GUIDE TO DIRECTED AND INDEPENDENT COURSES:
FIELD STUDY, INDEPENDENT STUDY, AND UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Virginia Tech offers several types of courses that can be tailored to the needs of individual students. By allowing students to pursue topics in which formal courses are not available, these directed and independent provide greater academic flexibility for undergraduate students at Virginia Tech.

Field Study (X964) courses are work experiences ("internships") approved by some departments and are selected to augment traditional classroom activities. The student is evaluated by their site supervisor and the academic department on the knowledge and skills acquired as a result of the experience. Emphasis is placed on the academic and practical value of the work.

Independent Study (X974) courses generally involve extensive reading and tutorial sessions with the faculty supervisor and also may involve written papers or other learning assessments. The subject of Independent Study usually is a continuation in greater depth of a topic covered in a regular course, allowing students to study topics of particular individual interest.

Undergraduate Research (X994) courses are individual research projects carried out by students under faculty supervision. The student defines the research topic, proposes a methodology, carries out the research, and creates a tangible deliverable such as a paper, presentation, or technical product.

Steps to Enrolling in a Directed or Independent Course

1. Consult with your academic advisor or faculty mentor about your interests and goals. He or she can provide you advice about selecting the appropriate course, writing the course description, selecting the credit hours (typically 1–3), and choosing the grading method (A–F or P/F).

2. Obtain the Request Form for the appropriate course (available on the CNRE website) and fill out the required information. You will need to consult the Time Table of Classes to determine the Course Prefix (i.e., FIW, FOR, GEOG, SBIO), Course Number and Course Request Number (CRN).

3. Obtain the necessary signatures from your instructor, advisor, and department head. Submit your Request Form to the CNRE Advising Center (138 Cheatham Hall) no later than the last day to add classes in the current semester. Upon approval of the request by the CNRE Academic Dean, the course will be added to your schedule – you will not need to add it in Hokie SPA.

Important Considerations for a Directed or Independent Course

- Start early! It takes some time to plan your course and complete the Request Form. If you wish to do a course in the fall, it is best to consult with your advisor or faculty mentor at the end of the previous spring semester.

- If your course will fulfill an experiential learning requirement for your major, be sure to consult the policy of your home department. Some departments require additional paperwork to count your course towards experiential learning. This is a separate process from the course request.

- Work with your course instructor to write a clear and cogent course description. The course request will be declined if the justification is weak, the methods are unclear, the assessment lacks rigor, or the credit hours are inconsistent with the effort involved in the course.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH REQUEST
College of Natural Resources and Environment

This form MUST be processed by the student's primary major Academic Dean.

Section 1: Experiential Learning Acknowledgement of Risk Form

All students engaging in undergraduate research, internships, service experiences, field work, or designated independent study projects are expected to complete the Experiential Learning Acknowledgement of Risk Form.

==Students will NOT be enrolled in credit until both this form and the COVID form are completed and approved.==

Before beginning the risk form, please have the following information available:

1. Where you will be working (e.g. name of a lab, organization, business, or campus department). Be as specific as possible.
2. Name of your experience supervisor (research supervisor, internship supervisor)
3. Name of your instructor of record (if you will be enrolled in a <u>for-credit</u> experience).
4. Email address of your instructor of record.

Once you have gathered these items, please fill out the risk form here:
https://virginiatech.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_agiYMNBD2TdwefH

By signing below, I am indicating that I have completed the Experiential Learning Acknowledgement of Risk Form.

1. Student: _____ Date: _____

2. Instructor: _____ Date: _____

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH REQUEST
College of Natural Resources and Environment

This form MUST be processed by the student's primary major Academic Dean.

<u>**Section 2: Credit Request**</u> (Before continuing on to this section, students must complete the Virginia Tech COVID assumption of risk form in Section 1.)

<mark>**Students will NOT be registered for Undergraduate Research until both this form and the COVID form are completed and all approvals are obtained.**</mark>

Name: _____ **Student ID #:** _____

FERPA Code: _____

VT Email: _____ **Local Phone:** _____

Primary Major: _____ **Secondary Major (if applicable):** _____

Overall GPA: _____ **Total Hours Passed:** _____ **Semester Hours Planned (incl. this request):** _____

Credit Hours Requested For: ☐ Fall ☐ Spring ☐ Summer 1 ☐ Summer 2 ☐ Winter **Year:** _____

Are you requesting Experiential Learning/Field Experience Credit for this project? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(NOTE: Fish and Wildlife Conservation students must submit supplemental Experiential Learning documents.)

Department Offering Course: _____ **Course #:** ☐ 2994 ☐ 4994 **CRN:** _____

# of Credit Hours Requested: _____ *(NOTE: Each credit should entail a minimum of 45 hours of instruction, supervision, and student effort during a 15-week semester.)*

Grading Method: ☐ A-F ☐ P/F **Instructor Name:** _____

Title of Project: _____

(NOTE: You must attach a project plan that includes the following: (1) scope of the project, (2) research objectives, (3) research methods, and (4) expected research outcomes/deliverables.)

Conflict of Interest

Conflict of Interest training is required by every student participating in an externally funded UR, the timing of which is determined by the nature of the research. Explanation of this requirement can be found at http://www.research.vt.edu/announcements/conflict-interest-training-requirement. Registration for training can be found at https://www.citiprogram.org/.

_____**This is a PHS** (Public Health Services project, specifically NIH, CDC, & FDA; as such we understand the student must complete Conflict of Interest training before the student begins any work on the project. Date training was completed:_____

_____**This is a non-PHS** (Public Health Service) project; we understand the student must complete Conflict of Interest Training within the first 30 days of classes for the term in which the student is earning credit for this project. Date training was/will be completed: _____

_____**This is NOT an externally funded project**, thus the COI training is not necessary for student.

<u>**SIGNATURES OF APPROVAL (obtain in order)**</u>**:**

(NOTE: By signing below, the student and the instructor acknowledge that any research compliance training required by the university and/or a granting agency will be completed by the student prior to undertaking the project.)

1. Student: _____ Date: _____

2. Instructor: _____ Date: _____

3. Instructor's Department Head: _____ Date: _____

4. Student's Advisor: _____ Date: _____

5. Primary Major Academic Dean: _____ Date: _____