

School of Communication & Journalism

Graduate Faculty Information & Policies

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Graduate Program Positions & Responsibilities

Graduate Program Officer

The graduate program of the School of Communication and Journalism is overseen by the Graduate Program Officer (GPO) in consultation with the Graduate Faculty. The Graduate Program Officer is an elected position. A simple majority of the voting School Graduate Faculty elects the Graduate Program Officer. The election is called and conducted by the Director of the School. Only Graduate Faculty may vote. Candidates for the GPO position must be tenured members of the School's Graduate Faculty. The GPO serves for a three-year term, renewable for up to a total of six years.

The GPO works closely with the School Director, the Deans of the Graduate School, the School Associate Directors, the Graduate Internship Director, and the Basic Course Director. The GPO, in consultation with the School Director, may negotiate a one or two course administrative reduction per year.

The GPO is responsible for planning the graduate course rotation in consultation with the Associate Director of each program, assisting in the Fall School Graduate Student orientations, making GTA offers, overseeing GTA Research service assignments, maintaining adherence to the graduate policies of the School and the Graduate School, GTA discipline, graduate policy matters, and other duties relating to the graduate program as required.

Graduate Internship Director

For students choosing a nonthesis capstone project, the Graduate Internship Director oversees graduate student internships in consultation with the GPO and a student's Advisory Committee, including student paperwork, approval of the internship, communication with internship supervisors, and evaluation of internship reports (Student advisory committees are responsible for a student's comprehensive exams and reviewing their final internship paper).

Basic Course (COMM 1000) Director

When the School budget allows, the GPO is assisted by a Basic Course Director (BCD). The Basic Course Director, working with the GPO, oversees GTA teaching assignments and responsibilities, as well as other duties associated with directing the Basic Course.

Admissions

Admission decisions are made by the GPO in conjunction with a three-member Faculty Review Committee. The GPO sets the standards for admission with the advice and consent of the Graduate Faculty. Student admission policies are outlined in the Graduate Student Policy Manual.

Graduate Student Advising

GPO as Advisor

The GPO acts as the advisor for all graduate students from the time of admission until the completion of Qualifying Exams.

Advisory Committee Chair & Members

Following successful completion of qualifying exams, students set up a three-member Advisory Committee, consisting of a Chair and two committee members. They also complete and submit a Plan of Study to the GPO (see [Appendix B](#)). In the School of Communication & Journalism, this committee can only include members of the Graduate Faculty unless approved by the GPO or School Director.

Having faculty members as unofficial committee members (i.e., providing significant help with a thesis, writing and evaluating written comprehensive exam questions) is discouraged, as such members traditionally do not receive recognition for their service to the student's committee. This does not preclude students from asking advice of other faculty members.

Timing Committee Service

All graduate faculty are expected to serve on graduate student advisory committees. Chairing a thesis committee often requires the greatest level of commitment. In contrast, internship (non-thesis) committees generally require less work than thesis committees.

Tenure track faculty typically begin serving on committees in their second year. To provide new faculty time to learn graduate faculty and advisory committee expectations, tenure track faculty are encouraged to wait until their third year to Chair a committee, particularly a thesis committee. Faculty should also carefully consider service during research leave, etc. For example, some research leaves may preclude such service. In other cases, significant service may compromise a faculty member's ability to meet research expectations.

The above said, faculty should be mindful of the importance of serving on committees to enable students to complete their studies in a timely manner and so that other graduate faculty are not serving on an excessive number of committees. **Graduate faculty are strongly discouraged from being on more than 5 total committees, including those where they serve as either chair or committee member, per academic year.** Faculty are also encouraged to discuss service levels with mentors, the GPO, and the School Director.

Composition of the Advisory Committee

Students should first identify the Chair of their Advisory Committee, then work with the Chair to identify the remaining members of the Advisory Committee. For both internship and thesis options, all students will seek out 3 graduate faculty to serve on their Advisory Committee, one of whom will serve as the Advisory Committee Chair. Students can choose from any CMJN graduate faculty for their committee, regardless of if they have taken a course with these faculty or not.

As soon as possible after identifying their advisory committee chair and members, the student should be directed to complete a Plan of Study and submit it to the Graduate Program Officer.

See [Appendix A](#) for an outline of Chair and Advisory Committee member responsibilities when directing a capstone project. See [Appendix B](#) for the Plan of Study Form.

Academic Honesty Issues

Faculty are urged to have regular conversations with graduate students on issues associated with academic honesty (e.g., global, patchwork, self-plagiarism; misrepresentation of sources; inappropriate assistance for other students; mishandling of exams, etc.), **and in particular the use of AI** (role, level, permissibility, etc.). Such conversations reduce confusion over what constitutes misconduct and reminds graduate students that academic integrity is of the utmost importance both when researching and when teaching.

