



CAMBRIDGE COLLEGE
School of Management
Prepare to lead.

ILP

Handbook

Independent Learning Project

The Independent Learning Project Process

	<i>Step</i>	<i>Refer to section</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>ILP Planning Assignment</i>
1	Understand the requirements of the ILP.	Introduction	3	
2	Brainstorm topics and narrow choice to three possible topics.	Choosing a Topic	4	Brainstorming Possible Topics
3	Select one topic and formulate problem statement.	Topic Development	6	Topic Development
4	Write a proposal setting out what you plan to research, your reasons for choosing this topic, and how you plan to conduct your research. Include an initial literature review.	Writing the Proposal	8	ILP Proposal
5	Expand literature review to show that you have a good understanding of the background to your topic.	Literature Review	9	Literature Review
6	Plan in detail how you intend to carry out research.	Methodology and Research Design	11	Methodology
7	Collect and analyze data.	Data Analysis	14	
8	Write the first draft of the ILP.	Elements of the ILP	15	Outline First Draft
9	Formatting and Typing	ILP format	16	
10	Revise draft(s) and produce final copy Complete and submit the final ILP	Completing the final document	17	

The Independent Learning Project – Additional Resources

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Refer to section ...</i>	<i>Page</i>
Details on what goes into each section of the ILP	ILP Template	18 -36
Further Resources: library, research and writing support	Further Resources	37
How the College evaluates ILPs.	Evaluation Criteria	40
Student Commitment Not to Plagiarize Form	Student Commitment Not to Plagiarize	42
Planning Assignments to develop your project	Planning Assignments	42

Introduction

Purpose

The Independent Learning Project (ILP) is a requirement for all Master of Management students at Cambridge College. It enables students to demonstrate that they can think critically, undertake research, apply theory to a practical situation, and present their findings and recommendations in writing.

The criteria used by the College to evaluate ILPs are shown on page 18. Outline requirements are that the ILP:

- ❑ Relates to current issues in Management, and to the student's choice of Concentration.
- ❑ Has personal and practical relevance to the student in the workplace or the community.
- ❑ Is original work.
- ❑ Demonstrates that the student has gained a thorough understanding of the subject area through research, analysis of current management literature, and critical thinking.
- ❑ Is researched using appropriate techniques and in sufficient depth to give meaningful outcomes.
- ❑ Provides evidence of the student's management skills, including project planning, meeting deadlines, overcoming hurdles, and responding to feedback.
- ❑ Is presented in American Psychological Association (APA) format and the Introduction, Main Body and Closing combined should be at least 40 pages in length. See pages 15 and 16 for more information on what is included in the 40 pages minimum length.

Most students find writing their ILP a rewarding experience. Managers in today's busy world rarely get a chance to research a subject in great detail, nor to stand back from their day-to-day activities to analyze what is really going on. Some students have found that their ILPs have enabled them to solve complex problems in their workplace. Others have found an opportunity for self-growth, sometimes opening up new career opportunities. In some cases, an ILP has been used as a launch pad to set up a new business or a new community organization. As it is often one of the last courses taken at Cambridge College, it is an excellent opportunity to draw together all you have learned here, and to apply it in a practical situation.

Hints for writing your ILP

- ❑ Start early, and allow plenty of time. Be realistic about your schedules and commitments. Remember that most projects take longer to complete than you anticipate.
- ❑ Stick to the timetable from your advisor for completing proposals and drafts – this will keep you on-track.
- ❑ Choose your topic carefully – losing interest is a common block for students.
- ❑ Don't be so focused on the number of pages you have to produce that you lose sight of the quality of the content. Students who have chosen a good topic and have researched it well rarely have a problem meeting the minimum length requirement.
- ❑ Break down the tasks into manageable chunks so that you don't feel overwhelmed.
- ❑ Expect your ILP to develop and change as you progress.
- ❑ Use all the resources available to help you – including your Advisor, fellow students, the Writing Lab, and colleagues.

Choosing a Topic

Many students find it difficult to choose a topic for their ILP. Even if you think you know what you want to research, spend some time considering alternative options so you are sure you have chosen wisely.

- ❑ Choose a topic that really **interests you** - it will motivate you to read about the subject.
- ❑ Choose something that is **researchable**. A project looking at *'The impact of quality improvement teams on customer complaints'* may be better than *'Is quality important to business'*. You can see how research could be conducted (for example, by comparing the number and type of customer complaints before and after the introduction of teams).
- ❑ Choose a project that is of **manageable size**. For example, *'Improving the skills of health care workers at X hospital'* would be much better than *'Training issues'*. Consider how you will carry out your research. What resources do you have available? Bear in mind the amount of time required to conduct surveys and interviews - be realistic.
- ❑ Choose a topic that **relates to your Concentration**. If you are unsure about this, ask your Advisor.

If you would like help with your writing skills at any stage in the process, please contact Sharon Rogolsky, Writing Tutor at (617) 873-0242 for an appointment. This service is free to students!

