



The University of Texas at Austin  
**Communication Studies**  
*Moody College of Communication*

**Graduate Program**

**Student Handbook**

Policies and procedures for Master's and Doctoral students in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

*Master of Arts*  
*Doctor of Philosophy*

*3 Areas of Study*

*Interpersonal Communication*  
*Organizational Communication and Technology*  
*Rhetoric, Language and, Political Communication*

**2023 2024**

# Department of Communication Studies Graduate Program

## Student Handbook

(Revised Fall 2022)

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The information contained in this Student Handbook includes all policies and procedures for Master's and Doctoral students in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Policies are reviewed annually by the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) which is comprised of all tenured and tenure-track faculty in the department.

All graduate students must abide by the policies and procedures outlined in the Student Handbook that is in effect during their first semester enrolled in the program. Any deviations from the policies contained therein may be considered via petition to a student's Faculty Advisor, the department Graduate Advisor, and the department Graduate Coordinator. The GSC will review and final approve or deny any exceptions to policies and procedures.

## **COVID-19**

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It's of the utmost importance that our students feel supported and prepared during these trying times. Here you'll find resources and information to assist all current, prospective and incoming students.

<https://coronavirus.utexas.edu/students>

If you need any clarification about any of the policies and procedures in this handbook, please direct these questions to the Graduate Program Coordinator.

## **Social Media**

Although social media has afforded many advantages, you should carefully consider what comments, photographs, etc. you post. Inappropriate photos and off-hand remarks about undergraduate students, staff, and faculty can reflect badly on you and/or the graduate program, Moody College, and UT.

It is not appropriate for you as an employed TA or AI to publicly post on social media critical remarks about the course, the instructor, or students in the course. As communication experts, it is important to keep your communication professional—especially in platforms that are potentially visible to students in the program or in your specific courses.

Unless required for the class or permitted by the lead instructor, avoid interacting with students via social media (e.g., FaceBook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.). And do not “friend” or accept “friend requests” from your students.

## **Masters' Degree Program Timetable**

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The CMS MA degree is structured for completion in two years. Students may choose to complete a Thesis or Report Option. MA students who are considering applying to a future doctoral program should complete the Thesis Option. The two-year plan for Thesis or Report students normally looks like this:

### Thesis Option (30 total hours)

Fall: 9 hours  
Spring: 9 hours  
Summer: None required  
Fall: 6 hours, CMS 698A (first Thesis course)  
Spring: CMS 698B (second and final Thesis course)

### Report Option (33 total hours)

Fall: 9 hours  
Spring: 9 hours  
Summer: None required  
Fall: 9 hours  
Spring: 3 hours, CMS 398R

## **Required Courses**

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All MA students are required to take the following courses:

**CMS 081** *Intro to Graduate Studies in Human Communication*. This course must be taken in a student's first fall semester in the program as an introduction to the department, faculty, and research. It is a "zero" credit course, meaning that it will not count toward total hours for the M.A. degree.

**6 hours "inside/outside."** These two courses should be within CMS, but outside of your area of study.

The remaining courses (**18 hours for thesis students; 21 hours for report students**) will likely be in the student's area of study, but students and their faculty advisors can determine that together.

**Students may take no more than two courses on a Credit/No Credit basis.** Only courses outside of Communication Studies are allowed as CR/NC. In all cases, the courses must be approved by a student's faculty advisor before they may be changed to CR/NC.

Students are required to meet with their faculty advisors at least once a semester to discuss coursework and registration and to complete a Work Program Checklist and Master's Timeline Form.

## Thesis/Report Committees and Requirements

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Master's students are required to have a two-person committee that includes a faculty supervisor and a faculty reader. Students should discuss selection of the reader with their faculty advisor (also known as your faculty supervisor for the purposes of the Thesis/Report committee) during the spring of their first year. A reader should be established no later than the beginning of the fall semester of a student's second year.

The University of Texas at Austin Graduate School establishes the policies governing final submission of all Theses and Reports. The department defers to them on all final requirements: <https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation/deadlines-and-submission-instructions>

## Thesis/Report Timeline

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**Topic Selection:** Students should talk to their faculty advisors about a topic by the end of their first year.

**Thesis Proposal:** Students will submit a thesis proposal to their Faculty Advisor and Reader by October 1<sup>st</sup> of their second year.

