



University of Colorado  
Denver

Department of Communication

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences



# Handbook for Graduate Study

Department of Communication  
University of Colorado Denver

<https://clas.ucdenver.edu/communication/>

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Dear Graduate Students,

Welcome to the Department of Communication at the University of Colorado Denver. We are glad that you chose to continue your higher education here at CU Denver.

Graduate school is an exciting time of growth, exploration, and change. On top of coursework, you will encounter new ways of thinking, writing, and mastering a host of policies and procedures. This book is intended to assist you in understanding these processes by giving you an overview of the Department, our expectations of you, what you can expect from us, and policies and procedural guidance. It is, however, just the beginning of what you will learn during your time in our Department. To further assist you in understanding how to pursue mentorship in the Department, it accompanies a guide to getting the mentorship you need, which offers a detailed overview of graduate school expectations.

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) will help you navigate your time here, and I, along with the rest of the faculty, are delighted to assist as well, so please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions, concerns, or comments you might have. While you will be assigned a temporary advisor and will eventually select a permanent advisor, you should also reach out to each faculty member and to other graduate students so that you have a wide support network. The more interlocutors you have, the wiser you will be. And do not forget to get acquainted with our program assistant, **Michelle Médal**, who will also help you navigate your time in the program.

In closing, we at the Communication Department wish you a stimulating and successful first semester and a wonderful experience in graduate school.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LB' followed by a flourish.

Dr. Lisa Keränen  
Associate Professor and Chair  
[lisa.keranen@ucdenver.edu](mailto:lisa.keranen@ucdenver.edu)  
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DISCLAIMER: This graduate student handbook, which includes parts of the Graduate School Rules, does not constitute a contract with the University of Colorado Denver, Denver Campus Graduate School or the CU Denver Department of Communication, either expressed or implied. The Graduate School reserves the right at any time to change, delete, or add to any of the provisions at its discretion. For the most up-to-date rules, see the Graduate School's website.

## THE MA PROGRAM

The Communication Department at the University of Colorado Denver comprises a vibrant community of scholars and teachers who offer a broad, or “generalist,” MA in communication. Our professors are nationally recognized leaders and award-winning teachers and scholars in areas such as rhetoric and public affairs, organizational communication, social justice, health communication, media studies, environmental communication, national security, and feminist theory. Your job as a graduate student is to put together a unique blend of coursework from in and outside the Department that will help you achieve your goals.

We offer MA programs with both academic and professional students in mind. Some of our graduates in the academic track go on for doctoral degrees in communication at programs such as Temple University, UNC-Chapel Hill, the University of Colorado at Boulder, and the University of Utah. Others choose a professional path and have accepted employment at places as diverse as Nike, Fox 31 TV, and the Bureau of Land Management.

More detailed information about our program may be found in the MA section of our Department's website.

## DEPARTMENT MISSION

The mission of the Department of Communication is threefold. First, the department aims to create a learning environment in which students develop the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to use communication to create a more civil and humane world. Second, the department strives to create scholarship of the highest intellectual merit and to contribute scholarly and creative works that further the study, teaching, and practice of communication. Third, the department aspires to provide excellent service to our college, university, profession, and community.

**Our educational mission is to guide students toward developing the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to use communication to create a more civil and humane world.**

By *civil* and *humane*, we do not mean good manners or a superficial veneer of politeness spread over interaction. We mean, instead, a way of communicating that is rooted in an acceptance and appreciation of others and that involves communicating in ways that express respect for and acknowledgment of others.

Communication that is rooted in civility and humaneness acknowledges people's space in the world, regardless of their station in life, wealth or lack of it, politics, religion, or any other quality.

As part of our mission statement, we have identified three communication skill areas that are associated with the creation of a more civil and humane world. Each of the courses we teach contributes to understanding in at least one of the three areas.

## CREATION OF COMMUNITY

When individuals know and care about one another, they are less likely to be adversarial or disrespectful. This skill area fosters recognition that reasonable people do sometimes disagree and that multiple interpretations of subjects exist. We help people learn the ability to discover and use various options for managing and resolving conflicts.

### **ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION**

We teach how to understand the underlying beliefs and values inherent in messages. Through critical thinking about communication using a variety of analytical systems, students learn to identify, understand and assess the range of options available in the construction of messages.

### **PRODUCTION OF COMMUNICATION**

We teach how best to produce effective oral, written, virtual and mediated communication that can contribute to society. Our students engage in actual production and creation of messages using a wide range of communicative forms and technologies.

## **TENURE STREAM GRADUATE FACULTY**

### **Soumia Bardhan**

Intercultural/international communication, rhetoric, Islamic studies, religion, politics, gender, and new media

### **Hamilton Bean**

Organizational communication, culture, and change; national security; mobile alerting

### **Catalina M. de Onís**

Environmental and energy rhetorics, Latina/o/x communication, Puerto Rican studies, de/coloniality, instructional and applied communication, reproductive justice, and rhetorical field methods

### **Larry A. Erbert**

Organizational communication and leadership; environmental communication; conflict, mediation, and negotiation; interpersonal communication

### **Sarah K. Fields**

Gender, history of sport and culture, injury

### **Mia Fischer**

Critical media studies, queer studies, and surveillance studies

### **Amy A. Hasinoff**

New media, media studies, gender, and sexuality

### **Stephen John Hartnett**

Contemporary rhetorical theory and criticism; American history; prisons, the death penalty, and contemporary social justice activism; citizenship and advocacy

### **Lisa Keränen**

Contemporary rhetorical theory and criticism; rhetoric of science, medicine, health; bioethics; biosecurity; health communication from a qualitative perspective

Other faculty who can serve on your graduate committees but not as your primary advisor:

**Yvette Bueno-Olson**, CU Denver COMM, health communication and diversity

**Patrick Dodge**, CU ICB, intercultural communication, diversity, China

**Therese Jones**, CU Anschutz, health humanities, film and health

**Tamara Powell**, CU Denver COMM, health communication

**EJ Yoder**, CU Denver COMM, intercultural communication, globalization, food

### **Emeritus**

**Barbara Walkosz**: health communication, public health campaigns

**Brenda J. Allen**: critical organizational communication; social identity; diversity; critical pedagogy

**Sonja K. Foss**: contemporary rhetorical theory and criticism, feminist perspectives on communication, visual rhetoric, and thesis and dissertation writing



## DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The MA in Communication requires **33 credit hours** (11 courses) and a comprehensive exam (or other project).

*Note: Students who enrolled prior to Spring 2019 may choose to graduate by fulfilling the requirements that were in place at the time they began the program. Consult with an advisor.*

### **1. COMM 6013 Introduction to Graduate Work in Communication (3 credit hours)**

Students must take COMM 6013 in the first semester it is available; it is typically offered only in the Fall semester.

### **2. COMM 5221 Research Methods: Qualitative (3 credit hours):**

Students must take COMM 5221 in the first semester it is available; it is typically offered only in the Spring semester.

