

MICHIGAN JEWISH INSTITUTE

Policy and Procedure Manual

Functional Area: COURSE WORK

Policy No. CW 2150

Title: Independent Studies Learning Contract

Effective Date: May 18, 2001

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GENERAL PURPOSE:

The purpose of an Independent Study is to provide an opportunity for an individual student to engage in intensive study with a faculty member.

An independent study at MJJ provides a unique opportunity for the student to work one-on-one with a MJJ professor or other authorized instructor. Independent studies enable a student (1) to engage in specialized coursework or research under a professor's supervision or (2) to complete courses not otherwise anticipated to be covered in regular semester offerings during the student's planned tenure at MJJ.

The independent study option is when a student contracts with a faculty member to work on a one to four credit hour course that relates either to the student's General Education Core requirements or to the student's area of concentration. The student is obligated to work with the selected faculty member or authorized instructor to devise a learning contract, which must be approved by the Dean of MJJ or his assigns.

POLICY:

Universally, the availability of Independent Studies is not a student entitlement. It is an enabling policy and option designed to encourage colleges and universities to provide fully matriculated students with an opportunity to pursue further studies not generally covered by scheduled courses. As such, independent studies are generally not available to guest students.

It is the policy of MJJ that requests for independent studies generally originate with the student and must be approved by the faculty member involved in the study and the Dean of MJJ or his assigns.

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A. Course duplications as independent studies:

In lieu of exceptional circumstances, independent studies cannot be a duplication of courses ordinarily scheduled within two semesters of the requested independent study. (Some examples of exceptional circumstances include: where the student could otherwise graduate prior to the usual offering of the duplicated course; or, irreconcilable scheduling conflicts.)

When regular courses are taught by independent study, they must include the same requirements as those in the classroom, including readings, exams and/or papers.

Additionally, since the advantages of classroom interaction with peers are absent during an independent study, the learning contract must include an activity that substitutes for this loss. (Examples of acceptable peer interaction substitutes include: attending any seminars or programs that may be available on the independent study subject matter; participating in "on-line" meetings and threads on the subject matter; working with a study group to complete the independent study; etc.)

Students are generally limited to one course of independent study per semester and a maximum of 4 credit hours. Students on academic probation are not permitted to take any courses by independent study.

NB: Course duplications via independent study are never perfect replacements for the classroom experience. If the MJJ academic faculty views the requested independent study as simply a "convenience", the learning contract, WILL NOT be approved nor will further consideration be given.

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B. Special study topics (Courses numbered 450 or 460 and BIS/CIS 400 or 410):

Students who have completed at least two semesters of college level academic work with a current grade point average of at least 3.0 may apply for an independent study in order to pursue topics of special interest, individual research or other issues of an academic or theological nature. Student's are responsible for obtaining the proposed instructor's consent before registering for a special topics independent study and must submit a complete and signed Learning Contract to the MJJ Dean or his assigns for final authorization. Ordinarily no more than four credit hours may be taken as a special studies topic during one semester.

PROCESS:

FOR ALL INDEPENDENT STUDIES

When proposing a independent studies project, you must follow all the procedures indicated below that apply to you.

Independent studies require that the instructor and student first meet to determine the student's exact interest and to create an appropriate Learning Contract. (Students may contact MJJ deans and other faculty members for suggestions on and availability of instructors for various fields of study and possible precedent learning contracts.)

The Learning Contract must contain all of the following information. Incomplete contracts will be returned to the student without authorization for the study.

Personal Information: Student's name, daytime telephone number, student's area of concentration, and GPA.

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Project Information: Course number and title of the proposed independent study, name of faculty instructor, day time telephone number of instructor, and if proposed instructor is not a regular member of MJJ's faculty: instructor's organization name, address and telephone number; instructor's academic credentials; and, evidence of instructor's suitability to act in the proposed capacity.

A. FOR COURSE DUPLICATIONS:

In addition to attaching the MJJ master (modifiable template) syllabus for the proposed independent study, and agreeing to complete all components therein, the student and the instructor **must include a statement indicating what additional requirements will be met to compensate for the loss of classroom interactions** (see Policy section, above.)

