

# School of Communication & Journalism

## ***Graduate Student & Graduate Teaching Assistant Policy Manual***

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## Part One: Graduate Student Policies

The graduate program in the School of Communication and Journalism (CMJN) is guided by the basic philosophy that the first priority of all graduate students is their education. The following policies are designed to help you achieve academic success.

In addition to School graduate student policies, you should also be familiar with Auburn University's [Graduate School Policies](#). Questions about CMJN graduate student policies should be directed to the Graduate Program Officer or the CMJN School Director. During the graduate student orientation, you will be asked to sign and submit a copy of the Graduate Student Policy Manual Acknowledgement Form (see Appendix D), which will be placed in your School file.

*The School of Communication and Journalism recognizes the importance of both reflecting and teaching diversity. Our policy is intended to be inclusive of all underrepresented groups whatever their race, religion, national origin, gender, age, ability or sexual orientation.*

### Admission-Related Policies

Students may submit their applications to the graduate program at any time during the calendar year. Committee members review applications on a rolling basis starting on January 15, until the cohort is filled (typically 10-15 students). Candidates are encouraged to submit applications as early as possible. Students are accepted to begin the graduate program starting the Fall semester after their acceptance.

Applications for Graduate Teaching Assistantships are evaluated during Spring semester (see the GTA section of this manual as well as Graduate Program website for additional information about GTA expectations as well as application information and deadlines).

Students applying to the program have six months from the date their electronic file is started at the Graduate School (Apply Yourself) to complete their application. After that date, incomplete applications are rejected. Prior to that date, applicants may contact the Graduate Program Officer (GPO) to ask for a six-month extension. In exceptional cases, at the discretion of the GPO, an additional six-month extension is permitted. Similarly, students who are accepted to the program, but do not begin classes within 12 months of being accepted will be removed from the program and must reapply.

Admission decisions are made by the Graduate Program Officer in conjunction with a Graduate Faculty Committee. For specific criteria, please contact the GPO or consult the [CMJN graduate admissions web page](#).

All graduate work toward a graduate certificate or a master's degree must be completed within a period of five calendar years.

*You are expected to familiarize yourself with related Graduate School enrollment and admission policies (e.g., requirements for continuous enrollment, active/inactive status, leave of absence, etc.).*

## **Graduate Program Officer (GPO)**

The graduate program is overseen by the GPO, who is responsible for coordinating graduate applications, planning the graduate course rotation, assisting in School graduate student orientations, making Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) offers, overseeing the assignment of course sections and faculty service, organizing qualifying exams, and monitoring graduate student and GTA adherence to School, Graduate School, and University policies.

## **Mandatory Orientation Sessions**

All graduate students must attend **mandatory** orientation sessions scheduled at the beginning of every semester. These orientation sessions are typically scheduled the week prior to the beginning of classes. Vacation, work, internship plans, etc. should be scheduled accordingly and are not excuses for nonattendance. Dates for orientation will be sent out by the GPO in advance. Graduate Teaching Assistants have additional meeting requirements (see the GTA section of this manual).

## **Course Registration & Grade Policies**

### ***Required Courses***

All graduate students must take the three required graduate courses – COMM 7000-Communication Theory, COMM 7010-Qualitative Methods of Research, and COMM 7020-Quantitative Methods of Research.

All full-time enrolled students take these classes within the first two semesters of coursework. Part-time students should consult with the GPO about their timeline for taking these courses. If you have additional questions about when to enroll in these classes, please contact the GPO. Additional information on course requirements can be found on the [Communication M.A. graduate school webpage](#).

### ***Registering for Courses***

CMJN graduate courses are taken by students from a variety of fields, while other graduate courses, particularly 6000 level courses, have strict course enrollment maximums. To increase the odds of getting your preferred classes, you should enroll as soon as registration opens each semester. The University Registrar publishes the registration schedule each semester. Outcomes from delays in registration are your responsibility. Do not expect a graduate faculty member to allow you to enroll in a class that has reached capacity or assume that you will be permitted to take non-CMJN courses.

## ***Taking Non-CMJN Graduate Level Courses***

In order to take a non-CMJN class, you must:

1. pass qualifying exams;
2. select your Chair and Advisory Committee members;
3. make a case to the Advisory Committee that the course is significant and relevant to your program (e.g., emailing your Advisory Committee a clear rationale for your course enrollment); and,
4. gain unanimous approval from your Advisory Committee to take the class.

NOTE: In cases where the student has not established a chair or advisory committee, the student will consult with the GPO regarding this decision.

The committee, in consultation with the GPO, will grant approval (or not) for taking the class. With Advisory Committee approval, you may take up to six (6) hours of non-CMJN classes in a closely related area.

## ***Taking CMJN Directed Study Courses***

Directed studies courses allow you to work with CMJN faculty to create a course on a topic of interest that is not already addressed in any of the offered courses or in non-CMJN courses. Graduate students are rarely allowed to take an directed study class. The guidelines for taking an directed study course are the same as for taking a non-CMJN graduate course. Only one directed study class may be approved for your M.A. program plan of study.

## ***Good Standing and Graduate GPA (GGPA) Requirements***

Students must maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative GGPA to remain in good standing at Auburn University and avoid academic probation. In addition, GTAs whose overall GGPA drops below a 3.0 will automatically lose their funding and will be placed on academic probation. *Students who receive notice from the Graduate School that they are on academic probation must notify the GPO immediately in order to learn about the procedures for continuing in the program.* Visit the Graduate School website for additional information. Additional GGPA requirements for qualifying exams and capstone courses are outlined below. Students should also review the graduate school GGPA requirements as outlined in the [AU Bulletin](#).

