

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

GRADUATE STUDIES

M.A. IN COMMUNICATION

## GRADUATE HANDBOOK

Procedures and Guidelines for  
the M.A. in Communication

2016/2017



**BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY**

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

*Department of Communication*

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## Graduate Program Overview

The Master of Arts in Communication is a two-year graduate program in communication. The program offers graduate students advanced study of communication to understand, critique, and actively engage contemporary interpersonal, organizational, cultural, social, and media-related issues. Graduate student coursework provides a foundation in the broad field of communication and choices of culminating activities allow students to focus their studies and acquire expertise in communication that supports their unique academic, personal, or professional interests.

Graduate faculty work closely with graduate students to support their graduate studies. Graduate students are mentored by a graduate faculty advisor as well as a committee to guide student progress through the program. With the guidance of a graduate faculty advisor and committee, students develop a plan of study that supports their goals as aligned with the diverse field of communication.

The program offers a vibrant intellectual community and supportive graduate culture. While earning a Master's degree in Communication, students choose courses across three interrelated and mutually-supportive areas of study:

- **Relational and Organizational Studies**—explores communication among individuals, groups, and organizations to enhance personal relationships and improve the ways we live and work well with others
- **Critical/Cultural Studies**—critiques social, political, and cultural practices to examine issues of power, difference, and rhetoric in everyday life
- **Media Studies**—examines the cultural and political influences of media to better engage in the production and consumption of news, information, and entertainment in a democratic society

The program encourages students to explore topics in communication aligned with their own interests. The variety of elective courses offered including independent studies, reading and conferences, internship/practicum experiences, as well as the option to take a few courses outside the department provide opportunities to craft a meaningful academic experience that supports students' unique interests and goals.

Graduate major advisors and supervisory committees mentor graduate students through the development and completion of a culminating activity in the form of a thesis, project, or comprehensive exam.

### Graduate Program Mission

The M.A. in Communication at Boise State University provides a quality graduate education in communication. Attending to both the theory and practice of communication, our distinctive graduate program emphasizes the development of engaged scholars, critical thinkers, and communication practitioners through exploration of communication across three interrelated and mutually-supportive areas of study: Relational and Organizational Studies, Critical/Cultural Studies, and Media Studies. The program is committed to encouraging exploration of students' unique interests in communication and offers a variety of culminating experiences to support varied academic or professional goals. Our talented graduate faculty members strive to mentor motivated graduate students toward the development of students' intellectual voice while preparing graduate students for success in doctoral programs, professional careers, and other life endeavors.

### Graduate Program Vision

The M.A. in Communication at Boise State University aspires to be a top Master's of Arts program in Communication in the Western United States recognized for our distinctive curriculum, engaging graduate seminars, supportive mentoring of graduate learning, and graduates well-prepared for continued personal, professional, and academic success.

## Graduate Program Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the M.A. in Communication at Boise State University, students will be able to:

- Describe the breadth of the communication field and demonstrate mastery of an area of content knowledge within the discipline
- Utilize appropriate communication research methods to address important questions or problems associated with communication
- Interpret, articulate, and respond to oral and written arguments in ways that demonstrate successful audience adaption and active listening
- Demonstrate a fluency in communication theories and apply these theories to understand and engage a range of communicative practices
- Communicate effectively in writing
- Apply concepts from communication scholarship to personal, professional, and/or political life
- Identify and recognize taken for granted meanings, assumptions, and ideologies guiding communication in everyday life

## Scholarly and Professional Development

With a focus on both the theory and practice of communication, our graduate program seeks to develop engaged scholars, critical thinkers, and leaders practicing communicative perspectives across a variety of contexts.

### **Developing Engaged Scholars**

Graduate students receive individual mentoring from faculty. Graduate advisors support student development in scholarship, independent research, and writing. Some of our graduates continue their education at top Ph.D. programs across the country.

### **Inspiring Critical Thinkers**

Graduate students explore the ways communication shapes how we come to understand and engage our everyday world. With focused attention to issues of power, difference, and politics, graduate students learn to challenge taken-for-granted ways of knowing and critically examine the complexities of communication, social interaction, and media.

### **Becoming Communication Practitioners**

Graduate students develop as practitioners applying their understanding of communication to engage a variety of contemporary issues. We encourage students to practice communicative perspectives and gain expertise in communication to guide their professional interests, career goals, or life aspirations. Our graduates become engaged communicative practitioners in a wide range of government, non-profit, corporate, and media-related fields.