B. FOR SPECIAL STUDY TOPICS (COURSES NUMBERED 400 OR 410 OR OTHERWISE IDENTIFIED AS SPECIAL TOPICS OR STUDIES, E.G., JST 450):

Your Learning Contract must include the following:

1. A course description where you (in consultation with the proposed instructor) completely describe the nature of your independent study project.
2. Between three and five specific and measurable learning outcomes that you expect to achieve with your independent study.
3. A list of learning resources that you plan to use during your study. These can be texts, journal articles, libraries, web sites, and/or others.

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4. The evidence of accomplishment that you will use to demonstrate that you have accomplished your learning objectives. This could be exam results, a research paper, a functioning software program, or some other objective demonstration of accomplishment.

5. A complete timetable indicating weekly activities, milestones, deliverables and independent study completion date. (Failure to meet the independent study completion date may result in lowering of the grade received.)

NB: When you and your proposed instructor consider the course description and your specific learning objectives, ensure that your project is not a duplication of another course already offered by MJI. If the MJI Dean or his assign determines that your special studies topic is a duplication of some other course, your learning contract will not be approved.

C. ALL PROPOSED INDEPENDENT STUDIES:

Independent studies should be designed to incorporate **no less than 30 hours** of student work per credit hour earned and must also include regular meetings with the instructor. **The Learning Contract should specify the total face-to-face contact anticipated between the student and the instructor.** Such meeting times should be incorporated into the course timetable section of the contract. The student and the instructor are expected to meet with each other for no less time than the timetable indicates, during the course of the independent study.

When you have completed your Learning Contract, both you and the proposed instructor should sign three copies. All three signed copies should be submitted to the MJI Dean or his assign for final approval of the proposed independent study. When your independent study has been approved, you and your instructor will receive an approved copy of the Learning Contract so you can begin work on your study.

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DO NOT BEGIN YOUR INDEPENDENT STUDY UNTIL YOU HAVE RECEIVED THIS WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION. WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION, YOU WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO REGISTER FOR THE COURSE NOR WILL YOU BE GIVEN CREDIT FOR ANY WORK.

Plan the use of your time carefully as your independent study must be completed in the semester registered. (You may request an extension and have your instructor submit an "Incomplete Mark Contract" to prevent your receipt of a failing grade.)

When you have completed the independent study your instructor will be required to turn in a final grade so that you will be granted credit for the accomplished work. (Grade forms have been attached to the end of this policy package for your and your instructor's convenience.)

Independent studies and their associated Learning Contracts are requested and submitted by students **prior to open registration** for the intended semester. Although "Add-on" registrations for independent studies might be accepted, they are not recommended, as timely approvals may not be possible. Delays could mean that the independent study will not be approved until a subsequent semester.

D. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Course Cancellations: From time-to-time, a regularly scheduled MJJ course may be cancelled due to a failure to achieve sufficient registration. In these cases, students who have registered for the course may either drop the course (no prejudice on permanent records or their SAP status and full refund of any paid tuition for such courses) or request that they be permitted to take it via independent study. Students who elect to take the cancelled course via independent study are required to complete an independent study learning contract, as described above. However, the phrase "Taken Via Independent Study" will not appear on the student's transcript.

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When a course is cancelled and there are students wishing to take it via independent study, those students and the scheduled instructor should meet on the **first** day and time the class was initially scheduled to meet. At that time, the students and the instructor should prepare a proper independent study, learning contract that includes all the requirements listed in this policy. Contracts should be printed and signed by each student and the instructor and then immediately forwarded to the Dean of Academic Administration or Registrar for review and approval. Failure to prepare timely independent study contract(s) may lead to termination of the substituted independent study and no recognition of any coursework effort performed by either the students or the instructor.

2. Opposite Gender Instruction: Some students (and instructors) taking independent studies with instructors of the opposite gender may be uncomfortable being alone on campus with their independent study instructor. Such students are advised that MJI **cannot be responsible** for providing additional campus personnel when the college is otherwise not open for administrative business (Sunday through Thursdays 10:AM – 6:00 PM). Students and their instructors who do not wish to meet with each other alone on campus are advised to ***schedule meetings when there are other campus programs in progress or when the administrative offices are routinely or otherwise open.*** In the alternative, students and their instructors may choose to meet at other **public locations**, such as public libraries that have the necessary resources to conduct the business of the independent study.

