

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION & JOURNALISM

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK AUGUST 2023



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GRADUATE STUDY IN COMMUNICATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

The graduate program in Communication at Texas A&M aims to produce well-educated academic professionals, as well as communication research specialists in other contexts. Because each student's goals are unique, the graduate curriculum in Communication is intentionally flexible to accommodate individual student's interests and promote intra/interdisciplinary inquiry. We offer small classes from nationally and internationally renowned faculty, allowing for a great deal of student-faculty interaction among the premier scholars in the field. And because our graduate faculty exemplify intellectual curiosity and excellence in scholarship, our A&M graduate students are themselves very active, productive scholars, participating frequently in professional meetings, publishing their own work, and being acknowledged for excellence in research and teaching.

The Department of Communication & Journalism offers an Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's (ABM) degree, a Master of Arts degree, and a Doctoral degree. All doctoral students are admitted to the 96-hour program. In some cases, students with Master's degrees will be invited to transfer to the 64-hour (four year) program during their second year of study. In such cases, a student's funding package (if any) is reduced by one year. Although doctoral students are asked to specialize in a primary area or two, all of our students are strongly encouraged to build a program of study that takes advantage of the multiple forms of expertise offered by our current faculty. In fact, many of our students graduate with research and teaching profiles that reflect this intra/interdisciplinary orientation, evidencing their abilities to adapt to a variety of positions outside of A&M.

Across these areas of emphasis, the curriculum is designed to provide instruction in the history, theory, and analysis of communication, culture, and media processes, events, and texts. Graduate students have exposure to social scientific, humanistic, and critical approaches to scholarship. To this end, we strive to identify common opportunities for students and faculty from the various concentrations to work together and learn from one another.

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RESEARCH ORIENTATIONS

COMMUNICATION & MEDIA SCIENCE

Scholars working in this tradition engage in the theoretical and applied study of human communication and media use, content, effects, processes, practices, and policies. Research and coursework in this area draw on qualitative, quantitative, and computational social scientific methodologies to develop understandings of and interventions for communication and media phenomena, processes, and events. Communication & Media Science faculty specialize in organizational communication, health communication, strategic communication, mass communication, and social and digital media.

HUMANITIES & CRITICAL/CULTURAL STUDIES

Scholars working in this tradition examine communication phenomena to better understand the aesthetic and/or political dimensions of institutions, cultures, social structures, and lived experiences. Research and coursework in this area develop insights through qualitative, textual, and field methodologies and cultivate understandings of historical and contemporary discourses, technologies, and practices. Humanities and Critical/Cultural Studies faculty specialize in media studies, rhetoric, and organizational communication with foci including race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, power, politics, health, religion, globalization, law, and policy.

GRADUATE STUDENT FUNDING

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION & JOURNALISM GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

The Department of Communication & Journalism annually awards graduate assistantships to qualified students. Funded graduate students within the Department of Communication & Journalism typically hold a .50 FTE position (20 hours/week effort). The Department of Communication & Journalism has developed a point system where .50 FTE funded graduate students are expected to earn two points for a semester. The two points can be earned by performing a single work role or some combination of work roles.

Work Roles:

The roles that graduate students may perform to fulfill this work expectation vary. Below are four types of work roles that graduate students may perform to fulfill their work expectation:

Instructor of Record (GAT/IOR or GAL): A graduate student may serve as an IOR for a class. An IOR is responsible for: (a) developing the course syllabus, (b) preparing class lectures, (c) writing and grading tests and assignments, (d) holding office hours and other meetings with students, (e) responding to student emails, and (f) submitting grades. The IOR works under the supervision of a designated faculty member who serves as course director.

Breakout/Recitation Section Leader (GAT/RS): A graduate student may serve as a GAT for a class where a faculty member is listed as the IOR. The class may range from a 100- to 400-level class. Typically, a GAT will be responsible for a recitation or breakout session for a class that is taught by a faculty member. In addition to the regular duties that are normally assigned an IOR, the faculty member is expected to: (a) prepare materials that GATS will present during the recitation or breakout session and train them in their use, and (b) train GATS in the use of grading rubrics for tests and class assignments. GAT responsibilities center on providing support to the IOR by attending class lectures, taking attendance, facilitating recitation or breakout sessions using material provided by the IOR, proctoring tests, grading class tests and assignments, and holding office hours.

Graduate Assistant Researcher (GAR): A graduate student may serve as a GAR for a faculty member. The duties of a GAR may vary depending on the needs of the faculty member and the skill level of the graduate student. GARS typically perform activities associated with the collection and analysis of data.

Administrative Support: A graduate student may provide administrative support to activities that help the undergraduate program. For example, graduate students have served as the Assistant Basic Course Director.

Setting Work Roles:

There are different roles that graduate students can perform to fulfill their work expectation. A point system has been developed where various work roles have been assigned different points. To meet the work expectations for a funded .50 FTE graduate student, the sum of the role(s) must total two points per semester. Points awarded for performing various work roles are as follows:

POINTS	ROLE
2	Instructor of Record (IOR) for one class
1	Recitation or breakout session (RS) leader for one section (or 1.5 sections of 101)
2	.50 FTE GAR (20 hours per week for 14 weeks or equivalent)
1	.25 FTE GAR (10 hours per week for 14 weeks or equivalent)
1	Administrative Support Position (10 hours per week for 14 weeks or equivalent)

Additional work roles may emerge that are not covered by this system. In those instances, the Department Head will consult the Executive Associate Head (EAH) and the Associate Head for Undergraduate Studies (AH-UG) to determine the appropriate point assignment.

Given current funding university models, it is anticipated that graduate students' work expectation will typically be fulfilled through the performance of teaching work roles such as GAT/IOA and GAT/RS. A graduate student in the Department of Communication & Journalism typically begins by serving as a GAT/RS teaching recitation sections for COMM 203 and/or COMM 101. They are then eligible to become an IOR for COMM 203 (Public Speaking) or COMM 205 (Communication for Technical Professions) in subsequent semesters. Graduate

students normally teach these courses or other 200-level courses prior to completing their preliminary examination.

***GAL:* All GALs must be IORs per university rules. In recognition of a GAL's time equivalents of the point system, all GALs will be assigned to either:**

- 2 IOR sections of the same course (with office hours capped at 4/week)
- 1 IOR section + 9 hours as GAR

Overloads:

Per federal law, international students cannot work more than 20 hours a week. Since the graduate assistantship at .50 FTE assumes a 20-hour work week, international graduate students on assistantship are not eligible for overloads.

Per university policy, a domestic graduate student on an assistantship cannot exceed a .725 FTE or a 29-hour work week.

The workload expectations for students assigned with an overload should correspond with the aforementioned point system. If an overload takes a student from .50 FTE to .725 FTE, the possibilities for overloads are as follows:

- 1 IOR section + 9 hours as GAR
- 1 IOR section + 1 GAT/RS (with office hours capped at 4/week)
- 2 IOR sections of the same course (with office hours capped at 4/week)
- 2 GAT/RS + 9 hours as GAR
- 3 GAT/RS (with office hours capped at 4/week)

All overloads must be approved by the student's advisor, the Executive Associate Head, and the Graduate & Professional School.

The minimum requirements for Executive Associate Head's approval are: (1) the student is to be in good standing, and (2) the student must be making satisfactory progress toward degree completion.

External Employment

Graduate students employed as graduate assistants in the Department of Communication & Journalism must receive permission from the Executive Associate Head before accepting employment from another unit at Texas A&M or from an entity external to the University. Failure to comply with this policy could result in the termination of the assistantship.

Tuition & Fees

All graduate assistants are eligible for in-state tuition. In addition, PhD-level graduate assistants in the Department of Communication & Journalism receive funds from the University to cover their tuition and fees. Texas A&M will cover tuition and fee expenses for up

to 9 credit hours for the Fall and Spring semesters that a doctoral student has a department assistantship. The university also covers tuition and fee costs for 3 credit hours for each 3-hour course a student teaches in the summer (*NOTE: summer teaching is NOT guaranteed*).

FUNDING FOR GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH & TRAVEL

All full-time graduate students in good academic standing are eligible to apply for travel funding in order to present their research at academic conferences. These grants *typically* offer \$1000 per academic year per student presenting at conferences, OR up to \$500 per academic year to attend conferences that one is not presenting at. Students seeking additional funds for conference travel and/or to cover research expenses should apply for either a Professional Development Support Award or Research Enhancement Grant through the Department of Communication & Journalism. These awards are distributed two or more times each academic year and require that students submit an application and proposal to the Graduate Instructional Committee. For more information about the proposal process, please visit the website.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

During each spring semester the faculty conducts an annual review of all graduate students. Students will be evaluated in terms of their scholarly productivity, performance in graduate seminars, teaching (when applicable), academic-related service, and participation/attendance to professionalization activities (colloquia, job talks, workshops, etc.).

