George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development

EDUC 897

Independent Study for the Ph.D. in Education Program
Spring, 2013

Guidelines

Independent study courses are integral elements of a student's Ph.D. in Education program. These are doctoral-level courses designed by a student with the advice of an instructor. They do not duplicate courses that exist as regular university course offerings.

All Ph.D. in Education independent study courses must meet accepted standards of doctoral study and inquiry. Such courses should involve analysis, synthesis and/or evaluation of research, theory and/or exemplary practice in an area of inquiry or scholarship approved as part of the student's program of doctoral study. As a minimum, an independent study reading course must include a culminating project or paper, or other suitable product(s) which communicates the key learnings developed by the student. Where an independent study seems to parallel or include an existing 500- level (or lower) course offered as a regular class, the course description/proposal must clearly describe what distinguishes the independent study from this regular offering to make it a doctoral level course and worthy of being an independent study.

To be applied to the student's program of doctoral study an independent study in any area of study must be *approved in advance* by the course instructor, student's faculty advisor and the Ph.D. in Education Director. Courses not approved in advance by the prescribed deadlines will *not* be accepted as meeting Ph.D. in Education program requirements.

An independent study course may be primarily a *reading* or a *research* course. Proposals for each of these kinds of independent study courses use the same cover sheet but differ in structure, as follows:

1. Readings course proposals should describe:
   a. general theme or topic
   b. relevance to the student's program
   c. learning objectives to be achieved (listing what the student is to *know* or *be able to do* by the conclusion of the study)
   d. learning activities to be undertaken or performed
   e. procedure(s) to be followed
   f. tentative reading list
   g. paper(s), project(s), or other product(s) to be prepared
   h. tutorial schedule to be followed
   i. evaluation procedures

2. Research course proposals should describe:

       a. goal of the research
       b. need/significance of the project
            ☐ background of the problem
            ☐ summary of previous related research

       c. schedule for completion of research
       d. any special sources to be consulted
       e. tutorial schedule with an instructor
       f. evaluation procedures
       g. research design
            ☐ problem/question (specific)
            ☐ hypotheses/questions
            ☐ procedures:
                 data collection and analysis
                 methods to be used
            ☐ anticipated results
            ☐ types of interpretation sought
            ☐ limitations anticipated

Independent study courses are designed by a student with the advice of the course's potential instructor and, where appropriate, with the consultation of the student's doctoral program of study advisor. In addition, for *each* independent study course students must prepare a two to four page course proposal in accord with the guidelines presented here. Once approved and signed by the course's instructor-to-be, *four* (4) copies of the signed proposal must be submitted to the student's doctoral advisor. Upon approval and signing by the advisor, the signed copies of the course proposal are submitted to the Ph.D. in Education Director for final approval.

Due date for proposal submission is no later than the first day of classes of the semester for which the student is registering.

Four completed and signed copies of an independent study proposal must be submitted to the Ph.D. in Education Director in time for final approval to be obtained by the appropriate date listed above. It is the student's responsibility to ensure approval has been received before starting an independent study.

Copies of all major written reports, final papers, etc. prepared for an independent study are to be included in the student's portfolio upon completion of the course.

Student Expectations

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/].

- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See http://ods.gmu.edu/].

- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html].

- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.

- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

Campus Resources

- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See http://caps.gmu.edu/].

- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/].

- For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See http://gse.gmu.edu/].