

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

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# GRADUATE STUDY IN COMMUNICATION

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The graduate program in Communication at Texas A&M aims to produce well-educated academic professionals, as well as communication research specialists in other contexts. Because each student's goals are unique, the graduate curriculum in Communication is intentionally flexible to accommodate individual student's interests and promote intra/interdisciplinary inquiry. We offer small classes from nationally and internationally renowned faculty, allowing for a great deal of student-faculty interaction among the premier scholars in the field. And because our graduate faculty exemplify intellectual curiosity and excellence in scholarship, our A&M graduate students are themselves very active, productive scholars, participating frequently in professional meetings, publishing their own work, and being acknowledged for excellence in research and teaching.

The Department of Communication offers a Master of Arts degree and two paths toward a doctoral degree—a traditional 4 year (64 Hour) track for students entering with a Master's degree, and a 5 year (96 Hour) direct admit track for exceptional students entering with a Bachelor's degree. In each of these tracks, students select coursework from the department's five areas of specialization. Although doctoral students are asked to specialize in a primary area (or two), all of our students are strongly encouraged to build a program of study that takes advantage of multiple areas. In fact, many of our students graduate with research and teaching profiles that reflect this intra/interdisciplinary orientation, evidencing their abilities to adapt to a variety of positions outside of A&M.

Across these areas of emphasis, the curriculum is designed to provide instruction in the history, theory, and analysis of communication processes, events, and texts. Graduate students have exposure to both social scientific and humanistic approaches to scholarship. To this end, we strive to identify common opportunities for students and faculty from the various concentrations to work together and learn from one another.

## FIVE AREA CONCENTRATIONS

### COMMUNICATION, POLITICS, & POLICY

Scholars in communication, politics, and policy explore the interactions among media organizations, technology, production, content, distribution, uses, systems, and ecologies within and across political, legal, cultural, social, economic, and geographic contexts and as they affect individuals, organizations, communities, and governments. Faculty research examines the ways in which law and policy shape the environments within which all communication takes place; the co-construction of law, society, and technology; interactions between political actors and journalists; media effects on political attitudes and behaviors; interactions between technological innovations and use; and the role of communication technologies in politics. Using a variety of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches, they study historical and contemporary political communication as well as the politics, political economy, and law- and policy-making for and of all communication.

## HEALTH COMMUNICATION

Health communication researchers employ a diverse set of theoretical and methodological approaches to examine the role of communication and media in relation to the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Our contexts of study include public health, clinical settings, families, health care organizations, and community organizations. Topics of research include clinician-patient communication and health outcomes, health-related decision making in families, culture and health, social media and well-being, persuasive public health campaigns, and the impact of social and professional changes on communication within health care organizations.

## MEDIA, CULTURE, & IDENTITY

Scholars in Media, Culture, & Identity explore the role of traditional and emerging media within and across historical, cultural, global, and international contexts. They use diverse approaches to study how media and technology influence culture and identity at the individual and societal levels. They examine how culture, communication, and identity (such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, religion, place, and social class) influence and are shaped by media and technology content, uses, practices, and effects. Faculty research topics such as media technologies, popular communication, media representations, digital cultures, intercultural communication, global media, mobile communication, media processes and effects, journalistic practices, entertainment media, media activism, and media literacy as these are constitutive of the power relations and processes of social change. Scholars studying and teaching in this area employ a variety of theoretical (such as feminist, critical, cultural, behavioral, and social psychological) and methodological (such as ethnographic, content analytical, interpretive, textual analytical, case study, survey, and experimental) approaches.

## ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Organizational communication faculty study the role of communication in organizing processes and practices within and between organizations, stakeholder groups, and institutions and how these processes and practices enable organizations and publics to manage relationships, conflicts, and power. Faculty research focuses on how communication processes such as structuring, sense-making, advocacy, and collaboration shape the ways organizations and publics are organized in corporate, non-profit, and community contexts. Organizational communication scholars employ a variety of quantitative, critical/interpretive, and rhetorical methods to generate useful knowledge for organizations, publics, and institutions. Engaged communication scholarship represents an important mode of inquiry by providing one avenue for integrating theory and practice to address ethical, social, and civic problems within and between these organizations and publics and to create the potential for social change.

## RHETORIC & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Scholars in this area are rooted in humanistic traditions and focus on how public discourse shapes and is shaped by choices confronting the public, ways in which texts and cultural practices of communication constitute identities and sustain democratic forms of citizen participation, and the interwoven fabric of power, politics, and speech-making in American society. Research in the program includes classical, contemporary, and critical rhetorical theory; rhetorical history and the criticism of American public address; feminism and the intersectional analysis of race, class, and gender; the presidency; social movements; contemporary political campaigns; policy and media; visual rhetoric, materialism, and monuments; and freedom of expression.

## GRADUATE STUDENT FUNDING

### TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

The Department of Communication annually awards graduate assistantships to qualified students who have been admitted to the doctoral program. All graduate assistants have the university's regular employee benefits package, including health insurance coverage, carry a nine-month stipend (September through May) and require 20 hours of assigned work per week. Typically, entering graduate students teach recitation sections of COMM 203 ("Public Speaking"), under the direct supervision of the course director during their initial semester.

Doctoral students in good academic standing can be assured of at least four years of assistantship funding. Graduate students will be moved into stand-alone sections of COMM 203 or other courses that are related to their program of research as soon as possible. **Texas law requires that students have completed 18 semester hours of graduate coursework in their academic field before they can become the instructor of record (e.g., teach in other than a mass lecture/recitation format).** This law will be irrelevant to students who enter our 64-hour PhD program with a Master's degree in Communication. Students who enter 96-hour PhD program, as well as 64-hour PhD students whose Master's degrees are in other disciplines should be careful to complete 18 graduate hours of COMM coursework during their first year in residence. If they do not, they may not be able to be funded during their first summer or teach stand-alone courses during the fall semester of their second year.

A concerted effort is made to provide doctoral students who perform well in teaching assignments with diverse instructional experiences. In addition to public speaking, graduate students typically have the opportunity to teach skills courses such as argumentation and debate, small group communication, technical communication, and interviewing. Graduate students who have passed their preliminary exams may have the opportunity to teach lecture courses in their primary research areas. In the past these courses have included organizational communication, health communication, American oratory, and intercultural communication. Summer teaching assistantships are often available.

Graduate students with assistantships will be provided office space and the keys needed to access Bolton Hall, their offices, and other spaces deemed necessary for them to do their jobs. Once a student leaves the graduate program, no longer is on an assistantship, or has job duties that are

changed or reassigned, keys must be returned immediately to the staff member charged with managing the keying system. If a key is lost, the student will be required to pay the fees necessary to compensate.

### RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

Over the course of their study, graduate students are sometimes assigned as research assistants. A research assistantship requires that a student work between 10-20 hours/week during the semester, performing a variety of tasks related to the ongoing research functions of the department faculty. In the case of an overload, students are required to work 9 hours/week during the semester. Because RA funding is linked to individual faculty members, either through their having obtained grants and/or contracts, or through negotiation over the terms of their employment, they decide (in conjunction with the department head) which students they would like to invite to serve as their RAs.

### UNIVERSITY ASSISTANTSHIPS

Students may also seek graduate assistantships with other offices and departments at Texas A&M University. For example, graduate students in communication have secured graduate assistantships in the College of Liberal Arts' Undergraduate Advising Office, the Confucius Institute, the University's Off-Campus Housing Office, the Writing Center, Office of Student Life, and in academic units including Sociology, GeoSciences, and the School of Rural Public Health.

### TUITION & FEES

All graduate assistants are eligible for in-state tuition. In addition, PhD-level graduate assistants in the Department of Communication typically receive funds from the University to cover their tuition. These funds are granted to teaching assistants, and most research assistants. Typically, Texas A&M will cover tuition expenses for up to 9 credit hours for the Fall and Spring semesters that a student has an assistantship. Students are responsible for paying fees each semester. The university typically covers tuition costs for 3 credit hours for each 3 hour course a student teaches in the summer (NOTE: summer teaching is NOT guaranteed).

### OVERLOADS & EXTERNAL EMPLOYMENT

There may be opportunities for additional teaching and research opportunities inside and outside the department that exceed the normal teaching and research load for graduate students. Given the complexity of university rules informing overloads, students wishing to pursue such opportunities should consult with the Department Head and their advisor before entering into a contract to take on overloads. Only students with excellent academic credentials who are on track for completing their degrees on time will be asked or approved to take on an overload.

### FUNDING FOR GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH & TRAVEL

All full-time graduate students in good academic standing are eligible to apply for travel funding in order to present their research at academic conferences. Students can apply for a travel grant

once every academic year. These grants *typically* offer \$1000 for one conference/academic year for a student presenting at the conference, OR up to \$500 for one conference/academic year to attend a conference that one is not presenting at. Students seeking additional funds for conference travel and/or to cover research expenses should apply for either a Professional Development Support Award or Research Enhancement Grant through the Department of Communication. These awards are distributed up to two times each academic year, and require that students submit an application and proposal to the Graduate Instruction Committee. For more information about proposal materials and deadlines, please visit the website.

## **ANNUAL REVIEW OF GRADUATE STUDENTS**

During each spring semester the faculty as a whole conducts an annual review of all graduate students. Students will be evaluated in terms of their scholarly productivity, performance in graduate seminars, teaching (when applicable), academic-related service, and participation/attendance to professionalization activities (colloquia, job talks, workshops, etc.).

