

**DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
GRADUATE INDEPENDENT STUDY MODULE AGREEMENT**

**CRITERIA FOR AN ISM – What it is and what it isn't**

An ISM is an 'independent' study module. It is designed to allow graduate students to explore an area of interest **independently** but with advisory support. It can be related (or not) to their **broad** thesis topic (but see below). A proportion of draft material (around 20 to 30% of the word length) may be submitted to advisors but ideas, goals, research and reading plans, progress reports and outlines of the ISM should be the basis for most of the discussion in the 3 scheduled meetings. In this way the process and skills of researching and writing are explored in depth and provide training for proposal and thesis writing. Students who wish to take two ISMs should not work with the same advisor twice unless they are able to provide clear and compelling scholarly justification for doing so.

The topic of interest should not be thesis-driven and can be an opportunity to investigate something beyond the thesis plans. However, ISMs can connect with the thesis in a tangential way. For example, a student with less geographical/disciplinary background can pursue an ISM to catch up or fill gaps in their knowledge. An examination and analysis of a new area of literature that may be relevant to the thesis is permissible. For some students, working with an advisor beyond the topic of their thesis can be a productive means to be guided through fresh research areas as part of building wider expertise.

**ISM**s are **NOT** to be used as part of writing for a thesis. An ISM must be distinct from the actual thesis as the department and faculty will not allow students to receive credit twice for the same work. Hence it is not to be a draft thesis literature review or chapter.

**CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT**

- General organization of the paper
- Identification of a clear area of debate and analysis
- Integration of ideas
- Ability to sustain an argument
- Creativity/originality in the deployment of secondary material and evidence
- Spelling, typing, presentation and clarity of argument
- Bibliography (accurate and professionally presented)
- Word Limit: 4000-6000 words (6000-8000 group projects)

**FOR GRADUATE STUDENT**

ISM module code: GE5660 / GE6660 (please delete accordingly)

Name of student:

**JOINT PROJECT**

Please indicate if this ISM is to be part of a joint project/group study with other students: Yes/No\*

- Using Appendix A, please indicate the names of other members of the group and elaborate on the portion of the project that you will claim responsibility for and on which you will be assessed.

### **GRADUATE STUDENT DECLARATION & SUBMISSION**

I declare that I: have read and understood the requirements pertaining to writing an ISM; will submit the ISM report to the staff member advising my ISM and send a copy to Ms. Pauline Lee; have noted the deadline for submission.

#### **Deadlines for submission of ISM report to supervisor:**

- Friday on Week 12 of the semester

Name :

Signature & Date:

### **FOR ADVISOR OF ISM**

If an extension is needed, then the Department should be notified by the beginning of week 12 of a semester. The appointment of a second marker is the responsibility of the Chair and/or Deputy Chair of the GSC, **and NOT** the responsibility of the ISM advisor. The second markers should be anonymous and not engage with discussion of the ISM prior to grading.

Name :

I have ensured that the student's ISM assignment comprises work that is in addition to that envisaged as part of their research thesis.

Signature (digital signature will suffice):

Date:

### **FOR GRADUATE COORDINATOR/DEPUTY COORDINATOR**

Name :

Based on the information provided, including that in Appendix A below, I have ensured that the student's proposed project complies with the requirements of a Graduate ISM in the Department of Geography.

Signature & Date:

### **APPENDIX A: PROPOSAL FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY MODULE**

(Proposal should not exceed two pages)

1. Statement about your thesis – include title and a short paragraph of explanation
2. Title of proposed ISM
3. Abstract of ISM
4. Statement as to what type of focus you will pursue and what the relationship is/is not with your thesis.
5. Schedule/Plan of Work (3 meetings)
6. Advisor's Role
7. Contact Hours (between advisor and student)
8. For joint projects please include breakdown of joint and individual assessments.
9. Student obligations