

University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Communication Graduate Student Handbook 2010



Welcome to the Communication graduate program at UNO.

This handbook answers questions that arise between admission and completion of your degree, and it should help you with the process. Please keep this handbook as a reference to use throughout the program. Of course, you will still need to consult your advisor, the catalog online and other sources. It is your responsibility to know the rules and the deadlines. The handbook should make that job easier.

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Graduate Program Chair

Dr. Barbara Pickering, located in ASH 1070, is the current communication *graduate program chair*. Her phone number is 554-8804 and her e-mail address is bpickering@mail.unomaha.edu. She is the primary graduate advisor for the school. Any general advising, paperwork, scheduling of comprehensive exams and thesis supervisory committees should go through the *graduate program chair*. All other graduate faculty members (listed below) can assist students in planning their courses and committees. *Please note, from 1/09-8/09 Teresa Lamsam will be the Interim Graduate Program Chair. 554-4853, tlamsam@unomaha.edu

Communication Graduate Faculty Members and Fellows (GF)

Dr. Chris Allen, Associate Professor (Ph.D., University of Missouri, 1996): broadcast history; journalism history; journalism & popular culture, journalism ethics.

Dr. Gail F. Baker, Dean and Professor (Ph.D., University of Missouri, 1997): multicultural communication; reputation management; crisis management.

Dr. Shereen Bingham, Professor (Ph.D., Purdue University, 1988): conflict resolution, sexual harassment; gender and communication; message strategies.

Dr. Robert Carlson, Professor (Ph.D., Purdue University, 1978): communication attitudes, behaviors, anxiety; rhetorical sensitivity; organizational communication; health communication; quantitative methods.

Dr. Chin-Chung Chao, Assistant Professor (Ph.D. - Bowling Green State University) Organizational Communication, Leadership, Intercultural and Interpersonal Communication, and Female Leadership.

Dr. Ana Cruz, Assistant Professor (Ph.D., University of Nebraska, 2007): marriage and the family; race, ethnicity, and culture.

Dr. Karen Dwyer (GF), Associate Professor (Ph.D., University of Nebraska, 1995): instructional communication; communication apprehension; communication education; training & development; public speaking.

Dr. Robert Franklin (GF), Dir. Media Operations(Ph.D., Arkansas State University): broadcast education, International communication.

Dr. Michael Hilt (GF), Asst. Dean/Professor (Ph.D., University of Nebraska, 1994): broadcast education and social research of broadcast managers; media and the elderly; Local TV news.

Dr. Bruce Johansen (GF), Professor (Ph.D., University of Washington, 1979):Native American studies; environmental issues.

Dr. Teresa Lamsam, Associate Professor (Ph.D., University of Nebraska, 2002): Native American Studies. (MA, University of Missouri, 1996): Native American press; development communication.

Dr. Lynnette Leonard, Assistant Professor (Ph.D., University of Kansas, 2006): history of rhetoric; rhetorical criticism; new communication technology; critical theory.

Dr. Jeremy Lipschultz (GF), Professor (Ph.D., Southern Illinois University, 1990): communication law, technology & policy, internet/computer-mediated communication; digital media; mass communication theory & research.

Dr. Dave Ogden, Associate Professor (Ph.D., University of Nebraska, 1999): public relations; radio production; baseball & culture; baseball history.

Dr. Barbara Pickering, Associate Professor (Ph.D., University of Southern California, 1992): gender and communication; political communication; rhetorical criticism; argumentation.

Dr. Marshall Prisbell (GF), Professor (Ph.D., University of Nebraska, 1981): relationship development & skills; instructional development; nonverbal communication.

Prof. Hugh Reilly, Assistant Professor (MA, University of Nebraska, 1997): journalism history; public relations; advertising.

Dr. Cynthia Robinson-Moore, Assistant Professor (Ph.D., University of Nebraska, 2005): cultural communication; identity; race; family.

Dr. Randall Rose, Associate Professor (Ph.D., Purdue University, 1977): organizational communication; organizational culture; communication theory.