Because an overview of the student's progress will be presented by the academic advisor, it is imperative that the graduate student take the initiative to meet with their advisor prior to this meeting, which occurs during the last full week of classes in May. The purpose of the annual review is to provide constructive feedback to students, both in terms of identifying problems or weaknesses to remedy, as well as to reinforce achievements and strengths. Students are expected to complete and submit a form detailing their accomplishments from the previous year as well as a current copy of the CV. At these meetings, all students who will be returning the following academic year are reviewed.

In all annual reviews, minimal satisfactory requirements are that students have maintained at least a **3.30 GPR**. During this annual evaluation, the advisor will first report on the student's progress through the academic program toward degree completion (e.g., completion of degree plan, preliminary exams, thesis / dissertation proposal, etc.). Any incompletes will be noted; lingering or accumulating incompletes are a serious problem. Other faculty members who have had the student in classes may also comment. The faculty also will focus on other scholarly activities, such as papers submitted to or presented at conventions and conferences, essays under review or accepted by academic journals, or in edited collections, grants applied for or awarded, and participation in departmental activities.

Finally, for students on assistantships, reports will be made by the faculty who have observed and/or supervised the student in teaching settings and/or have supervised the student in a research assistantship. Prior to this meeting, all students who serve as teaching assistants will have been observed while teaching, and have received feedback about their instructional skills. Student evaluations of graduate teaching assistants will also be reviewed.

On the basis of this annual review, students will receive written feedback from their advisor that summarizes the faculty comments.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For information concerning Suspension and Dismissal from the Graduate Program and/or Assistantships, see Appendix F.

## MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION

The following sections provide an overview of the policies, procedures, and regulations governing the M.A. degree in Communication at Texas A&M. Other specific details related to graduate study at TAMU are covered in more detail in the *Graduate Handbook* produced by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies and in the *Graduate Catalog* (in particular, note the residency requirements found in the *Graduate Catalog*). These documents are available on-line at the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies website. A summary of the course requirements for an M.A. degree (thesis and non-thesis option can be found in Appendices C & D.

### THESIS OPTION

#### REQUIRED 30 CREDIT HOURS

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| 600-Level COMM Seminar in at least two areas                   | 21 Credits |
| Optional Course (600-level course inside or outside COMM Dept) | 3 Credits  |
| COMM 691: Thesis Hours   | 6 Credits  |

**Note 1:** Students in the MA program must take one course in at least 2 different areas (i.e., a course in 2 of the 4 areas of Rhetoric, Health, Organizational, and Media) to acquire experience in different research traditions.

**Note 2:** Only 3 credits of Directed Research (COMM 685) will be counted toward the total 30 credits.

**Note 3:** The “area” of the course will be determined by the student’s graduate advisor using a combination of course number, subject matter, and the faculty member teaching the course.

**Note 4:** 400-level courses can be taken if they are necessary for a thesis project and have the approval of the student’s advisor. Enrollment in such courses should be considered only when no comparable graduate course is available, and when the class is being taught by a member of the graduate faculty. Given that the class is being taken as part of the students’ graduate coursework, it is not unusual for faculty to require additional work in the form of reading, paper, or research assignments and projects.

**Note 5:** All students are required to complete at least two methods courses that will prepare them to conduct independent research, including a thesis.

**Note 6:** Exceptions to these requirements require approval by committee chair and a majority of the Departmental Graduate Committee.

Thesis option students may take more than 6 hours of COMM 691, but they can only include 6 hours on their degree plans. The same "continuous enrollment" requirements that PhD students must meet also apply to MA thesis-option students.

Students who initially choose the thesis option can change to a non-thesis option should their interests and career goals change. However, once a student files a non-thesis degree plan with the Office of Graduate Students, they cannot change to a thesis option.

A number of divisions of TAMU recently have established certificate programs for graduate students. Examples include a certificate in business, which requires four courses from that college, a certificate in International Studies, a four-course program in the Bush School of Government and Public Service, a certificate in Film Studies, and a certificate in Women's & Gender Studies. Students who are interested in these programs should discuss them with their advisor during their first semester in residence.

## THESIS

Students selecting the thesis option must write a thesis proposal. The proposal is a document in which the student explains the topic or subject of inquiry, the reasons and justifications for studying the topic, the methods by which the investigation will proceed, and the current state of knowledge concerning the topic. The specific format and plan for the thesis proposal should be discussed with the advisor, as faculty members have different requirements for this document.

Once the student has produced a proposal acceptable to their advisor, a thesis proposal meeting can be set up. *In all cases a minimum of two weeks notice is required* for setting up a thesis proposal meeting. It is expected that all members of the student's thesis committee be present for the proposal meeting. The student is to submit the approved thesis prospectus to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies along with the proposal form signed by all committee members (see OGAPS website for forms). It should be noted that research projects involving human subjects must be approved by TAMU's Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRB approval must be obtained before the proposal is submitted to OGAPS. The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies requires submission of the proposal 15 days before the defense, but most students in communication complete the proposal several months ahead of this deadline.

When the advisor and student are both satisfied that the thesis is ready for a defense, a complete copy should be distributed to each member of the student's advisory committee in the format they prefer (paper or electronic) and an oral defense of the thesis should be scheduled. The thesis should be distributed to the student's advisory committee at least 10 working days before the requested examination date. If this requirement is not met, the defense will have to be rescheduled. There are no exceptions to this rule. In addition, permission to announce and hold the final examination must be requested of OGAPS at least 10 working days before the requested exam date. It also is good practice to review the degree plan that has been filed with OGAPS well in advance of the requested date, especially if the degree plan (including committee membership). Thesis defenses normally are scheduled during the academic year (August 15 to June 1). Most faculty are on 9-month contracts, which means that they are not on staff during summer months, and should not be expected to be involved in committee activities.

The thesis defense will be a 1-3 hour meeting over the content of the thesis. University policy allows a student's advisory committee to open the initial segment of a thesis defense to faculty, students, or invited guests. If the committee chooses this option, the student will provide a brief, formal presentation of the thesis project and findings. Following the presentation, all attendees who are not official members of the student's committee will be asked to leave and the official portion of the defense will begin. The meeting is conducted by the chair of the student's advisory committee. All members of the student's advisory committee should attend the meeting (see OGAPS rules about committee attendance). Upon completion of this meeting, the student will be excused from the room while the student's committee votes on whether or not to accept the thesis in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements. Theses that are accepted must be filed with the thesis clerk in the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies following the policies and procedures of that office. For deadlines for filing theses, see the calendar distributed by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies and available on the OGAPS website.

Should the committee decide that the thesis defense is not of passing quality, university regulations provide that the "student shall be given only one opportunity to repeat the final examination [thesis defense] for the master's degree and that shall be within a time period that does not extend beyond the end of the next regular semester," exclusive of summer terms.

#### NON-THESIS OPTION

#### REQUIRED 36 CREDIT HOURS

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| 600-Level COMM Seminar in at least two areas                   | 24 Credits |
| 600-Level Course Outside COMM Department                       | 3 Credits  |
| Optional Course (600-level course inside or outside COMM Dept) | 9 Credits  |

**Note 1:** Students in the non-thesis MA program must take one course in at least 2 different areas (i.e., a course in 2 of the 4 areas of Rhetoric, Health, Organizational, and Media) to acquire experience in different research traditions.

**Note 2:** Only 3 credits of Directed Research (COMM 685) will be counted toward the total 30 credits.

**Note 3:** A Course area will be determined by the student's graduate advisor using a combination of course number, subject matter, and the faculty teaching the course.

**Note 4:** 400-level courses can be taken if they are necessary for a student's program of study have the approval of the student's advisor. Enrollment in such courses should be considered only when no comparable graduate course is available, and when the class is being taught by a member of the graduate faculty. Given that the class is being taken as part of the students' graduate coursework, it is not unusual for faculty to require additional work in the form of reading, paper, or research assignments and projects.

**Note 5:** A student may take up 3 hours of COMM 691 as they prepare their research portfolio.

**Note 6:** Exceptions to these requirements require approval by committee chair and a majority of the Departmental Graduate Committee.

### **Research Portfolio**

The required Research Portfolio review for a non-thesis MA degree will be conducted by a three-member committee (including, the student's advisor) comprised of graduate faculty in the Department of Communication that represent the student's research interests.

The review process will consist of a written and oral component. The written component has the following *minimum* requirements (additional components are at the discretion of the faculty review committee):

**(1) Personal Statement** – A statement that articulates a clear research/academic/professional identity.

**(2) Research Essay(s)** – One to two research essays that demonstrate theoretical and methodological competency appropriate for an MA. The research essay(s) *cannot* be unrevised seminar papers, and each must be a complete and bounded academic argument. The number of required research essays is at the discretion of the advisor and committee members.

