

# Independent Study Course Application (v2.Oct 2023)

## Support Document

Use this document to help you complete your independent study course application

### **Before You Begin: Is an Independent Study Course right for you?**

If you are interested in doing an Independent Study Course (ISC), you should have a conversation with some key people that can help you make informed decisions.

First, you should see your school counsellor to discuss your options. They will review your transcript, the course offerings at your school, and your learning interests to help you decide if an ISC is right for you. They will also notify your principal regarding your intention to apply. If you haven't already considered who will act as your supervising teacher, your school counsellor can help with that too.

Second, you should have a discussion with your parent(s)/guardian(s) about the ISC. They will likely have questions about what an ISC is and how it will affect you and your post-secondary pathway.

Finally, you should have a conversation with yourself ... as in *self-reflection*. Doing an ISC is a challenging task, so it is essential that you have a genuine interest in doing the work as well as the ability to handle the process. Consider the following questions to guide your thinking about the ISC:

- Do I have a passion for learning about a particular subject or aspect of a subject?
- Is there a particular topic I learned about in my courses that I wish I could study in more depth?
- Have any of my courses left me with unanswered questions that I want to explore further?
- Can I work independently with minimal direction?
- Can I do high quality work at an academic grade 11 or grade 12 level with minimal supervision?
- Can I collaborate with and learn from others?
- Can I solve problems and think both critically and creatively?
- Am I able to share my learning experiences with others in a final presentation?

It will be a difficult task to successfully complete an ISC if you can't answer "yes" to these questions. Doing an ISC is a big commitment.

## **You have decided that an ISC is a good option for you. Now what?**

If you have decided that you would like to develop an Independent Study Course, the next steps are to complete your application form (link to follow), submit it and then wait for approval.

Completing your application form will take time, careful thought and consideration. As part of the application process, you need to *plan* your ISC. You need to imagine what your ISC will look like from start to finish. You need to think about what you want to do and how you want to do it. You need to think about what you will learn, what resources you will need, etc. It is quite challenging, but don't worry ... you can do it!!

Your application form asks you to share your *intended plans for your ISC*, but we realize that it is impossible to plan every detail. You don't know what you don't know! Once you start doing your ISC work, you might discover a better way to do a task, or find another resource, or connect to an additional community mentor. The point of the application is to help you start off with a very solid vision of your work. If you need to make changes along the way, you can write about them in your learning log.

You can reach out for help as you fill in your application form. Your supervising teacher and/or school counsellor are there if you get stuck. They can provide feedback and help you to make revisions before completing and submitting the final application to the Department of Education for approval. There is no need to worry that your application isn't "good enough". Even when it gets to the Department of Education, you can get feedback from staff (if necessary) to make sure that your application is good to go.

Here is a checklist to help you stay on track:

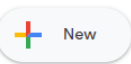
- ☐ Using your school account, create a Google Drive folder in your My Drive and call it Last Name First Name ISC (e.g. Smith John ISC).
- ☐ Share your ISC Google Drive folder with [isc@cloud.edu.pe.ca](mailto:isc@cloud.edu.pe.ca) and with your supervising teacher.
- ☐ Make a copy of the [Application Form](#) to go into your own ISC Drive Folder.
- ☐ Open up the [Support Document](#) (relevant sections are also linked in the application form itself).
- ☐ Print and complete the appropriate School-Based Approval Page ([Grade 10](#), [Grade 11/12](#))
- ☐ Once you have the signatures you need, scan the document and add it to your ISC Google Drive folder.
- ☐ Complete your Application Form and ensure that the most up-to-date copy is in your ISC Google Drive folder.
- ☐ When your application is complete and your School-Based approval pages are signed and added to your Google Drive folder, reach out to [isc@cloud.edu.pe.ca](mailto:isc@cloud.edu.pe.ca) to let them know you are ready for your application to be reviewed.
- ☐ Once approval is received, you are ready to begin