**Full Thesis Draft:** Students will submit a thesis proposal to their Faculty Advisor and Reader by April 1<sup>st</sup> of their second year.

**Final Thesis and Signature Page:** Students will submit the final thesis to the Graduate School no later than 3 pm on the last class day of the spring semester.

## Thesis/Report Best Practices

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**Leave enough time for the unexpected.** Unexpected items could include trouble securing interviews, problems coding data, long transcriptions that eat up precious time, or needing IRB approval for a study. IRB approvals commonly take some time to receive, so students should build in time for those types of delays.

**Stay in touch with both the faculty advisor AND reader.** Different faculty will have different preferences/expectations on the process. Staying in touch with both of the committee members on a regular basis during the second year allows open communication on a student's topic and process and can mean fewer problems at the end.

**The first version of the Thesis/Report should be finished by the beginning of April.** A finished version in April gives the student, the faculty advisor and the reader time to make revisions. Students should ask their faculty advisors questions such as: how does the advisor like to see progress; does the advisor wish to see chapters as they are completed or do they wish to see the first half and then the complete draft? Faculty advisors may want different things, so students should not rely on what other students have told them about the process, especially if they have different faculty advisors.

**Know the deadlines.** The Thesis/Report must be approved by everyone (faculty advisor, reader, Graduate School) and submitted to the University by the last Friday of classes of any given semester. Students should always consult the website for the Graduate School for each semester's deadlines.

### **Reapplying to the Doctoral Program**

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Master's students who wish to continue on in the doctoral program must submit a new application via the University's online application system. They may update their supporting materials such as letters of recommendation and statement of purpose. It is recommended that students speak to the Graduate Coordinator about the process no later than late summer/early fall of their second year.

Students who earn their Master's degree in the Department of Communication Studies at UT-Austin may (with faculty advisor approval) roll forward up to 12 hours (four classes) from the Master's program to count toward the doctoral degree. Students should consult with the Graduate Coordinator and their faculty advisor about the specifics of this policy.

## Doctoral Degree Program Timetable

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The Communication Studies doctoral degree is designed for completion in four years. Forty-five (45) hours of course work is required, plus comprehensive exams and at least two semesters of dissertation courses.

### Semester One:

- Student enrolls in 9 hours (3 courses) in addition to CMS 081M (details on 081M below in Required Courses).
- If the student is employed in the department as a teaching assistant or assistant instructor, CMS 398T should be one of the three courses above. CMS 398T counts on the degree work program checklist as 3 hours toward the 45-hour total.
- A First Semester Mentor is assigned by the Graduate Coordinator on the basis of the student's area of study to assist in selecting courses for the first semester.
- Conditions of admission, if any, are met.

### Semester Two:

- Student enrolls in 9 hours (3 courses).
- In February, a Permanent Advisor, also known as the Supervisor of the Doctoral Committee, is selected by the student. Student must get the consent of the individual prior to submitting his/her name and is required to inform the graduate coordinator of this choice.
- A Comprehensive Exam Committee, consisting of at least two members from the CMS department in addition to the Supervisor, is chosen by the student. Students must have consent of those individuals whose names are proposed and presented on their work program checklist.
- Student, with the help of the Comprehensive Exam Committee, prepares a Work Program Checklist for all of her/his doctoral course work. The course work should be planned around the student's stated tentative dissertation topic, and submitted to the Comprehensive Exam Committee for approval and signatures.
- By April 1, student submits signed Work Program Checklist to the Graduate Coordinator. A meeting with the Graduate Coordinator will be held in March to discuss the preparation of this document.
- Work Program Checklist reviewed by the Communication Studies Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) in early May.

### Semesters Three, Four & Five:

Student continues to enroll in 9 hours (3 courses) per semester.

### Semester Six:

After completion of the required 45 hours of coursework and with the approval of the Supervising Faculty member, students will prepare and take their **comprehensive exams**. Details on Comprehensive Exam preparation can be found below in the Comprehensive Exam section. Upon successful completion of Comprehensive Exams, students then prepare the dissertation **prospectus timeline**. A student will register for CMS\_88C (Comps prep hours) until they pass the prospectus defense and have an approved candidacy application.

### Semester Seven:

In consultation with the Dissertation Committee, the student prepares a written prospectus for a Dissertation (see more info below in the Doctoral Prospectus section).

A student will register for CMS\_88C (Comps prep hours) until they pass the prospectus defense and have an approved candidacy application. Then they will follow the instructions to apply to Doctoral Candidacy (see more info below in Doctoral Candidacy section).