Dr. Michael Sherer (GF), Professor (Ph.D., Southern Illinois University, 1982): legal, ethical, historical and contemporary issues in photojournalism; communication law, first amendment.

Dr. Deborah Smith-Howell, Professor (Ph.D., University of Texas, 1993): political communication; rhetorical criticism; communication education.

Dr. Paige Toller, Assistant Professor (Ph.D., University of Nebraska, 2006): bereavement; marital communication; feminism.

Dr. Adam Tyma, Assistant Professor (Ph.D. - North Dakota State University 2008): Pop Culture, Mass Media, Visual Rhetoric.

Dr. Sherrie Wilson, Assistant Professor (Ph.D., University of Minnesota, 2001): communication law; journalism ethics; print journalism practice.

Admission

Following advising from the school of communication graduate program chair, a student seeking admission should:

- Submit the admission form and fee to the *admissions office*. This should be done first to guarantee that our department will receive official transcripts.
- Send the personal data form and essay to the *graduate program chair*. The 500 word essay in which you: 1.) Describe your understanding of the communication field; 2.) Identify areas of communication that interest you; and, 3.) Explain why/how you think this particular program will help you. The essay must be typed, double spaced, and attached to the personal data form.
- Have three references send letters to the *graduate program chair*.

International students are required to have a minimum score of 550 on the TOEFL (213 for students completing a computer-based TOEFL).

If you have received notice of **unconditional** admission, be sure you know when you can register for classes and seek counseling. Once you receive a BRUNO registration card, contact the graduate program chair to select appropriate course work and to have your advising flag removed.

If you received **provisional** admission, be sure that you understand the conditions. Generally, if your academic record was close but not clearly above our requirements, you may be required to earn a 3.25 or above for the first 12 hours of course work. Other common conditions include completion of specified undergraduate courses for students without the required undergraduate background in communication. If the condition calls for completion of undergraduate hours, discuss the required courses with the graduate program chair.

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate students interested in a Graduate Teaching Assistantship for the School of Communication must complete and application form and attach a 250-word essay detailing their communication background and their reasons for pursuing the position. The deadline for application is **March 1**.

Assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis. Interviews will be conducted with the finalists for the assistantships. The GRA Interview Committee will consist of the Graduate Program Chair, School Director, Speech Communication GTA Coordinator and

Mass Communication GTA Coordinator. Possible questions could include, but would not be limited to, the following: What interested you in our program? Why do you want to pursue an M.A. in Communication? What classes outside our school are of interest to you? What academic areas are of interest to you? Where do you see yourself in two years (or, after graduation)? What teaching experience do you have? How do you view the roles/responsibility of a Graduate Teaching Assistant?

The Graduate Faculty considers a student who is pursuing graduate study and holding a Graduate Assistantship to be carrying the equivalent of a full-time work load and therefore, discourages the practice of holding additional jobs which may interfere with satisfactory performance of assigned duties. With the approval of your graduate program committee and the Dean for Graduate Studies, an additional assignment may be accepted if professionally relevant and if your total FTE does not exceed .49.

Advising

The graduate program chair serves as advisor to all communication graduate students when they first enter the program. You may select another member of the school's graduate faculty as your advisor at any time. Here's what usually happens: students stay with the program chair until they discover, typically through course work, a faculty member whose research or other professional interests coincide more with the student's interests. It makes good sense to work with the one faculty member as your advisor and your thesis or project committee chair because that individual will best know you and your work. However, students may continue to be advised at registration by their initial advisor if they choose.

Curriculum

All students who major in communication are required to complete 12 semester hours of core courses with an average grade of B or higher across the core; Communication 8010, 8020, 8470, and 8570. The core provides basic, intensive and broad coverage of communication as a field of advanced study. The core integrates mass and speech communication theories and research methodologies. If a student fails to achieve an average grade of B in the overall core, the student may retake each core course with a grade below B once, and must obtain an average grade of B or higher to remain in the program.