When academic misconduct is identified, faculty are strongly urged to file academic misconduct charges in keeping with University policies. In doing so, it emphasizes that we as graduate faculty take academic honesty seriously.

Coursework Related Policies

Student Registration

Graduate students are responsible for registering for classes as soon as registration opens. Any problems resulting in their failure to do so is the student's problem. Faculty should not feel pressured to take on student overloads, to support non-CMJN graduate course enrollments, or agree to independent study courses because a student delays their registration.

Students cannot directly enroll in Capstone course classes. The Internship Director handles enrollment of students into the nonthesis class. Students will enroll in thesis hours under the direction of the chair of their advisory committee. The chair of the committee makes arrangements for enrollment.

Taking Non-CMJN Graduate Courses

Because graduate students take a limited number of CMJN courses while pursuing their degree, graduate students are discouraged from taking courses outside our graduate program. This said, students interested in making a case for a non-CMJN class should:

1. have passed their qualifying exams;
2. have selected a Major Advisor and Advisory Committee members; and,
3. make a strong case to the Advisory Committee for the need to take an outside class. *When making the case to the committee, the student must show how the course(s) pertain to their program of study in the clearest manner possible.*

The Advisory Committee, in consultation with the GPO, will grant approval (or not) for taking the class(es). With Advisory Committee approval, graduate students may take up to six (6) hours of classes that are in a closely related area.

Independent Study Courses

For the reasons stated above and because graduate faculty are not compensated for their time, graduate faculty are generally discouraged from directing independent study courses with graduate students. Exceptions are made when a student's advisory committee strongly endorses the need for specialized study that can only be gained via an independent study course. Procedures for petitioning to take an independent study class are the same as that for taking a non-CMJN graduate level course. Only one independent study class will be applied to a student's plan of study. Because of reduced student enrollment in summer/fall classes, graduate faculty are strongly advised against conducting independent study courses during the summer semester.

Incomplete Grades in Graduate Courses

Because of the nature of graduate coursework, incomplete grades are awarded only for exceptional circumstances and should be negotiated with the student in advance of the last day of classes. Once an incomplete grade has been negotiated, the student has until the end of the 10th day of classes in the next term (including Summer semester) to turn in all work. If they miss this deadline, the faculty member should compute the final grade with a zero-credit assigned to all missed work. Because of its implications for a student's GPA, the final grade should be reported to the registrar as soon as possible.

Qualifying Exams

Faculty who teach the required graduate courses (COMM 7000, COMM 7010, and COMM 7020) constitute the Qualifying Exam Committee. Each member writes and evaluates their respective section of qualifying exams (Qualifiers) for both Spring and the Fall terms. *Exams may not be taken at other locations or by "distance," including another computer lab on campus, the student's home, the student's workplace, etc.* Any exceptions to this policy are strongly discouraged and must be approved by the GPO and the School Director in advance.

GPO Responsibilities

The GPO coordinates and administers qualifying exams and any exam rewrites, and handles all student communications regarding qualifiers.

- The GPO contacts the Biggio Center in the third week of the Fall/Spring semester to set up Qualifiers. Students take all three, two-hour exams on the same day.
- Immediately after, the GPO notifies students of the exam day/time/place, meets with them to explain the process, particularly that communication and questions about the exam should be directed to the GPO.
- Following the exam, the GPO removes identifying information from the exams, and uses a code name/number with the goal of allowing for an anonymous evaluation of student exams as possible.
- The GPO informs students of the results of the exams and handles "Retakes."
 - Students who fail all three sections of the exam are informed that they failed the Exam and are removed from the program.
 - Students who fail one or two sections of the exam are provided one opportunity (one hour for each section) to revise their exam response.

- Students who fail their “retake” will not be able to continue in the program.
- Graduate students who fail do have an appeals process, as outlined in the *Graduate Student Policy Manual*.
- The GPO informs students of the results of their retakes, handles any student-initiated appeals, and notifies the Graduate School that failing students should be dropped from the program.

Faculty Responsibilities

- Qualifying Exam Committee members will evaluate exams for both Fall and Spring semesters (typically the week after finals), and are expected to be available during this period (including evaluating rewrites). In the unlikely event that one of these faculty members is unavailable, the GPO will take responsibility for evaluating the exams and may identify a substitute.
- Questions for the exam should be provided to the GPO a minimum of five (5) working days prior to the scheduled exams.
- Students may approach faculty for clarification on course material, but should not pressure faculty for the nature/type of questions on the exam. If this occurs, faculty should contact the GPO, who will communicate with students.
- Exam Evaluation:
 - Faculty evaluating the exams should bear in mind that the exams are evaluated on a pass/fail basis. Thus, students may do poorly on one section of the exam, but do very well on another.
 - The faculty member will judge whether the student’s performance on their section of the exam *overall* merits a “pass.”
 - At their discretion, faculty may provide written feedback to students who must retake a segment of their exam. Feedback should be provided to the GPO to relay to the student.