### **3. Two Additional Graduate Seminars in Communication (6 credit hours):**

Students must take two graduate seminars (6 credit hours) from the Communication Department. Graduate seminars are 6000-level courses in which there are no undergraduate students. COMM 6013, thesis, or project credits does not count towards the two graduate seminars.

In addition to typically offering COMM 6013 in the Fall and COMM 5221 in the Spring, the department often offers only one additional 6710 seminar each Fall and Spring semester. Students should take that additional seminar whenever possible in order to fill the seminar requirements. If the available seminar is outside the student's primary interests, students are still strongly encouraged to take that seminar to broaden their education.

Graduate seminars that are offered frequently include:

- COMM 6710 Topics in Communication (can be repeated with different topics)
- COMM 6700 Thesis and Project Practicum

### **4. Seven Electives (21 credit hours):**

Courses that count as electives include:

- Additional graduate seminars from the Communication department

- 4000/5000 level Communication courses (“bridge” courses that include both graduate students and advanced undergraduates); enroll at the 5000 level
- Communication Internships (max 6 credit hours)
- Communication Independent Studies (max 6 credit hours)
- Courses from outside the Communication department (seminars or bridge courses; max 6 credit hours).
  - Only one course (3 credits) for the MA degree may be at the 4000-level, and that course must be from outside the Communication department.
  - Electives from outside the Communication Department should be chosen in consultation with the DGS and/or the student’s advisor.
  - The DGS may grant permission to take more than 2 courses outside the Communication Department.
- Thesis or project credit, if applicable

### **5. A Comprehensive Exam (or thesis or other project)**

To complete the program, students must choose **one** of the following options:

- (a) Pass a comprehensive exam (a take home exam followed by a 1-hour defense) **OR**
- (b) Complete and defend a thesis **OR**
- (c) Complete and defend a project.

The comprehensive exam option is the default option and is strongly recommended for most students. Students who take the exam do so in their final semester of coursework. Taking the exam does not involve registering for any additional credits.

Students who complete theses or projects register for additional credit hours. Theses and projects typically take 8-12 months to complete, as they are often the equivalent of 2 to 3 graduate seminars of work. Students may only choose the thesis or project options with the full support and participation of their advisor and committee members. Exams and thesis (or project) defenses are offered in the Spring and Fall semesters.

Students who will complete the credit requirements for the program in the Summer semester may elect to complete their exam in the preceding Spring semester.

Students must be registered for at least one (1) credit during the semester in which they take and defend their comprehensive exam or defend their thesis or project. If the student has already completed the required hours of thesis work (if applicable) and all other coursework, and is not registered for any other

courses, then they must register for 0 credits of CAND 5940, by filling out the special processing form, leaving the call number blank. Then have the advisor sign as the instructor, and submit the form to the Graduate School and cc the DGS.

### **Advanced Standing**

As of May 2019, the Department provides "advanced standing" (a waiver for 6 of the 33 credits required for the MA degree) to applicants who have earned Accreditation in Publication Relations (APR) from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

## **INTERNSHIPS**

Contact Megan Hurson for more information about graduate internships.

## SAMPLE SCHEDULE

Sample **suggested schedule** for completing the MA program's 33 credits (11 courses) in 2 years as a full-time student with the **exam option**:

Year 1	Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMM 6013 Introduction to Graduate Work in Communication</li> <li>• 1 COMM elective: a bridge course (4/5000); take at the 5000 level</li> </ul>
	Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMM 5221 Research Methods: Qualitative</li> <li>• 1 COMM seminar</li> <li>• 1 elective</li> </ul>
	Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMM 5939: Internships (3 credits) or a Travel Study course</li> </ul>
Year 2	Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 COMM seminar</li> <li>• 2 electives</li> </ul>
	Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 COMM seminar</li> <li>• 1 elective</li> <li>• <i>Take and defend the exam (no additional credits)</i></li> </ul>

## STEPS TO COMPLETE THE PROGRAM

**YOUR FIRST SEMESTER:** Consult with an advisor and plan your schedule

Students will be assigned a temporary advisor when they enter the program. Consult with that person, and/or other faculty members, to plan a schedule for completing the program. Check in every semester to make sure you are on track.

During their first and second semesters, students should meet with many faculty members to find a permanent advisor who matches their intellectual and interpersonal style. The goal is to find the best match in terms of topic and temperament, and students should feel free to switch from a temporary to a permanent advisor at any time. Advisors must be full-time, graduate faculty in the Communication Department; instructors, lecturers, and clinical track faculty are not eligible to serve as students' advisors.

**YOUR SECOND-LAST SEMESTER:** Choose an advisor and committee before or at the beginning of your second-last semester

Ask the faculty member of your choice to be your advisor, if you have not already done so. Any tenure-stream faculty member can be your advisor: an Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor. Meet with your advisor and/or the DGS to verify that you are meeting the program requirements.

Ask two additional faculty members of your choice to serve on your committee. Any tenure-stream faculty member can be on your committee, and any faculty member with a PhD can also be on your committee. You can check the directory on the department webpage for titles and degrees.

Inform the DGS about who will serve as your advisor and committee members.

Students who choose the thesis or project option should develop, in consultation with their advisor and committee members, a clear set of deadlines, expectations, and evaluation policies at least 10 months before graduation. This written plan should be submitted to the DGS.

**YOUR LAST SEMESTER:** Submit graduation and exam paperwork and take and defend your exam (or complete and defend a thesis or project)

Find the graduate school's [Graduation Deadlines](#) and the necessary forms on the [Graduate School website](#).

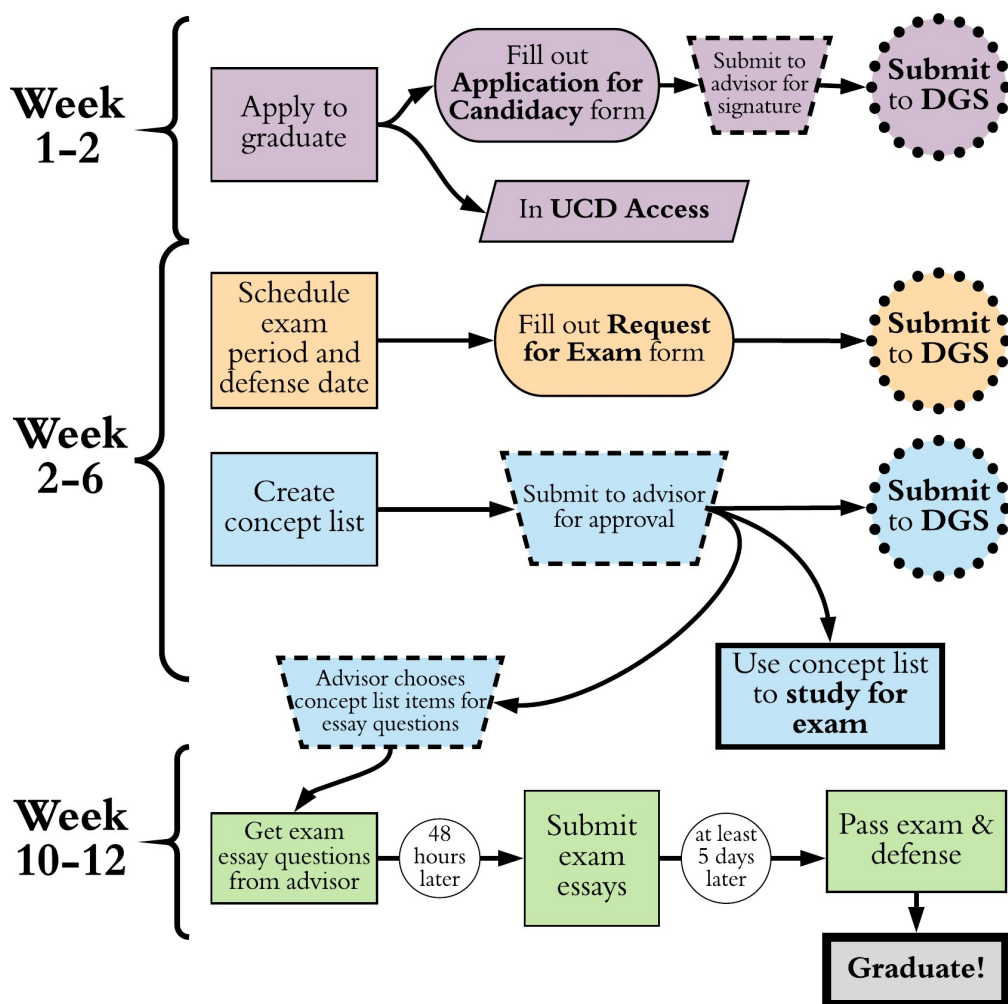
The tables below explain all the steps you will need to complete in the semester you plan to graduate.