Because an overview of the student's progress will be presented by the academic advisor, it is imperative that the graduate student take the initiative to meet with their advisor prior to this meeting, which typically occurs during the last full week of classes in April or May. The purpose of the annual review is to provide constructive feedback to students, both in terms of identifying problems or weaknesses to remedy, as well as to reinforce achievements and strengths. Students are expected to complete and submit a form detailing their accomplishments from the previous year as well as a current copy of the CV. At these meetings, all students who will be returning the following academic year are reviewed.

In all annual reviews, minimal satisfactory requirements are that students have maintained at least a **3.30 GPR**. During this annual evaluation, the advisor will first report on the student's progress through the academic program toward degree completion (e.g., completion of degree plan, preliminary exams, thesis/dissertation proposal, etc.). Any incompletes will be noted; lingering or accumulating incompletes are a serious problem. Other faculty members who have had the student in classes may also comment. The faculty also will focus on other scholarly activities, such as papers submitted to or presented at conventions and conferences, essays under review or accepted by academic journals, or in edited collections, grants applied for or awarded, and participation in departmental activities.

Finally, for students on assistantships, reports will be made by the faculty who have observed and/or supervised the student in teaching settings and/or have supervised the student in a research assistantship. Prior to this meeting, all students who serve as teaching assistants will

have been observed while teaching and have received feedback about their instructional skills. Student evaluations of graduate teaching assistants will also be reviewed.

On the basis of this annual review, students will receive written feedback from their advisor that summarizes the faculty comments.¹

¹ For information about Suspension and Dismissal from the Graduate Program and/or Assistantships, see Appendix H.

ACCELERATED BACHELOR'S TO MASTER'S (ABM) IN COMMUNICATION

The following sections provide an overview of the policies, procedures, and regulations governing the Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's (ABM) degree in Communication at Texas A&M. The combined Bachelor and Master is a program that provides a direct pathway for majors from five different degrees (BA-COMM; BS-COMM; BA-TCMS; BS-TCMS; BA-USLA-JRN) to transition seamlessly into the MA-COMM program, thereby earning both degrees in five or fewer years. A summary of the course requirements for an ABM degree can be found in Appendix B.

REQUIRED 36 CREDIT HOURS

ABM students are required to take courses in one of the following tracks:

Track 1: Communication & Media Sciences

Core (15 hours selected from the following):

COMM 601: Foundations of Communication Inquiry
 COMM 610: Social Science Methods in Communication Research
 COMM 611: Advanced Quantitative Methods in Communication Research
 COMM 615: Interpretive Methods in Communication Research
 COMM 616: Topics in Communication Methods
 COMM 620: Communication Theory
 COMM 662: Survey in Media Studies
 COMM 664: Media Processes & Effects

Electives (21 hours)

COMM class 400 or above (6 hours)
 COMM class 600 or above (9-12 hours)
 Outside of COMM class 600 or above (3-6 hours)

Track 2: Humanities & Critical/Cultural Studies

Core (15 hours selected from the following):

COMM 601: Foundations of Communication Inquiry
 COMM 615: Interpretive Methods in Communication Research
 COMM 616: Topics in Communication Methods
 COMM 640: Rhetorical Theory
 COMM 645: Rhetorical & Textual Methods
 COMM 658: Communication & Culture
 COMM 661: Media & Identity
 COMM 662: Survey in Media Studies

Electives (21 hours)

COMM class 400 or above (6 hours)
 COMM class 600 or above (9-12 hours)
 Outside of COMM class 600 or above (3-6 hours)

Note 1: A student may take up to 6 credit hours of Directed Research (COMM 685) as part of their coursework.

Note 2: Exceptions to these requirements require approval by committee chair and a majority of the Departmental Graduate Instructional Committee.

MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION

The following sections provide an overview of the policies, procedures, and regulations governing the M.A. degree in Communication at Texas A&M. Other specific details related to graduate study at TAMU are covered in more detail in the *Graduate Handbook* produced by the Graduate & Professional School and in the *Graduate Catalog* (in particular, note the residency requirements found in the *Graduate Catalog*). These documents are available on-line at the Graduate & Professional School website. A summary of course requirements for an M.A. degree (thesis and non-thesis option) can be found in Appendices C & D.

THESIS OPTION

REQUIRED 30 CREDIT HOURS

MA students are required to take courses in one of the following tracks:

Track 1: Communication & Media Sciences

Core (15 hours selected from the following):

- COMM 601: Foundations of Communication Inquiry
- COMM 610: Social Science Methods in Communication Research
- COMM 615: Interpretive Methods in Communication Research
- COMM 616: Topics in Communication Methods
- COMM 620: Communication Theory
- COMM 662: Survey in Media Studies
- COMM 664: Media Processes & Effects

Electives (9-15 hours)

- COMM class 600 or above (6-9 hours)
- Outside of COMM class (3-6 hours)

Thesis (6 hours)

- COMM 691

Track 2: Humanities & Critical/Cultural Studies

Core (15 hours selected from the following):

- COMM 601: Foundations of Communication Inquiry
- COMM 615: Interpretive Methods in Communication Research
- COMM 616: Topics in Communication Methods
- COMM 640: Rhetorical Theory
- COMM 645: Rhetorical & Textual Methods
- COMM 658: Communication & Culture
- COMM 661: Media & Identity
- COMM 662: Survey in Media Studies

Electives (9-15 hours)

COMM class 600 or above (6-9 hours)

Outside of COMM class (3-6 hours)

Thesis (6 hours)

COMM 691

Note 1: Only 3 credits of Directed Research (COMM 685) will be counted toward the total 30 credits.

Note 2: 400-level courses can be taken if they are necessary for a thesis project and have the approval of the student's advisor. Enrollment in such courses should be considered only when no comparable graduate course is available, and when the class is being taught by a member of the graduate faculty. Given that the class is being taken as part of the students' graduate coursework, it is not unusual for faculty to require additional work in the form of reading, paper, or research assignments and projects.

Note 3: Exceptions to these requirements require approval by committee chair and a majority of the Departmental Graduate Committee.

Thesis option students may take more than 6 hours of COMM 691, but they can only include 6 hours on their degree plans. The same "continuous enrollment" requirements that PhD students must meet also apply to MA thesis-option students.

Students who initially choose the thesis option can change to a non-thesis option should their interests and career goals change. However, once a student files a non-thesis degree plan with the Office of Graduate Students, they cannot change to a thesis option.

THESIS

Students selecting the thesis option must write a thesis proposal. The proposal is a document in which the student explains the topic or subject of inquiry, the reasons and justifications for studying the topic, the methods by which the investigation will proceed, and the current state of knowledge concerning the topic. The specific format and plan for the thesis proposal should be discussed with the advisor, as faculty members have different requirements for this document.

In conjunction with their advisor, MA graduate students should design a **proposed plan of study**. This proposed plan of study serves as a template for selecting subsequent coursework in the program. The content of the program of study will depend on the student's goals and the educational needs as determined by the student and committee. *According to University policy, the advisory committee must be established and a formal degree plan submitted to the Graduate & Professional School BEFORE the THIRD semester for Master's students.* Therefore, we strongly encourage MA students to finalize their committees and formal degree plans in the Spring semester of their first year of the graduate program. This advisory committee

typically consists of an advisor; additional members of the departmental faculty (1-2 for thesis-option MA students), and one faculty member from outside the department. An outside member is required by the University. Changes in advisor or committee members or changes in the degree plan can be done through the normal petitioning process described in the Texas A&M University Graduate Handbook.

Once the student has produced a proposal acceptable to their advisor, a thesis proposal meeting can be set up. *In all cases a minimum of two weeks' notice is required* for setting up a thesis proposal meeting. It is expected that all members of the student's thesis committee be present for the proposal meeting. The student is to submit the approved thesis prospectus to the Graduate & Professional School along with the proposal form signed by all committee members (see Graduate & Professional School website for forms). It should be noted that research projects involving human subjects must be approved by TAMU's Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRB approval must be obtained before the proposal is submitted to Graduate & Professional School. The Graduate & Professional School requires submission of the proposal 15 days before the defense, but most students in communication complete the proposal several months ahead of this deadline.

When the advisor and student are both satisfied that the thesis is ready for a defense, a complete copy should be distributed to each member of the student's advisory committee in the format they prefer (paper or electronic) and an oral defense of the thesis should be scheduled. The thesis should be distributed to the student's advisory committee at least 10 working days before the requested examination date. If this requirement is not met, the defense will have to be rescheduled. There are no exceptions to this rule. In addition, permission to announce and hold the final examination must be requested of Graduate & Professional School at least 10 working days before the requested exam date. It also is good practice to review the degree plan that has been filed with Graduate & Professional School well in advance of the requested date, especially if the degree plan (including committee membership). Thesis defenses normally are scheduled during the academic year (August 15 to June 1). Most faculty are on 9-month contracts, which means that they are not on staff during summer months, and should not be expected to be involved in committee activities.

