

# TUTORIAL COURSES AND INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

Most departments and programs offer tutorial courses with such titles as “Independent Research,” “Directed Reading,” or “Individual Writing Tutorial.” In such courses the DUS is almost always the instructor of record, responsible for collecting the grades from the instructors and reporting them to the Registrar’s Office. One of the departmental responsibilities of the DUS is to ensure that the tutorial course in the department is administered in accordance with the following principles established by the Course of Study Committee:

1. The work of the course must not be able to be accomplished within an already existing graduate or undergraduate course to which the student has access.
2. The course must have a “product,” such as a term essay, a series of short essays, laboratory or project reports, a portfolio, a performance, or a final examination.
3. The instructor must meet with the student regularly, normally for at least one hour each week.
4. Students may not receive academic credit for paid research assignments.
5. The approval of the director of undergraduate studies, as well as that of the instructor, is required for the student’s intended work in the course.

The Yale College Faculty has also unanimously approved the following additional recommendations from the Course of Study Committee concerning the conduct of research and independent study for academic credit. These recommendations concern actions that you might undertake as DUS to ensure proper oversight of research and independent study courses in your department. The Yale College Faculty voted:

1. that departments be encouraged to offer meaningful opportunities for research and independent study as a valuable component and potential capstone of a Yale education.
2. that departments establish guidelines for students and faculty concerning their commitments to research and independent study courses and that these guidelines be made known to students and mentors in advance of their election to participate in any term. It is expected that a student engaged in independent study will meet regularly with a Yale faculty member who will be responsible for the supervision of the project.
3. that departments periodically review research and independent study projects to inform the establishment of guidelines as to appropriate content; i.e., that credit is given for substantive and pedagogically meritorious experiences, and not, for example, for technical or administrative assistance.
4. that departments establish mechanisms for reviewing proposed research and independent study projects to assure their appropriateness. This review should be conducted by the DUS or another faculty member designated by the DUS and should be completed prior to the deadline for each student’s academic schedule. The review should include consideration of the content of the project, whether the

student has appropriate preparation, and whether the proposed independent study fits into a cogent overall plan of study.

5. that departments and programs periodically review independent study to ensure that credit being given is appropriate for the intensity and substance of the experience. It is expected that independent study for academic credit should be at least as meaningful an academic experience as a regular Yale College course. Senior projects or other independent study courses not meeting this standard should be half-credit or noncredit.
6. that departments and programs establish reasonable regulations concerning the number of independent study credits to be offered toward departmental requirements.

Instruction in these courses is to be given only by persons with faculty appointments, although on occasion, they may be conducted by a member of the curatorial staff of the Yale University Library or a Yale research scientist.

The department may or may not choose to open these courses to non-majors. You should try to protect new and popular instructors from taking on a burdensome load of tutorial courses in addition to their regular teaching duties. Some departments have established a limit on the number of tutorial courses that an instructor may teach in a year. Members of the departmental faculty will need to be reminded from time to time about the nature and requirements of these courses. Finally, you should review the descriptions of such courses in the YCPS to be certain that the requirements and standards of the tutorial course are clearly specified.

DUSs, or their departmental designees, must give approval for a student to enroll in any independent research or tutorial course in the department. In certain circumstances, permission is also required from the Committee on Honors and Academic Standing. A student must petition the committee, with the support of the instructor and the DUS, to enroll in more than one such course credit in any single term before the senior year or in more than two such course credits in any single term during the senior year. Such permission is also required for a student to enroll in more than three such course credits in the first six terms of enrollment. In the petition the student must give sound academic reasons for exceeding these limits. The chair of the Committee on Honors and Academic Standing is Associate Dean Joel Silverman ([joel.silverman@yale.edu](mailto:joel.silverman@yale.edu)); students petition the Committee through their residential college dean's office.

If a department does not have a tutorial course, students may apply to the Committee on Honors and Academic Standing for a Special Term Course in order to undertake individual work for credit with a member of the department's faculty (see Special Term Courses).

The guidelines for grading in an independent study course are as follows:

Independent study courses, other than senior essays or projects and other exempted courses as exp

Senior projects and courses deemed by a department or program to be a constituent of the senior r

In accordance with these guidelines, you will have to make the determination whether an independent s

The official repository for instructors' reports will be the office of the student's residential college dean. As DUS, you should begin to develop a system for keeping

a copy of the reports that are shared with you by the residential college deans. Please maintain these reports with the same care and degree of confidentiality as you would a student's other grades.

Questions about independent study courses should be addressed to Associate Dean Joel Silverman ([joel.silverman@yale.edu](mailto:joel.silverman@yale.edu)).