## ***Incomplete Grades Policy***

Incomplete grades are awarded only for exceptional circumstances and should be negotiated in advance of the last day of classes. Once an incomplete grade has been negotiated you have until the end of the 10th day of classes in the next term (including Summer semester) to turn in all work. If you miss this deadline, your final grade will be computed with a zero credit for all missed work, and this grade will be reported to the registrar.

## Advising Policies

The GPO acts as the advisor for all graduate students until they pass qualifying exams and have assembled their Advisory Committee. Students should plan to choose their advisory committee after they have taken qualifying exams, typically at the end of the first year of study for full time graduate students.

The Advisory Committee is composed of a minimum of three graduate faculty members, including the Chair. In the School of Communication & Journalism, this committee can only be composed of members of the CMJN Graduate faculty unless approved by the GPO or School Director. The committee approves the student's graduation application, conducts required examinations, and evaluates a student's capstone project.

### ***Choosing Advisory Committee Members & Chair***

After passing qualifying exams, students should establish their Advisory Committee (consisting of the Chair and two additional Graduate Faculty Members) and complete a Plan of Study, which can be found in the Appendix of this document. The Plan of Study should be submitted to the GPO and the Advisory Committee Chair as soon as possible following the successful completion of qualifying exams, but no later than the end of the second week of the following Fall semester.

1. 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.
2. Students should first approach the graduate faculty member that they would like to serve as their Advisory Committee Chair. At this meeting, students will discuss their interests and the appropriateness of the thesis and internship options. If the student has compatible academic goals and interests and the faculty agrees to serve as their Chair, then the student and their Chair will collaborate to develop a list of other appropriate graduate faculty members to serve on the student's Advisory Committee. It is the student's responsibility to contact these faculty members to see if they are interested and/or able to serve on the Advisory Committee.
3. The GPO can help students identify potential Advisory Committee Members when students are unsure of which faculty to consider.
4. Please note that graduate faculty balance several service and work requirements and are not obligated to serve on all committees. Faculty may decline a student's invitation to be on their advisory committee. 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. As such, students should seek out graduate faculty for their committee as early as possible after completing their qualifying exams.

***Once you have assembled your committee, you should complete and submit your Plan of Study to the Graduate School. (See Appendix B).***

# Graduate Program Student Examinations

## ***Qualifying Exams***

Graduate students take qualifying exams immediately after successful completion of the program's required courses: COMM 7000 (Communication Theory), COMM 7010 (Qualitative Methods), and COMM 7020 (Quantitative Methods).

Eligibility requirements to take Qualifying Exams:

- Students earning a "C" in two or more required courses are ineligible to take qualifying exams.
- Students earning a "D" in any required course are ineligible to take qualifying exams.
- Students who are not in good standing with the graduate school at the end of their second semester of course work are ineligible to take qualifying exams (i.e., have less than a 3.0 GGPA).

The exam consists of three sections/subject areas (2 hours for each), given over the course of one day at the University's testing center, totaling 6 hours total. A 30-60 minute break will occur between each exam. All students take the same exam at the same time. The order of the exams is determined by the GPO. Additional university testing center information can be found the Biggio Center [website](#). Exams are administered electronically on testing center computers.

Students with testing accommodations should contact the GPO well in advance of qualifying exams to coordinate a schedule. Students who have not established accommodations through the Office of Accessibility but need accommodations can make an appointment with the Office of Accessibility, 1228 Haley Center (334-844-2096). You can find more information on their [website](#): <https://accessibility.auburn.edu/students/academic-accommodations>

## **Qualifying Exam Process:**

1. ***Exam Schedule.*** The qualifying exam is given one day at the end of Spring semester, typically 1-3 days after final exams are completed. The GPO will announce the date of exams each spring semester. All eligible graduate students are required to take the exam together at the same time unless they have an accommodation as outlined above.
2. ***Exam Criteria and Evaluators.*** The exam is written and evaluated by the Qualifying Exam Committee, which typically consists of the faculty who teach the required classes (COMM 7000, 7010, 7020). If one of these professors is not available, the GPO will evaluate the exams or appoint a substitute. The GPO will administer the exams such that evaluators will not know whose exam they are reviewing. However, students might be identifiable based on their response (e.g., if asked a question that describes research interests). Students are not allowed to see their qualifying exams after they have submitted them for evaluation.

- a. ***Exams are evaluated on a Pass/Fail basis.***
  - b. ***You must pass all three sections of the exam.***
3. ***Communicating with Evaluators.*** Communication about the exam process is *only* allowed with the GPO and should be conducted via email. Thus, questions should be directed to the GPO. Do not contact evaluators directly unless it is to ask for clarification of some aspect of your notes, readings, etc.
4. ***Notification of Status.*** You will be notified via email of your performance within 24-36 hours of taking the exam.
5. ***Successful Completion of Qualifiers.*** Students seeking a master's degree who pass the qualifying exams will be allowed to create their graduate Advisory Committee and proceed with their course work, including the capstone project. Students seeking a graduate certificate must successfully complete 18 hours of course work (including the required classes) and pass qualifying exams.
6. ***Failing all or part of the Exam.*** Students failing *all three* sections of the exam will be removed from the program.

