Independent Study
Supervised independent study

1 Guidelines

1.1 Definition
An independent study is a graded module that allows students to concentrate on working independently on a specific topic, helping them learn to work on their own. Before students register for this module, they must arrange supervision with an informatics professor; students have no automatic right to supervision for an independent study. For further information, see also section 2.1.

1.2 Timing
Independent studies may be completed at any point during the program of study. Usually, an independent study is carried out in the more advanced stages of the program.

1.3 Duration
The duration of the independent study module is determined by the supervising professor. Depending on the scope of the independent study module, it may last anywhere from three months up to twelve months (time between start of independent study and assessment date). The assessment must be completed at the latest within 12 months of the start of the study (as indicated on the registration form), otherwise the module is recorded as a failed attempt.

1.4 ECTS credits and completing the module multiple times
Depending on the scope of the work involved in an independent study, the supervising professor determines whether the module is worth 3, 6, or 9 ECTS credits. The independent study module may be completed multiple times, as long as the maximum number of failed attempts or the limit of 12 ECTS credits (maximum of two independent studies per level of study) is not exceeded. If the module is completed multiple times, the student may work with the same professor on each occasion or with different professors.

1.5 Topic and format of the work
The topic and format of the work are agreed upon with the supervising professor. Both aspects are outlined on the registration form. Independent studies can take many forms, including literature study, small-scale research projects, software development, implementation of an algorithm or the development and completion of an experiment. Generally, an independent study is completed individually. In exceptional cases, it may be more sensible to have two or more students work on an independent study module – or part of an independent study module – together. The supervising professor is responsible for deciding whether this approach would be useful and if group work is permissible in individual cases.

1.6 Assessment
The supervising professor decides on the form of the assessment, e.g., an oral exam and/or a written paper. Other outcomes (such as software) may count towards the final grade.
1.7 Failed attempts and repeat examinations
Failure to pass the independent study module is a failed attempt. The student may repeat the module, either with the same professor or a different professor. It is up to the supervising professor to decide whether or not a new topic must be selected.

2 Procedure

2.1 Finding a supervisor
Generally, an independent study is supervised by a professor who the student already knows from a previous course or project. This enables the supervising professor to ensure that the topic, type and scope of the independent study module are optimally tailored to the student.

Students interested in doing an independent study should ask the relevant professor, either by e-mail or face-to-face during consultation hours, whether he or she would be willing to supervise an independent study module. If the response is positive, a preliminary meeting is arranged.

2.2 Preliminary meeting
At the preliminary meeting, the student and the supervisor discuss potential topics and the scope and type of the independent study.

Students should bring the following documents to the meeting:
- The registration form for independent studies (available online)

If, at the end of the preliminary meeting, the student and the professor reach agreement on the independent study to be carried out, the following points must be defined and recorded on the registration form:

- The project definition (reverse of the registration form)
- The number of ECTS credits (3, 6, or 9)
- The start date of the work
- Assessment date

2.3 Registration
The student hands the completed independent study registration form to the professor at the preliminary meeting. The professor signs the form and submits it to the Informatics Department Office.

⇒ No further action is required to book the module.

2.4 Examination and assessment
The assessment must be completed at the latest within 12 months of the start date (as indicated on the registration form), otherwise the module is failed. On the day of the oral examination, the registration form is retrieved from the Informatics Department Office by the supervising professor (or a teaching and research assistant). After the assessment, the assessing professor informs the student of their grade and records the grade on the registration form. The professor ensures that the form is sent back to the Informatics Department Office for the module to be credited toward the degree.
2.5 Cancelation
In justified cases, e.g., in the event of illness, the examiner may, in consultation with the examination delegate, reschedule the assessment.

2.6 Copyright
Students must sign the “Agreement on the rights to written works and artifacts in Informatics at the University of Zurich” before starting their work.

2.7 Transfer of credit
The ECTS credits are recorded by the Dean's Office in the Faculty of Business, Economics and Informatics, and are listed on the student's next transcript of records.

Independent studies may be credited toward the free elective area, the INF elective area or a core elective area determined by the professor.