



Integrative Project (IP) Guidelines

M.A. Spirituality and Psychology: Science and Practice
Teachers College, Columbia University

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I. IP Overview

As a crucial element of the Spirituality and Psychology: Science and Practice Master's Program, the Integrative Project (IP) represents an extraordinary opportunity for students to apply insights from spiritual traditions and scholarship toward a significant real-life question or issue. Within the supportive and educational structure of the program, students have the opportunity to weave their own questions, interests, knowledge, and skills into a finished product that can have an impact beyond the academy's walls. To inform the development of this project, students are encouraged to draw from multiple streams of their SMB MA experience, including didactic courses, practical training, research skills, experiential learning, and relationships with professors, mentors, and colleagues.

The IP can take various forms. Some examples include (but are not limited to) a secondary analysis, a literature review article, a workshop curriculum, a start-up business plan, a book proposal, or a documentary film. It is an invitation to dive deeply into one's deepest questions, utilize the resources within the program and the larger university, and create something novel. The result will be a polished product that, upon completion of the program, SMB MA graduates can apply in their personal and professional lives.

At its best, the IP can serve as a bridge between classroom education and the world that lies outside. Along the way, students will develop important cognitive, contemplative, interpersonal, and practical skills. In addition, students are recommended to use this opportunity to contact and seek guidance from professionals in the relevant field who might later support career development, e.g., a start-up venture, a publication, employment, or further study. In this sense, the IP is an opportunity to expand one's network and build relationships for the future.

The general structure of the IP begins with brainstorming, connecting with a sponsor, drafting, and finally completing one's final draft. After completing the first draft (well in advance of the final due date), the student should expect to make significant revisions and rewrite drafts, often multiple times. Students should plan to assess their own work critically and leave ample time for reworking and finalizing their drafts. Students have the opportunity to meet with the IP Instructor and/or TC Writing Center for additional sources of support with the writing process. IP checklists and suggested timelines are on page 14 of this document.

Questions pertaining to the IP should be directed to the IP Instructor, Melanie Lown, MA (ml2217@tc.columbia.edu).

II. Format Options

IPs must be between 20 and 40 pages in length, double-spaced.

*The page length requirement is a minimum of 20 pages of written academic content, **excluding the title page, references, and any tables/figures for the research format.***

**Note: A minimum of 10 pages of written academic content is sufficient along with a minimum of 10 pages (or equivalent) for the alternative format literature review. Please approve with IP Instructor.*

All written academic content must be in APA 7th format. More information on APA 7 formatting can be found [here](#). Beyond this requirement, students may use either the standard or the alternative research format. More information about either format can be found below.

A. Research Format	B. Alternative Format *Must be approved with IP Instructor and sponsor
20-40 pages of academic writing APA 7th Format Research Format Options (choose one):	Foundational 10-page Literature Review APA 7th Format + Alternative Project Alternative Format Options (choose one): <i>(10 pages, or equivalent)</i>
• Literature review or conceptual paper <i>(Most popular)</i> • Qualitative methods paper, including case studies, ethnographic studies, and interviews • Study proposal and outline for future research • Analysis of data collected by the student, or pre-existing data • Questionnaire construction and/or validation *No research can be conducted. IRB approval is not available to students within the program.	• Curriculum, workshop, or retreat plan • Business plan • Documentary film • Public policy proposal • Novel or screenplay • Interactive website or new media Project • Other project approved by the IP Instructor

III. Choosing a Topic

To begin, students are encouraged to start with what they know, what they truly care about, and what they have always wanted to learn more about. *Begin brainstorming ideas for your IP in your first year.* Students have the option to meet with the Integrative Project Instructor to discuss ideas related to the IP and to receive practical guidance for moving forward.

IV. IP Sponsors

The Integrative Project is primarily self-led and is created under the supervision of an official sponsor, who will serve as the IP's evaluator. While sponsors will provide expert feedback, the IP is largely an independent project, and students are expected to become immersed in their own scholarship and take full charge of their own progress.

You may choose to reach out to core faculty members of the SMB MA program, Teachers College, any college affiliated with Columbia University, or potential sponsors beyond the university. **If you choose to work with a sponsor outside of Columbia, Teachers College, or Barnard, please reach out to the IP Instructor for approval.** Eligible sponsors should hold a PhD or doctorate (preferred) or a terminal degree in the field and be affiliated with an academic or research institution.