## Interrelated and Mutually-Supportive Areas of Study

While earning a Master's degree in Communication, students choose courses across three interrelated and mutually-supportive pedagogical areas of study. Representing strengths across our department, graduate students are encouraged to take courses across these areas in support of a thoughtful and informed study of the broad field of communication.

While some graduate students gravitate toward a particular area of interest, taking courses across these areas provides collaborative learning opportunities and supports an inclusive and well-rounded graduate community.

### **Relational and Organizational Studies**

Relational and Organizational Studies courses explore social interaction among individuals, groups, and organizations. Embracing communication as a constitutive practice, courses explore interpersonal relationships, organizational communication, collaborative engagement, discourse and identity formation, as well as communication pedagogy and training. These courses offer students a graduate-level understanding of relationship development and of communication as the essential practice for working and living well with others.

### **Critical/Cultural Studies**

Critical/Cultural Studies courses engage in the critical exploration of social, political, and cultural practices from a communicative perspective. With a focus on power and reflexivity, courses explore critical theories, culture and communication, community and politics, gender and difference, as well as rhetoric and civic engagement. These courses offer students a graduate-level understanding of communication as a power-laden practice permeating everyday social interactions, varied forms of media, and participation in a vibrant public sphere.

### **Media Studies**

Media Studies courses explore the complex role media and media institutions play in society. With a critical focus on the production and consumption of news, information, and entertainment in a democratic society, courses explore media theory and criticism, media and institutions, media power and politics, media law and ethics, and media aesthetics and culture. These courses offer students the opportunity to develop and apply a graduate-level understanding of the cultural and political influences of media.

## Graduate Program Requirements

The M.A. in Communication program requires completion of 31 credits and the successful defense of a culminating activity. With the guidance of graduate faculty advisors and committee members, students develop and pursue a plan of study in communication in support of their unique academic, personal, or professional interests.

Coursework begins with a 7 credit course sequence providing a foundation in communication research methods and the theory and philosophy of communication. An additional graduate seminar provides an introduction to graduate-level study of communication and an opportunity to develop a supportive graduate student cohort. Students take 18 to 21 credits of elective courses to accomplish their specific plan of study. Elective courses develop expertise within and across the areas of Relational and Organizational Communication Studies, Critical/Cultural Studies, and Media Studies.

The program concludes with 3 to 6 credits of a culminating activity in the form of a thesis, a project, or a comprehensive examination. Successful defense of a culminating activity demonstrates graduate expertise in communication. The choice of a culminating activity is made with guidance from a student's graduate advisor and committee. The culminating activity provides graduate students with the opportunity to concentrate and specialize their learning in an area of their particular interest. Topics are often inspired by relevant social issues or problems, can further particular academic or professional goals, and/or can serve as a foundation for pursuing a Ph.D. in Communication or other advanced degree.

### Curricular Requirements for the M.A. in Communication

Core Sequence (7 credits):

- COMM 501 Research Methods (3 credits)
- COMM 505 Communication Theory and Philosophy (3 credits)
- COMM 598 Communication Seminar (1 credit)

Graduate Elective Courses (18 - 21 credits):

- COMM 506 Interpersonal Communication (3 credits)
- COMM 507 Organizational Communication (3 credits)
- COMM 508 Media Theory and Criticism (3 credits)
- COMM 509 Media Law and Ethics (3 credits)
- COMM 510 Communication, Community and Politics (3 credits)
- COMM 511 Critical Theories (3 credits)
- COMM 512 Culture and Communication (3 credits)
- COMM 520 Collaboration and Conflict (3 credits)
- COMM 521 Discourse and Identity (3 credits)
- COMM 522 Communication Pedagogy and Training (3 credits)
- COMM 530 Media, Power, and Politics (3 credits)
- COMM 531 Media and Institutions (3 credits)
- COMM 532 Media Aesthetics and Culture (3 credits)
- COMM 540 Communication, Gender, and Difference (3 credits)
- COMM 541 Rhetoric and Civic Life (3 credits)
- COMM 590 Practicum/Internship (3 - 6 credits)
- COMM 595 Reading and Conference (3 - 6 credits)
- COMM 596 Independent Study (3 - 6 credits)
- COMM 597 Special Topics in Communication (1 - 3 credits)

Graduate Culminating Activity (choose one activity for 3 -6 credits):

- COMM 591 Project (6 credits)
- COMM 593 Thesis (6 credits)
- COMM 690 Master's Comprehensive Examination (3 credits)

## Selection of Major Advisor and Supervisory Committee

Mentoring graduate students is an important part of a quality graduate experience. Graduate students are expected to be guided by a Supervisory Committee while pursuing an M.A. in Communication. A Supervisory Committee is composed of members of the Graduate Faculty charged with the guidance of a graduate student pursuing an M.A. in Communication.

