

Department of Communication  
**Graduate Handbook**  
California State University, Fresno

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# Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Overview</b> .....   | 3  |
| <b>Admission</b> .....  | 3  |
| University Graduate Admission.....  | 3  |
| Department (Program) Admission.....   | 4  |
| Classifications of Graduate Students.....   | 4  |
| <i>Conditionally Classified Standing</i> .....                                    | 5  |
| <i>Classified Standing</i> .....  | 5  |
| <i>Advanced to Candidacy</i> .....  | 5  |
| <b>Graduate Life</b> .....  | 6  |
| Initiating Graduate Study in Communication.....                                   | 6  |
| <b>Your Graduate Advisor and Committee</b> .....                                  | 7  |
| Dept of Comm Graduate Faculty Appointment Policy.....                             | 7  |
| <b>Program Requirements</b> .....   | 8  |
| Program Objectives.....   | 8  |
| Degree Requirements.....  | 9  |
| Graduate Writing Requirement.....   | 10 |
| Completion of Master's Degree.....  | 11 |
| <i>Thesis Option</i> .....  | 11 |
| <i>Project Option</i> .....   | 12 |
| <i>Comprehensive Examination Option</i> .....                                     | 14 |
| Specific Selection of Classes.....  | 15 |
| <b>Assistantships</b> .....   | 16 |
| <b>Participation in Scholarly Activities and Professional Organizations</b> ..... | 18 |
| <b>Forms and Deadlines</b> .....  | 19 |
| <b>Financial Aid</b> .....  | 20 |
| <b>Special Programs</b> .....   | 20 |
| <b>A Final Word...</b> .....  | 20 |

# Graduate Study

## Department of Communication

### California State University, Fresno

## Overview

The Master of Arts (M.A.) graduate program in the Department of Communication is a comprehensive 30 unit program reflecting the history and breadth of the communication discipline. The graduate program reflects the diverse backgrounds and interests of the department faculty. The program also reflects the faculty's commitment to a program that is grounded in the traditional as well as contemporary approaches to the study interaction.

The program is committed to providing a quality education to students in two broad categories: (A) Students pursuing an advanced degree in preparation for further graduate study and/or for teaching in higher education and (B) students pursuing a graduate degree that will further equip them with knowledge and skills in applied communication studies.

Our degree program involves 30 units of intensive study focused on diverse communication contexts including: Communication Theory, Rhetorical Theory, Organizational Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Research Methods, Health Communication, Intercultural Communication, and Rhetorical Criticism.

Our unique curriculum offers a thesis, project or comprehensive examination option to complete the Masters degree.

The *Graduate Handbook* is intended to facilitate your successful completion of the Master of Arts degree in Communication. Specific questions concerning graduate study in communication which are not answered here or in the university catalog should be directed to the Graduate Coordinator or your graduate advisor.

## Admission

Admission to the program occurs at two levels. First, you must be admitted to the Division of Graduate Studies at the University; second you must be admitted to the Departmental Program. You must complete both sets of admission procedures. If you are not admitted as a "classified student," it is quite important you obtain full Classified Standing as soon as possible.

### University Graduate Admission

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The University has individual application requirements administered by Division of Graduate Studies. They require specific admission items, such as official transcripts, GRE scores, and application form. International Students must also submit formal TOEFL scores. Specific admission requirements to the Division of Graduate Studies may be found on their web site: <http://www.csufresno.edu/gradstudies>. Domestic students may contact Graduate Admissions at 559.278.4973 to request a Graduate Admission form. All University (Division of Graduate

Studies') application materials should be sent directly to their office as soon as possible; you may also apply via the WWW using the above web address.

International students may receive more detailed information and an international application by contacting the International Student Services and Programs Office at 559.278.2782.

## Department (Program) Admission

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In addition to your Division of Graduate Studies Admission (University) process, you must also make application directly to the Department of Communication. Our admission deadline for a Fall term is **March 1<sup>st</sup>** of the same year. Admission for a Spring term is **September 30<sup>th</sup>** of the preceding year. Deadlines for a program application are independent of the deadlines for a Division of Graduate Studies application. The Department encourages early applications.

Your Department Application should include the following materials.

1. A statement of purpose (outlining your reasons for attending graduate school in Communication);
2. An unofficial transcript (photocopy is acceptable);
3. An unofficial copy of GRE scores (photocopy is acceptable);
4. *Three* letters of recommendation from individuals who can attest to your preparation for advanced study (these letters may be included in the application sent by you, or may be mailed separately);
5. A sample of your writing (upper division academic paper, project proposal, etc.);
6. International students must also submit an unofficial copy of TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores. Our international students must score a minimum 600 composite TOEFL.