The student registers for CMS \_99W (Dissertation writing) after being admitted to candidacy by the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Graduate Coordinator can help change a student's registration from Comps prep to Dissertation hours during this semester. Please stay in touch with the Graduate Coordinator as there is a deadline for this before the end of the semester.

### Semester Eight:

The student registers for CMS \_99W (Dissertation writing) for every long semester until the Dissertation is completed, defended, and turned into the Graduate School.

Student must complete all required paperwork and processes of the Graduate School to graduate in this semester (see more info below in the Defending the Dissertation section).

**Please note: Students who do not complete and defend their Dissertations within four years of entering doctoral candidacy, may be required to take a departmental recertification of candidacy exam on the state of the field.**

## **Required Coursework**

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All Doctoral students are required to take the following courses:

- **CMS 081** *Intro to Graduate Studies in Human Communication*. This course must be taken in a students' first fall semester in the program as an introduction to the department, faculty, and research. It is a "zero" credit course, meaning that it will not count toward total hours for the doctoral degree.
- **6 hours "inside/outside."** These two courses should be within CMS, but outside of your area of study.

The remaining courses (**39 hours**) are determined by the student and the faculty advisor to supplement the above and to assist the student in writing the dissertation s/he aspires to write.

**Students may take no more than two courses on a Credit/No Credit basis.** Only courses outside of Communication Studies are allowed as CR/NC. In all cases, the courses must be approved by a student's faculty advisor before they may be changed to CR/NC.

Students are required to meet with their faculty advisors at least once a semester to discuss coursework and registration and to complete a Work Program Checklist.



## **Comprehensive Exams for Doctoral Students**

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When a student has completed 45 hours of coursework, they will be required to complete comprehensive exams in their area of study. This usually occurs in the spring semester of a student's third year. Comprehensive exams can be taken earlier, if a student completes his/her coursework sooner and upon approval of their faculty advisor. The Comprehensive Exam will have both written and oral components. The purpose of the Comprehensive Exam is to:

- Determine whether the student has mastered the areas of research expertise (content and methodology) declared prior to exam.
- Ascertain whether or not the student is adequately prepared for, and capable of, completing a dissertation.
- Evaluate student's potential for making a scholarly contribution to her/his area of study.

A formal meeting (defense) of the student's Comprehensive Exam Committee and the student is held to discuss their performance on the exam. Outcome of the exam will be stated in the following terms: Pass, Fail, Reconsideration. Following the exam, the student's Supervising Faculty Advisor will complete a Comprehensive Exam Report form to inform the Graduate Coordinator of the outcome.

Students who fail their comprehensive exams will have their doctoral program terminated at the end of the semester in which the exams were taken. Faculty advisors and comprehensive exam committees may consider allowing the student to petition the Graduate Studies Committee for a continuation of their program and the opportunity to retest.

Students who fail their comprehensive exams a second time will not be considered for further petitions and will have their doctoral program terminated at the end of the semester in which the exams were retaken.

Students are required to meet with the department Graduate Coordinator the semester before they intend to sit for their Comprehensive Exams to review policies and procedures.

## **Defense of the Doctoral Prospectus**

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Students are required and expected to defend their Doctoral Prospectus the semester after they have successfully completed their Comprehensive Exams (usually, the fall semester of their fourth year). The process to defend the Doctoral Prospectus is as follows:

- The Chair of the Dissertation Committee tentatively approves the prospectus.
- The student distributes copies of the prospectus to the Dissertation Committee.
- A formal meeting of the Dissertation Committee is held to act on the prospectus. This meeting must be held no later than one year after admission to doctoral candidacy.
- Approval Form for Dissertation Prospectus (departmental form) is completed and signed by the Chair of the Dissertation Committee, all members of the committee attending the meeting, and the Graduate Advisor.
- Student delivers signed form to the Graduate Coordinator.

## **Application for Doctoral Candidacy**

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Once Doctoral Exams (Comps and Prospectus) are successfully completed, students will be expected to enter Doctoral Candidacy no later than the next semester – typically, fall of their fourth year. To complete the Doctoral Candidacy application via the Graduate School online portal, students must:

- Select a dissertation committee that consists of a Supervising Faculty member; two faculty in Communication Studies; and one “outside” faculty member. The outside faculty member can be any faculty member outside of the CMS department, including off-campus. Off-campus members are required to have the proper credentials and to provide a Curriculum Vitae for review by the Graduate School. A minimum of four dissertation committee members are required, but students can have more. Students should get consent from all faculty members before naming them to their committees.
- Provide a brief abstract of their dissertation topic.

