

**Proposed Clarification of Interdisciplinary Research for Research Option
Undergraduate Research Advisory Group
March 2007**

Rationale: Ambiguities in Current Policy

In March 2005, the IUCC approved the following policy for interdisciplinary research by undergraduates seeking research option:

Interdisciplinary Research & Second Degrees

Interdisciplinary research is encouraged. If a student wishes to do research in a discipline other than their major, the student simply needs to submit a petition to the URAG (see Section VI) with a short description of the research and a description of which unit's requirements (or combination of requirements) should apply. Students earning a second degree will follow this same procedure if they wish to do research that spans both of their majors.

In practice, this has left some ambiguities. First, not all academic units have agreed to participate in research option (RO). What if one of the two units for interdisciplinary research does not offer research option? We have four separate cases to consider, depending on whether RO is offered in the student's home unit or interdisciplinary unit, and whether the primary advisor is from the student's home unit or the interdisciplinary unit.

Second, it has become apparent that we need to make a distinction between inter-disciplinary research (with an advisor from each unit), and what is better described as other-disciplinary research—research that really has little relation to the student's major. Other-disciplinary research is sometimes appropriate. For example, a student may be earning a minor or certificate in another discipline, and want to do research in that discipline. The student may desire to go on to graduate study in their new field. In this situation, completing research option in their new discipline may be wise and appropriate.

Proposed Changes to Research Option

Currently a student who completes research option gets the words "Research Option" on their official Georgia Tech transcript. We propose that this wording should be changed to "Research Option in <name of academic unit>." Students may earn research option in any academic unit that offers it. The primary advisor of the research project must be a member of the faculty in the unit where the option is being earned. If that unit is not the student's home unit, then the signature of the unit's undergraduate research coordinator will be required on the student's thesis proposal (required for admission to the required thesis writing class.) The undergraduate research coordinator is instructed to approve only proposals that legitimately constitute research in their discipline, and for which they believe the student is adequately prepared. After approving such a proposal, the coordinator will notify the UROP office and the undergraduate research coordinator of the student's home unit.

Research option requirements may differ slightly between academic units. The requirements that apply are those of the unit in which the student wishes to earn research option. Note that students must still complete all the normal requirements of their home unit for their main degree.

Research credits must be earned in the student's research unit, not the home unit. A petition to count research credits from the student's home unit may be submitted to the Undergraduate Research Advisory Group (URAG), and will be approved only in the case in which the home unit (or other third unit) credits could legitimately count as work in the research discipline.

Exceptions to these rules and clarifications of unusual cases may be requested by petition to the URAG. The URAG will only approve proposals that are at least as rigorous as typical research option requirements.