A package, containing all of the above material should be returned to  
Graduate Coordinator  
California State University, Fresno  
Department of Communication  
5201 North Maple Avenue M/S SA46  
Fresno, CA 93740-8027

You will be notified by the Division of Graduate Studies of both the University and Department application decisions.

## Classifications of Graduate Students

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Admission to a master's degree program places you in one of three categories. *Conditionally Classified Graduate Standing* means you are eligible to complete up to ten units of course work toward the master's degree, but have certain criteria to meet before full standing is attained. *Classified Graduate Standing* signifies that all admission requirements have been met. The final step in the classification process is *Advanced to Candidacy*; a student who has been formally recognized by the department and Division of Graduate Studies as a degree candidate. For further details, see the "Admission to Post-Baccalaureate Standing" section of the current university catalog.

Conditionally Classified Standing. In some instances a student may be admitted as “Conditionally Classified.” This usually signifies a deficiency in the admissions process or a “probationary” period for the student. If you are admitted “conditionally classified” you have certain obligations to fulfil before the department “classifies” you as a graduate student. Under normal circumstances, a student may be conditionally classified for a maximum of ten units. Your admission statement will state the condition(s) of your admission. It is vital that you remedy these conditions, *to the letter*. For example, if you are accepted conditionally with the obligation of earning a 3.25 GPA in the first 9 units, you *must* earn a cumulative GPA of 3.25. Failure to satisfy any condition may result in the department refusing to reclassify your admission, the consequence of which is a disqualification from the program.

Regardless of the deficiency, in order to move from conditionally classified standing to classified standing, the student must have a 3.0 or better GPA.

Classified Standing. Classified standing is granted to those students who meet all admission requirements, and have satisfied all professional, personal, scholastic or other expectations of entering graduate students. Classified standing should be attained either at or immediately following the first semester of graduate study.

Advanced to Candidacy (i.e. Graduate Candidate). A student who has been advanced to candidacy is a “Candidate for Graduation.” Approval of a formal Advancement Petition from a student signifies an accepted contract among the student, program, and university. Students should be advanced to candidacy as soon as possible, after satisfying these conditions:

1. Attained classified standing.
2. Nine units of graduate study are completed with 3.0 GPA or better.
3. All prerequisite courses required by the Graduate Coordinator are satisfied.
4. GRE scores are received and accepted.
5. Minimum GPA of 3.0 is earned (for both overall GPA, and campus GPA).
6. Selection of a chair for the student’s committee.
7. Completion of the Graduate Writing Requirement.

A student must petition for advancement *no later* than the semester preceding the semester s/he applies for graduation. However, it is strongly encouraged that a student submit a petition as soon as the above requirements are met.

## **Graduate Life**

As a beginning graduate student you should be aware of the differences between undergraduate and graduate school. The differences relate directly to what is expected of you as a student. Whereas, your undergraduate program required that you maintain a "C" average in your studies, graduate students are expected to maintain a minimum cumulative grade average of "B." A graduate student is also expected to contribute to the sum total of knowledge in the field. This

means that your graduate experience includes more than the acquisition of information. You are expected not only to conserve the accumulated knowledge of the past, but to amplify, clarify, and modify this knowledge.

The majority of your classroom interaction will be in “seminar format.” Seminars are discussion oriented – very different than the typical lecture format of an undergraduate class. You are expected to fully participate in the discussion of your graduate seminars.

To facilitate these goals you are expected to work closely with the faculty. A close relationship between you and the faculty will enhance your graduate experience. The faculty strongly supports graduate students and encourages your active participation in departmental functions.

## Initiating Graduate Study In Communication

When you arrive on campus you should confer with the Graduate Coordinator of the Department of Communication. The Coordinator will serve as your temporary advisor and will orient you to the regulations, requirements, and procedures of graduate study within the program. For example, the Graduate Coordinator provides scheduling advice, answers general questions concerning progress toward your degree, and approves study plans and program changes. The Graduate Coordinator serves as your provisional graduate advisor until you have formed a Graduate Advisory Committee. The Graduate Coordinator helps you to explore thesis and research topics, to identify appropriate classes, to identify possible committee members, and to progress systematically toward your degree.

