

Glassen Undergraduate Experience Guidelines for Obtaining Experiential Learning Credit (FW 490)

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Overview and Criteria

Students accepted to the Glassen Undergraduate Experience (GUE) may qualify to earn up to 3 credits of FW 490 (Independent Study). FW 490 credits can be used to fulfill the Fisheries and Wildlife experiential learning requirement. To receive academic credit for a GUE project, the student must:

- 1) Ensure their GUE project meets MSU's definition of independent study ([LINK to Definition](#)),
- 2) Confirm your faculty mentor will serve as the instructor for FW 490 and assign a grade,
- 3) Agree to produce at least one final product summarizing the completed work (e.g., written report, manuscript, poster presentation, oral presentation),
- 4) Work with your mentor to prepare the online "Application for Independent Study" (link and detailed instructions below),
- 5) Once the application is approved, Jim will enroll you in the appropriate FW 490 section for the appropriate semester(s).

Important Note: The independent study must be developed and approved early in the research experience. Credit cannot be granted retroactively for past work.

Determining Number of Credits

- A full GUE award (200 hours at \$15/hour = \$3,000) qualifies for 3 credits of FW 490 when all hours are dedicated to the independent study project.
- Credit will be reduced accordingly if less than 200 hours are dedicated to the independent study component (i.e., approximately 1 credit per 67 hours of independent study).
- Students are encouraged to register for all FW 490 credits in a single semester whenever possible. Choose the semester when the majority of the work will take place (including the final product).
 - For example, a student receiving a GUE award in fall semester would most likely register for independent study in the following spring semester.
 - The student may need to split credits across two semesters to stay within MSU's flat rate tuition (12-18 credits). If you anticipate you'll need to split credits, contact Jim and Rose for guidance before submitting the application.
 - Students must register for at least 1 credit during the semester when the final product is completed.

Steps for Obtaining Credit

- 1) The student and mentor meet to discuss and agree upon a plan for the independent study project.
- 2) The student writes up a plan which outlines the information needed for the "Application for Independent Study" and sends it to their mentor for review. The plan should include:

- **Semester(s)** of proposed work
 - **Brief Description** of proposed work (include purpose, design, and expected learning outcomes). *1-2 paragraphs are sufficient.*
 - Estimated **Contact Hours** per week with instructor (mentor) and **Total Number of Credits**
 - **Rationale** (why do this independent study rather than a course?). *Brief paragraph is sufficient.*
 - **Preparation** (list the student’s relevant coursework, prior work experience, etc.). *Brief paragraph is sufficient.*
 - **Work to be Completed** (describe the work and product(s) on which the student will be evaluated). *A bulleted list or 1 paragraph narrative is sufficient.*
 - **Evaluation Procedure** (basis for applying grade). Evaluation could include regular meetings, assigned readings or training courses, checks on comprehension of knowledge, etc. *Brief paragraph is sufficient.*
 - **Deadline** for submitting work for final evaluation
- 3) The student submits the “Application for Independent Study” using the information gathered above via an online form located on the “Student-Instructor Forms” page on the Registrar website: ([LINK to Access Application for Independent Study](#)). This form routes to your mentor and then Jim for approval.
- On the form, the subject is “FW” and the course is “490”.
 - If credits need to be split over two semesters, list the first semester when credit will be received. Jim will add a note about the plan to split credits before approving.
- 4) Once approved, Jim enrolls the student in the appropriate section and number of credits for FW 490.
- 5) Upon completion of the project, the mentor assigns a grade for FW 490.

Important Note: Submit the “Application for Independent Study” as early as possible. The form must be submitted at least 2 weeks before the start of final exams for the semester of enrollment.

Things to Remember

- Students are not automatically enrolled in FW 490 when they are accepted into a GUE position.
- Not all GUE work may qualify for independent study. While the faculty mentor can define the overall concept and approach, the student must play an active role in implementing the research or outreach activities. The expectation is that the student works independently on the project while receiving regular training and guidance from the faculty mentor.
 - Examples of “active role” include developing and refining research questions or outreach activities, collecting and entering data, analyzing data, contributing to interpretation, writing up results (i.e., not solely performing data entry or other routine laboratory tasks).
- Students can (and should) be paid for the GUE work while earning credit.
- If a manuscript is a final product, it should be drafted but does not need to be submitted or accepted to a peer-reviewed publication during the final semester of independent study.
- MSU’s University Undergraduate Research and Arts Forum (UURAF) is a great opportunity to showcase your results! UURAF presentations qualify as a final product. This annual event takes place on campus each April. Students can submit an abstract for either an oral or poster presentation, and registration typically opens in January. ([LINK to UURAF Website](#)).