8010 Seminar in Communication Research: Quantitative Emphasis (3)

Philosophy of scientific investigation from a quantitative standpoint, including process and products, in comparison to other ways of knowing. Introduces students to quantitative designs and statistical applications for communication research and to data-gathering methods appropriate for such designs. Emphasis is placed on preparing, evaluating and writing quantitatively oriented communication research proposals and reports. Interplay between quantitative and qualitative data is discussed.

8020 Seminar in Communication Research: Qualitative Emphasis (3)

Philosophy of scientific investigation from a qualitative standpoint, including process and products, in comparison to other ways of knowing. Introduces students to qualitative designs for communication research and to methods appropriate for qualitatively oriented designs. The interplay between qualitative and quantitative data in communication research is discussed as are techniques for preparing, evaluating and writing qualitatively oriented communication research reports.

8470 Foundations Seminar: Speech Communication (3)

This seminar was designed for students preparing to take the major, minor or advanced seminars in Communication. The course will expose students to the historical development of the Speech Communication discipline. It will also address issues involved in conceptualizing and doing research in Speech Communication. Additionally, the course will discuss Speech Communication in selected contexts (e.g. intercultural, organizational and small group) and areas of study (e.g., persuasion, nonverbal communication). Finally, future direction of the discipline will be addressed.

8570 Foundations Seminar: Mass Communication (3)

This seminar was designed for students preparing to take the major, minor or advanced seminars in Communication. The mass communication system in the United States will be examined in terms of its basic philosophical and legal assumptions and the current political, cultural, sociological and psychological theories relating to the process and effects of mass communication.

Core courses fill during the pre-registration period, thus you may not be able to enroll in core courses in your first semester of graduate study. However, students are encouraged to complete the four core courses early in their program of study.

Certificate in Human Resources and Training

The School of Communication is part of the Graduate Certificate Program in Human Resources and Training (HR & T). Students can choose between the **Training and Development Concentration** (focused on enhancing training skills, i.e., designing, implementing, and assessing training programs), or the **Human Resources Concentration** (focused on enhancing the management of organizational performance, i.e., recruitment, performance evaluation, motivation and retention). Examples of courses in the HR & T program include: Communication Training & Development Skills (SPCH 8156), Communication for Instructional Settings (SPCH 8166), Communication Leadership and Power in Organizations (SPCH 8186), Cross-Cultural Communication (SPCH 8536), or Persuasion (SPCH 8156). Students interested in the 15-credit HR & T graduate certificate will need to complete a certification application from the *UNO Graduate Office*. Students who wish to work towards a master's degree in communication and earn the HR & T certificate at the same time must apply to both programs.

Certificate in Technical Communication

The Technical Communication Graduate Certificate prepare students with the strategies for interpreting technical information and articulating that content to multiple audiences.

These abilities are necessary for students to continually succeed within a fast-paced, constantly evolving environment of the workplace.

Core classes for this certificate are: JOUR 8816- Digital Literacies for Technical Communicators, JOUR 8836 – Technical Communication, JOUR 8856 – Information Design for Technical Communicators, JOUR 8876 – Technical Editing, and JOUR 8896 – Capstone Course in Technical Communication.

Graduate Specializations

The School of Communication has created a list of graduate specializations. These specializations, while not required, were designed to enhance the depth and breadth of graduate student knowledge in concentrated areas of Communication and related disciplines. Choosing an area of specialization can also provide a more coherent structure to a graduate student's program of study. Graduate students often choose an area that builds upon his or her prior background or prepares the graduate student for future professional experience and /or doctoral studies.

Additionally, students may create their own area of specialization based on personal interest or in preparation for specific careers by choosing courses from several of the areas listed below. Graduate students are encouraged to speak with the Graduate Chair for assistance in choosing a specialization area. The categories for these specializations are:

- **Communication Law, Technology, & Policy**
- **Interpersonal/Cross-Cultural Communication**
- **Instructional Communication**
- **Organizational Communication**
- **Public Relations**
- **Public/Political Communication**

Admission to Candidacy

A *Plan of Study* is required of all graduate students who have successfully completed six hours of course work.