Why do I want to research this topic?

Think about how you want to use your research.
Do you want to solve a problem at work?
Improve your chances of promotion? Change career direction? Start your own business?
Could you use your research to help a non-profit organization you are involved with?

Where can I find ideas for topics?

- ❑ Review your course materials - what interested you most?
- ❑ Look at the headings from your course textbooks.
- ❑ Read business and management magazines (e.g. Fortune, Workforce).
- ❑ Think about problems in your workplace - could your ILP help find a solution?
- ❑ Take a look at some previous ILPs – ask your Advisor.
- ❑ Talk to faculty, students, colleagues, family and friends.

Objectivity

Remember that if you are deeply interested in a subject, you may hold certain assumptions. As a researcher you should aim to be objective.

Whatever your starting position, always consider alternative viewpoints. Using the example above, suppose your topic is *'Improving the skills of health care workers at X hospital'*. Your starting point is probably that there are training needs in the hospital, and that management has a responsibility to provide training. An alternative view might say that skills are already adequate, or that managers should only recruit worker with the appropriate skills. As you read the literature and conduct research you should always keep an open mind.

Want to write a business plan?

Business plans are acceptable as ILP topics but you must provide a full market analysis and review of relevant literature/research, and prepare financial plans and statements. You will be assessed on the quality of your background research and its application to your proposed business idea. Discuss this with your Advisor first – they may have a preferred style for Business Plan ILPs that you should use.

Another useful starting point would be the course in Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management (MM735).

Select three topics

Time spent brainstorming is time well spent. Allow as many ideas as possible to emerge before you narrow down your topics to three. Write a paragraph on each, and discuss these choices with your Advisor. You should then be in a position to decide on your ILP topic.

Examples of ILP titles

- No longer face-to-face: negotiating contracts via the Internet.
- Training and developing volunteers: challenges and opportunities.
- A How To Guide: A Sales Representative's Guide to Using CRM and Social Networking to Increase Potential Profits
- The Negative Impact of Inefficient Accounting Practices on the Cash Flow of Non-Profit Organizations
- Modern Amenities vs. Cultural Identity: A Dilemma for the Hotel Industry in Nepal
- Soul II Soul Day Spa and Wellness Clinic for Women: A Business Plan
- An Assessment of the Accessibility of Health Care Services for HIV and AIDS: A Case Study on the Health Care Situation of African American Women in Boston, MA
- Resistance to Change: The Case of the OEF/OIF Flag in the VA Boston HealthCare System
- Creating a Successful In-House Clinical Engineering Program in Healthcare
- Utilization of Physical Space to Improve Productivity and Maximize Patient Throughput

Topic Development

Once you have decided on a topic for your ILP, you will want to start exploring it in greater depth. Remember that your ideas may change as you proceed – be prepared to change direction if necessary. Find some books or articles about your topic, and identify some key themes and concepts. How have other writers approached this topic? Think about why you are particularly interested in this topic, and what you hope to gain from researching and writing the ILP.

As an illustration, a student choosing a topic on workplace environmental issues may be interested in the subject for a number of reasons:

- ❑ Has professional responsibilities for environmental issues. Wants to evaluate the effectiveness of policies in different companies and how policies translate into actions.
- ❑ Wants to set up a consulting business advising other companies on the business benefits of adopting ‘green’ policies. The ILP might include a business plan for the consultancy.
- ❑ Has responsibilities for marketing company products, and would like to explore likely customer response to the company’s proposed new environmental policies.
- ❑ Has a personal interest in ‘green’ issues, and wishes businesses would take a more proactive role in energy conservation. The ILP could provide an opportunity to find out what other companies do, and how to go about changing attitudes in the workplace.
- ❑ Wants to explore how managers make ethical decisions. Do managers need training in ethical decision making?

Your angle on your topic will depend on your interests, the resources available to you, and the outcomes you hope to achieve.

Topic Development Assignment

Completing the topic development assignment below will clarify your thinking and help you prepare for writing the ILP proposal – more on this in the next chapter.

1. Working Title

Think of a suitable title for your ILP. Remember that this may change as your ILP evolves.

Example: Total Quality Management: How can it benefit non-profit organizations?

2. Focus

Most topics are too broad to research in depth. Think about all the various aspects of your topic, and narrow your focus onto one specific aspect that interests you most.

Say you are interested in which bank offers the best deal for working parents. You may want to restrict this further to banks in Massachusetts, or to looking at specific company policies such as maternity leave provision.

3. Problem statement

The problem statement should be a brief statement (1-2 sentences) that specifies the problem or issue that your learning project will address. It should demonstrate that you understand current management issues, and can think critically about your subject.

Many businesses have introduced Total Quality Management to improve the quality of their operations. Can the same techniques be used in a non-profit organization?

4. Value

How will this study be valuable to you? To your organization? To others in your profession or community?

You want to convince senior managers to introduce policies to retain more working parents. Or maybe you are a working parent, wanting to know which bank would offer you the best deal. Or perhaps you are interested in setting up a consultancy business to help organizations introduce flexible working practices.

