PROTOCOL FOR DEVELOPING AND REVIEWING
STUDENT-INITIATED INDEPENDENT RESEARCH COURSES (SOWK 790's)

Description and Purpose of the Student-Initiated Independent Research Course (SOWK 790):
The student-initiated independent research course provides an opportunity for students with advanced research abilities to pursue a research topic of personal interest that *cannot be addressed in the existing SSW curriculum* (i.e., that does not duplicate existing content).

This course requires a faculty mentor and a written proposal that is approved by the research sequence. If the proposed course is being used to satisfy the student's advanced research requirement, it must also be approved by the Chair of the student's concentration and specialization. The purposes of the SOWK 790 courses are:

1. To improve student knowledge and skills related to research on a specialized subject

2. To foster student critical thinking about ethical concerns or complex decision making related to conducting research

To help ensure the successful completion of a student-initiated independent research course, there are three pre-requisite criteria. The interested student must: (1) have an identified faculty member within the school who is willing and available to mentor the student; (2) have received an "A" in her/his SOWK 670 course (or successfully passed the 670 exemption exam) *and* be in good academic standing within the SSW; (3) demonstrate to the proposed faculty mentor a strong likelihood of being able to successfully execute and complete the independent research project within the proposed timeframe.

The description of a given 790 course in the proposed syllabus should provide a brief rationale for the project and an overview of required readings and research activities.

Qualifications and Responsibilities of the Faculty Mentor:
A 790 faculty mentor should be a School of Social Work faculty member who has research experience and principal investigator (PI) privileges with the UMB IRB. Faculty members who do not have research experience or PI privileges with the UMB IRB may serve as co-mentors to the student, particularly if their substantive area overlaps with the student's research interest. The mentor(s) are responsible for providing the student guidance and oversight during the development and implementation of the proposed project. For the mentor(s), this includes: (1) reviewing the draft course syllabus and research proposal prior to submission to the research sequence, concentration, and specialization for approval; (2) obtaining IRB approval before initiating any research activities; (3) meeting with the student on a regular basis to ensure timely progress is being made on project aims, and troubleshoot potential problems; and (4) provide the student with a final grade.

Research Sequence Review Timetable:
1. Course Proposals. 790 proposals consist of a fully developed course syllabus, complete with a course description, objectives, and a timetable for required readings, student activities and assignments. For the fall semester, the course proposal must be reviewed by research sequence representatives and given a determination (approved or otherwise) by March 1. For the spring semester, the course proposal must be reviewed and approved by October 1. It is strongly recommended that proposals be submitted to the research sequence chair(s) at least 4

weeks before these deadlines to allow at least 2 weeks for peer review and another 2 weeks for completing possible revisions.

2. Proposal Review Criteria. The review criteria for course approval by the research sequence are described in detail in the Appendix (below).

Appendix: Research Sequence Review Criteria for Student-Initiated Independent Research Courses

Reviewer Instructions:
The following are questions to be considered when reviewing a proposed 790. Each proposed 790 will be reviewed by at least three representatives of the research sequence committee selected by the chair/co-chairs of the research sequence for their content and/or methodological expertise. Reviewers will vote on whether the proposed course is "approved," "approved pending revision," or "requires significant revision and resubmission." *Any response of "no" to any of the following questions likely indicates a need for significant course revision prior to approval.*

1. Will the proposed course **improve the student's knowledge and skills** related to research on a specialized subject? YES / NO (if "no" please explain)

2. Will the proposed course **foster critical thinking about ethical concerns or complex decision making** related to conducting research? YES / NO (if "no" please explain)

3. Does the course engage the student in at least 5 of the following activities? (Asterisked activities are required):

    a. IRB/CITI training*
    b. Consideration of issues pertaining to diversity/inclusion*
    c. Literature review
    d. Measurement development (e.g., questionnaire construction)
    e. Intervention implementation
    f. Data collection
    g. Data cleaning/data management
    h. Conduct data analysis (either qualitative or quantitative)*
    i. Interpretation of findings
    j. Help with product development/dissemination of results

    YES / NO (if "no" please explain)

4. Are course materials/readings **relevant** to the topic and objectives of the course? YES / NO (if "no" please explain)

5. Are the course materials/readings **current** (generally within 10 years of the publication date, unless seminal)? YES / NO (if "no" please explain)

6. Are the course materials/readings **appropriately comprehensive** for an advanced MSW student? YES / NO (if "no" please explain)

7. Does graded work correspond with course objectives and include two graded mechanisms/assignments? YES / NO (if "no" please explain)

8. Does graded work evaluate requisite course knowledge/skills/behaviors? YES / NO (if "no" please explain)

9. Are class activities befitting of an advanced graduate-level research course in terms of rigor and sophistication? YES / NO (if "no" please explain)

10. Can course assignments and activities be completed within the time allotted? YES / NO (if "no" please explain)