TRANSCRIPT IMPACT:

It is vital that all students requesting any type of independent study understand the following.

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NB: All regularly offered courses taken as independent studies will be listed on student transcripts with the regular course titles followed by the designation "Taken Via Independent Study."

Generally, independent studies are acceptable to most employers and other colleges and universities. However, MJJ can make **no warranty** that a particular independent study or independent studies in general will be found acceptable by all employers or universities. Risks regarding the acceptability of such independent studies increase as the number of independent studies on a student's transcript increase. Students considering taking a independent study in lieu of a classroom course should carefully evaluate this advisory in terms of their own plans for future employment and/or graduate study.

For those students requesting special study topics as independent studies, the risks are considerably lower. Virtually all universities and colleges recognize special studies as appropriate academic pursuits, when not a significant portion of total undergraduate academic tenure.

AUTHORIZATIONS: (at least one signature is necessary to enact this policy/procedure)

President

For Academic Administration

INDEPENDENT STUDY CHECK LIST

DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR LEARNING CONTRACT UNTIL YOU HAVE CHECKED OFF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AS COMPLETED. INCOMPLETE LEARNING CONTRACTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR AUTHORIZATION.

___ I have met with my proposed independent study instructor and s/he has agreed to mentor my independent study.

___ I have negotiated the requirements of my independent study with my proposed instructor and we have agreed upon all of them.

___ I have completed all items on the first page of the independent study contract. Specifically:

___ Independent study course number and title

___ The semester I will be registering for this independent study

___ The number of credits I am requesting for this independent study

___ I have indicated my name, concentration, address, telephone number

___ I have indicated my email address

___ I have provided my instructor's contact information

___ I have indicated all other course numbers and titles I will be taking this semester.

___ I have stated my reasons for requesting this independent study

A. FOR COURSE DUPLICATIONS:

___ I have completed parts A and C if I am taking course duplication as a independent study. Specifically:

___ In agreement with my instructor, I have attached the modified course syllabus containing:

___ a complete timetable **indicating number and duration** of face-to-face contacts

___ weekly activities

___ milestones (dates) and deliverables (dates)

___ independent study completion date

___ I have included a statement indicating what additional requirements will be met to compensate for the loss of classroom interactions.

B. FOR SPECIAL TOPICS INDEPENDENT STUDIES:

___ I have completed parts B and C if I am taking a special topic as an independent study. Specifically:

___ I have provided a complete course description of the independent study project. Namely:

___ subject matter

___ aims

___ objectives

___ content

___ how it will extend and deepen my knowledge of the subject area

___ I have identified between three and five specific and measurable learning outcomes I expect to achieve with this independent study.

___ I have listed the specific learning resources I plan to use during the independent study.

___ I have provided the evidence of accomplishment I will use to demonstrate that I have accomplished my learning objectives.

___ I have provided a complete timetable

___ indicating number and duration of face-to-face contacts

___ weekly activities

___ milestones (dates) and deliverables (dates)

___ independent study completion date

C. FOR ALL INDEPENDENT STUDIES:

___ I have obtained my instructor's signature and date of signature

___ I have signed and dated the learning contract

I recognize that incomplete learning contracts will not be authorized.

 I know that I must register for this independent study after it is authorized via a MJI Registration Form or Add Form if I am already registered.



Independent Study Learning Contract

Will become part of the student's permanent academic record

THIS CONTRACT MUST BE COMPLETELY AND ACCURATELY FILLED OUT OR IT WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED FOR APPROVAL. Items that are typically forgotten have been flagged for your notice and attention

Course Number and Title: _____ 

Semester/Year of Study _____ Number of Credits Requested _____

Student's Name _____ Concentration _____

Current Address _____

Current Phone # (s) _____ e-mail _____

Permanent Address _____

Instructor's Name _____

Current Address _____

Current Phone # (s) _____ e-mail _____

Study Site (if off campus) _____

Site Address _____

Current Phone # (s) _____ e-mail _____

Enter Proposed Independent Study Course Number and Title Here:

Independent study course number and title: _____

State your goal(s) and reason(s) for requesting this independent study. (The more complete your response, the more likely this proposal will be approved. Use additional paper or type electronically right on this contract template, as necessary):



!!!DELETE THESE PINK LINES AND COMPLETE THIS QUESTION !!!