The following process applies to students who fail one or two sections of the exam:

- a. You will be allowed to retake the exam by revising the relevant section or sections.
    - i. The date and time for "Retakes" is scheduled by the GPO; normally within 48 hours of the original qualifying exam.
    - ii. Students have one hour (per section) to revise their original question response.
    - iii. Students are typically notified of Retake results within 36-48 hours.
    - iv. Students failing a section again after retaking the exam may appeal the failing review within one week of notification of failure. (See appeals process below).
    - v. Students passing all three sections of the exam after their Retakes will be considered as passing and will remain in good standing.
  - b. The GPO will inform students who fail their Retake(s) that they cannot continue their studies within the CMJN graduate program and that they are being dropped from the program. Graduate Teaching Assistants who fail all or part of Qualifying Exams after the Retake process will have their GTA rescinded.
  7. ***Appeals Process.*** Students who fail all or part of the Retake exam may appeal. The following process applies:

- a. The student must notify the GPO by email within one week (five working days) of receiving notification of failure of all or part of their Qualifying Exam that they are appealing the results of the exam.
  - b. An ad hoc committee is appointed by the GPO and composed of three (3) Graduate faculty members other than those who initially evaluated the qualifying exams.
  - c. This Committee will review the sections of the Exam that the student failed, evaluating it on a Pass/Fail basis. The Committee's decision is final. The student is notified as soon as possible of the committee's decision.
8. ***Reinstatement Process.*** Students who fail qualifiers and have been notified they will be dropped from the CMJN graduate program can petition to remain in it using the appeals process procedures. The petition will be reviewed using those same procedures, outlined above. Reinstatement occurs only if, in the committee's judgment, extraordinary circumstances adversely affected a student's progress.
  - a. If the petition is granted, the student will be placed on School probation.
  - b. Before taking any additional CMJN graduate courses, they will be required to take the class associated with the failed section again, at the earliest offering. No other class may be substituted. The student is required to take the relevant portion of the qualifying exam again at the end of that semester and pass it.
  - c. In these circumstances, there are no appeals or Retakes of the exam. Failure of the exam will result in the student being dropped from the program.

### ***Capstone Project***

All students seeking the master's degree must pass a capstone project prior to graduation.

Eligibility requirements to enroll in a Capstone Project (thesis or nonthesis):

1. Students must have successfully passed Qualifying Exams.
2. Students must be good standing with the graduate school at the beginning of the semester they enroll in the capstone course (i.e., have a 3.0 or higher GGPA).

***Thesis Option.*** In the thesis option, you will engage in a (1) thesis proposal, (2) a written thesis and (3) an oral defense of the written thesis.

1. **Thesis Proposal:** The thesis option begins with a written thesis proposal and oral defense of the proposal. Consult with your Advisory Committee Chair and Committee Members for specific guidelines on this process. The written thesis proposal should be due and orally defended ideally by the end of the student's third semester but no later than the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the student's final semester.

2. **Thesis Project & Paper:** Once approved, students build on the proposal and work on the thesis paper. The thesis constitutes the written portion of the capstone project, covering your program of study as well as your research interests.
  - a. The Advisory Committee Chair will serve as the primary contact for working on the thesis project and paper.
  - b. Once the written thesis has been completed, all Advisory Committee members will review the written portion of the project prior to the thesis oral defense.
  - c. The student and the Advisory Committee Chair, in coordination with the Advisory Committee members, should plan the deadlines for the written thesis project at the beginning of each semester. These deadlines should take into consideration the Auburn University Graduate School deadlines to ensure timely completion of the thesis project prior to graduation as well as Advisory Committee Member schedules to ensure the committee has sufficient time to review the written thesis prior to the oral defense. At least one week should be scheduled between the time written paper is completed and the oral defense occurs to allow for adequate time for evaluation. Exceptions to this policy can be made with unanimous approval of advisory committee members and the GPO.
3. **Thesis Oral Defense:** The thesis oral defense will take place following the written portion of the project and will last two hours. The oral defense begins with a brief presentation of the written portion of the project. Following the presentation, the student will respond to questions from their Advisory Committee. In instances where the Advisory Committee determines the final oral defense is not satisfactory, the Committee may also require a separate written examination. The thesis defense is open to graduate faculty and students, who may attend any oral defense as visitors. The Advisory Committee chair will notify the Graduate faculty and students of the time and place of the student's oral defense at least one week prior to the defense date.

***Internship (Non-Thesis) Option.*** The internship (non-thesis) option involves successful completion of the internship, along with (1) a written research-based internship paper proposal, (2) a written research-based internship paper, and (3) oral defense of the written internship paper.

1. **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.
2. **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. [Appendix F](#) includes more detailed expectations for the internship proposal paper. The internship paper proposal should ideally be due by the end of the student's third semester but no later than the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

3. **Internship Paper**: Once the proposal is approved, students build on the proposal and work on the internship paper. The paper constitutes the written portion of 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. [Appendix G](#) includes more detailed expectations 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 and the Advisory Committee Chair, in coordination with the Advisory Committee members, should plan the deadlines for the written internship paper at the beginning of the student's final semester. These deadlines should take into consideration the Auburn University Graduate School deadlines to ensure timely completion of the paper prior to graduation as well as Advisory Committee Member schedules to ensure the committee has sufficient time to review the written paper prior to the oral defense. At least one week should be scheduled between the time written paper is completed and the oral defense occurs to allow for adequate time for evaluation. Exceptions to this policy can be made with unanimous approval of advisory committee members and the GPO.
4. **Internship Paper Oral Defense**: The internship paper oral defense will take place following the written portion of the project and will last two hours. The oral defense begins with a brief presentation of the written portion of the project. Following the presentation, students will respond to questions from their Advisory Committee. In instances where the Advisory Committee determines the final oral defense is not satisfactory, the Committee may also require a separate written examination.

***NOTE: It is important that you and your internship supervisors are aware of and willing to schedule your work schedule around the assigned your oral defense schedule. The oral defense may be in person or via Zoom. The student will work to schedule a mutually agreeable time with Committee members.***

### ***Scheduling Written and Oral Defense***

You will work with your Advisory Committee Chair and Members to schedule your **oral defense** at a mutually agreeable time in keeping with CMJN policies and the Graduate School calendar. Failure to complete the exams by the listed [Graduate School deadline](#) will delay graduation.

