

Independent Studies: Frequently Asked Questions

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What do I need to hand in?

Basically, what is required is an annotated bibliography – you will have to create a list of those books and articles that you have read, and comment on them briefly.

What “briefly” means depends on the text that you have read and on your specific research topic:

Only note down those aspects that are directly relevant for your topic.

If the text is a short article, 3-5 lines (key words only, not full sentences) are enough. If it is a monograph, or even a novel, you may find that you will have to write a page, or even more than a page.

What kind of topic can I choose?

(Nearly) every topic is possible – you can focus on:

- A theoretical question, such as: emotions in literature, presentation of consciousness, cognitive narratology, ...
- A question concerned with a particular theme – leaving out the basic theory and methodology – such as: gender in 19th century novels, the presentation of space in contemporary Black British Fiction, the position of women in xy, ...
- A mix of both – this is what most students choose.

How many works do I have to comment on?

You can take the number of credit points as a rough anchor: 1 credit point means 30 hours of work, so for 7 CP you should invest around 210 hours. Since one reads about 20 pages per hour, this adds up, theoretically, to more than 4000 pages. However, you can take into account some time for your initial research, for analysing the texts and choosing what to write down. Also, it depends on the genre, and on the complexity of the texts.

If you are unsure about the number of works to include, please write me an email!

Can I use my research later on?

Yes, you can:

You can either use it as a basis for your MA thesis, or you can use it as one of the two additional topics in your oral exam.

In the exam, about half an hour is devoted to the discussion of your MA thesis, and about fifteen minutes each to an additional topic.

One of these topics should be rather broad – such as “Modernism”, or “the English novel in the 19th century”, or “the contemporary British novel”. For this topic, you should read the equivalent of 10 novels, but secondary literature is NOT required.

The other of these exam topics can be rather narrow, and it can and be identical with the topic of your Independent Studies.

For further information on this, please see also the “Merkblatt für Examenskandidaten, die mit Master abschließen”:

http://www.as.uni-heidelberg.de/personen/Nuenning/files/MerkbMaster_updated.pdf

Is there anything else that I have to do, in addition to handing in my results?

No – provided that you do not want to use your Independent Studies as one of the topics discussed in your final oral exam. If you do, then of course you have to make sure that you remember enough in order to discuss the most interesting points with me!

How often do I have to contact the professor who supervises my Independent Studies while I am working on the topic?

Basically: not at all, since these are meant to be *Independent Studies*. Just make sure that your topic is accepted. Since I may want to recommend that you read some additional works – or leave out others – I advise you to send me the reading list in advance. Afterwards, you can contact me if you have problems that you cannot solve on your own, or if you would like some additional advice.

Is there anything else that I have to take into consideration?

Yes: If you wish to use your Independent Studies as a topic for your final oral exam, it is advisable to take these Independent Studies with the same professor that you want to supervise your MA thesis, since, in the final exam, only the supervisor of your MA thesis will be present.