Consult with your advisor, complete the form, and file it with the graduate program chair. Failure to do so may result in delays in completing the degree. In some cases a student may, in agreement with the advisor, delay filing the listing of course work. The graduate chair should be informed of these situations, as explained below. School rules forbid registration beyond eighteen hours if no plan of study has been approved.

Candidacy means that the student is on track for the graduate degree and that any conditions placed on admission have been removed. The six-hour completion rule cited above applies if the admission was unconditional. If, however, the student was required to complete the first twelve hours with a 3.25, for example, the *Plan of Study* should be filed after completing those hours. **All applicants for candidacy must have at least a 3.00 average and no incompletes.**

The *Plan of Study* lists your courses, semester of completion, and grades. In some cases, you should list your preferred course in the form's left column and an alternate course in the right column. It is not generally acceptable to list more than one or two such options, and the alternatives should make sense in terms of the overall plan or emphasis for elective courses. **You should consult with an advisor on course availability. Any later changes must be submitted through a formal petition process involving another form.**

Your application must be signed by your advisor and then submitted to the graduate program chair. If possible, secure these signatures personally and after making your own copy, deliver to the graduate program chair. The form will be retained in your file.

Quality of Work

All UNO graduate students must maintain quality of work standards. The graduate catalog states that *automatic dismissal will result if any student receives nine hours of "B-", "C" or "C+" work in any courses taken in the student's major field of study or in any courses included in the plan of study.* Students must maintain a "B" average (3.0) in all graduate work. Additionally, the faculty have adopted standards related to the core. Consult the official course catalog.

Reinstatement Policy

A graduate student in Communication may petition for reinstatement if he or she is dropped from the program. The student must initiate a petition for reinstatement within a 24-month period following notification of dismissal. The student must provide the following information to the school Graduate Program Chair:

- 1.) A letter addressed to the GPC explaining the circumstances that led to a grade of "C-" or lower, or to an unacceptable GPA. The student should explain any special or extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control that may have prevented him or her from achieving a passing grade or an acceptable GPA. Supporting documentation from a physician, counselor, employer, academic advisor, or faculty member may be included with the explanation letter and is recommended, but is not required. The graduate program committee highly recommends at least one letter from a faculty member supporting the student's reinstatement.
- 2.) A copy of the student's transcript.

The Graduate Program committee will review reinstatement petitions on a case-by-case basis within one month (during the regular academic year) of submission of the completed petition. The student will be informed by mail whether or not reinstatement has been granted

Comprehensive Examinations

Comprehensive Exam Policy and Procedures

The following policy and procedures were approved by the graduate faculty in 1989:

Policy Statement: The comprehensive exam process represents a unique moment in a graduate student's career. It comes at a time when the individual has completed an organized plan of study that has included courses from a rather broad range of subjects. At the completion of this program of study, the individual is in a position to reflect on the nature and substance of that experience before moving on to a more specialized undertaking of writing a thesis or completing a project.

The reflection and synthesis of knowledge gained through graduate study lies at the heart of the comprehensive examination process. Comprehensive exams provide the individual with the opportunity to pull together a sometimes seemingly diverse body of information gained through formal course work into a more coherent whole. The exams, in other words, are not tied to specific courses (i.e., such as final exams are) but rather are written in such a manner that passing responses must draw upon knowledge gained through course work in one's entire program of study.

In order to achieve this all-encompassing nature of the examination process, the actual exams are divided into three areas of emphasis: (1) communication research, (2) communication theory and (3) specialized study in communication. A brief discussion of each of the areas follows:

Communication Research

The exam area in communication research places primary emphasis on understanding how one embarks on a quest for new knowledge. This includes an overall knowledge of how to organize and conduct a specific research task. An awareness of how to formulate a research question, how to conduct an appropriate review of literature, how to select an appropriate method for the research task

ahead, how to draw meaningful conclusions from the information gained, and how to package the research results are all included in this exam area. More than a methodological (i.e., statistical, historical, legal, etc.) exam, this area requires the individual to demonstrate an understanding of how successful communication research is organized, conducted, analyzed and presented.