For both thesis and internship options, the Advisory Committee Chair schedules and organizes the oral defense. In the event that your Advisory Committee Chair is unavailable to fulfill these duties, a member of your Advisory Committee will. Direct questions about the process to your Advisory Committee Chair (or to your Advisory Committee members if the Chair is not available).

### ***Passing the Capstone Project***

Successful completion of your capstone project requires the unanimous support of all members of the Advisory Committee.

### ***Failing the Capstone Project***

If you fail any part of the project, a reexamination may be given on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee and approval by the Dean of the Graduate School. The re-examination will be scheduled for the next semester. Further reexaminations will only be granted under *exceptional* circumstances with unanimous approval of the student's Advisory Committee and approval of Auburn University's Graduate Council. Failure may result in additional graduate school fees and costs and may also delay graduation. The student is responsible for these costs. Students should consult with the graduate school.

## **Graduation Requirements**

One term before you plan to graduate, you must fill out your [Graduation Application](#) (under AU Access, on My Academics). It is your responsibility to track and meet all [Graduate School deadlines](#) and requirements. Contact the graduate school if you have any questions about meeting requirements and deadlines.

# **Student Behavior and Communication Policies**

## ***Communicating with Faculty***

Your professors will frequently use your Auburn email address to communicate class assignments and other messages to you. Email is the University's official form of communication. You are expected to check it at least once each business day and to respond to professor inquiries within one business day of receiving a message.

## ***Using Social Media***

No electronic posting should ever be considered truly confidential and/or private. Carefully consider what comments, photographs, etc. you post. Offhanded remarks and inappropriate photos may reflect badly on you and/or the graduate program, the School, and the university. The classroom environment should support the intellectual exchange of ideas. Postings about peer or professor comments in class may negatively affect the exchange of ideas and overall class environment. CMJN graduate policy requires that you obtain permission from faculty and your peers prior to posting photographs, personal commentary, etc.

## ***Interacting with Faculty, Staff & Colleagues***

Professionalism and respect are the key elements of interactions with colleagues, CMJN staff, and with faculty. All personnel must adhere to University policies, including policies concerning bias, harassment, and romantic relationships. Sexual harassment and related policies are available on the Title IX [website](#). Information on policies and reporting other discriminatory incidents may be reviewed at the BERT [website](#).

## ***General Class Policies***

As advanced communication scholars, you are expected to attend class, be prepared and on time, make substantive contributions to class discussion, meet assignment requirements, etc. It is important that you speak with employers regarding class schedules. Missing class for a work-related reason is not an excused absence or a reason for submitting assignments late.

## ***Related University Policies***

You are expected to abide by the University's [Code of Student Conduct](#). The Code is also designed to protect you when your rights have been violated. You should familiarize yourself with this document as well as policies outlined in the AU student Handbook, [Student Policy eHandbook](#). The [Office of Student Conduct \(OSC\)](#) is responsible for the administration of the AU Code of Student Conduct.

Students will also abide by University policy's regarding harassment. As outlined in the [AU Bulletin](#), "harassment in academic settings and in the employment arena where students are involved is defined as: Conduct (physical, verbal, graphic, written, or electronic) that is (1) unwelcome; (2) discriminatory on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability; (3) directed at an individual or group in one of the protected classes outlined in this policy; and (4) so severe or pervasive and objectively offensive that it unreasonably interferes with the victim's ability to participate in or to realize the intended

benefits of an institutional activity, opportunity, or resource, unreasonably interferes with the victim's work or living environment, or deprives the victim of some other protected right.

As noted in the AU Bulletin, also notes that "Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is prohibited by federal regulation. Sexual harassment in academic settings and in the employment area where students are involved is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, graphic or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct may be explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a student's academic success or employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct may be used as the basis for employment or academic decisions affecting the student and the student's total educational and/or work experience, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with a student's employment or academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or educational environment that is severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive."

### ***Handling Problems***

As noted above, *all* students and university personnel must adhere to University policies including policies concerning harassment and romantic relationships.

If you are having problems interacting with a student, colleague, faculty member, or other university personnel or if you feel your rights have been violated, you should contact the GPO or School Director immediately, follow the directions outlined in the Code of Student Conduct, and contact the Office of Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity in 317 James E. Foy Hall, or call (334) 844-4794 between 7:45 a.m. and 4:45 p.m., Monday through Friday. Incidents may also be reported through the Title IX and BERT websites.

***If you feel your safety is threatened, you should contact law enforcement immediately.***

Finally, it is important that you be proactive. ***Any questions or concerns regarding the appropriateness of your own or another's behavior should be directed to the GPO or School Director immediately.*** These individuals, rather than your peers (i.e., other graduate students/GTAs) are most qualified to help you.

### ***Academic Honesty***

Because some students in the past have expressed confusion as to what may constitute plagiarism, you will be given a copy of the School plagiarism policy to read and sign (see Appendix C). You should also review the *Student Policy eHandbook*'s Academic Honesty Code prior to signing this form. The signed copy will be placed in your School file.

Academic honesty goes beyond plagiarism to include issues such as misrepresentation of authorship, fabrication of research, allowing others to submit work from classes previously taken, submitting the same paper to two separate assignments (self-plagiarism), etc. You should review the AU Student Policy eHandbook to familiarize yourself with your personal rights as well as the penalties of academic misconduct.

