DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Independent Study Module

Guide for Supervisors and Students

1. ISMs will involve 4 hours of supervision/discussion; while in most cases this will take the form of 2 hours of discussion near the start of the semester and 2 hours at the end, the 4 hours of supervision can be redistributed as the supervisor sees fit.

2. ISMs will be assessed on the basis of the final essay submitted (100%), although individual supervisors may also at their discretion assign presentations and other tasks as part of the total ISM project. It is understood that these other tasks would be intended to advance and feed into the final essay, and thus the essay will still count as 100% of the final grade.

3. The Final Essay should be between 4,000 and 5,000 words in length. Students should make sure that the ISM does not exceed the stipulated length. Violation of this limit will incur penalties. An ISM that, after due consideration, is found to violate this limit will have five marks deducted from the total for the first 1,000 words in excess and five marks for every subsequent 500 words.

4. Students are to hand in their final essays by the deadline not later than 12 noon on (10 November 2014 for Semester 1 or 13 April 2015 for Semester 2) unless prior permission has been obtained from the Head of the Department for late submission.

5. Any late submission without prior permission will be viewed seriously and will be subject to the following conditions and penalties, to be deducted from the final grade of the essays:

   - Deduct 2 marks if it is submitted on the same working day (one hour from the stipulated deadline).
   - Deduct 5 marks if it is on the next working day.
   - Deduct 2 extra marks per day for up to a maximum of a week.
   - Disqualify if the essay is late by more than a week without proper explanation and/or supporting document(s).

6. There will be no cross-marking of ISMs, but in the case of student appeals, the head, deputy head, or honours co-ordinator may review the case and final essay and arbitrate/moderate if need be.
Independent Study Module Supervision

The ISM represents an opportunity to define an area of interest to the student doing it, to read around it, and write a mid-length paper on it. It is weighted at 5 modular credits.

The responsibility for this exercise rests primarily with the student, the emphasis being on the ‘I’ in ‘ISM’. It is not the supervisor’s task to do any ‘thinking’ for the student; the supervisor’s task is to guide ‘from behind’, i.e. to provide critical response to the direction adopted and the arguments produced by the student.

1. Students are expected to see their supervisors for a total of 4 contact hours over the semester at a mutually agreed time. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that he/she attends these sessions. In the event of the student being indisposed, he/she must inform the supervisor in order to schedule a ‘make-up’ session.

2. It is the student’s responsibility:
   - to discover his/her particular focus on the chosen topic.
   - to work out how best to articulate his/her argument and divide his/her essay into its component parts.
   - to discover availability of secondary material in the NUS Library and, where desirable, to get the supervisor’s help in obtaining supplementary reading. In the event of such a request being made, the student must be responsible: i.e. (1) only ask for material that he/she is more or less certain to find useful; (2) to give the library time to obtain such material. Students would be well advised to think about this issue (i.e. whether the library has all the works they will want to consult) soon after selecting their topic (i.e. in the first term).
   - to discover his/her engagement with such secondary material and to refer to it in an appropriate fashion.
   - to ensure that his/her argument is coherent.
   - to ensure that presentation and all references, etc. are in the required form. A stylesheet is provided by the department; please use it.
   - to submit the written work on/by the date stipulated.

3. It is the supervisor’s responsibility:
   - to be available at the mutually agreed time; in the event of unavoidable indisposition, to be available at the earliest possible date thereafter.
   - to respond to questions asked and to provide suggestions/advice where appropriate.
   - to draw the student’s attention to weaknesses in the soundness, coherence, integration and presentation of his/her argument.
   - to read and critically evaluate any material submitted and return it to the student with appropriate comments within a week of it being submitted.
   - to keep abreast of the student’s progress and discuss with the student any ‘falling behind’ at the earliest possible moment after it has become evident.
   - to inform the Honours Year Co-ordinator about any difficulty the student may be experiencing.

4. In the event of the student experiencing a difficulty, of whatever kind, it is his/her responsibility to discuss this with the supervisor at the earliest opportunity. If this has been done to no satisfactory effect, or, for whatever reason, the student feels unable to discuss the issue with the supervisor, it is the student’s responsibility to seek the advice of the Honours Year Co-ordinator or the Head of Department at the earliest possible opportunity.