#### **What to do in your last semester: Exam Option**

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Step</b>	<b>Things to do</b>
Weeks 1-2	Apply to graduate	Complete the <b>Application for Candidacy form</b> , get your advisor to sign it, and send the signed and completed form to the DGS.
		<b>Apply for graduation</b> (in UCD Access)
Weeks 2-6	Create a "theory/concept list"	Create a "theory/concept list" in consultation with your advisor and committee.
		<b>Submit your "theory/concept list"</b> to your advisor for approval.
	Schedule an	Schedule the 2-day (48 hours) period for the

	exam period	<b>take-home essay portion</b> in consultation with your advisor.
	Schedule an exam defense date	Schedule a <b>1-hour exam defense date</b> with your advisor and committee members that is at least 5 business days after the take-home exam is due and before the department's deadline for defenses, which is 2 weeks before the Grad School's posted deadline. Your defense date should therefore be, at the latest, in early November for Fall graduation or early April for Spring graduation. Contact the program assistant to book a room.
	Submit exam items to the DGS	Submit a completed <b>Request for Exam form</b> to the DGS, at least 3 weeks before your exam date.
		Submit your approved " <b>theory/concept list</b> " to the DGS along with the Request for Exam form via email, copying your advisor.
Weeks 10-12	Pass the exam and defense	Complete and submit the 2-day take-home essays; defend the exam at least 5 business days later.

A flowchart version of the **exam option**:



### What to do in your last semester: Thesis or project option

If you are doing a thesis or project, you will register for 3 or 6 thesis or project credits.

Timeline	Step	Things to do
Weeks 1-2	Apply to graduate	Complete the <b>Application for Candidacy form</b> , get your advisor to sign it, and send the signed and completed form to the DGS.
		<b>Apply for graduation</b> (in UCD Access)
Weeks 2-6	Schedule a thesis or project defense date	Schedule a <b>1-hour thesis or project defense date</b> with your advisor and committee members that is before the department's deadline for defenses, which is 2 weeks before



		the Grad School's posted deadline. Your defense date should therefore be, at the latest, in early November for Fall graduation or early April for Spring graduation. Contact the program assistant to book a room.
	Submit exam forms	Submit a completed <b>Request for Exam form</b> to the DGS, at least 3 weeks before your exam date.
	Submit your thesis or project	Submit your thesis or project to your advisor and committee by the agreed deadline.
Weeks 10-12	Pass the defense	Pass the defense.  Theses must also be submitted to the Grad School following their deadlines and formatting rules.

## EXAM OPTION

The comprehensive exam consists of a 2-day period (exactly 48 hours) to write responses to one theory question and one methods question, followed by a 1-hour verbal defense with your advisor and two committee members.

The two questions are created from fixed templates, with specific theories, concepts, and methods drawn from the student-created “theory/concept list” and chosen by the advisor before the exam period begins. These exam questions require broad knowledge across multiple courses.

Students who choose the exam option do not register for any thesis or project credits or any other additional credits.

*Note: Students who enrolled prior to Spring 2019 may elect to use the comprehensive exam policy that was in effect at that time. Consult with an advisor.*

### The purpose of the exam

The comprehensive exam is intended to be a culminating experience of the master's program. We view the exam not only as a measure of students' understanding of the communication field but also as an opportunity for students and faculty to dialogue about key issues and for faculty to welcome students into the community of communication scholars.

### How to create a “Theory/Concept List”

Look back at the syllabi from all your Communication courses. Take note of the readings, theories, methods, and concepts that you found the most compelling, persuasive, and interesting. Look at your notes from each course, your coursework, papers, and projects, and look back at some of your favorite articles and books. Look for links among all your courses that may not have been obvious when you took each course individually. Generate a list of all the theories and methods that you are both interested in and familiar with. Now you are ready to create a “theory/concept list.”

Your “**theory/concept list**” list consists of:

- a) 8 communication theories
- b) 3 methods used in communication research
- c) A brief summary (200-400 words) of the issues or topics you are interested in.

Indicate in which course(s) each theory and method was engaged; at least 5 different courses should be represented on the list.

## Examples

Here are some examples of theories, concepts, and methods that could be used on a theory/concept list, along with the course(s) in which they were covered. Choose items for your own list that interest you and that you have learned about in your courses.

Theories & Concepts	
Identity Management	Intercultural Communication
Expectancy Violation Theory	Communication & Conflict
9 steps of strategic planning for public relations	Advanced Public Relations
Situational crisis communication theory	Crisis Communication
Sensemaking theory	COMM 5240
Social Role Theory	COMM 5240; COMM 5021
Encoding/Decoding	COMM 5221; COMM 5710-Hasinoff; COMM 5710-Fischer
Heteronormativity	COMM 5221
Framing	COMM 5710
Agenda Setting	COMM 5710
Methods	
Interviewing	Qualitative Methods
Textual analysis	Visual Communication
Participant Observation	COMM 5221; COMM 5240
Rhetorical Criticism	COMM 5022
Critical Discourse Analysis	COMM 5710-Hasinoff; COMM 5710-Fischer

## How to prepare for the exam

- To study for the exam, create 300-600 word summaries of each theory and concept and share them with classmates and your advisor to check your work.
  - For each theory on your list, prepare to address all parts of the template theory question by describing:
    - the theory's origins, development, and place in the field of communication;
    - the assumptions the theory makes about the nature, role, and/or process of communication;
    - two examples of the use of the theory in communication research

- For each method on your list, prepare to address all parts of the template method question by describing:
  - how the method is used;
  - what kinds of questions the method is useful for answering;
  - two examples of the method's use in communication research;
  - the benefits and limitations the method;
- Students may wish to consult the [Encyclopedia of Communication Theory](#) (eds. Littlejohn and Foss), though note that some entries describe broad theoretical traditions rather than specific theories.
- Form study groups and conduct mock exams with fellow students. Students who form study groups and meet regularly with them in the weeks preceding their exams perform much better than students who prepare by studying alone.
- Conduct a mock exam with your advisor, if desired.

