GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE DIRECTED STUDIES AND DIRECTED RESEARCH COURSES

Application:

The application form is available from the FHS Education Staff. Students must complete an application form to enroll in a Directed Studies (DS) or a Directed Research (DR) course in the Faculty of Health Sciences. The application establishes the qualifications of the student and specifies the course requirements. Details are provided below.

Course Objectives:

The purpose of FHS’s HSCI 488-3 “Directed Studies in Health Sciences” (DS) and HSCI 489-3 “Directed Research in Health Sciences” (DR) courses are to make it possible for an upper division student to do independent studies or independent research with a faculty member on a literature review, extended essay, methodological approach or research project on a topic of mutual interest.

Reasons for a student to take a DS/DR course include:

1. To expand upon readings or a research project that started in an upper division course
2. To develop or assess potential research interests
3. To cover material not included in regular courses
4. To gain additional knowledge and practical experience in designing, conducting, analyzing, and documenting research

Qualifications for doing a DS/DR course:

The student should have:
1. Taken all regular courses offered by FHS (if taught in recent semesters) that cover relevant background material for the project, as determined by the instructor and UGS Director.
2. A minimum of a B (3.0) average in HSCI coursework
3. At least 60 accumulated credits towards a HSCI or related degree

Circumstances where a DS/DR course is not warranted:

1. Student does not meet the qualifications above.
2. Student is unable to register for a regular course offering and therefore wishes to take the course under the guise of a DS/DR Course.
3. Student has not successfully completed all regular courses that cover the relevant background material.
4. The material in the DS or DR course duplicates material covered in other HSCI courses.

In unusual situations (e.g., scheduling has not permitted a student to meet graduation requirements in a normal manner), the above circumstances may be waived.

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Faculty Obligations:

A faculty member is not obligated to accept a request to direct a DS/DR course. It is the faculty member's prerogative to refuse a request to supervise a DS/DR course. A faculty member who agrees to this role should have a background appropriate for supervising the student on the selected topic or research area. He or she commits to providing regular supervision of the DS/DR course through participating in the design of the course, meeting regularly throughout the semester (i.e., weekly or biweekly meetings), and providing timely feedback for any approvals warranted from the Research Ethics Board (see http://www.sfu.ca/vpresearch/ethics/index.html), and all other deliverables and assessments. Faculty must ensure that a DS/DR course is devoted to advancing students' knowledge, addresses a well defined topic, meets all criteria of SFU’s Research Ethics Board (REB), and has an intellectual level equivalent to that of other HSCI 400-level courses.

Although students may become involved in data collection, coding, and data analyses of faculty members' research in the context of DS/DR courses, students must not be used as unpaid research assistants.

Steps:

1. Student determines the general topic of inquiry.

2. Student seeks out a faculty member interested in the subject that the student hopes to study. A good place to find out faculty members’ areas of specialization is the FHS webpage http://www.fhs.sfu.ca/People-in-FHS/faculty-members.

3. The instructor decides whether to accept the invitation to supervise the student's DS or DR.

4. Prior to initiating the course, the student and instructor should discuss and mutually agree upon the requirements for the course. Students and faculty are advised to make their arrangements for the course well in advance. In consultation with the instructor, the student is responsible for the preparation and submission of the application. The following components should be presented in a syllabus-type format:
   a. A set of learning objectives for the DS/DR
   b. A reading list (if applicable)
   c. Course deliverables and other learning assessments
   d. Timeline and due dates
   e. The basis on which the grade will be assigned
   f. If ethics approval is needed for a research project, a plan for the submission to the REB.

After the student has completed a DS/DR application form in consultation with the intended instructor, he/she must submit it to the Undergraduate Studies education staff, who will forward it to the Chair of the Undergraduate Studies Committee (UGSC) for review.

5. The approved and signed application should be submitted to the Undergraduate Studies office before the end of the first week of classes. Registration in the DS/DR course cannot be completed
until the application is approved and signed by the student and faculty member. Students may not register themselves for a DS or DR course.

6. The Chair of the Undergraduate Studies Committee (UGSC) will receive a copy for review by the end of the first week of classes at the latest. If there are questions about the nature of the proposed DS/DR course, these should be identified and resolved by the end of the second week of classes.

Course Requirements:

The student must satisfy the obligations specified in the application form about the work to be performed, deliverables, and timeline. As well, he or she should perform sufficient work to justify the credit hours in the course, which are normally a minimum of three hours per week for each credit hour. For example, a 3 credit hour course implies about 9 hours of work per week on the part of the student, including time meeting with the instructor. The student is expected to meet with the instructor on a regular basis (i.e., weekly or biweekly meetings). Specific requirements vary, but at a minimum, the student is required to submit a substantial written report for the course (e.g., paper or essay, literature review, annotated bibliography, research report). The set of deliverables would usually include a selection of items, such as one or more of the following, weighted towards the final mark in the course:

- For research projects that require it, ethics approval
- A set of completed assignments
- An interim report
- A final report
- An oral presentation
- A final examination

Upon completion of the course, copies of the paper deliverables must be filed with the Undergraduate Studies Office. Failure to do so may result in the course being rejected as an approved course.

Credit Hours and Other Restrictions:

HSCI majors are limited to 6 credit hours (2 DS/DR courses). HSCI minors are limited to 3 credit hours (1 DS or DR course). HSCI honors students may count, in addition to the 15 credit hours they take for Honors, a maximum of 3 additional credit hours (1 DS or DR course) towards their HSCI major. Students may take only 3 credit hours of DS/DR with any individual faculty member. Honors students may take 3 DS or DR credits hours from the person who is their Honors thesis supervisor; usually DS/DR coursework would be completed prior to beginning the 3-course sequence for the Honors project. All credit is applicable toward fulfilling the BA or BSc degree requirements.