Communication Theory

The exam area of communication theory places primary emphasis on a general understanding of the communication process. Knowledge of the general trends, issues, and theories that underlie human communication through personal interactions as well as through the mass media is required for successful performance in this area. By drawing upon one's knowledge of the fundamental principles underlying the traditional disciplines of speech communication and mass communication, the individual will discuss how communication is carried out on any level of human interaction.

Specialized Study in Communication

Throughout an individual's pursuit of knowledge in the graduate program, certain topics often arise and become special areas of interest. As courses are taken, papers are written, and readings are discussed, an overall body of specialized knowledge often underlies and unifies a person's graduate studies program. This exam area concentrates on the individual's own area of interest and expertise. Of a much tighter focus than the communication research and communication theory exam areas, the individual demonstrates a thorough understanding of a particular sub-field of communication -- a sub-field that may very well be the individual's anticipated subject area for the upcoming thesis or project.

Comprehensive Examination Procedures

There are ten comprehensive examination procedures approved by the graduate faculty in 1990:

1. Each student must take a written comprehensive examination as part of her/his graduate studies.ⁱ The exam will usually be taken following the completion of all course work. A student may, with the approval of her/his advisor, take the comprehensive exam during the final semester of course work.
2. The comprehensive exam will be based upon the following three areas: (1) communication theory, (2) communication research, and (3) specialized study in communication. A detailed description of each of the three areas is included in the Comprehensive Exam Policy Statement.
3. When the student is ready to begin the comprehensive exam process, the individual will prepare a *curriculum vita*, a master list of all courses taken in her/his program of study. This list of courses should include titles of all papers written, projects conducted, key texts read, plus other relevant information that will provide graduate faculty members with an overall view of the student's graduate training.
4. Once the *curriculum vita* is completed, the graduate student will consult with her/his advisor to determine which three graduate faculty members will write the questions for the comprehensive exam. Once the faculty members are identified, the graduate student will then request graduate faculty members' participation in her/his comprehensive exam. The three graduate faculty members will serve as the graduate student's comprehensive exam committee. At this time, contact the school secretary at 402-554-2600 to schedule the comprehensive exam. File the *Graduate Student Comprehensive Examination School of Communication Assessment Form* with the Department secretary at this time.

5. It is understood that all graduate faculty members are both qualified and capable of writing comprehensive exam questions for graduate students. Any graduate faculty member, however, has the option of either accepting or declining to participate in any comprehensive exam.
6. Each member of the comprehensive examination committee will generally write and evaluate only one exam area question for a particular graduate student. Questions written for the comprehensive exam will reflect the general nature of the exam area as discussed in the comprehensive exam policy statement as well as the nature of course work undertaken by the graduate student as reflected in the student's curriculum vita.
7. Graduate faculty members are encouraged to provide the graduate student with a set of written guidelines/suggestions for study for the comprehensive exam. Actual questions for the comprehensive exam will be provided at the time of the exam.
8. Each exam area question will generally be designed to be written in approximately two hours. The entire series of answers must be completed within three days.
9. If a graduate faculty member feels that a graduate student has failed a question that the graduate faculty member wrote, the other two members of the comprehensive exam committee will read the exam. If one of the two additional readers agrees with the original graduate faculty member's evaluation, the student will fail that exam area. A student must pass all three exam areas in order to continue in the degree program.
10. In the event of a failure in any area of the comprehensive exam, the student may request a second exam question in the same area no sooner than one month and no later than 12 months after the original failure. The second exam question will be written by the graduate faculty member who wrote the original question. No exam area may be taken more than twice.