### **Take-home exam: Template Questions and Policies**

The student's advisor will select items from the student's "theory/concept list" to fill in these two template essay questions:

#### **Theory Essay**

Compare and contrast "X" and "Y." Your answer should discuss:

- (a) their different origins, development, and place in the field of communication;
  - (b) the assumptions that each makes about the nature, role, and/or process of communication;
  - (c) two examples of the use of each theory/concept in communication research (4 examples total; ideally connected in some way to the topic in part (d)); and
  - (d) the differences and similarities in how each could explain or provide insight on "Z."
- *"X" and "Y" are theories or concepts selected by the advisor from the student's "theory/concept list."*
  - *"Z" is an issue, topic, or social problem (the more specific the better) of interest to the student and chosen by the advisor, that "X" and "Y" could plausibly explain or apply to.*

#### **Method Essay**

Compare and contrast the application of the two methods of "X" and "Y" to the research question "Z":

- (a) Create two different study designs (one using each method). Explain exactly how each design could be used to answer all parts of the research question, and describe the procedures for using each method. For example, if your method is “interviewing” provide sample interview questions.
  - (b) Compare the benefits and limitations of each method for answering the research question.
- *“X” and “Y” are methods selected by the advisor from the student’s “theory/concept list.”*
  - *“Z” is a research question created by the advisor based on student’s interests.*

The take-home essay questions are open-book. Each essay must be 1500-2000 words (plus works cited in APA or any other consistent citation style) and should answer all the parts of each question.

Students will have a 2-day exam period (exactly 48 hours) in which to write their essays. Extensions to the 48-hour period will only be granted in cases of extraordinary, unanticipated, and documented issues or for disability accommodations.

Students will choose the start time for the exam in consultation with their advisor. The advisor will email the student the questions filled in with their chosen theories or concepts, at the start time. Students will not know what the advisor will choose from the “theory/concept list” until the start of the exam.

At the end of the 48-hour exam period, students should submit their essays via email (or time-stamped hard copy if a faculty member requests it) to the advisor and the two committee members.

### **Exam Questions: Examples**

Here are some samples of what the exam questions look like when they are delivered to the student:

**Theory Question:** Compare and contrast “Framing” and “Performativity.” Your answer should discuss:

- a) their different origins, development, and place in the field of communication;
- b) the assumptions that each makes about the nature, role, and/or process of communication;
- c) two examples of the use of each theory in communication research (4 examples total; ideally connected in some way to the topic in part(d)); and

- d) the differences and similarities in how each theory could explain or provide insight on heteronormative, gendered media representations in the reality cooking competition *Hell's Kitchen*.

**Methods Question:** Compare and contrast the application of the two methods of “interviewing” and “participant observation” to the research question “How does English proficiency affect access to pre-natal health care Denver?”:

- a) Create two different study designs (one using each method). Explain exactly how each design could be used to answer all parts of the research question, and describe the procedures for using each method. For example, if your method is “interviewing” explain who you would interview, why, and provide a few sample interview questions.
- b) Compare the benefits and limitations of each method for answering the research question.

### **Exam defense: Process and policies**

The 1-hour defense must be scheduled at least 5 business days after the take-home exam is due and before the department’s deadline for defenses. The department deadline for exam defenses is 2 weeks before the Grad School deadline.

Students should use the period between the take-home and oral defense of the exam to review material related to the questions and to assess their own answers so that they can provide additions and corrections to them. Essays written in 48 hours can always be improved, so students should come prepared to suggest changes they would make to their answers. The kinds of changes suggested should not be typos or grammatical errors but substantive issues of addition or omission.

Students should bring their essays and any relevant notes to the defense. During the defense, the student will discuss changes they could make to improve each essay (5-8 minutes each). Students should speak extemporaneously and demonstrate strong oral communication skills.

Following the student’s discussion of each essay, the student will address follow-up questions from the committee. Students should demonstrate the ability to engage in dialogue with the committee about ideas. Thus, the official name “defense” is inaccurate; students should think of this session as an opportunity to reflect on, repair, and improve their exam answers in dialogue with the faculty members.

### **Evaluation of the exam**

Immediately following the completion of the oral defense of the exam, the student is asked to leave the room, and the committee members caucus

privately and assign an evaluation of *pass*, *provisional pass*, or *fail* on each question.

*Pass* means the student has attained a degree of professional competence in their command of the theoretical material as well as in presentational style, whereas *fail* means that some area of the demonstrated knowledge or oral presentation was deemed below competency for an MA degree. *Provisional pass* means that the student must complete additional work to pass the exam.

The evaluation will be based both on the written answers and the student's discussion of their answers in the defense. For the written component of the exam, students are expected to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the relevant concepts and theories, and express their work in a clearly organized and sophisticated manner. A student must pass both questions to pass the exam.

Provisional Pass: If one or both questions are evaluated as a *provisional pass*, students have until the Graduate School deadline for exams to provide the requested revisions to their answers to the same questions to their advisor (or full committee) for re-evaluation.

Fail: Students who earn a *failing* evaluation on one or both essays must wait until a future semester to retake the exam. Students are informed immediately of the evaluation decision following the oral defense of the exam. The decisions of the committee are final. Students may retake the exam in a future semester only once. If they fail the exam the second time, they will receive written feedback within two weeks that explains the rationale. Students who fail the exam a second time are withdrawn from the program and are not permitted to earn the master's degree.

### **Timely completion**

Students who delay taking the exam do not perform as well as those who take it during the final semester of their coursework. Students who delay taking the exam risk losing touch with their peer groups and the material they have studied. A longer delay does not enable students to study longer, better or more carefully. The intensity with which students review over a relatively short period and a supportive social environment are helpful in students' preparation for the exam.

### **Advisor responsibilities for exams**

- Approve and sign the Application for Candidacy form within the first two weeks of the semester.

- Aid the student in choosing appropriate theories and methods for the “theory/concept list” and approve the list within the first 6 weeks of the semester.
- Work with the student to schedule a 48-hour take-home exam period and a defense at least 5 business days later. Defenses must be at least 2 weeks before the Graduate School deadline for defenses (and therefore typically at least 4 weeks before the semester ends).
- For the exam, choose items from the “theory/concept list,” create a research question, and add these items to the template essay questions.
  - Email the essay questions to the student at the start time for the exam.
- Attend the 1-hour defense, providing feedback and asking questions; evaluate the essays and the defense.