5. Annotated bibliography

Find a few relevant articles or books about your topic, and write brief notes about each. This will help you begin identifying sources for the literature review section of your ILP.

You might choose a couple of articles highlighting the benefits and drawbacks of Total Quality Management, and one that looks at specific issues for non-profit management.

6. Resources

How do you plan to carry out your research? What resources will you need? If you want to do research in your own workplace, have you asked permission?

You may decide to design a questionnaire for employees about flexible working arrangements and to interview several senior managers.

7. Difficulties or challenges

Do you foresee any problems with this topic? Do you have particular concerns? What could you do to overcome this?

What if the banks are reluctant to give you the information you need?

Writing the Proposal

The ILP proposal has two main purposes: it helps you think through your project in more detail, and it allows your advisor to check that you are on the right track before you start your research.

Some students have made the mistake of trying to leap straight into writing their ILP, bypassing this stage. Our experience is that the more thought and planning goes into the proposal stage, the better the final ILP. Your Seminar Leader will give you feedback on your proposal. Read this carefully, and ask for clarification of any point you do not understand.

As the first major writing assignment in preparation for your ILP it should be written in APA format and include the following sections:

Tip

Start using APA format for assignments, and for early drafts of the ILP. It will become easier with practice! For details please refer to the guides in the Writing Lab or the On-line library.

Working Title

Make your title specific so that the reader immediately knows the subject of your ILP.

Introduction

Introduce your reader to your topic and your problem statement. Provide background information about your topic – its history, its importance to managers, and why you are interested in it. Explain any management theories or concepts that you will be using or exploring in your research. If you are writing about a particular organization, provide an overview of the organization, its mission, structure, and culture.

Initial literature review

Find several up-to-date articles or books that relate to your topic. Briefly describe the findings and arguments made as they relate to your problem statement. Try to find articles that oppose your case as well as those that support it. See the Literature Review section for sources of books and articles.

Outline methodology

Describe how you intend to carry out your research. Are you planning to use interviews, questionnaires, case studies, or in-depth literature based research – or a combination? Explain why you feel this is an appropriate way of finding the answers you need. Remember that all methods have some limitations.

Anticipated outcomes

What do you expect to find out from your research? What will you do with these findings? For example, will you be making recommendations to your managers, preparing a business plan for a new venture, or developing a training program for staff?

Working reference list

Provide a list of books and articles you have read in developing this proposal. Remember to use APA format.

Literature Review

Why is this important?

The literature review shows the reader that you are very familiar with what has already been said about your topic. We assume no one else has satisfactorily answered your problem statement (otherwise you wouldn't need to do your ILP), but it is likely that many people have written about similar issues. You need to demonstrate that you are aware of differing points of view about your topic, particularly if it is a controversial subject.

Reviewing the literature may:

- ❑ Provide background information or baseline data.
- ❑ Offer a theoretical framework for your project.
- ❑ Expand your thinking into new areas.
- ❑ Challenge or confirm your initial assumptions.

Or all of these, and more!

How to choose books and articles

Start with books and articles that are considered major works in this topic. Ask your advisor or an expert in the field. Or look to see which authors and books are regularly cited by others writing about your topic.

Aim to use the most recent sources. For management this usually means written within the last 5-10 years. Use reputable sources - remember anyone can publish almost anything, but that doesn't make it true. Academic journals and well-known management texts are generally the most reliable.

Balance works that support your point of view with ones that put forward a different view. Keep an open mind as you read. For example, you may be interested in why fewer women are in management positions. You may feel that affirmative action has led to a significant increase in women's participation, and therefore should continue. But other people oppose affirmative action. Try to explore their reasoning, and consider their views.

Tip

Keep a record of the books and articles you read. If you use APA format from the start, it will make life a lot easier when you come to produce your reference list.

Reading critically

Reading critically is an important skill to develop. What evidence does your author give to support his/her viewpoint? Why do they agree/disagree with other authors? What are the implications for management and/or for your study? Taking the example above, is it that affirmative action:

- ❑ Works well in all situations?
- ❑ Was important in the past but is not needed anymore?
- ❑ Is essential in some occupational sectors, but not necessarily all?
- ❑ Can work well, but only under certain circumstances?
- ❑ Leads to increased participation, but then has other negative consequences (e.g. a higher turnover rate)?

Taking notes

Take notes as you go along. Write down the main points that the author is making, the relevance to your topic, and any other feelings you have about the work.

As you read, start to create categories of information. Then develop a master list of categories, noting sources under each heading. Some books and articles will contribute to several headings. Unless you develop a way to organize your notes, you can easily become confused, or forget sources.

Tip

Allow plenty of time for the literature review. Tracking down relevant references can sometimes be time consuming and frustrating. Give yourself enough time to read and consider a wide range of source materials before you design your own research.