**Now ... let's get started!**

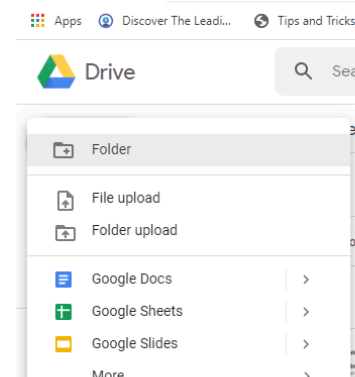
## 1. Open the Application Document and save it in your ISC Google Drive Folder

The application form is linked [here](#). You will need to make your own copy. It is a good idea to rename the document to include your actual name (e.g. Jane Smith Application For ISC)

### Technology and Organization Hint:

- Go to My Drive
- click on the + New icon 
- Choose the folder icon.
- A new folder will then appear and you can name it Independent Study Course

If you have an ISC Drive folder, you can keep your meeting logs, your learning logs, any research, etc. in one easy place.



## 2. Complete the Application Form

### Support for Section 1: Application Information:

#### Choose the Timing of your ISC

Be sure to discuss the timing of your ISC with your supervising teacher and/or guidance counselor. You can submit your Independent Study Course Application *at any time*, but don't start your work until your application has been approved. As soon as approval is granted and your support people are ready, you can start your ISC. The credit will be awarded in the semester that you finish your work.

Many students want to start and finish their ISC in one semester as a fourth course in their schedule, but there are other options. You can take an ISC as a fifth course, either in one semester or over the span of the full school year. You can even submit your application in April, start in May, and finish in November of the following school year if you want. The point is to be flexible, and the timing is up to you and your supervising teacher.

Of special note:

If you want to finish your work during one semester, you need to submit your completed application form for approval from the Department of Education and Early Years by early September at the latest for first semester credit and by early February at the latest for second semester credit.

If you plan to work on your ISC over the summer, your supervising teacher will not be available to you. You must therefore show in your application form how your community mentor will support you in July and August, especially if your ISC involves work that requires supervision (e.g. lab work, etc.). You should also plan a meeting with your supervising teacher before school ends in June to update them on your plans for July and August, and early in September to update them on your progress.

## **Support for Section 2a. Independent Study Course Curriculum Area and Topic**

Your ISC should have a connection to our provincial curriculum in some way without duplicating it. You can self-select your topic or theme but it should extend the curriculum of an authorized provincial course(s). Being on the yearbook committee or being part of the student council isn't an independent study course, but you might find some inspiration in those activities that *could* lead to an ISC topic with enough rigor. For example, you might have been involved with a student council activity that welcomed newcomers to the school. Some of your recent students have arrived from a refugee camp where they had lived for many years. This might have inspired an independent study credit that explores the social impact of refugee migration due to war or climate change. The curricular connection could be to global issues or one of your science classes, etc.

Examples of areas and topics:

Biology - impact of pesticide use on fish health;

Global Studies - alternative facts and politics;

Physics - the prevalence and impact of radon gas on P.E.I.

Music or Psychology - the use of music therapy in Alzheimer's Patients,

Physical Education - concussions in women's soccer, etc

## **Support for Section 2b. Independent Study Course Curriculum Area and Topic**

Use this space to explain why you want to learn more about your chosen topic or theme.

- Why is it important to you?
- How does it connect to your interests? Your current areas of study? Your future plans?

## **Support for Section 2c. Describe Yourself as a Learner**

In order to manage your learning during an independent study course, you need to draw on your strengths as a learner and be open to developing areas for growth. To start the process, share how you see yourself as a learner right now. The following questions might help you to write your response.

- Reflect on your most memorable learning experiences. What key elements stand out for you?
- Do you like to learn from others?
- Do you like to tackle hands-on projects that require building and constructing?
- Do you like to perform?
- Are you able to shift through lots of information to find exactly what you want?
- Do you have strong visual-spatial skills?
- Can you identify areas where you can grow as a learner?
- Is there anything else you want to share?

You don't need to answer the questions individually - they are only meant to get you thinking so that you can write your response.

### Support for Section 3a. What is your driving question?

Your driving question should show the purpose of your independent study course and be written in the form of a question. Your Driving Question is the focus of everything you will do in the course so give it some thought.