## **THESIS or PROJECT OPTION**

Students who write a thesis or complete a project must register for a minimum of three (3) and a maximum of six (6) hours of thesis or project work, which is included in the 33-credit total for the program. All research conducted for a Master's degree must meet all appropriate regulatory standards specified by federal, state, and local agencies regarding ethical research, animal use, human subjects, HIPAA and environmental safety.

Students completing a thesis or project must develop a written plan with the advisor, and approval of committee members, at least 10 months before graduation and submit it to the DGS. The plan should include, at minimum, the topic, the research design, if applicable, the format of the project, specific deadlines for the student to complete various parts and/or drafts, and the criteria that will be used to evaluate the work.

A thesis is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's degree and must meet the formatting criteria outlined in the CU Denver "Style and Policy Manual for Thesis and Dissertations" available on the Graduate School website.

During the process of completing the thesis, students must register for Master's thesis (COMM 6950). Students should work with their committee chair to set the number of thesis credits that will be completed each semester. Students may not use any additional thesis credits (beyond the maximum of 6) to substitute for other credits needed to complete their degree. Students completing a thesis or project should also take COMM 6700 Writing Practicum.

A master's thesis should be between 60 and 100 pages in length. Whether the thesis is rhetorical or empirical, it involves original research to investigate a question about communication grounded in theory and established research. It generally involves one year to 18 months of work and is the equivalent in workload of two or three difficult courses. During the process of writing the thesis, students are expected to meet with their chair at least monthly.

The Graduate School conducts the final review of Master's thesis for proper formatting. The final, formally approved Master's thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School, with the appropriate supporting documentation, within sixty (60) days of the thesis defense.

A grade of "In Progress" (IP) will be assigned for thesis hours in all semesters until the final approved thesis is submitted to the Graduate School office. The Graduate

### **Oral Defense of Thesis**

The oral defense of the thesis occurs after students submit their thesis to their committee, during the usual exam period (March or October). The defense usually lasts approximately an hour and a half. Thesis defenses are usually friendly, open discussions in which committee members seek to understand the nature of students' work more fully. Students are allowed to bring blank paper and their thesis to the oral defense.

Following the oral defense of the thesis, the committee members assign an evaluation of satisfactory or unsatisfactory on students' performance on the entire comprehensive exam and defense, which includes the oral defense of the thesis. A satisfactory rating is a grade of pass; an unsatisfactory rating is a grade of fail. Students who fail the exam must re-take the exam during the next regularly scheduled exam period. For example, a student who fails the exam in March has the option of re-taking the exam again the following October. If students perform satisfactorily in some areas and not in others, the committee members have the option of asking students to re-do only those portions of the exam rather than redoing all components of the exam. A lack of satisfactory performance on any aspect of the written or oral portions of the exam means that students will have to re-do the portion that received the unsatisfactory rating.

### **Thesis or project evaluation rubric**

If applicable, advisors and committee members may elect to use the following criteria to evaluate theses and projects.

- 5 = exceptionally well
- 4 = very well, better than average
- 3 = acceptably
- 2 = marginally, below average
- 1 = poorly

#### **Research Question**

\_\_\_\_\_ Does your research question meet the criteria for good research questions?

#### **Research Alignment**

\_\_\_\_\_ Do all pieces of the study align with the research question?

#### **Introduction**

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you avoid beginning your paper with a discussion of your data?

\_\_\_\_\_ Does your introduction explicitly present the research question as a research question, a thesis statement, or a purpose statement?

\_\_\_\_\_ Does your introduction explain a problem that your study is beginning to address? In other words, does the paper address the “so what?” and “who cares?” questions?

#### Literature Review

\_\_\_\_\_ Are the categories of your literature review appropriate for and aligned with your research question?

\_\_\_\_\_ Have you surveyed and analyzed sufficient literature?

\_\_\_\_\_ Have you presented the literature using an insightful and effective conceptual schema?

\_\_\_\_\_ Have you summarized the literature and incorporated actual quotations from some of it to make an engaging narrative?

#### Identification and Description of Data or Artifact

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you provide a justification of why your data are appropriate for answering the research question?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you provide sufficient information about the data so that readers can understand the nature of the data and your analysis?

#### Description of Research Design

\_\_\_\_\_ If necessary, do you explain how you collected your data or artifact(s)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you adequately describe the method you will be using to analyze your data?

#### Overview of and Transition into Analysis

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you provide a brief preview of your analysis or the categories of your explanatory schema in a transition paragraph?

#### Presentation and Interpretation of Findings or Analysis

\_\_\_\_\_ Are your findings presented using an explanatory schema that shows an organic and coherent relationship among the labels?

\_\_\_\_\_ Are the findings presented using an explanatory schema that is not obvious and is insightful and sophisticated?

\_\_\_\_\_ Are the explanatory terms or labels for the various concepts and relationships of the schema original and parallel in form?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do all components of your explanatory schema receive the same amount of attention, and are they explained at the same level of depth?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you provide sufficient justification of the claims you make using the data or artifact as support?

#### Conclusion

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you provide an effective and insightful interpretation of your findings?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you provide a theoretical answer to your research question that transcends the data?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you conclude your paper with a discussion of theory and not your specific artifact?

#### Reference List or Endnotes

\_\_\_\_\_ Do your references follow the format of whatever style sheet you are using with minimal errors?

#### Mechanics

\_\_\_\_\_ Is your paper appropriate for submission to the venue of your choosing?

\_\_\_\_\_ Is your paper formatted correctly?

\_\_\_\_\_ Have you sufficiently proofread your paper so that typos and spelling errors are minimal?

\_\_\_\_\_ Have you consistently constructed grammatical and properly punctuated sentences?

#### Overall

\_\_\_\_\_ Did you make the requested revisions from the earlier drafts of your paper concerning writing style, mechanics, and punctuation?

\_\_\_\_\_ Did you make the requested revisions from the earlier drafts of your paper concerning content?

\_\_\_\_\_ During the defense, did you defend your ideas orally with poise and reflection?

## **POLICIES**

**Students are responsible for knowing and following all University of Colorado Denver and Graduate School policies.**

### **Grade Requirements**

Students must receive a grade of B or higher in all courses that are applied to the MA degree. Students who earn a grade lower than a B have two options: (1) They may retake the course, in which case the grade counted for the course and computed in the GPA is the average of the two grades for the course. This average grade must be a B if the course is to count toward the degree. Students may re-take a course only once. (2) They may request permission to substitute a different course for the one in which a grade lower than a B was earned. Such students must prepare a written request for the substitution explaining what course they wish to substitute and why the course is an appropriate, relevant substitute. The request is submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies, whose decision about whether to approve the substitution is final.

### **Advisors**

Students are assigned a temporary faculty advisor at the time they are admitted to the MA program. Students are encouraged to select someone else as their advisor if another faculty member is better able to help them achieve their academic and professional goals. Instructors cannot serve as advisors. Students may change advisors at any time during their program by notifying the Director of Graduate Studies.

### **Creation of Committees**

The committee, which consists of the advisor and 2 additional faculty members, is responsible for evaluating students' comprehensive exam, thesis, or project in the 1-hour oral defense. Recruitment of the members of the committee is the student's responsibility, in consultation with their advisor. Asking faculty members to serve on your committee is a relatively informal endeavor. Students simply should make an appointment with potential committee members to discuss their willingness to be on the committee.