Writing your literature review

Decide on the main themes that you want to present in your literature review, and how best to order them. For example, do you want to describe how ideas about your topic have evolved over the last few years, or do you want to compare and contrast two (or more) viewpoints?

Don't simply summarize the literature you read. Your aim is to guide the reader through this background material so that they have a clear picture before you begin to offer your own contribution to the subject. Make sure that everything you write here has a close connection to your own topic.

Library resources

Cambridge College has provided extensive online resources for academic research in the Cambridge College Online Library at <http://www.cambridgecollege.edu/library/>. This online resource includes full-text articles from scholarly and professional journals, tips and tools for doing research and 24-hour live reference librarian support. Also available are a number of handouts from the Cambridge College Research Librarian including research resources for Management students, APA style, etc. (Go to Research Resources, from within the Online Library).

You should also plan to use traditional academic libraries, especially for books. Many local academic libraries are open to the public. For example, the Kirstein Business branch of the Boston Public Library, the libraries at Northeastern University, Boston University, Boston College, Tufts University, UMass/Boston, Brandeis University and MIT's Dewey library are particularly useful for management and business research. Ask a reference librarian for help in tracking down books and articles.

Methodology and Research Design

There are many ways of carrying out research for your ILP. Which method(s) you choose depend on your topic, your interests, and resources. For all research, you should aim to keep an open mind. You may start out with strong views on a subject but don't forget that you may be proved wrong.

If you are collecting data from companies or individuals you will need to be sensitive to organizational politics. Do not be surprised if you find difficulty getting permission to interview staff if your research is addressing an issue such as why senior managers are incompetent! Companies may also be reluctant to let you interview staff or distribute questionnaires because of the potential for raising unrealistic expectations amongst staff.

Before carrying out any research, take a look at some of the books on research design in the Further Reading section, and discuss your proposed methodology with your Advisor.

Here are some tips on conducting research. You may be using just one of these methods, or a combination.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires are useful for collating information and opinions in writing from a fairly large number of people. The downside is that it is that the response rate may be poor, and people may give you the answer they think you want, rather than the truth. To improve your chances of success:

- ❑ Use a well-designed form. It should be easy to read, have a logical format, and with interesting, relevant questions. No one likes wading through pages of complicated or boring questions.
- ❑ Decide whether you want to use open ended questions (*What do you like about your working environment*) or closed questions (*Is your working environment a) too hot, b) just right, or c) too cold?*).
- ❑ Explain the reasons for your research. People are more likely to respond if they can see the purpose. Offer to send them a copy of your results, if appropriate.
- ❑ Ask some people to fill out a draft questionnaire before you finalize it, so you find out in advance if there are problems with wording, layout etc.
- ❑ Think carefully about the variables in your sample group. Do you need to know sex, race, age, and job position of the respondents? But don't ask unnecessary questions.
- ❑ Offer confidentiality to respondents.
- ❑ Consider a follow-up letter to non-respondents to encourage more responses. Or make sure you send out enough questionnaires in the first place to cope with a poor response rate. A 50% response rate is often considered very successful.
- ❑ You may want to combine a questionnaire with more in-depth interviews with selected individuals.

Interviewing

Interviews, either face-to-face or telephone, are particularly useful if you want to gain an understanding of people's attitudes, or if you want them to recount their version of a significant event. By developing a rapport with your interviewees, you may get more honest responses. However, arranging and conducting interviews can be time-consuming, and you need to be well prepared:

- ❑ Work out a script beforehand. As with a questionnaire, it is a good idea to trial this with a couple of people before you start your interviewing.
- ❑ Think about how you plan to code your responses. Are you interested in quantitative or qualitative data?
- ❑ Select interviewees carefully. You want to choose people who can offer a range of viewpoints, and who each have a good understanding of the subject of the interview.
- ❑ Where will interviews take place? People may give more candid responses away from the workplace. Offer confidentiality – and respect it.
- ❑ Allow enough time for the interview – don't overrun.
- ❑ It is a good idea to tape interviews, so you can concentrate on what they are saying rather than on taking notes. But ask your interviewee for permission first.
- ❑ Work through your script logically, but be prepared to be flexible. Don't ask people lots of irrelevant questions. Don't put words into your interviewees' mouths. Listen to what they are saying, not to your own assumptions.
- ❑ Finally, thank people for their assistance, and offer them a copy of the research results, if appropriate.

Analyzing existing data

You may decide to look at data collected by someone else, such as company records. You will nearly always need to negotiate permission beforehand. Find out how the data was collected, and consider what biases or limitations there may be. For example, if you were using Human Resources records of employee educational qualifications, you would need to find out whether all qualifications are recorded or just those relevant to the job, and when the records were last updated.

Case studies

An in-depth case study can be an excellent way of gaining a detailed understanding of a situation. It can be based on analysis of documentation, interviews or based on cases from the management literature. The downside is that it may not be possible to draw conclusions from it about other organizational situations:

- ❑ As with other methods of research, you may need to ask permission before conducting the case study analysis.
- ❑ Make sure that you can get access to all the documentation and the people you need to consult to build up a complete picture of the case.
- ❑ Think about how you intend to use the data right at the start. It is easy to get sidetracked by other aspects of the case study.