The thesis defense will be a 1-3 hour meeting over the content of the thesis. University policy allows a student's advisory committee to open the initial segment of a thesis defense to faculty, students, or invited guests. If the committee chooses this option, the student will provide a brief, formal presentation of the thesis project and findings. Following the presentation, all attendees who are not official members of the student's committee will be asked to leave and the official portion of the defense will begin. The meeting is conducted by the chair of the student's advisory committee. All members of the student's advisory committee should attend the meeting (see Graduate & Professional School rules about committee attendance). Upon completion of this meeting, the student will be excused from the room while the student's committee votes on whether or not to accept the thesis in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements. Theses that are accepted must be filed with the thesis clerk in the Graduate & Professional School following the policies and procedures of that office. For deadlines for filing theses, see the calendar distributed by the Graduate & Professional School and available on the Graduate & Professional School website.

Should the committee decide that the thesis defense is not of passing quality, university regulations provide that the “student shall be given only one opportunity to repeat the final examination [thesis defense] for the master's degree and that shall be within a time period that does not extend beyond the end of the next regular semester,” exclusive of summer terms.

NON-THESIS OPTION

REQUIRED 36 CREDIT HOURS

MA students are required to take courses in one of the following tracks:

Track 1: Communication & Media Sciences

Core (15 hours selected from the following):

- COMM 601: Foundations of Communication Inquiry
- COMM 610: Social Science Methods in Communication Research
- COMM 615: Interpretive Methods in Communication Research
- COMM 616: Topics in Communication Methods
- COMM 620: Communication Theory
- COMM 662: Survey in Media Studies
- COMM 664: Media Processes & Effects

Electives (21 hours)

- COMM class 400-482 or 600-689 (6 hours)
- COMM class 600-689 9-12 hours)
- Outside of COMM class 600-689 (3-6 hours)

Track 2: Humanities & Critical/Cultural Studies

Core (15 hours selected from the following):

- COMM 601: Foundations of Communication Inquiry
- COMM 615: Interpretive Methods in Communication Research
- COMM 616: Topics in Communication Methods
- COMM 640: Rhetorical Theory
- COMM 645: Rhetorical & Textual Methods
- COMM 658: Communication & Culture
- COMM 661: Media & Identity
- COMM 662: Survey in Media Studies

Electives (21 hours)

- COMM class 400-482 or 600-689 (6 hours)
- COMM class 600-689 (6-9 hours)
- Outside of COMM class (3-6 hours)

Note 1: A student may take up to 6 credit hours of Directed Research (COMM 685) as part of their coursework.

Note 2: Exceptions to these requirements require approval by committee chair and a majority of the Departmental Graduate Instructional Committee.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN COMMUNICATION

The following sections provide an overview of the policies, procedures, and regulations governing the Ph.D. program in Communication at Texas A&M. Other specific details related to graduate study at TAMU are covered in more detail in the *Graduate Handbook* produced by the Graduate & Professional School and in the *Graduate Catalog* (in particular, note the residency requirements found in the *Graduate Catalog*). These documents are available on-line at the Graduate & Professional School website. A list of graduate courses in Communication is provided in Appendix A. A summary of the course requirements, elective requirements, and a timetable for completing important activities related to completing the Ph.D. program can be found in Appendices E, F, and G.

COURSEWORK IN THE PROGRAM OF STUDY

The program of study for the doctoral degree can vary a great deal from student to student, depending on academic and professional goals, as well as previous educational experiences. Thus, it is critical that the program of study be developed by the student in close consultation with their advisor and advisory committee. Before an advisory relationship is established, the student should consult with his/her interim advisor and the Doctoral Program Coordinator.

The course requirements for a Communication degree are designed to maximize student flexibility in choosing courses while at the same time ensuring that all graduates possess a comprehensive background in communication, not only in their own specialized area, but also across multiple areas. Rather than fostering difference, however, we believe that experiencing a diversity of robust and distinct perspectives enriches all of our understandings of communication as a whole. It is on this basis that we *require* every student to take courses outside of their specialized area *within* the Department of Communication & Journalism and in consultation with their advisor and committee. In addition, it *allows* students with interests in more than one area to create an individualized program of study in which they can pursue those interests.

All students are admitted to the 96-hour program. In some cases, students with Master's degrees will be invited to change to the 64 hour program during their second year of study. In such cases, a student's funding package (if any) is reduced by 1 year.

96-HOUR PHD PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

To earn a PhD in the Department of Communication & Journalism at Texas A&M, a student is required to take at least 45 credit hours of course work, 51 hours of research credit (for a total of no less than 96 total credit hours). Students must also pass: a second year (or equivalent) review, a written and oral preliminary exam on the completion of coursework, and then successfully write and defend a dissertation.

COURSEWORK (must total 45 hours)

Methods Core: (3 hours)

COMM 601: Foundations of Communication Inquiry

Methods Development from the following: (6 hours)

COMM 610: Social Science Methods in Communication Research

COMM 611: Advanced Quantitative Methods

COMM 615: Interpretive Methods in Communication Research

COMM 616: Topics in Communication Methods

COMM 645: Rhetorical & Textual Methods

Content Specialization (12 hours)

Any COMM course 600-689 in a single area

Content Outside Specialization (6 hours)

Any COMM course 600-689 that is not in specialized area

COMM Electives (9-12 hours)

Any COMM course 600-689 in any area

Outside of the Department Electives (6-9 hours)

Any course 600-689 in a department other than COMM

Professionalization (0 hours)

COMM 681 (2 different iterations)

DISSERTATION RESEARCH (minimum 51 hours)

COMM 691

TOTAL: 96 HOURS

Note 1: Only 6 credits of Directed Research (COMM 685) will be counted toward the degree.

Note 2: Each individual committee may have more specific course requirements (i.e. specific methods courses) in addition to the general requirements of the department.

Note 3: The “area” of the course will be determined by the student’s graduate advisor using a combination of course number, subject matter, and the faculty teaching the course.

Note 4: On rare occasions, and if space is available, 400-level courses can be taken if they are necessary for a dissertation project and have the approval of the student’s advisor. Enrollment in such courses should be considered only when no comparable graduate course is available, and when the class is being taught by a member of the graduate faculty. Given that the class is being taken as part of the students’ graduate coursework, it is not unusual for faculty to require additional work in the form of reading, paper, or research assignments and projects.

Note 5: Exceptions to these requirements require approval by committee chair and a majority of the Departmental Graduate Committee.

Note 6: Students may take additional courses beyond the 45 credits, but they will simply not be counted toward the minimum requirement of 45 hours. For instance, students who take more than 6 hours of directed research, or who require additional outside courses, still have to take the required 600-level COMM seminars

YEAR 2 (OR EQUIVALENT) REVIEW

In the fall semester that follows a student’s completion of 18 hours, they will submit materials for review. This standardized review will be conducted by a Year 2 review committee and will assess student progress, subject matter competence, and potential to conduct independent research.

REVIEW TIMING & STRUCTURE

All reviews will be conducted during a 2-week period in the Fall terms as designated by the Doctoral Program Coordinator (usually, October/November)

The Year 2 review committee will be comprised of: the student’s advisor, the Doctoral Program Coordinator, and two members of the Graduate Instructional Committee.. The committee will examine the student’s submission, record, and they will host a 1-hour oral interview.

Student Submission:

- o 1 seminar paper from coursework at Texas A&M
- o Response to two standardized questions. Questions will be written by the GIC and distributed to the student in advance.

Student Record:

- Year 1 (or equivalent) annual review letter(s)
- Transcript from Year 1 (or first 18 hours of coursework)

Oral Interview:

An approximately one-hour meeting that allows committee and student to discuss career program goals and progress.

REVIEW OUTCOME

This review process will determine one or more of the following paths for continuation in the program:

- (1) Student will be advised/required to switch to the MA program, effective the semester following the review. Students would be required to complete the MA program requirements. If funded, the student's assistantship would be terminated at the conclusion of the second year (or completion of 36 hours)
- (2) Student will be given the option to enter the accelerated 64-hour doctoral program. If funded, the student's package would be reduced by 1 year (for a total of 4 years of funding). Coursework requirements are reduced to 36 hours (see accelerated path below).
- (3) Student is advised or chooses to continue in the 96-hour doctoral program.

The above options will be determined by a majority vote (including the student's advisor) of the review committee (see above). Student will be notified of option(s) at the conclusion of the oral interview.

ACCELERATED (64 HOUR) PHD PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The accelerated path to a PhD is open to students with a Master's degree who have been recommended for such a path after the Year 2 Review. The accelerated path requires that a student successfully complete at least 36 credit hours of courses plus at least 11 hours of dissertation credit (for a total of no less than 64 total credit hours), pass a preliminary exam on completion of coursework, and write and defend a dissertation.