The nature of a graduate degree, however, presumes that you will master a specific area in our discipline, and necessitates that you work closely with a faculty member who specializes in a subject related to your academic and professional interests. Your graduate advisor assumes many of the above responsibilities upon signing your Petition For Advancement To Candidacy form (this form can be found in the department office). Whereas the Graduate Coordinator handles more general issues relevant to all graduate advisees in our department, your graduate committee chair is responsible for directing your specific work and advising you on courses that may help you both to complete your degree in a timely fashion and contribute to your scholarship. Your graduate committee chair is your *content* advisor and the Graduate Coordinator is your *process* advisor.

The specific nature of your master's degree program of study will be a function of your career objectives and interests as well as of your academic and professional background in the discipline. The specific courses to be included in your program will be selected by you, your advisor, and your graduate committee.

## **Your Graduate Advisor And Committee**

Your graduate advisor's duty is to advise you in the selection of courses to fulfill the master's degree program, to help you select faculty members to serve as members of your thesis, project, or comprehensive examination committee, and to guide this culminating experience. Your

committee will consist of your advisor, at least one other faculty member from the Department of Communication, and at least one faculty member from outside the Department of Communication. One of the committee members from within the Department of Communication will be designated as your thesis, project, or comprehensive examination committee chairperson. The thesis committee must be selected before registering for thesis units and a "Thesis Committee" form must be completed and filed (this form can be obtained in the office of the Division of Graduate Studies).

You will not be assigned a graduate advisor; you will be expected to exert your own initiative in requesting the professor of your choice to serve in this capacity. Some students know at the beginning of the first semester on campus which professor they wish to have as their advisor; others may not be prepared to make such a choice, and the Graduate Coordinator will serve as a temporary advisor. You are encouraged to select your permanent advisor by the end of your first year. Care should be exercised in the selection of an advisor so as to provide maximum faculty expertise in your special area of inquiry. If your graduate plans are altered, do not hesitate to seek a change of advisors; such changes are made without embarrassment on anyone's part. If changes are made in a thesis committee a form reporting the change must be submitted to the Division of Graduate Studies (this form can be obtained in the department office).

If you plan to complete your degree during the summer months, all arrangements regarding the availability of faculty members for advising and approving a thesis, project, or administering comprehensive examinations should be made well in advance.

## Department of Communication Graduate Faculty Appointment Policy

To become or remain a member of the Graduate Faculty in the Department of Communication, the faculty member must have taught at least one graduate level course or must have supervised at least one project or thesis during the most recent five years, and should show evidence of scholarly activity appropriate to the graduate program.

Nothing in this policy precludes faculty members not designated as members of the Graduate Faculty from contributing to delivery of the curriculum through teaching, or through appointment as the third member of thesis or project committees (excluding appointment as committee chair).

## **Program Requirements**

The minimum number of units required to complete a Master's Degree in communication is 30. Of these 30 units, at least 21 units must be in courses designed primarily for master's degrees, i.e., courses numbered in the 200 series. Also, a coherent program of cognate study is recommended. Outside department course work in the amount of 3 units must be used to complete your study program. At least 21 units of any master's degree program must be California State University, Fresno, residence credit.

## Program Objectives

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The graduate program has several objectives that serve as measures for competent M.A. graduates of the Communication Department.

- **First:** all graduates will have a comprehensive understanding of the historical and philosophical assumptions of the communication discipline;
- **Second:** all graduates will recognize and be able to use appropriate communication strategies in formal, informal, professional and personal contexts;
- **Third:** all graduates will understand quantitative and qualitative methods of research in communication;
- **Fourth:** all graduates will understand various communication perspectives and will have a clear understanding of their own personal perspective and ideology.

## Degree Requirements

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|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>Required Core Theory Seminars</b> .....   | <b>6</b>                |
| Comm 241: Seminar in Rhetorical Theory   |                         |
| Comm 262: Seminar in Communication Theory & Research   |                         |
| <b>Required Core Methodology Seminar</b> .....   | <b>3</b>                |
| Comm 242M: Seminar in Contemporary Criticism   |                         |
| <b>OR</b>  |                         |
| Comm 264M: Seminar in Strategies and Applications in Communication Research  |                         |
| <b>Additional Seminar Experience</b> .....   | <b>12</b>               |
| Minimum of 21 seminar units are required. “Core” classes count toward this 21 unit requirement. (21 unit requirement – 9 units from core classes = 12 units of additional seminar experience). |                         |
| <b>Outside Elective</b> .....  | <b>3-9</b>              |
| Minimum of 3 units of coursework required outside the Dept of Comm.  |                         |
| <b>Culminating Experience:</b> .....   | <b>0-6</b>              |
| Select one of these options.   |                         |
| A.    Comprehensive Examination (0 units)  |                         |
| B.    Comm 298: Project (3-6 units)  |                         |
| C.    Comm 299: Thesis (3-6 units)   |                         |
| <b>TOTAL</b> .....   | <b>30 units Minimum</b> |

