

# Graduate Project Track Policy

---

## Introduction:

The MSW Program at B.U. has two tracks: Thesis and Graduate Project track. Within the Graduate Project track the student is required to complete six credit hours in which s/he designs and implements a project that demonstrates his/her knowledge of a subject and practical field. Once the program is completed, the student is expected to have the competence to contribute and advance the field of community social work in Palestine. The graduate project track combines between practice and write paper. The student is requested to carry on an intervention within the local community or an organization to solve an issue that was identified. Following the project implementation, the student is required to write a paper about the project implemented and the main results with a clear analysis of the process and theory of change utilized.

Based on MSW paradigm effective since the academic year 2016/2017, students joining the non-thesis track will be signed up for the course MSWK 773: Graduate Project Planning. By the end of the course, students are expected to develop a practical project to implement either within selected organization or in the local community.

Graduates projects submitted by students will be reviewed by a committee that is set by the program . The committee will ensure that the project suggested by the student has clear theoretical and operational framework , a clear theory of change, and plan of implementation .Notes provided to the students are expected to be incorporated into the program, after discussing with the project advisor. Students are expected to present their proposal in a study day that is conducted at the end of the semester, the notes they receive is part of the feedback about their projects.

Upon successful completion of MSWK 773, and the approval of the project submitted students will be permitted to sign up for MSWK 781 Graduate project Implementation. In the course MSWK781 the student needs to implement their project over a minimum of three months that may start during the summer semester.

Students are expected to write a 25-30 pages paper about the project conducted. The paper should follow the standards of the International social work journal. Please see the last section in this document for details about the paper structure and format. Students are allowed to be enrolled in MSWK781 for a maximum of two semesters that does not include the summer semester. If the student applies for a continuation in the course for a second semester they have to pay a continuation fee.

Students can directly join the graduate project track. If students wish to choose between thesis and graduate project tracks, they should have completed all research courses and received an average of B in both qualitative and quantitative research courses before choosing between tracks. A student who received an average less than B in the two courses will be directed towards the graduate project track. Students registering for the graduate project must have completed 32 credits of coursework.

When approved the student will be assigned to a graduate project advisor from the Department of Social Science and/or other BU departments and partner institutions. The graduate project advisor will help students fine tune their project and set the implementation plan, program's evaluation approach and tools, and the timeline for implementation. The project advisor follows the student's work and provides him/her with all needed support. Students are expected to present the results of their projects in a capstone session that is conducted for the whole program. Please see the later section for details of the responsibilities of the graduate project advisor.

### Graduate project advisor:

With the guidance of the MSW program management the student will be recommended to a graduate project advisor; once an advisor is being determined students are expected to work closely with their advisor until they successfully defend their project in the capstone session. Please note that faculty members reserve the right not to supervise certain topics, if they do not see fit with their field or expertise. The student has the responsibility for the quality and content of their project, and they have the responsibility for their action and the steps on the ground. The graduate project advisor will advise the students whether his/her project is feasible, assist the students in tailoring the project to the time frame and resources, and advise the student about challenges facing them when implementing and evaluating the project. The project advisor is expected to meet at least once a month, for a one hour meeting, with the student to discuss the progress. In case there are any urgent challenges, additional meetings can be scheduled.

Graduate project advisor should be a Ph.D. holder. Please see rules and regulations for the project or thesis advisor.

### Capstone:

Students are expected to present their graduate project in a capstone session. Students will present the issue they examined in depth. Students are expected to present their work through a panel with other students during the capstone ( The department will decide towards the middle of the semester if the capstone presentation will take place through a poster session or regular presentation. During capstone students will share their approach, findings, and lessons learned with their classmates and faculty. Capstones will be open to the public and the day will be set for all students by the department. The Capstone presentations showcase the skills and expertise students have developed during the program, including through their course work, field-based work and related professional experience. The students' Capstone presentations highlight the broad range of problems and approaches to macro practice of social work.

Capstones will take place twice a year: Early December or Mid-April. Students are asked to present their lessons learned, approach and theory of change, and analysis. Notes received will be utilized to finalize their final paper. Moreover, students are expected to be punctual, arrive on time, and adhere to the time limit set by the capstone presentation according to the following format:

- Expected presentation time: **(20)** minutes
- Expected discussion 30 min
- Students are expected to attend presentations and discussions of other students

- Students are expected to send their soft copy and a hard copy of the final version of their paper to the MSW program, and one copy to their advisor.