COURSEWORK (64 hours)

Methods Core: (3 hours)

COMM 601: Foundations of Communication Inquiry

Methods Development from the following: (6 hours)

COMM 610: Social Science Methods in Communication Research

COMM 611: Advanced Quantitative Methods

COMM 615: Interpretive Methods in Communication Research

COMM 616: Topics in Communication Methods

COMM 645: Rhetorical & Textual Methods

Content Specialization (12 hours)

Any COMM course 600-689 in a single area

Content Outside Specialization (6 hours)

Any COMM course 600-689 that is not in specialized area

COMM Electives (3-6 hours)

Any COMM course 600-689 in any area

Outside of the Department Electives (3-6 hours)

Any course 600-689 in a department other than COMM

Professionalization (0 hours)

COMM 681 (2 different iterations)

DISSERTATION RESEARCH (minimum 28 hours)

COMM 691

Note 1: Only 6 credits of Directed Research (COMM 685) will be counted toward the degree.

Note 2: Each individual area may have more specific course requirements (i.e. specific methods courses) in addition to the general requirements of the department.

Note 3: The "area" of the course will be determined by the student's graduate advisor using a combination of course number, subject matter, and the faculty teaching the course.

Note 4: 400-level courses can be taken if they are necessary for a dissertation project and have the approval of the student's advisor. Enrollment in such courses should be considered only when no comparable graduate course is available, and when the class is being taught by a member of the graduate faculty. Given that the class is being taken as part of the students' graduate coursework, it is not unusual for faculty to require additional work in the form of reading, paper, or research.

Note 5: Exceptions to these requirements require approval by committee chair and a majority of the Departmental Graduate Committee.

Note 6: Students may take additional courses beyond the 36 credits, but they will not be counted toward the "core" 36 hours. Students who take more than 6 hours of directed research, or who require additional outside courses, still have to take the required 600-level COMM seminars

DISSERTATION HOURS (COMM 691)	Approximately 28 hours
TOTAL REQUIRED HOURS (coursework + dissertation):	64 hours

ADVISING IN THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

Upon entering the MA and PhD programs at Texas A&M, each student will be assigned an *interim advisor*. The interim advisor's responsibilities include helping the new student understand the requirements and course options in the graduate program, assisting in the assessment of curricular needs with relation to previous coursework at both the BA and MA levels, and familiarizing the student with the graduate faculty, their research interests, and their expertise in anticipation of selecting a permanent advisor and advisory committee.

A permanent advisor should be selected early in the second semester of the program. This permanent advisor may (or may not) be the interim advisor. Also, the permanent advisor can be changed during the course of the program as circumstances require. However, it is critical that an advisor be selected early in the program in order to help design a program of study, make decisions about mentorship opportunities, and start thinking about thesis or dissertation project possibilities.

In conjunction with their advisor, graduate students should design a **proposed plan of study**. This proposed plan of study serves as a template for selecting subsequent coursework in the program. The content of the program of study will depend on the student's goals and the educational needs as determined by the student and committee. *According to University policy, the advisory committee must be established and a formal degree plan submitted to the Graduate & Professional School BEFORE the FOURTH semester for doctoral students.* Therefore, we strongly encourage Ph.D. students to finalize their committees and degree plans in the Fall semester of their second year of the graduate program. This advisory committee typically consists of an advisor, additional members of the departmental faculty (2-3 for PhD students), and one faculty member from outside the department. An outside member is required by the University. It should also be noted that committee membership sometimes shifts as a student moves from the preliminary examination to the dissertation. Changes in advisor or committee members or changes in the degree plan can be done through the normal petitioning process described in the Texas A&M University Graduate Handbook.

ENROLLING IN COMM 691

Finally, as a general rule, students should complete coursework before taking COMM 691: Research hours. In order to sign up for COMM 691 hours, one of the following conditions must be met:

- (1) Funded doctoral or Master's (thesis option) students can enroll in COMM 691 hours in any summer session that they are on assistantship.
- (2) A student is conducting research for a thesis or dissertation.
- (3) Doctoral students may take COMM 691 hours the semester before they are scheduled to take preliminary exams. roll in COMM 691 during the summer semester(s) that immediately precedes the fall).
- (4) Doctoral students can enroll in COMM 691 after having successfully passed the preliminary examination.

If one of these conditions has been met, the student must submit a COMM 691 request form (signed by their permanent advisor) to Silvia Martinez. This form is only required if it is the fall or spring semester, and it is the student's first time to sign up for COMM 691 hours.

Exceptions to the conditions described above will be made on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Doctoral Program Coordinator.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

Preliminary exams (also called “comprehensive” examinations) are designed to test a student’s expertise in at least two and up to four areas of specialization, general field knowledge, theory, and methodology as declared in the student’s Program of Study. Although preliminary exam questions will relate to the student’s research trajectory, the examination process is not designed to forward or approve a specific dissertation proposal or agenda, but rather to ensure mastery of a discourse within a discipline. The written component will consist of a journal submission paper (or equivalent) and 3-4 essay questions. It will also include an oral defense.

A preliminary examination should be taken no later than the semester following the completion of the formal coursework on the degree plan.. Doctoral students must file their degree plan with the Graduate & Professional School no later than the beginning of the fourth semester in the program. The degree plan is filed electronically, and details on this process can be found at the Graduate & Professional School website. The preliminary examination has a written portion and an oral portion. The chair and the student will complete the "Preliminary Examination Checklist." At the end of the oral examination the chair will submit the "Checklist" and the "Report of the Preliminary Examination" (See forms on Graduate & Professional School website) to the Graduate & Professional School. Preliminary exams MAY NOT be taken during the professionalization/orientation events that occur at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters. Also, dissertation prospectus meetings cannot be scheduled the same day as exams.

Developing the Examination

Each committee will develop an examination based on that student’s declared areas of interest. The advisor and the student shall convene a meeting of the committee no later than the semester before the student plans to take the exam. The papers, projects, and questions will involve theory, method, and special topic areas, as appropriate. The Chair of the student’s committee will facilitate this process overall, in conjunction with the graduate administrative assistant or other exam proctor. Under the direction of the committee chair, responsibility for writing the exam questions will be distributed among the examination committee members based on the member’s particular expertise.

EXAMINATION STRUCTURE

The examination includes: (1) the production of a journal submission quality paper or equivalent, and (2) answering 3-4 essay questions using a timed closed-book format, take-home format, or some combination of the two.

- (1) **Journal submission paper or equivalent.** Each student will be assigned a paper to write that is (or is equivalent to) a journal submission. This paper should advance a focused and bounded argument in some way. While the paper may be related to the student’s dissertation, it is not a complete prospectus. The essay portion of the test begins once the paper has been submitted to the exam proctor.

- (2) **Essays.** The essay portion of the examination will consist of 3-4 questions that are to be divided among theory, method, and special topics as appropriate, and as determined by the committee chair in consultation with the student and other committee members. The essay questions can be answered “in-house” or as “take-home” questions.

TIMING OF THE EXAMINATION AND DEFENSE

Graduate & Professional School rules stipulate that the examination process, including the writing of the in-house essays and the final oral examination, must be conducted within a three-week period. The following deadlines guide the process, although if extenuating circumstances exist, these deadlines may be modified in consultation with the student's committee and the Doctoral Program Coordinator.

- (1) **Development of the examination:** The student's committee will meet no later than the (fall/spring) semester before the student plans to take the exam to develop the examination. Papers and essay questions must be developed well in advance of the proposed examination date.
- (2) **Announcement of the examination** (*one month prior*): A student must submit a signed Preliminary Examination Scheduling form to the test proctor (graduate administrative assistant), no later than 30 days before the exam is to begin. Questions will be due to the administrative assistant no later than 2 weeks before the exam.
- (3) **Completing the written examination:** The written portion of the examination consisting of the essay questions should be completed:
- o 64-hour students: No later than November 1 of the student's third year.
 - o 96-hour students: No later than April 1 of the student's third year.
- The student will have 10 days (including weekends) to complete the essay questions.
- (4) **Oral examination** (*Three weeks following the first day of the written exam e*). Committee members will have at least one week to read the answers and form an opinion of the quality, providing cursory feedback to the committee chair. The oral examination will consist of questions related to the written answers, journal quality essay, and may also be directed toward further development of the theoretical/methodological issues related to dissertation research (if known at the time). A Student passes the oral exam if the majority (including chair) agrees. Passing the written and the oral portions of the examination are necessary to proceed to a dissertation prospectus meeting. Per University rules, if a student fails the exam, they will have one more chance to pass in order to continue in the program.
- (5) **Revisions:** On rare occasions, the committee may request that a student revise a portion of the exam. In such cases, the writing process must mimic the original conditions of the exam question (e.g., in-house, take-home, time-allotted, etc.). Revisions should be completed in a reasonable amount of time following the oral defense

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT, CHAIR, AND COMMITTEE MEMBER:**The responsibilities of the student:**

- Meet with the advisor to determine declared areas of expertise, journal quality essay, and preferred method of questions (take-home, in-house, combination), and proposed timing.
- Schedule meeting with committee members to set the terms of the exam.
- Schedule the examination with the graduate administrative assistant.
- Schedule the defense with the committee and inform the graduate administrative assistant.
- Take the examination, emailing the answers to the graduate administrative assistant at the end of the scheduled times.
- Before the oral defense: Meet with the advisor to review preliminary answers and plan for what to prepare for the defense.
- OPTIONAL: Provide a 5-8 minute presentation at the beginning of the defense; notes are allowed.