Capstone Project

All students must complete a capstone project prior to graduation. Faculty responsibilities varies with the choice of the thesis or the nonthesis option. **Below is a general overview, see [Appendix A](#) for a more detailed outline.**

Students Choosing the Thesis Option

All candidates under the **thesis option** will successfully complete an original research project that includes (1) a thesis proposal, (2) a written thesis, and (3) an oral defense of the written thesis.

1. **Thesis Proposal:** The thesis project includes a written thesis proposal and an oral defense of the proposal. The student’s Advisory Committee review’s the written proposal and asks questions in the oral defense to refine the proposal. The thesis proposal should be due and defended ideally by the end of the student’s third semester but no later than the end of the 3rd week of the student’s final semester.

2. **Thesis Project & Paper:** The student then completes the thesis project, submitting the written draft of the thesis to the Advisory Committee at a time allowing for adequate review of the thesis by committee members prior to the oral thesis defense (typically one week).
3. **Thesis Oral Defense:** There is a public oral defense of the project with the Advisory Committee. The defense is coordinated by the Chair of the Advisory Committee, who sends an invitation to attend to graduate faculty and graduate students of the School one week prior to its scheduled time. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that Graduate School deadlines for graduation are met, though the Advisory Committee Chair, in consultation with the Advisory Committee members, should plan the deadlines for the written and oral defense at the beginning of the student's final semester.

Students Choosing the Internship (Non-Thesis) Option

All candidates under **the internship (non-thesis) option** will successfully complete the internship, as well as three additional requirements for the internship option, including: (1) a written research-based internship paper proposal, (2) a written research-based internship paper, and (3) oral defense of the written internship paper.

- **Internship:** Students will complete an internship in their final semester of the program. Students are responsible for securing their internship. This internship will provide students with practical experiences in a career setting and will be completed in lieu of traditional coursework. While the term "communication" is defined by the School of Communication and Journalism in a broad and reasonable way, all internships must employ some form of effective oral and/or written communication and help the student achieve career goals.
- **Internship Paper Proposal:** The internship paper proposal will be a 5–7-page paper (excluding title page and references) that outlines a plan for the final internship paper. The goals of the proposal are to (1) clearly articulate the field of interest and identify the industry where the student intends to pursue an internship or has pursued an internship, (2) integrate relevant communication theories to frame the research and practical application of these theories to the internship experience and (3) serve as a roadmap for the student's internship planning, including research questions related to the organization(s) the student intends to or has already secured an internship for. The internship paper proposal should be due ideally by the end of the student's third semester but no later than the end of the 3rd week of the student's final semester. *Unlike the thesis option, only the Advisory Chair of the internship committee will evaluate the internship paper proposal.* See [Appendix C](#) for more detailed requirements for the Internship Paper Proposal.
- **Internship Paper:** Once the proposal is approved, students build on the proposal and work on the internship paper. The paper constitutes the written portion the student's capstone exam. It should be a 20-25-page paper (excluding title page and references) that identifies, explains, and evaluates communication practices in the internship. The paper will include a research question (written during the proposal stage) and should use relevant literature and communication theory to answer the research question regarding the student's internship experience. See [Appendix D](#) for more detailed requirements for the Internship Paper.

- a. The Advisory Committee Chair will serve as the primary contact for working on the internship paper.
- b. Once the written internship paper has been completed, all Advisory Committee members will review the written portion of the paper prior to the internship paper oral defense.
- c. The student should submit the written draft of the thesis to the Advisory Committee at a time allowing for adequate review of the thesis by committee members prior to the oral thesis defense (typically one week). It is the student's responsibility to ensure that Graduate School deadlines for graduation are met, though the Advisory Committee Chair, in consultation with the Advisory Committee members, should plan the deadlines for the written and oral defense at the beginning of the student's final semester.

Capstone Project Pass/Fail Policy

Successful completion of the capstone project requires the unanimous support of all members of the Advisory Committee, who evaluate all written materials (thesis, exams, and research papers) on a pass/fail basis.

Thesis Capstone Project

- If any element of a student's **thesis project** (i.e., thesis, oral defense, revisions) is deemed unacceptable, the committee, with a unanimous vote, may allow for a one semester extension to make suggested revisions to the project and/or orally defend the project. The student and GPO will be notified by the advisory committee. If the thesis or oral defense is again deemed unacceptable, the student and the GPO will again be notified by the advisory committee. Only in extraordinary circumstances will an additional extension be awarded. The committee will notify the GPO if the student's thesis is found unacceptable. The GPO notifies the Graduate School that the student failed their thesis capstone project and should be removed from the program.