Literature based study

Although all ILPs will involve a literature review that explores the links between your project and the existing management literature, some topics are also best researched through an in-depth study of the literature. Before you start, make sure sufficient literature is available, and that it relates closely to your topic. Otherwise you may want to consider using one of the above methods to do some original research yourself.

Once you have established that the literature is out there, check that you have your research questions worked out, and that you know what you are looking for. Don't choose an obvious angle on your topic – there is no point paraphrasing what others have written. Aim to develop new insights or ideas from your reading, or new applications for them in the workplace.

Be aware of author bias. For example an article written by a lawyer is likely to stress the legal aspects of human resource management, whereas one written by a training consultant may stress training aspects.

Finally - allow plenty of time for this type of study. Not everything you read will prove useful for the final report and you will need time to synthesize your piles of notes and quotes into a final document.

Methodology for a literature-based project

When you write up your methodology, you need to explain what research questions you chose, and what literature you decided to use to explore these questions. Discuss any limitations of the literature – for example, research carried out in the US may not be directly applicable in other parts of the world.

Data Analysis

Once you have collected your data you need to start making sense of it:

- ❑ Are the results what you expected? Are there any surprises?
- ❑ If you are analyzing qualitative data (e.g. from in-depth interviews or case studies), look for common themes running through your data. Do respondents keep referring to particular incidents or issues? Look for quotes that highlight key points you want to make in your report. Direct quotes help bring your writing alive.
- ❑ Look for significant differences. For example are managers at one site more positive about their jobs than at another? Ask yourself why that might be the case. Is there anything else in your data that might help answer that?
- ❑ Consider how to present your results – would a bar chart, histogram, pie chart, or a table help to highlight your findings?
- ❑ Reassess your methodology. Are there things you would do differently if you were repeating the research?

Two important concepts are **validity** and **reliability**. Validity refers to whether you actually measured what you intended to measure. Reliability refers to whether you or another researcher would be able to gather the same data again. Handwriting assessments are reliable – most of us keep the same style throughout our adult lives. But it is questionable whether handwriting is a valid as a measure of management potential.

Be careful about small sample sizes when analyzing quantitative data, such as the results of surveys or large numbers of observations. For example, if 90% of women in management positions think their performance appraisals are fair, compared with 70% of men, can you conclude that there is a significant gender difference? Not if your survey had responses from only 10 men and 10 women. But if you surveyed 100 of each, then the difference could be significant. Ask your Seminar Leader for references on statistical analysis techniques - particularly on statistical significance testing and sample sizes.

ELEMENTS OF AN ILP

The following table illustrates the main elements of an ILP. Each of the following elements should start on a new page. For further details of what goes into each section – see the ILP template starting on page

SECTION I: PRELIMINARY PAGES	
Title Page	The title summarizes the main idea of the ILP and identifies the actual problem.
Abstract Statement	Between 100-150 words, an abstract is a brief concise summary of the ILP. The abstract describes the contents of the ILP. This is best written after the ILP is completed.
Acknowledgments Page (Optional)	This section is used to express appreciation to those who assisted and supported the author throughout the ILP process.
Copyright Page (Optional)	This is a statement establishing ownership of the author's work.
Table of Contents	This is a guide to the elements of the ILP, including the contents and page numbers of the sections of the ILP.
SECTION II: INTRODUCTION & BODY	
Introduction/Problem Statement	This section establishes the focus of the whole ILP. It explains what the study is about and the background to the problem and how the author decides to carry out the research.
Literature Review	The review of articles, books or research by other authors that address a similar topic.
Methodology and Research Design	This section explains how the research was carried out; i.e. literature review, interviews, surveys, questionnaires etc.
Data Analysis and Findings	In this section you present the analysis of your data and the findings of your research. If your ILP includes a Business Plan or other "product" this is where you include it.

SECTION III: CLOSING	
Conclusions and Recommendations	Summarizes the main conclusions from the study. Provides recommendations based on the results of the research.
Statement of Learning	Summarizes what the author has learned personally as a result of this project.
SECTION IV: SUPPORTING MATERIALS	
References	A list of all books, journal and magazine articles, pamphlets, brochures etc. cited throughout the ILP.
Appendices	Supporting documents for the ILP.
Resume	Author's current resume.

See ILP template on the pages for details on what goes into each section

ILP FORMAT

FORMATTING & TYPING THE ILP	
Font	Times New Roman
Size	12 pt.
Spacing	Double spaced between sentences.
Paragraphs	Indent each paragraph with a 5-7 space indent (use tab function)
Margins	Top: 1" Bottom: 1" Right: 1" (do not justify right margin) Left: 1.5" (for binding)
Page Numbers	Number each page on the upper right corner of the page. DO NOT number Title Page
Headings: Below is an example of how the heading within your ILP should look:	
Main Heading	
Title of the chapter is centered on the page. Start each chapter on a new page.	
<u>Second Level of Heading</u>	
Subheadings like this are used to separate sections in the chapter. It is indented with 5 spaces.	
<u>Third Level of Heading</u>	
Sometimes a third level of headings within the chapters is necessary. It is indented with 5 spaces from the second level of heading.	