More details on this process can be found here:

<https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations/doctoral-candidacy>

Once a student is approved to enter doctoral candidacy by the Graduate School, s/he will then enroll in doctoral dissertation hours (\_99W) until successful defense of their dissertations. Students are required to enroll in at least six hours of dissertation courses before they may graduate.

## **Defense of the Dissertation**

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Students are expected to complete their dissertation and schedule a Final Oral Defense after their Doctoral Prospectus has been approved by their Dissertation Committee. The timeline for this varies, depending on a student’s forward progress.

Students in their final semester with intent to complete their dissertation and graduate, must do the following:

- They must be registered in the final dissertation course (\_99W) the semester they intend on graduating.
- Students should consult closely with their Supervising Faculty members regarding their final Dissertation draft and when it is ready to be sent to the entire Dissertation Committee for review. The Dissertation Committee expects that the final draft of the student's Dissertation will be fully edited before being submitted to the Committee. Drafts that are characterized by inaccuracies, spelling, punctuation, grammatical or typographical errors will not be accepted.
- Student will work with their Dissertation Committee to determine a date and time for the defense. Defenses should be scheduled for at least a two-hour window.
- Students must meet with the Graduate Coordinator to review final required paperwork and processes.

- Students must apply to graduate via the Graduate School online portal. It is the student's responsibility to know the Graduate School's deadlines as posted on their website.
- Students must file an official Request for Final Oral form to the Graduate School **no later than two weeks prior to a defense date.**
- They must submit all required signature pages and the final Dissertation to the Graduate School no later than the last Friday of any semester. Consult the Graduate School website for this semester's deadline.

### **Flexibility in a Graduate Student's Program (Leaves of Absence)**

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All Masters and Doctoral students are required to enroll every long semester (fall/spring) until they graduate. In the event of an unforeseen issue, a student may request an official Leave of Absence via their Graduate Program Coordinator. No more than two long semesters of Leave are allowed during a student's entire graduate program.

Common Reasons for Requesting a Leave of Absence

- Illness
- Pregnancy/Birth

The Graduate School governs the rules regarding Leaves of Absence and their guidelines can be found here: <https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies/leaves-of-absence>. Students should consult with the Graduate Program Coordinator for guidance through the process.

If an official Leave of Absence is approved by the Department and the Graduate School, the student will not have to enroll or pay tuition for the approved semester. The student must submit a reapplication for admission before returning the semester following the Leave. Details on readmission are at the link above. If a student was on an approved Leave of Absence, their readmission is guaranteed and they will pick up where they left off in the program. However, Leaves of Absence do cause a delay in progress toward graduation and should be considered fully before requested. In addition, students should be mindful that they may not access any University resources while on Leave.

### **Funding and Leaves of Absence**

If a student is funded in the Department as a Teaching Assistant or Assistant Instructor and is considering a request for an official Leave of Absence, they should consult with the Graduate Program Coordinator, their Faculty Advisor and the Department Human Resources Representative about the impact of the Leave on their funding.

## **Student Employment**

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The Department offers employment for graduate students in the form of Teaching Assistant or Assistant Instructor positions. This is often called “funding.” These positions are offered to students during the admissions process or sometimes after a student’s first year.

### Pay Rates and Benefits

Pay rates are established by the Moody College of Communication and students are paid at differing rates, based upon their classification (Master’s or Doctoral). These pay rates are not negotiable as they are set by the College and not the Department.

The full list of benefits provided to funded students can be found here:

<https://hr.utexas.edu/student/student-employee-benefits>.

### Length of Funding

When funding is offered at admission, it is offered for contiguous years (2 years for Masters, 4 years for Doctoral). Students whom are offered funding after their first year, may be funded on a year-to-year basis or for the remaining time in the program (not to exceed their fourth year). Each faculty area makes those funding decisions once a year (usually during the spring semester) and students are notified by the Department.

### Breaks in Funding

On occasion, students may be offered employment in another department or as a Graduate Research Assistant on a project. If a funded student accepts employment or a GRA position outside of the Department that is for 20 hours, the new funding offer replaces the Department funding for that given semester or year. The Department will not roll forward funding that was replaced. Students are required to give as much notice as possible to the Department when this situation arises to allow for replacement of that funded position.

