**THE INDEPENDENT STUDY PROJECT (ISP)**

**(SWRK 690)**

The independent study project is intended to give you an opportunity to become familiar with a particular issue of interest in the broad area of “Children and Families”, “Health and Social Care”, or “International and Community Development”. Driven by your own queries or curiosities, the independent study project entails a thorough review and synthesis of published research and theoretical debates in order to better understand and evaluate professional social work practices, programs, and/or policies. The independent study project (ISP) is often derived from practice interests or challenges, and ought to have meaning for you in terms of developing your own expertise. The ISP culminates in a written report in appropriate scholarly form. The scope of the project should be appropriate for a 9-credit course. The ISP invites you to:

* Analyze a specific social problem and contemplate responses to it
* Integrate self-directed learning with coursework and field placement learning in the context of the student’s area of specialization
* Contribute to the advancement of social work practice

 **Consulting your advisor:**

Upon acceptance into the MSW program, and as indicated in the letter of acceptance, all MSW students are assigned an advisor. Your advisor is expected to help you to:

* Articulate your preliminary ideas for your ISP
* Assist you in conceptualizing the topic for your ISP and the strategies for addressing that topic

**Advising for the ISP entails:**

* Meeting to discuss your topic, help you focus on that topic and design a relevant and manageable ISP
* Overseeing the conceptualization, development, and completion of your ISP
* Providing scholarly direction such as a literature review strategy, and ways of organizing the sections of your ISP
* Offering feedback on draft sections or suggestions for improvement, according to a jointly agreed upon deadline. At minimum, a section of the ISP can be submitted for review by the advisor for detailed feedback.
* Agreeing to an expected completion date.

Faculty members may take sabbatical leave or embark on other commitments, and thus your assigned advisor may not be available throughout your MSW program, and more importantly, at the time when you are entering into or engaged in your ISP. This may mean finding another advisor, and possibly revising some of the work completed up to that point. If your advisor takes a leave of absence, retires, or goes on sabbatical leave, the MSW Graduate Program Director will assist you in finding a new advisor

**Deadlines:**

As a full-time student with coursework and field placement duties during the fall and winter terms, you might want to consider writing your ISP in the spring and summer months in order to graduate in the fall (you also have the option of registering for your third full-time semester in the following fall to graduate at Winter Convocation). As a part-time student, you have 5 years to complete all your program requirements. However, if you have completed your course work and fieldwork, and have registered for your ISP but have not completed it, you are required to register for a non-thesis extension to maintain your student status. The tuition for a non-thesis extension is equivalent to full-time fees. Thus, it is strongly recommended that you aim t finish your ISP within the time frame set out in the MSW program.

For each graduation date, there is a deadline for submitting your ISP, and you should plan to meet this deadline:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **To Graduate in…** | **Your ISP Deadline will be…** |
| **Winter (February)** | **Last Friday in November** |
| **Spring (May/June)** | **March 31**  |
| **Fall (October/November)** | **August 15** |

All finishing students must also sign on to MINERVA and “apply to graduate”. Please check the McGill Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies Office website for specific deadlines for this procedure.

**Essay Format:**

The ISP entails a comprehensive literature review with implications for practice, program development, policy initiatives and/or further research. It is therefore written in essay format as follows:

40-50 pages double-spaced (50 pages maximum, excluding any appendices and full list of cited references)

* Times New Roman, 12 pt font
* Standard margins
* Numbered pages
* References in APA format (latest version)

**Each ISP must have the following Cover Page:** (follow example below)

* A title with a maximum length of 55 letters; a subtitle is optional
* Your name given in full
* The date shown is the month of convocation.

Should you wish to submit a reduced version of your ISP for scholarly publication, you may do so after the requirements of for your MSW have been met. Thus, the ISP would be graded as an essay paper and then consideration would be made for possible publication(s) with or without your advisor or other persons as co-authors. Consider attending the Skillset Academic Integrity Day event for a detailed look at ethical authorship practices between students and professors (http://www.mcgill.ca/skillsets/calendar).

**Submission and evaluation:**

Submit one copy of your final ISP along with the ISP Submission Form (available from the Social Work website under MSW Downloadable Forms: https://www.mcgill.ca/socialwork/prospective/msw) to Lillian Iannone (Room 300) on or before the deadline date. Lillian will forward your ISP to your advisor for grading. Your ISP may be submitted in a folder, duo-tang, binder, or stapled. Your name and your advisor’s must appear on the cover page (follow below example). [If submitting your ISP to your advisor by email, please make sure to cc: Lillian.iannone@mcgill.ca and attach the ISP Submission Form.]

Your ISP will be evaluated by your advisor, who will record her/his comments on a standard evaluation form (reproduced below). The evaluation form is intended to provide helpful feedback—it is not intended to be used to arrive at an overall grade by a mechanical averaging of individual item ratings.

After your advisor has assigned a grade, the form will go in your file, and a copy will be given to you.

**SAMPLE TITLE PAGE**

McGILL UNIVERSITY

THE SINGLE-SESSION GROUP:

A NEW APPROACH TO THE WAITING ROOM

A Research Report Submitted to

The School of Social Work

Faculty of Arts

Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies Office

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for

The Master's Degree in Social Work

by

Full name of student

Montreal, Month, Year

Advisor’s Name

McGill University

School of Social Work

**MSW ISP Evaluation Form (SWRK690)**

**RE**: (Student’s name): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**ISP TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**FROM:** (Evaluator) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **SIGNED:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**DATE**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **GRADE:** \_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **unsatisfactory** | **satisfactory** | **good** | **very good** | **excellent** | **n/a** |
| **Introduction** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clear research or practice question |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clear scholarly rationale |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clear practice rationale |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clearly laid out format for the ISP |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Literature Review** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Thorough review Empirical Scholarship |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  Appropriate review of Theoretical Scholarship |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Appropriate sources selected and presented |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Accurate use of sources (citations, paraphrases) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Well Organized literature review |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Demonstrates need or gap in literature related to the research or practice question |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conclusions** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Implications for further research |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Implications for practice (broadly defined) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clearly related to research or practice question |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Identified contributions & limitations of study |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Format** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Well organized ISP  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clearly written ISP |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Logical flow from section to section |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Free from grammatical errors |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Free from typographical errors |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Consistent reference style |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Appropriate reference selection |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **●IF DATA COLLECTED & ANALYZED ADD**: |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Methodology** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Appropriate to topic |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clearly described |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Appropriately supported by a review of literature on chosen methodology |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Major Findings** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Thorough in presentation |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Coherent in presentation |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Freedom from error (quantitative) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Freedom from bias; explicit assumptions |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clearly related to research or practice question & methodology |  |  |  |  |  |  |