Completing the Final Document

Writing a document of this size can sometimes seem rather daunting. It's all too easy to find reasons why you should wait a little longer before getting started, or to spend hours perfecting one section at the expense of the rest of the document. If you find yourself getting stuck – seek help. Talk to your Seminar Leader or the Writing lab staff. Remember that the Writing lab staff can help with any aspect of the writing process, from planning an outline to style and format. It is also important to send in sections of the draft to your advisor for feedback and approval.

Revising the ILP

Your Seminar Leader will return your draft ILP to you with detailed feedback. You will be expected to prepare further draft (s) following all the recommendations made, and meet the deadline for final submission. Allow yourself plenty of time to revise the final draft after you have received comments from your advisor. Do not wait until the final deadline to send your final draft to your advisor – that leaves no time for revisions – and could make the difference between an approved ILP and one that receives an INC grade.

Tip

Ask a couple of friends or colleagues to read through your work for you – they may be able to spot errors, inconsistencies, or parts that need more explanation. Remember to do a final spelling and grammar check.

Once your ILP has been approved and signed off by your Seminar Leader, print the complete document on thesis paper and put it in a binder. Thesis spring binders are available from stationers such as Bob Slate, 1288 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge. Label your binder on the front with the title, your name, date and advisor's name. You may also get the ILP bound at Kinko's – ask them to use black cover pages – and remember to add labels.

Final submission

Your advisor must submit final bound document to the office of the Dean or Provost on or before the final deadline posted in the College calendar. Final submissions must include:

- (1) **The bound copy of the ILP**
- (2) **Two extra (loose) copies of the Title page and Abstract**
- (3) **The signed Student Commitment Not to Plagiarize**
- (4) **The ILP evaluation form completed and signed by your advisor.**

You advisor must also submit a grade for you by the deadline for grade submission for the term.

ILP TEMPLATE

SECTION I: PRELIMINARY PAGES

Title Page	The title summarizes the main idea of the ILP and identifies the actual problem.
Abstract Statement	Between 100-150 words, an abstract is a brief concise summary of the ILP. The abstract prepares the reader for the contents of the ILP. This is best written after the ILP is completed.
Acknowledgments Page (Optional)	This section is used to express appreciation to those who assisted and supported the author throughout the ILP process.
Copyright Page (Optional)	This is a statement establishing ownership of the author's work.
Table of Contents	This is a guide to the elements of the ILP, including the contents and page numbers of the sections of the ILP.

Full title of your ILP

An Independent Learning Project

Presented by

Your name

To

Name of your seminar leader

Faculty Advisor

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Management

Cambridge College

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Month, Year

Copyright

This is an unpublished Independent Learning Project

in which copyright subsists

copyright by Name

Month, Year

All Rights Reserved

Since this manuscript is not intended for publication, some of the charts, graphs, photos, pictures, and drawings were used without the permission of the authors. This copy is not for distribution to the public.

Full title of your ILP

by

Your Name

Month, Year

Abstract

The abstract shall be within one page and three paragraphs normally. It shall briefly describe what issue or problem you addressed in the first paragraph, how you did your research in the second paragraph and summarize what your findings are in the third paragraph. In general, you want to summarize your ILP in around 100-150 words.

Throughout the whole ILP, all lines should be double spaced. When writing in APA format use Times Roman font, size 12, make sure that the first line of each paragraph is indented by 5 to 7 spaces, There should be a 1-inch margin at the top, bottom, and right-hand side, and a 1.5 – inch margin on the left-hand side (to allow space for binding). Text should be left justified, leaving a ragged right hand margin. Put page numbers in the top right corner.

Acknowledgements

This section is optional. You may want to have this section to acknowledge any one who has inspired or helped you in completion of this ILP.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	22
Acknowledgements	23
Chapter One: Introduction	26
Chapter Two: Literature Review	27
Chapter Three: Methodology	28
Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings	29
Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions	31
Chapter Six: Statement of Learning	32
References	34
Appendices	35
Resume	36

SECTION II: INTRODUCTION & BODY

Introduction/Problem Statement	This section establishes the focus of the whole ILP. It explains what the study is about and the background to the problem and how the author decides to carry out the research.
Literature Review	The review of articles, books or research by other authors that address a similar topic.
Methodology and Research Design	This section explains how the research was carried out; i.e. literature review, interviews, surveys, questionnaires etc.
Data Analysis and Findings (could be several chapters)	In this section you present the analysis of your data and the findings of your research. If your ILP includes a Business Plan or other “product” this is where you include it.