Internship (Non-thesis) Capstone Project.

- For the **nonthesis internship**, if a student fails to satisfactorily complete any part of the internship evaluated by the Internship Director, the Internship Director will notify the student, the GPO, and the student's advisory committee members that the student has failed the internship. Only when there are significant extenuating circumstances will a student be allowed to engage in a second internship (which cannot be with the same company/organization) and only with permission of the Graduate School.
- If the **internship paper** (written paper, oral defense, revisions) is deemed unacceptable, the committee, with a unanimous vote, may allow for a one semester extension to make suggested revisions to the project and/or orally defend the project. The student and GPO will be notified by the advisory committee. If the internship paper or oral defense is again deemed unacceptable, the student and the GPO will again be notified by the advisory committee. Only in extraordinary circumstances will an additional extension be awarded. The committee will notify the GPO if the student's internship paper is found unacceptable. The GPO will then notify the Graduate School that the student failed their internship capstone project and should be removed from the program

If an extension is granted, all failed elements of the capstone project will be scheduled for the next semester (including summer semester). The student is responsible for any enrollment and all funding requirements.

Failing the Capstone Project: The GPO will notify the Graduate School; the student will be removed from the program but may petition for a Graduate Certificate. The determination to award a Graduate Certificate will be made by the Advisory Committee, in conjunction with the GPO, and approval of the Graduate School.

Scheduling Capstone Oral Defense (Oral Exam)

Committee Chairs bear the primary responsibility for scheduling written paper deadlines and oral examinations (defenses) for both thesis and internship students.

- Oral defenses should not be scheduled either the first or last week of classes or during final exams. No defenses should be scheduled for the periods between semesters.
- All parties should be aware of the deadlines imposed by the Graduate School calendar for each semester. Failure to complete capstone exams by the deadline will delay a student's graduation.
- The student and their Chair should work closely with Advisory Committee to schedule oral capstone exams (the oral defense), typically allowing at least one week for the Advisory Committee to review the written portion of the internship or thesis project prior to the oral defense.

Graduation Requirements

No student will be permitted to graduate who fails to complete the Graduate School's [Graduation Approval](#) the semester prior to expected graduation. At this time, graduation day is designated as the official last day of each semester and, therefore, is the deadline for submitting for Graduation Approval each semester.

Working With GTAs

Teaching Assistants

Faculty desiring a GTA for an upcoming class should contact the School Director. Assignment considerations include a number of factors such as the number of GTAs available and the number of students enrolled in the course. Assignments are made at the discretion of the School Director, in consultation with the BCD. A request does not guarantee the assignment of a GTA.

TA duties should be kept to a minimum. In particular, the duty of first year GTAs is primarily to observe. Typical duties involve taking attendance, handling student questions, leading group discussions, etc. TAs may be allowed to teach 2-3 times during the course of the semester. The instructor of record for the course will provide a written evaluation of any teaching to the TA, will review the evaluation with the TA, and will provide a copy of the written evaluation to the BCD.

Minor grading with objective answer keys (e.g., multiple choice exams, quizzes, fill-in-the-blank, etc.) may be done by GTAs. GTAs may grade subjective assignments if specific conditions are met:

- The GTA's work outside of class should not exceed 3-4 hours per week.
- The instructor of record must remember that the GTA is not a subject matter expert.
- The instructor of record must train the GTA on how to grade and provide a rubric or some other standard of grading.
- Major assignments should be graded by the instructor of record.
- Prior to the start of the semester, the GPO will ask what kind of responsibilities faculty plan to assign GTAs. The GPO may request to see rubrics, sample assignments, or other materials used to train and aid GTA grading.
- The GPO will check with the GTA about the time and extent of the duties they have been asked to perform. **Faculty who give their GTAs too much work, do not give them clear grading guidelines, or otherwise over-extend their GTAs may lose the opportunity to have a GTA in the future.**

Problems with a TA should be reported to the BCD and the GPO as soon as they develop. TAs are typically inexperienced teachers who sometimes do not fully understand their teaching and classroom responsibilities. To provide the best classroom experience for our undergraduates, TA problems (large or small) should be addressed as quickly as possible.

Research Assistants

As part of their Graduate Teaching Assistantship, graduate students provide graduate faculty and other members of the School with research or other service.

Faculty Responsibilities.

