



<b>Section:</b>	II.3.22	
<b>Title:</b>	Undergraduate Course Types: Independent Study, Independent Research, Group Study, Group Research, and Special Arrangement	
<b>Effective Date:</b>		
<b>Approved By:</b>	Provost	
<b>Responsible Unit:</b>	Academic Affairs (academic@tcnj.edu, 609-771-3080)	
<b>Related Documents:</b>	MOA 62 Course Approval Policy	
<b>History:</b>		
	<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>
	<b>Notes</b>	
2.0	Draft	Revised by CAP
1.0	2004	New policy; initial release

## I. INTRODUCTION

This document outlines policies and procedures for existing undergraduate courses involving independent or group study or research. Specifically, the policy covers the following undergraduate course types: independent study, independent research, advanced tutorial (group study), group research, and courses offered by special arrangement (Section 70). Such courses not in the Undergraduate Bulletin must be approved through governance according to the Course Approval Policy.

## II. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are provided in MOA 62.

Independent Study - an independent study course is one in which the student works independently with only minimal faculty direction.

Independent Research - an independent research course is one in which the student works independently with significant faculty involvement.

Advanced Tutorial (Group Study) - an advanced tutorial (aka group study) course presents a focused topic with individualized mentoring, intensive reading, and library work with student led discussions. The sponsoring faculty member meets with a small group of students together for approximately one hour per week; students meet more frequently to design presentations and critique each other.

Group Research - a group research course is one in which a group of students performs an investigation on a focused topic in collaboration with each other and led by a faculty mentor.

Course by Special Arrangement - A course offered by special arrangement is an experience in which the student(s) cover[s] the content of a regularly scheduled course through



individual or small group study under the guidance of a faculty sponsor.

### **III. POLICY**

#### **1. Common policy elements for all course types:**

- a) The courses must have either an individual proposal or a generic syllabus (or both) to ensure that students and faculty have a common understanding of course content, learning outcomes, learning activities, grading policies, prerequisites, faculty-student interaction frequency and duration, and other key course aspects.
- b) Individual proposals are approved by department chair and dean (or designee) prior to enrolling in the course. Generic syllabi, as well as all course eligibility criteria, must be approved through the governance process (i.e. department and school committees).
- c) All eligibility criteria and application processes must be published on the department/program's website and in the TCNJ Undergraduate Bulletin.
- d) The approved course topic will be reflected on the student's transcript.

#### **2. Independent Study Course**

- a) Purpose: Independent study courses are for individual pursuit of topics within or beyond a student's major field of study that transcend the regularly available curriculum, and typically involve research, primary source reading, or field work. These courses may include capstone/senior thesis courses.
- b) Eligibility: Matriculated students must have completed at least twelve (12) total course units, with at least four (4) course units completed at TCNJ, to be eligible for an independent study. A minimum 2.5 grade point average is required, subject to waiver by the departmental chair. Departments may establish additional eligibility criteria for independent study courses that must be approved and published in accordance with section 1, above.
- c) Proposal: An independent study contract consists of two parts: the proposal, and the enrollment form to be filed with the Office of Records and Registration. In consultation with the faculty sponsor, the student prepares a proposal containing the following information:
  - a detailed project description and deliverables
  - the anticipated time necessary for each course deliverable
  - a description of prior coursework and/or other experience that prepared the student for the proposed work
  - the frequency and duration of meetings with the faculty sponsor
  - project milestones completion dates, where applicable
  - The methods by which the student's work will be evaluated (e.g., paper, performance, presentation)



- d) Credit: The number of credit hours for the independent study is determined by the guideline of a minimum of 12 hours of effort per week per course unit. When planning for independent study, the student and advisor strive to maintain a balance between this mode of study and other elective courses. A disproportionate number of independent study courses may prevent a student from taking other elective courses that are equally important to scholarly development. A student may enroll in no more than 1.5 course units of independent study in a given semester. A department may establish a limit of independent study course units that students are permitted to complete within that department's programs.

### **3. Independent Research Course**

- a) Purpose: An independent research course is one in which the student works independently with significant faculty involvement. These courses may include capstone/senior thesis courses.
- b) Eligibility: To be eligible for independent research, matriculated students must have completed at least twelve (12) course units and four (4) course units at TCNJ, although this requirement is subject to waiver by the department chair in individual cases. A minimum 3.0 grade point average is required, subject to waiver by the departmental chair. Departments may establish additional eligibility criteria for independent research projects, subject to publication in accordance with section 1, above. Any departments with fractional unit research courses designed for first-year students that have been approved by the Department and School Curriculum Committees and the Dean are exempt from these requirements.
- c) Proposal: Independent Research courses require the preparation of a proposal of the research objectives and the techniques expected to be employed in the research work. This is typically prepared by the student in consultation with the faculty research sponsor. An enrollment form including a summary of this proposal must be signed by the student, the research sponsor, the department chair, and the dean (or designee), and submitted to Records & Registration.
- d) Syllabus: Departments should have generic syllabi for independent research courses. These syllabi should be available to students when preparing their proposals. Departments may establish further requirements for this type of course, subject to approval and publication in accordance with section 1, above.
- e) Credit: The number of credit hours for the independent research is determined by the guideline of a minimum of 12 hours of effort per week per course unit. A student may enroll in no more than 1.5 course units of independent research in a given semester. A department may establish a limit of independent research units that students are permitted to complete within that department's programs.

### **4. Advanced Tutorial (Group Study) Course**

- a) Purpose: This course is arranged so that a group of students can study a focused topic



with individual mentoring by a faculty member. The faculty member usually meets with the students for one hour a week, with the students meeting more frequently to discuss and critique each other's work.

- b) Eligibility: Any department offering this type of course must establish appropriate eligibility requirements.
- c) Syllabus: Departments must have generic syllabi for advanced tutorial courses, specifying student workload and grading standards.
- d) Credit: A department must establish a limit of advanced tutorial units which a student is permitted to complete within that department's programs.

#### **5. Group Research Course**

- a) Purpose: Faculty must lead this course, which involves a focused investigation of a topic by a group of students and the faculty member.
- b) Eligibility: Any department offering this type of course must establish appropriate eligibility requirements.
- c) Syllabus: Departments must have generic syllabi for group research courses, specifying student workload and grading standards.
- d) Credit: A department must establish a limit of group research units which a student is permitted to complete within that department's programs.

#### **6. Special Arrangement (Section 70) Course**

- a) Purpose: A special arrangement course is an experience in which the student covers the content of a regularly scheduled course through individual study under the guidance of a faculty sponsor. The special arrangement course designation is to be used only in response to scheduling difficulties or low enrollment.
- b) Eligibility: Enrolling in a special arrangement course requires signed authorization by the chair of the department offering the course and the dean of that school. Permission for a special arrangement course will not be granted during a semester in which the regularly scheduled course is available.
- c) Syllabus: The instructor must ensure the assessment and evaluation of the same learning objectives associated with the regular course. The syllabus and course policy must be aligned with the regular course, including grading expectations, appropriate textbook(s), and other course content.
- d) Credit: Because the course code and number is the same as regular course offerings and only distinguished by a section number of "70", courses offered by special arrangement must be designated as such on the student's transcript by the following statement: "Requirements for this course were met through individual study under the sponsorship of a qualified faculty member."