describing course work: _____

What are your objectives in taking this course? What do you expect to learn?

What activities do you plan to engage in to meet these objectives?

What pattern of interaction have you agreed to with your faculty supervisor?

Regular meeting? How often or how many?

Submission of oral or written reports?

Submission of reading lists?

Other? (Please be specific.)

How have you and your faculty supervisor agreed that you will be evaluated? (Please be specific: papers, reports, etc.)

Signature of Student

Date

Signature of Student's Faculty Advisor

Date

Signature of Faculty Member supervising Independent Study

Date

Please make a copy for your records.

Independent Study and Field Work Policies

Carefully crafted and well-supervised independent studies and field experiences can be a powerful learning experience. They offer students the opportunity to work with a faculty member on a program of special reading, research, or fieldwork beyond the coursework included in the *HGSE 2016-2017 Catalogue*. Students who are considering approaching a faculty member about participating in an independent study or field experience are offered the following advice:

First, some faculty members have reported feeling pressured to work with students on independent studies or field experiences. It is important to remember that no faculty member is under any obligation to do so — the decision to take on this added responsibility is entirely up to the individual. Faculty members differ enormously in their preferences; some believe it is an ideal vehicle for working with students (especially advanced doctoral students); others would prefer to engage in activities that benefit more than a single student. . Students who decide to approach a faculty member about sponsoring an independent study or field experience should realize that they are asking someone to take on an additional time commitment. .

Second, a small number of students have reported that they did not receive the kind of mentoring they had expected during the course of the independent studies or field experiences. Upon investigation, the most common problem was mismatched expectations on the part of student and faculty or sponsor. It is strongly suggested that, before registering for an independent study or field experience, students ensure that they and the faculty member discuss a set of common expectations about the scope of work, faculty/student contact (its periodicity and length) and feedback (its depth and timeliness). Most faculty members believe that their primary teaching obligation is to students in their formal classes; students in independent studies and field experiences are sometimes supervised “at the margins.” It is hoped that an open and honest discussion of expectations, in advance of completing the required HGSE independent study or field work contract, may improve these experiences for all parties.

Given that independent studies and field work are designed to augment the HGSE course offerings, not supplant them, students are expected to abide by the following policies:

- Independent study and field work contracts must be signed by both the faculty member agreeing to supervise the course and the student’s faculty advisor. This requirement is not designed to increase paperwork, but rather to ensure an added level of scrutiny.
- A full-time student is limited to a maximum of one independent study or field experience per semester. A part-time student is limited to a maximum of one independent study or field experience per year.
- No more than two independent studies, field experiences, or combination thereof may count towards each degree (Ed.M., C.A.S., Ed.D. or Ed.L.D.)¹. Independent studies and field experiences cannot be used to satisfy substantive degree requirements.
- If a student chooses to take two independent studies, field experiences, or a combination, the two courses must be with different HGSE faculty members.
- The supervisor of an independent study or field experience needs to be an HGSE faculty member with the title “Adjunct Lecturer,” “Lecturer,” “Senior Lecturer,” “Member of the Faculty,” or any level of “Professor.”

¹ Ph.D. in Education students considering independent study should consult the [GSAS Student Handbook](#) for enrollment regulations.