All committee members must be full-time faculty at CU Denver unless the student has received permission for an outside member from the Director of Graduate Studies and that person has been approved as graduate faculty by the CU Denver Graduate School. Clinical track professors and instructors with Graduate Faculty appointments can serve on committees.

The committee members are typically from the Communication Department, but students may select a faculty member from another department to serve on the

committee if that person's area of expertise contributes in important ways to the area of study.

### **Transfer Credits**

Transfer credit refers to any credit earned at another accredited institution either in the USA or abroad. Graduate courses taken while the student was enrolled in a graduate program anywhere in the UC system, or an institution with established Memoranda of Understanding with UC Denver, do not count towards the limits on transfer credits.

For students who obtained graduate course credits while they were enrolled in a Graduate Program at a University in the USA, or students who earned credits within the CU System as a non-degree student, the number of course credits that can be transferred to CU Denver will be determined by the graduate Program Director on a case-by-case basis (subject to the limits described at the bottom of this paragraph).

In the case of students who performed coursework at institutions outside the USA, the graduate Program Director will provide a recommendation to the Graduate School listing the courses that they accept for transfer and will also provide documentation including an independent evaluation by the Office of International Affairs to support the recommendation. The Graduate School Dean will evaluate the recommendation of the Program Director regarding the transfer of credits from foreign institutions and make a determination on a case-by-case basis. Our Department allows up to 12 hours of graduate transfer credit.

Coursework accepted for transfer credit must not have been applied towards an undergraduate degree or another graduate degree of the same level (e.g., MA to MS). Specifically, Master's courses applied to one completed Master's degree program may not be applied to another Master's degree program; however, graduate level coursework (5000 level or above) taken for a Master's degree may be applied toward a doctoral degree with Program approval. Likewise, coursework taken for a completed doctoral degree may be applied toward a concurrent or subsequent Master's degree with Program approval.

All courses accepted for transfer must:

- be at the graduate level (5000 or above);
- have a "letter" grade (courses in which the grading is either satisfactory/unsatisfactory or pass/fail are not accepted);
- have a grade of "B" or better;
- be validated by the Program Director if not taken within seven (7) years of the PhD comprehensive exam or the Master's final exam, if applicable, to ensure that the course content is still considered current; and

- be transferred prior to the semester in which the PhD comprehensive or Master's final exam, if applicable, is taken.

Credit cannot be transferred until the student has established a satisfactory record of at least one term of enrollment at the CU Denver and earned a minimum 3.00 GPA. Transferred courses do not reduce the residency requirement but may reduce the amount of work required at CU Denver for the degree.

### **Time Limits for Completion of Degree**

Master's students, whether enrolled full-time or part-time, have seven (7) years from matriculation (the semester of formal admission to the Graduate School) to complete all degree requirements, including the filing of the thesis with the Graduate School if the Program requires a thesis. Students who fail to complete the degree in this seven (7) year period are subject to termination from the Graduate School upon the recommendation of the Program Director and concurrence of the Dean. For a student to continue beyond the prescribed time limit, the Program Director must petition the Dean for an extension and include 1) reasons why the program faculty believes the student should be allowed to continue in the program and 2) an anticipated timeline for completion of the degree. Normally, extensions for time to degree are for one year or less, but under *rare circumstances*, a second extension may be requested.

### **CU Denver Email**

Students are required to regularly check their CU Denver email as it is an official channel of university communication.

### **Independent Studies**

Students may only count two independent studies totaling no more than 6 credits towards their degree.

### **Graduation**

Master's students must complete all requirements for the degree including a comprehensive exam, a cumulative professional project, or a thesis defense.

### **Leave of Absence**

Students who need to leave CU Denver Graduate Programs for a period of time should determine with their Program Directors whether a petition for leave of absence is required for up to one (1) year. If approved by the Program Director and the Dean of the Graduate School, a copy of the Leave of Absence form is forwarded to the Registrar's Office. The original is retained in the student's file. Approved leaves of absence do not automatically extend the time limits for earning a degree, but they may be cited as supporting documentation to request an extension if needed. Requests for leaves of absence that exceed one (1) year will not be approved unless the Program Director provides the Dean with

a compelling justification why such action should be approved. Students who are absent for longer than one (1) year will be considered to have withdrawn from the Program and will be required to reapply for admission and be considered with all other applicants.

### **Academic Probation and Dismissal**

If, at any time, a student's cumulative graduate grade point average (GPA) after matriculation falls below 3.00 (some graduate programs may require that a higher GPA be maintained) the student will be placed on academic probation. Probationary full-time students have 2 semesters, probationary part-time students have 4 semesters, in which to raise their cumulative GPA to a 3.00 (or greater if required by the program) for removal from academic probation (calculated using **all** graduate-level courses since matriculation, including graduate courses that a student enrolled in outside his/her main program). In addition, a minimum GPA of 3.00 (or greater if required by the program) must be maintained in each probationary term. Students who fail to meet the conditions of probation are subject to dismissal from the Graduate School. Any student who is dismissed from the Graduate School following unsuccessful academic probation or failure to meet his/her program's guidelines for satisfactory academic progress may reapply for admission to the same or a different graduate program only after 1 year. The student should consult with the Program Director before applying.

Probation also may be imposed by the Graduate School and its programs for other reasons related to unsatisfactory academic progress and for unprofessional behavior, including honor code violations and conduct that violates the integrity of training and research. In such instances, the length and specific conditions of the probationary period will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

### **Removal from Probation**

Once the student's GPA has been recalculated and shown to be 3.00 or above, and/or other specified conditions of the probationary status have been met, the student will be notified by email, with a copy of the notification sent to the student's program.

### **Probation and Graduation**

A student cannot take a milestone exam (Masters final exam or thesis defense, PhD comprehensive exam or dissertation defense) or obtain a degree from CU Denver | Anschutz while on academic probation.

### **Student Academic Honor and Conduct Code, Academic Grievances, Misconduct and Appeals**

Students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of personal integrity and professional ethics as detailed in the Graduate School Academic Honor and



Conduct Code. Students who do not meet these standards of integrity and ethics, or who violate the honor code may be placed on disciplinary probation by the Dean upon the recommendation of the Academic Conduct and Appeals Committee (ACAC). Generally, procedures for matters involving academic misconduct should emphasize due process, which should include, at a minimum, notification to the student regarding the alleged violation, an opportunity for the student to gather information in order to properly respond to the allegation, and an impartial hearing to be conducted by the ACAC. The honor code, committee guidelines, and appeal process are on file in the Graduate School office and available in the Graduate School Student Handbook, as well as online. The Schools or Colleges in which Graduate Programs are housed, or individual Graduate Programs themselves, may have additional policies and/or requirements for student conduct.

### **Academic Grievances**

Students who feel that they have been treated unfairly should first seek to resolve the matter with the person with whom they have the conflict. They may then speak to the graduate director or chair and consider filing a grievance using CLAS policy. Outside of normal programmatic/departmental policies, students may file a grievance with the Graduate School in accordance with grievance procedures outlined in the Student Handbook and posted online. If a School, College or Graduate Program has established its own procedures to consider academic grievances, then the student must follow these procedures before they can submit a grievance to the Graduate School.

