

CONTRACTS & INDEPENDENT STUDY PROJECTS

The Academic Contract

An academic contract, which corresponds to one full-time semester of enrollment at New College, contains four sections:

1. Educational activities
2. Short- and long-term goals
3. Descriptions of academic activities and activities outside of the academic contract
4. Certification criteria

Goals may of course change over time. Rather than committing to activities or outcomes, contemplation of goals provides an opportunity to imagine the future, and to reflect on how educational choices lead to academic achievements. Over time, successive contracts record new directions in thoughts and aspirations, and document the changes in a student's intellectual and social development.

The student's list of planned educational activities can include both semester-long (fourteen-week) and modular (seven-week) activities. Each New College full term course, tutorial, internship or Independent Reading Project is equivalent to one unit; one that is modular or module-equivalent counts as a half unit. At minimum, **the student must enroll in, and remain enrolled in, at least three units throughout the semester.** Enrollment in more units may be necessary to make timely progress toward graduation, and/or because the faculty advisor requires this.

Only activities listed under educational activities, when completed and evaluated as satisfactory by the appropriate New College professors, appear on the official transcript. Educational activities may be courses, seminars, tutorials, labs, fieldwork, internships, special projects, and the like. For each activity for academic credit, a New College faculty member is listed and is responsible for submitting an evaluation of student work. All activities undertaken as tutorials or internships require the instructor's initials on the contract.

Activities outside the formal curriculum, such as personal development projects or employment, have a place on the contract as well. They do not appear on the transcript, and, while they may form an important part of the student's experience and play an important role in the discussion with the contract sponsor, a faculty member does not evaluate these activities. This section may also be used to describe in more detail any educational activities listed in the second section.

The advisor and student negotiate the criteria for satisfactory completion of the contract, called "contract certification." The certification criteria reflect an agreement between the student and sponsor as to what constitutes successful academic progress for a semester. These criteria usually involve a number of completed educational activities, but may include the completion of other projects as well, such as planning for the senior thesis or solving a specific academic problem.

The New College faculty member with whom a student develops the contract, and who signs it, is the contract sponsor. This professor serves as a mentor (or advisor) during the semester, helping the student integrate experiences and respond effectively to academic challenges. Though the sponsor is often an instructor for one or more of the student's educational activities, this need not be the case.

The completed contract, with the appropriate signatures, must be submitted electronically to the Office of the Registrar by the eighth day of the semester (typically, Wednesday of the second week of classes—see Registration Part II). In exceptional circumstances the Division Chair or Associate Provost may sign the Contract, with the contract sponsor's approval.

Contract Renegotiation

After the student submits the contract, the student may revise it in consultation with the sponsor, a process called "contract renegotiation." Educational activities may be added or dropped, **and the certification criteria must be revised accordingly.** The sponsor must endorse the changes. The deadline for contract renegotiation is Friday of the twelfth week of the semester.

Semester Evaluations

At the end of each semester, the instructor for each of the contract's educational activities (listed for potential transcript entry) submits a narrative evaluation of each student's performance to the Student Evaluation System (SES). In addition to providing details related to the student's performance, this evaluation specifies whether or not that work is "Satisfactory," "Incomplete," or "Unsatisfactory."

Preemptive Unsatisfactory Designations

A "preemptive unsatisfactory" designation may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor before the contract renegotiation deadline. Assignment of a "preemptive unsatisfactory" designation serves as a warning that the student will not satisfactorily complete the course for that term. At the contract sponsor's discretion, that course may still be dropped before the contract renegotiation deadline. If the course remains on the contract after the evaluation submission deadline, the Office of the Registrar will convert the "preemptive unsatisfactory" designation to a regular "unsatisfactory" designation at the end of that term. Like all "unsatisfactory" designations, these converted designations remain a permanent part of the student's academic record.

Deadlines for Incomplete Work

The deadline for incomplete courses and tutorials will be the first day of the following academic semester. If the work remains incomplete by this date, it will automatically be marked as unsatisfactory. This policy applies to both modular and full-semester courses.

If a student needs more time to complete the work, they can apply for an extension by submitting a Provost's Petition before the deadline. If an extension is granted, the student will have an additional two months to complete the work. If the work is still not submitted after the extension period, the incomplete will automatically turn into an unsatisfactory.

The deadline for the submission of semester evaluations by the faculty is Wednesday at 5:00 p.m. during the eighteenth week after the beginning of the semester.

New College does not assign letter grades or calculate grade point averages for NCF degree-seeking undergraduate students. New College's academic program focuses on demonstrated competence rather than on the compilation of credits and grades. Achievement is recorded on the official transcript only for educational activities completed satisfactorily: courses, labs, tutorials, internships, independent study projects, and independent research projects. At the conclusion of each term, students receive an assessment of their performance followed by a narrative evaluation from the faculty member overseeing each educational activity. Evaluations are not intended as substitutes for grades and are never

converted to grades. The narrative portion of the evaluation is a personal communication between the professor and the student.

Beginning with the fall 2016 incoming student cohort, narrative evaluations may be provided as a component of the official transcript, at the request of the student. Students who first entered New College prior to fall 2016 are responsible for providing narrative evaluations separately from the official transcript, if needed.

Since only current students have access to the Student Evaluation System, the Office of the Registrar strongly suggests students download a copy of their evaluations prior to graduation or leaving the College. However, students may request a set of their narrative evaluations *once* from the Office of the Registrar. Contact the Office of the Registrar for more information at records@ncf.edu or at 941-487-4230.

