

**Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies**  
**Resolution 2015-16O**  
**Resolution to Establish Guidelines for Independent Study and**  
**Undergraduate Research**

Approved by CUSP:	April 11, 2016
First Reading by University Council:	April 18, 2016
Second Reading by University Council:	May 2, 2016
Approved by the President:	May 2, 2016
First Effective Date:	Fall 2016

**WHEREAS**, the University’s guiding document, A Plan for a New Horizon—Envisioning Virginia Tech 2012-2018 states that, “a commitment to research and experiential learning for students requires that we incorporate a diverse and inclusive range of perspectives and resources into undergraduate and graduate courses across all disciplines. We will respect multiple ways of knowing and experiencing phenomena under study,” and

**WHEREAS**, the University values and documents these experiences; and

**WHEREAS**, special courses and independent studies are described and defined in University Policy 6365—Approvals for Special Courses and Independent Studies (X974 (Independent Studies), and X994 (Undergraduate Research)); and

**WHEREAS**, Independent Study (X974) courses generally involve extensive reading and tutorial sessions with the faculty supervisor, and 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; and

**WHEREAS**, Undergraduate Research (X994) courses are individual research projects carried out by students under faculty supervision, where the student defines the research topic, proposes a methodology, and carries out the research; and

**WHEREAS**, these courses, which are of variable credit, are utilized by students to enhance and individualize their educational experience; and

**WHEREAS**, it is acknowledged that there are differences by discipline regarding content and methodology of these courses that are appropriate and necessary reflecting the unique perspectives of each discipline; and

**WHEREAS**, the Carnegie Foundation defines a credit hour as a unit of measure representing an hour of instruction and 2 hours of homework per week over a 15 week period in a semester, with this information documented by the Office of the University Registrar (<http://www.registrar.vt.edu/faculty/teaching/instructional-minutes.html>); and

**WHEREAS**, the instructor of record for each course is required to provide a significant amount of supervision to the student via appropriate contact hours as defined in University Policy 6901—Definition of a Credit Hour; and

**WHEREAS**, the University has established limits for the number of credit hours that may be taken pass/fail toward a degree; and

**WHEREAS**, a University Policy regulating the number of independent study and/or undergraduate research credits that a student may take overall or may use to count towards a degree does not currently exist;

**THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED** that:

- A student may take a maximum of 12 credit hours of Independent Study (IS) and/or Undergraduate Research (UR) to be counted towards their undergraduate degree, exclusive of IS and/or UR courses required by a specific degree as indicated on a check sheet
- Each time the student enrolls in IS or UR, the instructor is required to identify a tangible output produced by the student at the end of the course that will be used to determine the student's grade.
- The time that the student devotes to satisfying course requirements shall be reflected in the number of credit hours awarded based on the Carnegie Foundation definition.