August 1, 2016

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.

As Director of Graduate Studies, it is Dr. Hamilton Bean's job to help you navigate your time here, and I am delighted to assist as well, so please do not hesitate to contact me 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 the ropes during 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,

Dr. Lisa Keränen
Associate Professor and Chair
lisa.keranen@ucdenver.edu
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Appendix A: Comprehensive Exam Options

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.
ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

A premier research university . . .

The University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver) is Colorado’s premier research university. The origins of this institution began in 1883 with the creation of a medical department (consisting of two students and two senior faculty) by the University of Colorado. The College of Nursing was established in 1898. The School of Pharmacy was added in 1913, and the medical center at Ninth and Colorado was dedicated in 1925.

The Downtown Campus originated as an extension of the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1912, becoming a separate institution in 1972. In 2004, the University of Colorado at Denver combined with the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center.

The university is currently found at two different locations:

- Downtown Campus, with liberal arts and sciences and professional programs in seven schools and colleges
- The Anschutz Medical Campus, University of Colorado Hospital, and patient care buildings reflects a history of service to upper division and graduate students.

Downtown students have historically been older than the traditional 18-to-21-year-old student. They are generally working at least part-time (and many fulltime) and have significant family responsibilities. The addition of residential housing adjacent to the Auraria campus has enabled a significant infusion of attention and focus to the lower-division undergraduate student.

A robust undergraduate experience is taking shape, including an appeal to high-achieving students through a University/Honors and Leaders Program. The Downtown Campus offers convenient access to businesses, organizations and government offices. Internships and class projects “in the field” enable students to gain hands-on, practical experience to complement their classroom learning. Health sciences programs are highly selective. Clinical and research components are significant drivers of the university budget and economic impact. The extensive new medical and research facilities at the Anschutz Medical Campus provide a cutting-edge environment for studies, patient care and research. When this development is complete, including the university programs as well as some affiliated hospitals and independent bio-science companies, it will be the most substantial health and research enterprise in the Rocky Mountain region.
A priority on diversity and inclusion . . .
The university places a high priority on strengthening diversity and inclusion in its student and faculty programs. The greatest diversity at UC Denver is found among staff and administrators, who are 27 percent minority and 64 percent female. Every faculty category has in the last year showed a slight increase in faculty-of-color representation. Compared to Colorado’s research universities, UC Denver has the most diverse student population: 34 percent of undergraduate students, 13 percent of graduate students and 21 percent of first professional students are students of color. Since fall 2006, enrollment for students of color has increased 4 percent. Five-year growth rates show the greatest increase came from African Americans, with 22 percent growth overall and 37 percent increase among undergraduates. International students comprise 4 percent of the total student population.

This text about the University was extracted from the CU Denver website and 2012 Factbook.
ABOUT OUR DEPARTMENT’S GRADUATE PROGRAM

The Communication Department at the University of Colorado Denver comprises a vibrant community of scholars and teachers who offer a broad-based, or “generalist,” master’s degree 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, and health communication.

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.

In Fall of 2009, the graduate faculty decided to emphasize three areas in our graduate program; these include rhetoric, social justice, and health communication. However, faculty expertise spans a range of areas such as identity and difference, technical communication, interpersonal/organizational communication, media studies, environmental communication, rhetoric of science, rhetoric and the law, national security, and feminist theory; coursework and independent studies are available across a wide range of topics. 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.

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 four 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 four 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.

COMMUNICATION WITHIN SYSTEMS
There is a special ability found in those who can understand, evaluate and communicate effectively within social, public and professional systems that enable change to occur in ways that are civil and respectful of all perspectives. Our students learn to create, sustain and communicate effectively within these systems.
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.
MEET OUR TENURE STREAM GRADUATE FACULTY IN BRIEF

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

Hamilton Bean
Organizational communication, culture, and change; national security

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

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

Amy Hasinoff
New media; media studies; gender; 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

Alfred Martin
Media studies, race, gender and sexuality
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  
**Carey Candrian**, CU Anschutz, health communication  
**Patrick Dodge**, CU ICB, intercultural communication, diversity, China  
**Larry Frey**, CU Boulder, social justice and applied communication research  
**Therese Jones**, CU Anschutz, health humanities, film and health  
**Dongjing Kang**, CU ICB, intercultural communication, dialogic communication, China  
**Barbara Walkosz**, CU Denver COMM, emeritus, health communication, public health campaigns  
**EJ Yoder**, CU Denver COMM, intercultural communication, globalization, food
GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COMMUNICATION MA

33 CREDIT HOURS TOTAL

At least 30 credit hours must be at the 5000 or 6000 level; 3 hours may be at the 4000 level, but 4000-level classes may NOT be in COMM. The requirements for coursework are as follows.

