

Directed Research Online Application

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Purpose

These guidelines are for students who enroll in Directed Research (DR) in our department. Undergrads may take EE 490, which carries a letter grade, and graduate students may take EE 590 (MS), EE 690 (Engineer), or EE 790 (PhD), which is graded CR/NC.

These guidelines clearly state your responsibilities as a student and the responsibilities of the faculty member supervising the DR. While most of these guidelines are specifically concerned with MS students, the comments apply to DR at all levels.

Course Description, Faculty and Student Responsibilities

The catalog definition of DR is that it is research leading to a given degree. DR may be taken for 1 to 12 units (typically 1 to 6 units), depending on the degree objective (the exact limits for each level of DR are specified in the catalog). Regardless of the research topic, exact assignment or number of units, DR should have a workload equivalent to the specified number of units of a regular course. For example, most EE graduate classes are for 3 units (class contact hours), and these courses generally require 10 hours per week of study and preparation time. DR requires personal one-to-one interaction between faculty and student according to a mutually agreed-to format and research plan. The interaction can be by telephone, email, office visits, or any form of electronic communication. Obviously, regular, direct personal interaction is strongly preferred. The exact assignment for DR is by agreement between faculty member and student. It can be original research on a defined topic, assisting graduate research assistants (RAs) with their research, doing a project, programming in support of a project, or any other learning experience at the appropriate level. If deviations from the plan occur during the semester, the faculty member and student must both agree to changes in the research plan. Students can carry out DR in groups, with permission to do so and determination of individual effort as decided by the faculty member.

Steps to Follow

1. As a student, you are responsible for finding a faculty member to work with you on your proposed DR topic. A list of all EE faculty and their research interests is at http://ee.usc.edu/faculty_staff/faculty_directory/. After contacting the proposed faculty member, get their verbal approval that they will supervise your DR course.
2. With guidance from the faculty member, write a project plan that briefly defines the topic, the approach, the outcomes that are expected and the form of the final result. When this is completed, fill out the online form <http://viterbi.usc.edu/academicservices/directedresearch>, including the required research project plan.
3. Faculty are then automatically sent an email directing them to a webpage to approve/deny your proposed DR project.
4. You will then receive a confirmation email that your DR course has been approved/denied by the faculty member.
5. Get D-clearance in EEB 102 for the course
6. Register at the registrar's office or on the web for the course.
7. At the end of the semester your DR faculty supervisor will submit your grade (for EE 490) or credit/no credit/incomplete (for other DR courses).

8. A maximum of 6 units of DR may be counted toward the MS.

For BS and MS students, the faculty member will expect you to present your results at the end of the semester, and to write a final report. They will also require you to meet with them or communicate with them on a regular schedule so they can guide your work and monitor your progress. Most students will take at least 2 units of DR, although 1 unit is acceptable in some cases. As noted above, each unit of DR requires 3-4 hours of work per week. Faculty may require a minimum GPA (e.g. 3.6 for the MS level) on previous course work for students taking DR, and may require that you have the necessary background on related courses. They may ask you for a copy of your STARS report and unofficial transcripts prior to agreeing to supervise the DR.

All USC academic integrity rules apply to DR. Your work and final report should be in your own words and should properly attribute the work of others. Oral presentations are an effective way to communicate the work performed, and may be required by the faculty member as a supplement to the written report.

The form is available at: <http://viterbi.usc.edu/academicservices/directedresearch>