The designation *academic grievance* covers those problems related to academic issues. Such issues are distinguished from *academic ethics* cases and *disciplinary cases* for which separate procedures exist. Included within academic grievance cases are faculty, program, departmental, College or School (including Graduate School) policies affecting individual student prerogatives; deviations from stated grading procedures (excluding individual grade challenges); unfair treatment and related issues. Policies and procedures governing the filing of an academic grievance are available in the Graduate School and online.

### **Academic Misconduct**

The Academic Conduct and Appeals Committee (ACAC) has responsibility for reviewing and resolving cases of honor code misconduct or student academic grievances unless the School or College in which the Graduate Program resides has established its own policy. For those Schools and Colleges that have their own academic misconduct policies and procedures, and which meet the standards of due process, such Schools and Colleges will have the original jurisdiction in cases involving honor code misconduct or student academic grievances. For such Schools and Colleges the ACAC may act as an appellate

review board for the final action taken by the School or College and will forward their recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School.

**Conflict of Interest in Cases of Amorous Relationships ([APS #5015](#))**

Amorous relationships will sometimes develop between members of the University community, whether faculty members, students, administrators or staff. This policy requires that direct evaluative authority not be exercised in cases where amorous relationships exist or existed within the last seven years between two individuals of any gender.

Problems often arise with amorous relationships in situations where one party is the supervisor and the other the supervisee. In such situations the integrity of academic or employment decisions may either be compromised or appear to be compromised. Further, amorous relationships between parties of unequal power greatly increase the possibility that the individual with the evaluative responsibility, typically a supervisor or a faculty member, will abuse their power and sexually exploit the student or employee. A relationship that began as consensual may in retrospect be seen as something else by one or both of the parties. Moreover, others may be adversely affected by such behavior because it places the faculty member or supervisor in a position to favor or advance one student's or employee's interest at the expense of others and implicitly makes obtaining preferences contingent upon romantic or sexual favors.

## **FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Teaching Opportunities**

A limited number of teaching opportunities are sometimes available for M.A. students in the Communication Department. Typically, students will teach Presentational Speaking (COMM 1001) or act as teaching assistants (TAs) for Fundamentals of Communication (COMM 1011). Students may teach other classes according to their expertise and Departmental needs, such as COMM 2050 and COMM 1021.

Although every effort will be made to provide teaching opportunities for students, they are not guaranteed and are dependent on the instructional needs of the Department. The graduate program committee meets in late February to make TA assignments for the following academic year based on the requirements and procedures outlined below.

### **Minimum Requirements**

- BA in Communication or related field
- Demonstrated academic achievement and maintenance of satisfactory progress toward completion of the degree, including receiving an A or A- in all CU Denver Communication classes
- Attendance at training workshops, pedagogy meetings, and orientation sessions

### **Application Procedures**

A letter of interest and qualifications for teaching assistantships must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies by **February 1** for consideration for teaching in the following academic year. The application should include detailed letter of interest and qualifications.

### **Selection of TAs**

If there are more eligible students interested in teaching than there are positions, or if there are fewer applicants than needed, the graduate committee will select the students from the eligible applicants following a conversation with department leadership regarding teaching needs. Criteria used in selecting from among the eligible applicants include: seniority in the program, academic achievement, aspirations to remain in academe, and prior experience related to course content areas. Preference will be given to TAs with prior teaching experience. However, teaching assignments will be limited to no more than two years. The committee also strives to designate one slot for an incoming teaching assistant each year.

### **Graduate Grants**

Need-based financial aid is available to graduate students in the form of graduate grants through UCD's Financial Aid office. To be eligible for a graduate grant, students must: (1) Complete a financial aid application through the Financial Aid office by April 1 (submitting the application as soon after January 1 as possible is recommended); (2) Be a Colorado resident; (3) Register for a minimum of 4 credit hours of coursework; and (4) Have a Pell-grant-eligible estimated family contribution. Any graduate student who meets these criteria will automatically be considered for a graduate grant. For more information, call the Financial Aid office: 303-556-2886.

### **Travel Funds**

The Communication Department has some funds available for graduate students who present papers at conferences. Graduate students who present papers at out-of-state conferences approved by the Department chair are eligible for approximately \$300 in travel funds per year, subject to the availability of funds, and must discuss their needs with the DGS as soon as possible. The Graduate School also offers once annual competitive travel grants of \$500 for students who are presenting papers at national conferences. Students traveling to a conference are responsible for applying for these grants.

The National Communication Association (NCA) offers travel grants for students of color who have papers or panels accepted for an NCA convention. Grants in the range of \$250 are awarded to students who need financial assistance to attend the convention and whose departmental or university funding is insufficient to cover the costs. Nominations of students should be made by faculty and should include a letter of support from the Department chair, which should verify that the nominee is a student and that the funding available from the Department or the University will not cover the student's convention costs. The deadline for nominations is typically in early October. For more information, contact the National Communication Association: 202-464-4622 or [www.natcom.org](http://www.natcom.org).

## GENERAL EXPECTATIONS AND EVALUATION

At the end of the spring semester, each student enrolled in the M.A. Communication program **may** receive a progress report from her or his advisor. The purpose of the progress report is to let you know how you are doing and what you can do to improve. The progress report identifies if you are **exceeding expectations, meeting expectations, or below expectations**. The progress report also describes what you need to do, if anything, to bolster your performance.

The progress report will be placed in your file and will become part of your permanent record. I encourage you to meet with me to discuss this report.

A student must do the following in order to minimally **meet expectations**

1. Attend classes regularly, be prepared, and participate orally.
2. Attend official Department functions that are relevant to graduate student education (including research colloquia and Communication Days activities).
3. Earn a “B” or better in each course.
4. Meet with your faculty advisor at the beginning of each semester.

When students do not meet these four criteria, they will be considered to be **below expectations**. If you fall into this category, the progress report will identify what you need to do to **meet expectations**.

When a student exceeds the four criteria, that student will be considered to be **exceeding expectations**. For example, if a student earns grades of “A” in classes, as demonstrated by strong writing skills and insightful classroom participation, and attends and assists in Department activities, that student exceeds expectations. Other examples of behaviors of students who exceed expectations include: Attending and/or presenting papers at professional conferences (e.g., the Rocky Mountain Communication Association’s convention), assisting professors in research and writing projects, and submitting manuscripts to professional communication journals.

## **EXPECTATIONS FOR GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS (GTAs)**

### **HOURS PER WEEK:**

- 1/4 time GTAs are responsible for working for an average of 7.5 hours per week, including office hours.
- 1/2 time GTAs are responsible for working for approximately 15 hours per week, including office hours.
- Please note that some deviations in weekly hours will occur due to the scheduling of exams, assignments, and other obligations of course instructors and will be negotiated with the primary course instructor.