The Supervisory Committee consists of a Major Advisor, who serves as chair of the Supervisory Committee, plus at least two (but no more than four) additional members. The Major Advisor is the primary advisor and mentor for the graduate student and must be a member of the Graduate Faculty with an endorsement to chair a Supervisory Committee. A majority of the Supervisory Committee members must be Graduate Faculty from the Department of Communication. For instance, if you have a Supervisory Committee of three members, at least two members must be Graduate Faculty from the Department of Communication. Similarly, if you have a Supervisory Committee of four or five members, at least three must be Graduate Faculty from the Department of Communication.

In addition to advising graduate students, Supervisory Committees serve as the defense committee for a thesis, project, or comprehensive examination.

Graduate students are responsible for selecting a Major Advisor and Supervisory Committee. The following is the recommended process of selecting a Major Advisor and Supervisory Committee:

- In the first semester in the program, graduate students are encouraged to meet with Graduate Faculty in the Department and begin discussing their interests and goals for graduate study.
- Graduate students are expected to select a permanent Major Advisor at the start of their second semester in the program.
- Early in the second semester, graduate students are expected to consult with their Major Advisor and invite at least two other graduate faculty members to form a Supervisory Committee.
- When a Major Advisor and a Supervisory Committee has been determined, graduate students are expected to complete and submit an **Appointment of Supervisory Committee** form (see the list of Forms on the Graduate College website: <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu/forms/>).

Please contact the Director of Graduate Studies for any guidance on selecting a Major Advisor or if there are any questions about inviting Graduate Faculty to serve as members of a Supervisory Committee.

### Department of Communication Graduate Faculty

The following faculty members in the Department of Communication are members of the Graduate Faculty with an endorsement to chair a Supervisory Committee, and thus may be invited to serve as a Major Advisor (Supervisory Committee chair) or members of a Supervisory Committee:

Seth Ashley	Ryan Cannon	Mary Frances Casper	Daehwan Cho
Manda Hicks	Matthew Isbell	Julie Lane	erin mcclellan
John McClellan	Rick Moore	Marty Most	Todd Norton
Heidi Reeder	Jessica Roberts	Tasha Souza	Laurel Traynowicz
Kelly Rossetto	Rulon Wood		

Graduate Faculty outside the Department of Communication may also serve as members of a Supervisory Committee, however a majority of members of the Supervisory Committee must be from the Department of Communication.

## Completing a Plan of Study

Upon determining on a Major Advisor and forming Supervisory Committee, graduate students must complete a plan of study defining a student's overall plan for completing their degree. A plan of study details a student's individual graduate learning objectives and is expected to be completed in consultation with a Major Advisor. Specifically, the plan of study asks students to:

- Complete a brief identity statement that defines a your primary area(s) of study; individual graduate learning objectives; explains how your studies will help you advance your personal, professional, or scholarly interests; and identifies which culminating activity you will be pursuing and why it is best to support your learning.
- List the courses your plan to take to complete your degree
- Define which culminating activity has been chosen to complete the M.A. in Communication

The plan of study offers students the opportunity to craft a program of study that will best support their unique learning objectives and individual goals for graduate study. Developing a plan of study requires purposefully examining of a student's interests in communication and then documenting a plan that will best help fulfill a student's unique objectives and goals. Completing a plan of study will help ensure a student's graduate learning experience provides the best preparation for achieving their unique academic, personal, or professional goals. When the plan of study is complete, students may apply for candidacy. The Appendix of this handbook contains a template plan of study.