The driving question should be challenging and complex, open-ended in nature, yet achievable and measurable within a reasonable time frame. A suitable degree of rigor is expected (this is an academic 521 or 621 course). It should connect to a subject area and extend your learning *in* that subject area, but should not be the same as the curriculum covered in our program of studies. You can't duplicate the work you do for external credit in an independent study course - no double dipping.

Some examples of driving questions include:

- What is the best way to plan and execute a campaign to raise awareness among various groups in our community about a healthy diet?
- To what extent do the dominant character archetypes in Canadian History still embody our values today?
- How do rain events affect the chemical and physical properties of a section of the Dunk River?
- What does the work of George Orwell show us about humanity and who we are as humans?

Your final product should provide a clear answer to your driving question, and all of the learning activities you undertake in the course should serve to help you find an answer to that question.

**Research Reality Check ...** Don't worry if your journey takes you in unexpected directions. As you do research, speak with your mentor(s) or chat with your supervising teacher, your Driving Question might change. Your Driving Question might stay the same, but you end up with unexpected results. Twists and turns are a normal part of any research journey. Research isn't a linear process so expect change. Be sure that your final project addresses your final driving question though.

**Support for Section 3b. Outline and, where applicable, explain the processes involved with your investigation.**

It is important to think about the steps you need to take in order to complete your independent study credit before you start your independent study credit. Doing some initial planning now will give you direction as you start. Some questions to consider are:

- What do you need to do in order to explore your driving question? Start at the beginning and work your way through to the end.
- Who can help you find the answers?

**Research Reality Check ...** Be prepared to add to and/or revise your processes

Even though we are asking you to start explaining the processes involved in your investigation now, we understand that things can *and probably will* change as you work through your ISC. You may find new tasks to do along the way. Your research might lead you to a better way of doing something. Your mentor or your supervising teacher might have a terrific suggestion for you. Your research might bring you to a dead end or highlight a different focus that you would rather explore. This is absolutely okay. In fact, this often happens when you do big research projects. Research takes resilience! Be sure to reflect on any changes in your Learning Log.

**TIP ...** Ask a friend to read your outline

If they can describe the project back to you and capture what you plan to do, your description is clear and thorough. If they can't, you might need to add more detail.

**Support for Section 3c. What will your final product be?**

Your final product should be appropriate to your final driving question and make sense within the field of study. Did you do an experiment? Your final product could be a lab report. Did you conduct academic research on a topic? Your final product could be a written paper. Your final product might be a book, performance, prototype, model, video, speech, podcast or website. There are many possibilities. Don't forget to be open to change. This is your *initial* plan. If your driving question changes, or if your focus changes, your final product might change too.

**Support for Section 3d. Who is the Intended Audience for your Presentation of Learning?**

In addition to submitting your final product and a final reflection to your supervising teacher, you will also need to invite guests to a formal presentation of your learning. It is up to you to decide the most appropriate audience members. Will you invite your mentor? A group of experts in the field? Other community members? A university professor? Some friends? Your teachers? Your driving question and final product should be meaningful to the audience so keep that in mind as you consider who to invite. **At least three audience members will give you verbal and/or written feedback on your presentation of learning. They will also provide your supervising teacher with input to help them evaluate your presentation of learning.**

If you are comfortable inviting a Department of Education and Early Years staff member from the curriculum area(s) associated with your ISC, please do so. They love to see the work of students in their curriculum area. If you aren't sure who to invite, check with your supervising teacher or send an email to [isc@cloud.edu.pe.ca](mailto:isc@cloud.edu.pe.ca) for recommendations.

### **Support for Section 3e. Who will act as your Community Mentor(s) or Expert(s)?**

Throughout your independent study course you will have the opportunity to work closely with at least one community mentor/expert who is involved in a field of study related to your topic area. They might live in your community, or you might engage with them via technology. The mentor(s)/expert(s) will be able to provide advice based on their personal experience with your topic. It is your responsibility to secure your mentor(s)/expert(s) but your supervising teacher can help you brainstorm potential names, make connections, etc.

Questions to consider when identifying potential mentors/experts:

- How can this mentor help to deepen your understanding of the topic and support you in finding answers to your driving question?
- When and where will you work with them?
- What method of transportation will you use to travel to your mentor's workplace? Will it be easier to meet with your mentor virtually or call them instead? How will you stay in touch?
- How often will you communicate with them?
- Are they able to provide ongoing feedback during different stages of your investigation?
- How are you going to document your mentor interactions?
- Will your mentor(s) be involved in the assessment of your final product?

