

Guide to Independent Study (PSYC 4841 or NRSC 4841)
Department of Psychology & Neuroscience, CU-Boulder

Independent Study provides students an opportunity to earn academic credit for an individualized course of study with one of the faculty in the Department. Independent Study is intended to provide students with a learning experience that goes beyond regular classroom work. In this Department, Independent Study will usually occur in the context of a faculty's research laboratory. This type of hands-on experience strengthens preparation for graduate school, professional training in the biomedical sciences and for employment in academic or commercial laboratories.

Independent Study in the Department must adhere to the following rules:

1. **Academic value:** Independent Study must serve a legitimate academic purpose. College policy specifically forbids the use of Independent Study credit to “pay” students for non-academic work or internship activities. The critical difference between eligible and ineligible projects is the degree of intellectual involvement of the student. Service type work, such as coding or entering data, cleaning laboratory glassware, or routine preparation of reagents, in the absence of intellectual development, does not qualify for Independent Study credit. Internship type experiences that are comparable to being employed as a junior technician performing experiments that are wholly designed and interpreted by a supervisor do not qualify as Independent Study. Additional guidelines for students working in faculty research labs are described in the Department's *Guidelines for Volunteer or Independent Study Students Working in Research Labs*. These should be reviewed by both the student and faculty supervisor.
2. **Supervision by full-time, resident faculty:** Only full-time faculty in the Department may supervise departmental Independent Study (PSYC/NRSC 4841). Supervisory faculty must also be in residence during the Independent Study and meet with the student regularly. If such meetings typically occur in the context of a larger lab group, the faculty must have at least 2 individual meetings with the student during the semester. Graduate students or post-docs may be the day-to-day supervisors of Independent Study projects; supervision by a bachelor's level professional research assistant should be minimal.
3. **No substitution for regular coursework:** College policy prohibits using Independent Study as a substitute for a regular course. College policy also forbids use of Independent Study to meet Core Curriculum (General Education) requirements. No more than 8 credit hours of PSYC/NRSC 4841 can be applied toward the 120 hours needed for a B.A. degree. A maximum of 16 hours of Independent Study across all departments may count toward the B.A. degree. PSYC/NRSC 4841 is graded as Pass/Fail and can not be used to fulfill PSYC/NRSC major requirements; it also does not count toward the 75 credit hours required outside the major for a B.A. degree.
4. **No duplication of credit:** Students may earn Independent Study credit, earn Thesis credit, or receive funding from UROP or other sources for work conducted with faculty. These forms of credit or payment may not overlap for the same work.
5. **Registration:** PSYC/NRSC 4841 is restricted to majors with an overall GPA of 2.5 and completion of at least 1 full-time semester on campus. With faculty and departmental approval, students may register for Independent Study during normal registration periods each semester. Ordinarily, 1-3 credit hours of PSYC/NRSC 4841 may be taken in a semester. The expectation for each semester hour of credit is a minimum of 25 hours of work (e.g., 3 credit hours = 75 hrs/semester).
6. **Independent Study Agreement:** The Independent Study Agreement (version 8/25/17 or later) is required. Its purpose is to insure that the student and faculty supervisor have agreed on the nature of the project, the accomplishments that are expected, the types of reports that must be submitted, and due dates. The Agreement must be signed by the student, the faculty sponsor, and the Director of Undergraduate Studies.
7. **Documentation of Work:** Students must submit written documentation of their work and learning experience to the Department, by the date specified in the Agreement and no later than the last day of final exams for the semester. This document will be tailored to the number of credit hours and the objectives of the Independent Study, as stated in the Agreement.