

INDEPENDENT STUDY AND RESEARCH

Independent Study

Independent study and research provides an opportunity for students to work one-on-one with a faculty member through directed reading or supervised research. Normally independent study is reserved for students at an advanced level within their majors. Students should consult with their respective major or departmental advisors about requirements and limits for independent study, which vary from department to department.

Students are advised to approach faculty members about independent study as early as possible, since many instructors limit the number of students they will supervise in a given semester or year. Some departments require that the Director of Undergraduate Studies approve the independent study. As part of the proposal and approval process, students must specify, in consultation with the faculty supervisor, the number of points to be earned for the independent study. Students must designate the number of points to be earned when registering for independent study.

Students may count no more than 12 points of independent study toward the degree, and may register for no more than one independent study per term. If a student wishes to undertake an independent study program involving more points than the number permitted, he or she must have the approval of the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the GS Committee on Academic Affairs.

Independent Research: Human Subjects

Any research that involves people is considered human subjects research in a broad sense. Students who are interested in conducting independent research that will involve participants answering questions, completing surveys, filling out forms, following instructions, and/or being observed, or that involves receiving data about identifiable individuals, may need special approval.

All universities have an Institutional Review Board (IRB), which reviews research proposals involving humans and assesses whether or not the research can be approved. The approval is dependent upon the risk of harm to the research subjects.

This risk of harm can be physical, psychological, legal, or social and it is the role of the Columbia IRB to protect those who have voluntarily donated their time (even if they are compensated) in order to take part in any research that is conducted by a member of Columbia University.

Taking seriously the well-being of research participants is part of what makes a good researcher and a good research project.

Requesting IRB Approval

Students submitting proposed research for approval by the Institutional Review Board must:

- Complete the [online Human Subjects Protection Training](#). [\[Instructions\]](#)
- Identify a CU faculty member as a Principal Investigator.
- Complete the Undergraduate Study [IRB Approval Request Form](#).
- Create a consent form. ([Samples are available on the Columbia IRB website.](#))
- File a [Conflict of Interests Disclosure Statement](#).

- Create a research protocol in [RASCAL](#). [\[Instructions\]](#)
- Attach to your RASCAL protocol your completed approval request form and any necessary supplemental documentation (for example, research instrument and consent form).