### **Grades:**

Both MSWK773 and MSWK781 will be graded on pass/fail basis. Taking into consideration that Pass will not be less than 75

**Transfer between tracks:** students who are part of the thesis track can request to transfer to non-thesis track. Still the opposite is not accepted. If a student wants to transfer from a thesis track to a non-thesis track, they have to submit for the MSW program management the form requesting the change of track clarifying the reasons for transfer. Upon approval the students should be enrolled in the course MSW 773

### **The graduate project Process:**

The graduate project process is a continuous process from start to end. It starts with developing the idea and building the proposal, and ends with the final implementation of the project and writing the graduate paper. The graduate project proposal development is not separate from the implementation of the project itself. The process is a critical process in which the student is expected to go through a reflection process with the community in which they work with. Through this process the student is going to analyze the challenges facing the community, set the objectives and the plan of intervention. Also through this process, the student can reflect at the point at which he/she stops working with the community.

Hence, students are expected to keep a journal in which they document all their work and process. The journal is used in the process of developing and implementing the project. The journal is requested to be brought to the graduate project advisor, and it will be used to reflect on the process passed by the student and advisor during the process.

Concepts such as participation should be incorporated in the process from the initial phases of the project. The student should demonstrate a clear understanding of the theory used through the conceptualization and operationalization of theory concepts and reflecting the theory through the intervention developed and conducted. The position of the graduate student as an insider/outsider to the community should also be discussed, and how it will affect the process of work conducted. The student in his/her proposal and final paper should ensure to describe the process he/she went through. The process described should include but not limited to: how did he/she reach the community, what are the issues he/she will work on changing, where did he/she get the idea ( are they insider/outsider to the community), how did he/she involve the community in the process, what are the suggestions for change, how did they go about implementing them, what issues emerged and how did the student deal with them, how did they ensure the sustainability of change, evaluation process.

The students are expected to present a proposal by the end of the first semester, the graduate proposal will be reviewed by a committee. The student is expected to present the graduate project during the study day towards the end of the semester. During the cross examination the student will receive feedback and remarks with regards to their project that they should include within the project after consultation with the graduate project advisor.

The student is expected to prepare a 30-page paper about the project, guidelines for the paper are provided below. In addition to presenting their work through the capstone session.

### MSW Project Timeline:

Project timeline:

- At the end of the first month of the semester the student is expected to submit a concept paper presenting the project idea.
- The concept paper will be reviewed by the MSW program for approval.
- If the student register for the Fall semester they are expected to present their final project proposal by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of November, if the student is registered for MSWK773 for the spring semester, they are expected to submit the proposal by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of April.
- Students are expected to present their proposal in front of a committee and receive feedback maximum two weeks after the proposal is submitted.
- Students make the amendments accordingly and work with the project advisor on finalizing the implementation plan based on amendments made. The plan of implementation should aim for one semester following: ie: if the proposal is submitted in the fall, the plan is to be finalized by the spring.
- Please note that summer semester can be used for project implementation, but it should be included in the implementation timeline.
- By the mid of the second semester students with their advisor should inform the MSW program administration about their progress, and the expected time to finalize working on the project. If the student needs more time than one semester ( does not include the summer), the student should register for the following semester for the course MSWK781 Note that students who register for the MSWK781 twice have to pay a continuation fee.
- Students are expected to submit their final paper by the mid November if they are enrolled for the course MSWK781 in the fall semester and finalized their project. For students enrolled in the Spring semester they are expected to present their projects by the Mid of April.
- Students are expected to present their projects in a capstone session by the end of the semester by first week of December for the fall semester, and first week of May for the spring semester.

### The graduate proposal components:

The graduate proposal should include the following sections and information:

- I. **Introduction:** The introduction should include a general background about the issue you are working on, the importance of the issue, and a brief description of the project objective.
- II. **Project Idea Description:** This section will provide a detailed description of the project Idea and the project goals and objectives. It will take account of the target group and the suggested intervention. This section will also include the significance of your project, and its importance for the target group/ population. In this section you will also introduce how did you develop the idea, the relation with the community.

