

# Independent Study Contract

(ITLS 2900, 4900, 6900, 7900)



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## Department of Instructional Technology & Learning Sciences Utah State University

There may be times or circumstances when no structured course is available for the content or experience you want to include in your degree program. Or a relevant opportunity may arise that is not tied to a specific course or to the department or the university. The ITLS degree programs allow you the option to create your own independent experience in lieu of organized coursework. Your Advisor or Chairperson (chair) is responsible for approving, monitoring, and signing off the work completed for the requirement. You must have **PRIOR** approval from your advisor/chair before you begin. This includes advisor permission to register. The formal process begins with the completion and approval of the independent study contract. *Note: While you will work independently for this experience, there will be a Canvas-accessed portal for weekly reporting and to facilitate communication and submission expectations.*

Identify an experience that is not included in your program's regularly organized courses that you feel will enhance and support your current program. The scope of the experience should be compatible with the level of scholarship in your specific program. A 1-2 page description of your idea is a good way for you to succinctly articulate the idea for your advisor/chair. You should then expect to further develop the idea in consultation and cooperation with your advisor/chair. This may take some negotiation to finalize the idea and decide on the work involved. The basic idea must be agreed on by all parties before approval to register will be given.

1. Complete the Independent Study Contract with the pertinent information.

Credit hours: Independent experiences are variable credit. When you register, the default is 1 credit. If you have agreed that the work will warrant or require more than 1 credit, you will need to manually change the number of credits in Banner after you initially register (in the Schedule & Options tab). As a general rule, 3-credits translates into 150-180 total hours, or 10-12 hours per week for the semester. But it is not just the amount of time, scope and depth of the experience are also critical components in figuring appropriate credits. Total credit hours for the experience will be determined in consultation with your advisor/chair.

Nature of the experience/Problem statement/Context: The purpose of this section is to present the problem to be addressed or the context of the experience. Much of this section may come from the prospectus you worked on with your advisor/chair but should include more detail. This is necessary to avoid misunderstandings and to protect your best interests, the ITLS department, and the University. It should specify in adequate detail all of the important facets involved. This section provides a record for both you and your advisor/chair of the specific nature and extent of the experience agreed upon.

Objectives/Goals/Outcomes: This section should describe what you will *learn* or *be able to do*, not what you will *use* to learn. List the demonstrable skills or knowledge you will acquire in this experience. Here is where you will specify your expected measurable changes or improvements once you've completed the experience.

Activities/Experiences/Resources: Identify possible resources (both material & human) you plan to use. You should also list the strategies (techniques & tools) you will employ in making use of those resources. This section is the explanation of how you will be spending your time and effort in meeting the objectives you have identified above. Be as specific as possible in the proposal, understanding that this section may be refined as you work through the process. You will undoubtedly realize it needs to evolve as you get further into the experience. An adequate description of the procedures to be followed will anticipate most of the questions that your advisor/chair might raise about the sequence of activity, populations, and/or materials involved in development and evaluation of the project.

Evidence/Evaluation/Assessment: List the evidence/artifacts/documentation you will produce, demonstrate, or collect to show you have done what you intended to do. The format can be what makes the most sense: paper/tangible, digital/electronic, in-person event like a demonstration or performance, etc. What they are is up to you and your advisor/chair. Once you have decided what the evidence will be, choose how that will be validated and by whom. Included in this section will be the criteria that will be used for evaluation. The evaluation should be structured to measure the success of the project and to identify areas in which it might be improved. If the experience adequately completes the steps outlined in the approved proposal, it will be judged a success even though major unanticipated flaws are identified as a result of the evaluation.

Timeline/Milestones: A timeline specifying the projected sequence and date of completion of the various steps is helpful to both the advisor/chair and to you during the completion of the experience. Identify milestones, with expected completion dates, that will indicate the clear sequence of events leading to the successful completion of your total experience. These milestones are the checkpoints along the way.

Signatures: At a minimum, you and your advisor/chair must sign the form. This can be actual or virtual/digital. There may be instances where another person or persons will be included in this experience. Examples include a work supervisor, a subject matter expert, or a contractor. When there will be more than just the student and the advisor/chair, signatures from all parties involved must be obtained before proceeding with the experience.

2. Submit the proposal for approval to your advisor/chair allowing a **minimum** of one week for review. You must have an approved, signed proposal **before** proceeding with the independent study experience.
3. Carry out the approved proposed project with the highest level of professionalism. A log of activities, insights, costs, resources, time, and other concerns will be submitted weekly through Canvas. This record can be used in the preparation of your summary and to guide your choice of portfolio inclusions.
4. During the process, consult with your advisor/chair as needed. Remember that there will be weekly submissions via the Canvas course, but take the initiative to supplement that as the experience warrants. Reach out as soon as you identify a need. Do not wait until the end of the semester.

Upon completion of the independent study experience, prepare a 1-2 page summary. Submit the summary and other agreed on artifacts to your advisor/chair for approval.

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This special credit contract verifies that the undersigned have entered into an agreement regarding the assignment of credit to a non-course learning opportunity.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

A# \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Semester \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ Course Number \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Hours \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of the experience/Problem statement/Context (Use attachment if needed)

\_\_\_\_\_

Objectives/Goals/Outcomes

\_\_\_\_\_

Activities/Experiences/Tasks

\_\_\_\_\_

Evidence/Evaluation/Assessment

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Timeline/Milestones

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

As the Student doing this independent study, I recognize and concur that the experience will be completed by myself with the assistance and to the satisfaction of the faculty advisor/chair, whose signature appears below, no later than \_\_\_\_\_.

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor/Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Other/Sponsor (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Completion of Contract Verification

Outstanding Work \_\_\_\_\_ Acceptable Work \_\_\_\_\_ Unsatisfactory Work \_\_\_\_\_

Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ (pass/fail only)

Faculty Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_