Upon submission of the research portfolio, the committee will have a minimum of two weeks to evaluate the written materials. After the minimum evaluation period, an oral defense of the research portfolio must be conducted. To pass this review, a student must receive a passing vote from the majority of the review committee members (including the chair). ***Students may only complete the oral defense up to two times. If a student fails this defense twice, the student will not be able to continue in the program.***

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN COMMUNICATION

The following sections provide an overview of the policies, procedures, and regulations governing the Ph.D. program in Communication at Texas A&M. Other specific details related to graduate study at TAMU are covered in more detail in the *Graduate Handbook* produced by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies and in the *Graduate Catalog* (in particular, note the residency requirements found in the *Graduate Catalog*). These documents are available on-line at the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies website. A list of graduate courses in Communication is provided in Appendix A. A summary of the course requirements, elective requirements, and a timetable for completing important activities related to completing the Ph.D. program can be found in Appendices D & E.

### COURSEWORK IN THE PROGRAM OF STUDY

The program of study for the doctoral degree can vary a great deal from student to student, depending on academic and professional goals, as well as previous educational experiences. Thus, it is critical that the program of study be developed by the student in close consultation with their advisor and advisory committee. Before an advisory relationship is established, the student should consult with his/her interim advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.

The course requirements for a Communication degree are designed to maximize student flexibility in choosing courses while at the same time ensuring that all graduates possess a comprehensive background in communication, not only in their own specialized area, but also across multiple areas. Rather than fostering difference, however, we believe that experiencing a diversity of robust and distinct perspectives enriches all of our understandings of communication as a whole. It is on this basis that we *require* every student to take courses outside of their specialized area *within* the Department of Communication and in consultation with their advisor and committee. In addition, it *allows* students with interests in more than one area to create an individualized program of study in which they can pursue those interests.

## 64 HOUR PHD PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

(STUDENTS ENTERING DOCTORAL PROGRAM WITH A COMPLETED MA)

To earn a PhD in the Department of Communication at Texas A&M, a student entering the program with an MA from another institution is required to take at least 36 credit hours of courses plus at least 11 hours of dissertation credit (for a total of no less than 64 total credit hours), pass a preliminary exam on completion of coursework, and then successfully write and defend a dissertation. PhD coursework should follow a plan of study that includes those research methods, theories, and topics that will best prepare the student to successfully complete their dissertation and other research projects.

### COURSEWORK (64 Hour Program)

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| COMM 681: Professional Seminar (x2)              | 0 Credits     |
| 600-Level COMM Seminars in Specialized Area      | 12 Credits    |
| 600-Level COMM Seminars outside Specialized Area | 6 Credits     |
| 600-Level COMM Seminars in any Area              | 12-18 Credits |
| 600-Level Courses outside COMM Department        | 6-15 Credits  |

**Note 1:** Only 6 credits of Directed Research (COMM 685) will be counted toward the degree.

**Note 2:** Each individual area may have more specific course requirements (i.e. specific methods courses) in addition to the general requirements of the department.

**Note 3:** The “area” of the course will be determined by the student’s graduate advisor using a combination of course number, subject matter, and the faculty teaching the course.

**Note 4:** 400-level courses can be taken if they are necessary for a dissertation project and have the approval of the student’s advisor. Enrollment in such courses should be considered only when no comparable graduate course is available, and when the class is being taught by a member of the graduate faculty. Given that the class is being taken as part of the students’ graduate coursework, it is not unusual for faculty to require additional work in the form of reading, paper, or research.

**Note 5: Exceptions to these requirements require approval by committee chair and a majority of the Departmental Graduate Committee.**

**Note 6:** Students may take additional courses beyond the 36 credits, but they will not be counted toward the “core” 36 hours. Students who take more than 6 hours of directed research, or who require additional outside courses, still have to take the required 600-level COMM seminars

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| <b>DISSERTATION HOURS (COMM 691)</b>                     | 11 to 28 Credits |
| <b>TOTAL REQUIRED HOURS (coursework + dissertation):</b> | <b>64 Credit</b> |

## 96 HOUR PHD PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

(STUDENTS ENTERING DOCTORAL PROGRAM WITHOUT AN MA)

To earn a PhD in the Department of Communication at Texas A&M, a student entering the program without an MA or equivalent degree from another institution is required to take at least 51 credit hours of courses plus at least 29 hours of research credit (for a total of no less than 96 total credit hours), pass a committee review of a research portfolio the by the end of year two, pass a preliminary examination on the completion of coursework, and then successfully write and defend a dissertation.

### COURSEWORK

***\* at least 6 credit hours of the following requirements must be committed to "methods" courses\****

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| COMM 681: Professional Seminar (x2)        | 0 Credits     |
| 600-Level COMM Seminar in Specialized Area | 15 Credits    |
| 600-Level COMM Seminar in Second Area      | 9 Credits     |
| 600-Level COMM Seminars in any Area        | 18-27 Credits |
| 600-Level Course Outside COMM Department   | 6-15 Credits  |

**Minimum Coursework Total 51 Credits**

### RESEARCH

*Research hours may be taken: (1) when the student is preparing the research essay for second year review (up to 3 credit hours), (2) the summer before and semester of completion of preliminary exams, and/or (3) all semesters the student is working on his/her dissertation.*

|                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| COMM 691: Research | 29-45 Credits |
|--------------------|---------------|

**TOTAL REQUIRED HOURS (Coursework + Research)                      96 CREDITS**

**Note 1:** Only 6 credits of Directed Research (COMM 685) will be counted toward the degree.

**Note 2:** Each individual committee may have more specific course requirements (i.e. specific methods courses) in addition to the general requirements of the department.

**Note 3:** The "area" of the course will be determined by the student's graduate advisor using a combination of course number, subject matter, and the faculty teaching the course.

**Note 4:** On rare occasions, and if space is available, 400-level courses can be taken if they are necessary for a dissertation project and have the approval of the student's advisor. Enrollment in such courses should be considered only when no comparable graduate course is available, and when the class is being taught by a member of the graduate faculty. Given that the class is being taken as part of the students' graduate coursework, it is not unusual for faculty to require additional work in the form of reading, paper, or research assignments and projects.

**Note 5: Exceptions to these requirements require approval by committee chair and a majority of the Departmental Graduate Committee.**

**Note 6:** Students may take additional courses beyond the 51 credits, but they will simply not be counted toward the "core" 51 hours. For instance, students who take more than 6 hours of directed research, or who require additional outside courses, still have to take the required 600-level COMM seminars

### **Research Portfolio Review**

In order to continue in the program students in the 96-hour program must pass a research portfolio review by June 1 of the second year of study (or upon completion of 38 hours). The review will be conducted by a three-member committee (including, the student's advisor) comprised of graduate faculty in the Department of Communication that represent the student's research interests.

The review process will consist of a written and oral component. The written component has the following *minimum* requirements (additional components are at the discretion of the faculty review committee):

**(1) Research Narrative** – A personal statement that articulates a clear research identity and trajectory for continued graduate work. (\*note advisors and/or committee members may have further requirements for this narrative\*)

**(2) Research Essay(s)** – One to two research essays that showcase the student's research interests and demonstrate theoretical and methodological competency. The research essay(s) *cannot* be an unrevised seminar paper(s), and each essay must be a complete and bounded academic argument (appropriate for conference and/or journal submission). The number of required research essays is at the discretion of the advisor and committee members.

Upon submission of the research portfolio, the committee will have a minimum of two weeks to evaluate the written materials. After the minimum evaluation period, an oral defense of the research portfolio must be conducted. To pass this review, a student must receive a passing vote from the majority of the review committee members (including the chair). ***Students may only complete the oral defense one time. If a student fails this defense, the student will not be able to continue in the program.***

## ADVISING IN THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

Upon entering the Ph.D. program at Texas A&M, each student will be assigned an *interim advisor*. The interim advisor's responsibilities include helping the new student understand the requirements and course options in the doctoral program, assisting in the assessment of curricular needs with relation to previous coursework at both the BA and MA levels, and familiarizing the student with the graduate faculty, their research interests, and their expertise in anticipation of selecting a permanent advisor and advisory committee.

A permanent advisor should be selected early in the second semester of the program. This permanent advisor may (or may not) be the interim advisor. Also, the permanent advisor can be changed during the course of the program as circumstances require (for example, after the completion of preliminary exams). However, it is critical that an advisor be selected early in the program in order to help design a program of study, make decisions about mentorship opportunities, and start thinking about dissertation possibilities.

At the beginning of the third semester of the program, in conjunction with their advisor, doctoral students should design a **proposed plan of study**. The proposed plan of study should follow the same format as the degree plan that will eventually be submitted to the university (see OGAPS website for Degree Plan form), but will be for internal department review only. This proposed plan of study serves as a template for selecting subsequent coursework in the program. The content of the program of study will depend on the student's goals and the educational needs as determined by the student and committee. The proposed plan of study should be submitted to the graduate director by **October 1** of the second year of study in the program for 64 hour students, and third year of study in the program for 96 hour students. Students can get forms for the internal program of study review at: <http://comm.tamu.edu/current-graduate-resources/>.

The student must form their **permanent advisory committee** before submitting a formal plan of study and taking preliminary examinations. This advisory committee typically consists of an advisor, two to three additional members of the departmental faculty, and one faculty member from outside the department. An outside member is required by the University. *According to University policy, the advisory committee must be established and a formal degree plan submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies no later than 90 days prior to the preliminary examination (see upcoming section on the preliminary examination).* However, we strongly encourage students to finalize their committees and formal degree plan early in the second year of the Ph.D. program. It should also be noted that committee membership sometimes shifts as a student moves from the preliminary examination to the dissertation. Changes in advisor or committee members or changes in the degree plan can be done through the normal petitioning process described in the Texas A&M University Graduate Handbook.