In addition to the Department policies above, the Graduate School and the International Office set and monitor the rules governing student employment as outlined below.

### First-Year Limits

The Graduate School requires that all first-year students (Masters and Doctoral) be limited to 20 hours of employment during their first two long semesters. If a student wishes to petition for 30 hours of employment, they must start the process with the Graduate Program Coordinator. There must be a valid and reasonable reason for requesting an exception to the first-year limits.

After a student’s first year, they will be limited to 30 hours of employment per long semester.

### International Student Limits

The International Office requires that all international students be limited to 20 hours of student employment throughout their entire academic program. Details on their rules regarding this issue can be found here: <https://world.utexas.edu/iss/students/work/campus>

## **Financial Assistance for Graduate Students (Fellowships)**

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In addition to student employment, students may also receive additional financial assistance in the form of fellowships. There are multiple resources for these fellowships and application deadlines vary. Below is a list of the most commonly issued fellowships:

**Graduate School Recruitment Fellowships** – offered to newly admitted Master’s or Doctoral students during the admissions process. These fellowships can be for one or two years.

**Moody Graduate Fellowships** – offered to newly admitted Doctoral students during the admissions process. These fellowships are for four years and must be in conjunction with a funding offer.

**Continuing Fellowships** – available to current Doctoral students. The Graduate Program Coordinator solicits for applications in late fall every year. A faculty committee selects 1-2 students who are then forwarded to the Graduate School to compete at the university level. There are no guarantees that a department nominee will receive a fellowship once competition is complete. These are large, one-year fellowships normally given to fourth or sometimes fifth-year Doctoral students. If a student is in the midst of their four-year funding, the Continuing Fellowship replaces the funding for that year. Funding does not roll forward. More information on these fellowships can be found here:

<https://gradschool.utexas.edu/finances/fellowships/graduate-school/continuing-fellowships>

**Jesse H. Jones Fellowship** – available to current doctoral students. The Moody College of Communication solicits for these applications in early spring every year. A department faculty committee selects one student. This one-year fellowship can be doubled-up with funding and is normally awarded to fourth or sometimes fifth-year students. More information can be found here: <https://moody.utexas.edu/prospective/graduate-students>

**Graduate School Dissertation Writing Fellowships (Spring and Summer)** – available to current Doctoral students who have been admitted into Doctoral Candidacy and have successfully defended their Dissertation Prospectus (also known as “ABD”). The Graduate Program Coordinator will solicit for applications in late fall (for the spring fellowship) and late spring (for the summer fellowship). A faculty committee selects one student to receive the award. These one-semester fellowships are large and will replace funding for that semester. Funding does not roll forward.

*The Graduate Program Coordinator is the primary conduit for all of the above fellowships and students should address all questions and concerns to her.*

## **Advising and Supervision of a Graduate Student**

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All Communication Studies graduate students are individually advised by a faculty member in their area of study. Faculty Advisors guide students through the selection of their courses every semester. In addition, they help students prepare for Comprehensive Exams (Doctoral), and guide students in the preparation of the Thesis (Master's) or the Dissertation (Doctoral).

### **First Semester Mentors**

All new Master's and Doctoral students are assigned a "First Semester Mentor" (FSM) after they are admitted. FSM's are faculty members in a student's area of study who will guide them through their first two registration cycles (for the first fall and spring).

During a student's first fall semester, they are encouraged to get to know their FSM and the other faculty in their area of study. In early spring of the first year, students will meet with the Graduate Program Coordinator to discuss selection of a Permanent Faculty Advisor for the duration of the program. Students do not have to select their FSM as a permanent advisor. Research interests may change or students may find that they align better with another faculty member.

### **Permanent Faculty Advisors**

Early in the spring of a student's first year, they will be asked to select a Permanent Faculty Advisor, based on their interactions with faculty in their area and research interests. Students must meet with their intended Permanent Faculty Advisor to formally request this association moving forward. Students are then required to inform the Graduate Program Coordinator of their Permanent Faculty Advisor no later than April 1<sup>st</sup>.

From that point forward, the Permanent Faculty Advisor will serve as the academic and professional guide to the student regarding coursework and progress through the graduate program.

