

## Independent Study Guidelines

### Description:

The purpose of independent graduate study is to allow students to pursue projects that do not fit within the framework of regular course offerings. Such course work is intended to be a truly independent project of a special nature. Only in rare circumstances are students allowed to take a core or an elective course as an independent study. The graduate director and faculty sponsor must approve all independent study requests. Students are responsible for contacting the faculty sponsor and director and providing them with an overview of the proposed study or project **prior** to submitting the online independent study petition form.

**If the independent study project is a research study that involves human subjects in any way, including conducting surveys, the College's Institutional Review Board (IRB) must approve the study.** This approval must also be obtained **prior** to submitting the online independent study petition form. The procedure for submitting projects to the IRB can be found on the institutional research website: <http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/institutional-review-board/undergraduate-and-graduate-student-research>. Students engaging in research involving human subjects will also need to complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training course prior to beginning their study. Instructions for accessing and completing that training can be found in Appendix A.

Students can take multiple independent studies through out the course of their study in the Graduate Kinesiology Program with the approval of the graduate director.

### Course Numbers & Minimum Requirements:

The graduate independent study class number is **Kinesiology (KINES) 399** for a unique course of study and **Kinesiology (KINES) 397** for a study based on an existing course. Minimum requirements are:

1. An approved Faculty advisor within the Graduate Kinesiology program. Students are responsible for approaching and gaining approval from the faculty member they would like to work with. The Graduate Program Director can provide guidance on which faculty member(s) would be the best fit for a project, but their suggestions in no way ensures the faculty member's approval of the project.
2. An approved academic reading list to supplement the independent study experience. The list should be comparable to a similar classroom course list and include books, journal articles, and other scholarly resources.
3. The amount of work hours, including reading, research, meetings with their faculty advisor, and completion of assignments varies depending on how many units of credit students would like to gain from the experience. **Typically students should plan on approximately 90 hours for 1 unit, 120 hours for 2 units, and 135 hours for 3 units over the course of the semester.** The faculty advisor and the student are responsible for establishing work schedule and duration of the independent study. Students may not concentrate independent study work hours during the semester. Work should be

completed consistently on a week-to-week basis to ensure the project(s) will be completed within the semester.

4. The student must meet with their instructor virtually or in-person, aside from the initial proposal conversation, by the beginning of the fourth week of the semester for fall and spring semesters and the end of the first week for summer semester, barring any unforeseen circumstances, death in the family, acute illness/injury, etc., or they will be administratively dropped from the course. This will result in a \$25.00 Late Course Adjustment Fee, and they will have to forfeit 25% of the tuition they have paid for the class as per the policies of the Office of the Registrar and Business Office.

### **Independent Study Objectives**

1. To develop students into self-directed learners and independent researchers.
2. To provide more scope and depth in the Graduate Kinesiology curriculum by encouraging students to:
  - a. Investigate areas of interest not currently included in any approved course at Saint Mary's College of California.
  - b. Study areas and develop projects that cut across existing course boundaries.
  - c. Delve more deeply into specific parts of an existing course offering.
3. To provide the student with sufficient circumstances to assess personal aptitude for the sport management, fitness management, or sports studies field.
4. Develop a critical understanding of and the ability to apply theoretical knowledge from the student's chosen concentration, sport management, fitness management, or sports studies, in a research or self-directed learning environment.

### **Personal Learning Outcomes:**

Students will be required to identify, describe, and document **at least three** personal learning outcomes specific to their independent study to help ensure their independent study experience is congruent with their personal, professional goals. These outcomes must be included on the student's independent study petition and approved by their faculty advisor. The completion of these learning outcomes should be discussed, at least briefly, in the final paper. For help developing these outcomes please see Appendix B: Writing Learning Outcomes.

### **Student Responsibilities**

1. Make sure that you are fully prepared academically for the independent study. Generally students should have completed and passed one full summer session or at least KINES 200 prior to enrolling in an independent study.
2. Commit to the minimum hours required to complete an independent study. Ensure that your current work and school schedules allow for that commitment both in terms of research hours required in order to meet the academic requirements and progress meetings with your instructor. Failure to meet these minimum requirements will result in a failing grade which will affect your overall academic standing in the program.
3. Research independent study topics and opportunities and pursue those you find most interesting and for which you feel adequately prepared. It is recommended that you start researching independent study opportunities the semester before you want to enroll in an

independent study to give you adequate time to meet with and obtain approval from the chosen faculty member and program director and to submit the necessary paperwork to petition and be enrolled in the independent study. For example, if you are planning on enrolling in an independent study in spring semester, you should begin researching independent studies at the beginning of the fall semester.