## ENROLLING IN COMM 691

Finally, as a general rule, students should complete coursework before taking COMM 691: Research hours. In order to sign up for COMM 691 hours, one of the following conditions must be met:

- (1) 96 hour students can take up to 3 hours of COMM 691 the semester they are preparing and defending their research portfolio.
- (2) 64 hour and 96 hour students may take COMM 691 hours the semester they are scheduled to take preliminary exams (Exception: If a student is scheduled to take preliminary exams the beginning of the fall semester, that student may enroll in COMM 691 during the summer semester(s) that immediately precedes the fall).
- (3) 64 hour and 96 hour students can enroll in COMM 691 after having successfully passed the preliminary examination.

If one of these conditions has been met, the student must submit a COMM 691 request form (signed by their permanent advisor) to Silvia Martinez. This form is only required if: (1) it is the student's first time to sign up for COMM 691 hours, and (2) a student is in the 96-Hour program and the student has defended a research portfolio, but has not passed preliminary exams. Exceptions to the three conditions described above will be made on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Director of Graduate Studies

## PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

Preliminary exams (also called “comprehensive” examinations) are designed to test a student’s expertise in at least two areas of specialization, general field knowledge, theory, and methodology as declared in the student’s Program of Study. Although preliminary exam questions will relate to the student’s research trajectory, the examination process is not designed to forward or approve a specific dissertation proposal or agenda, but rather to ensure mastery of a discourse within a discipline. The written component will consist of a journal submission paper (or equivalent) and 3-4 essay questions. It will also include an oral defense.

A preliminary examination must be taken no later than the semester following the completion of the formal course work on the degree plan (except COMM 691, Dissertation Hours). The student must file their degree plan with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies at least 90 days prior to taking preliminary exams. The degree plan is filed electronically, and details on this process can be found at the OGAPS website. A student can enroll in dissertation hours during the semester in which they take the preliminary exam but not before. The preliminary examination has a written portion and an oral portion. The chair and the student will complete the "Preliminary Examination Checklist." At the end of the oral examination the chair will submit the "Checklist" and the "Report of the Preliminary Examination" (See forms on OGAPS website) to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. Preliminary exams MAY NOT be taken during the Graduate Professionalization/Orientation Events that occur at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters. Also, dissertation prospectus meetings cannot be scheduled the same day as exams.

### Developing the Examination

Each committee will develop an examination based on that student’s declared areas of interest. The advisor and the student shall convene a meeting of the committee no later than the semester before the student plans to take the exam (in most case this will be May 15 of the student’s second or third year). The papers, projects, and questions will involve theory, method, and special topic areas, as appropriate. The Chair of the student’s committee will facilitate this process overall, in conjunction with the graduate administrative assistant or other exam proctor. Under the direction of the committee chair, responsibility for writing the exam questions will be distributed among the examination committee members based on the member’s particular expertise.

### EXAMINATION STRUCTURE

The examination includes: (1) the production of a journal submission quality paper or equivalent, and (2) answering 3-4 essay questions using a timed closed-book format, take-home format, or some combination of the two .

- (1) **Journal submission paper or equivalent.** Each student will be assigned a paper to write that is (or is equivalent to) a journal submission. This paper should advance a focused and bounded argument in some way. While the paper may be related to the student’s dissertation, it is not a complete prospectus. The essay portion of the test begins once the paper has been submitted to the exam proctor.

- (2) **Essays.** Twelve hours of the examination may be taken in-house using a timed closed-book format, take-home format, or some combination of the two. The essay portion of the examination will consist of 3-4 questions that are to be divided among theory, method, and special topics as appropriate, and as determined by the committee chair in consultation with the student and other committee members. Potential areas for take-home examinations may include literature reviews, data analyses, and other sorts of problem-based exercises in which it makes sense to have an open book format and for which the amount of time needed doesn't equate to a carefully-timed number of hours.

## TIMING OF THE EXAMINATION AND DEFENSE

OGAPS rules stipulate that the examination process, including the writing of the in-house essays and the final oral examination, must be conducted within a three-week period. The following deadlines guide the process, although if extenuating circumstances exist, these deadlines may be modified in consultation with the student's committee and the Director of Graduate Studies.

- (1) **Development of the examination (May 15):** The student's committee will meet no later than May 15 of the student's second year to develop the examination. Papers and essay questions must be developed well in advance of the proposed examination date.
- (2) **Announcement of the examination (One Month Prior):** A student must submit a signed Preliminary Examination Scheduling form to the test proctor (graduate administrative assistant), no later than 30 days before the exam is to begin. Questions will be due to the administrative assistant no later than 2 weeks before the exam.
- (3) **Completing the written examination (November 1):** The written portion of the examination consisting of the essay questions shall be completed no later than November 1 of the beginning of the student's third year. The examination will start on a Friday, when the student submits the journal submission paper. The student will then have 10 days to complete the written portion of the examination, the second Monday following the start of the examination on Friday.
- (4) **Oral examination (Three weeks following the beginning of the written exam).** Committee members will have one week to read the answers and form an opinion of the quality, providing cursory feedback to the committee chair. The oral examination will consist of questions related to the written answers, journal quality essay, and may also be directed toward further development of the theoretical/methodological issues related to dissertation research (if known at the time). Student passes the oral exam if the majority (including chair) agrees. Passing written and oral examination is necessary to proceed to dissertation prospectus meeting. Per University rules, if a student fails the exam, they will have one more chance to pass in order to continue in the program.
- (5) **Revisions:** On rare occasions, the committee may request that a student revise a portion of the exam. In such cases, the writing process must mimic the original conditions of the exam question (e.g., in-house, take-home, time-allotted, etc.). Revisions should be completed in a reasonable amount of time following the oral defense

*EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT, CHAIR, AND COMMITTEE MEMBER:*The responsibilities of the **student**:

- Meet with the advisor to determine declared areas of expertise, journal quality essay, and preferred method of questions (take-home, in-house, combination), and proposed timing.
- Schedule meeting with committee members to set the terms of the exam.
- Schedule the examination with the graduate administrative assistant.
- Schedule the defense with the committee and inform the graduate administrative assistant.
- Take the examination, emailing the answers to the graduate administrative assistant at the end of the scheduled times.
- Before the oral defense: Meet with the advisor to review preliminary answers and plan for what to prepare for the defense.
- Provide a 5-8 minute presentation at the beginning of the defense; notes are allowed.

The responsibilities of the **committee chair**:

- Meet with the student to determine the number of hours allotted for each question declared areas of expertise, journal quality essay, and preferred method of questions (take-home, in-house, combination), and proposed timing of exam.
- Coordinate with other committee members as needed.
- After the written portion of the examination: Meet with the student to prepare them for the defense; in particular, point out areas where they will want to be especially prepared
- Before the oral defense, students should temporarily leave the room so committee chairs should consult with other members of the committee to determine their cursory determination of the quality of the written portion (i.e., pass/fail).
- During the defense: facilitate the defense, coordinating the conversation and order of questioning; turn the conversation toward proposal and dissertation if appropriate.
- After the defense, students should again leave the room so the committee can deliberate.

The responsibilities of the **committee members**:

- Along with the student, develop a general sense of the topic and scope of the question; aid in the construction of a reading list and/or offer other guidance.
- Write a question designed for the length of time allotted for the question and send to the committee chair and graduate administrative assistant two weeks before the student is scheduled to begin written portion of the exam.
- For the oral defense: Read closely the journal quality essay, and the answer to your proposed question. Read or skim answers to all of the questions and be prepared to ask questions on the answer specific to your area.

## AFTER PASSING ONE'S PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

Once a student has passed the Preliminary Examination, they have four years to complete all remaining requirements for the degree. Otherwise, the student must repeat the Preliminary Examination. If a student has completed all of the regular coursework on their degree plan, they must be continuously registered during all regular (fall and spring) semesters until all degree requirements have been met. This requirement can be met either by registering "in absentia" or by registering in residence. Students who plan to register "in absentia" should obtain a letter from their advisor indicating that they will not be using any university resources (including faculty time) while registered "in absentia." A copy of this letter should be placed in their permanent file. Out-of-state students who register "in absentia" pay out-of-state tuition. Additional regulations for both parts of the examination regarding the scheduling, timing, and administration are included in the *Texas A&M Graduate Handbook*.

## DISSERTATION

Doctoral students must demonstrate their ability to conduct independent research of high quality by completing an original dissertation. While acceptance of the dissertation is based primarily on its scholarly merit, it must also be well-written. Details about the format of the dissertation are available in the *Texas A&M University Graduate Handbook* and the *Thesis Manual*. The University now requires mandatory electronic formats for theses and dissertations.

The dissertation process actually begins early in the program, as the student explores possible dissertation topics and discusses those possibilities with their advisor and other members of the faculty. The first formal step is formulating and presenting a dissertation proposal. The precise form of the proposal will vary greatly, depending on the topic areas and the preferences of the student's committee. Thus, students should carefully discuss expectations for the proposal with advisor and committee. It should be noted that research projects involving human subjects must be approved by TAMU's Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRB approval must be obtained before the proposal is submitted to OGAPS.