The responsibilities of the committee chair:

- Meet with the student to determine the number of hours allotted for each question's declared areas of expertise, journal quality essay, and preferred method of questions (take-home, in-house, combination), and proposed timing of exam.
- Coordinate with other committee members as needed.
- After the written portion of the examination: Meet with the student to prepare them for the defense; in particular, point out areas where they will want to be especially prepared
- Before the oral defense, students should temporarily leave the room so committee chairs should consult with other members of the committee to determine their cursory determination of the quality of the written portion (i.e., pass/fail).
- During the defense: facilitate the defense, coordinating the conversation and order of questioning; turn the conversation toward proposal and dissertation if appropriate.
- After the defense, students should again leave the room so the committee can deliberate.

The responsibilities of the committee members:

- Along with the student, develop a general sense of the topic and scope of the question; aid in the construction of a reading list and/or offer other guidance.
- Write a question designed for the length of time allotted for the question and send to the committee chair and graduate administrative assistant two weeks before the student is scheduled to begin the written portion of the exam.
- For the oral defense: Read closely the journal quality essay, and the answer to your proposed question. Read or skim answers to all of the questions and be prepared to ask questions on the answer specific to your area.

AFTER PASSING ONE'S PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

Once a student has passed the Preliminary Examination, they have four years to complete all remaining requirements for the degree. Otherwise, the student must repeat the Preliminary Examination. If a student has completed all of the regular coursework on their degree plan, they must be continuously registered during all regular (fall and spring) semesters until all degree requirements have been met. This requirement can be met either by registering "in absentia" or by registering in residence. Students who plan to register "in absentia" should obtain a letter from their advisor indicating that they will not be using any university resources (including faculty time) while registered "in absentia." A copy of this letter should be placed in their permanent file. Out-of-state students who register "in absentia" pay out-of-state tuition. Additional regulations for both parts of the examination regarding the scheduling, timing, and administration are included in the *Texas A&M Graduate Handbook*.

DISSERTATION

Doctoral students must demonstrate their ability to conduct independent research of high quality by completing an original dissertation. While acceptance of the dissertation is based primarily on its scholarly merit, it must also be well-written. Details about the format of the dissertation are available in the *Texas A&M University Graduate Handbook* and the *Thesis Manual*. The University now requires mandatory electronic formats for theses and dissertations.

The dissertation process actually begins early in the program, as the student explores possible dissertation topics and discusses those possibilities with their advisor and other members of the faculty. The first formal step is formulating and presenting a dissertation proposal. The precise form of the proposal will vary greatly, depending on the topic areas and the preferences of the student's committee. Thus, students should carefully discuss expectations for the proposal with the advisor and committee. It should be noted that research projects involving human subjects must be approved by TAMU's Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRB approval must be obtained before the proposal is submitted to Graduate & Professional School.

After completing the written proposal, a meeting is typically scheduled with all members of the student's advisory committee. This meeting is often seen as a "working session" in which ideas about the dissertation can be discussed and negotiated. Once the proposal is approved by all members of the student's committee, the proposal and approval forms are submitted to Graduate & Professional School (see Graduate & Professional School website for complete details). Though the formal deadline for submitting a dissertation proposal is 15 days prior to the dissertation defense date, students in our department typically submit their dissertation proposals months before the dissertation defense. Conducting the dissertation research and writing the dissertation then involves a period of time involving both independent research and much consultation with the advisor and, at times, the advisory committee. When the advisor and student are both satisfied that the dissertation is ready for a defense, a complete copy should be distributed to each member of the student's advisory committee in the format they prefer (paper or electronic) and an oral defense of the dissertation should be scheduled. The dissertation should be distributed to the student's advisory committee at least 10

working days before the requested examination date. If this requirement is not met, the defense may be rescheduled. In addition, permission to announce and hold the final examination must be approved by Graduate & Professional School at least 10 working days before the requested exam date. It also is good practice to review the degree plan that has been filed with Graduate & Professional School well in advance of the requested date, especially if the degree plan (including committee membership) has been changed between the date of the preliminary exam and the date of the dissertation defense. Dissertation defenses can be scheduled throughout the year. However, students should be aware that most graduate faculty are on 9-month contracts. As such, some faculty may only be available for defenses during the nine-month contract term (Sept-May). Students planning to defend their dissertations outside of the 9-month contract period (i.e., summer months) should consult with their committee members in advance. Dissertation defenses **MAY NOT** be scheduled during Graduate Professionalization/Orientation events that occur at the beginning of fall and spring semesters.

The dissertation defense will be a 1-3 hour meeting over the content of the dissertation. University policy allows a student's advisory committee to open the initial segment of a dissertation defense to faculty, students, or invited guests. If the committee chooses this option, the student will provide a brief, formal presentation of the dissertation project and findings. Following the presentation, all attendees who are not official members of the student's committee will be asked to leave and the official portion of the defense will begin. The chair of the student's advisory committee conducts the meeting. All members of the student's advisory committee should attend the meeting (see Graduate & Professional School rules about committee attendance). Upon completion of this meeting, the student will be excused from the room while the student's committee votes on whether or not to accept the dissertation in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements. Dissertations that are accepted must be filed with the thesis clerk in the Graduate & Professional School following the policies and procedures of that office. For deadlines for filing theses, see the calendar distributed by the Graduate & Professional School and available on the Graduate & Professional School website.

A doctoral student is allowed **one** attempt on a dissertation defense.

TIME LIMITS

The University requires that students complete degree requirements in a timely fashion. As such, a student has a maximum of **10 years** to complete degree requirements (after 10 years, courses begin to "expire"). Also, after passing preliminary exams, doctoral students have **4 years** to successfully defend a dissertation.

In very rare occasions, the Department of Communication & Journalism will grant an extension of these time requirements. The department will grant extensions only in cases where: (1) an extenuating circumstance has delayed progress on the degree, and (2) there is evidence that substantive work toward fulfilling degree requirements has been accomplished. In order to request an extension, a student must submit a memo to the Doctoral Program Coordinator and Executive Associate Head detailing how the above qualifications have been met. This memo must be accompanied by the student's advisor verifying that condition two has been met.

APPENDIX A: Graduate Courses in Communication

(unless otherwise noted, courses are for 3 hours credit)

601. Foundations of Communication Inquiry Explores critical, humanist, and social scientific epistemologies and research traditions in Communication Studies.

610. Social Science Methods in Communication Research Examination of social science research methods in communication, including design, measurement and analysis for descriptive and experimental research; practice in evaluating and conducting research projects.

611. Advanced Quantitative Methods in Communication Research In-depth exploration of the philosophical underpinnings of quantitative research, research design and statistical analysis of quantitative data in communication research; examination of regression-based modeling and its extensions, including ordinary least squares (OLS), analysis of categorical dependent variables, interactive effects, statistical mediation; introduction to structural equation modeling.

615. Interpretive Methods in Communication Research Introduction to interpretive and qualitative methods in communication research. Underlying epistemologies, design issues, and explanation of knowledge claims. Methods including participant observation and interviewing.

616. Topics in Communication Methods Focused and in-depth examination on theory and practice of single method in communication research; includes surveys, interviewing, focus groups, ethnography, digital methods, rhetorical field methods, engage scholarship, historiography and experimental design. May be repeated for credit up to 12 hours.

620. Communication Theory The nature and role of communication theory, systems of ontology and epistemology in theory development; critical review of current theories concerning communication codes, function and processes in various contexts.

625. International Communication and Public Diplomacy Exploration of the intersections of culture, media, and communication; emphasis on the role of communication in public diplomacy; examination of global media, international relations and globalization and media technologies on issues of cultural identity and geopolitics and their policy impacts.

626. Communication Law & Policy Foundations of law and policy as the context for all communication, online or off; issues such as free speech, privacy and surveillance, intellectual property rights, access to information, extreme speech, public diplomacy, cybersecurity and network neutrality; mechanisms and effects of policy-making by governments, international and global organizations and via technical standard-setting and algorithms; roles of civil society and corporations in policy-making and implementation.

