

Northwestern

PRITZKER SCHOOL OF LAW

Independent Study Rules

The Independent Study Program allows second- and third-year law students to conduct supervised legal research leading to a final paper of approximately 20 pages (2 credit project) or 30 pages (3 credit project). Students work one-on-one with a supervising faculty member on developing the topic, researching the topic, and writing the paper.

To participate in the program, students must be eligible as noted in these rules, draft a proposal, and find a faculty member to supervise the project.

1. Eligibility

- a. A student must have successfully completed and/or transferred in all of the required 1L courses before participating in Independent Study.
- b. An Independent Study project must be a discrete, original research project and may not be work that is “double counted” toward any degree (JD or other degree). If the Independent Study project builds on prior work or becomes the basis for future work, the student is expected under the Honor Code to disclose and discuss those circumstances with each faculty member involved and to do appropriate “new work” for each credit-bearing (or graduation-requirement) enrollment.

2. Credit Hours

- a. The number of credits a student may receive for a project depends on the nature of the work and scope of the research/writing involved in the project. Thus, students should describe the nature of the project in detail when submitting a proposal. The Rules and Regulations limit the number of Independent Study credits permitted in a single term and in a student’s law school career (see Rule 3).
- b. Independent Study projects may be undertaken for either two or three credits:
 - a. Independent Study projects undertaken for two (2) credits in a single semester will not satisfy any part of the graduation writing requirement.
 - b. Independent Study projects undertaken for three (3) credits in a single semester will satisfy the Research Writing graduation requirement.
- c. Projects may not span more than a single semester.

3. Limitations on Multiple Semester or Separate Independent Study Projects

- d. No student may enroll for more than one Independent Study project to be conducted in the same term or semester.
- e. No student may enroll in both an Independent Study project and Senior Research project to be conducted in the same term or semester.
- f. The maximum number of credits a student may earn through Senior Research and/or Independent Study projects is twelve (12). For example, a student may undertake a 2-credit Independent Study in the 2L Fall and a separate 2-credit Independent Study in the 2L Spring, and then complete a 4-credit Senior Research project in the 3L Fall and a separate 4-credit Sr. Research project in the 3L Spring for a total of 12 credits.
- g. A student who has pursued an Independent Study project for credit in a given semester may not pursue a second, separate Independent Study project in a subsequent term or semester unless he/she obtains the following prior to fourteen (14) days after the first day of classes of the semester (or term) in which he/she seeks permission to enroll for a second project:
 - 1. Certification by the supervising faculty member of the first project that the first project has been fully completed, and that a grade has been given for the first project.

4. Supervising Faculty Members

- a. Independent Study must be supervised by Law School faculty as noted below:
 - a. Residential faculty may supervise 2-credit and 3-credit projects.
 - b. Adjunct faculty may only supervise 2-credit projects (not 3-credit projects).
- b. The student is responsible for finding a supervising faculty member. We recommend students pursue faculty members with whom they already have a working relationship and/or who have expertise or interest in the proposed area of research. Students who need assistance choosing a supervising faculty member may make an appointment with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Director of Senior Research.
- c. The supervising faculty member concerned necessarily has final discretion as to acceptance of a particular applicant, the research topic, and the procedures and methods to be followed, subject to these rules and to the rules of the Law School. Where possible, priority will be given to students who have not otherwise had an opportunity in Law School to do substantial supervised upper-class written work.

5. Proposal Submission Process, Deadline, and Review Process

- a. All Independent Study projects must be approved by the supervising faculty member. The form for Independent Study registration is available online on the [Registration](#) webpage. The student shall submit a completed form which will automatically route to the supervising faculty member for approval. The form shall be submitted as soon as possible, and in no event later than 5:00 PM on the first day of class.

6. Enrollment/Withdrawal

- a. After receiving approval from the supervising faculty member, the Office of the Law Registrar will enroll you in the Independent Study Program. Students will be charged 25 bidding points per credit hour of Independent Study conducted in the Fall and/or Spring semester.
- b. In order to withdraw from Independent Study, a student must submit a withdrawal form to the Registrar no later than the Friday of the fourth week of the semester or term in which the credit was to be earned. The withdrawal form must be signed by the supervising faculty member and will be recorded by a GPA-neutral grade of "W" on the student's academic records and transcript. Any requests for withdrawal after this date must be approved by the Dean or Dean's designate and, if approved, will be recorded by a GPA-neutral grade of "W" on the student's academic records and transcript.

7. Conduct of the Work

The work must be conducted in accordance with the following requirements:

- a. Direct supervision of each participating student by a member of the Law School faculty (see rules in Part 4).
- b. The student must attend frequent, individual meetings of a substantial nature with the supervising faculty member to discuss the work. These meetings must include a regular, weekly one-on-one meeting between the student and the supervising professor. The weekly meeting is to be held in accordance with a pre-arranged schedule. These meetings may be conducted remotely (e.g., via teleconference or videoconference) if the supervising faculty member agrees in advance to this arrangement. A minimum of twelve (12) such weekly meetings should be held in each semester an Independent Study project is in process. For projects that involve work when classes are not in session, there must be at least one meeting each week during that period.
- c. Completion of one of the following by the student:
 1. 2-credit project: a finished paper of approximately 5000 words (20 pages) in length; this will not satisfy any part of the graduation writing requirement.
 2. 3-credit project: a finished paper of approximately 7000 words (30 pages) in length that satisfies the Research Writing graduation requirement by meeting the following criteria:
 - a. The paper makes an argument based on research conducted by the student.
 - b. The student submits a full initial draft of the paper.
 - c. The student receives substantial individual feedback from the professor on the clarity and effectiveness of the writing as well as on the substance and organization of the argument in the draft.
 - d. The student submits a final draft responding to the professor's feedback.
 - e. The student receives a passing grade on the paper.
- d. Review and approval of the final draft of the required paper or report by the supervising faculty member.

8. Due Date

Independent Study project papers are due on the date established by the instructor, which may be any date prior to the last day of the scheduled examination period of the semester. For good cause, a student may request to submit the paper at a later date. Such a request must be in writing, addressed to the supervising faculty member, and must set forth the student's reasons for the request. The supervising faculty member may:

- a. Deny the request.
- b. Authorize a delay in the submission of the paper until any date prior to the grade due date of the semester in which the credit is earned; no deadline may extend beyond the grade due date established for that term.

Contacts

- Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Director of Senior Research
- [Office of the Law Registrar](#), McCormick 127