
UNDERGRADUATE DIRECTED STUDIES, SPECIAL TOPICS & INDEPENDENT STUDY COURSES

Approval Authority	Senate
Responsible Executive	Provost and Vice-President, Academic
Related Policies / Legislation	Undergraduate Course and Program Approval (21)

PURPOSE

This policy is to ensure a consistent approach to the scheduling and development of “directed studies,” “special topics,” and “independent study” at the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV).

DEFINITIONS

In this policy, the following definitions apply:

Directed studies: an individualized research, directed reading or project-based course that is offered on an ad hoc basis and supervised by a faculty member.

Special topics: a course that permits individual sections to be taught on different related topics that are not covered in other UFV courses.

Independent study: a section of an existing course timetabled for a student to learn course material on their own with some guidance from the instructor. Course sections timetabled as independent study are usually offered in formats that differ from the standard course delivery format.

POLICY

Directed studies courses, special topics courses, and independent study are created and/or scheduled when feasible and appropriate to facilitate curriculum flexibility and development, and to enhance students’ learning.

Directed studies and special topics course outlines must be approved through the formal process according to the Undergraduate Course and Program Approval policy (#21) before sections may be scheduled. The content of directed studies and special topics courses must not replace nor duplicate the content of existing courses in the UFV calendar.

All directed studies and independent study course sections must be approved by the dean or designate before being timetabled.

Special topics courses are scheduled as part of the timetabling process by a department or program.

The first time a special topics course is proposed, the syllabus must be approved by the UEC

Screening Subcommittee to ensure that official course outline learning outcomes are addressed, and that any necessary consultation has occurred.

Independent study sections of a course will not be timetabled in the same semester as regular sections of the same course on the same campus. Exceptions may be granted by the dean or designate in special cases such as when availability of seats, scheduling, or mode of delivery in existing sections adversely impact on graduation timelines.

Only one independent study section (or multiple sections to a combined maximum of six seats) of a single course can be timetabled in a single semester.

An instructor may teach any combination of independent study and directed studies sections in a single semester, as long as the total enrollment of their sections does not exceed six. Under exceptional circumstances the dean may override this.

REGULATIONS

Directed Studies

- 1) A directed studies course section is initiated by a student or group of students who identify a specific topic of interest to them and obtain the agreement of a UFV instructor to act as a supervisor for the course.
 - 2) The student(s) and/or the faculty member must submit a proposal to their department or program head for approval. The proposal must contain the following elements:
 - A description of the topic to be addressed in the course
 - An overview of the project to be conducted
 - An explanation of how the proposed project fulfills the outcomes on the official course outline
 - A description of the planned format for the deliverables of the project (e.g. journal article, oral or poster presentation)
 - A description of the student and the supervisor responsibility in the course (if not stipulated in the approved department guidelines)
 - An explanation of how student work will be evaluated for grading purposes
 - 3) The proposal must be approved in writing by the department or program head and submitted to the dean or designate.
 - 4) A student may not enroll in more than one directed studies course in a single semester without the dean's permission.
 - 5) A student may not enroll in more than one directed studies course with the same instructor. The dean or designate must approve any exceptions to this policy, and approval must be obtained prior to the student enrolling in the course(s).
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Special Topics

- 1) A special topics course offering is initiated by the instructor, who identifies a topic for the course.
- 2) If the specific topic has not been previously approved by the department, an instructor who wishes to offer a new topic in a special topics course must submit a proposed course syllabus to their department head. The course syllabus must contain:
 - a. A rationale for the topic (including an explanation of why the subject of the course is appropriate for a special topics course)
 - b. A description of learning outcomes for the topic with an explanation of how they fit within the approved learning outcomes of the official course outline
 - c. A description of how student performance in the course will be evaluated, including weightings for evaluation components
- 3) The approval of the department or program and of UEC Screening must be obtained for the topic offered in this special topics course.
- 4) Generally, each separate offering of a special topics course will be distinguished with an alphabetical identifier after the course number (e.g. BUS 307C, BUS 307D). If the same version of a special topics course is offered more than once, the alphabetical identifier previously assigned to that version will be used.
- 5) Departments or programs may limit the number of special topics courses an individual student can take, and/or limit the number of special topics courses an individual student can use for program credit.

Independent Study

- 1) The department head or director, in response to student needs, initiates the process to offer an independent study course, and discusses it with the instructor involved and with the dean.
- 2) The program or department head or director and the dean or designate must give their approval for an independent study section to be timetabled.

Course Numbering

For course numbering information, refer to <https://www.ufv.ca/registration/how-to-register/course-numbering//> in the Student Records Information section.