- The faculty member should provide meaningful *research* work for the RA (e.g., literature searches, data collection and analysis, format checking, etc.). The goal is to build research skills while at the same time productively assisting graduate faculty with research and related projects.
- Faculty should keep in mind that graduate students are often new to the research process and, as a result, may take longer than expected to complete an assigned task. A conversation with the RA about their skill level at the beginning of their assignment will help determine the level of initial training a student may require.
- ***RA work is limited to five (5) hours each week of the regular semester.***
- Faculty experiencing any problems while working with a graduate student should first speak with the student. If problems are not resolved quickly, the faculty member should contact the GPO. The GPO will meet with the student to review GTA service responsibilities. *It is important to address issues as soon as they become problematic.*
- Faculty complete an RA evaluation at the end of the semester. Providing honest feedback is helpful for a student's professional development and when the GPO has their yearly assessment meeting with the student.

Student Responsibilities.

- They are assigned to assist during the first week of classes.
- They should be proactive in maintaining contact, soliciting assignments, and completing them in a timely manner.
- They should provide a quality product (keeping in mind their initial skill level).

GPO Responsibilities.

- The GPO makes all service assignments.
- Assignment requests are made at the beginning of Fall and Spring semester.
 - The GPO will send out a request for research assistants via email (no assistants are available in the Summer).
 - Not all requests may be filled.
 - Generally, Assistant Professor requests are filled first, followed by Associate, then Full professor requests. Rarely are RAs assigned to nontenured faculty.
- The GPO will solicit faculty evaluations of their assigned RAs at the end of each semester. Evaluations become part of the student's files and may be used in end-of-the semester evaluations, assigning summer teaching, or determinations of graduate student awards.

GTA Exam Policies

GTAs should not handle tests except in highly supervised situations. In addition, it is recommended that GTAs assigned to assist in courses other than COMM 1000 (Public Speaking) hold undergraduate degrees from institutions other than AU. When they do not, course instructors should be aware of the possibility of increased exam leakage due to lasting friendships and social relationships outside of the academic environment.

Other exam-related activities that ***should be avoided*** include:

- having GTAs write, edit, or compile questions for exams;
- having GTAs proctor original exams without supervision;
- having GTAs answer students' questions during the course of the exam period;
- having GTAs store old exams in their home or office; and,
- having GTAs shred or dispose of old exams.

All these activities increase opportunities for exam leakage.

Graduate Faculty Criteria¹

Levels of Membership

The School recognizes one level of membership on the Graduate Faculty. The faculty member may teach at the 6000 or 7000 level, may serve on both master's and doctoral committees and may direct master's theses.

Initial Appointment

Candidates will hold a terminal degree recognized by the School, typically the Ph.D. or M.F.A and must have a full-time, tenure or tenure-track appointment at the rank of assistant professor or higher.

Reappointment

Reappointment is based upon the following criteria:

1. Prior service as a member of the graduate faculty.
2. During the term of appointment, the candidate has contributed to the graduate program by:
 - a. Maintaining a level of teaching quality commensurate with the School peers in graduate courses as evidenced by relevant student and/or peer teaching evaluations,
 - b. And, contributing in an active and positive fashion as either a chair or a member of graduate advisory committees.
3. The candidate shall have a record of creative works, scholarly publication, or professional publication. The publication requirement should reflect the evaluation criteria as established by the Research/Creative/Professional Track outlined in the CMJN School Policies and Procedures manual.
 - a. A record of publication will be satisfied typically by publication of at least three (3) full-length research articles in reputable refereed journals. ("Reputable journals" are those identified as such by faculty in the nominee's School or academic area.)
 - b. The research methodology in these articles should reflect methodology appropriate to the nominee's field. The nominee must be the senior author on at least one of these publications.
 - c. The publication of a book or research monograph can satisfy this requirement completely or in part if it makes a scholarly contribution to the author's field of specialization. Such publications must clearly demonstrate the author's research competence.
 - d. In those areas where publication is not customarily the end result of the scholarly and creative activity, evidence of comparable achievement suitable for establishing professional standing must be presented and should be in keeping with the CMJN School Policies and Procedures Manual description of publication/output for creative and professional tracks.

¹ With the exception of organization and minor edits, the wording from this section was directly drawn from the graduate school website at the time of approval of this manual. Faculty should consult the graduate website at the time of renewal for possible changes.

4. The candidate should have served on at least three (3) examining committees.

NOTE: In rare cases where the candidate has established a significant scholarly record, and demonstrated in some other outstanding way their ability to work with and mentor graduate students, the Graduate Dean may approve a reduction in the requirements for 4 above. Such strongly justified, written requests must be supported by a majority vote of the School's graduate faculty and School Director.