### Degree Requirement Rules

1. While 30 units are the minimum required to graduate, a student may graduate with a substantially greater unit requirement. An individual student’s program of study is determined by the student, the student’s advisor, and student’s committee. All degree requirements, and in particular elective requirements, must be approved by the graduate student’s advisor.
2. An elective requirement can be met by an approved communication seminar, approved upper-division communication course, or appropriate course outside the department.
3. No undergraduate capstone course may be used to fulfill graduate degree requirements. There is a strict prohibition on capstone classes counting as “outside” electives.
4. Receiving SP (satisfactory progress) for any units on COMM 298 or 299 commits the student to a project or thesis. A subsequent change to comprehensive exams may not be approved. If a student does not complete a project or thesis after being given a grade of SP, the “SP” grade will be changed to an “F” by the Division of Graduate Studies. This may seriously jeopardize a student’s required 3.0 GPA for graduation.

5. Students must receive a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater to graduate. Special restrictions on GPA and course load apply to Graduate Teaching/Forensics Assistants (see the section on Assistantships).
6. Students must pass the Graduate Writing Requirement. This condition must be satisfied before being advanced to candidacy.
7. Students must maintain continuous enrollment 1) while completing a grade of SP or I in either thesis or project or other course, 2) while preparing to take comprehensive examinations, and 3) during the semester in which an application for graduation is filed.
8. Students have a maximum of five years to complete all master's degree requirements from the date of their first course used toward the MA degree.
9. No more than six units of independent study may be applied toward the 30 unit program.

### ***Graduate Writing Requirement***

Graduate students are required to submit an academic graduate writing sample prior to advancement to candidacy. Specific dates for submitting the writing sample are established by the Graduate Coordinator.

Writing samples are evaluated by two graduate faculty based on correct and effective style, mechanics, content, and organization. If needed the Graduate Coordinator will evaluate the writing sample in order to break a tie. The evaluations are conducted using a blind review process.

Failure to successfully complete this writing requirement will postpone or prevent the student's advancement to candidacy.

#### **If a student fails the writing requirement:**

If the student fails the writing requirement on the first attempt, a revised or second writing sample must be submitted within the same semester. If the revised or second writing sample fails to meet department expectations, the student will be required to work with the University Writing Center and a faculty mentor. The student will be given the opportunity to resubmit writing samples during the regularly scheduled dates each subsequent semester until the writing sample meets department expectations.

#### **The appeals process:**

In the event that a student contests the writing requirement results, the contested writing sample will be further reviewed by two graduate faculty members in a blind review process. If needed, the Graduate Coordinator will evaluate the writing sample in order to break a tie.

***Special note:*** This section of degree requirements and rules is designed for explanation and illustration of commonly asked questions. All students are governed by official rules published in the University Catalog. The Catalog shows the formal (official) degree requirements.

## Completion Of Master's Degree

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The master's degree may be completed in one of the following ways: (a) a thesis; (b) a project; or (c) a comprehensive examination. For detailed descriptions of these options, see the graduate studies section of the current university catalog. In addition, for a thesis or project, consult “Specifications and Instructions for the Master's Thesis or Project” which is available from the Division of Graduate Studies.

Graduate Students may not proceed to a project or thesis defense, or begin comprehensive examinations with incomplete work outstanding (grades of I or SP).

Upon completion of your culminating experience, your advisor and Graduate Coordinator must submit a “Master Degree Clearance” form to the Division of Graduate Studies. This form may be obtained from the graduate coordinator.

### ***Thesis Option***

Prior to completion of a thesis proposal or prospectus, the student is required to complete the “Thesis Committee Form” available from the Division of Graduate Studies. This form lists all committee members, and general thesis topic. This form must be signed by the student’s advisor, and by the Dean of the College of Arts & Humanities. Students using human subjects as part of their thesis must also be granted approval from the Human Subjects Committee.

Thesis Proposal or Prospectus. As a first step in preparing a thesis, you should prepare a written proposal which specifies the thesis topic, the significance of the topic, the research parameters and the methods to be employed in the thesis. After the proposal has been received by the committee, you should arrange to distribute your proposal to the faculty and arrange for a public presentation of your research project. At this time the faculty at large will offer its suggestions and recommendations for the acceptance, modification, or rejection of the proposal is the responsibility of your graduate committee. One copy of the approved proposal, with signatures of the committee members, shall be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator.