630. Interpersonal Communication Major theories in interpersonal communication; critical examination of current research programs on communication in interpersonal influence, relational development and conflict management.

631. Group Communication Major concepts and theories of communicative processes in task-oriented groups from a social scientific perspective; the role of group communication in (1) group decision processes (2) decision development, (3) decision-making agendas and (4) conflict and performance quality.

632. Communication and Conflict Elements and central features of conflict theories and different approaches to communication in conflict management. Analysis of communication research in interpersonal, family/marital, group, organizational, and public conflicts and the role of the media in social and international disputes.

634. Communication and Gender Gender considered as a complex phenomenon constituted through communication. Topics include femininities, masculinities, language, power, nonverbal behavior, gender in media, organizations, interpersonal relationships and social movements.

636. Survey of Organizational Communication Theoretical and empirical literature on human communication and complex organizations; the study of messages, interaction, and meaning in the process of organizing; topics include superior-subordinate communication, communication networks and technologies, language, message flow, symbols and organizational culture, negotiation and conflict, and power and politics.

637. Organizational Communication Seminar Investigation of a subject important to the understanding of organizational communication, such as communication and organizational decision-making, group communication within organizations, communication and organizational culture, and organizational rhetoric and issue management. May be repeated for credit with a different content up to a total of three times.

638. Crisis Communication Focuses on crisis communication theory and research as it applies to organizations; differentiation between the various crisis communication theories; application of various crisis communication theories to crisis cases; understanding the relationship between crisis and risk communication.

640. Rhetorical Theory Close reading of classical and contemporary systems of rhetoric; survey of principal applications to communication theory and research.

645. Rhetorical and Textual Methods in Communication Research Comparative study of traditional and contemporary perspectives on the description, interpretation, and evaluation of public discourse, including textual analysis, neo-classical analysis, Burkean criticism, quantitative and qualitative approaches to content analysis, fantasy theme analysis, and semiotic analysis.

651. Presidential Communication Examination of discourse of, about and from American presidents, including principal genres of presidential communication, speechwriting and media strategies; case studies of presidential communication ranging from campaigns, oratory, to crisis rhetoric and ceremonial address.

652. The Rhetoric of Social Movements. Analysis of persuasive strategies used to build social identities and collectively agitate for social change; exploration of the history of social movements in the United States and abroad.

653. Rhetoric and Public Cultures. Examination of how artifacts of public culture function rhetorically to transform public attitudes, opinion, and memory; analysis of documents, artworks, images, and histories from a humanities and social science perspectives.

654. Classical Rhetoric. Origins of rhetoric in classical Greece and Rome; exploration of the relationship between philosophy, rhetoric, and democratic political culture; the contemporary relevance of classical thought to contemporary problems. Cross-listed with ENGL 654.

655. Contemporary Theories of Rhetoric. Investigation of the major figures in rhetorical theory in the 20th and 21st centuries; analysis of the relationship between rhetoric and power; identifying new challenges for rhetoric in a global, multicultural, technological age. Cross-listed with ENGL 655

658. Seminar in Communication and Culture Investigation of the ways that culture, religion, identity, gender, popular culture, community, history, and related ideas are shaped through communication in order to understand the development of social norms, political values, and the human experience. May be repeated for credit up to 3 times.

659. Communication and Citizenship in the Public Sphere Theoretical examination of communication within democratic, republican, and liberal conceptions of citizenship; consideration of the ideal of the public sphere, and communication in global civil society. Specific attention to the practices of American citizenship within the global civil society.

662. Survey in Media Studies Survey of research and theory in media studies; overview of the historical and theoretical orientation of media studies and mediated communication; examination of approaches to analyzing media texts, technologies, audiences, reception processes, economics and/or industries.

663. Seminar in Media Studies Intensive work on selected topics of research in media studies; may address work in the areas of audience studies, media effects, industries, policy, international issues, media and culture, media history or theory. May be repeated for credit with different content up to a total of three times.

664. Media Processes & Effects Investigation of processes through which mediated messages influence our everyday lives; examination of social scientific approaches; understanding how viewers select, interpret and respond to mediated messages; includes media representations, mediated inter-group processes, news framing, political advertising, persuasive messages, entertainment media, popular culture, health campaigns, positive media psychology, new media technologies, pro-social media effects and critical media literacy.

665. Communication and Technology Examines the relationships between human communication and technology, investigating the social effects of communication technology, the quality of

messages, communicative practices, and rhetorical norms that typify effective communication in technological society.

667. Media and Health Examination of theories, methods and research that characterize the use of media in health contexts; focus on mass media influence on public health and/or strategic use of mass media to promote health behaviors; engagement of social and behavioral science approaches to media effects and/or critical perspectives on the study of media as social institutions. May be taken three times for credit.

669. Survey of Health Communication Theories and research in health communication considering functions and outcomes of communication processes in various health contexts, ranging from interpersonal settings to public campaigns. Emphasis on providing framework for synthesizing and critically evaluating health communication research.

670. Health Communication Seminar Investigation of a subject important to the understanding of health communication, such as persuasion and public health campaigns, physician-patient communication, or communication in health care organizations. May be repeated for credit with different content up to a total of three times.

681. Professional Seminar (0-1 credit) Provides socialization to the profession of communication, focusing on graduate students' roles as scholars and teachers; provides instruction on teaching, communication, conducting and writing publishable research, and fulfilling responsibilities to one's organization and profession.

685. Directed Studies; Credit (1 to 6 each semester) Directed studies in specific problem areas in communication. Student may take up to two sections of directed studies in communication in the same semester, with a maximum of 6 credits.

689. Special Topics in... (Credit 1 to 4 each semester) Selected topics in an identified area of communication. May be repeated for credit.

691. Research; (Credit 1 or more each semester) Research for thesis or dissertation.

APPENDIX B: ACCELERATED BACHELOR'S TO MASTER'S PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

600-Level COMM Core Courses (15 hours)

_____ COMM ____

_____ COMM ____

_____ COMM ____

_____ COMM ____

_____ COMM ____

_____ COMM ____

600-Level COMM Electives (9-12 Credit Hours)

_____ ____

_____ ____

_____ ____

_____ ____

400-Level Electives in COMM (6 Credit Hours)

_____ ____

_____ ____

600-Level Outside of COMM Course (3-6 hours)

_____ ____

_____ ____

TOTAL HOURS: 36

Residency requirement:

_____ At least 1 nine-hour semester OR 1 full 10-week summer session

Degree plan requirement:

_____ Degree plan filed by student through ogsdpps.tamu.edu in first full semester in G7 status

Apply for graduation:

_____ During first week of final semester through Howdy

BenchmarksFirst semester

_____ Begin tentative plan of study

Second semester

_____ Consult with MA Program Coordinator on coursework

Third semester

_____ Select Permanent Advisor

_____ Select exit project committee members

_____ Submit degree plan to Graduate & Professional School

Fourth semester

_____ Revise portfolio pieces for exit project

_____ Defend exit project portfolio

_____ Graduate

APPENDIX C: MASTER OF ARTS REQUIREMENTS (THESIS OPTION)

600-Level COMM Core Courses (15 hours)

_____ COMM ____

_____ COMM ____

_____ COMM ____

_____ COMM ____

_____ COMM ____

600-Level COMM Electives (6-9 Credit Hours)

_____ ----

_____ ----

_____ ----

600-Level Outside of COMM Course (3-6 hours)

_____ ----

_____ ----

Thesis Hours (6 hours)

_____ COMM 691

_____ COMM 691

TOTAL HOURS: 30

Residency requirement:

_____ At least 1 nine-hour semester OR 1 full 10-week summer session

Degree plan requirement:

_____ Degree plan filed with Graduate & Professional School (<https://ogsdpps.tamu.edu>) by student before third semester in program.