After completing the written proposal, a meeting is typically scheduled with all members of the student's advisory committee. This meeting is often seen as a "working session" in which ideas about the dissertation can be discussed and negotiated. Once the proposal is approved by all members of the student's committee, the proposal and approval forms are submitted to OGAPS (see OGAPS website for complete details). Though the formal deadline for submitting a dissertation proposal is 15 days prior to the dissertation defense date, students in our department typically submit their dissertation proposals months before the dissertation defense. Conducting the dissertation research and writing the dissertation then involves a period of time involving both independent research and much consultation with the advisor and, at times, the advisory committee. When the advisor and student are both satisfied that the dissertation is ready for a defense, a complete copy should be distributed to each member of the student's advisory committee in the format they prefer (paper or electronic) and an oral defense of the dissertation should be scheduled. The dissertation should be distributed to the student's advisory committee at least 10 working days before the requested examination date. If this requirement is not met, the defense will have to be rescheduled. There are no exceptions to this rule.

In addition, permission to announce and hold the final examination must be approved by OGAPS at least 10 working days before the requested exam date. It also is good practice to review the degree plan that has been filed with OGAPS well in advance of the requested date, especially if the degree plan (including committee membership) has been changed between the date of the preliminary exam and the date of the dissertation defense. Dissertation defenses normally are scheduled during the academic year (August 15 to June 1). Most faculty are on 9-month contracts, which means that they are not on staff during summer months, and should not be expected to be involved in committee activities. Dissertation defenses MAY NOT be scheduled during Graduate Professionalization/Orientation events that occur at the beginning of fall and spring semesters.

The dissertation defense will be a 1-3 hour meeting over the content of the dissertation. University policy allows a student's advisory committee to open the initial segment of a dissertation defense to faculty, students, or invited guests. If the committee chooses this option, the student will provide a brief, formal presentation of the dissertation project and findings. Following the presentation, all attendees who are not official members of the student's committee will be asked to leave and the official portion of the defense will begin. The chair of the student's advisory committee conducts the meeting. All members of the student's advisory committee should attend the meeting (see OGAPS rules about committee attendance). Upon completion of this meeting, the student will be excused from the room while the student's committee votes on whether or not to accept the dissertation in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements. Dissertations that are accepted must be filed with the thesis clerk in the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies following the policies and procedures of that office. For deadlines for filing theses, see the calendar distributed by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies and available on the OGAPS website.

A doctoral student is allowed **one** attempt on a dissertation defense.

#### TIME LIMITS

The University requires that students complete degree requirements in a timely fashion. As such, a student has a maximum of **10 years** to complete degree requirements (after 10 years, courses begin to "expire"). Also, after passing preliminary exams, doctoral students have **4 years** to successfully defend a dissertation.

In very rare occasions, the Department of Communication will grant an extension of these time requirements. The department will grant extensions only in cases where: (1) an extenuating circumstance has delayed progress on the degree, and (2) there is evidence that substantive work toward fulfilling degree requirements has been accomplished. In order to request an extension, a student must submit a memo to the Director of Graduate Studies and Department Head detailing how the above qualifications have been met. This memo must be accompanied by the student's advisor verifying that condition two has been met.

## DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURE

Communication is one of the twelve departments that comprise the College of Liberal Arts at Texas A&M University. The Dean of the College of Liberal Arts is Dr. Pamela Matthews. She is assisted by three Associate Deans; Associate Dean Maria Escobar-Lemmon currently chairs the College's Graduate Committee and has various responsibilities related to graduate policies in the College. The graduate student's daily existence, however, is much more likely to be directly affected by the structures and codes operating inside a given department.

**Department Head:** The head of the Department of Communication is Dr. J. Kevin Barge. Dr. Barge is responsible for all aspects of the department and reports directly to Dean Matthews. Anyone wishing to have a private conference with Dr. Barge should schedule a meeting through his assistant, Sandra Maldonado. If the problem can be solved at a level below that of the department head, then take the problem to that level first. Many problems can be solved by the office staff, Director of Graduate Studies, advisor, or the basic course director (if applicable).

**Director of Graduate Studies:** Dr. Kristan Poirot is the Director of Graduate Studies. The DGS is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the graduate program. The DGS is available to counsel all incoming graduate students and oversees their transition to a permanent advisor. The graduate studies director is responsible for the implementation of all university, college, and departmental policies involving graduate instruction. The DGS reports directly to the Department Head and to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies. The DGS is always accessible to talk with graduate students about any aspect of their experiences in the graduate program. If a person, policy, procedure, or other aspect of "life as a graduate student" is bothering you, speak to your advisor. If your advisor is not able to solve the problem, see the DGS. Routine problems, (filing forms, registration, etc.) usually can be solved by Silvia Martinez the administrative assistant for the graduate program, or other members of the office staff.

**Director of Undergraduate Studies:** Professor Nancy Street is the undergraduate studies director. The Director of Undergraduate Studies oversees, and is in charge of, activity and organization related to high quality undergraduate studies in the Department of Communication. The DUGS coordinates academic advising for undergraduate students, and plans and executes curriculum, as well as instructional staffing. Additionally, the DUS provides for the support of high impact practices such as study abroad, internships, undergraduate research, leadership and service, and the Undergraduate Teaching Academy. She provides structure for career preparation for undergraduates, as well as administrative support for departmental compliance with academic requirements such as posting grades, ordering textbooks, syllabus policy compliance, and best practices for instruction. The DUS reports to the Department Head, chairs the Undergraduate Instruction Committee, serves on the Department of Communication Leadership Team, Advisory Committee as well as the College of Liberal Arts Undergraduate Instruction Committee. Also, the DUS collaborates with the COMM Honors committee, the Assessment Committee, the Internationalization Committee, and the Climate and Inclusion Committee. The DUS oversees the Undergraduate Studies office supervising four Academic Advisors and two student workers.

**Basic Course Director:** While some advanced doctoral students may teach diverse classes, the majority of students who are serving as graduate teaching assistants (T.A.s) will work closely with the Director of COMM 203 (“Public Speaking”), Professor Sara Rowe. Professor Rowe is responsible for the instruction and final evaluation of the undergraduate students enrolled in COMM 203. As a T.A., you will be expected to perform duties that are assigned to you by the course director. Usually, this will involve responsibility for recitation sections of the course. T.A.s should consult closely with the course director concerning classroom policies and procedures. Any problems with students, grades, classroom discipline, or other dimensions of the undergraduate classroom should be referred immediately to the course director. As a member of the teaching staff of the department, you fulfill a vital role in the departmental mission. Always act in a professional manner. The faculty, including the course director, will stand behind you 100%.

Different faculty members will serve as directors for the other courses taught by graduate students. They will play a similar role to that performed by Professor Street for these courses.

**Graduate Placement Officer:** The Graduate Placement Officer advises students on how to prepare materials for academic job applications, and helps prepare them for job interviews. Students who are currently applying for jobs should contact Dr. Sherry Holladay. Students plan to apply for jobs in the next 12-18 months will also benefit from meetings with these faculty members.

**Communication Laboratory Personnel:** The Department of Communication maintains an active communication laboratory, managed by Ms. Melinda Alvarado. Questions about multimedia instruction and laboratory equipment, maintenance, access, and use should be directed to Ms. Alvarado or other appropriate lab personnel.

**Departmental Graduate Instruction Committee:** The department graduate committee is composed of the graduate studies director and four to six members of the graduate faculty. This committee is the policy-making arm of the faculty on questions concerning graduate education. The graduate committee, for example, selects students for admission, examines applications for graduate assistantships, and advises the DGS on the day-to-day operations of the graduate program. Any suggestions for improving the graduate program or petitions for waiving requirements or adjudicating grievances should be directed to the graduate committee through its chair, Dr. Poirot.

**Permanent Advisor:** The permanent advisor is the person with whom the graduate student should be working most closely. Generally, this is the person who will either direct the dissertation/thesis or chair the examining committee. No decision made during a graduate student's residence is more important than the selection of a permanent advisor. This should be a person whom you respect, whose research is in an area similar to your own, who has a genuine interest in you and your ideas, and with whom you can work closely to achieve your goals. Most members of the department's graduate faculty can serve as a permanent advisor. Talk to as many faculty members as you can before making this selection. Don't be hesitant about approaching them, but don't be surprised if you are asked to set up a time for an appointment—they have heavy schedules too. Use the time—both yours and theirs—wisely.

**Texas A&M Office of Graduate and Professional Studies:** As one progresses through the program, one will want to become familiar with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, located in 001 Commons Building. OGAPS phone number is (979) 845-3631, and its mailing address is 1113 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843-1113. This is the office that issues guidelines for theses, deadlines for exams, and other detailed information concerning “end times.”

**APPENDIX A: GRADUATE COURSES IN COMMUNICATION**

(unless otherwise noted, courses are for 3 hours credit)

**610. Social Science Methods in Communication Research** Examination of social science research methods in communication, including design, measurement and analysis for descriptive and experimental research; practice in evaluating and conducting research projects.

**611. Advanced Quantitative Methods in Communication Research** In-depth exploration of the philosophical underpinnings of quantitative research, research design and statistical analysis of quantitative data in communication research; examination of regression-based modeling and its extensions, including ordinary least squares (OLS), analysis of categorical dependent variables, interactive effects, statistical mediation; introduction to structural equation modeling.