COMM 6013 Introduction to Graduate Work in Communication (3 credit hours)
This course is strongly recommended to be taken the first semester of graduate coursework; it is offered only in the fall semester.

Methods Courses (3 credit hours):
Students must complete one methods course. At least one of the methods courses will be offered each year. Many of these are offered every other year.
   COMM 5011 Research Methods: Quantitative
   COMM 5022 Critical Analysis of Communication
   COMM 5221 Research Methods: Qualitative
   COMM 6205 Empirical Research Methods for Communication

Graduate Seminars (15 credit hours):
Students must take 5 graduate seminars (12 credit hours) from the Communication Department. Graduate seminars are 5000- or 6000-level courses in which there are no undergraduate students. The same course may fulfill a methods and seminar requirement. Introduction to Graduate Work in Communication does not count as one of the graduate seminars.

Electives (12 credit hours):
At least 2 of the 4 electives must be Communication courses; the remaining 2 electives may be taken from outside of the Communication Department.
Students must receive permission from the DGS to take coursework outside the Communication Department. The DGS may grant permission to take more than 6 hours outside the Department.

OPTIONAL THESIS OR PROJECT REQUIREMENTS – 33 CREDIT HOURS TOTAL

Thesis (3-6 credit hours) or Academic Writing Project:
Students wishing to write a thesis must register for a minimum of three (3) and a maximum of six (6) hours of thesis work. 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. The 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 to substitute for other credits needed to complete their degree; thesis credits may not be substituted for elective credits, for example.

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 between one year and 18 months to complete 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 communication as their written examination. Thus, students may defend their thesis only in March or October, the times at which the comprehensive examination is offered. 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 examination 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 examination must re-take the examination during the next regularly scheduled examination period. For example, a student who fails the examination in March has the option of re-taking the examination
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 examination rather than redoing all components of the examination. A lack of satisfactory performance on any aspect of the written or oral portions of the examination means that students will have to re-do the portion that received the unsatisfactory rating.

**Timely Completion**

Students are encouraged to finish their thesis promptly. They may delay registering for thesis credits for no more than one semester following the semester in which they complete the comprehensive examination. Students who fail to register for thesis credits for more than one semester following the semester in which they complete the comprehensive examination will be considered to have left the program. Students who complete the comprehensive examination in the spring semester, for example, must register for at least one credit of thesis in the fall semester. Unless students are registered for at least one credit of thesis, the faculty of the Communication Department are under no obligation to advise or consult with them about progress toward completion of the degree.
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

Please see Appendix A for revised comprehensive exam policies.
KEY ACADEMIC POLICIES

1. 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.

2. Assignment of Advisors
Students are assigned a faculty advisor at the time they are admitted to the MA program. This advisor is a temporary advisor only. 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. Students may change advisors at any time during their program by completing the Form for Declaring and/or Changing Graduate Advisors. The form should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies.

3. Course Transfers
Transfer credit refers to any credit earned at another accredited institution either in the USA or abroad, or credits earned as a non-degree student within the CU system. Graduate courses taken while the student was enrolled in a Graduate Program anywhere in the CU System, or an institution with established Memoranda of Understanding with CU Denver, fall outside the limits for 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 shall 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 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 minus” or better (individual programs may require a “B” or better for transfer credit and/or may require a B or better in the core classes of the particular discipline);
- 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 examination, 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.

4. 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.
5. CU Denver Email
Students are required to regularly check their CU Denver email as it is an official channel of university communication.

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

7. 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.

8. 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.

**9. 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 the Departmental policy. Outside of normal programmatic/departmental policies, 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.

10. **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.

11. **Students are responsible for knowing and following all policies of the University of Colorado Denver and its Graduate School.**
FUNDING SUPPORT FOR MA STUDENTS

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), although students may teach other classes according to their expertise and Departmental needs, such as COMM 2050 of COMM 1021. The pay is variable depending on the assignment. 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 UCD 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 the associate chair 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 though 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 receives 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. Make a “B” or better in each course.
4. Meet with her or his faculty advisor at the beginning of each semester.