## **Part Two: Graduate Teaching Assistant Policies**

As noted previously, the policies concerning the graduate program in the School of Communication and Journalism (CMJN) are guided by the basic philosophy that the first priority of all graduate students is their education. This principle is especially important in balancing educational requirements with a Graduate Teaching Assistantship. CMJN faculty believe that if a graduate student, for any reason, has difficulty balancing course work and GTA responsibilities, then it is in the best interest of the student to discontinue the GTA position in order to focus on their education.

### ***Graduate Program Officer & Basic Course Director***

The graduate program is overseen by the GPO. The GPO works closely with the COMM 1000/ Basic Course Director (BCD) with the goal of maintaining the highest pedagogical standards for GTAs teaching COMM 1000 (or assisting with other School courses), while at the same time striving to attain the highest educational standards for undergraduates enrolled in School courses. The GPO, aided by the BCD, is responsible for planning the graduate course rotation, assisting in School graduate student orientations, and overseeing all academic related matters of the graduate program. The GPO is also responsible for tendering GTA offers, overseeing GTA sections and service assignments, and monitoring graduate student and GTA adherence to School and Graduate School GTA policies.

Generally, the Basic Course Director oversees all teaching related duties associated with COMM 1000, including teaching orientations, GTA assignments and reassignments, evaluations, and other related duties. Questions regarding teaching should be directed first to the BCD, then to the GPO if the Director is unavailable.

### ***Defining the Role of GTAs***

In the first year of your GTAsip, your primary role is to observe teaching methods in the courses so that you can build your skills as you train to become instructors of record in your second year. Most GTAs observe and assist with COMM 1000: Public Speaking, although some may assist with other large lecture courses. Whatever the class, your primary role is to observe. In COMM 1000, you are typically required to lecture 2-3 times over the course of the semester to support your teaching development. Evaluations of your presentation are conducted by the class instructor with feedback provided during midterm evaluations with the BCD. During the second semester, GTAs also engage in mock-grading of speeches and attend mandatory training sessions with the BCD. Most second year GTAs are assigned as an instructor of record teaching COMM 1000. Failure to follow class guidelines, as established by the class instructor, will be reported to the Basic Course Director and the GPO. Additional policies are outlined in the COMM 1000 policy manual.

## ***Eligibility***

Graduate teaching assistantships (GTA) are available on a competitive basis. As noted on the [Graduate School website](#), “All international graduate teaching assistants are required to submit evidence of satisfactory speaking skills. This can be demonstrated with a score of 23 or higher on the Speaking Section of the Internet-based TOEFL (iBT), or a score of 7 on the Speaking section of the IELTS, or a score of 4.5 and above in the Speaking section of the iTEP (which replaced the SPEAK test), which is administered at Auburn University prior to the start of classes. A student may be asked to enroll in a course designed to improve the oral communication skills of international teaching assistants.” To be eligible for a teaching assistantship from their first semester, international students must successfully pass an official interview conducted by GPO and the BCD.

## ***Application Process***

Assistantships are awarded on the basis of the undergraduate GPA, letters of recommendation, the applicant's Statement of Purpose, GTA application form, and an interview. Additional Graduate School requirements can be found on the following Graduate School [webpage](#): Assistantships can only be awarded after a student has completed their Graduate School application and identified Communication as his or her graduate program. *All GTAs are subject to pass a University background check.*

## ***Basic Duties***

Graduate teaching assistants observe the courses they are assigned to, maintain office hours, perform service assignments, and must be enrolled in nine (9) graduate credit course hours in the School of Communication & Journalism per semester. After 18 hours, they may be eligible to teach courses on their own.

## ***Mandatory GTA Orientation***

GTAs are required to attend all GTA orientation sessions scheduled at the beginning of every semester. Vacation, work, internship plans, etc. are not excuses for nonattendance. The GPO/BCD will notify GTAs of orientation days. *Nonattendance may result in revoking an assistantship.*

# **Enrollment Related Policies**

## ***GTA Minimum Course Enrollment***

GTAs are required to be enrolled in nine (9) graduate course hours every semester except their final semester in which they are enrolled in their capstone project. A GTA will immediately lose their assistantship if the GTA withdraws from a course during a semester and their total number of graduate course hours drops below this minimum. A loss of an assistantship has financial repercussions: The Graduate School will withdraw the university paid tuition and the graduate student will be responsible for all tuition charges for that semester. This rule is in effect until the last day of classes for each semester.

## ***GTA Service Assignments***

In addition to teaching duties, GTAs also provide five (5) hours of research/service assistance (RA) to School faculty each week of the semester (approximately 75 hours over the entire semester). On rare occasions, you may be assigned to special service projects requiring more than five (5) hours weekly. In such circumstances, your teaching duties will be reduced to adjust for this additional service time. Keep in mind the following about your RA duties:

1. You will receive your service assignment the first week of the semester. You should contact your professor immediately upon receiving your assignment. Delaying contact will not reduce your weekly assignment.
2. You will contact your assigned professor at least once a week to provide updates on project progress and to check for additional duties.
3. You are expected to finish tasks in a timely manner, providing explanations for delays, etc.
4. Your RA service is evaluated at the end of the semester and the evaluation is submitted to the GPO. Evaluations are used to make decisions regarding continued GTA funding for the next semester and when assessing Summer semester teaching eligibility. (See appendix for sample evaluation form)
5. If your RA service exceeds five hours weekly, you should contact your assigned professor and, if appropriate, the GPO.

## ***GTA Funding & Compensation***

Graduate assistantships provide a nine-month stipend plus University-Paid Tuition (GTAs must pay semester fees, books, etc.).

Graduate Teaching Assistantships are awarded on a semester-by-semester basis, and reappointments are not guaranteed. The longstanding university policy on graduate assistantships states that: “Graduate teaching assistant appointments are temporary. Continuation for future terms depends upon availability of funds, levels of enrollment, and teaching needs.”