It is STRONGLY RECOMMENDED that you find and declare a sponsor before the end of your second-to-last semester before graduation (i.e., if you are graduating in Spring, find and declare your sponsor before the end of Fall semester).

IMPORTANT: Once a sponsor relationship has been finalized, students must complete the online "SMB MA IP Mandatory Student Information" form, available [here](#).

a. Sponsor Responsibilities

You are responsible for 95% of your IP workload, and your sponsor for 5%.

The official responsibilities of your sponsor are as follows:

1. Provide written consent to sponsor your project.
2. Provide feedback on your final draft via the SMBI IP Evaluation form.

You may ask your sponsor for help with secondary responsibilities, such as meeting with you to discuss conceptual development and/or reviewing preliminary drafts and providing feedback; the completion of these tasks is at your sponsor's discretion. Please be mindful that your sponsor's schedule may be limited.

b. Selecting a Sponsor

Create a list of three to five potential sponsors whose work aligns with your IP interest. It is suggested to start with the Spirit Mind Body (SMB MA) core faculty members, as listed in the emails below. You may also broaden your search to all of Teachers College, any college affiliated with Columbia University, or beyond. Eligible sponsors outside of Teachers College or the Columbia network should hold a PhD or doctorate (preferred) or a terminal degree in the field and be affiliated with an academic or research institution. **If you choose to work with a sponsor outside of Columbia, Teachers College, or Barnard, please reach out to the IP Instructor for approval.**

(More information about SMB core faculty members' experience and specialty areas can be found on the SMB website and in the Student Handbook). You may schedule an appointment with the IP Instructor (Melanie Lown, ml2217@tc.columbia.edu) for a Sponsor choice consultation.

List of SMB Core Faculty eligible to serve as an IP Sponsor	
<i>Faculty Name</i>	<i>Faculty Email Address</i>
Aur�lie Athan, Ph.D	ama81@columbia.edu
Mark Kuras, Ph.D	mfk8@tc.columbia.edu
Linda Lantieri, M.A.	ljl2139@tc.columbia.edu
Jack McGourty, Ph.D	jm723@columbia.edu
Ruth Rosenbaum, Ph.D., L.P.	rtr2117@tc.columbia.edu
Mitchell Saskin, Ph.D	mhs2191@tc.columbia.edu
Lorne Schussel, Ph.D	lms2191@tc.columbia.edu
Suza Scalora, Ph.D	scs2199@tc.columbia.edu

c. Reaching Out to a Potential Sponsor via Email

Once you have thoughtfully chosen your first (and other) choices, reach out to the faculty. In your email, it is suggested that you include the following:

1. Your name.
2. Express your interest in their work.
3. Give a little information about yourself.
4. Summarize your IP topic.
5. Optional: You may choose to include a proposal in your email; in this case, send it as an attachment and make a mention. An outline for an IP Proposal can be found at the end of this document.
6. Ask if the faculty is able to sponsor your IP, which entails giving written confirmation (via email) that they will sponsor your project, reading your final draft, and providing feedback via the sponsor feedback form sent by the IP Instructor upon submission. (If they are able to give you more than one round of feedback, that is great, but they are not required to do so.)
7. Offer to share more about yourself, if they're interested.

d. Sponsor Information Form

Follow these two steps to formally declare your sponsor.

1. Locate a sponsor and obtain their written consent via email.
2. Complete the online “SMBI Sponsor Information” form, available [here](#).

Note: It is STRONGLY RECOMMENDED that you find and declare a sponsor before the end of your second-to-last semester before graduation (i.e., if you are graduating in Spring, find and declare your sponsor before the end of Fall semester).

VI. Important Deadlines

Please refer to the following chart for IP due dates and important dates for graduation.

Graduation Date	Deadline: Apply to graduate via myTC	Deadline: Final Draft of Integrative Project
October	August 1	August 1
February	November 1	December 1
May	February 1	April 1

Closer to your requested graduation date, you will receive a notification from the registrar on whether you have been cleared to graduate. If there are any discrepancies on your degree audit (holds), the registrar will contact you via email. **Check your degree audit early and often. Do not wait for the registrar to contact you.**

VI. IP Submission Protocol

After you have completed the final draft of your IP, follow these steps:

1. **Complete your final draft, ensuring that you correctly format your IP in APA 7th edition.** If your IP is not in APA7, your project will not be accepted. Resources on APA7 can be found [here](#).
2. **Apply to graduate** via myTC for your intended graduation date, before the TC deadline.