A thesis topic should not be selected solely because of the interests of the members of the thesis committee. However, nothing can facilitate the execution of a thesis and insure its quality more than carefully insuring that the committee is particularly competent and interested in both the substantive issue and methodological techniques employed in the thesis. Although the research necessary for writing a thesis will not be completed when the proposal is submitted, you must display a fundamental understanding of the relevant research methodologies to be employed and a familiarity with the literature in the area of your thesis topic. It is also your responsibility to demonstrate that you can perform the research you propose.

Timetable for Submitting A Thesis. In addition to meeting the regulations of the Division of Graduate Studies, the thesis must be submitted to the committee members at least seven days prior to the oral defense of the thesis. The oral defense must be completed at least one week before the deadline set up by the Division of Graduate Studies. This time allows you to make necessary corrections in the manuscript and still meet the Division of Graduate Studies deadline

for submitting a thesis. Failure to meet this deadline results in delaying the completion of the degree until the following semester.

Oral Defense of Thesis. The two-hour oral defense of the final draft of the thesis is open to all faculty members of the Department of Communication. All faculty members should be notified in writing of the time and place of the oral defense. Such notification is the responsibility of your graduate committee chair and should be made at least one week prior to the defense to allow faculty members to plan on attending and to read the manuscript. One copy of the final draft of the thesis is to be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator one week prior to the oral defense so as to allow faculty members to read the manuscript prior to the defense.

Final Copy of the Thesis. The final thesis must conform to the regulations set forth by the Division of Graduate Studies and specified in the "Guidelines for Thesis Preparation." After the student's committee approves the final thesis, the thesis is forwarded to the Dean of the College of Arts & Humanities for review and approval. The ultimate decision regarding the acceptance of the completed thesis is the responsibility of the student's graduate committee, the Dean of the College of Arts & Humanities, and the Division of Graduate Studies.

The student should bind a final copy for the committee chair, and give copies of the final thesis to other committee members.

### ***Project Option***

As a second alternative you may select to complete your degree is completing a project. The University describes a project as "a significant undertaking appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to professional fields." A project should evidence originality and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale. Generally, a project focuses on a significant problem, articulates objectives, methodology, and a conclusion or recommendation. The merit of the project is to be judged on the quality of the work.

The project *must* reflect the author's critical and independent thinking (to simply describe, catalog, or compile information is not appropriate), originality, clarity of purpose, accuracy and completeness of documentation. The quality of writing, the project's format, and documentation must meet authorized style requirements. Students using human subjects as part of their project must seek approval from the Human Subjects Committee.

There is no *academic* distinction between a project and a thesis. COMM 298 Project (3 or 6 units) is appropriate for those whose work does not fit or is not served by the traditional thesis format. For example, a student who enters the business community after completing a master's degree may well be served by a "project" culminating experience.

Project Proposal. The student is required to prepare a formal, written project proposal detailing among other things the characteristics of the project report. The proposal must be presented in a colloquy open to the public and attended at least by the project committee. The proposal should be submitted to the committee members at least one week before the date of the colloquy. The

proposal must be approved by the project committee members prior to the undertaking of the project work. Students are required to select a project committee when choosing the project option. The committee composition is the same as a thesis or comprehensive examination; it is composed of 2 members from the faculty in the Department of Communication and a member from outside the program. One of the two faculty members from the Communication department will serve as the project director.

#### Kinds of Experiences Acceptable for a Project

- A communication audit.
- A computer model(s).
- A system simulation(s)
- An individual field analysis of an operating business area.
- Design, implementation and evaluation of a workshop(s).
- Development of an experimental device or piece of equipment.
- An extensive curriculum design.
- A pilot study.

This list is not exhaustive. The final approval of any project is the responsibility of the project committee. However, project experiences that are not acceptable are those experiences without a written report. For example, a workshop is not acceptable if it is not accompanied by a written document addressing those areas outlined below in the specific guidelines for project reports.

Specific Guidelines for a Project The following guidelines are only general requirements for the project option. Each of the elements should be considered in early evaluation of the project, early drafts, and the completed project. Determination of the ultimate acceptability is the responsibility of the project committee.

A. The formal project proposal should include:

1. Statement of the Problem (justification of the project)
  - a. Context or background of the project.
  - b. Description of relevance and importance of the project.
  - c. Purpose of the project.
  - d. Theoretical or practical implications of the project.
  - e. Project goals.
2. Preliminary Review of Relevant Literature (demonstrates the relationship between the project and current thinking in the field)
3. Proposed Outline for Final Project Report  
The project proposal contains a substantial literature review. The student should expect to put as much effort into the proposal as would be required by a term paper. Much of the content of the proposal can be revised for use in early chapters and the bibliography of the final project report.