Thesis or Project

All research involving human subjects must receive the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). UNO is committed to the safety and dignity of human subjects as new knowledge is gained in behavioral and social science research. Those instructors and students involved in human subject research must maintain the same high ethical standards. In order to accomplish this, a web-based training *IRB Certification Program* has been established. The program consists of thirteen (13) individual modules with questions at the end of each module. The modules are designed to be completed sequentially, but you may take them in any order desired. The web-based course is designed to be user friendly and allow you to complete the whole process on your own schedule without any problems. To help you with any problems or questions that might come up, you need to contact your Thesis/Project Committee Chair (advisor). The web site for the training is:

[www.courses.miami.edu/courses/irb training](http://www.courses.miami.edu/courses/irb%20training).

When you have completed the required training on the web site, you will be directed back to a page on the University of Nebraska web site. You will then be given instructions on how to download and print the *Certification Statement*. The *Certification Statement* must be completed, signed and forwarded to the Office of Regulatory Affairs, Box 986810, Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha, NE 68198-6810. After printing the statement, you will be given instructions on how to register in the IRB Database.

Thesis Option

(30 credit hours including COMM 8990)

In this option, the student must complete: the 12 hour core, 12 additional hours of graduate elective courses, and a six hour thesis, based on a proposal approved by the student's committee. The student must write a thesis which is defended orally before his or her thesis committee. No more than nine hours from outside the school may be counted toward degree requirements.

Project Option

(36 credit hours including COMM 8970)

In the project option, the student must complete: the 12 hour core, at least one additional three hour graduate-only seminar, 18 additional hours of graduate elective courses, and a three hour graduate project. The project, in lieu of a thesis, is based on a proposal approved by the student's committee. The student must complete a project which is defended orally before his or her project committee. No more than 12 hours from outside the school may be counted toward degree requirements.

NOTE: Project students should sign-up for COMM 8970 Graduate Project (3 hours). Thesis students will continue to take COMM 8990 Thesis (6 hours). All other independent studies will continue to be under COMM 8980.

Check with the Graduate Office for:

- A timeline check list.
- Specifications, such as paper quality, etc.
- Style manuals approved by the department.
- Sample title and acceptance pages.

What follows supplies some, but not all the brochure information, plus other advice on thesis, project, and committee. Most students follow the thesis option; unless exceptions are noted, references to the thesis also apply to the thesis-equivalent creative project as

well as the independent research or creative project required for the non-thesis option.

When and how should you begin?

Think about thesis ideas in every class right from the start. It is a great advantage to discover a research interest early and develop it through class research assignments and other opportunities. But everyone is not that fortunate. Many students develop their eventual thesis topic as a research proposal for the core research seminars. Whenever you work with a faculty member on a research assignment, weigh and discuss its potential as a thesis topic.

Advisor and Committee Roles

Students are assigned the graduate program chair as initial advisor, but should seek an advisor based on course work and special interests. As a practical matter, some common interest or specialty will bring you together with the best faculty member to advise your thesis or project. Ideally and in practice, this relationship usually grows from classroom experience. You should work well with the professor, and she or he should be interested in your ideas.

Topic Approval Path

1. Ask your choice as advisor to direct the thesis and chair the committee. Consult with the advisor on other possible committee members.
2. Committees must have at least two other members, including one from *outside* the School of Communication. You may ask for specific members or seek your advisor's suggestions. Generally, members should be chosen for their expertise and interest in your topic.

3. Discuss the proposal. Some advisors may require a full proposal before agreeing to chair your committee. Others will settle for less then, but all will require a formal proposal which must be approved by the thesis committee.ⁱⁱ Typically, the proposal will include statements of your interest and purpose, bibliography and review of relevant literature, as well as methodology, but the requirements will vary somewhat with advisor and topic. It is common for the proposal to be the first three chapters of the thesis.
 4. Meet with the thesis committee for discussion and approval of your proposal. It is common for students to make a formal oral presentation of the proposal, and for committee members to ask questions and suggest revisions. Each student must file the supervisory committee form months before graduation.
3. Defend the thesis orally before the committee. At this stage, the thesis/project is as complete as you can make it, but at least minor changes are commonly required. If major changes are required, another committee meeting may be held before approval. The committee must sign the official signature page that is included in the original bound thesis.
 4. Check and double-check all the deadlines and details. Be aware of all the Graduate Office deadlines if you are submitting the thesis with a close eye on a graduation date. Their deadlines do not bend even slightly. Review all the detailed requirements for the bound copies of your thesis. Provide one bound copy of your completed thesis for the department to keep.