The BCD is responsible for conducting and reviewing midsemester and end of semester teaching evaluations of GTAs and Instructors. Good evaluations are necessary for a continued appointment.

Your overall performance is evaluated by the GPO at the end of each semester. You will be considered for reappointment at that time. Evaluations are based on: (1) performance in the classes you take and (2) graduate teaching and research (RA) assignment evaluation. You will receive notification from the GPO prior to the end of final exams regarding your status. First year GTAs must also successfully complete qualifying exams in order to continue their appointments into their second year (see above).

## ***Factors Affecting GTA Continuation/Funding***

A number of situations may lead to the loss of your Graduate Assistantship. A brief list is presented below:

- Lack of funding for the position. All GTA appointments are contingent upon final approval of the School budget.
- Enrollment in fewer than nine (9) graduate class hours in any semester except the final capstone semester.
- Dropping a class during the semester resulting in less than nine (9) class hours.
- Missing the mandatory pre-semester orientation session.
- Violation of stated graduate student or graduate teaching assistant policies.
- Failure to maintain the minimum cumulative 3.0 GGPA.
- Failure to receive favorable teaching and/or research (RA) evaluations.
- Failure to successfully fulfill other School assignments.
- Ineffective/inappropriate communication with undergraduate students in a classroom setting.
- Engaging in inappropriate personal relationships with undergraduate students.
- Failure to adhere to the COMM 1000 common syllabus or policies outlined in the COMM 1000 Policy Manual.
- Failure to attend and excessive tardiness to classes you take and/or are assigned to assist.

## ***Funding While Working on Thesis/Internship***

The GTA must enroll in a minimum of nine (9) graduate credit course hours, unless the student is in her or his final semester and taking Thesis or Internship credits. Failure to maintain good progress toward program completion, such as failing qualifying or comprehensive exams, or taking course loads of less than nine (9) credit hours, also will result in loss of the assistantship.

## ***Funding Time Limitations***

Typically, GTA funding is for four semesters, excluding the Summer semester. Only in the rarest of circumstances may funding be extended, and then for only one semester. GTAs seeking a one semester extension of their funding should speak with the GPO at the beginning of the semester prior to the term for which they are seeking the additional funding (e.g., at the beginning of Spring semester if seeking funding for Fall semester). Funding is provided based on availability.

## ***Summer GTA Funding***

***Summer teaching is not guaranteed.*** Teaching assignments are limited, competitive, and determined by several criteria including budget, availability, demand, grades, service work, performance, and behavior. There is no service work in the summer. Students awarded a Summer GTA will typically teach one, sometimes two class sections.

***Note:*** Faculty with research grants or contracts may hire students to assist with their research projects. This funding may be awarded to CMJN GTAs and nonGTAs. While this type of RA work is considered separate and apart from the COMM 1000 assistantship, it and other university employment may affect the number of hours a student may work.

## GTA Communication

### **Mailboxes**

All GTAs must check their School mailboxes at least twice per week during the official university semesters in which they are employed. The mailing address is School of Communication and Journalism, 232 Tichenor Hall, Auburn University, AL 36849-5211.

### **Email**

Email is the University's official form of communication. You are expected to check your email daily during the semester. You should respond to emails concerning your teaching and research assignments by the next business day. Loss of university email privileges will result in revocation of the GTA.

### **Social Media**

In addition to the social media policies stated earlier in this manual, you are expected to follow all stated social media policies outlined in the COMM 1000 policy manual.

## **GTA Office Hours**

GTAs are required to keep a minimum of three (3) office hours each week of the semester in the GTA office. The GTA should provide this schedule to students, the BCD, and the GPO, and School administrative staff the first week of each semester. Office hours should be publicly posted on your office door by the first day of classes. Permission to hold office hours in another location must be cleared with the BCD in advance, and the GPO and the School administrative staff should be notified by email as soon as the change is approved.

## **GTA Office Assignments**

The School supplies GTAs with a communal office. University and School policies should be followed when using office space and university computers. When possible, all GTAs are assigned their own desk or cubical space. When this is not possible, the BCD will make space assignments. GTAs are expected to share these resources with one another and make allowances for each other's use. As a group, GTAs are responsible for maintaining a professional workspace. The GTA office is only for GTAs and no other student, faculty, or staff is allowed to share the office space. All communication that occurs within the communal office – verbal, written, etc. – will be conducted in a professional manner.

## **GTA Office Facilities**

University personnel aid in protecting university facilities, particularly after hours, holidays, and weekends (especially football game days/weekends). GTAs are expected to check all doors and windows to ensure that they are locked when they enter or leave a closed building, classroom, office, or lab. Likewise, GTAs are restricted from allowing unauthorized individuals into buildings when they are closed. The university requires employees to keep all doors locked and may hold a GTA responsible for damage in a closed building if that GTA was careless in keeping the space secure. ***The GTA office should be kept locked anytime no one is in the office to supervise the space.*** Undergraduates are not allowed in the GTA office or lab unsupervised.

## GTA Reprimands and Dismissals

All GTA infractions of University and School policies are referred to the appropriate individual, usually the School Director or GPO, or university office (e.g., Title IX, BERT, HR). The GPO will issue reprimands in accordance with University and School policies. Depending on the severity of the infraction, the reprimand may be verbal or written. It may also require an improvement action plan. The School Director and the GPO may **immediately** dismiss a GTA from their position for inappropriate behavior that warrants dismissal. University and graduate school policy requires GTAs dismissed during the semester to repay all tuition remitted.

