INDEPENDENT STUDY FAQ

WHAT IS AN INDEPENDENT STUDY PROJECT?

Independent Study projects are student-driven projects that **deepen knowledge** within an AET field through the creation of one large project or 2-5 smaller explorations.

Projects must result in high quality execution with thorough documentation in order to achieve a passing grade.

Independent Study projects must be shown in the Spring Showcase. Posters or physical/digital demos are acceptable.

HOW DOES INDEPENDENT STUDY WORK?

Independent Study projects must be conceptualized, planned, produced, and documented by the student. Students work *independently*, meaning that they assign their own work, organize their own time, and do their own research. Faculty mentors will meet weekly or biweekly with you to give feedback, advice, and resources to help with production.

Your independent study project must be fully researched and planned before the application is submitted. You must have a concrete project idea and a fully researched plan for how to accomplish it.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY?

1. Identify a project concept and potential faculty mentor.
2. Connect with the faculty, share your idea, and ask if they will accept you as an independent study student.
3. Work through the application writeup with the support of your faculty mentor.
4. Share the finished writeup with your faculty mentor to get their approval before submitting to the AET Advisor.

WHEN IS MY APPLICATION DUE?

Applications must be submitted before 4pm on the first day of classes. No exceptions.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Create your writeup in a separate document. Number the responses.
Use complete sentences! Be thorough!

1. What is your project? Give a 3-5 sentence overview.
2. How will this project connect to your career goals or other opportunities?
3. Provide rationale for why this project should be an independent study and can not be accomplished in a class.
4. Create a reference board in Miro. Include references for inspiration, aesthetic goals, technical goals and comparable projects/products/experiences in the industry. All links should have subtitles with an explanation for why they are relevant. Insert a link to the board (make sure sharing settings are on).
5. Provide your research into all tools, workflows, and tutorials that will enable you to successfully complete all aspects of this project.
6. Create a specific, full-semester production timeline that includes time for documentation.
7. How will your project be documented? Include description of industry specific documentation practices and links to comparable portfolios.
8. How will *success* be determined? Create 2-3 metrics for how this project should be assessed, including one for documentation.

Submit writeup to aet_advising@austin.utexas.edu as a PDF with your faculty mentor CC'd.
Title the email "AET Independent Study Application".

Example Self Evaluation Rubrics

Criteria	5: Exceeds Expectations	4: Meets w/ One Reminder	3: Meets w/ Occasional Reminders	2: Frequent Reminders Required	1: Not Meeting Expectations	0: Absent
Collaboration with Participants	Centering subject voices in interviews, designing with their identity in mind, and maintaining clear, respectful, and responsive communication.	Designs consistently reflect subject input and emotional tone; interviews are insightful and empathetic; communication is proactive and engaged.	Designs reflect participant experience and feedback with minor gaps; good communication with minimal prompting.	Designs are loosely based on subject input; interview or follow-up effort is uneven or needs more direction.	Minimal subject engagement or disconnect between interview content and final design.	Subject input not reflected; interviews incomplete or avoided.
Conceptual Rigor & Queer Frameworks	Application of queer theory, design tenets (e.g., obfuscation, monstrous beauty) and alignment with project's ideological goals.	Work clearly articulates and embodies queer design theory; consistently challenges binary norms and embraces ambiguity with intention.	Strong understanding of theory with mostly consistent application; clear effort to engage deeply with concepts.	Conceptual connections are present but underdeveloped or uneven.	Some misunderstanding or avoidance of core themes; weak or inconsistent application.	Theory is absent or misapplied; project lacks ideological depth.
3D Modeling, Design & Fabrication Execution	Use of modeling/sculpting tools to create wearable forms that are thoughtful, creaturely, and structurally functional.	Modeling is consistently strong, innovative, and aligned with participant insights; wearable execution is clean and effective.	Solid modeling with minor technical or aesthetic inconsistencies; functionally wearable.	Conceptually strong but technically underdeveloped; some wearability or structural issues.	Major flaws in modeling, function, or cohesion of form; needs additional refinement.	Modeling incomplete or not usable in current state.
Creative Initiative & Problem Solving	Willingness to experiment, troubleshoot, refine design ideas and methods (materials, forms, attachments, asymmetry, etc.)	Proactively seeks solutions, experiments with new methods, and documents evolution of ideas.	Demonstrates problem-solving skills and creative adjustments when needed.	Some effort to improve and iterate, but limited exploration or growth.	Often stuck or avoids technical/creative challenges.	Shows little to no attempt to solve problems or explore beyond initial ideas.
Communication w/ Mentor	Regular updates, thoughtful reflections, responsive to feedback, proactive in scheduling check-ins and meetings.	Communicates clearly and regularly; applies feedback with little prompting.	Communicates with occasional delays or reminders; feedback mostly implemented.	Sporadic check-ins, often needs prompting to reflect/apply feedback.	Minimal or inconsistent communication; rarely integrates mentor feedback.	Failed to meet with mentor entirely.

Example Self Evaluation Rubrics

Criteria	Best	Better	Okay	Not Okay	Boo
Research	Thoroughly explored existing methods, technologies, and challenges. Applied relevant research effectively to project goals.	Investigated a range of existing solutions and applied them appropriately, though some opportunities for deeper exploration remained.	Conducted basic research sufficient to complete the project.	Minimal research conducted. Solutions were applied without knowledge of alternatives, standards, or best practices.	No research conducted.
Testing, Iteration, & Refinement	Regularly tested systems, identified and addressed issues proactively, and significantly improved performance and stability through multiple refinements.	Conducted some testing and made improvements, though some areas could have benefited from further iteration.	Performed minimal testing and refinement. Addressed only major issues without deeper optimization or polish.	Little testing or iteration beyond initial implementation. Systems remained rough or unstable.	No testing or iteration has taken place.
Technical Execution	Systems were implemented with strong attention to stability, scalability, and performance. Technical challenges were addressed with effective, maintainable solutions.	Systems functioned as intended with minor issues or limitations. Core technical requirements were met, though some implementations could be more robust.	Systems were partially functional but exhibited notable issues.	Systems were incomplete, unreliable, or failed to meet key technical goals.	Systems do not work.
Documentation & Presentation	Documentation was clear, detailed, and well-organized. Plenty of images, gifs, and code snippets in order to show off concepts, methods, challenges, and solutions.	Documentation covered major aspects of the project clearly, but could have been expanded with more depth, organization, or clarification.	Basic documentation provided, but lacked detail, organization, or depth.	Minimal or unclear documentation. Difficult for others to follow the project's process or results.	Documentation not present.