**615. Interpretive Methods in Communication Research** Introduction to interpretive and qualitative methods in communication research. Underlying epistemologies, design issues, and explanation of knowledge claims. Methods including participant observation and interviewing.

**616. Topics in Communication Methods** Focused and in-depth examination on theory and practice of single method in communication research; includes surveys, interviewing, focus groups, ethnography, digital methods, rhetorical field methods, engage scholarship, historiography and experimental design. May be repeated for credit up to 12 hours.

**620. Communication Theory** The nature and role of communication theory, systems of ontology and epistemology in theory development; critical review of current theories concerning communication codes, function and processes in various contexts.

**625. International Communication and Public Diplomacy** Exploration of the intersections of culture, media, and communication; emphasis on the role of communication in public diplomacy; examination of global media, international relations and globalization and media technologies on issues of cultural identity and geopolitics and their policy impacts.

**626. Communication Law & Policy** Foundations of law and policy as the context for all communication, online or off; issues such as free speech, privacy and surveillance, intellectual property rights, access to information, extreme speech, public diplomacy, cybersecurity and network neutrality; mechanisms and effects of policy-making by governments, international and global organizations and via technical standard-setting and algorithms; roles of civil society and corporations in policy-making and implementation.

**630. Interpersonal Communication** Major theories in interpersonal communication; critical examination of current research programs on communication in interpersonal influence, relational development and conflict management.

**631. Group Communication** Major concepts and theories of communicative processes in task-oriented groups from a social scientific perspective; the role of group communication in (1) group

decision processes (2) decision development, (3) decision-making agendas and (4) conflict and performance quality.

**632. Communication and Conflict** Elements and central features of conflict theories and different approaches to communication in conflict management. Analysis of communication research in interpersonal, family/marital, group, organizational, and public conflicts and the role of the media in social and international disputes.

**634. Communication and Gender** Gender considered as a complex phenomenon constituted through communication. Topics include femininities, masculinities, language, power, nonverbal behavior, gender in media, organizations, interpersonal relationships and social movements.

**636. Survey of Organizational Communication** Theoretical and empirical literature on human communication and complex organizations; the study of messages, interaction, and meaning in the process of organizing; topics include superior-subordinate communication, communication networks and technologies, language, message flow, symbols and organizational culture, negotiation and conflict, and power and politics.

**637. Organizational Communication Seminar** Investigation of a subject important to the understanding of organizational communication, such as communication and organizational decision-making, group communication within organizations, communication and organizational culture, and organizational rhetoric and issue management. May be repeated for credit with a different content up to a total of three times.

**638. Crisis Communication** Focuses on crisis communication theory and research as it applies to organizations; differentiation between the various crisis communication theories; application of various crisis communication theories to crisis cases; understanding the relationship between crisis and risk communication.

**640. Rhetorical Theory** Close reading of classical and contemporary systems of rhetoric; survey of principal applications to communication theory and research.

**645. Rhetorical and Textual Methods in Communication Research** Comparative study of traditional and contemporary perspectives on the description, interpretation, and evaluation of public discourse, including textual analysis, neo-classical analysis, Burkean criticism, quantitative and qualitative approaches to content analysis, fantasy theme analysis, and semiotic analysis.

**649. American Public Discourse to 1865** Public discourse and political rhetoric in America in colonial and pre-Civil War years. Historical, conceptual, and practical examination of political campaign rhetoric, legislative rhetoric, judicial rhetoric, and advocacy group rhetoric.

**650. American Public Discourse since 1865** Public discourse and political rhetoric in America in post-Civil War years. Historical, conceptual and practical examination of political campaign rhetoric, legislative rhetoric, judicial rhetoric and advocacy group rhetoric. May be repeated for credit with a different content up to a total of three times.

**651. Presidential Communication** Examination of discourse of, about and from American presidents, including principal genres of presidential communication, speechwriting and media strategies; case studies of presidential communication ranging from campaigns, oratory, to crisis rhetoric and ceremonial address.

**652. The Rhetoric of Social Movements.** Analysis of persuasive strategies used to build social identities and collectively agitate for social change; exploration of the history of social movements in the United States and abroad.

**653. Rhetoric and Public Cultures.** Examination of how artifacts of public culture function rhetorically to transform public attitudes, opinion, and memory; analysis of documents, artworks, images, and histories from a humanities and social science perspectives.

**654. Classical Rhetoric.** Origins of rhetoric in classical Greece and Rome; exploration of the relationship between philosophy, rhetoric, and democratic political culture; the contemporary relevance of classical thought to contemporary problems. Cross-listed with ENGL 654.

**655. Contemporary Theories of Rhetoric.** Investigation of the major figures in rhetorical theory in the 20th and 21st centuries; analysis of the relationship between rhetoric and power; identifying new challenges for rhetoric in a global, multicultural, technological age. Cross-listed with ENGL 655

**656. Feminism and Rhetoric.** This course traces the historical development of the ideology, theory and rhetorical practices of U.S. feminism. We will begin in the 19th century with women's activism in the abolitionist movement and end by studying contemporary feminist activism.

**658. Seminar in Communication and Culture** Investigation of the ways that culture, religion, identity, gender, popular culture, community, history, and related ideas are shaped through communication in order to understand the development of social norms, political values, and the human experience. May be repeated for credit up to 3 times.

**659. Communication and Citizenship in the Public Sphere** Theoretical examination of communication within democratic, republican, and liberal conceptions of citizenship; consideration of the ideal of the public sphere, and communication in global civil society. Specific attention to the practices of American citizenship within the global civil society.

**662. Survey in Media Studies** Survey of research and theory in media studies; overview of the historical and theoretical orientation of media studies and mediated communication; examination of approaches to analyzing media texts, technologies, audiences, reception processes, economics and/or industries.

**663. Seminar in Media Studies** Intensive work on selected topics of research in media studies; may address work in the areas of audience studies, media effects, industries, policy, international issues, media and culture, media history or theory. May be repeated for credit with different content up to a total of three times.

**664. Media Processes & Effects** Investigation of processes through which mediated messages influence our everyday lives; examination of social scientific approaches; understanding how viewers select, interpret and respond to mediated messages; includes media representations, mediated inter-group processes, news framing, political advertising, persuasive messages, entertainment media, popular culture, health campaigns, positive media psychology, new media technologies, pro-social media effects and critical media literacy.

**665. Communication and Technology** Examines the relationships between human communication and technology, investigating the social effects of communication technology, the quality of messages, communicative practices, and rhetorical norms that typify effective communication in technological society.

**667. Media and Health** Examination of theories, methods and research that characterize the use of media in health contexts; focus on mass media influence on public health and/or strategic use of mass media to promote health behaviors; engagement of social and behavioral science approaches to media effects and/or critical perspectives on the study of media as social institutions. May be taken three times for credit.

**669. Survey of Health Communication** Theories and research in health communication considering functions and outcomes of communication processes in various health contexts, ranging from interpersonal settings to public campaigns. Emphasis on providing framework for synthesizing and critically evaluating health communication research.

**670. Health Communication Seminar** Investigation of a subject important to the understanding of health communication, such as persuasion and public health campaigns, physician-patient communication, or communication in health care organizations. May be repeated for credit with different content up to a total of three times.

**671. Interdisciplinary Seminar in Prevention Science (1 Credit)** Contemporary research programs that represent the interdisciplinary field of prevention science; strengths and limitations of diverse theoretical and conceptual bases of research in prevention science; application of research findings to issues related to the prevention of mental, emotional, and physical health problems and the promotion of well-being. May be taken 3 times for credit.

**681. Professional Seminar (0-1 credit)** Provides socialization to the profession of communication, focusing on graduate students' roles as scholars and teachers; provides instruction on teaching, communication, conducting and writing publishable research, and fulfilling responsibilities to one's organization and profession.

**685. Directed Studies; Credit (1 to 6 each semester)** Directed studies in specific problem areas in communication. Student may take up to two sections of directed studies in communication in the same semester, with a maximum of 6 credits.

**689. Special Topics in... (Credit 1 to 4 each semester)** Selected topics in an identified area of communication. May be repeated for credit.

**691. Research; (Credit 1 or more each semester)** Research for thesis or dissertation.

## APPENDIX B: MASTER OF ARTS REQUIREMENTS (THESIS OPTION)

### 600-Level COMM Courses in at least 2 areas (21 hours)

\_\_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_

### 600-Level Course Inside or Outside of COMM

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_

### Thesis Hours

\_\_\_\_\_ COMM 691

\_\_\_\_\_ COMM 691

**TOTAL HOURS: 30**

### ***Residency requirement:***

\_\_\_\_\_ At least 1 nine-hour semester OR 1 full 10-week summer session

### ***Degree plan requirement:***

\_\_\_\_\_ Degree plan filed with OGAPS (<https://ogsdps.tamu.edu>) by student 90-days *prior* to thesis defense.

### ***Apply for graduation:***

\_\_\_\_\_ During first week of final semester through Howdy.