Chapter One: Introduction

In this chapter you will introduce your reader to your topic and your problem statement. Provide background information about your topic – its history, its importance to managers, and why you are interested in the topic. Explain any management theories or concepts that you will be using or exploring in your research. If you are writing about a particular organization, provide an overview of the organization, its mission, structure, and culture.

***TIP:** Outline this chapter...you may find that the headings in the outline will be great subtitles in this chapter. For example, Following might be good headings:*

Background:

Problem statement/ Purpose:

Significance:

Here, you may want to elaborate why it is important for you to address the issue of this ILP personally and professionally. And more importantly, what is the significance for readers to read your ILP.

Summary:

At the end of every chapter, it is always a good idea to have a brief summary of the current chapter and then a short description of what's following in the next chapter. In particular, the summary section of the first chapter shall explain how the whole ILP is structured; i.e., what is in Chapter 2, Chapter 3, etc

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In the literature review you will discuss several up-to-date articles or books that relate to your subject. Briefly describe the findings and arguments made as they relate to your topic. Try to find articles that oppose or challenge your case as well as those that support it.

The literature review shows the reader that you are very familiar with what has already been said about your topic. You need to demonstrate that you are aware of differing points of view, particularly if it is a controversial subject.

The literature review is not a place for your opinion; here you may compare other experts to each other. It is not an annotated bibliography in which each citation is followed by a brief paragraph which describes and evaluates what the author said. When writing your literature review you need to decide on main themes that you want to present and how best to order them. You then use these main themes as subtitles to organize your material.

Do not simply summarize the literature. Your aim is to guide the reader through the literature so they can have a clear picture before you begin to offer your own contribution to the subject. You may quote from the texts, but be sure that you use APA format to cite sources.

TIP: As you are working on your research, capture the citations in the Reference section using APA format. See the following URL for how to format and present references from many different types of sources (<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/index.aspx>). You can go back and delete references and reorder entries when you are done.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The methodology chapter describes to the reader how you collected your data, what you did to complete the ILP. For example, if you are gathering information using a questionnaire, you will describe how you went about designing the form, developing the questions, selecting participants. Why did you choose to use a questionnaire, do interviews or create a case study? If you did interviews with groups, how did you determine who you would include? What are the limitations of your process? If you have relied completely on secondary data, talk about how you identified sources, how you determined that these are accurate, and valid. What were the key words that you used while doing internet research...what are the limitations of your data collection?

If you conducted a survey questionnaire, how did you pick your sample subjects? You also want to describe the sample profile in this chapter about who they are in terms of gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, education background or social economic status when relevant. If it is lengthy to describe this part, you may want to have a separate chapter just for this.

Do not include the results of your surveys etc. in this chapter. That belongs in the Data Analysis section. The methodology only describes HOW you did your research i.e. the methods you used – not WHAT you discovered.

TIP: As you complete your work, pay attention to your process, this is the basis of your methodology chapter.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings

Chapters Four could actually develop into multiple chapters. If, for example, you have done complicated surveys you will need a chapter that is titled Data Presentation...here you will discuss the data that you have gathered. The next chapter will be Data Analysis, what does this data mean, etc.

If you are doing a business plan, introduce the business plan with a few paragraphs and then you need to do the analysis in this chapter. Conduct the analysis of all elements in the business plan: mission statement, marketing plan, operations plan, financial plan (including income statement, balanced sheet and cash flow analysis), human resources plan, future expansion plan, etc. The full document of your business plan goes in this chapter or in the following chapter. Discuss this with your Seminar Leader.

If you are solving a problem with a training manual that you have developed, again you want to introduce the manual with a few paragraphs and started the analysis of all elements of your training manual in this chapter. The full manual will can go the Appendix section in the back of your ILP but will count as part of the minimum 40 pages..

If you are developing a strategic plan to solve an organizational problem, same story, do the analysis here and the full plan will go to the Appendix section in the back of your ILP or in the next chapter and will count towards the required minimum pages.

SECTION III: CLOSING

Conclusions and Recommendations

Summarizes the findings from the study. Provides recommendations based on the results of the research.

Statement of Learning

Summarizes what the author has learned personally as a result of this project.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter you will first summarize your findings, based on your research you want to summarize the implications for managers and leaders. What changes do you recommend based on your research? If you are doing a business plan, discuss your next steps, what you have learned about the likelihood of success or failure for your venture.

Chapter Six: Statement of Learning

In this section you should summarize what you have learned personally by doing this ILP. For example, you have improved your writing, research and communication skills and networking skills. This chapter is optional. However, many find this chapter worth doing to recap what's been learned during the completion of your ILP.

SECTION IV: SUPPORTING MATERIALS

References	A list of all books, journal and magazine articles, pamphlets, brochures etc. cited throughout the ILP.
Appendices	Supporting documents for the ILP.
Resume	Your current resume.

References

References must be in APA format. See handout “APA Style Instructions” link near bottom of page <http://www.cambridgecollege.edu/library/research.cfm>.