- III. **Literature review:** Review the pertinent literature with special attention to previous studies and relevant evidence-based practices in the area of study. The research literature review should be a critical analysis of the pertinent empirical studies and theory. Avoid identifying and summarizing each study in succession. Instead, craft an integrated discussion of past efforts to study the identified problem, the strengths and shortcomings of previous research, how the proposed study will address previous shortcomings, what the proposed study will incorporate from previous research. The literature review section will help you develop the theory of change you will utilize in the project. It will include your critique for the international, regional, and local practices and its implementation and help you craft the direction of your intervention.
- Through this section you will focus on the theory that you will use. Clarify the constructs and concepts that are included in the theory, operationalize the concepts and constructs. For example, what does the empowerment indicate, what are the differences between the various approaches of empowerment, how do you operationalize it, how do you reach empowerment based on the approach you are adopting, what is the criticism and limitation of this approach as clarified by various projects implemented.
- In building the above dialogue the student should bring the previous and similar interventions and application of the theory/ approach under study, also the student should bring the challenges that may face such an approach within a Palestinian context.
- IV. **Intervention:** This section will provide a clear description of your theory of change and your intended intervention on the Macro/Mezzo level. It will present the approach you are using for social change and action. This section will clarify your logic of community intervention based on the three approaches of macro social work. Developing this section will demonstrate how you are connecting theory and practice. It will connect project goals and objectives, with intervention approach/s, and with techniques you are utilizing in your work, and the expected results. This section should end with a graph that shows your theory of change with detailed steps. Part of your plan should include program evaluation methodology with a clear description of the type of evaluation you are using, and the tools you are utilizing. This section should show from a pedagogical view how the theory/approach adopted will be presented in the implementation process. For example, how would the student work on transformative empowerment on the level of individuals, groups and community in large, what are the steps included in the process.
- V. **Intervention plan:** A clear intervention plan with a time table and activities, and steps to be taken to be presented in this section. The plan should connect each activity with the objectives and project goal. Also it should include an evaluation plan with clear indicators for evaluation of various steps of work.
- VI. **Expected challenges for the project:** Ensure to include any expected challenges for the program implementation based on the analysis you conducted, the population group, the community you are going to

implement your project within, and your analysis for the context you will be working within. Please present how would you mitigate and deal with these challenges if they took place.

When developing your graduate project, it is advised to think about the following overarching issues :

- How much the community/ target group is involvement
- What are the forms of community involvement
- How do we ensure the community or target group participation
- Sustainability: how much the project/ suggested change will remain, how much this is owned by the community
- What tools the community need to work on such a project.
- How do we work with the community to be aware to read the reality, and then decide on the change
- Who is going to resist the change, how to increase support for the community

### **Evaluation process:**

The project evaluation will depend on the following:

- The extent in which the process is theory based, that will be clear through the presentation of the theory, conceptualization and operationalization, and how it was reflected in the process of implementation. It will also look into the use of the theory in the analysis of the results.
- Participatory: To which extent the process was participatory with the local community or the target group, the level of community involvement, what was the role of the various actors involved in the project implemented.
- The sustainability of the change introduced and worked on through the project. What is the mechanism in the project that will be sustained. What are the challenges for sustainability, how did the student address them?
- The level of empowerment and agency created at the macro and mezzo levels. Did you ensure that the society is gaining the knowledge on how to do things, so they can go through the process themselves. For example, when doing a community mapping, did you ensure that the society has the knowledge on how to use this tool.
- Level of innovation: to which extent you introduced a new idea to the community that did not exist before.

### **Written paper:**

Students following the non-thesis track are expected to write a 25-30 pages paper. It is advised to publish your paper, and the program highly recommends that the student works with their advisor to get their paper published. The paper should follow the international social work submission guidelines except for the reference style in which the student is requested to use the APA reference style.