## **Graduate Student Evaluation**

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Department faculty gather annually at the end of every spring semester as the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) to review the progress of each student in the program. Students are informed of their progress by the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee by letter, distributed via UTBox. A copy of the letter is also placed in the student's file in the Graduate Program Coordinator's Office.

Evaluations are based on the following:

### Grades

Students must maintain, within the overall grade-point average, a 3.0 average for all courses. Failure to maintain a 3.0 average can result in Warning Status and Academic Dismissal. The Graduate School policies on this are here:

<https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies/warning-status-academic-dismissal>

### Grades in Dissertation or Thesis Courses

All Dissertation and Thesis courses are only offered on a CR/NC basis. Students who fail to make progress (as evaluated by their Faculty Advisor) for a semester will receive a “NC” for that semester. The accumulation of three or more “NC” grades will jeopardize a student’s academic standing and employment on campus. Details on the employment policy can be found here:

<https://gradschool.utexas.edu/finances/student-employment/conditions>.

### Progress

The annual review looks closely at a student’s forward progress in the program. Students who are enrolled past the normal limits (2 years for Masters; 4 years for Doctoral) must exhibit tangible progress toward completion of the Thesis or Dissertation every semester. If a Faculty Advisor reports no tangible progress for a semester or more, the Graduate Studies Committee will impose warnings, deadlines or eventual recommendation of termination from the program.

Types of Recommendations seen in the Annual Review Letters:

- Student is making good progress and should be continued in her/his program.
- First Warning: Student has made little to no progress in the last year and is warned that another year without progress will result in strict deadlines.
- Second Warning with Deadlines: Student has made little to no progress again the last year and now must adhere to strict deadlines for the coming year. Failure to meet those deadlines will result in a recommendation for termination.
- Recommendation for Termination: Student has failed to meet the deadlines outlined in the previous year’s letter and will be recommended for termination by the Graduate Studies Committee to the Graduate School.

## Recommendations for Terminations

If a student has failed to meet deadlines set by the Graduate Studies Committee, they will be given an opportunity to file a petition to the GSC requesting a review of the termination. The GSC will vote on an extension and, if approved, new deadlines will be set for the student. If an extension is denied, a formal recommendation for termination will be delivered to the Graduate School.

If a student has been recommended for termination to the Graduate School, a formal review of the student's progress and documentation will be made by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. All final decisions on terminations are made by the Graduate School. In the event of a termination, students have the right to seek redress of any grievance related to his or her student affairs; a student must initiate his or her complaint within six months of the incident that is the subject of the grievance. The Graduate School grievance procedure can be found under section D1 at <http://www.policies.utexas.edu/policies/graduate-school>

## Returning to the Graduate Program after a Termination

Terminated students may consider reapplication to the program at a later date. The following must be taken into consideration:

- There are no guarantees of readmission.
- Students will be required to apply to the program with all new application materials and will be considered along with all of the applicants for any given cycle.
- Students must adhere to current application cycles and deadlines (no spring admission, for example).
- Master's or Doctoral students who have been out of coursework for longer than 6 years will be asked to enroll in new coursework in order to renew their familiarity with the current department and faculty. The hours required will be determined by the student's faculty advisor and the Graduate Studies Committee.
- Doctoral students who have been out of coursework for longer than 4 years will also be required to re-take their Comprehensive Exams to recertify their knowledge of the discipline. This applies to those who were terminated when they were in dissertation hours.

## Individual Instruction Courses (Conference Courses)

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The Department offers individual instruction courses (also called "Conference Courses") every semester. These courses can be taken for multiple hours (180E, 280E, 380E, 480E). Students who are interested in working with a faculty member on a project under the Conference Course heading, must request a registration form from the Graduate Program Coordinator and complete it with the pertinent information. It must be returned to the Graduate Program Coordinator with the supervising faculty member's signature before registration.

Evaluation of Conference Courses is completely based on whatever criteria that the student and the supervising faculty member agreed upon when enrolling. **Students may take up to two conference courses for their degree.** Only a student's Faculty Advisor may approve more than two to count.



## **Registration Policies**

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### Registration for Students in Coursework (First Year Students)

All first-year students are assigned a First Semester Mentor (FSM) in their area of chosen study. These FSMs meet with new graduate students during the summer advising period to assist them with selecting classes for their first registration. These FSMs will also serve as their guides to the second semester registration (which occurs in late October/early November). Students work with their FSM on a proposed schedule and fill in a Workplan form (see Appendix A (Master's) or Appendix B (Doctoral) for a sample Work Program form). The form must be signed by their FSM. These signed and completed forms are then returned to the Graduate Program Coordinator so that the student's registration advising bar may be lifted.

