

Independent Learning Courses Flourish in First Year, Empowering Students to Pitch Creative Proposals

Campus focus

“We want students to decide what to learn and how to learn — that is the core spirit of independent learning,” explained Shun-Jie Ji, Director of the Center for General Education and Core Curriculum. He noted that, in line with the independent learning model promoted by Taiwan’s Curriculum Guidelines of 12 Year Basic Education, Tamkang University introduced the “TKU Guidelines for the Implementation of Student Independent Learning Courses” in the 2024–2025 academic year. These guidelines encourage students to take initiative in proposing learning topics and to deepen their learning experience through hands-on practice. The program has been steadily expanding, growing from 6 courses in the first semester to 11 courses in the second semester. Ji expressed hopes that more students will make good use of these resources, boldly submit proposals, actively participate, and enhance their knowledge, skills, and interdisciplinary learning outcomes.

Ji further explained that undergraduate students may submit an

“Independent Learning Course Application Form” to the Center during the second week of each semester. Each course requires at least 10 students to jointly initiate a proposal, and students may recommend an instructor or request the Center to assist in arranging one. He shared that the course formats are highly diverse. For example, under the guidance of the Department of History Chair, Prof. Chi-Lin Li, students in the

“Historical-Themed Banquet Design” course participated in the practical project “Huwei Banquet”, collaborating with industry partners to build cross-disciplinary skills. Similarly, Distinguished Professor Chih-Yung Chang of the Department of Computer Science and Information Engineering actively supports students by organizing industry seminars and site visits, broadening their perspectives and encouraging them to pursue in-depth learning aligned with their interests.

The independent learning courses have so far covered a wide range of fields, including history, AI, programming, academic research, foreign languages, and career exploration. As long as students are motivated and find like-minded peers to submit a joint proposal, they have the opportunity to explore their areas of interest under faculty mentorship. Many students have shared that they discovered the key to effective learning lies not in the materials themselves but in cultivating the ability to proactively seek solutions and solve problems. Through these experiences, students have not only developed stronger time management and information retrieval and integration skills but also built greater confidence in approaching unfamiliar fields. These outcomes have sparked deeper enthusiasm for interdisciplinary learning and a greater willingness to embrace new challenges. Students also noted that independent learning is different from traditional classroom instruction. While it offers more flexibility in scheduling, it also demands stronger self-discipline to meet learning objectives effectively.

Prof. Chi-Lin Li praised the significant learning outcomes achieved through the independent learning micro-credit program. Using the “Historical-Themed Banquet Design” course as an example, he explained that participating students showed strong interest in finding innovative ways to connect and communicate history, such as incorporating cultural heritage into culinary experiences like the Huwei Banquet, which allows guests to appreciate the historical narratives behind each dish. Beyond the appeal of the cuisine, learning how to present and narrate the story behind the food is also an essential skill. He added, “Students enrolled in the micro-credit program are eager to pursue deeper learning and exploration, and I am happy to mentor them through group-based practicums. Because students are more engaged in active learning and collaborative practice, their learning outcomes are significantly higher than in traditional courses. Some students have even taken their skills further by joining USR projects, applying their knowledge creatively and effectively.”

Wen-Hsun Chang, a first-year French major, shared that joining the course was an exciting challenge. Being passionate about language learning, she

wanted to use her foreign language skills to introduce Taiwanese culture to a broader audience. She said that through the course, she learned to plan topics, gather information, and leverage AI tools to support learning and creative work. “These abilities,” she said, “are not only helpful for my future studies but will also benefit me in my career.”