IMPORTANT SUBMISSION DETAILS BELOW

Your IP will not be considered submitted until I have done the following:

1. Save your file as: Last name_Cohort Year_Title of IP (Ex: Lown_2025_The Intersection of Spirituality and Psychology)
2. **Email the final draft of your IP to 1) your Sponsor and 2) Instructor Melanie Lown (mll2217@tc.columbia.edu), and your sponsor in the same email.**
 - i. The subject line should read "SMB MA Integrative Project: [Title of Project]".
 - ii. Please include your graduation date (ie. May 2026, October 2026, February 2027, etc.) in the body of your email submission.
- b. Upload and submit your IP to the [Integrative Project Submission Form](#).

a. *CCPX 4001.002*

Students are required to be registered for classes while working on an IP. If students have completed their MA coursework (32 credits) and need more time to finish their IP, they can register for CCPX 4001.002, a zero-point course.

CCPX 4001.002 offers full-time equivalency, allows the student to remain an enrolled student and retain their student status, and have access to campus facilities and the [Columbia Libraries Catalog](#) (CLIO). **Please note that although enrollment in CCPX 4001.002 does not incur any tuition point charges, students enrolled in this course are still required to pay the college fee to the TC bursar. As this fee is set by the college and not the department, please direct questions to bursar@tc.columbia.edu.**

VII. After Submission

After you submit your IP, the IP instructor will do the following:

1. Evaluate the IP for compliance with requirements.
2. Send your sponsor the SMB IP Evaluation form.
3. If accepted, satisfy the "special project requirement" in your degree audit.
4. Send you a PDF receipt of your degree audit reflecting the changes made.
5. Send you a PDF copy of your sponsor's feedback from the Evaluation form, once received.

VIII. IP Checklists and Suggested Timelines

Section VIIIa and VIIIb contain checklists and suggested timelines for you to use in structuring your IP planning and progress. These checklists are approximated for those completing the SMB Program in 2 years or 1 year, respectively. ***You are not required to use these checklists. They are provided as available resources, should you desire more structure.***

***Note: It is STRONGLY RECOMMENDED that you find and declare a sponsor before the end of your second-to-last semester before graduation (i.e., if you are graduating in Spring, find and declare your sponsor before the end of Fall semester).**

a. *2-Year Track (Standard Timeline)*

Year 1:

Fall / Spring Semester

- ☐ Brainstorm potential topics.
- ☐ Review list of potential sponsors. You may ask a faculty member to sponsor your project as early as your first semester.
- ☐ Optional and **strongly recommended**: Meet with IP Instructor Melanie Lown (mll2217@tc.columbia.edu) to discuss ideas and goals.

Year 2:

Fall Semester

- ☐ Choose your topic.
- ☐ Choose your format (Research Format [standard] OR Alternative Format).
- ☐ Optional: Write an IP Project Proposal.
- ☐ Identify a sponsor.
- ☐ Obtain written consent from your sponsor via email.
- ☐ Complete the Sponsor Information form [here](#).
- ☐ Begin drafting.

Spring Semester

- ☐ Continue drafting your IP. **Expect to go through multiple revisions.**
- ☐ Optional and recommended: Meet with IP Instructor Meet with IP Instructor Melanie Lown (mll2217@tc.columbia.edu) to discuss structure and writing improvements.
- ☐ Optional: Meet with TC's Graduate Writing Center for additional writing support.
- ☐ Complete final draft, utilizing APA7 format diligently.
- ☐ If completing your IP during your last semester at TC, apply to graduate via myTC.
 - ☐ If you have completed your 32 credits of coursework to satisfy your degree, but need additional time to complete your IP, register for CCPX 4001.002 for the following semester.
- ☐ Submit your IP following the submission protocol (found on p. 11 of this document) on or before the deadline for your desired graduation date.

b. 1-Year Track (Accelerated Timeline)

Year 1:

Fall Semester

A. Start of Semester - October 31:

- ☐ Brainstorm potential topics.
- ☐ Review list of potential sponsors.
- ☐ Optional and **strongly recommended**: Meet with IP Instructor Melanie Lown (mll2217@tc.columbia.edu) to discuss ideas and goals.

