A Commonwealth Honors College “Independent Study Honors” (ISH) differs from a departmental independent study in two primary ways:

- Emphasis on development of a mentoring relationship between the faculty sponsor and the student through frequent contact (at least one-half hour per week per credit requested or one hour every other week).
- Integration of a theoretical component beyond applied experience.

Students are encouraged to consider their future goals when designing an Independent Study Honors. It should be challenging as well as rewarding, ideally serving to better prepare you for graduate school or a professional career.

**Traditional ISH registration options include:**

- 1-2 credit ISH enriching a non-honors course of 3 or more credits; must involve at least eight hours of student/faculty contact time over the course of the semester.
- 3-6 credit “stand-alone” ISH. Students requesting this option must provide a syllabus-like proposal and documentation of the work load and have at least one-half hour of contact with the sponsor per credit per week with approximately three to four hours of work per credit per week.

**NOTE:** a maximum of three Independent Study Honors (ISH) may be applied to the Commonwealth Honors College honors requirements.

**PROPOSAL GUIDELINES**

The ISH proposal will serve as the official UMASS course description of the honors work you completed.

Grad schools, employers, etc., inquiring about your I.S.H. may be sent a copy of your proposal; ensure that it is well written and an accurate reflection of the enriched honors work you will be undertaking.

The information on the contract form (credit request, affiliated course, etc.) is necessary in order to register your Independent Study Honors on SPIRE. Please make certain you have provided all the information requested and allow for one week’s processing time in our office.

**NOTE:** Commonwealth Honors College students may use a maximum of three ISH’s to satisfy Commonwealth Honors College requirements.

Your proposal should address the following questions:

1. **What will you study?**
   - Clearly define your topic and the nature of your study, e.g., do you wish to investigate the "big picture" (e.g., The Effects of Excessive TV Viewing on the General Public) or a specific aspect of something (e.g., Violence on TV and the Rising Crime Rate among Teenage Males)?
   - What do you hope to discover/accomplish from your study?

2. **How will you conduct your research?**
   - Surveys, observations, lab experiments, library searches, readings, and consultations are examples of research methods. Please provide details for each method you list, including bibliographies as applicable.

3. **What is your timeline and proposed method for benchmark evaluations of your ISH progress/achievements throughout the semester?**
   - Create a timeline of assignments and a regular meeting schedule to help keep you on track and to provide opportunities for evaluation and feedback from your ISH sponsor.

4. **How will you present your I.S.H. for grading?**
   - A written document (formal paper with a bibliography, journal, or composition) is the standard method for wrapping up an Independent Study Honors. Discuss the proposed length with your sponsor and note that in your proposal.
   - Occasionally an oral presentation of your findings to either a committee or class may be scheduled as well.
   - Other options might include a project with documentation: collection of original poetry, an exhibit of original artwork, a performance or contribution of a product to a community or for a client.

Independent Study Honors (ISH) Contract Registration is online via CHC Paths (www.honors.umass.edu/chc-paths) student portal