When a student does not meet the four criteria, she or he 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 makes 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.
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
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, except in truly exceptional cases, should not be meeting undergraduate students in 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 warm but professional communication climate and to demonstrate respect for students and their diversity.
- GTAs are expected to check e-mail at least once per day and respond promptly to student emails.
- GTA 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.
- GTA’s must attend orientation activities for the Department and graduate school, as announced by the DGS.

CONFLICTS:

- If a GTA believes that he or she is 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, 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 correctly 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 and 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 though 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


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.
GRADUATE FACULTY BIBLIOGRAPHY (PARTIAL)

This bibliography is intended to give you an idea of the kind of research our faculty do. It includes three representative works from each member of the graduate faculty. The asterisked article is recommended reading for incoming graduate students. Hard and electronic copies will be made available to all students in the Spring of 2010, although all graduate students should easily be able to find articles in online databases.


## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

### In the Department
- Lisa Keränen, Chair: 303.315.1916
- Michelle Médal, Program Assistant: 303.315.1919
- Hamilton Bean, Director of Graduate Studies: 303.315.1909

### 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
Live and learn in the Mile High City, where the perfect blend of outdoor adventure and urban sophistication awaits.

As the premier urban center for communication studies along Colorado’s Front Range, the Department of Communication offers BA, MA, and certificate programs in community service & public affairs, legal communication, health communication, mediation & conflict resolution, political communication & government, rhetoric, and public relations & advertising. The Department’s award winning tenured and tenure-track faculty have earned national and international recognition for research, teaching, and service.

The University of Colorado Denver offers a hands-on, real-world education in a vibrant city in the heart of the energetic west. The University attracts the most research funding and awards the most graduate degrees in the state, and is ranked 34th in the nation among public colleges by Forbes magazine.
Appendix A: Revised MA Comprehensive Exam Policy

Approved by TTF vote on August 24, 2015; Effective Immediately

Department of Communication
MA Comprehensive Exams

CU Denver Graduate School rules require MA students to pass a comprehensive exam before graduating. The purpose of the examination for the MA in Communication is to ensure deep content learning regarding communication research, theory, and practice. Our examinations are tailored to the needs and goals of the student but require demonstrated mastery of communication subject areas of the student’s choosing.

The Department of Communication at CU Denver offers four options for the comprehensive examination: the traditional oral and written examination, the portfolio, the thesis and the original research paper.

Students are strongly encouraged to discuss the advantages and limitations of each option with various faculty members before electing one option. However, ultimately, students and their examination committee should jointly make a decision about the best option given the student’s learning goals. Each of these options is detailed below. Regardless of which option students and their advisors select, they must follow all general procedures and Graduate School requirements.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

Eligibility
To be eligible to take and defend the comprehensive examination, students must be in their final regular (spring or fall) semester of their graduate program. Students may be taking courses in the semester in which they take the examination.

Registration
In the semester in which they take the comprehensive examination, students must:

1. Register for a minimum of one of the following:
   - One or more credits of coursework
   - One credit hour of Thesis (COMM 6950)
   - Zero credit hours of CAND 5940, which is a special course registration number for students who are taking their comprehensive examinations and no coursework or thesis work. Students who choose this option will be charged tuition equal to one credit hour. Students must register by hand for CAND 5940 by completing the CU Denver Special Processing Form. “CAND 5940” should be written in the “Course Number” space on the
form. The call number for the course, which changes every semester, will be distributed by the Graduate School after the form is turned in.

2 Students must file an Admission to Candidacy form and a Request for Graduate Examination/Thesis Defense form. These forms should be submitted to the Graduate School on the 12th floor of the Lawrence Street Center. There is a posted deadline for the submission of each form, and the latter must be turned in at least two weeks before the examination is taken.

3 In addition, students must complete any additional online forms related to graduation that will be required by the graduate school each term. Students should pay close attention to the deadline for submission for the semester in which they intend to graduate.

Examination Committee
At the time they enter the MA program, students are assigned a temporary advisor by the members of the graduate studies committee. During their first and second terms, students should be meeting with all 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 not feel awkward about switching from a temporary to a permanent advisor. 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.

The student's advisor helps the student construct a committee of three faculty members, one of whom is the advisor and who serves as the chair of the committee. 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 crucial ways to the area of study. 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. The committee is responsible for evaluating students' comprehensive exam, thesis, or special writing project and for conducting the oral portion of the examination.

Recruitment of the members of the committee is the responsibility of students. Students are encouraged to select the members of their examination committee at the beginning of the academic year in which they take their comprehensive examination. Asking faculty members to serve on their 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.

