

PLANNING FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY

Preparing Proposals

When you first meet with a faculty member whom you hope will sponsor your ISP, you should bring a written draft of your proposal. This meeting should occur during the quarter before the one in which you plan to register the ISP. Fairhaven ISPs may only be sponsored by [Fairhaven faculty](#) (either regular or adjunct).

Online Registration Instructions

- Log in to WEB4U
- Click on Student / Registration / Fairhaven ISP Request Form / Create new ISP Request
- Select FAIR – Fairhaven
- Select the Course Number, Term, Number of Credits, and Grade Mode (S/U)
- Create a Title
- Select a Faculty Sponsor
- Save often!
- Enter your Proposal text
- Attach an optional note
- Save changes, submit, or cancel changes
- Register using CRN emailed to you
- Your ISP List
- How to Create a Group Independent Study
- Evaluation of Independent Studies

More information and extended instructions on registering an Independent Study Project is available on the Fairhaven website.

<http://www.wvu.edu/fairhaven/academics/isp/instructions.shtml>

Responsibilities

Student: Below, you will find a description or statement of the 6 Elements of an Independent Study Project (ISP) at Fairhaven.

Sponsor: Approving an ISP proposal signifies the instructor's endorsement and agreement to share responsibility for the quality of the proposal. (Although ISPs are encouraged as part of a student's Fairhaven experience, doing an ISP is not an automatic "right." Faculty are expected to sponsor ISPs, however, they may use their judgment in deciding to sponsor any individual ISP, taking into consideration such factors as their own load, the relationship between their areas of expertise and the proposal's theme, the

student's preparation for the study, their sense of the quality of the ISP, etc.). The sponsoring instructor is expected to advise the student prior to and during formulation of the ISP proposal. If the student wishes, the instructor may advise in the reformulation of the proposal. After approval of the proposal, the instructor is responsible for on-going advisement as needed, and for evaluation of the completed project.

The 6 Elements of an Independent Study Project

Remember that both your ISP proposal and your final evaluation should demonstrate your ability to write clearly so that others can understand what you mean. These documents will be retained in your permanent academic record at Fairhaven College.

1. **Description:** Objectives and Related Issues: You must be able to present a concise statement of what you plan to do, what expectations and objectives these plans are intended to fulfill, and what problems, major issues, and fundamental questions you expect to encounter in pursuit of your study.

What do you plan to do and how do you plan to do it?

What are your objectives in undertaking this study?

What do you hope to learn? What questions do you wish the study to address?

What problems, issues, and complexities do you expect to confront?

If there is any controversy concerning this area or approach to the study, how do you expect to address such controversy?

What problem(s) do you intend to explore?

What questions will guide this exploration?

Can you describe your present position regarding these problems, these questions?

2. **Qualifications:** Generally, readiness to undertake the ISP implies some background, preparation, knowledge or experience in the area or related areas to be studied. However, exploratory ISPs may be undertaken for which you have little or no specific background; in such instances, you should take special care to identify appropriate resources.

What background, knowledge, preparation or special abilities do you possess that will help you in undertaking this project: include books read, courses taken, experiences outside of school.

3. **Resources:** It is the responsibility of the student to seek and access adequate resources to undertake the project. These may include a bibliography, other institutions, faculty at Fairhaven or elsewhere, other knowledgeable or skilled persons.

What sources and resources do you intend to use, including:

- Bibliography

- Faculty at Fairhaven and else where
- Other institutions and agencies
- Other knowledgeable or skilled persons?

Beyond specifics:

- Where and how do you plan to track down further resources?
- What are the first books/resources you plan to use?
- Which do you think are likely to be the most important?
- If you are uncertain where to begin, how will you find out?
- What background, skills, or special information do you have and/or will you need?
- Is there anyone at Fairhaven or Western whom you might find helpful? Elsewhere?
- If this study takes you off campus, where might that be and why?
- Will you need any help making contacts, locating resources?

4. ***Demonstration of Learning:***

The study must involve a demonstration of the learning accomplished, to be made available to the sponsor—and, if desired, to a larger audience—in some concrete, accessible form. Such might include a critical or analytical paper, a work of art or creative writing, some experimental data and conclusions, a public performance, an examination or oral interview, and the like. This demonstration will serve as one basis for the sponsor's evaluation.

- In what way do you plan to keep track of and demonstrate your learning?
- What arrangement should you make with your sponsor for reporting the progress of your work?
- Is the product you've chosen appropriate to the level and sophistication of the proposal?

5. ***Evaluation Criteria:***

Upon finishing the project, you will complete a written evaluation of it for your sponsor. This should include evaluation of the extent to which the intentions stated in the original proposal were realized, the issues addressed and the important questions answered. It will assess developments undertaken during the course of the study according to their educational value. It will discuss the meaning and the value of what was learned (whereas the demonstration of learning will state or reveal what was learned). Upon receipt of your evaluation, the faculty sponsor will write an evaluation of the project, assess your learning through it, and determine and assign credit.

- By what criteria will you evaluate your work?
- What will be the focus of your evaluation?
- If your objectives changed during this study, what triggered the change?
- Give some account of the major questions, problems, ideas and personal insight

that were encountered.

