The Development Studies Programme (DSP) at Birzeit was established in 1997 as a specialized policy and research-oriented programme for development issues which link the academic and policy-making communities. The DSP grew out of the university-affiliated Human Development Project which produced the first Human Development Profile on Palestine in 1997.

The DSP endeavors to provide and interpret developmental concepts and frameworks which will aid in understanding the political, economic and social changes now taking place in Palestinian society and in promoting sustainable development planning. The Programme also aims to raise public awareness of development issues in order to improve individual and institutional capabilities to enable and empower the community to contribute effectively to the development process.

To achieve these goals, the DSP:
- Conducts academic and policy-oriented research and studies;
- Prepares and publishes the human development report on Palestine;
- Provides library and outreach services through the DSP resource center;
- Encourages academic institutions to integrate development concepts into their curriculums;
- Organizes a diversity of community outreach activities, including conferences, workshops and symposia which bring together various sectors concerned with development issues.

A committee of university academic and administrative personnel supervises the Programme’s activities. In addition to its own programme goals, DSP coordinates with local institutions and international agencies on projects requiring research expertise in the development field.