Once their committee is formed, students should complete the Request for Examination, on which they indicate the committee's composition. This form is due at least two weeks before the examination date, which must be scheduled in accordance with CU Denver Graduate School rules regarding deadlines for scheduling comprehensive exams, theses, papers, or projects (and the defense thereof).

Option A: The Written and Oral Comprehensive Exam
Examination Schedule
The examination is offered twice a year—usually on the last Friday of October in the fall semester and on the Friday following the week of spring break in the spring semester. The exact dates will be announced by the Director of Graduate Studies at the beginning of each term. Students must take the examination on the scheduled day or wait until the next semester. The examination is not offered during the summer.

Traditional Examination Format
The comprehensive examination has two parts—a written and an oral component. These two parts are completed on separate days, usually with no more than two weeks between them. The written portion of the examination lasts four-and-a-half hours, and the oral examination lasts approximately three hours; one-and-a-half hours are devoted to the article critique, and one-and-a-half hours are devoted to the oral defense. The oral portion of the examination is not open to friends and family.

Written Examination
In the written part of the comprehensive examination, students are given five essay questions and must answer four of them in a four-and-one-half hour period. The questions cross content areas and deal with methodological, theoretical and application issues in communication. They encourage students to make connections among constructs, theories, topics and courses. Students are expected to cite relevant scholars and sources in the answers to the questions. Students may bring in a set of notes limited to both sides of an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper. Students may take restroom breaks as needed during the examination.

Students take the examination in the Communication Department office suite on a computer provided by the Department. Students are not allowed to use their own laptops for the examination. Paper for the examination is provided by the Department.

Oral Examination
The oral examination is generally held within two weeks of completion of the written examination. Students should set the date for the oral examination in consultation with their advisor and committee members and should schedule a room with Michelle Medal. Three hours should be allowed for the oral examination. The advisor will need to be in the Department when the student begins the process (when the student is completing the critique of the article), but the other committee members will need to be there only for the last one-and-one-half hours of the examination period. The oral portion of the examination involves four steps:

• **Critique of text:** When students arrive for the oral examination, they are given one-and-a-half hours to read an article from a communication journal selected for them by their committee members and to prepare an oral critique of that article. Students are asked to evaluate the research question, design of the study, the methods used, findings, and any other aspects of the article they see as noteworthy or inadequate. Following the completion of the plan for the oral critique, students are given a 15-minute break before the start of the oral portion of the examination. Students should bring paper with them on which to take notes and develop their critique.

• **Oral presentation of critique of text:** Students present a five-minute oral critique of the article they analyzed at the beginning of the oral examination period. Students
should treat this as a formal presentation and demonstrate their competence in presentational speaking. Following the presentation, students are questioned for approximately 10 minutes about their critique.

- **Repair of written examination:** At the beginning of the portion of the examination when students are questioned on their written answers, students are asked to explain changes they would like to make to their written answers. Students should use the period between the written and oral portions of the examination to review material related to the questions and to assess their own answers so that they can provide additions and corrections to them. Students should come prepared to suggest some changes they would make to their answers; not wanting to change anything will lower students’ credibility with faculty members. The kinds of changes suggested should not be typos or grammatical errors but substantive issues of addition or omission. Students should spend no more than five minutes on this portion of the examination.

- **Defense of written examination:** Students are questioned by their committee members about their answers on the written portion of the examination for approximately one hour. Students are allowed to bring blank paper on which to jot notes.

**Evaluation of the Examination**

For both the written and oral components of the exam, students will be evaluated based upon the competency and professional attainment demonstrated. Immediately following the completion of the oral portion of the examination, the student is asked to leave the room, and the committee members caucus privately and assign an evaluation of *satisfactory* or *unsatisfactory* on each of the four examination questions. *Satisfactory* means the student has attained a degree of professional competence in her/his command of the theoretical material as well as in presentational style, whereas *unsatisfactory* means that some area of the demonstrated knowledge or oral presentation was deemed below competency for an MA degree.

- **Oral Critique:** For the oral part of the exam, students are expected to be able to read, summarize, evaluate and criticize a scholarly article. Students are required to accurately state the thesis of the article and evaluate the article using conventional criteria for assessing research.

- **Written Exam:** The evaluation will be based both on the written answer and the student's defense of that answer. For the written component of the exam, students are expected to be able to cite major scholars relevant to a construct or theory, demonstrate solid understanding of the relevant constructs and theories, and express their work in a clearly organized and sophisticated manner.