B. The final project report should include:

1. Statement of the Problem
2. Literature Review
3. Methodology (i.e., how the problem will be investigated.)

4. Project Component (i.e., analyses, description of the workshop, the curriculum, the computer program, etc.)
5. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations
  - a. Evaluation, if any, of the project component.
  - b. Major results and conclusions.
  - c. How well does the project component meet the project goals?
  - d. Theoretical and practical use for the project component.
  - e. Further research/work in the topic area?
6. References
7. Bibliography (if needed)
8. Appendix (if applicable)
9. Abstract

Oral Defense of Project Once a complete draft of the project has been fully reviewed by the committee and all revisions incorporated, a two hour oral defense of the final draft of the project is open to all faculty members of the Department of Communication. All faculty members should be notified in writing of the time and place of the oral defense. Such notification is the responsibility of the student's committee chair and should be made a least one week prior to the defense to allow faculty members to plan on attending and to read the manuscript.

Final Copy of the Project. Copies of the final project are to be given to all committee members. The ultimate decision regarding the acceptance of the completed project is the responsibility of the student's committee.

### ***Comprehensive Examination Option***

As a third alternative you may elect to complete your degree by taking a comprehensive examination. This examination is divided into three components: an out-of-house written paper, a 8-hour in-house written examination, and a two-hour oral examination. These time guidelines may only be altered by decision of the student's committee and in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator.

The comprehensive examination is used to assess: (a) critical and independent thinking, (b) mastery of subject matter, and (c) integration of knowledge from various areas of interest. The written material from all components will be evaluated according to the following criteria: (a) Does the student demonstrate independent thinking?, (b) Does the student use appropriate organization?, (c) Does the student demonstrate high writing competency?, (d) Does the student demonstrate critical analysis?, and (e) Is the documentation accurate?

The student and his/her committee may conduct a pre-examination meeting to decide the areas of the questions and time limits, and the area of the question. Material to be covered may be discussed with the candidate beforehand; however, any specific question(s) should not be disclosed to the candidate. The meeting will be summarized in a time-line for the entire examination (i.e., time limits for each area and when the question will be distributed and finished). This time-line is to be given to the Graduate Coordinator who will ensure all relevant parties have a copy. The exam is to be treated as a package and distributed to the committee members as a package. One week should be given for the reading and evaluation of the total

examination. Any re-writes have to be completed by the last day of the semester in which the exams were started. If they are not then the exam will not be passed and the student can reinstate his/her exam schedule the next semester.

The Out-of-House Written Component. This part of the examination will involve the student addressing one significant question from his/her area of interest. The student's committee will determine the area of the question. The student will be required to research information, integrate information, and apply information to the question with appropriate organization and referencing. The student will be given no longer than one month to complete this portion of the examination.

The In-House, Written Examination. This examination will cover the student's program of study to be determined by the student and his/her committee. The examination will be 8 hours in length (2 hours on material from the cognate area; 3 hours on material from rhetorical communication or applied seminars; 3 hours on material from communication theory/rhetorical theory). The questions covering these areas will be comprehensive in nature and not necessarily limited to material covered in a student's course work. The student will be given one week to write the in-house examination.

Both parts of the written examination (paper and written examination) will be completed before any feedback will be given to the candidate. At the student's committee's discretion, a student may be required to rewrite a portion or the entire exam. A student may only rewrite a portion or the entire exam once in a particular semester.

The Oral Examination A two-hour examination shall be scheduled no sooner than one week after the completion of both components and no later than one month after completion of both components. At this time a student should be prepared to answer questions relating to the written answers and/or questions from other areas of communication. All faculty members should be invited to the oral examination in a manner similar to the invitation extended for the thesis defense.

## Specific Selection of Classes

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The Department of Communication utilizes a degree program flexible to a wide variety of students. You, in careful consultation with your advisor, should select specific classes pertinent to your own career interests. With this in mind, the department highly suggests the following courses.

For individuals pursuing careers in teaching or doctoral work, the Department highly suggests selecting 12 units of coursework from the following: Comm 205, 215, 242M, 243, 244, 214, 263, 264M, 265 and 266.

For individuals pursuing professional careers such as business and industry, public service, law or government, the Department of Communication highly suggests selecting 12 units of coursework from the following: Comm 214, 215, 263, 264M, 265, 266, 268 and 276.