**Important ... Before you begin working with your mentor**, make sure that you and your supervising teacher have consulted the [Guidelines and Procedures for Community Based Learning document](#). Note: This document has not been updated since 2011 but is the most current version available.

**ESSENTIAL ... Mentors are required to complete a criminal record & vulnerable sector background check. The school will provide the mentor with a volunteer letter that they can then take to the appropriate police department for processing. The cost of this background check is usually waived for volunteers. Your Supervising Teacher can help get a copy of this letter for you.**

It is best practice to follow the coaching guideline of "Rule of Two" when meeting with your Mentor. The Rule of two ensures that all interactions and communications are done in the open, are observable by others and are in an appropriate setting.

## **Support for Section 4a. What do you hope to learn and be able to do by the end of your ISC?**

Learning outcomes define what you will learn (e.g., I will know...) and what skills you will build (e.g., I will be able to...). They are intended to help you design your learning experiences and assessment tasks. They should be specific, measurable, and achievable with your ISC timeline. In other words, tell us what you expect to know and be able to do as a result of your independent study course.

Example: If you choose to create a podcast that outlines the impacts of climate change on the infrastructure of P.E.I. fishing ports, you will no doubt come to know facts about the current impact of climate change on P.E.I. (I will know ...), but you will also be able to create a podcast (I will be able to ... ) which will have even more “I will be able to ... “ items embedded within that.

If you need advice or support with this part of your application, please consult with your supervising teacher or your mentor.

**Research Reality Check ... At this stage, it is unreasonable to expect you to know all of the possible learning outcomes you will accomplish.** In fact, you will likely know and be able to do much more than what you list here. Still, it is worthwhile and important to think about the possibilities. You can note any changes in your learning log as they arise, but getting a start now will provide you some goals/direction.

## **Support for Section 4b. Connection to the Essential Graduation Competencies.**

Essential Graduation Competencies are the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that prepare learners to successfully participate in lifelong learning and life/work transitions.

In order to understand the meaning/context for each of these EGCs, you should read the following document: [The Atlantic Canada Framework for Essential Graduation Competencies](#). Which one(s) do you feel you will develop most and why/how?

## **Support for 5a. Assessment For Learning and Assessment Of Learning: Formative and Summative Tasks in your ISC**

Assessment is a very important part of your Independent Study Course. Your ISC requires both assessment *for* learning tasks (formative) and assessment *of* learning tasks (summative).

Your Summative Assessments are used to give you a final grade. Your Formative assessment tasks aren't worth marks, but you still have to do them as part of your course because they support your success. Your formative tasks help you keep track of your learning and get feedback along the way. This feedback is important and gives you the best chance to create a final product, presentation, and final reflection that really shows who you are as a learner.



## Summative Tasks

Every ISC has three mandatory summative assessments:

1. Your Final Product (30% - 40%),
2. Your Final Reflection (40% - 50%), and
3. Your Formal Presentation of Learning (20% - 30%).

You have the flexibility to determine the value of these three assessments within the ranges provided.

Each of these tasks will need a rubric for assessment purposes. The Presentation of Learning and the Final Reflection rubrics are provided by the Department of Education and Early Years and are standard for all ISC students starting in 2023. The other rubric is for your Final Product. Your supervising teacher will help you find or make one that is appropriate for your final product.

Ideally you will submit your final product rubric when you submit your application form, but don't worry if you aren't ready. If you aren't sure what your final product and rubric will be just yet, make a note in the table below and share a specific date by which you plan to have your rubric ready.

### 1. Final Product Rubric: Student-Determined

Your teacher is going to evaluate your final product so you will need to create or find a rubric that makes sense for whatever your final product is going to be. Did you do a scientific study and experiment? Is your final product going to be a comprehensive lab report and a document highlighting your supporting research? Look for a rubric to evaluate those items. Did you create a podcast and a video? What would those rubrics look like? Your teacher can help you to find and/or develop a suitable rubric.