A student must pass all four questions to pass the examination. The committee may ask for rewrites on one or more questions or present other options for retaking the oral examination. Rewrites involve answering a new question and a half-hour oral defense of the answer. Students who are given a non-passing evaluation on the oral and written exam as a whole must wait until a future semester to retake it. Students are informed immediately of the evaluation decision following the oral portion of the examination. The decisions of the committee are final.

Students may retake the examination in a future semester only once. If they fail the examination the second time, they will receive written feedback within two weeks that
explains the rationale. Students who fail the examination a second time are dropped from the program and are not allowed to complete the master's degree.

Successful Examination Preparation for Option A

The comprehensive exam is intended to be an educational and culminating experience of the master's program. It is designed to assess students’ ability to think critically about issues in the communication discipline; such critical thinking includes the ability to analyze, integrate and apply concepts/theories to what they have learned in the program. To engage students in this process, the exam questions are broad based and cut across content areas, methods and issues to provide a thorough context for inquiry. We conceptualize 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. To this end, students are encouraged to follow some basic procedures as they prepare for the examination:

• **Study group with peers:** Students are encouraged to form study groups with their peers. Students who form such groups and meet regularly with them in the weeks preceding the examination perform much better than students who prepare by studying alone. Such groups are supportive, helpful and fun.

• **Course materials and syllabi as a basis for review:** Students are encouraged to review the courses they have completed in the program as a primary means of preparation for the examination. They should look for linkages among the courses that were only partly visible when the individual courses were taken. A review of the discussion questions and other assignments for each course is also useful.

• **Preparation of summaries of articles and books read:** As students go through their coursework, they should write and keep summaries of the articles and books read. Such notes might include:
  - One-sentence summary of the reading
  - One-paragraph abstract of the reading, including context, purpose, key findings and conclusions
  - Notes about the unique contributions the reading makes to its field, such as the ways it contradicts received wisdom or previous theories, new insights or arguments, what it elucidates, what it confirms, what it rejects or what it puts in perspective
  - Brief discussion of how the student can best use the reading, such as to make a case, to build or support an argument, to link or to illustrate
  - Primary critique of the article
  - Best quote

• **Review of sample questions:** Students will be provided with sample questions prior to the examination by the Director of Graduate Studies. Although the examination students take will not have the exact questions as the samples, a review of these questions will help students anticipate the kinds of questions they are likely to be asked. In the study groups, students are encouraged to practice how they might answer the sample questions. Students will not be provided with sample answers from previous students’ examinations to use in their studying.

**Timely completion of the examination:** Students who delay taking the examination by a semester or more do not perform as well as those who take it immediately after completing their coursework. Students who delay taking the examination 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, convivial social environment are most helpful in students’ preparation for the examination.

Option A.1: The Written and Oral Comprehensive Exam (Take-Home Version)

In this option, students follow the procedures for Option A, except that they are allotted 10 consecutive days to write four-to-six-page answers to four of the five questions at home.

Students who select this option must complete the written portion in accordance with the deadlines outlined in Option A above, meaning that their 10-day period must occur at least three weeks before the CU Denver Graduate School’s last day to defend MA comprehensive exams.

The take-home option is open book, but answers must be polished with accurate citations and a bibliography. Because of the time allowed for preparation and composition, the expectations for Option A.1 in terms of sophistication, detail and polish are higher than for Option A.

Students will then complete the article critique and oral defense per the procedures outlined in Option A.

Option B: The Portfolio Model

Purpose: The purpose of the comprehensive-exam portfolio is to demonstrate mastery of communication theory and skills as they relate to the students’ goals and professional objectives. The goal is to showcase their best writing, analysis, thinking and communication production. Regardless of whether students intend to remain in the workforce or begin a PhD program, the portfolio will require synthesis and analysis across communication research, theory and practice.

Schedule
Portfolios will usually be due on the last Friday of October in the fall semester and on the Friday following the week of spring break in the spring semester. The exact dates will be announced by the Director of Graduate Studies at the beginning of each term. Students will schedule portfolio defenses two weeks following their portfolio submissions in order to give faculty time for review. All defenses must be completed in accordance with the posted deadlines schedule of the CU Denver Graduate School. However, students will be encouraged to work on their portfolios well in advance of the term in which they intend to graduate, and they can begin work on initial drafts in COMM 6013. No extensions are allowed unless students can provide documentation of a catastrophe that has happened to them to prevent the completion and delivery of the portfolio.
Format
Completed portfolios will be submitted in either hard or digital copy to their committee members and to the Department’s program assistant, based on the preference of the individual faculty members. All or part of the portfolio may also be placed online by candidates for professional purposes.