To be prepared to complete the part of you ILP, be SURE you capture all of the data as you do your research...if it is on the web you will need the web address and the date that you last accessed that web site. If in a journal, you will need the publication title, date, volume number, author, title of the specific article and page numbers.

Be sure you have all of this information – if you cannot cite sources, it is difficult for you to use the material.

A frequent question asked by students is “How many articles/books do I need to conduct an ILP?” A quick answer would be a minimum of 15. The real answer is that you need to research your topic exhaustively and have as many references as possible that are recent, valid and credible.

Sample references:

Michaelson, G. (2001). Sun Tzu- The art of war for managers – 50 strategic rules. Adams Media Corporation.

Snowden, D & Boone, M. “A leader’s framework for decision making”, pp. 68-77, Harvard Business Review, November, 2007.

For many more sample references go to <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/index.aspx>

Appendices

If you have used extensively some documents or secondary data set from other sources, you may want to have them here since it is not appropriate for you to have them included in the body of your ILP. If you have multiple documents to be included in this section, you may order them into Appendix A, B, C, etc.

Resume

This section is optional. However, many of our previous students found that ILP is a good tool for career advancement and therefore, it is a good idea to have your resume included at the end of your ILP.

Congratulations! This completes your ILP.

FURTHER RESOURCES

USEFUL WEBSITES ON APA FORMAT

<http://www.apastyle.org/>

<http://www.psychwww.com/resource/apacrib.htm>

<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/index.aspx>

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPA.html>

<http://library.osu.edu/sites/guides/apagd.php>

FURTHER READING

Gummesson, E. (1999). *Qualitative methods in management research*. Sage.

Lester, J. (2006). *Writing research papers: A complete guide*. 12th Edition. Longman.

Sommer B. and Sommer R. (2001). *A practical guide to behavior research. Tools and techniques*. 5th Edition. Oxford University Press.

Strunk, W. and White, E.B. (2000). *The elements of style*. 4th Edition. Prentice Hall.

SparkNotes Ultimate Style (2006). *How to write a research paper*. Barnes and Noble Books.

LIBRARY RESOURCES

Cambridge College Online
Library (Free access from
MyCC portal)

Contains thousands of articles from newspapers &
professional journals and several databases
For information on using see tutorials on MyCC

The Boston Public Library
(BPL)

666 Boylston Street, Boston
(617) 536-5400
<http://www.bpl.org>

<p>Kirstein Business Branch of (BPL) Government Center, Boston http://www.bpl.org/research/kbb/kbbhome.htm</p>	<p>For Information go to URL: http://www.cambridgecollege.edu/download/library/Kirstein%20updated%2009.pdf</p>
--	---

DATABASES & ON-LINE RESEARCH	
<p>For Instructions on researching and writing and other library resources</p>	<p>http://www.cambridgecollege.edu/library/instructions.cfm</p>

WRITING TUTOR SUPPORT	
<p>Sharon Rogolsky Writing Tutor</p>	<p>17 Monsignor O'Brien Highway Room 403 (617) 873-0242</p>
<p>Writing lab at 1000 Mass Ave.</p>	<p>617-868-1000 x 1185</p>

Independent Learning Project Evaluation Criteria

Student Name: _____

Title of ILP _____

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs more work
1. Audience Awareness				
a) Identification of constituencies				
b) Appropriateness for audience				
2. Content				
a) Breadth and depth of coverage of topic				
b) Knowledge of diverse perspectives				
c) Evidence of critical thinking				
d) Evidence of creative thinking				
e) Organization of ideas				
3. Process of the ILP				
a) Timely completion of components				
b) Responsiveness to feedback				
c) Evidence of participation in learning process				
4. Presentation				
a) Mechanics (spelling, format)				
b) Writing style				
c) Meets requirements of ILP (abstract, reference list)				
d) Consistency and accuracy of reference format				
5. Literature				
a) Knowledge of relevant resources				
b) Analysis of literature / research				
c) Synthesis of literature / research				
d) Appropriate documentation and acknowledgement of resources				
6. Data collection (if applicable)				
a) Research design				
b) Methodology for data collection				
c) Analysis of results				
d) Discussion of results				
e) Acknowledgement of limitation of study				
7. General				
a) Usefulness to student's career				
b) Usefulness to the field				
c) Integration of theory & practice				
8. Overall evaluation				
a) Shows progress				
b) Credit is awarded				
c) Credit is not awarded				

Cambridge College Capstone/IRP/ILP Evaluation Form – Page 2

Name of Student _____ Phone Number _____ Date of Submission _____

Title of Capstone/IRP/ILP _____ Program _____

Comments:

Seminar Leader's Signature _____ Date _____

Dean's Signature _____ Date _____

Student Commitment Not to Plagiarize

I understand that “*plagiarism is the appropriation of another’s work and passing off as one’s own the product of the mind and language of another.*” I certify that I have not plagiarized, and that I have done original work on the Independent Learning Project (ILP), Independent Research Project (IRP) and Capstone.

Student’s Name (Please Print)

Student ID#

Student’s Signature

Date