The University Bulletin provides additional guidance on graduate assistantships and fellowships at this [link](#). Of particular note are the following two sections:

- Annual Evaluation of Graduate Teaching Assistants and Doctoral Students
- Graduate Assistant Performance Improvement and Administrative Action Policy

## GTA Behavior Policies

### ***General Policy***

As stated in the introduction to this manual, the School of Communication and Journalism recognizes the importance of both reflecting and teaching diversity. School policies are intended to be inclusive of all underrepresented and minority groups whatever their race, religion, national origin, gender, age, ability, or sexual orientation per CMJN's Diversity Statement outlined in the beginning of this manual. GTAs will abide by all Student Behavior Policies outlined this manual, in the COMM 1000 policy manual, as well as all University employee related policies.

Beyond following all University and School policies, *GTAs should always conduct themselves in a professional manner.*

GTAs must maintain the highest level of professional behavior while in the classroom and on campus. A GTA is in the employment of Auburn University whether they are assisting a professor/instructor or independently teaching a course. Therefore, the GTA must adhere to all University policies. Breaches of University policy can result in a variety of consequences ranging from a reprimand to dismissal.

Beyond the University policies, GTAs must maintain professional behavior in all classes. If a GTA is assisting a professor/instructor, then the GTA is expected to perform all tasks assigned by the professor in a timely and professional manner. Further, the GTA should be attentive in the professor's class, take notes, and offer substantive remarks when appropriate. The GTA should not read or do work unrelated to the class during the class meeting. GTAs are role models for undergraduates and as such should be attentive and professional in the classroom. Failure to do so will result in a reprimand. Reprimands may lead to the loss of the GTA position.

You should be proactive. If you have concerns or questions regarding the appropriateness of your own or another's behavior, you should contact the GPO, BCD or School Director immediately. These individuals, rather than your peers (i.e., other graduate students/GTAs), are most qualified to help you address these questions/concerns. If problems do arise, review the section on Handling Problems presented under [Student Behaviors](#) in this manual.

## ***Interacting with Students***

Many of you are friends with, date, or have family members that are undergraduates at this university. While we do not wish to be involved in your personal affairs, there are instances where you should make this information known to the GPO, the BCD, and instructor you are working with ***immediately*** to develop a plan of action for avoiding a compromising situation:

- If a roommate, personal friend, or family member is taking a COMM 1000 course or a course you are assisting in.
- If a family member, roommate, close friend, or significant other is registered for a class you teach.
- If you are involved with large groups of undergraduate students outside of class (i.e. fraternities, sororities, undergraduate clubs, etc.).
- If you are working in a job in addition to your GTA that brings you into frequent contact with undergraduate students (e.g., bartending, restaurant serving, salesclerk, etc.).

***NOTE: You are not allowed to have an intimate or romantic relationship with undergraduate students who are enrolled in the courses in which you are a GTA.***

*See also Appendix A: [Tips for Maintaining a Professional Distance/Relationship with Students.](#)*

## ***Professional Appearance***

As you accept the responsibilities of your new Graduate Teaching Assistant positions, it is important to understand the need for dressing professionally in the classroom and during office hours. You may be very close in age to the students you will be teaching, and dressing professionally can help establish your classroom credibility and set you apart from undergraduate students. While more casual dress is acceptable when attending the classes you are enrolled in, please keep in mind that in situations where you will interact with your undergraduate students (e.g., teaching, office hours), you should dress in business casual attire.

Business casual attire can include: dress pants and skirts, jackets and blazers, vests, dark jeans, sweaters and cardigans, button down shirts, ties, and more. Clothing to avoid includes distressed jeans, athletic wear, flip-flops, and anything that is too revealing or too short. Auburn's [Career Closet](#) can provide you with up to four free professional attire items (e.g., suits, blazers, skirts, button-down shirts) every academic year.

In the unlikely case you wear something that is inappropriate for class, please note that you may receive a communication to this effect (usually from the BCD or GPO). This is not done to embarrass you, but to help you develop an understanding of what is appropriate dress for GTAs in the classroom context.

## **Appendix A: Maintaining a Professional Relationship with Students\***

### ***Establishing Credibility***

1. Ask students to address you formally (e.g., Mr./Mrs./Ms./Mx.) and begin this pattern on the first day, e.g., “I’m Lindsey Smith, your instructor, and you can call me Ms. Smith”). Repeat this pattern if you refer to other instructors to your students and use their formal title.
2. Sharing who you are with students can make them feel connected to you, but in general, you do not want to overshare or share too many personal details that would compromise a professional boundary or make students feel uncomfortable. For example, if students ask about your weekend plans, you might share that you are going to the Auburn game. That information is about you but not too personal or too detailed.
3. When/if working as a TA or with a teaching team, ensure the teaching team is on the same page. Any questions or concerns you have about the course material should be professionally addressed with the instructor of record. For example, if a student approaches you complaining about their grade from the instructor of record, you should refer them to the instructor and avoid commenting on your thoughts of the instructor’s grading to the student directly.

### ***Ensuring Consistency***

4. For all courses, ensure policies are applied equally (e.g., if one student can get an extension for nonmedical reasons, all students should be able to). If you are teaching COMM 1000, you should abide by the policies set forth in the COMM 1000 training manual and the Basic Course Director.
5. Treat students equally. This applies not only to your course policies but also to your interpersonal interactions. For example, if you greet one student each morning, try to greet each one.

### ***Establishing Mutual Respect***

6. Arrive to class promptly and ensure your materials for the day are well organized. Arriving on time and presenting an organized class communicates to students that you respect their time and the learning environment.

### ***Maintaining Professional Distance***

7. You should not socially hang out with students who are enrolled in your courses. If you see a student outside of your course, you can politely and professionally greet them as you would a colleague. For example, if you see your students in a social setting, such as a bar or a gym, and they approach you, simply say hello and keep moving to avoid any compromise of the professional boundary.