Students who elect to submit hard copies of their portfolios should bear in mind principles of professional communication. Whatever format they use, the binder must be big enough to contain all of the required work in one portfolio (with the exception of online work). Individual sheets of work should not be placed in plastic covers.

Contents
All portfolio contents produced as part of coursework should show evidence of substantial revision and growth since the original submission as part of MA coursework. Students are encouraged to rework their written and digital communication products in conversation with faculty members and their peers, especially the professor to whom the work was originally submitted and the advisor. The process includes receiving oral and written feedback from all committee members and composing a letter outlining the revisions made. This process mimics the journal submission process with the three faculty members serving as reviewers. In addition to the letter detailing changes, students should submit the original and the revised content for each item. The revision work may begin in advance of the final semester of coursework, although the final semester should be reserved for final revisions and polishing of the entire document.

Great care should be taken to ensure that the portfolio is polished, attractively arranged and error free. Editing errors, proofreading errors, spelling errors and grammatical errors will detract from the overall evaluation.

The portfolio must contain in this order:
1. Title page or landing screen
2. Table of contents or menu
3. Resume or CV (include a new version and the resume or CV draft from 6013 that was originally submitted; the old version may be submitted in hard copy if new one is online)
4. Sample of students’ strongest revised course paper with a written response to committee members detailing how they have incorporated their feedback in the revision of the essay
5. A two-to-three-page critique of a journal article selected by their advisor in the term they are taking the comprehensive exam
6. One each of: theory, method and practice essays—three essays of four-to-six pages each for no more than 20 pages total
7. Optional: any additional digital or visual or written products of students’ choosing.

Revision means that a new version contains evidence of both substantive content changes and stylistic ones.

Students must choose to address one of each of the following theory, method and practice essays.
Theory Questions (choose one to answer in four-to-six pages):

1. Write an essay in which you track the relevance of a single communication concept or theorist across three different contexts of communication (e.g., health communication, interpersonal communication, organizational communication, etc.). Make an argument for how this concept or theorist matters to each context. Be sure to cite theorists, communication journals and other relevant material.

2. Compare and contrast any two philosophical traditions in the field of communication. Explain how each of the two traditions views communication, discuss its assumptions about the nature of communication and identify its key vocabulary. Close by putting the two traditions in conversation with one another. How do they relate to, differ from or critique one another? What does each illuminate about human communication? You may choose to refer to intellectual traditions, to broad methodological traditions or to other philosophical perspectives on communication that you have encountered in your studies.

3. Compare and contrast two different definitions of communication and assess what each offers the study of communication. Which definition resonates most strongly with you and why? How do you see that definition playing out in your work and life?

Method Question (four-to-six pages):

1. Design a research project on a communication topic of your choosing. Your task is to develop a research question for the study, identify the categories of literature and/or theory you would review for the study, select data to collect to answer the question, choose your method of analysis and briefly explain the significance of the project. Be sure to justify your choices. You are free to use any method you would like in designing the project.

Practice (choose one to answer in four-to-six pages):

1. Imagine that you are asked to give a workshop on a communication concept, theory, or theorist used by communication scholars at your workplace. Outline the key ideas you would address and explain the significance of that concept or theorist to what happens at your workplace.

2. Write an essay in which you explain how communication research can help our understanding of the challenges facing the world in the 21st century. Discuss at least one specific communication research article that can illuminate a problem in the world and another that can help remedy the problem. The more specificity in terms of the research discussed the better.

3. Submit a sample of communication in action that you have created using knowledge and skills learned in the program. This sample could be from work, school or personal or community life. Make sure your sample is accompanied by an explanation of the theories and principles you used in creating the sample.

Evaluation: The exam will be graded as follows: satisfactory (pass) or unsatisfactory (fail) using the rubric that appears in Appendix A. Faculty are looking for integrative learning that demonstrates mastery of communication research, theory and practice. That means that not only should the content be substantive but also that the design should embody best practices in communication.
If you do not follow all of the above procedures in preparing or submitting the portfolio, the exam evaluators will not read your portfolio.

**Option C: The Thesis**

A thesis is intended for students who wish to develop original knowledge in a particular subject area. It is a substantial undertaking and one that should not be taken lightly. Not all faculty believe that a thesis is the best model for a culminating experience. To undertake a thesis, students first must find a faculty member willing to serve as their advisor.