5. The candidate shall also demonstrate other significant professional scholarly commitment. Evidence of other significant professional scholarly commitment involving anyone, or any combination of such activities as a) reading papers before academic and professional organizations; b) writing book reviews, scientific and industrial reports, short notes, popular articles, or similar materials; c) acting as a judge at a juried competition; d) rendering any type of consulting service which provides evidence of the scholar's professional standing and competence in her/his special field; e) participating in the activities of appropriate scholarly, creative, and professional organizations by holding offices or serving in other responsible capacities; f) performing significant administrative duties connected with the graduate program of a School or of the university; or g) attainment of extramural support that is evidence of professional/creative/scholarly standing.

Term of Appointment

The term of appointment shall be seven (7) years. Application should be made prior to assuming teaching responsibilities.

Procedures for Nomination: Initial Appointment and Reappointment

Initial Appointment

The School Director shall notify candidates to apply for initial appointment. Application should be made via the Graduate Faculty Approval System (GFAST) on the Graduate School website. Information to be supplied by the candidate includes the current curriculum vitae. The School Director will be notified of the application.

Reappointment

The School Director shall notify candidates to apply for reappointment. Application should be made via the Graduate Faculty Approval System (GFAST) on the Graduate School website. Information to be supplied by the candidate includes the current curriculum vitae. The School Director will be notified of the application. For reappointment, application material will be made available to the graduate faculty. Prior to forwarding the nomination to the Graduate School, nomination materials shall be reviewed by all graduate faculty members within the School. Following that review the School Director shall call for a vote by the graduate faculty by secret ballot relative to support or non-support of the nomination. Input will be solicited from the Graduate faculty and a vote taken. The nominee shall have the support of the majority of the current graduate faculty in the School. Approval or rejection will be submitted to the Graduate School for action by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Appeals Process

Candidates who are denied graduate faculty status (initial appointment or reappointment) may appeal the decision. Prior to appealing, the candidate shall meet with the School Director to solicit information as to why the candidate received an initial vote of non-support. If the candidate chooses to appeal, the candidate shall notify the School Director of the decision to appeal. The candidate shall then provide written justification and support addressing graduate faculty concerns that lead to the initial vote of nonsupport. The School Director will provide copies of the written appeal to the graduate faculty for review. Appeal materials shall be reviewed by all graduate faculty members within the School. Following that review the School Director shall call for a vote by the graduate faculty by secret ballot relative to support or non-support of the appeal. Input will be solicited from the Graduate faculty and a vote taken. The successful appeal shall have the support of the majority of the current graduate faculty in the School. Approval or rejection will be submitted to the Graduate School for action by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Appendix A: Directing the Capstone Project

Before joining or directing a thesis/non-thesis committee, the student must have successfully completed qualifying exams. Below is a general outline of project responsibilities. Committee members should familiarize themselves with related elements introduced earlier in this manual.

Thesis Capstone Project

Getting Started:

- ***Thoroughly explore student interests.*** The more focused the student is at the onset of the project, the better for determining if you are the right Chair or committee member. Ideally, advisory committee members have research and/or methodological backgrounds compatible with the thesis topic. Any member of the Graduate faculty may serve on a thesis capstone project. The student is not required to have taken a class from the faculty member. The Chair will help the student develop a list of appropriate graduate faculty to serve on the committee (the GPO can also assist if needed). It is the student's responsibility to approach potential committee members.
- ***Becoming a chair or committee member.*** When considering serving on committee, please keep in mind the amount of time that may be spent on the project and your availability (summer travel, sabbaticals, etc.). When considering serving on a thesis committee, you should consider how your research interests, background, methodology, etc. will contribute to the project.
Graduate faculty are strongly discouraged from being on more than 5 total committees, including those where they serve as either chair or committee member, per academic year
- ***Committee Responsibilities & Duties.*** The Chair bears primary responsibility for the capstone project. In the case of the thesis option, the level and involvement of committee members varies. In some cases, they will act only as readers, while in other cases students may consult with committee members throughout the project about specific aspects of the thesis (e.g., methodology, etc.). The chair and committee members, along with the student should consult with each other to determine how involved committee members will be.
- ***Setting up a Schedule.*** Setting deadlines for components of the project and having regular meetings will help Chairs identify potential trouble spots and help keep the student on track for graduation. It is essential to be aware of Graduate School graduation deadlines.

The Semester Prior to Graduation

- ***Committee Responsibilities & Duties.*** While the Chair bears primary responsibility, the amount and level of committee member contributions can vary depending on the nature of the project and committee member expertise.
- ***Thesis Proposal & Defense.*** Graduate students writing a thesis present a thesis proposal to the advisory committee. Writing a proposal helps graduate students more clearly delineate their project. Feedback from committee members in a formal proposal meeting can help identify potential problems that can (and often should) be addressed early in the project. The thesis proposal should ideally be due and defended ideally by the end of the student's third semester but no later than the end of the 3rd week of the student's final semester.

