

# AQB Senior Project Guidelines

Viewed by **Al-Quds Bard College** as the capstone of the student's education in the liberal arts and sciences, the Senior Project is an extended piece of work growing out of the student's cumulative academic experience at the college. One course each semester is devoted to completing the Senior Project (SP I and SP II). A student can enroll in SP I after the student has earned at least 96 credit hours, has successfully moderated into a program, and has successfully completed the Senior Project Proposal Workshop (SPPW). Students ordinarily enroll in SPPW in the second semester of their third year, during which they begin developing a senior project idea, select an adviser, and become familiar with primary and secondary sources in their senior project topic. Students who fail to complete any of the senior project requirements will be ineligible to graduate from his/her program of study at AQB.

## **The Senior Project Purpose and Mission:**

The senior project at AQB is a culmination of the educational process. Through this process, students are required to complete a satisfactory senior project in their related fields of study. The senior project process provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in their areas of study. Through this journey, the students apply the knowledge and critical thinking skills gained during their study at AQB.

The senior project mission and philosophy ensures that every student is capable of producing a satisfactory senior project in the student's area of study and can become a productive participant in the community. It also creates an opportunity for students to produce a project that allows them to demonstrate and exhibit the various skills needed for lifelong learning and success in their careers after graduation.

Below is an overview of the Senior Project requirement, followed by a step-by-step guide to the three-semester process taking you from conception to completion.

## **Overview: The Senior Project**

### **A. Form, Structure, and Length:**

Students have great flexibility in choosing the form and subject of their project, which will typically vary according to their major. ASocial Sciences project may take up critical

research on a social or political phenomenon or report findings from qualitative fieldwork; a Literature and Society project may take the form of literary analysis, a creative work, or a substantive translation; a Sciences project might take up an analysis of an original experiment or engage a theoretical problem; and a Media Studies project might be a narrative or non-fiction film; a photographic series; an installation that combines various media; a performance-based work; a feature-length film script; or a web-series or podcast series. Regardless of your program, however, senior projects should share some common characteristics:

**I. Form:** First, the senior project should represent original work of satisfactory academic standards. Second, projects should begin with more than a general interest in a subject, but should be motivated by a puzzle or a problem that does not make sense upon first glance and begs for further explanation. Research-oriented projects should aim for work that is analytical rather than descriptive in nature. Arts-based projects should seek to explore something that is complex, compelling and multi-faceted. These projects are not intended merely to be summaries of existing literature, but should contribute to a conversation in the student's respective field.

**II. Structure: (Note:** This may vary according to Division and Program. See your Program Head or Division Head for program-specific information.)

i. **Abstract:** An abstract is a short summary of the finished project. It should be no more than 300 words and should succinctly summarize the basic arguments and findings of the research.

ii. **Introduction:** The introduction should describe the problem that inspired your research, pose a clear research question, briefly summarize the argument, and touch on the methodology used to explore the topic. The introduction might also include a short road-map that lays out the major sections of the project.

iii. **Literature Review:** The literature review is the backbone of the project. Based on extensive reading of the literature relevant to the student's project, it introduces the reader to debates in the field and highlights a gap to which the student will contribute. Because the literature review provides historical scholarly context, it helps the reader understand why the research is important. Students can reference *Writing Literature Reviews* by José Galvan (available in the AQB Library) for useful guidelines and suggestions in writing

their literature review.

iv. Chapters: The length of the project necessitates that it be organized into chapters with clear sub-headings.

v. Conclusion: The conclusion should summarize the findings and discuss the significance of the research (i.e. how it contributes to the field) and/or suggest additional avenues for future research.

vi. Bibliography: The project must include a list of every source consulted while preparing the project, even if the source is not quoted from directly.