**Eligibility**

Students who wish to complete a thesis must meet the following requirements:

1. Students must have completed nine courses and at least one methods class. Generally, students begin their thesis work at or before the beginning of their last academic year in the program.
2. Students may be asked to complete certain courses to prepare them for their thesis research.
3. Students must have demonstrated superior writing and research ability in their coursework.

**Thesis Committee**

The thesis committee serves as the de facto comprehensive exam committee, and the faculty member who serves as the chair of the committee is the advisor for the thesis. The advisor and committee members work with students on developing the topic for their thesis, designing the research for the thesis, reading rough drafts and conducting an oral examination on the basis of the thesis.

**Registration**

During the process of completing the thesis, students must register for at least three but no more than six hours of Master’s thesis (COMM 6950), either in one term or divided across two semesters. 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 to substitute for other credits needed to complete their degree; thesis credits may not be substituted for elective credits, for example.

To register for thesis credit, students must complete the CU Denver Special Processing Form.

**Nature of the Thesis**

Students should consult the latest *Guidelines for Preparing Master’s and Doctoral Theses*, available from the Graduate School, for instructions on completing the thesis. They also are encouraged to obtain copies of successful theses from the Director of Graduate Studies and/or their advisor.

A master’s thesis should be between 40 and 80 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 takes about six months to complete and is the equivalent in workload of two or three difficult courses. During the process of writing the thesis, students are expected to meet or check in with their chair at least weekly.

Students who wish to propose an alternate type of format (e.g., documentary film, digital project, etc.) may make a written proposal request of the Graduate Committee, which will meet to determine in advance whether the project meets the requirements for the Comprehensive Exam. The committee’s decision is final.

**Thesis Planning Meeting**
In the semester before a student begins writing the thesis in earnest, students and their advisor should hold a meeting to discuss the parameters of the project, the research question and topic under investigation and the timeline. When the advisor and student concur about the contours, the student will craft a draft proposal of approximately 10 pages.

Students and their advisor will hold a meeting with other committee members after the circulation of a draft proposal. Students must give committee members at least two weeks to read all drafts, including the proposal. After the meeting, students, working with their advisor, will send an email to committee summarizing what has been agreed upon and indicating any changes to the proposal.

**Oral Defense of Thesis**
The oral defense of the thesis constitutes the thesis writer’s comprehensive examination. Thus, students may defend their thesis only in March or October, the times at which the comprehensive examination is offered. 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, notes, 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 written thesis and the oral defense of the thesis.

**Timely Completion**
Students are encouraged to finish their thesis promptly. Unless students are registered for at least one credit of thesis, the faculty of the Communication Department are under no obligation to advise or consult with them about progress toward completion of the degree.

**Option D: The Original Research Paper**

Students who intend to apply to PhD programs are encouraged to use this option to prepare an original research paper that is suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed journal, academic convention or PhD program as a writing sample for the admissions process. PhD programs look favorably on candidates who have published articles in peer-reviewed journals.

**Eligibility**
Students who wish to complete a paper must meet the following requirements:

1. Students must have completed nine courses and at least one methods class. Generally, students begin their work on a paper at or before the beginning of their last academic year in the program.
2. Students may be asked to complete certain courses to prepare them for their research.
3. Students must have demonstrated superior writing and research ability in their coursework.

**Paper Committee**

The committee for the original research paper is the de facto comprehensive exams committee, and the faculty member who serves as the chair of the committee is the primary advisor for the project. The other faculty members on the committee, then, work with students and their advisor on developing the topic for their paper, designing the research, and providing peer reviews.

In cases where students begin or complete a paper in the Writing Practicum (COMM 5700), students, their advisor and the instructor of COMM 5700 need to meet and communicate frequently to ensure agreement about the requirements for and contours of the project.

**Registration**

During the process of completing the paper, students may elect to take the Writing Practicum (COMM 5700), Independent Study (COMM 5980), or Special Project (COMM 6960). The paper will take more than one semester to complete and reflects at least one course worth’s of labor.

**Specifications**

Students write a research paper under the direction of their advisor and committee. The paper must follow the conventions and formatting requirements of the target journal or conference.

The paper must be the student’s composition entirely and not co-authored. Faculty advisors, committee members and other substantive reviewers should be acknowledged in the author notes but not listed as co-authors.