- **Filing the Plan of Study, Committee Selection Form, and Graduation Checks.** Once the committee is assembled, the graduate student is responsible for completing a graduation application and committee selection form with the Graduate School. Failure to do so will delay the student's graduation. A School Plan of Study Form should be completed and sent to the GPO. ([See Appendix B](#)).

The Semester of Graduation

- **Committee Responsibilities & Duties.** Again, the primary responsibility lies with the Chair of the committee. The level of participation by committee members in activities such as reading drafts of the thesis, etc. is negotiated between the Chair and the committee members. Students bear the ultimate responsibility for meeting Graduate School deadlines such as those for format checks and submission of theses and supporting documentation.
- **Scheduling.** Typically, in the thesis option, the final draft of the thesis is delivered to the advisory committee no later than two weeks before the Graduate School's deadline for thesis submission.
- **Oral Defense.** The oral defense is open to the public. The Advisory Committee Chair is responsible for scheduling the oral defense, reserving a meeting space, and notifying graduate faculty and students of its day/time a minimum of one week in advance.
- **Submitting Graduate School Forms:** Students must submit the approval form (Form 9 for thesis students) to the Graduate School by the date indicated on the official Graduate School calendar. Failure to do so will delay the student's graduation.

Internship (Non-Thesis) Capstone Project

Getting Started:

- **Explore Faculty Eligibility and Availability.** It is the student's responsibility to approach potential committee members, who can be any member of the graduate faculty. Students are directed to first approach a faculty member they would like to chair the committee, followed by other committee members. The Chair will help the student develop a list of appropriate graduate faculty to serve on the committee (the GPO can also assist if needed).
- **Becoming a chair or committee member.** When considering serving on committee, please keep in mind the amount of time that may be spent on the project and your availability (summer travel, research leave, etc.). Graduate faculty are strongly discouraged from being on more than 5 total committees, including those where they serve as either chair or committee member, per academic year.

The Semester Prior to Graduation

- **Committee Responsibilities & Duties.** Graduate students pursuing the nonthesis option should identify and confirm an internship. The internship must be approved by the Internship Director, and the internship organization.
- **Setting up a Schedule.** Setting deadlines for components of the internship project and having regular meetings with an Advisor will help Advisory Chairs identify potential trouble spots and help keep the student on track for graduation. It is important to be aware of Graduate School graduation deadlines.

- ***Internship Paper Proposal & Defense.*** Graduate students completing an internship must write and present an internship paper proposal to the Advisory Committee Chair. Writing a proposal helps graduate students more clearly delineate their project. The internship paper proposal should be due ideally by the end of the student's third semester but no later than the end of the 3rd week of the student's final semester. *Unlike the thesis option, only the Advisory Chair of the internship committee will evaluate the internship paper proposal.* See [Appendix C](#) for more detailed expectations for the proposal.
- ***Filing the Plan of Study, Committee Selection Form, and Graduation Checks.*** Once the committee is assembled, the graduate student is responsible for completing a graduation application and committee selection form with the Graduate School. Failure to do so will delay the student's graduation. A School Plan of Study Form should be completed and submitted to the GPO. (See [Appendix B](#))

The Semester of Graduation

- ***Committee Responsibilities & Duties.*** Again, the primary responsibility lies with the Chair of the committee. The level of participation by committee members in activities such as reading drafts of the internship paper (see [Appendix D](#)), etc. is negotiated between the Chair and the committee members. Students bear the ultimate responsibility for meeting Graduate School deadlines.
- ***Scheduling.*** Typically, in the internship option, the final internship paper is delivered to the advisory committee no later than one week prior to the oral defense. Like other elements of the internship project, the paper is evaluated on a pass/fail basis (See [Capstone Project Pass/Fail Policy](#)).
- ***Oral Defense.*** The oral defense is open to the public. The Advisory Committee Chair is responsible for scheduling the oral defense, reserving a meeting space, and notifying graduate faculty and students of its day/time a minimum of one week in advance.
- ***Evaluating Written Internship Paper and Oral Defense.*** Examinations are pass/fail. Passing requires unanimous approval by all committee members. See [Capstone Exam Pass/Fail Policy](#) above. Typically, oral examinations are scheduled a minimum of one week before the relevant Graduate School deadline. This time period allows the student time to make corrections made by the committee and/or to respond to concerns raised by the committee during the oral defense.
- ***Submitting Graduate School Forms:*** Students must submit the approval form (Form 8 for internship/nonthesis students) to the Graduate School by the date indicated on the official Graduate School calendar. Failure to do so will delay the student's graduation.

Appendix B: CMJN Graduate Plan of Study Worksheet

Date:	Committee Chair:*
Name:	Committee Member 1:*
User ID:	Committee Member 2:*
Check degree sought: <i>COMM MA</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>COMM Certificate</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	Check Capstone Project Choice: <i>Thesis</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Nonthesis/Internship</i> <input type="checkbox"/>

AU COMM courses: There is a six (6) year time limit for Master's coursework.