B. November 1 - End of Semester:

- ☐ Choose your topic.
- ☐ Choose your format (Research Format [standard] OR Alternative Format).
- ☐ Optional: Write an IP Proposal.
- ☐ Identify a sponsor.
- ☐ Obtain written consent from your sponsor via email.
- ☐ Complete the Sponsor Information form [here](#).
- ☐ Begin drafting.

Spring Semester

- ☐ Continue drafting your IP. **Expect to go through multiple revisions.**
- ☐ Optional and recommended: Meet with IP Instructor Melanie Lown (mll2217@tc.columbia.edu) to discuss structure and writing improvements.
- ☐ Optional: Meet with TC's Graduate Writing Center for additional writing support.
- ☐ Complete final draft, utilizing APA7 format diligently.
- ☐ If completing your IP during your last semester at TC, apply to graduate via myTC.
 - ☐ If you have completed your 32 credits of coursework to satisfy your degree, but need additional time to complete your IP, register for CCPX 4001.002 for the following semester.
- ☐ Submit your IP via email to your Sponsor and to the IP Instructor Melanie Lown (mll2217@tc.columbia.edu) on or before the deadline for your desired graduation date.

IX. Recently Submitted IP Titles

The following list of recently submitted IP titles is provided as both reference and inspiration:

1. *The Double-Edged Sword of Identity Development in Emerging Adulthood*
2. *Spiritual Ecology and Ecotherapy: A Literature Review and Informed Commentary*
3. *Unpacking Spiritual Activism: A Literature Review of Spirituality & Social Justice Action*
4. *The Supported Mother: A Mind-Body Approach to Maternal Mental Wellness*
5. *Finding Self-Love and Beauty in A Selfie Era*
6. *Supporting Educators in a Pandemic: A Facilitator's Guide to Stress Reduction Workshops*
7. *Screening for Suicidality in African American Churches*
8. *The Sculptor: Explorations in Buddhism and Nature*

X. General IP Advice

1. **Contact sponsors early.** Many sponsors have busy schedules and may not be able to accommodate your IP timeline.
2. Pick a sponsor who you perceive will be **responsive** to your communications.
3. **Break the project down** into manageable pieces and **set personal deadlines** to complete the sections of your IP in a structured manner. If you need help with project management and/or accountability, reach out to the IP Instructor for support with planning and progress checks.
4. **Use APA Style 7th Edition.** IPs will only be accepted if they are formatted properly in APA7.
5. **Do not fall into the perfectionism trap.** Find a balance of effort and ease.
6. Try to complete the IP before completing coursework, or during the immediate semester after all 32 points have been completed.
 - a. Keep in mind, you must register for CCPX 4001.002 if you would like to continue working on your IP after you complete your coursework.

XI. Further Guidance

IP Instructor

You are welcome to email Melanie Lown (ml2217@tc.columbia.edu) or set up a meeting with her to discuss any of the following about your IP:

- Topic acceptability
- Topic feasibility
- Sponsor choice consultation
- Format choice / APA
- Progress checks
- Graduation planning
- Submission planning

Graduate Writing Center

The Graduate Writing Center at Teachers College is an excellent resource for writing support. Make an appointment [here](#). Find their website [here](#).

XII. IP Proposal Outline

You may choose to write an optional proposal for your IP. An IP proposal can be a useful tool, both while writing your IP and as an early milestone that sets you up for success. It can also be an effective tool to have before reaching out to your potential sponsor, as it could increase their interest in sponsoring your project.

Your IP Proposal should be 1-2 pages and include the following:

1. A brief overview of the relevant literature.
2. Exploration of the gaps in the current research.
3. A carefully worded research question.
4. Explanation of the possible contributions of the topic in the field.
5. A description of the planned methods (i.e. specify your format option).

XII. AI Acceptable Use Policy

Generative AI tools are permitted in this course for limited support, provided each use is clearly disclosed and cited in APA 7 format.

- All submitted work must reflect the student's original voice, thinking, and academic effort. Students are responsible for ensuring the accuracy and appropriateness of any AI-assisted material.
- Each instance of AI use must be clearly disclosed and cited. Undisclosed or improperly cited AI use constitutes plagiarism.
- Students with disabilities are eligible for reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to Teachers College programs and coursework. Students registered with OASID who have accommodations related to AI use should speak with the instructor directly to discuss their needs.
- Example AI citations in APA7 can be found [here](#).