4. Discuss these opportunities and others with the course instructor to ensure they are a good fit for the program requirements and your personal goals.
5. **Enroll in the Kinesiology 399 or 397 independent study class.** Directions on the proper enrollment procedures can be found on the Graduate Kinesiology website under the “Current Students” tab. **Petitions must be submitted and approved by 5:00 PM Pacific Time on the last day of the Add/Drop period.** Petitions received after that time may be subject to a late enrollment fee as per College policies.
6. Discuss and agree upon a specific schedule with your instructor. This must meet at least the College minimum requirements, 90 hours over the course of the semester, approximately 7 hours per week for 1 unit independent studies, 120 hours over the course of the semester, approximately 10 hours per week for 2 unit independent studies, and 135 hours over the course of the semester, approximately 11 hours per week for 3 unit independent studies.
7. Meet with your instructor either virtually or in-person by the beginning of the fourth week of class to ensure that you are not administratively dropped from the Independent Study in accordance to the department’s academic policies and procedures.
8. Approach the independent study with a positive attitude, a strong work ethic and a willingness to learn.
9. Set mutually agreeable and achievable personal learning outcomes and other goals with your instructor.
10. With guidance from the instructor, select an appropriate reading list to supplement the practical experience.
11. Prepare for and attend meetings as established by the instructor.
12. Submit all assignments on the due date(s) established by the instructor.

## Appendix A: Instructions on Accessing and Completing CITI Training

1. Begin at the Saint Mary's College IRB page (<http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/institutional-review-board>).
2. Click on the third to the last blue box on the left-hand side of the screen labeled CITI Training.
3. Click on the link [www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org).
4. You have now navigated away from the Saint Mary's website.
5. Click on the button Create an Account on the right hand side of the page.
6. Go to the first box "Participating Institutions" and scroll to Saint Mary's College of California.
7. Follow the instructions on the CITI website to continue to Step 2.
8. Complete the "Personal Information" fields.
9. Continue to Step 3 on the CITI website.
10. Enter your name and email address.
11. Create a user name and password.
12. Continue to Step 4 on the CITI website.
13. Enter gender, race, ethnicity (please refer to the question bubble on screen to learn why CITI is asking for this demographic data). You will have the option to click "I would rather not disclose this" for all three questions.
14. Continue to Step 5 on the CITI website.
15. Decide whether or not you would like to receive Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for completing the program and whether you would like CITI to send you other surveys, etc. If you are a student completing the course then you will probably not need CEUs for completing the program.
16. Continue to Step 6 on the CITI website.
17. Please provide the information requested by Saint Mary's College of California (for "Role in Research" you will most likely choose either Clinical Researcher or Co-Investigator)
18. Continue to Step 7 on the CITI website.

19. Choose your role for Human Subjects Research (As graduate students you will most likely select: “Students conducting no more than minimal risk research” or “Research with data or laboratory specimens – ONLY: No direct contact with human subjects”. If you are unsure which role you should choose please speak with your faculty advisor.)
20. You will need to complete the Basic/Refresher course for your research discipline. You will not be required to take the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) courses.
21. Once you’ve selected the appropriate course click Complete Registration.
22. Now navigate to the Main Menu and click Saint Mary’s College of California as your institution affiliation.
23. You are now ready to begin your CITI training.

## Appendix B: Writing Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning, which explains why we learn. The taxonomy consists of six levels that build upon each other to create a hierarchy of learning.

- Remember - recall and recognize facts
- Understand - interpret, translate or paraphrase information remembered (you must remember before you understand)
- Apply - use information in a situation different from the original learning context (you must understand before you apply)
- Analyze - separate information into its essential elements to make things clear (you must be able to apply in order to analyze)
- Evaluate - make judgments or decisions based on information from your analysis and form new information (you must analyze in order to evaluate)
- Create - generate new ideas or ways to look at a current issue or idea (you must evaluate before you create)

To write learning outcomes you should focus on the desired end state of a process of learning and how achievement of that end state can be measured. As a result, your learning outcomes should include action words related to one or more of the six levels of learning to demonstrate that a skill was indeed learned or the outcome achieved. Examples include:

- Remember — define, recall, list, recognize, memorize
- Understand — classify, discuss, explain, identify, describe
- Apply — interpret, choose, employ, illustrate
- Analyze — contrast, compare, distinguish, differentiate
- Evaluate — appraise, judge, select, support
- Create — assemble, construct, design, develop, formulate

Other verbs that are sometimes used in academic situations are more vague and therefore less easily measured. These verbs include:

- Become familiar with,
- Appreciate,
- Become aware of,
- Learn
- Know.

These verbs should be avoided when crafting personal learning outcomes since they are difficult to demonstrate. Think in terms of bullet points on your resume, at the end of this independent study what will you be able to tell future employers you achieved and how will you be able to prove that achievement. For instance, if your outcome is to test the efficacy of a marketing plan for a recreational fitness program in terms of the number of new people attending or inquiring about group fitness classes you could easily demonstrate achievement of that outcome by

displaying or quickly discussing the outcomes of your research. If, however, your outcome is to know how to craft a marketing plan for a recreational fitness program it is more difficult to quantify or qualify your level of knowledge and it would be difficult to really prove to future employers that you had achieved that outcome without some sort of test or in-depth follow-up questions and discussion.

You also want to make sure that your learning outcomes are at an appropriate level of learning for graduate education. Levels at the beginning of Bloom's Taxonomy are considered basic therefore only one, if any, of your outcomes should be based on remembering or understanding. The majority should be based on applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating.

### **Sample Learning Outcomes**

- Construct and apply a method for evaluating and comparing the current business models of two area fitness organizations identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Design and evaluate the efficacy of a recreational fitness program for at-risk youth in an urban setting using current best practices and research methodology.