Contract Certification

The contract sponsor certifies the academic contract after evaluations have been submitted to the online Student Evaluation System. This is based on the certification criteria articulated in the contract. The deadline for contract certification is ten days after the beginning of the following semester. Like individual courses, contracts are certified as **Satisfactory**, **Incomplete**, or **Unsatisfactory**.

The Independent Study Project

The ISP requirement addresses five educational objectives:

1. To train students to carry out independent research so they are prepared to plan and carry through an effective senior thesis.
2. To supplement the curriculum by providing opportunities to cover areas or methods of study not usually available, particularly off-campus.
3. To provide an opportunity for non-traditional, innovative, experiential learning projects in the U.S. or abroad.
4. To encourage work-related experiences such as internships.
5. To provide an opportunity for intensive involvement with one subject, as a change of pace from semester-long terms.

A student chooses a topic in consultation with a faculty member who agrees to become the ISP advisor. The ISP Handbook, and the ISP Workshop held in November of each year, provide guidance to students as to the types of ISPs that faculty encourage. Projects may be carefully defined at the beginning, or left open-ended and exploratory. The content and demands should be roughly equivalent to that of a term-length tutorial. A full-time, four-week academic activity, the ISP is incompatible with full-time employment, a regular semester contract, or a second, simultaneous ISP. One New College ISP counts as one unit. Three ISPs are required for graduation. A student may register for a fourth ISP. A fourth ISP may be necessary for completion of Area of Concentration requirements. To register for a fourth ISP, please reference the instructions below.

The first ISP must take place as on-campus study in order to assure the opportunity for frequent consultation between student and ISP advisor. When strongly justified by the educational benefits of a project, including a project completed abroad, a student may petition the Provost for a waiver of this requirement. To petition for a waiver, a student should submit a Provost Petition (<https://nextgensso.com/sp/startSSO.ping?PartnerIdId=myncf.ncf.edu/&TargetResource=https%3a%2f%2fdynamicforms.ngwebsolutions.com%2fSubmit%2fStart%2fa80e67d5-31f5-43db-9714-af0c047c8a3e>) form. The petition should be accompanied by the completed **Independent Study Project Description**

Form and a letter of support from the project advisor. **Transfer students are not bound by this requirement**, although on-campus study during the first ISP is strongly recommended. When practical, subsequent ISPs should also be done as on-campus study to permit advisor-student consultation.

Renegotiating the ISP

ISPs may be renegotiated with respect to topic, scope, etc. at the discretion of the original ISP advisor by filing a revised ISP Description form with the Office of the Registrar. The renegotiation deadline for ISP proposals is at 5:00 p.m. on the third business day of the ISP period. Renegotiation of an ISP Description form that was submitted on time will not be assessed a late fee. If a student is registered for an ISP and fails to submit an Interterm ISP Description form to the Office of the Registrar by the renegotiation deadline, the student forfeits payment for the ISP, and the ISP is recorded on the student's permanent academic record as "Unsatisfactory." Changes to the topic and ISP advisor after the renegotiation deadline require a successful petition to the Provost.

Summer ISPs

Students can earn ISP credit during the summer in two ways. With approval from their contract sponsor, students can pursue a summer internship for ISP credit under supervision of NCF's Center for Career Engagement and Opportunity; the evaluation for this ISP would be due before the start of the fall term at New College. The other option, with faculty sponsor approval and a completed Summer ISP Description Form, allows a student to enroll in academic activities at an accredited college or university for at least 4 semester credit hours (or 6 quarter hours). The credit hours must be earned with a grade of C or better at the host institution in order to receive transfer credit for an ISP at New College. Students who complete a Summer ISP abroad for academic credit need to submit off-campus study forms and documents at abroad.ncf.edu (<http://abroad.ncf.edu/>). Since credit for only one ISP may be accepted in transfer, students should ensure they have not already earned transfer credit for an ISP.

May 2nd, or the next business day if May 2nd falls on a weekend, is the deadline for submission of the Summer ISP Description Form to the Office of the Registrar. The contract sponsor also serves as the ISP advisor on the Summer ISP Description Form. Completion of the summer ISP is due by the day before fall classes begin at New College. The official college transcript for the work must be received no later than the last day of classes of the subsequent fall semester. The contract sponsor and/or the host institution may set earlier deadlines for completion and transcript submission.

Deadlines for Completing ISPs

All work completed as part of the Interterm ISP is due no later than the last day of the January Interterm. After that date, the ISP is considered incomplete or unsatisfactory.

A summer internship for ISP credit must be completed and evaluated before the start of the fall term at New College. A summer ISP through approved course work at another college must be completed by the day before the first day of fall classes at New College (or earlier, if specified by the host institution or faculty contract sponsor). The New College Office of the Registrar must receive the transcript by the last day of fall classes. (The contract sponsor and/or host institution may set earlier deadlines for completion and transcript submission.)

If a student has turned in an ISP project and has received no acknowledgment of his or her completed work in the Student Evaluation

System, the student should contact the ISP sponsor and request that the professor indicate "All Work Submitted" in the Student Evaluation System. Appeals of ISP terminations, and of ISPs that are deemed Unsatisfactory because they were turned in after the deadline for faculty to evaluate them, will be heard by the Student Academic Status Committee (SASC), which can waive termination in exceptional cases.

Deadlines for Faculty Evaluations of ISPs

A January ISP that has not been evaluated as Satisfactory in the Student Evaluation System by 5:00 p.m. on the Wednesday of the eighteenth week after the beginning of the subsequent spring term will be designated Unsatisfactory. A summer internship for ISP credit must be evaluated before the start of the fall term at New College. The expected completion date for a summer ISP is the beginning of the subsequent fall semester at New College. The New College Office of the Registrar must receive the transcript from the host institution by the last day of fall classes.