## Appendix B: CMJN Graduate Plan of Study Worksheet

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Committee Chair:*</b>		
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Committee Member 1:*</b>		
<b>User ID:</b>	<b>Committee Member 2:*</b>		
<b>Check degree sought:</b> COMM MA <input type="checkbox"/> COMM Certificate <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Check Capstone Project Choice:</b> Thesis <input type="checkbox"/> Nonthesis/Internship <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:				
<b>Capstone:</b> Thesis (4 hours) or Internship (3 hours)				
		<b>Total Hours:</b>		

### 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
				<b>Total Hours:</b>

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

## Appendix C:

### Sample Graduate Student Research/Service Evaluation Form

Graduate Student \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Member \_\_\_\_\_ Semester/Year \_\_\_\_\_

Service Assignment: \_\_\_\_\_ EX: Lab Assistant/Research Assistant, etc.

This form is to serve as a written evaluation for the performance of the graduate student indicated above. It is to be filled out by the faculty mentor who accepts responsibility for setting the objectives of the rotation, and who directs the student during her/his service assignment.

#### General Assessment

Please assess the performance of the student in the following areas.

	Unsatisfactory/ Substantial Improvement Needed	Marginal/ Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Exemplary/ Greatly Exceeds Expectations	N/A
Dependability & Commitment	1	2	3	4	5	
Research Ability	1	2	3	4	5	
Willingness to Learn	1	2	3	4	5	
Interpersonal Skills	1	2	3	4	5	
Time Management (met deadlines)	1	2	3	4	5	
Communication w/Faculty Mentor (was proactive, timely response to emails , etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	

Please provide specific comments for the following areas:

1. Performance relative to level of education and experience, overall effort:
2. Student's commitment, enthusiasm, initiative, and drive.
3. Did the student spend adequate time to accomplish research goals (5 hours/weekly).
4. Please identify the student's strengths
5. What areas does the student need to address/work on; particularly note areas the GPO should be aware of and/or address with the student?

Please rate the student's *overall* performance this semester:

Excellent \_\_\_\_\_ Very Good \_\_\_\_\_ Good \_\_\_\_\_ Average \_\_\_\_\_ Poor \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to work with this student again in the future: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Policy on Originality of Student Work

All written or oral work submitted for credit must be the product of each student's individual effort. The learning process involves making one's own mistakes, then discovering the principles involved as well as ways to avoid, similar mistakes in the future. As a part of the process of preparing a piece of original work for final evaluation, it is acceptable to receive informal assistance, such as asking another student to review your work and make constructive suggestions about its structure and/or content or proofread a paper for typographical errors.

It is unacceptable to receive any substantive help, such as having another person write or rewrite your paper or to collaborate with someone (share information, outlines, or other research) on a paper you are expected to write by yourself. When you receive such help, you are engaging in academic misconduct.

It is also unacceptable for students to engage in self-plagiarism. Self-plagiarism refers to the practice of turning in all or part of an assignment completed for one class to fulfill assignment requirements in another class. Thesis students sometimes use a research proposal written in a class to develop their thesis—this does NOT count as self-plagiarism.

All portions of the Auburn University Student Academic Honesty code (Title XII) found in the [Student Policy eHandbook](#) will apply to both students who are currently enrolled as well as those who are not (e.g., students applying for admission into the School of Communication and Journalism). All academic honesty violations or alleged violations of the SGA Code of Laws will be reported to the Office of the Provost, which will then refer the case to the Academic Honesty Committee.

You are responsible for knowing what constitutes plagiarism, which is broadly considered “the failure to properly cite sources, which results in taking credit for someone else’s words” (Davis & Lachlan, 2017, p. 72). Plagiarism is academic dishonesty and will not be tolerated in the program. It is important to note that even if plagiarism is accidental, it is still plagiarism.

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- Directly using part or all of another’s work without directly quoting or properly citing the author.
- Paraphrasing another’s work without properly citing the author.
- “Patchwork plagiarism,” which is when “a writer copies material from several writers and rearranges that material with no attempt to acknowledge the original sources” (Northern Illinois University, n.d.). It is essentially a cut-and-paste job of ideas and words that are not your own. Using a wide variety of research materials will help you to avoid patchwork plagiarism.
- Self-plagiarism, which involves submitting part or all of your own work used or produced for a different assignment or course for another course *without* explicit permission from your professor(s).
- Using AI software to write your work for you. Unless explicitly permitted by an instructor, using AI to write your work is prohibited. If permitted, you should still use appropriate source attribution.

The above is not a complete list of the many types of plagiarism. When in doubt, ask your professor! Also, Auburn University’s Writing Center has an array of [resources](#) to support you with enhancing your paraphrasing and writing skills to ensure you avoid plagiarism. We encourage you to review those resources in addition to the Student Policy e-Handbook linked above for more information.

*Note:* If you are considering cheating or plagiarism because you want to earn a certain grade or do not feel you will be able to submit an assignment on time, please reach out instead to your professors to seek support and develop a solution that does not result in cheating or plagiarism. Resorting to cheating and plagiarism is never the answer and can result in serious academic ramifications.

## **Appendix E: Policy Acknowledgement Forms**

### **Graduate Student Policy Manual Acknowledgment**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (printed)

Student Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

*I have read and understood the policies stated in the Auburn University School of Communication and Journalism Graduate Student Policy Manual and agree to abide by them.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Graduate Teaching Assistant Policy Acknowledgment**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (printed)

Student Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

*I have read and understood the policies stated in the Auburn University School of Communication and Journalism Graduate Teaching Assistant Policy Manual and agree to abide by them.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix F: 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 G: 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.