Student Checklist for Research Project Approval

For students enrolling in: Guided Research and Seminar BIOL BC3591-3592 to fulfill one lab course requirement for the biology major. You may enroll in BIOL BC3591-3592 in your sophomore, junior or senior year.

Project approval must be granted before the April program-filing deadline for the following academic year. It is a good idea to begin planning early in the spring semester for research during the following academic year. In addition, if you are considering applying for summer fellowships to work in your research lab (such as the Hughes, SURF or Amgen fellowships) application deadlines begin in early February.

1. Have you found a research mentor?
You may work in a faculty lab here at Barnard, or in a lab at another institution. Once you have found a mentor, you should meet to discuss potential projects. Your mentor will likely suggest projects to you, but may also seek your input in making a final choice.

2. If your lab is not at Barnard, have you found an internal advisor?
If your lab is outside the Barnard Biology Department, you will need a faculty member within the department to serve as your internal advisor. Your internal advisor will ideally work in an area of research that is similar to your lab. For a list of faculty research areas, see: http://biology.barnard.edu/faculty

3. When will your research start?
In order to enroll in this course, you must begin research in the fall semester, and continue in the spring. You may already be working in your lab (as a summer intern, or during a previous year), but you can only begin receiving credit for BIOL BC3591-3592 during the fall semester of your sophomore, junior or senior year. Please note that if you plan to enroll in BIOL BC3593-3594 (Senior Thesis Research) to fulfill your senior requirement for the biology major, you cannot perform that research in the same lab for which you have already received credit for BIOL BC3591-3592.

4. Does your project meet the requirements for BIOL BC3591-3592?
Your Barnard research mentor (if your lab is at Barnard) or internal advisor (if your lab is elsewhere) must approve your planned research before you enroll in BIOL BC3591-3592. Your project must be appropriate in terms of (A) scope and (B) time requirement for a 3-credit course.

   (A) Is the scope of the project appropriate?
Your project can be in any area of biological research, including clinical research, but it must aim toward generating original data. In addition, you should be contributing substantially to your project. This does not mean that you should take the lead on it; you will likely be working with another lab member who leads the project (a PI, grad student, postdoc, or research technician), but it is important that you spend the majority of your lab time doing experiments for this project.

   (B) Is the time requirement met for the project?
In addition to time spent preparing for the seminar, you should plan to spend 9-10 hours each week in your lab, doing research.
5. Can you meet the scheduling requirements for your project?
Your project may have specific scheduling demands, which you should discuss along with your availability with your research mentor. You may need to be in lab for many consecutive hours to complete a particular experiment, or you may occasionally need to check in on experiments at odd hours such as early mornings, nights, or weekends. Be certain that you are able to fit in the specific scheduling requirements for your project or make arrangements with your mentor that you both agree on.

6. Do you have transportation to your lab?
If your lab is not on campus, do you have a reliable form of transportation? Have you budgeted transportation time into your schedule? Transit time does not count toward research time.

Also consider transportation when discussing scheduling requirements (see #5, above). Be sure to discuss your mentor’s expectations and your availability, and make arrangements that you both agree on.

7. Do you need additional training/approvals before beginning a project?
If you will be working with human subjects, live vertebrate animals, or dangerous materials including radioactive or biohazardous materials, you will need to complete training sessions before beginning work in any lab. At Barnard/Columbia trainings and approvals are offered through the Barnard or Columbia University Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) and the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) office, respectively. Check with your research mentor to determine what approvals you will need, and for instruction on how to sign up for training sessions. Please note that approval for work with human subjects can take up to 6 months, so plan accordingly.

8. Have you submitted a signed Project Approval Form, signed up for the appropriate course, and for the appropriate number of credits?
Once you have planned your project with your mentor, and discussed it with your internal advisor (if your lab is off campus), you should complete and submit a Project Approval Form which can be found at http://biology.barnard.edu/research-opportunities. This form must be signed by your Barnard research mentor (if your lab is in the Biology Department) or by your internal advisor (if your lab is elsewhere).

Then:

- Submit the signed form to the Department Administrator in the Biology Department Office (1203 Altschul) by the program filing deadline in April.

- Keep a copy of the signed Project Approval Form for your records. Your major advisor will need to see your copy in order to approve your program. Be sure to add the appropriate course to your program in eBear.

- In addition to adding the course on eBear, sign-up for the course in the Biology Department Office during the lab sign-up period, which is announced at the biology program planning meeting, and posted on the Biology Department website below: http://biology.barnard.edu/special-signup-procedures