### Registration for Students in Coursework (Second Year Students and Beyond)

During the spring semester of their first year, graduate students are required to select a permanent advisor in their area of study who will sign off on their registration Work Program Checklists for the duration of their academic career. The completed and signed Workplan will be turned into the Graduate Program Coordinator every semester so that the advising bar can be lifted and students may be cleared to register.

### Registration for Students in Comprehensive Exams (Doctoral only)

During a Doctoral student's final semester of coursework, s/he will complete a Work Program Checklist and will be required to get the signatures of all three of their potential comprehensive committee members. Once all have signed, students will be cleared to register for the comprehensive exam courses (CMS 388C/688C/988C). Information on comprehensive exam prep and structure can be found on page 8 of this Handbook. The completed and signed Workplan will be turned into the Graduate Program Coordinator every semester so that the advising bar can be lifted and students may be cleared to register.

### Registration for Students in Thesis (Master's only)

Master's students will enroll in two Thesis courses to graduate: CMS 698A and CMS 698B. Ideally, this would occur in the fall and spring of their second year (see Master's Degree Timetable on page 2 of this Handbook). Students will be required to complete a Workplan and have both their Faculty Advisor and their Faculty Reader sign the form for both of those semesters. The completed and signed checklist will be turned into the Graduate Program Coordinator every semester so that the advising bar can be lifted and students may be cleared to register.

## Registration for Students in Dissertation (Doctoral only)

Students who have been accepted into Doctoral Candidacy (see page 9 of this Handbook for information on Doctoral Candidacy), do not have to complete a Workplan for registration. The Graduate School auto-registers all Doctoral candidates in Dissertation courses until they graduate. However, if the student has a registration bar (financial, Dean of Students, etc), registration will be disrupted and the bar must be cleared by the student before registration may occur. It is the student's responsibility to verify that they have been registered correctly every semester. If a problem is discovered, students should contact the Graduate Program Coordinator for assistance.

## **Research and Conferences**

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The Graduate Program in the Department of Communication Studies has a long record of excellence in placing graduates in top university positions and thriving companies. A critical step in setting our students up for success is encouraging them to present their original research at academic conferences. It is at these scholarly meetings that students receive feedback from other top scholars, meet and develop networks with researchers in the United States and across the world, learn about cutting edge advances in knowledge and methodologies prior to their publication in journals, and help recruit future graduate students to the University of Texas. Conference attendance, in other words, helps students refine and improve their work, develop reputations, build relationships, improve their prospects for employment, and contribute to the standing and status of our program.

## **Department Travel Funding**

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The Department provides travel funds to every eligible graduate student on a yearly basis. The amount of the travel funds varies from year to year and graduate students are informed of that year's amount every September.

Funds must be used between September 1<sup>st</sup> and August 31<sup>st</sup> of any given year and do not roll over into the next year.

In order to be eligible to receive travel funding for a conference, students must be participating in one of four ways: presenting, panel, paper, or poster. Travel funds cannot be issued to a student who is not participating in one of those four ways.

## **Sources of Information for the Graduate Program**

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The Communication Studies Graduate Program Office consists of two staff members: The Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Program Coordinator.

### **The Graduate Advisor**

The department Graduate Advisor is a faculty member elected to chair the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) and take the lead on all matters pertaining to graduate program's policies and procedures. Duties include:

1. Represents the Vice President, Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Studies Committee in all matters pertaining to the advising of graduate students taking major coursework in Communication Studies.
2. Refers students to the Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies for exceptions requiring their action.
3. Acts as the representative of the Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies in all matters that may be assigned.
4. Provides information to those who inquire about graduate programs in Communication Studies.
5. Assists the graduate faculty in selecting students for admission.
6. Provides students and faculty with information about the policies and procedures of The University, Graduate School, and Departments that govern graduate programs.
7. Counsels students who are having academic problems.
8. Chairs Graduate Studies Committee.

