

Independent Project Week – Criteria for Approval

Eligibility

Students may do one independent project in middle school and one independent project in upper school, but no student is guaranteed automatic approval for any project. Project approval is determined by the Project Week Committee. Proposals must be received by the due date in order to be considered.

Students cannot do an independent project during their first year of enrollment.

Students applying for an independent project must also submit a project week sign-up form listing five other options, in case their proposal is not approved.

Criteria

The four defining characteristics of the school's Project Week program are **challenge, experiential education, group process, and reflection**.

In keeping with those goals, the committee approves independent project week proposals when they do most or all of the following:

- Provide unique opportunities for learning that would otherwise be missed.
- Cannot be done or are not better done in some other time frame, such as spring break, senior project, or summer vacation.
- Have clear and substantive learning goals and objectives.
- Have a clear daily itinerary where the bulk of each day will be spent in educational activities.
- Provide opportunities to learn with experienced leaders, mentors, or practitioners (outside of family) of a particular skill, art, or practice.
- Challenge a student outside of his or her comfort zone.
- Are experiential, rather than academic, learning opportunities.
- Culminate in a formal reflection that will be turned in for credit, being shared with an audience or real-world purpose whenever possible.

Examples of projects that the committee has approved include:

- A 10-day hike through technical canyon terrain, led by a NOLS certified leader and involving specific outdoor education goals;
- Intensive training as a yoga instructor in a formal program, where the student was also using winter break, spring break, and senior project to accumulate the hours necessary for instructor certification before her 18th birthday, when fees would double.

There are many valuable activities that do not meet those criteria. For example, the committee does not approve projects that a reasonable person would see as being primarily vacation, even though we acknowledge that these experiences can provide valuable family time or learning. **Examples of projects the committee has not approved include:**

- Family projects, such as a scrapbooking or gardening project
- Family vacation to Hawaii or Mexico, or skiing or biking trips with friends or family
- Trips with grandparents to historical sites
- Internships that could be done during senior project or in the summer

Final Credit

Even after approval, all students on independent projects must meet with the Independent Project Leader before and after their trip in order to receive credit. All independent projects will require additional work (beyond the week itself) in order to receive credit. Examples of these final projects could be a journal, a presentation to peers, an article in the *Overlake Independent*, or a short film.

To be approved, all proposals must detail the specific work that will be completed in order to receive academic credit.

Students who do not complete final projects to the satisfaction of the independent project coordinator must re-do the work or submit a new independent project proposal in order to receive credit for this graduation requirement.



Independent Project Week Proposal Form

Name: _____

Advisor: _____ Grade: _____

Are you a new student (circle) yes no

List projects in which you participated for the previous two years.

- Students may do only one independent project in grades 5-8 and one in grades 9-12.
- Students may only participate in one college tour, independent or organized by Overlak.

Final approval will be granted by the Project Week Committee. Follow up meetings will be required with the Independent Project Leader.

In order for your proposal to be approved, you must include following items. Please type your answers and attach them to this page.

- Description: Please describe in detail what you intend to do for Project Week
- Educational component (what will you be learning)
- Daily activities or itinerary
- People you will be working with or who will be supervising
- Location

Presentation. In order to receive credit for this project, you will need to put together a culminating presentation or project. This may be in the form of a daily journal, a research report, a photo journal, a completed physical project (i.e. artwork or music) or some other approved presentation. Please outline how you plan to meet this requirement.

Please Contact the Project Week Director (Joey Pauley jpauley@ovelake.org) if you have questions.

See website for due dates <https://www.overlake.org/node/558>

Parent Signature: _____

Advisor's Signature: _____ Date _____