# Assistantships

Teaching and forensic assistantships are awarded to qualified classified graduate students.

## ***Policies on Graduate Teaching Associate Appointment and Retention***

The Graduate Teaching Associate Director and GTA Development Committee will recommend GTA teaching assignments, which shall be approved by the Communication Faculty. GTA's will typically teach two sections of lower division General Education courses under the close supervision of the Director.

The exact number of positions available will be determined each year by the Communication faculty and chair, and approved by the Dean of Arts and Humanities. These positions shall be allocated according to staffing needs and budgetary constraints and take priority over any part-time lecturer positions offered. The typical appointment as a GTA will not exceed four semesters.

All GTAs are required to attend the supervisory meetings with the GTA Director as part of their contract with the university.

The department requires all GTAs to take a minimum of six graduate units of course work each semester. However, students in their last semester may be exempt from this provision if they have completed or are completing the required course work for their degree. GTAs should be aware that other offices, including the Department of Financial Aid, may require a heavier course load.

Criteria for GTA appointment:

1. BA in Communication or equivalent preparation.
2. A cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.
3. Three letters of recommendation from university faculty.

GTA reappointment requires a pattern of significant progress in accomplishing graduate degree requirements. At a minimum, this means:

1. Earn a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better, and a grade of B or higher, in all graduate work.
2. Be enrolled in, and complete, two courses or six units of equivalent graduate level work toward the graduate degree including work toward the completion of the thesis/project each semester. **Withdrawal from a course(s) after the fourth week does not constitute acceptable progress.**
3. Receive a satisfactory teaching performance evaluation from the GTA director.
4. Meet the requirements for, and achieve, classified standing and advancement to candidacy. Complete the degree in a timely manner. The GTA committee will determine timeliness.

Any exceptions to the GTA policy must be approved by the GTA committee, who shall have the option of bringing exceptions to the Communication faculty for a vote.

### ***The Director of Graduate Teaching Associates***

The Director will be selected by the Department Chair and approved by the Communication faculty.

The Director will have the following duties:

1. Curriculum Design. In consultation with the Graduate Teaching Associate Committee, the Director will:
  - a. Select textbooks that will be used in the program
  - b. Create a standardized syllabus
  - c. Develop assignments
  - d. Facilitate the development of appropriate assessments of students by the Graduate Teaching Associates.
2. Instructional Practice. The Director will teach students about teaching methods and the features of effective classroom interaction. Representative topics to be discussed include:
  - a. Effective Lecture/Discussion
  - b. Teacher Clarity
  - c. Behavioral Management
  - d. Experiential Learning Activities
  - e. Cooperative Learning
3. Program Management. The Director will assess and monitor the progress of the graduate students participating in the program through the following:
  - a. Classroom observation and assessment of performance by the Director and/or the Director's faculty designees.
  - b. Student evaluation facilitation, including the required end-of-the-semester evaluation.
  - c. Assessment of the end-of-term student evaluations and classroom observation reviews.
  - d. Individual meetings on classroom practice.
  - e. Weekly meetings of the Graduate Teaching Associates, chaired by the Director.
4. Preservice Program. The Director will conduct a pre-service program for all Graduate Teaching Associates during the week prior to the start of the fall semester.

## **Graduate Teaching Associate Development Committee**

The Director of Graduate Teaching Associates will be assisted by a GTA Development Committee. The committee will be a standing committee of the Communication Department, and its members will be the Director of Graduate Teaching Associates, the Director of the Graduate Program, and the Director of Forensics. The Department Chair will serve as an ex-officio member and be the liaison between the Committee, the Dean, and the faculty.

The Graduate Teaching Associate Development Committee will have the following duties:

1. Review applications of prospective instructors and assess their qualifications based on the criteria for appointment or retention.
2. Select Graduate Teaching Associates from the applicant pool and present the candidates to the Communication faculty for approval. If there are insufficient positions for all the approved candidates, the committee will rank order the candidates.
3. Exceptions to the policies for awarding courses to Graduate Teaching Associates must be presented to the Communication faculty and approved by majority vote.
4. Provide assistance to the Director of Graduate Teaching Associates as needed, including classroom visitations and assessments of the instructors.
5. The committee members (except for the director) will facilitate the evaluation of the Director of Graduate Teaching Associates.
6. Annually evaluate and recommend an outstanding Graduate Teaching Associate in conjunction with the International Communication Association sanctioned award.

Although the department does not forbid a graduate student seeking employment beyond an assistantship, new graduate students are strongly advised against dividing their time too severely. Your first priority is to complete your master's degree in a reasonable time frame. These assistantships are intended to assist students who are working full-time to complete their graduate degree.