Apply for graduation:

_____ During first week of final semester through Howdy.

Thesis proposal (student downloads thesis proposal title page form from Graduate & Professional School website):

_____ Form and the proposal filed with Graduate & Professional School 25 days prior to submitting request for Final Exam (the thesis defense)

Request for Final Exam/Thesis Defense (student downloads form from Graduate & Professional School website):

_____ Filed with Graduate & Professional School 10 days prior to exam date

Thesis Defense (Graduate & Professional School form sent DIRECTLY to advisor; student downloads thesis approval form from thesis office website):

_____ Committee signs **form** from the Graduate & Professional School and the **form** from the thesis office

Benchmarks

First semester

_____ Begin tentative plan of study

Second semester

_____ Select Permanent Advisor

_____ Consult with advisor on coursework

_____ Submit 1 manuscript or panel proposal to a conference

_____ Select thesis committee members

_____ Submit degree plan to Graduate & Professional School

Third semester

_____ Have attended or are registered to attend at least one scholarly convention

_____ Write and meet to discuss thesis proposal

Fourth semester

_____ Complete and Defend thesis

_____ Graduate!

_____ Submit Dissertation to Graduate & Professional School

APPENDIX D: MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS (NON-THESIS)

600-Level COMM Core Courses (15 hours)

_____ COMM ____

_____ COMM ____

_____ COMM ____

_____ COMM ____

_____ COMM ____

600-Level COMM Electives (15-18 Credit Hours)

_____ ____

_____ ____

_____ ____

_____ ____

_____ ____

_____ ____

600-Level Outside of COMM Course (3-6 hours)

_____ ____

_____ ____

TOTAL HOURS: 36

Residency requirement:

_____ At least 1 nine-hour semester OR 1 full 10-week summer session

Degree plan requirement:

_____ Degree plan filed by student through ogsdps.tamu.edu before third semester in program

Apply for graduation:

_____ During first week of final semester through Howdy

BenchmarksFirst semester

_____ Begin tentative plan of study

Second semester

_____ Select Permanent Advisor

_____ Consult with advisor on coursework

_____ Submit 1 manuscript or panel proposal to a conference

_____ Select exit project committee members

_____ Submit degree plan to Graduate & Professional School

Third semester

_____ Have attended or are registered to attend at least one professional or scholarly convention

Fourth semester

_____ Complete coursework

_____ Revise portfolio pieces for exit project

_____ Defend exit project portfolio

_____ Graduate!

APPENDIX E: 64-HOUR PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

PH.D. COURSEWORK

TOTAL REQUIRED HOURS (coursework + dissertation):

64 Credits

Methods (9 hours)

_____ COMM 601 (3 hours)

_____ COMM ___ (choose from 610, 611, 615, 616, 645)

_____ COMM ___ (choose from 610, 611, 615, 616, 645)

Courses in Specialized Area (12 hours)

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

Courses Outside of Specialized Area (6 hours)

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

COMM Electives (3-6 hours)

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

Courses Outside of COMM (3-6 hours)

_____ ___

_____ ___

Two Professional Development courses:

_____ COMM 681 _____ COMM 681

TOTAL COURSEWORK HOURS: 36

Dissertation Hours: 28 hours of COMM 691

TOTAL HOURS for Ph.D. Degree Plan: **Minimum of 64 hours (coursework + dissertation)**

Residency requirement:

_____ One academic year taking 9 hours each term (semester or 10-week summer session)

Degree plan requirement:

_____ Degree plan filed through ogsdpss.tamu.edu before fourth semester in program

Preliminary exam checklist form (student downloads form from Graduate & Professional School):

_____ Prior to scheduling exams to determine all criteria have been met

Registration for preliminary exams:

_____ Must be enrolled for a minimum of 1 credit hour the semester or summer term the student will take the exam

Preliminary exam results (student downloads forms from Graduate & Professional School website):

_____ Two **forms** submitted to Graduate & Professional School to report results of comps (Report of Doctoral Preliminary Exam form and Preliminary Examination checklist) within 10 working days of oral defense

Dissertation proposal (student downloads form from Graduate & Professional School website):

_____ The proposal and TITLE PAGE **form** from Graduate & Professional School submitted after getting committee approval and at least 15 days prior to defense

Apply for graduation:

_____ During first week of final semester.

Request for Final Exam/Dissertation Defense (see Graduate & Professional School website):

_____ File **form** with Graduate & Professional School 10 working days prior to exam date

Dissertation Defense (Graduate & Professional School form sent DIRECTLY to advisor; student downloads thesis from thesis office website):

_____ Committee signs **form** from the Graduate & Professional School and the **form** from the thesis office

BenchmarksFirst semester

- _____ Begin tentative plan of study
- _____ Become involved in at least one research project (solo or with faculty)
- _____ Join 1 or more professional organizations

Second semester

- _____ Select Permanent Advisor
- _____ Consult with advisor on coursework
- _____ Submit 1-2 manuscripts to a conference

Third semester

- _____ Have attended or are registered to attend at least one scholarly convention
- _____ Engage in independent research project or work with a faculty member
- _____ Start preparing one first/solo authored manuscript for journal submission
- _____ Select Committee Members
- _____ Submit Degree Plan of Study with Graduate & Professional School

Fourth semester

- _____ Complete coursework
- _____ Meet with committee to plan Preliminary Exam
- _____ Submit at least two manuscripts to scholarly convention
- _____ Submit manuscript to a journal for publication

Year 3

- _____ Prepare a 2nd essay for submission for publication at a journal.
- _____ Have completed (or in the process of giving) at least 3 conference presentations
- _____ Complete and pass Preliminary Exams
- _____ Successfully defend dissertation proposal with committee
- _____ File proposal with Graduate & Professional School.
- _____ Submit 1-2 manuscripts to conferences.
 - _____ Prepare writing sample for job applications.

Year 4

- _____ Continue to Submit papers to conferences to journals
- _____ Prepare materials for job applications
- _____ Prepare research job talk (early in the fall)
- _____ Practice research job talk (coordinated through Graduate Placement Officer)
- _____ Complete dissertation
- _____ Schedule Final Exam (dissertation defense)
- _____ Submit Dissertation to Graduate & Professional School

APPENDIX F: 96-HOUR PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

PHD. COURSEWORK

TOTAL REQUIRED HOURS (coursework + dissertation):

96 Credits

Methods (9 hours)

_____ COMM 601 (3 hours)

_____ COMM ___ (choose from 610, 611, 615, 616, 645)

_____ COMM ___ (choose from 610, 611, 615, 616, 645)

Courses in Specialized Area (12 hours)

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

Courses Outside of Specialized Area (6 hours)

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

COMM Electives: Courses in Any COMM Area (9-12 hours)

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

Courses Outside of COMM (6-9 hours)

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

_____ COMM ___

Two Professional Development courses (0 hours):

_____ COMM 681 _____ COMM 681

TOTAL REQUIRED COURSEWORK HOURS: 45

Dissertation Hours: 51 hours of COMM 691

TOTAL HOURS for Ph.D. Degree Plan: Minimum of 96 hours (coursework + dissertation)

Residency requirement:

_____ One academic year taking 9 hours each term (semester or 10-week summer session)

Degree plan requirement:

_____ Degree plan filed through ogsdpss.tamu.edu prior to fourth semester in program

Preliminary exam checklist form (student downloads form from Graduate & Professional School):

_____ Prior to scheduling exams to determine all criteria have been met

Registration for preliminary exams:

_____ Must be enrolled for a minimum of 1 credit hour the semester or summer term the student will take the exam

Preliminary exam results (student downloads forms from Graduate & Professional School website):

_____ Two **forms** submitted to Graduate & Professional School to report results of comps (Report of Doctoral Preliminary Exam form and Preliminary Examination checklist) within 10 working days of oral defense

Dissertation proposal (student downloads form from Graduate & Professional School website):

_____ The proposal and TITLE PAGE **form** from Graduate & Professional School submitted after getting committee approval and at least 15 days prior to defense

Apply for graduation:

_____ During first week of final semester through degreeapp.tamu.edu

Request for Final Exam/Dissertation Defense (student downloads form from Graduate & Professional School website):

_____ File **form** with Graduate & Professional School 10 days prior to exam date

Dissertation Defense (Graduate & Professional School form sent DIRECTLY to advisor; student downloads thesis from thesis office website):

_____ Committee signs **form** from the Graduate & Professional School and the **form** from the thesis office

Benchmarks

First semester

- _____ Begin tentative plan of study
- _____ Become involved in at least one research project (solo or with faculty)
- _____ Join 1 or more professional organizations

Second semester

- _____ Select Permanent Advisor
- _____ Consult with advisor on coursework
- _____ Submit 1-2 manuscripts to a conference

Third semester

- _____ Have submitted at least one paper to a scholarly convention
- _____ Have attended or are registered to attend at least one scholarly convention
- _____ Engage in independent research project or work with a faculty member
- _____ Start preparing one first/solo authored manuscript for journal submission
 - _____ Complete Progress Review and Oral Interview **(October-early November)**
- _____ Submit Degree Plan of Study with Graduate & Professional School
- _____ Select Committee Members

Fourth semester

- _____ Submit at least two manuscripts to scholarly convention
- _____ Submit manuscript to a journal for publication

Year 3

- _____ Complete coursework
 - _____ Prepare a second manuscript for submission for publication at a journal
- _____ Have completed (or in the process of giving) at least three conference presentations
- _____ Meet with committee to plan PhD Preliminary Exam **(November 1)**
- _____ Complete and Pass Preliminary Exams **(April)**

Year 4

- _____ Submit manuscript or abstract to a national scholarly convention
- _____ Successfully defend dissertation proposal
- _____ File proposal with Graduate & Professional School.
- _____ Submit a manuscript for publication at a journal.
- _____ Prepare writing sample for job applications.
- _____ Update CV for Annual Review

Year 5

- _____ Continue to Submit papers to conferences to journals
- _____ Prepare materials for job applications
- _____ Prepare research job talk (early in the fall)
- _____ Practice research job talk (coordinated through Graduate Placement Officer)
- _____ Complete dissertation
- _____ Schedule Final Exam (dissertation defense)
- _____ Submit Dissertation to Graduate & Professional School

APPENDIX H: SUSPENSION & DISMISSAL FROM GRADUATE PROGRAM/ASSISTANTSHIPS

Students may be suspended or dismissed from the graduate program if they fail to remain in good standing, engage in unethical behavior, or both.