THE ADMIN OFFICE WILL NOT ACCEPT CONTRACT WITH THIS ITEM MISSING!!!

COMPLETE PART A or B and then C

A. For course duplications:

1. **Attach** as part of this contract the MJI master (modifiable template) syllabus for the proposed independent study, **as modified by you and/or your instructor**. This will form the core description and timetable of the independent study. (See Independent Studies Policy Statement if clarification is necessary.)

The modified syllabus should include:

- a complete timetable **indicating number and duration** of face-to-face contacts with your instructor;
- weekly activities;
- milestones (dates) and deliverables (dates); and,
- **the independent study completion date.**

You may **add these items directly to your copy of the MJI master syllabus**. (Your proposed instructor or the MJI academic offices can make an electronic version of the required syllabus available to you to simplify preparation of this learning contract.)

Failure to meet the independent study completion date may result in lowering of the grade received.

2. Include below a statement indicating what additional requirements will be met to compensate for the loss of classroom interactions. Use additional paper or type on this electronic template, as necessary. (See Independent Studies Policy Statement if clarification is necessary.)



B. For special study topics (Courses numbered 400 or 410 or otherwise titled as special topics or studies, e.g., JST 450): (Use additional paper as necessary or simply type directly onto this electronic template file.)

1. Describe here or attach as part of this contract a **complete** course description of your independent study project – subject matter, aims, objectives, content and how it will extend and deepen your knowledge of the subject area. (Suggestion: See the MJJ Dean of Academic Administration or Registrar’s Office for possible precedent Learning Contracts.)



2. Identify between three and five specific and **measurable** learning outcomes that you expect to achieve with your independent study.



3. List the specific learning resources that you plan to use during your study. These can be texts, journal articles, libraries, web sites, and/or others.



4. What evidence of accomplishment will you use to demonstrate that you have accomplished your learning objectives? (This could be exam results, a research paper, a functioning program, or some other objective demonstration of accomplishment.)



5. **Attach** a complete timetable indicating **number and duration** of face-to-face contacts with your instructor, weekly activities, milestones, deliverables and independent study completion date. (Failure to meet the independent study completion date may result in lowering of the grade received.)



NB: When you and your proposed instructor consider the course description and your specific learning objectives, ensure that your project is not a duplication of another course already offered by MJI. If MJI determines that your special studies topic is a duplication of some other course, your learning contract will not be approved.

C. For all proposed independent studies:

I, the undersigned student agree to work for no less than 30 hours for every credit hour earned in the completion of this independent study. I also agree to meet with the undersigned instructor for no less time than the attached timetable indicates, during the course of this independent study.

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Instructor's Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of Authorization _____ (MJI Dean or assign)

Date Authorized _____

On the following pages are forms that:

The Instructor should use to submit the final grade once this independent study is complete;

The Instructor should use to submit a grade change for a previously reported independent study;

The student should use to **register** this independent study (once it has been authorized) for the desired semester if no previous registration form has been submitted by the student for the desired semester; or,

The **add form** the student should use to add this independent study (once it has been authorized) for the desired semester if a previous registration form has already been submitted by the student for the desired semester.

PLEASE NOTE: IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO INCLUDE THESE BLANK FORMS OR THE ACTUAL POLICY STATEMENT WHEN SUBMITTING A COMPLETED LEARNING CONTRACT FOR AUTHORIZATION. THE POLICY AND THE FORMS ARE FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND FOLLOW-UP USE AFTER A LEARNING CONTRACT HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED.

To summarize the steps taken in developing and submitting an independent study learning contract:

N.B.: if any step is skipped or taken out of order, it is virtually guaranteed that major problems with the independent study will ensue!

