

Guidelines for the Integrative Project

Overview

As a crucial element of the M.A. Degree Program, the Integrative Project (IP) represents an extraordinary opportunity for students to apply insights from spiritual traditions and scholarship towards a significant real-life question or issue. Within the supportive and educational structure of the program, students have the chance to weave together their own questions, interests, knowledge, and skills into a finished product that can have an impact beyond the walls of the academy. To inform the development of this project, students are encouraged to draw from multiple streams of their SMBI experience, including didactic courses, practical trainings, research skills, and experiential learning, as well as relationships with professors, mentors, and colleagues.

The IP can take a number of different possible forms. Some examples include (but are not limited to) an empirical study, a literature review article, a workshop curriculum, a start-up business plan, and a documentary film. It is an invitation to dive deeply into one's own deepest questions, to utilize the resources within the program and the larger university, and to create something novel. The result will be a polished product that, upon completion of the program, SMBI graduates can bring out into 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.

Thinking of engaging in research with faculty for your IP? Depending on the year or availability, some full-time faculty will take on M.A. students to join their research Laboratories. The earlier you contact them as an incoming student, the better your chances. Inquiries to work with faculty members should be made to them directly. There are no guarantees for a response or invitation to participate. Try the following: a) enroll in their related courses b) e-mail them c) sign up for Office Hours

Sponsor

This project is to be created under the supervision of an official sponsor, who will be the primary guide, mentor, and, ultimately, evaluator of the IP. While the sponsor may be on faculty at Teachers College (TC), students are encouraged to approach potential sponsors outside TC who have relevant expertise and experience to broaden their network. As a rule, sponsors should have a terminal degree in their field (e.g. M.S.W., Ph.D., M.B.A.). It is recommended that students decide on and begin meeting with a sponsor by summer or fall of the first year, in order to receive direct guidance early on in the process. Sponsors are vital to aid the initial vision and provide practical guidance at different stages of the IP. As soon as a sponsor relationship has been finalized, students should complete the online “SMBI Sponsor Information” online form.

The Beginning

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.

Meet with the SMBI Instructor of Research and Integrative Projects (or IP Advisor) to discuss ideas related to the IP and to receive practical guidance for moving forward.

Identify a potential sponsor through your network, and approach her or him to be your IP sponsor (additional guidance for this process can be found on the SMBI website, under the Integrative Project tab).

Finalize the sponsorship by completing the “SMBI Sponsor Information” online form.

Format

The IP may take any of the following academic formats:

Analysis of data collected by student

Analysis of pre-existing data

Questionnaire construction and/or validation

Literature review or conceptual paper

Qualitative methods paper, including case studies, ethnographic studies, and interviews

Field research or action research

Study proposal and outline for future research

The IP may also take alternative formats, if accompanied by supplementary material of approximately ten pages (double-spaced). The purpose of this supplement is to provide relevant background material and an explanation of the process and principles that underlie the project, which may not be evident in the project itself (further guidelines can be found on the SMBI website, under the Integrative Project tab). Alternative formats could include but are not limited to the following:

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

The Middle

While the content, length, and design of your IP is ultimately agreed upon with your sponsor, the following represent important guidelines:

Think “not too big, not too small.” This is not a doctoral dissertation, nor is it simply a final class paper. Flesh out the scope and feasibility. For example, if you have a good idea for a research study but may not be able to execute it in its entirety, perhaps focus on a particular component of the study, e.g. thorough review of pertinent literature, interviews with a sub-sample, design and validation of a survey instrument, etc.

The project should be of substantial breadth and depth. Generally speaking, 20-40 pages (double-spaced) of writing is typically sufficient for the IP.

Though previous work may be expanded upon in substantial and significant ways, a piece of writing or a project already submitted elsewhere, like for a class, *cannot* be re-submitted for the IP.

APA style is required.

Guidelines for interactions between the sponsor and the student include the following: While sponsors will provide mentorship particularly during the initial conceptualization phase and will give expert feedback over the duration of the project, the IP is largely an independent project, and students are expected to immerse in their own scholarship and take full charge of their own progress.

At the outset, in addition to providing expert guidance for the initial frame of the project, the sponsor will set expectations regarding her or his supervisory style and scheduling of future meetings. As a rule, a 95 to 5 ratio of student to supervisor commitment is expected.

In addition to the sponsor, the IP Instructor is available to support the ongoing development of ideas, methods, and writing for the IP. Moreover, for writing support, the Graduate Writing Center at Teachers College is an excellent resource.

After completing the first draft (well in advance of the final due date), the student should expect to make significant revisions and re-write drafts, often multiple times, based on the sponsor’s feedback. Therefore, the student should organize his or her own schedule accordingly and leave ample time for finalizing drafts.

The End

As the graduation date approaches, it is important that students pay attention to important due dates and maintain good communication with the sponsor, IP instructor, and registrar. Students will be guided by the sponsor’s expectation and timetable, which should be discussed well in advance. In most cases, two or more drafts are required before the sponsor would consider the IP complete. If the student misses the semester’s deadlines (see below), the sponsor is not obligated to approve the IP for that semester.

Students are not required to be registered for classes while working on the IP. If a student would like to access the library during an off-semester, one can do so by registering for IND 4000 (0 credits).

Final IPs are submitted by simply emailing a PDF version to the sponsor and the IP Instructor, with the subject line, “SMB Integrative Project: [Title of Project].” After submission, the sponsor will formally evaluate the IP and provide final feedback to the student through the “SMB Integrative Project Evaluation” online form.

The student is also responsible for submitting to the Registrar’s Office the “Degree Audit” form, which requires a signature from the IP Instructor. Further instructions for completing this form can be found on the SMBI website. Students should independently through the website or Registrar, inform themselves of TC-level deadlines.

Registrar and sponsor deadlines are indicated below:

Graduation Date	Degree Audit Form for Registrar	Final Draft of Integrative Project
October	August 1	August 1
February	November 1	December 1
May	February 1	April 1