**III. Length and Formatting:** The senior project asks that students present their findings in a professional manner, following proper formatting and citation guidelines established by their particular program and field of study. Senior Project samples from past years can be found at the Academic Resource Center.

i. Title Page: The project should open with a page clearly stating the title, their name, the advisor's name, the program to which they are submitting, and the date of submission.

ii. Table of Contents: The project must include a page with chapter titles and their corresponding pages at the beginning of the project.

iii. Length: In general, a project should aim for at least 10,000 words excluding figures, tables, footnotes and bibliography. However, this may vary according to the student's program and division. Depending on the nature and substance of the project, the Senior Project Adviser may require that the project be shorter or longer with the approval of the Division Head.

iv. Spacing, Margins, and Font: The final product should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and written in a standard 12-point font such as Times New Roman.

v. Footnotes and Citations: Citation style will vary according to the student's

program. Students should consult with their advisor as to which style to use (MLA, Chicago Style or APA).

vi. Page numbers should appear on every page.

vii. The student may also consider including an acknowledgements section.

## **B. Support System: Adviser, Board Members and the Academic Resource Center (ARC)**

By the junior year, students should be thinking about potential project ideas and talking to faculty members who might be a suitable advisor. Through these conversations, students can begin to locate useful resources to help develop and refine their topic.

I. **Adviser:** By the middle of the junior year, each student should have selected and agreed to work with one faculty member who has knowledge of the senior research project subject and can help guide research. During the proposal phase, the advisor will coordinate with the Senior Project Proposal Workshop instructor in order to define the initial reading list and supervise the proposal phase. During SP I and SP II, the adviser will meet regularly with the student in order to ensure satisfactory progress toward Senior Project completion.

II. **Board Members:** The Senior Project Board meets three times in order to evaluate student work and provide guidance: for Proposal Review (ordinarily at the end of the second semester of the junior year), the Midway (ordinarily at the end of the first semester of the senior year) and for the Oral Defense (ordinarily at the end of the second semester of the senior year). For the Proposal Review (SPPW) and the Midway (SP I), the Senior Project Board consists of AT LEAST TWO faculty members, which includes the Senior Project advisor and an additional faculty member, one of whom must be from the student's major program. For the Oral Defense (SP II) the Senior Project Board consists of AT LEAST THREE faculty members, which includes the Senior Project advisor and two additional faculty members, one of whom must be from the student's major program. The student will select board members in consultation their Senior Project Adviser. While the Senior Project Adviser gives feedback on SP drafts, board members are not required to give feedback on every draft of the project, but the student may wish to consult board members periodically to get feedback on how the research and thinking is progressing.

**III. Academic Resource Center:** The fellows at ARC are available to work with seniors throughout the year. In collaboration with the faculty coordinator for the ARC, the center offers a series of workshops aimed at supporting seniors throughout their Senior Project process, including: proposal writing, handling quotes and formatting citations, developing a research question, how to write a literature review, and strategies for revision. The ARC also houses past samples of exemplary senior projects.

## **C. Senior Project Evaluation**

**I. Senior Project Grading:** Each division at AQB (Sciences Division, Social Sciences Division, and Humanities & Practicing Arts Division) use a senior project grading rubric in order to evaluate the student senior project. Immediately following the Final Senior Project Oral Defense (SP II), the student will be told whether they have passed. However, a grade will not be assigned to the student until the student has submitted their revised draft, and the SP advisor and board members have evaluated the student's work according to the respective Divisions' SP rubric.

**II. Plagiarism:** The Al-Quds Bard College plagiarism policy applies to both senior project proposals and projects. Penalties for plagiarism and academic dishonesty apply as follows:

i. If the offense occurs in developing a senior project idea, the student will be given a verbal warning.

ii. If plagiarism is detected during the proposal or draft stages by the advisor or another faculty member, the student receives a warning letter. If a second offense occurs at any point during the yearlong process, the punishment is more serious and could result in a one-semester suspension from the college or denial of the degree. In the event of plagiarism in a submitted midway or final draft, the student's project board will determine the penalty. In the absence of an agreement, the majority opinion will be submitted to the division head for a final decision. Students should be aware that plagiarizing in a senior project can result in denial of the degree.

Any student accused of academic dishonesty, plagiarism, or of writing for another's use may request a hearing before a Hearing Committee nominated by the Dean and approved by the Al Quds University Vice President for Academic Affairs. The student must request this hearing by letter to the Dean within 72 hours of receiving written notification of the charge. Decisions of the Hearing Committee are final.