- a. Student requests permission from the Dean or his assign to take an independent study;**
 - b. If permission is granted, the Academic Administration will attempt to find a professor interested in mentoring the independent study;**
 - c. If a mentoring professor is found, MJI will email both the student and the professor advising them to proceed with preparing the independent study learning contract;**
 - d. It is the responsibility of the student and the mentoring professor to **properly and completely** prepare and sign the learning contract;**
 - e. Upon completion of the learning contract, a signed original should be sent to the Registrar for review. S/he will forward complete contracts to the Dean or his assign for authorization or return incomplete contracts to the student, unauthorized;**
 - f. Upon authorization of a complete contract by the Dean or his assign, the student will be required to:**
-

- 1. Register the independent study with the Registrar for the current or upcoming semester (depending on timing), or**
- 2. File an “Add” form with the Registrar if the student is already registered for other courses in the semester of interest**

g. The Registrar will advise the mentoring professor and student (via returned copies of the authorized learning contract) that the independent study may begin.



INDEPENDENT STUDY GRADE FORM

At the conclusion of the independent study, the instructor should complete this form and submit it to the academic office. Students will receive a F grade if this form is not received by the contract's end date unless they have filed a properly completed "Incomplete Mark Contract" with the Registrar's Office

GRADE FOR: _____ **DATE:** _____
 (Print student's full name)

STUDENT'S MJI ID NUMBER: _____

COURSE NUMBER AND NAME: _____

SEMESTER: _____
 (e.g., Fall '13)

FINAL GRADE: _____

COMMENTS REGARDING THIS INDEPENDENT STUDY (optional):

INSTRUCTOR'S NAME: _____
 (Print your name)

INSTRUCTOR: SIGNATURE: _____



GRADE CHANGE FORM

CHANGE OF GRADE FOR: _____ DATE: _____
(Print student's name)

STUDENT'S MJI ID NUMBER: _____

COURSE NAME AND NUMBER: _____

SEMESTER: _____
(e.g., Fall '13)

CHANGE GRADE FROM: _____ TO: _____

FULLY STATE YOUR REASON FOR CHANGING THIS GRADE:

INSTRUCTOR'S NAME: _____
(Print your name)

INSTRUCTOR: SIGNATURE: _____

DEAN or ASSIGN'S SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

This form will become a part of the student's permanent record



Fax/Mail Registration Record

Michigan Jewish Institute · 6890 W. Maple Rd. · West Bloomfield, MI 48322
 Phone (248) 414-6900 (888) 463-6654 · Fax (248) 414-6907 · info@mji.edu

PLEASE PRINT Term (circle one): Fall Winter Spring/Summer Year 20_____

Student's Legal Name _____
Last First Middle

Other Name Used at MJI (if any) _____

Social Security Number _____ - _____ - _____ Gender Male Female Date of Birth _____

Phone (1): _____ (2) _____ email: _____
(Include Country Code if Applicable) CELLULAR BUSINESS

Degree Program: Associate Bachelor Certificate Guest Student – Home School: _____

What is your Major? _____ Track or focus: _____

| COURSE NO. | COURSE TITLE | CREDIT | LOCATION | DAY | TIME |
|------------|--------------|--------|----------|-----|------|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

| COURSE NO. | COURSE TITLE | CREDITS | INSTRUCTOR |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------|------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| TOTAL CREDITS APPLIED FOR: | | | |

I understand that by registering for courses I incur tuition charges on my account. I have read the appropriate sections of the MJI Academic Catalog and I understand MJI policies regarding maintaining satisfactory academic progress, late registration charges, and adding, dropping or withdrawing from classes. I am also aware that my registration is not considered complete if there is any outstanding past-due balance on my account or until a payment agreement is accepted for the current semester.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

| |
|---|
| Office Use: (Approvals) _____ Dean _____ Registrar _____ Bookkeeping _____ Fin. Aid. (Initialed by all) |
|---|

3/23/2006



REQUEST TO **ADD** Independent Study

STUDENT: _____ **SOC. SEC.** _____
PHONE: _____

DATE OF CHANGE _____ **SEMESTER** _____ **EMAIL:** _____

Please accept my request to **ADD** the following independent study course(s)

| COURSE NUMBER | COURSE NAME | Number of Credits Requested | <i>Office Use Only</i> |
|---------------|-------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Student Signature _____ Date _____

| |
|---|
| Office Use: (Approvals) _____ Dean _____ Registrar _____ Bookkeeping _____ Fin. Aid. (Initialed by all) |
|---|