**Process**

1. **Paper Planning Meeting**

   Before a student begins writing the paper in earnest, students and their advisor should hold a meeting to discuss the parameters of the project, the research question, topic under investigation and the timeline. When the advisor and student concur about the contours, the student will complete the “Research-Alignment” worksheet, which is available from the Director of Graduate Studies and includes the following:
   - The problem your research is attempting to address
   - Your research question
   - The categories of your literature review
• Your data and the collection and analysis plan
• The significance of your study.

Students and their advisor will hold a meeting with other committee members after the circulation of the worksheet. Students must give committee members at least one week to read the worksheet. After the meeting, students, working with their advisor, will send an email to committee members summarizing what has been agreed upon and indicating any changes to the worksheet.

2. Evaluation and Oral Defense of Paper
Students must conform to Graduate School deadlines for scheduling comprehensive exam defenses. Students who enroll in Writing Practicum (COMM 5700) in their final semester must arrange to defend their draft early to ensure that the defense of the writing project is completed in accordance with the deadlines of the CU Denver Graduate School.

The oral defense of the paper constitutes the writer’s comprehensive examination. Thus, students may defend their thesis only in March or October, the times at which the comprehensive examination is offered. Paper 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, notes and their paper to the oral defense.

After a successful defense, students will revise their essay until their advisor believes it is ready to submit to the target journal or conference. The submission need not be accepted for publication; the committee only needs to sign off at the defense that, with minor revisions, the essay is ready for submission.

Following the oral defense of the paper, the committee members assign an evaluation of satisfactory or unsatisfactory using the rubric that appears at the end of this document. Faculty are looking for integrative learning that demonstrates a strong command of written English and that makes a substantial contribution to an understanding of communication.

3. Reviews
Each committee member will have one week to submit a (non-blind) peer review of the paper before the defense. Faculty members should assess the paper and write a peer review report as though it has been submitted to the target venue. These reviews will be given to the student after the defense. Faculty members’ peer reviews should answer these questions:

1. What contribution does this paper make to the field in which it is situated? If it is unclear, can you suggest how the paper might develop a contribution?
2. Is this manuscript appropriate for the target venue? If not, can you suggest another outlet that might be more appropriate?
3. Is the treatment of the subject matter intellectually interesting? Are there citations or bodies of literature you think are essential to which the author has not referred?
4. Are there any noticeable problems with the author’s means of validating assumptions or making judgments?
5. How well did the paper execute the research method?
6. Is the paper well written?
7. Are there portions of the paper that you recommend be shortened, excised or expanded?

In consultation with the advisor, students will then re-write and revise the paper in response to these suggestions.

Appendix A: Faculty Evaluation of Written and Oral, Take Home and Portfolio Comprehensive Exams

Master’s Degree Comprehensive Exam Rubric

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

Knowledge of Perspectives in Communication Theory and Research

(1) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate comprehension of theoretical perspectives in the communication discipline?

5  4  3  2  1

Comments:

(2) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate the ability to apply theoretical constructs to contemporary communication problems?

5  4  3  2  1

Comments:

(3) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate the ability to construct and defend complex arguments?

5  4  3  2  1

Comments:

(4) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate fluency engaging in multiple perspectives?
5 4 3 2 1

Comments:
Competence in the Interpretation and Evaluation of Published Research (Oral Critique)

(5) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate comprehension of published communication research?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

(6) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate the formulation of constructive, relevant questions around communication research?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

(7) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate communication research (presented carefully grounded conclusions about its strengths and weaknesses)?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

Competence in Oral Interpretation and Interaction

(8) For the critique of the research article during the comprehensive exam, if applicable, did the student

a. provide a clear purpose statement and preview statement in the presentation?

5 4 3 2 1

b. provide relevant, carefully focused content and supporting details that were consistent with their purpose and preview statements?

5 4 3 2 1

c. display personal communicative dynamism in ethos/persona and in non-verbal paralinguistic language?

5 4 3 2 1
Comments:

(9) During the oral defense, did the student demonstrate the ability to engage in dialogue with the committee about ideas?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

(10) During the oral defense, did the student demonstrate respect, receptivity, sensitivity and authentic engagement when hearing and responding to different or contrary viewpoints?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

Possible High Score: 50; To pass, the student must receive a 38 or above.
Appendix B: Original Research Paper or Thesis Evaluation Form

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?

150 points possible; Scores of 100 or higher pass.
Appendix C: Research-Alignment Worksheet

What is the problem you are trying to address with your study?

What is your research question?

What are the categories of your literature review?

What are your data?

How will you collect your data?

How will you analyze your data?

Why is your study significant? (Who cares? So what?)