SUSPENSION FROM GRADUATE PROGRAM

Good standing is defined as meeting the minimum GPR, minimizing incompletes, and making good progress toward the degree. Suspension from the program means that students will not be allowed to register for classes, and as a result, will lose any funding that is contingent on their being a full time student (e.g., employment as teaching or research assistantships, fellowships and scholarships, student loans, and in-state tuition). Students may be suspended from the program if they fail to meet one or more of the following criteria.

Minimum GPR. Graduate students are expected to maintain an overall GPR of 3.30. If a student's overall GPR falls below 3.30 for one semester, the student must meet with their advisor and the doctoral program coordinator to discuss the issue and develop a plan and timeline for raising the GPR. The student may be dismissed if they fail to raise their GPR within the timeline established.

Excessive incompletes. If a graduate student accumulates two or more incompletes during a single semester—or has two or more outstanding incompletes at the end of a semester—the student will not be allowed to register for classes the following semester unless the two incompletes are converted to a satisfactory grade prior to the start of the following semester. In rare cases, an alternative timeline may be generated through consultation among the student, the advisor, and the doctoral program coordinator. (i.e., a timeline for conversion of the incompletes is set). If the incompletes are not resolved prior to the beginning of the following semester or an alternative timeline negotiated, the student will be reinstated the semester following the successful conversion of the incompletes to a satisfactory grade.

Failure to make normal progress toward the degree. Normal progress toward the degree is defined in terms of the timely and successful completion of: (1) coursework, (2) selecting a permanent advisor, (3) creating a program of study, (4) establishing preliminary examination, and thesis or dissertation committees, and (5) paperwork required by the department and the Graduate & Professional School. Appendices A, C, and D lay out the benchmarks by which normal progress is determined. Students are expected to develop active research programs while in graduate school. This involves submitting papers based on their research to conferences, revising those papers, and submitting them for publication. However, successful efforts to publish research, while strongly valued and generally necessary for employment in a competitive job environment, is not used to assess progress toward the degree.

If a student fails to make adequate progress, the student will not be allowed to register for the next semester unless the reason for failing to make adequate progress is addressed (e.g., establishing a committee) or a mutually agreeable alternative is negotiated by the student, the advisor, and the doctoral program coordinator (e.g., postponing preliminary exams for a semester).

DISMISSAL FROM GRADUATE PROGRAM

Students may be dismissed from the program if: (a) They fail to maintain good standing in the program for an extended period of time (i.e., more than one semester), (b) they are suspended from the program, but take insufficient action to be reinstated, (c) they fail to maintain a 3.30 overall GPR for two consecutive semesters, (d) they have one or more incompletes for two consecutive semesters, or (e) they act unethically in either their academic teaching or scholarship. Unethical conduct may be defined, but is not limited to, acts such as inappropriate relationships with students, plagiarism, improper use of university funds or equipment, and falsification of academic records. Depending upon the nature of the issue, extenuating circumstances may be taken into consideration by the Executive Associate Head when making a decision to dismiss a student from the program.

Students have a right to appeal dismissal from the program. The following five-step process should be followed when making an appeal.

- 1. *Student Notification.*** A registered or hand-delivered letter will be sent by the EAH to the student notifying him or her of dismissal from the program. In the case of a hand-delivered letter, the student shall sign a form indicating receipt of the letter. The letter will summarize the reasons for the dismissal and specify the date the dismissal goes into effect.
- 2. *Conference with the Executive Associate Head.*** The student may make a written request to the EAH to discuss the dismissal. If a mutually agreeable alternative to dismissal is negotiated during the meeting, the EAH will write a letter summarizing the resolution and provide a written copy to the student. A copy will also be placed in the student's file.
- 3. *Departmental Head and Graduate Committee Review.*** If the issue is not successfully resolved by the EAH, the student may request in writing for the Department Head to review the dismissal decision. The department head will request a review by the graduate committee. The graduate committee will hear evidence and testimony regarding the dismissal decision and the grounds for disputing the decision. Using a majority vote, the committee will recommend to the head to uphold, reject, or modify the dismissal decision.
- 4. *Dean Review.*** If the issue is not successfully resolved, the student or EAH may make a written appeal to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, or the Dean's designee, regarding the Graduate Affairs Committee decision. The Dean or the Dean's designee will provide additional information regarding the way the Dean's review is to be conducted and what kinds of evidence and testimony will be permitted.
- 5. *Graduate Appeals Panel.*** If the decision by the Dean or the Dean's designee is not satisfactory to either the student or the EAH, either party may request the Graduate Appeals Panel to take action. Information regarding the way the request may be made and the appeal is to be managed may be found in Rule 59 of Student Rules (student-rules.tamu.edu).

SUSPENSION AND DISMISSAL FROM RESEARCH AND/OR TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

Research Assistantships

Research assistantships (RAs) are funded by individual faculty members (or groups of faculty members) either through independent grants or research bursaries provided by the university (e.g., new faculty “start up” funds). Consequently, faculty supervisors select research assistants and the terms of an RA appointment are negotiated between the student and the faculty sponsor. There are a number of university guidelines for these negotiations (for example, a full-time research assistant cannot be required to work more than 20 hours per week), and the terms of these assignments must be approved by the department head, but specific activities, sites, and work schedules will depend on individual negotiations. As with their academic progress, RAs will receive annual reviews from their supervising professors, which will include evaluations of their work. Research assistants may be dismissed if their work is deemed to be inadequate by their supervising faculty member. Actionable behaviors include not completing assigned tasks or performing them at an inadequate level of quality, or violating university policies or relevant laws regarding research activities, confidentiality, or use of funds. When appropriate, RAs will first be given a formal notice that dismissal may be forthcoming which includes steps that must be taken to continue in the position, means of measuring progress toward meeting those requirements, and a timeline/deadline for doing so. In some cases, termination will take place at the end of a semester and students will be eligible to shift to a teaching assistantship as outlined in their offer letters (unless dismissal is related to violations of laws or university policies). However, in other cases, termination may be immediate and students will be given an alternate work assignment until the end of the term.

Teaching Assistantships

Teaching assistantships (TAs) are assigned on a semester-by-semester basis. Because of the extensive lead time for scheduling that is required by the university registrar, incoming graduate students normally will teach recitation sections of COMM 203, Public Speaking, during their first semester. In subsequent semesters, students who have successfully completed 18 hours of graduate coursework in COMM and distinguished themselves in the classroom may be offered other assignments that are related to their programs of study. Each TA will be assigned a supervising professor to help with course design, syllabus construction, teaching and evaluation strategies, and so on. General, department-wide expectations will be provided during new student orientation. Course-specific expectations will be provided by supervising faculty prior to the beginning of each semester. Teaching assistants may be dismissed if their work is deemed to be inadequate. Examples of actionable behavior include failure to hold class or make timely arrangements to have classes covered in cases of illness or personal crisis; repeatedly missing staff meetings or coming to them unprepared; refusing to communicate with students by holding regular office hours and/or responding to email messages; repeatedly being unprepared for class; arbitrary and/or capricious grading; and violation of university policies and/or state or federal laws, especially those related to student privacy (FERPA) or discrimination (overt or by creating a hostile educational environment); or failing to comply with the rules regarding outside employment that were described earlier in this *Handbook*. TA performance will be monitored throughout the semester through a wide variety of mechanisms. These approaches will be established by supervising faculty and

communicated to TAs. Teaching performance will be assessed by the supervising professor and communicated to the student in their annual review letter. If at some point a TA's performance is judged to be inadequate, supervising faculty must initiate an intervention that includes: (1) written notice of the action (either through campus mail or through the university email system); (2) identifies the problems that have been observed; and (3) establishes steps that must be taken to remedy those deficiencies. Item three will include criteria for measuring success in remedying identified problems, and a timeline/deadline for taking corrective action. Fortunately, both the department and the university have a number of opportunities in place through which teaching assistants can improve their teaching. Students who fail to complete a remediation program may be dismissed from their TA positions using the same dismissal process described in steps one through three of the procedures for academic dismissals.