### ***Thesis proposal (student downloads thesis proposal title page form from OGAPS website):***

\_\_\_\_\_ Form and the proposal filed with OGAPS 25 days prior to submitting request for Final Exam (the thesis defense)

### ***Request for Final Exam/Thesis Defense (student downloads form from OGAPS website):***

\_\_\_\_\_ Filed with OGAPS 10 days prior to exam date

***Thesis Defense (OGAPS form sent DIRECTLY to advisor; student downloads thesis approval form from thesis office website):***

\_\_\_\_\_ Committee signs **form** from the OGAPS and the **form** from the thesis office

### **Benchmarks**

#### First semester

\_\_\_\_\_ Begin tentative plan of study

#### Second semester

\_\_\_\_\_ Select Permanent Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_ Consult with advisor on coursework

\_\_\_\_\_ Submit 1 manuscript or panel proposal to a conference

\_\_\_\_\_ Submit proposed plan of study to DGS for preliminary review

\_\_\_\_\_ Select thesis committee members

#### Third semester

\_\_\_\_\_ Have attended or are registered to attend at least one scholarly convention

\_\_\_\_\_ Write and meet to discuss thesis proposal

\_\_\_\_\_ Submit degree plan to OGAPS

#### Fourth semester

\_\_\_\_\_ Complete and Defend thesis

\_\_\_\_\_ Graduate

\_\_\_\_\_ Submit Dissertation to OGAPS.

## APPENDIX C: MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM REQUIRMENTS (NON-THESIS)

### 600-Level COMM Courses in at least 2 areas (24 hours)

\_\_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_

### 600-Level Outside of COMM Course (3 hours)

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_

### 600-Level Electives Outside or Inside COMM (9 Credit Hours)

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_

**TOTAL HOURS: 36**

### ***Research Portfolio***

#### ***Residency requirement:***

\_\_\_\_\_ At least 1 nine-hour semester OR 1 full 10-week summer session

#### ***Degree plan requirement:***

\_\_\_\_\_ Degree plan filed by student through ogsdpss.tamu.edu 90-days *prior* to written exams

#### ***Apply for graduation:***

\_\_\_\_\_ During first week of final semester through Howdy

#### ***Request for Final Exam/Oral defense (student downloads form from OGAPS website)***

\_\_\_\_\_ Filed with OGAPS 10 days prior to exam date

#### ***Final Exam/Oral defense (form sent directly to advisor):***

\_\_\_\_\_ Filed with OGAPS immediately after defense

**Benchmarks**First semester

\_\_\_\_\_ Begin tentative plan of study

Second semester

\_\_\_\_\_ Select Permanent Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_ Consult with advisor on coursework

\_\_\_\_\_ Submit 1 manuscript or panel proposal to a conference

\_\_\_\_\_ Submit proposed plan of study to DGS for preliminary review

\_\_\_\_\_ Select thesis committee members

Third semester

\_\_\_\_\_ Have attended or are registered to attend at least one scholarly convention

\_\_\_\_\_ Submit degree plan to OGAPs

Fourth semester

\_\_\_\_\_ Revise essays for research portfolio

\_\_\_\_\_ Defend research portfolio

\_\_\_\_\_ Graduate

## APPENDIX D: 64-HOUR PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### PhD. COURSEWORK

**TOTAL REQUIRED HOURS (coursework + dissertation):**

**64 Credits**

**Courses in Specialized Area**

\_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_

**Courses Outside of Specialized Area**

\_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_

**Courses in Any COMM Area (12-18 hours)**

\_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_

**Courses Outside of COMM (6 to 15 hours)**

\_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_

**Two Professional Development courses (1 hour each):**

\_\_\_\_ COMM 681 \_\_\_\_ COMM 681

**TOTAL COURSEWORK HOURS: 37 to 53**

***Dissertation Hours: 11 to 27 hours of COMM 691***

**TOTAL HOURS for Ph.D. Degree Plan: Minimum of 64 hours (coursework + dissertation)**

**Residency requirement:**

\_\_\_\_\_ One academic year taking 9 hours each term (semester or 10-week summer session)

**Degree plan requirement:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Degree plan filed through ogsdpss.tamu.edu 90-days *prior* to preliminary exam (comps)

**Preliminary exam checklist form (student downloads form from OGAPS):**

\_\_\_\_\_ Prior to scheduling exams to determine all criteria have been met

**Registration for preliminary exams:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Must be enrolled for a minimum of 1 credit hour the semester or summer term the student will take the exam

**Preliminary exam results (student downloads forms from OGAPS website):**

\_\_\_\_\_ Two **forms** submitted to OGAPS to report results of comps (Report of Doctoral Preliminary Exam form and Preliminary Examination checklist) within 10 working days of oral defense

**Dissertation proposal (student downloads form from OGAPS website):**

\_\_\_\_\_ The proposal and TITLE PAGE **form** from OGAPS submitted after getting committee approval and at least 15 days prior to defense

**Apply for graduation:**

\_\_\_\_\_ During first week of final semester.

**Request for Final Exam/Dissertation Defense (student downloads form from OGAPS website):**

\_\_\_\_\_ File **form** with OGAPS 10 working days prior to exam date

**Dissertation Defense (OGAPS form sent DIRECTLY to advisor; student downloads thesis from thesis office website):**

\_\_\_\_\_ Committee signs **form** from the OGAPS and the **form** from the thesis office

**Benchmarks**First semester

- \_\_\_\_\_ Begin tentative plan of study
- \_\_\_\_\_ Become involved in at least one research project (solo or with faculty)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Join 1 or more professional organizations

Second semester

- \_\_\_\_\_ Select Permanent Advisor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consult with advisor on coursework
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit 1-2 manuscripts to a conference

Third semester

- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit proposed plan of study to DGS (**October 1**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have attended or are registered to attend at least one scholarly convention
- \_\_\_\_\_ Engage in independent research project or work with a faculty member
- \_\_\_\_\_ Start preparing one first/solo authored manuscript for journal submission
- \_\_\_\_\_ Select Committee Members

Fourth semester

- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete coursework
- \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with committee to plan Preliminary Exam (MAY 15)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit at two manuscripts to scholarly convention
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit manuscript to a journal for publication
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit Degree Plan of Study with OGAPS (@least 90 days before exams)

Year 3

- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare a 2<sup>nd</sup> essay for submission for publication at a journal.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have completed (or in the process of giving) at least 3 conference presentations
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete and pass Preliminary Exams
- \_\_\_\_\_ Successfully defend dissertation proposal with committee; file proposal with OGAPS.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit 1-2 manuscripts to conferences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare writing sample for job applications.

Year 4

- \_\_\_\_\_ Continue to Submit papers to conferences to journals
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare materials for job applications
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare research job talk (early in the fall)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Practice research job talk (coordinated through Graduate Placement Officer)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete dissertation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule Final Exam (dissertation defense)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit Dissertation to OGAPS.

## APPENDIX E: 96-HOUR PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### PhD. COURSEWORK

**TOTAL REQUIRED HOURS (coursework + dissertation):**

**96 Credits**

**Courses in Specialized Area**

\_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_

**Courses Outside of Specialized Area**

\_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_

**Courses in Any COMM Area (18-27 hours)**

\_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_

**Courses Outside of COMM (6 to 15 hours)**

\_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_ COMM \_\_\_\_

**Two Professional Development courses (1 hour each):**

\_\_\_\_ COMM 681      \_\_\_\_ COMM 681

**TOTAL REQUIRED COURSEWORK HOURS: 53**

***Dissertation Hours: 29-43 hours of COMM 691***

**TOTAL HOURS for Ph.D. Degree Plan: Minimum of 96 hours (coursework + dissertation)**

**Residency requirement:**

\_\_\_\_\_ One academic year taking 9 hours each term (semester or 10-week summer session)

**Degree plan requirement:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Degree plan filed through ogsdpss.tamu.edu 90-days *prior* to preliminary exam (comps)

**Preliminary exam checklist form (student downloads form from OGAPS):**

\_\_\_\_\_ Prior to scheduling exams to determine all criteria have been met

**Registration for preliminary exams:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Must be enrolled for a minimum of 1 credit hour the semester or summer term the student will take the exam

**Preliminary exam results (student downloads forms from OGAPS website):**

\_\_\_\_\_ Two **forms** submitted to OGAPS to report results of comps (Report of Doctoral Preliminary Exam form and Preliminary Examination checklist) within 10 working days of oral defense

**Dissertation proposal (student downloads form from OGAPS website):**

\_\_\_\_\_ The proposal and TITLE PAGE **form** from OGAPS submitted after getting committee approval and at least 15 days prior to defense

**Apply for graduation:**

\_\_\_\_\_ During first week of final semester through degreeapp.tamu.edu

**Request for Final Exam/Dissertation Defense (student downloads form from OGAPS website):**

\_\_\_\_\_ File **form** with OGAPS 10 days prior to exam date

**Dissertation Defense (OGAPS form sent DIRECTLY to advisor; student downloads thesis from thesis office website):**

\_\_\_\_\_ Committee signs **form** from the OGAPS and the **form** from the thesis office

**Benchmarks**First semester

- \_\_\_\_\_ Begin tentative plan of study
- \_\_\_\_\_ Become involved in at least one research project (solo or with faculty)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Join 1 or more professional organizations

Second semester

- \_\_\_\_\_ Select Permanent Advisor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consult with advisor on coursework
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit 1-2 manuscripts to a conference

Third semester

- \_\_\_\_\_ Have submitted at least one paper to a scholarly convention
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have attended or are registered to attend at least one scholarly convention
- \_\_\_\_\_ Engage in independent research project or work with a faculty member
- \_\_\_\_\_ Select Research Portfolio Committee Members

Fourth semester

- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare Research Portfolio
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pass Research Portfolio Review
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit at least two manuscripts to scholarly convention

Year 3

- \_\_\_\_\_ Revise at least 1 manuscript and submit for journal publication
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit Preliminary Plan of Study to DGS (October 1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit Degree Plan of Study with OGAPS (@least 90 days before exams)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with committee to plan PhD Preliminary Exam (April 30)

Year 4

- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete and Pass Preliminary Exams
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit manuscript or abstract to a national scholarly convention
- \_\_\_\_\_ Successfully defend dissertation proposal; file proposal with OGAPS.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit a manuscript for publication at a journal.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare writing sample for job applications.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Update CV for Annual Review

Year 5

- \_\_\_\_\_ Continue to Submit papers to conferences to journals
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare materials for job applications
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare research job talk (early in the fall)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Practice research job talk (coordinated through Graduate Placement Officer)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete dissertation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule Final Exam (dissertation defense)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit Dissertation to OGAPS.