Course Title	Prefix / Course #	Sem /Yr	Sem Hours	Grade/ GPO Notes
RQ: Communication Theory	COMM 7000		03	
RQ: Empirical Methods	COMM 7010		03	
RQ: Qualitative Methods	COMM 7020		03	
Elective 1:				
E 2:				
E 3:				
E 4:				
E 5:				
E 6:				
Capstone: Thesis (4 hours) or Internship (3 hours)				
		Total Hours:		

Transfer Courses

(maximum six hours; Must be graduate level communication-related courses; Requests must be submitted to the GPO prior to a student's first semester of graduate course work)

Institution Name	Course Title	Prefix / Course #	Sem / Yr	Sem Hours
				Total Hours:

• **Totaled Credit Hours (AU & Transfer):**

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Your Name (Printed): Signature Date

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Committee Chair Name (Printed)* Signature Date

**applies to 2nd year graduate students only. You must have a faculty member's approval prior to listing them as committee chair or member.*

Appendix C: Internship Paper Proposal Expectations

Students will write an internship paper proposal (5-7 pages excluding title page and references) and submit it to their committee chair for approval and feedback. The proposal paper should ideally be due by the end of the student's third semester but no later than end of the third week of the student's final semester. This paper is a foundational document that outlines the student's research focus, internship goals, and theoretical framework. It must be academically rigorous, well-organized, and demonstrate graduate-level writing proficiency.

The proposal paper should:

1. Clearly articulate the field of interest and identify the industry where the student intends to pursue an internship.
2. Integrate relevant communication theories from the discipline to frame the research and practical application.
3. Serve as a roadmap for the student's internship planning, including research questions and targeted organizations.

Required Components

Introduction: Field of Interest and Industry Overview

1. Define the student's field of interest and provide an overview of the relevant industry.
2. Explain why this field is significant to the student's academic and professional goals.

Literature Review

1. Identify and discuss communication theories, which can include theories covered in coursework and/or theories related to communication not covered in coursework, that relate to the student's field of interest.
2. Explain how these theories have been applied in prior research or industry contexts.
3. Critically analyze relevant literature and describe how these theories could help improve industry practices in the selected field.

Research Questions

1. Develop research questions that will guide the final internship report.
2. Ensure these questions are grounded in the theories from the literature review and focus on analyzing and evaluating communication practices in the internship.

Submission Guidelines

1. The paper must be formatted according to APA standards and reflect graduate-level writing.
2. The paper proposal will only be reviewed by the Advisory Committee Chair for feedback and approval.
3. Revisions, if required, should be completed in a timely manner to meet program deadlines.

This proposal paper is a critical step in the student's academic journey, providing a structured framework for their internship and ensuring alignment with both theoretical and practical aspects of communication practices in their chosen industry.

Appendix D: Internship Paper Expectations

After completing the proposal, students will complete a 20–25-page (excluding title page and references) research-based internship paper that identifies, explains, and evaluates communication practices in their internships. The paper should be academically substantive and analytical; this is not a summary or a reflection. The paper will be reviewed by the full Advisory Committee and will be defended via oral presentation with the Advisory Committee.

The paper should have the following qualities:

Introduction: Field of Interest and Industry Overview

- Define the student's field of interest and provide an overview of the relevant industry.
- Explain why this field is significant to the student's academic and professional goals.

Literature Review

The paper will have a literature review identifying and explaining relevant communication theories. The literature review will:

- Identify and discuss communication theories, which can include theories covered in coursework and/or theories related to communication not covered in coursework, that relate to the student's field of interest.
- Explain how these theories have been applied in prior research or industry contexts.
- Critically analyze relevant literature and describe how these theories could help improve industry practices in the selected field.

Research Questions

- Develop research questions to guide the analysis of the internship communication practices.
- Ensure these questions are grounded in the theories from the literature review and focus on analyzing and evaluating communication practices in the internship.

Analysis & Discussion

- The paper will have an analysis and/or discussion section where the communication practices of the internship are identified and explained considering the theories explained in the literature review.
- The paper will include an assessment of the communication practices of the internship with highlights of strengths and weaknesses and suggestions given for future improvements drawn from the literature review.

Submission Guidelines

- The paper will be between 20-25 pages of text (excluding references and title page), formatted to APA standards, and demonstrate appropriate writing skills for graduate students.
- The paper must be formatted according to APA standards and reflect graduate-level writing.
- The written paper along with its oral defense will be reviewed by the full Advisory Committee for feedback and approval.
- Revisions, if required, should be completed in a timely manner to meet program deadlines.