Thesis Completion

1. Sign up for thesis hours. Consult with your advisor on whether to register for all six hours, three hours, or fewer. Most commonly, students sign up for three hours in two consecutive semesters. Both your interests and the advisor's should be considered. (You may have registered for thesis hours during the proposal development period discussed earlier.) Students must file a *Proposed Supervisory Committee* form and apply for graduation in the semester before they expect to graduate.
2. Work primarily with the committee chair (advisor) as you proceed, submit draft versions of parts of your thesis/project for feedback. In most cases, other committee members are also consulted at several stages and students should seek their advice as needed, but most work between proposal approval and submitting of a final full draft usually is confined to student and advisor unless another committee member is performing a specialized role (for example with statistical analysis, etc.). The *Thesis/Thesis-Equivalent Project Proposal Approval Form* must be completed at this time.

Project Completion

When proposed in place of a thesis, an independent research or creative project may differ from a thesis in several ways, but not in the quality of the final product.

Requirements still include an advisor, a two-member committee, approval of a written proposal and a completed product approved by the committee.

If it is an academic research project, the same style rules and proposal guidelines noted for the thesis will still apply. If it draws on the standards of mass media forms or literature, for example, appropriate guidelines will be agreed on through the advising and committee process. Provide one bound copy of your completed project for the department to keep.

In all cases, students are obligated to make any and all changes required by the committee to make the project commensurate with the number of graduate credits allowed and the quality of work expected of persons holding the MA in communication.

Frequently Asked Questions

What can I do with a graduate degree in communication? There is no simple answer to this question. Some of our graduates have gone on to do a Ph.D. and teaching careers. Others wanted to be more competitive in the job market. Still others have felt the degree would assist them in management-level positions, or in any situation that requires a fuller understanding of the communication process, or requires finding solid answers to communication questions.

What if I studied something else as an undergraduate? Generally, we require at least 15 hours of undergraduate course work in communication to prepare for the graduate program.

What happens in comprehensive examinations? Students must seek out faculty to write three questions – theory, research, and a special area of interest. Faculty typically ask students to study for the questions for 4-8 weeks. Additional reading may be required. Synthesis is expected.

How do I find a thesis advisor? Usually, this is a natural process following success in a course. Students often write a research paper under advisement of a faculty member, and that paper leads to a thesis proposal.

Why is the thesis advisor so important? Most of your work will be done under the direction of the thesis advisor. She or he will help identify other committee members, help edit the proposal and help guide the process.

How do I go about doing the project? First, discuss this option with the Graduate Chair. Your Plan of Study will need to reflect additional course work. You should have an applied research project in mind (such as work-related research). It is your responsibility to contact faculty members with an interest in the project.

When do I take thesis or project hours? These should come near or at the end of your program, under the direction of an advisor. Always consult with faculty before scheduling courses or meetings.

ⁱ Comprehensive examinations are scheduled by the student with consent of the appropriate faculty members. Three faculty write the questions. Students should provide a CV (see sample located on the graduate display rack outside of ASH 108) to each question writer that outlines courses taken, books read and papers written. Test and room scheduling must be done with the school secretary in ASH 140 (402-554-2520 or 402-554-2600).

ⁱⁱ Committee meetings are held in ASH 107W (Small Conference Room) or ASH 107I (Reading Room). Rooms need to be reserved. Contact the department secretary or your graduate program adviser for room reservations.

Revised 9/22/2010

