

GRADUATE EDUCATION STUDENT FORUM

BECOMING AN IMPACTFUL RESEARCHER: A JOURNEY OF EMPOWERMENT AND SUPPORT

JANUARY 24, 25, 26, 2020

CONCEPT NOTE

This forum is a three-day event, organized by graduate students from Education departments from various universities across Lebanon. It is hosted by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences/ Department of Education at the American University of Beirut on the 24th, 25th, and 26th of January, 2020. The theme of this year's forum is “**Becoming an Impactful Researcher: A Journey of Empowerment and Support**”.

The forum is designed to allow graduate students to **share their research with fellow graduate students and faculty members, exchange ideas, and expand their network of professionals**. It welcomes finished and unfinished research projects utilizing any research methodology. The forum is **envisioned as part of a broader initiative to build a Graduate Education Student (GES) network aimed at equipping and supporting new researchers in the field of education to become change agents who are capable of leading social development**.

While educational demands have become more complex, research aimed at knowledge production in the Arab world to inform educational reform remains scarce and, when present, is detached from the pressing needs of practice within our sociocultural context. Despite the increase in number of graduate programs in Education in Lebanon and the region, graduate education students are mostly being prepared as technicians-researchers instead of being empowered and supported as agents of change who employ their research skills to innovatively solve problems in the educational sector, as both practitioners and impactful researchers. Moreover, very few graduate students assume the responsibility to contribute to knowledge production while being on their graduate studies journey, and often report that they are rarely provided with the support it takes to enact their educational knowledge towards social change while still on this journey.

In this context, the **GES forum** aims at **exposing the prevailing status-quo** of the graduate journey while promoting a culture of research that is collaborative, accessible, and inclusive. Most importantly, it will also **advocate for shaping graduate programs that trigger creativity, problem solving, and agency for impactful social improvement**. Graduate education students will get to experience empowerment and support through a variety of sessions that will provide tools and strategies to enhance the quality of their learning journey inside the university and during the transition beyond graduation.

In the same vein, the support of colleagues is known to provide some of the needed conditions for a successful graduate study journey. **The forum will expose participants to a safe network of colleagues who are willing to offer and receive the needed support**. Research collaborations among graduate education students will enable them to explore research interests, build supportive relationships, share their learning, and exchange ideas

through reflective dialogue. This will also **offer them opportunities to enhance their research skills and develop impactful researches that advance knowledge production in this region**. In the forum, graduate education students will also experience a collaborative and critical engagement with fellow graduate students to **gain an understanding of the challenges of the research endeavor and means to overcome them**.

Lastly, **the opportunity to think of actionable strategies to launch the future activities of the graduate education student network as a professional association that transcends institutional boundaries**; connecting/bridging graduate education students from universities across Lebanon to collaboratively navigate their learning journey and sustain the support and empowerment beyond the forum.

Thus, this forum is an opportunity for equipping, supporting, and empowering graduate students. The participants are invited to share their experience and research in many forms and at any stage and to interact with fellow graduate students and faculty members in hope of cultivating the culture of collaborative research that nourishes the intended profile of impactful educational researchers in the Arab World.