

Guidelines for Arranging Independent Study and Field Course

ISV's Educational Environment

While you volunteer with ISV, you can also pursue academic credit. ISV provides an environment for experiential learning in incredible settings on all our Volunteer Projects, including the following elements:

- Each host country has a unique history, culture, economy, population, biota, physical geography, and set of environmental resources and challenges — all suitable for academic consideration and exploration.
- Volunteer Projects are set up with a recognized, professional host organization in each host country, in partnership with the local community (grassroots), or are developed and maintained by ISV.
- An ISV-trained Project Leader will supervise and instruct your group as you contribute about 80 hours of volunteering during your two-week Volunteer Project.
- Our Project Leaders coordinate group discussions about conservation and community development issues, and many of them have extensive teaching experience and advanced degrees.
- You will be participating in the group discussions and keeping a journal of your experiences during the Volunteer Project.



ISV offers support and advice to help you earn academic credit through your own school. Below are guidelines we have provided to assist you in the process of arranging independent study or a field course through your school.

Arranging Credit through your School



Below are some **step-by-step** suggestions for pursuing academic credit through independent study or a field course. Keep in mind that each school is different, and administration of credit may fall under various academic departments (e.g. the department that houses your major), a college of multiple departments (e.g. College of Social Sciences), or another office on campus (e.g. Study Abroad or Career Services office).

Remember that you are responsible for finding an opportunity for, registering for, and meeting the requirements for receiving credit. ISV cannot guarantee that credit will be approved by your school, but we are able to assist you if you have questions or need help. Be diligent and industrious in your pursuit!

A. Independent Study

Many past participants have described independent study as an empowering and individually- tailored learning experience. To design a course of independent study, first think about what you will be participating in during your ISV Program. For example, during your weeks abroad you will be:

- Volunteering in community development or conservation
- Immersed in another culture
- Experiencing dramatically different natural habitats
- Engaging in the tourism economy of your host country

SUGGESTED STEPS:

1. Decide which theme(s) interests you most; feel free to go beyond those suggested above!
2. Look for a course labeled “independent study”, “directed study”, or something similar in the course catalog/website of the department(s) most closely associated with your interests.
3. Familiarize yourself with descriptions, requirements and protocols for these courses.
4. Approach a faculty member, advisor or department administrator, and suggest pairing your ISV trip with an independent study.
5. Discuss your interests and plan an individualized course of study with a faculty member, or use one of the ISV Course Syllabi (Natural Resources Management or Community Development). Please visit the ISV website www.isvonline.org for details on following the ISV Course Syllabus. *Note: A \$50.00 USD fee payable to ISV is applicable for independent study participants following the ISV Course Syllabus.*
6. Clearly establish the protocol for registration, the amount of credit hours you will be awarded, and how they will fit into your program of study (i.e. will they count towards your major, as electives, etc.).
7. Establish an agreement between you and the relevant school administrators (e.g. faculty supervisor, department advisor, registrar, etc.) with a clear list of requirements for receiving credit (e.g. evaluation of field journal, evaluation of discussions, final paper, project, presentation, etc.), and due dates.

REQUIRED STEP:

Inform ISV that you are receiving independent study credit (instructions below).

B. Field Course

Some campus departments and programs offer generic courses designed to partner with various field, volunteer, or service-based learning experiences. An ISV Program would be suitable and relevant for many such courses.

SUGGESTED STEPS:

1. Research offerings of field courses on your campus.
 - Field courses may be offered through particular academic departments or through a school-wide field studies, service learning, volunteering, or other office/department.
 - Approach the undergraduate advisor within that department to inquire about field courses that can be paired with extracurricular programs.
2. Establish an agreement between you and the relevant school administrators with a clear list of requirements for receiving credit (e.g. evaluation of field journal, evaluation of discussions, documentation of work, final paper, project, presentation, etc.), and due dates.
3. Clearly establish the protocol for registration, the amount of credit hours you will be awarded, and how they will fit into your program of study.

REQUIRED STEP:

Inform ISV that you are receiving field course credit (instructions below).

How do I inform ISV that I am receiving independent study or field course credit?

Once you establish and agree upon your path toward academic credit with your school, please **inform ISV**. While we cannot guarantee placement in a particular project, we will do our best to direct you toward the conservation or community development theme of your choosing.

Inform ISV you are receiving independent study via:

- Project Preference Form – The link to the Project Preference Form is included in your ISV Handbook which you receive along with your host country and departure date allocation letter. Check the box that states “I plan to earn academic credit through independent study,” indicate whether you are following the ISV Course Syllabus, and include your professor/advisor’s name and email address in the space provided. Please note any course requirements relating to your project placement in the "Additional Comments" section.

Or

- Email academiccredit@isvonline.org – Use this option if you have already sent us your Project Preference Form.

Need more help?

Don't hesitate to email us at academiccredit@isvonline.org. We can provide guidance as needed and feel strongly that your pursuit of academic credit will help you maximize your upcoming experience with ISV. Happy travels!