## APPENDIX F: SUSPENSION & DISMISSAL FROM GRADUATE PROGRAM/ASSISTANTSHIPS

Students may be suspended or dismissed from the graduate program if they fail to remain in good standing, engage in unethical behavior, or both.

### SUSPENSION FROM GRADUATE PROGRAM

Good standing is defined as meeting the minimum GPR, minimizing incompletes, and making good progress toward the degree. Suspension from the program means that students will not be allowed to register for classes, and as a result, will lose any funding that is contingent on their being a full time student (e.g., employment as teaching or research assistantships, fellowships and scholarships, student loans, and in-state tuition). Students may be suspended from the program if they fail to meet one or more of the following criteria.

**Minimum GPR.** Graduate students are expected to maintain an overall GPR of 3.30. If a student's overall GPR falls below 3.30 for one semester, the student must meet with their advisor and the graduate director to discuss the issue and develop a plan and timeline for raising the GPR. If the student fails to raise their GPR within the timeline established, then the student may be dismissed.

**Excessive incompletes.** If a graduate student accumulates two or more incompletes during a single semester—or has two or more outstanding incompletes at the end of a semester—the student will not be allowed to register for classes the following semester unless the two incompletes are converted to a satisfactory grade prior to the start of the following semester. In rare cases, an alternative timeline may be generated through consultation among the student, the advisor, and the director of graduate studies. (i.e., a timeline for conversion of the incompletes is set). If the incompletes are not resolved prior to the beginning of the following semester or an alternative timeline negotiated, the student will be reinstated the semester following the successful conversion of the incompletes to a satisfactory grade.

**Failure to make normal progress toward the degree.** Normal progress toward the degree is defined in terms of the timely and successful completion of: (1) coursework, (2) selecting a permanent advisor, (3) creating a program of study, (4) establishing preliminary examination, and thesis or dissertation committees, and (5) paperwork required by the department and the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. Appendices A, C, and D lay out the benchmarks by which normal progress is determined. Students are expected to develop active research programs while in graduate school. This involves submitting papers based on their research to conferences, revising those papers, and submitting them for publication. However, successful efforts to publish original research, while strongly valued and generally necessary for employment in a competitive job environment, is not used to assess progress toward the degree.

If a student fails to make adequate progress, the student will not be allowed to register for the next semester unless the reason for failing to make adequate progress is addressed (e.g.,

establishing a committee) or a mutually agreeable alternative is negotiated by the student, the advisor, and the director of graduate studies (e.g., postponing preliminary exams for a semester).

#### DISMISSAL FROM GRADUATE PROGRAM

Students may be dismissed from the program if: (a) They fail to maintain good standing in the program for an extended period of time (i.e., more than one semester), (b) they are suspended from the program, but take insufficient action to be reinstated, (c) they fail to maintain a 3.30 overall GPR for two consecutive semesters, (d) they have one or more incompletes for two consecutive semesters, or (e) they act unethically in either their academic teaching or scholarship. Unethical conduct may be defined, but is not limited to, acts such as inappropriate relationships with students, plagiarism, improper use of university funds or equipment, and falsification of academic records. Depending upon the nature of the issue, extenuating circumstances may be taken into consideration by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) when making a decision to dismiss a student from the program.

Students have a right to appeal dismissal from the program. The following five-step process should be followed when making an appeal.

**1. Student Notification.** A registered or hand-delivered letter will be sent by the DGS to the student notifying him or her of dismissal from the program. In the case of a hand-delivered letter, the student shall sign a form indicating receipt of the letter. The letter will summarize the reasons for the dismissal and specify the date the dismissal goes into effect.

**2. Conference with the Director of Graduate Studies.** The student may make a written request to the DGS to discuss the dismissal. If a mutually agreeable alternative to dismissal is negotiated during the meeting, the DGS will write a letter summarizing the resolution and provide a written copy to the student. A copy will also be placed in the student's file.

**3. Departmental Head and Graduate Affairs Committee Review.** If the issue is not successfully resolved by the DGS, the student may request in writing for the Department Head to review the dismissal decision. The department head will request a review by the graduate committee. The graduate committee will hear evidence and testimony regarding the dismissal decision and the grounds for disputing the decision. Using a majority vote, the committee will recommend to the head to uphold, reject, or modify the dismissal decision.

**4. Dean Review.** If the issue is not successfully resolved, the student or DGS may make a written appeal to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, or the Dean's designee, regarding the Graduate Affairs Committee decision. The Dean or the Dean's designee will provide additional information regarding the way the Dean's review is to be conducted and what kinds of evidence and testimony will be permitted.

**5. Graduate Appeals Panel.** If the decision by the Dean or the Dean's designee is not satisfactory to either the student or the DGS, either party may request the Graduate Appeals Panel to take action. Information regarding the way the request may be made and the appeal is to be managed may be found in Rule 59 of Student Rules ([student-rules.tamu.edu](http://student-rules.tamu.edu)).

## SUSPENSION AND DISMISSAL FROM RESEARCH AND/OR TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

### ***Research Assistantships***

Research assistantships (RAs) are funded by individual faculty members (or groups of faculty members) either through independent grants or research bursaries provided by the university (e.g., new faculty “start up” funds). Consequently, faculty supervisors select research assistants and the terms of an RA appointment are negotiated between the student and the faculty sponsor. There are a number of university guidelines for these negotiations (for example, a full-time research assistant cannot be required to work more than 20 hours per week), and the terms of these assignments must be approved by the department head, but specific activities, sites, and work schedules will depend on individual negotiations. As with their academic progress, RAs will receive annual reviews from their supervising professors, which will include evaluations of their work. Research assistants may be dismissed by if their work is deemed to be inadequate by their supervising faculty member. Actionable behaviors include not completing assigned tasks or performing them at an inadequate level of quality, or violating university policies or relevant laws regarding research activities, confidentiality, or use of funds. When appropriate, RAs will first be given a formal notice that dismissal may be forthcoming which includes steps that must be taken to continue in the position, means of measuring progress toward meeting those requirements, and a timeline/deadline for doing so. In some cases, termination will take place at the end of a semester and students will be eligible to shift to a teaching assistantship as outlined in their offer letters (unless dismissal is related to violations of laws or university policies). However, in other cases, termination may be immediate and students will be given an alternate work assignment until the end of the term.

### ***Teaching Assistantships***

Teaching assistantships (TAs) are assigned on a semester-by-semester basis. Because of the extensive lead time for scheduling that is required by the university registrar, incoming graduate students normally will teach recitation sections of COMM 203, Public Speaking, during their first semester. In subsequent semesters, students who have successfully completed 18 hours of graduate coursework in COMM and distinguished themselves in the classroom may be offered other assignments that are related to their programs of study. Each TA will be assigned a supervising professor to help with course design, syllabus construction, teaching and evaluation strategies, and so on. General, department-wide expectations will be provided during new student orientation. Course-specific expectations will be provided by supervising faculty prior to the beginning of each semester. Teaching assistants may be dismissed if their work is deemed to be inadequate. Examples of actionable behavior include failure to hold class or make timely arrangements to have classes covered in cases of illness or personal crisis; repeatedly missing staff meetings or coming to them unprepared; refusing to communicate with students by holding regular office hours and/or responding to email messages; repeatedly being unprepared for class; arbitrary and/or capricious grading; and violation of university policies and/or state or federal laws, especially those related to student privacy (FERPA) or discrimination (overt or by creating a hostile educational environment); or failing to comply with the rules regarding outside employment that were described earlier in this *Handbook*. TA performance will be monitored throughout the semester through a wide variety of mechanisms. These approaches will be

established by supervising faculty and communicated to TAs. Teaching performance will be assessed by the supervising professor and communicated to the student in their annual review letter. If at some point a TA's performance is judged to be inadequate, supervising faculty must initiate an intervention that includes: (1) written notice of the action (either through campus mail or through the university email system); (2) identifies the problems that have been observed; and (3) establishes steps that must be taken to remedy those deficiencies. Item three will include criteria for measuring success in remedying identified problems, and a timeline/deadline for taking corrective action. Fortunately, both the department and the university have a number of opportunities in place through which teaching assistants can improve their teaching. Students who fail to complete a remediation program may be dismissed from their TA positions using the same dismissal process described in steps one through three of the procedures for academic dismissals.