## **Participation in Scholarly Activities and Professional Organizations**

Graduate students are encouraged to join professional academic or applied associations. Student memberships are often relatively inexpensive and a good investment for the amount of information you receive. Currently, graduate students and faculty members belong to a variety of organizations including the National Communication Association (NCA), Western States Communication Association (WSCA), International Communication Association (ICA), and the International Network of Personal Relationships (INPR).

The Department considers your participation in professional and scholarly activities to be an important part of your professional development. Write seminar papers with a consideration for

submission to an academic conference. Ask your committee chair or the Graduate Coordinator about deadlines for submitting papers or panels to conferences. Find out when conferences are held so you can plan to attend. Several graduate students in the past have attended conferences and received financial aid to do so. In addition, The Department holds various forums, graduate colloquiums, and other activities beyond those in seminars which can be valuable experiences. The Department also hosts an annual student conference each April.

## Forms And Deadlines

You will find that a component of your graduate experience is meeting the demands of bureaucracy. The Graduate Coordinator will assist you in negotiating this bureaucracy. *However, it is your individual responsibility to complete appropriate forms, meet deadlines, and seek advice! Do not expect your advisor or the Graduate Coordinator to seek you out to complete forms; you must take responsibility for your own degree.*

Forms abound. You are responsible for completing all forms. These forms are common for a graduate student, and may be obtained from the Division of Graduate Studies, the Graduate Coordinator or the main department office.

- Classified Standing form (if you did not enter the program as a classified student)
- Advancement to Candidacy Petition – after completion of nine units, the Graduate Writing Requirement, and selection of an advisor. This form should be executed as soon as possible (see Admissions), however, it is due no later than the semester preceding the semester in which the student applies to graduate.
- Master Degree Clearance form (after passing your culminating experience)
- Application to Graduate form (during the first two weeks of the semester you plan to graduate. If you plan to complete your degree during a summer session, application must be made during the first two weeks of the first summer session.)
- Thesis Assignment Form (if you select the thesis option, a form must be completed specifying the members of your committee.)
- Change in Advancement to Candidacy Petition (if you make any changes in your plan of study or committee you must complete appropriate forms documenting and requesting those changes.)

As frustrating as some of these details can be, they are often essential for expediting your graduation. Therefore, please make sure that you type clearly all forms and provide clean copies of requested materials. Be attentive to posted deadlines and requirements of the Graduate School and this department. Annual deadlines are published in the University catalog, the schedule of courses, and available through the Division of Graduate Studies.

## Financial Aid

The primary financial aid offered from the department of communication is in the form of Graduate Assistantships. Additional financial aid is available from a variety of sources. The Division of Graduate Studies puts out a pamphlet detailing the number and kind of financial aid available to graduate students. This pamphlet is available from the Division of Graduate Studies. Out of state tuition waivers for non-resident students may be available. You must apply for these waivers through the department's Graduate Coordinator.

## Special Programs

If you desire an exception to any of the above regulations and procedures, you must petition through your advisor to the faculty. All such petitions are subject to the approval of the faculty of the Department of Communication and will be recorded in the minutes of the faculty meetings. Some modifications require approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

If the master's degree in the Department of Communication, as outlined above, does not meet your career objectives, the Division of Graduate Studies provides an opportunity for you to create a "special major" which combines study in two or more fields. If you are interested in such a program, you should contact the Graduate Coordinator of the Department of Communication or the Division of Graduate Studies who may provide the necessary information. *If you choose a Special Program, you must be given approval prior to beginning coursework.*

## A Final Word . . .

Occasionally, on a break or a weekend, when all else can be set aside, read something totally unrelated to your graduate program. Discipline, the art of knowing what to do and when to do it, is related to control, tenacity, and scholarship, but so too are passion, imagination, and intelligence. Let graduate school nurture your instinct to learn. Enjoy your graduate experience at the California State University, Fresno; in all its facets.

### REVISION HISTORY:

January 2000 - Substantial formatting change

August 2000 – Change in Comp. Examination Procedure

May 2001 – Change in Assistantship Policy (eligibility, appointment, renewal)

November 2001 – Addition of Graduate Faculty Appointment Policy (Policy approved by Dept on 10/24/01)

January 2002 – Clarification of Incomplete Work in the "Completion of a Masters Degree Option." Vote from faculty meeting 2/11/98

August 2004—Change to Graduate Writing Requirement (Dept. approved 9/17/03) and Graduate Teaching Associate policies (Dept. approved 4/16/03)