- The paper citations and references should follow the APA publication manual 6<sup>th</sup> edition guidelines.
- All tables and graphs should be included within the text and not as appendix
- If you are using pictures from the community and has people in it, ensure that you take their approval for presenting their pictures

- Plagiarism will not be tolerated, ensure to cite properly any ideas and quotes from other authors.
- The paper should include the following Headings:
  - Title
  - Abstract:
  - Keywords
  - Introduction: Please see proposal components for description of this section
  - Literature review with a clear theory of change. Please see proposal components for description of this section
  - Description of the approach used and process
  - Findings and analysis:
  - Limitations and suggested future steps
  - Conclusions
  - Acknowledgements
  - References

MSW project paper Major Headings:

- **Title:** Your MSW project should include a clear title which reflects the subject matter your project worked on, it should ensure a focused topic that can be implemented in the time frame. Please note that any change in the project title should be approved by your advisor and the MSW program in writing.
- **Abstract:** The abstract should give a very brief summary about your Project in no more than 300 words. Usually abstracts contain, but are not limited to, a brief reflection on the issue covered, targeted population, method(s) used and major findings, the application of your project in the field.
- **Introduction and general background:** Please see proposal components for description of this section
- **Literature review with a clear theory of change:** Please see proposal components for description of this section
- **Description of the approach used and process:** In this section please present the process that you went through for your intervention. This is an updated version from your intervention and intervention plan combined with a reflection on the process in which you went through. This section should include a reflection on the process you went through to develop your intervention and how you went through implementing it. It should include a clear reflection of the theory operationalization and how it was implemented in the plan.
- **Findings and analysis:** In this section you are expected to connect the lessons learned and finding reflecting from your process for creating the change with theory. You can utilize theories you learned at various courses during your course work.
- **Limitations and suggested future steps:** At this section the student is expected to describe the limitations of their work, and provide recommendations for future interventions.
- **Conclusions:** In this section you will present concrete possible interventions on policy, program, and community level. These recommendations will aim to enhance the practice in the field of your project. Policy and program



recommendations should stem out from your results and the issues raised in your project, it should not be in points it should be explained and clarified for the different levels such as organizations, community, policies, population groups.

- **Acknowledgements:** include all your thanks for people who supported you in the process
- **References:** Please follow APA style edition 6 for citation in the text and bibliography, graphs, and tables.

### Printing your graduate project paper:

Students are required to provide 2 printed hard copies of the graduate project paper upon approval of all revisions and before they graduate. The student's final grade will not be changed before receiving the printed copies based on standards identified below. The 2 copies will be distributed as follows:

- a copy for the MSW program,
- a copy for the advisor

In addition one soft copies should be provided to the MSW program on a CD and electronically by email.

The graduate project should be printed as follows:

- Hard cover: The cover will be dark blue in which the printing on it will be in gold.
- Text must be typed using the Times New Roman font style if in English, and Simplified Arabic if in Arabic. The same font must be used for the entire thesis.
- Use size 12pts for all parts, unless mentioned otherwise reduced type may be used in tables and figures.
- Font size on the inside cover should be 18pts.
- Font size on title page is 18pts.
- Italics are only used for foreign words, book and journal titles, special emphasis.
- Use font 14pts in the heading of the following pages:
  - Acknowledgement page
  - table of contents
  - list of tables
  - list of figures
  - list of appendices
  - all chapter titles.
- The graduate project paper should be produced on A4 paper ( 21cmX29.7 CM).
- Graduate project paper margins should be as follows:
  - Top, bottom, and right 2.5 CM
  - Left Margin 3.5 CM
- Page numbering should be as follows:



- All pages before the first page of the first paper should be numbered using Roman numbers
- Use Arabic numbers starting from the first page of the paper
- Title page and signatory page should not have a page number, although they are counted.
- paragraphs are written with 1.5 line spacing. single spacing is allowed only in: table of contents, heading, table, titles, figure captions, appendices, footnotes, bibliographical entries, long quoted passages.
- Tables and figures should be centered.

All tables and figures must be numbered ( each number should represent chapter and table number. for example (2.3 Chapter 2, table 2 ), you can use this numbering when referring to the table in text. **Please follow the following link for specification of tables:** <https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/aess/docs/AWC/graduatehandouts/Formatting%20Tables%20and%20Figures%20in%20APA.pdf>

Citations: please ensure to Follow APA rules and regulations APA 6th edition. In text and in the bibliography.

Final draft should be reviewed by the MSW program and written approval should be obtained before printing. If the printed paper is not according to standards the paper will not be accepted, and grade will not be provided for the student. Student's grades will be submitted only after completion of all program requirements.