### 2. Final Presentation of Learning - Provided

During your final presentation, at least three audience members will provide information to your teacher in support of your evaluation. Your panel guests will use the rubrics provided but they are not the ones formally assessing you. The teacher will use those rubrics to help inform their own final assessment of your presentation of learning.

### 3. Final Reflection - Provided

Your final reflection will be graded by your supervising teacher using the rubric provided.

***Suggestion:** You should review the Final Reflection and the Formal Presentation of Learning rubrics. This will help you make a more informed decision about the percentage values you want to assign to each of the three components. Make sure your three percentage values add to 100%.*

## Formative Tasks: Monitoring Your Learning to Help You Learn

In order to prepare for your summative assessments, you need to do three formative tasks along the way:

1. A Learning Log;
2. Meetings with your supervising teacher; and
3. Meetings with your mentor(s).

Formative tasks give you opportunities for feedback and help achieve your learning outcomes.

### The Learning Log:

The process of *doing* your ISC is just as important as the product that you are creating so it is important to document your journey. Your Learning Log gives you a place to reflect about your learning and comment on growth and development as a learner/researcher. This is a place to record your process - steps you have taken, changes you have made and why, notes from meetings, observations, discoveries about yourself in the learning process, successes and challenges that you have faced along the way, what you have done to overcome those challenges, changes in procedure, direction, etc. The Learning Log will be a very important tool for you when it comes time to write your final reflection.

### Meetings with your supervisor:

You must have regular meetings with your supervisor. Bring your Learning Log to your meetings. Your Learning Log and help guide your meeting. Be sure to document what happens in the meetings in your log too. Make note of suggestions, ideas, advice and other discussion topics that come up.

### Meetings with your community mentor(s)/advisor(s):

You may want to meet with your community mentor(s) regularly or only once in a while. Bring your Learning Log with you to these meetings for the same reasons you take them to meetings with your supervising teacher.

**Research Tip** ... Keeping your learning log up to date will help you with your final assessment task. Reviewing a well-kept learning log will help you to write an authentic and meaningful reflection that highlights not only what you learned about your topic, but also what you learned about yourself as an independent learner, about the research process, etc. Keeping your learning log up to date will also allow you to track advice from your teacher and mentor, give you a place to write questions that you can take to your meetings, etc.

## Support for 6a. Resources

Think about the resources you will need to complete your Independent Study Credit. Try to think not only about material resources such as books and equipment, but also about human resources such as your mentor and other experts in your field. Try to include as many resources as you think you will need. It is okay to add to the list once you get started. Just be sure to make note in your learning log.

## Support for 6b. Learning Activities

Throughout your ISC, you will complete many different tasks. For instance, you might do field research, interview members of the community, conduct internet research, review policies, write drafts, etc. To help you create this list of learning activities, begin with your final product and work backwards. What activities will you need to complete in order to create your final product? You might find it helpful to draw a mindmap. Remember that this is your initial plan. It is okay if you make changes.

## Support for 6c. Timeline

The timeline is one of the most important pieces of the application. Be sure to consult your school calendar as well as your own personal calendar when completing your timeline tasks. You might find it easiest to start with the final activities. By what date do you want to have your grade? Do you need it by the end of a semester? Do you need it to graduate? Once you and your supervising teacher agree on this date, work backward to set the rest of your tasks.

Consider the following:

- How much time do you need between your practice presentation (if you choose to do one) and your final presentation in order to incorporate feedback and make revisions?
- How often will you meet with your supervising teacher? These meetings should take place regularly throughout the ISC process so that you can discuss your successes, challenges and next steps.
- How often will you meet with your community mentor(s)?
- Do you need to set a date for your teacher to look at a draft of your work? Do you need to have data collected, or interviews done, or research gathered by a certain point in time to be able to finish?
- Do you need to book space for your final presentation? If so, by what date?

You can add other deadlines to your timeline. The tasks in **BOLD** are required and should be as specific as possible in your plan (knowing that they are subject to change).

**Technology Hint** ... To insert rows between ones that already exist, click into a row and then right-click-mouse. You will see a menu pop-up as shown below. You can then insert a row above or below the row you are in. You can also delete a row if needed.