### **René Dailey, Ph.D.**

*Graduate Advisor & Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee*

email: [rdailey@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:rdailey@austin.utexas.edu)

512-663-310

CMA 7.116A

### The Graduate Program Coordinator

The Graduate Program Coordinator provides administrative support to the Graduate Advisor and the department regarding any and all policies and procedures for the graduate program. Duties include:

1. Provides information to those who inquire about graduate programs in Communication Studies.
2. Assists students in applying for admission.
3. Assists the graduate faculty in selecting students for admission.
4. Assists in the supervision of orientation and registration of graduate students.
5. Checks registration on each graduate student and acts on adds, drops, and section changes.
6. Maintains a record of each student's work of previous degrees, as well as copies of registration and grades in work done at The University of Texas at Austin.
7. Informs current and prospective students about graduate work and refers students in appropriate instances to other faculty members for advice.
8. Assists students in applying for financial aid: fellowships, research, professional development awards, etc.
9. Provides students and faculty with information about the policies and procedures of The University, Graduate School, and Departments that govern graduate programs.
10. Counsels students who are having academic problems.
11. Assists the graduate faculty in its annual evaluation of students.
12. Reports periodically to the Graduate Dean and the graduate faculty of the Department about graduate programs, their size, the academic characteristics of the students, etc.
13. Maintains the graduate program website.

**Anne Bormann**

*Graduate Program Coordinator*

Email: [abormann@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:abormann@austin.utexas.edu)

512-471-1942

CMA 7.110

## **Student Conduct and Academic Integrity**

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The department holds all of its graduate students to the highest standards of academic and professional integrity. It is expected that all graduate students will conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times when representing the department at department-sponsored events.

Students are required to adhere to the University policies on academic integrity found here:  
<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php>

In cases where a student's conduct and scholastic integrity are questioned, the department will follow all University processes to investigate and discipline.

## Ph.D. Work Program Checklist

This Work Program sheet is for the following semester's registration: ☐ Fall ☐ Spring ☐ Summer 20\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

UTEID: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Study (check one): ☐ Interpersonal ☐ Organizational ☐ Rhetoric & Language

Tentative Dissertation Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

I will be enrolling in Comps hours for the upcoming semester: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, I will need to be enrolled in the following amount of hours (check one): ☐ 388C ☐ 688C ☐ 988C

REQUIREMENT	COURSES PLANNED/TAKEN	SEMESTER	METHODOLOGY COURSE?
	<i>Example: CMS 390R The Object – Dr. Josh Gunn</i>	<i>Fall 2017</i>	
Course 1 (Inside CMS/Outside your area)	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 2 (Inside CMS/Outside your area)	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 3	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 4	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 5	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 6	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 7	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 8	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 9	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 10	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 11	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 12	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 13	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 14	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 15	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>

CMS 399/699/999R

CMS 399/699/999W

**Approved by Advisory Committee:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor/Chair Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member Signature

**Approved by GSC:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman, GSC: Rene Dailey

## M.A. Work Program Checklist

(30 hours total coursework)

This Work Program sheet is for the following semester's registration:    ☐ Fall    ☐ Spring    ☐ Summer    20\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**UTEID:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Area of Study** (check one):        ☐ Interpersonal        ☐ Organizational        ☐ Rhetoric & Language

**Tentative Thesis Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I will be enrolling in Thesis hours for the upcoming semester:**        ☐ Yes        ☐ No

REQUIREMENT	COURSES PLANNED/TAKEN	SEMESTER	METHODOLOGY COURSE?
	<i>Example: CMS 390R The Object – Dr. Josh Gunn</i>	<i>Fall 2017</i>	
Course 1 (Inside CMS/Outside your area)	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 2 (Inside CMS/Outside your area)	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 3	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 4	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 5	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 6	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 7	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Course 8	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>
Thesis Course CMS 698A			
Thesis Course CMS 698B			

**Approved by Advisory Committee:**

**Approved by GSC:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor/Chair Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman, GSC: Rene Dailey

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Reader

## 2023-2024 GSC Certification Form for Graduate Student Handbooks

[Graduate student handbooks](#) describe graduate degree requirements, program expectations, and deadlines; and they are intended to supplement information published in the Graduate Catalog.

Graduate School policy requires that student handbooks be reviewed annually by the graduate program's Graduate Studies Committee in conjunction with the Graduate Catalog publication cycle.

The signature on this document acknowledges that the Graduate Studies Committee of the graduate program in \_\_\_\_\_ has reviewed and approved the attached handbook content for publication with the 2023-2024 Graduate Catalog.

GSC Chair

Date