- What books/resources/people did you find most useful?
- What problems, personal and/or academic, did you discover, and how do you think they could be amended or evaded the next time around (or should they be)?
- Can you say what implications this experience might have for your future plans?

6. *Expectations of Faculty Sponsor:*

Describe your agreement with your faculty sponsor regarding your expectations of him/her related to this Independent Study.

Independent Study Levels and Types

The sections below outline the variety of ways ISPs can be structured and some guidelines that should be followed and questions to ask when proposing independent work.

Credit levels: Each credit proposed for an ISP implies at least three hours of work per week of the quarter on that project.

Course levels: Group or individual independent study may be taken at the 200, 300, or 400 level, depending on the student's background or abilities and the nature of the study.

- **200** — ISPs at this level are exploratory, and can be used to venture into fields in which you have not yet developed any expertise.
- **280** – Practicum: Learning through practical involvement outside the classroom.
- **300**—ISPs at this level assume some prior learning in the field, and a growing comfort with the vocabulary of the discipline. The proposal should include a clear statement of the critical perspectives you will bring to the activity. "Keeping a journal" is not usually sufficient demonstration of learning for this level ISP, although a journal may be a source of data to be mined, along with other data, for thoughtful reflection, interpretation, analysis, and integration.
- **400** — ISPs at this level assume significant prior learning in the field and facility with the vocabulary of the discipline. In addition to the guide lines for the 300 level ISP, a proposal at this level should indicate how you will bring multiple perspectives to your study, which may include the critical contexts in which the activity takes place, e.g. contested issues in scholarly literature or political controversies in the community.

- **401a** – Senior Project: Independent study required of students completing an Interdisciplinary Concentration. Sponsorship and prior approval of Concentration chair is required.
- **480** – Internship in an area related to one’s course of study; addresses specific roles or responsibilities.

Guidelines for Sponsorship

Although ISPs are encouraged as part of your “Fairhaven experience,” doing an ISP is not an automatic “right” or “entitlement.” Faculty may use their judgment in deciding to sponsor ISPs based on their own teaching and supervision load and on the parameters outlined below. These parameters are not intended to be constraining or oppressive, but as guidelines for responsible experimentation in the spirit of exploration, playfulness and spontaneity.

Some questions to help you and your sponsor determine the legitimacy and parameters of your ISP proposal:

- Does this planned ISP connect with your Concentration or current study? Although this connection is not required, this parameter may make a difference when faculty members must decide if they can take on an additional student.
- Is it worth college credit? Any topic or experience may be appropriate for an ISP if the relevance to intellectual development, reflection, and connection making are clearly articulated as part of the ISP. ISP credits should not be arranged for experiences that do not include an avenue for reflection and meaning making.
- Are you seeking credit for work or an experience you have already completed? Fairhaven does not give credit for prior work unless there is significant current work being done as reflection on the previous work.
- Is it worth the amount of credit requested? You should understand the time commitment you are making when proposing an independent study. (Approximately 3 hours per week through the quarter for each credit assigned.)
- Are you using the ISP to “avoid” taking a scheduled class? ISPs are not appropriate as a vehicle to avoid taking a scheduled class or to avoid particular topics in a scheduled class. In rare circumstances they may be used to help with unavoidable scheduling difficulties.
- How many other ISP credits are you taking this quarter and why do you want to do this ISP now?



- Does your program rely too heavily on ISPs to develop your area of study? (See section below on Independent study credit as part of your Concentration.) Are you proposing this ISP simply to “fill” empty credits, or is it a genuine interest area? Would this ISP be more appropriate if scheduled at another time in your plan of study?
- Have you done work in this area before? This question can help you and your faculty sponsor determine the appropriate level for the ISP (200, 300 400). For projects at the upper division level, the proposal should be clear about the critical perspectives you are bringing to the project.
- Why have you chosen this faculty sponsor for this ISP?
- Have you thought carefully about how this sponsor can help? Are there other faculty who have greater expertise in this area of study?
- Can ISP credit be granted for courses taken outside of Fairhaven? Sponsoring credit for structured courses outside FHC/WWU can be appropriate, using these same guidelines, as long as credit is not being earned elsewhere for the same course. ISPs are usually referred to as Independent Studies in other departments and faculty and staff they may not be familiar with the term ISP as it is used exclusively at Fairhaven.

ISPs within Student Concentration

Concentrations (FAIR 303) should include opportunities for you to pursue your scholarly interests through a variety of means, including formal course work, independent study, and applied work in your fields. These opportunities should be balanced. As a guideline for the inclusion of independent study credit in Concentrations, the faculty have set a range of no less than 10% and no more than 25% of the credits in the Concentration to be taken in independent study or internship credit (excluding the Senior Project - FAIR 401). If a Concentration proposal falls outside this range, a rationale that supports the amount of independent work must be included in the Concentration proposal. If revisions to the Concentration course list after filing will cause the percent of ISP credits to fall outside this range, a rationale should be separately developed by the student, be approved by the Concentration Committee and filed with the Concentration in your permanent file.

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