### **OFFICE HOURS:**

- Each GTA should schedule a total of at least 2 office hours each week. Individual instructors may require additional office hours. Students are expected to hold their office hours on campus between Monday and Thursday during business hours and should not meet undergraduate students off-campus or on-campus residential locations.
- GTAs must be *present* and *on time* for office hours. If for some reason you must miss part or all of your office hours, you should (1) contact the instructor and Michelle Médal immediately, (2) schedule make-up office hours (which you communicate with students) and (3) post a notice for students.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- GTAs are expected to attend all of the class sessions for which they are a GTA. It is the TA's responsibility to bring schedule conflicts to the attention of the instructor well in advance of the conflict.
- GTAs must read and review all course materials prior to the class for which they are assigned.
- In all dealings with students and other instructors, GTAs are expected to maintain a professional communication climate and to demonstrate respect for students and their diversity.
- GTAs are expected to check Canvas and their University e-mail at least once per business day and to respond within 2 business days to student emails.
- GTAs are expected to be present and on time for regularly scheduled meetings with the course instructor.
- In addition to holding office hours, most GTAs will be assigned to a variety of tasks including keeping class attendance records; assisting with course planning; grading; preparing quizzes and exams; proctoring quizzes, assignments, and exams; leading recitation or special discussion sections; developing online content and handouts; guest lecturing; and completing other course-related needs of the instructor and students.

- GTAs are expected to communicate problems with instructors as they arise. They are encouraged to share ideas about course content and progress to engage in a collective teaching endeavor.
- Faculty may allocate different tasks to different GTAs in a given class section based on class needs and aptitudes. These tasks will be negotiated between the GTA and an instructor.
- GTAs must abide by all policies of the University of Colorado Denver. Particular attention should be paid to federal student privacy regulations.
- GTAs must attend orientation activities for the Department and graduate school, as announced by the DGS.

**CONFLICTS:**

- If a GTA believes that they are being treated unfairly by a student or instructor and cannot resolve the problem with that individual or the course supervisor, then the GTA should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies.
- Amorous relationships are not allowed between supervisors and those who report to supervisors (in this case, GTAs or instructors and students) per University of Colorado Denver policy. If you fear an amorous relationship may be developing, you must remove yourself as course supervisor and inform the instructor and Director of Graduate Studies.

## ADVICE FROM OUR FACULTY

Graduate school is an exciting time of change, but the first semester can be a challenging transition. We polled our faculty to see what advice they would offer.

**Sonja Foss** emphasizes the scholarly role of graduate school when she observes that “earning a master’s degree involves substantially different skills from those you employed as an undergraduate student. As an undergraduate, you collected, digested, and reported on knowledge generated by others to verify your understanding of that knowledge. You consumed and re-presented existing scholarly insights for the primary purpose of explaining to a professor the depth of understanding you possessed about the ideas of a theorist, school, movement, or text. You learned how to produce papers that demonstrated these skills quickly, often writing them overnight and submitting first drafts. In other words, you learned skills that enabled you to be successful as a reporter.

But graduate school requires that you develop the skills of a scholar instead of a reporter. As a scholar, instead of reporting what is already known, you create new knowledge. You generate original insights and theories instead of relying on the insights and theories of others. Developing these kinds of insights takes time, so you will not be able to write excellent papers in one sitting and without substantial time for thinking and revising.

The more quickly and completely you adopt the scholar role in your graduate studies, the more successful you will be as a graduate student and the more quickly you will begin to contribute to the knowledge of the communication discipline.”

**Jim Stratman** offers very specific tips for developing as an intellectual. Dr. Stratman advises you to “form a strong habit of writing down questions that you have about material that you read. See question-asking as one of your most important activities as a graduate student, professional, and scholar. Skepticism and creative research go hand in hand. Problems in or with published material are often golden opportunities that can help you grow and develop personally and intellectually. Above all, keep track of questions that you feel strongly about and keep notes concerning how they change or evolve over time. Tracking your most passionate or recurring questions will help illuminate your future research path and help you keep perspective and focus when you feel confused by new information and ideas.”

**Barb Walkosz** offers a list of academic and social themes to keep in mind:

- Keep in touch with your advisor – meet with them at least once a semester.



- Enroll in as many graduate seminars as you can – it is exciting to be in a small group that explores ideas.
- Try to attend department colloquia and/or other sponsored lectures.
- Do not hesitate to meet with your professors if you have any questions – we are here to help you navigate the program.
- Become familiar with the library and its resources.
- If you have a theme or focus to your program, tell your professors and each class that you take can help you build your knowledge in that area (via papers. etc.)
- Consider attending a communication conference or submitting a paper to a communication conference.

**Lisa Keränen** stresses open conversation when she advises you to “make sure you have many interlocutors. Schedule an appointment with each faculty member to discuss mutual interests early on and keep those relationships up by having regular intellectual discussions about your research. Even if a faculty member is not on your committee, they might have good ideas for your work. Additionally, while you want to read critically, be sure to read charitably. While you do not need to agree with everything you read, in the back of your mind, you should be asking, ‘What does this theory or idea or argument help me to do? What does it help me see or think about?’”

**Stephen Hartnett’s** advice is to “strive for synergy: your community work and career should feed your teaching, which should feed your research, which should feed your service—and so your different areas of effort can enhance each other, creating a feedback loop of creativity and mutual support.” In other words, find your passion and let it thread deeply through all your activities.

**Hamilton Bean** suggests that you “know your audience. Are you writing to make a mark in your career or professional field? Are you writing for other academics? Know what will resonate with different groups and work to make your writing informative, important, and interesting for them.”

Finally, **Brenda J. Allen** rightly stresses the role that each of us plays in building a community when she suggests that you “be proactive about forming and maintaining a strong, supportive cohort of your peers.”

## FURTHER RESOURCES

### Online

A helpful resource culled together by the Graduate School at the University of Washington offers links to numerous articles about how to succeed in graduate school: <http://www.grad.washington.edu/mentoring>. You might spend some time poking around on this site.

### Books

Melissa S. Anderson, ed., *The Experience of Being in Graduate School: An Exploration*, Jossey-Bass, 1998.

John A. Goldsmith, John Komlos, and Penny Schine Gold, *The Chicago Guide to Your Academic Career: A Portable Mentor for Scholars from Graduate School through Tenure*, University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Sherwyn Morreale & Pat Arneson, eds., *Getting the Most from Your Graduate Education in Communication: A Student's Handbook*. National Communication Association, 2008.

Robert L. Peters, *Getting What You Came For: The Smart Student's Guide to Earning a Master's or a Ph.D.* Noonday, 1997+.

**NOTE:** The Director of Graduate Studies has a library of books on making the most of your experiences, writing literature reviews, and general research and writing. They may be checked out for two weeks at a time.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### **In the Department**

Lisa Keränen, Chair	303.315.1916
Michelle Médal, Program Assistant	303.315.1919

### **On Campus**

Graduate School DDC	303.315.2183
Admissions	303.556.4841
Financial Aid	303.556.2886
ITS	303.624.4357
Campus Security	303.556.5000
Bursar	303.556.2710
Internships & Experiential Learning	303.556.3258