Reading Area Community College Honors Program

HONORS INDEPENDENT STUDY GUIDELINES

What is Honors Independent Study?

An Honors Independent Study is an instructional agreement whereby a student earns Honors credits through study or other educational activities not available through the College's existing courses or through cross-registration (3 – 4 credits possible).

The student collaborates with a faculty mentor to develop a syllabus that outlines the course particulars BEFORE the semester for which the Honors Independent Study is planned.

What are guidelines for planning an Honors Independent Study?

- The Honors Independent Study is intended to provide intellectual challenge and growth for students with a compelling interest in a particular discipline or area and the capacity to work independently.

- The student and faculty mentor are encouraged to think creatively in planning the Honors Independent Study. An Independent Study frequently emphasizes research, but creative works or engagement beyond the classroom with appropriate analysis may also be arranged.

- The student and faculty mentor need to verify with the RACC transfer specialist that the Independent Study being proposed is not available as a course through cross-registration at another Berks County college or university before designing the Honors Independent Study.

- A standard 3-credit course involves forty hours of class instruction and often more than two hours of work outside the classroom for each hour of class time. The time invested in an Honors Independent Study should be similar to that of a course of comparable credits.

- Examples of Honors Independent Studies offered in the past at RACC include Anthropology and Science Fiction, Middle Eastern Archaeology, European Anthropology, and Health, Spirituality, and Womanhood in Africa.

- Examples of non-research-based Honors Independent Studies include writing short stories, presenting a musical recital, conducting an experiment, designing and implementing an educational program, producing a television documentary, or exploring applications of knowledge in real-world contexts. These projects need to be accompanied by complementary course work or scholarship.

Who is eligible to do an Honors Independent Study?

Any student who meets the criteria for taking Honors courses may earn credit through an Honors Independent Study. Students are eligible to take Honors courses with a 3.25 GPA (exclusive of Foundation courses) or permission of the professor.

What are the procedures to arrange for an Honors Independent Study?

First, the student MUST request the faculty member's agreement to supervise the Honors Independent Study. Professors may decline any request as they are under no obligation to supervise Honors Independent Studies.

Next, the student collaborates with a faculty mentor to develop a syllabus that outlines the course particulars BEFORE the semester for which the Honors Independent Study is planned. The syllabus needs to follow the format of a RACC course syllabus. Including basic course information, instructional materials, course competencies, performance objectives, grading policy, assignments, and a tentative course schedule.

Finally, the completed Honors Independent Study proposal form and syllabus need to be submitted to the Honors Program Coordinator by either the student or faculty mentor. The Honors Program Coordinator will arrange for the course to be added to the semester's official course roster.

What are the procedures to receive credit for an Honors Independent Study?

When the student has satisfactorily completed the Honors Independent Study, the faculty mentor will sign at the bottom of the proposal form and prepare a written evaluation of the student's Honors Independent Study work. This signed form and written evaluation need to be submitted to the Honors Program Coordinator by the faculty mentor. The Honors Program Coordinator will submit the complete form and evaluation to the Records Office and a course grade will be entered on the student's academic transcript. Honors Independent Studies are subject to the standard RACC policies on incompletes.

Contact the Honors Program Coordinator, Dr. Pamela Blakely, for further guidance at pblakely@racc.edu.