Graduate students are responsible for completing their plan of study and submitting the appropriate Plan of Study form to the Director of Graduate Studies as well as the Application for Candidacy form to the Graduate College. The following is the recommended process of completing a plan of study and then applying for candidacy:

- Graduate students are expected to work with their Major Advisor and then complete and submit a **Plan of Study** form to the Director of Graduate Studies by the end of their second semester (download the form from the Department website: <https://communication.boisestate.edu/graduate-forms/>).
- When a plan of study is completed, students must also submit an **Application for Admission to Candidacy** form to the Graduate College. This form is due at the end of the second semester and must be submitted after the Appointment of Supervisory Committee form has been submitted (see the list of Forms on the Graduate College website: <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu/forms/>). The form should be completed no later than the deadline published in the academic calendar for the semester or summer session in which the student intends to complete the degree or certificate requirements. (see the specific semesters in the academic calendar at: <https://registrar.boisestate.edu/boise-state-academic-calendars/>).
- Specific dates for upcoming semesters are listed in the Suggested Timeline and Checklist section of this handbook

If a student wishes to update or modify a plan of study (including changing her or his culminating experience option), a new plan of study form must be submitted and approved. Changing a culminating experience option is not advised as it could lead to additional time toward earning a degree. As such, it is important to purposefully choose an appropriate culminating experience option.

## Graduate Culminating Activity Options

The term “culminating activity” refers to a summary exercise that is carried out by a graduate student with a high degree of independence. The culminating activity is based on advanced study of communication and a student’s accumulated graduate experience. The culminating activity is integrative in nature and is typically the focus of a student’s learning near the end of her or his graduate career.

The M.A. in Communication offers three options for a culminating activity: Thesis, Project, or Comprehensive Examination. Each culminating experience offers students a different way to complete her or his graduate learning experience as guided by his or her own interests and aims while grounded in the broad field of communication.

Each culminating experience provides an opportunity to demonstrate graduate-level mastery of communication and should be conducted independently while mentored by a student’s Major Advisor. Each culminating activity should be approved by the student’s Supervisory Committee and when completed successfully defended in a final oral examination conducted by the student’s Supervisory Committee.

Successful defense of a culminating activity demonstrates graduate expertise in communication. The choice of a culminating activity is made with guidance from a student’s graduate advisor and committee. The culminating activity provides graduate students with the opportunity to concentrate and specialize their learning in an area of their particular interest. Topics are often inspired by relevant social issues or problems, can further particular academic or professional goals, and/or can serve as a foundation for pursuing a Ph.D. in Communication or other advanced degree.

The following details process for completing each culmination activity option:

## Thesis Option

The thesis option documents original research carried out by a student enrolled in the M.A. in Communication. A thesis is often characterized by a clearly stated problem, proposition, or hypothesis that is investigated using appropriate communication research methods (i.e., analysis and synthesis of data or other scholarly evidence). A thesis may also include theoretical investigations and extension of ideas that contribute to the literature. The thesis must include a discussion of the relevant literature and demonstrate the ability of the student to independently and successfully address a significant intellectual problem with concepts and methods that are accepted in the communication field.

The following are the required components for completing the M.A. in Communication with a thesis as the chosen culminating experience.

### Thesis Prospectus

- Prior to beginning a thesis, a graduate student must develop and present a thesis prospectus (or thesis proposal) and have it approved by her or his supervisory committee. A thesis prospectus typically defines the background rationale for the research, research objectives, research scope, research methods, and a timeline for the thesis research to be completed.
- Graduate students working on a thesis prospectus must register for at least one credit of COMM 593 Thesis.
- Any substantive work on a thesis prospectus completed by a graduate student prior to the appointment of the Supervisory Committee or any work represented by credit other than COMM 593 Thesis (such as COMM 596 Independent Study) is not acceptable for the thesis under any conditions.

### Thesis Prospectus Defense

- Approval of a thesis prospectus is typically achieved through a “prospectus defense” meeting with the Supervisory Committee. The aim of a prospectus defense is for the graduate student and Supervisory Committee engage in a rigorous conversation about the proposed thesis to ensure the student’s work is well grounded and the student is prepared to engage in an independent research project.
- When the student’s Major Advisor feels the prospectus is well-developed and the graduate student is ready to defend the prospectus, a prospectus defense meeting is scheduled with the student’s Supervisory Committee. Typically, the graduate student is responsible for scheduling this meeting.
- The graduate student should provide a copy of the thesis prospectus to the members of her or his Supervisory committee with enough time for the committee members to review it prior to the defense meeting (typically two weeks).
- During the prospectus defense meeting, the graduate student is typically asked to provide a brief overview of the thesis prospectus. The committee members then ask questions in ways that help assure the graduate student is ready to begin an independent research study. After the defense and extended discussion, the graduate student will be excused from the meeting and the committee will confer on the acceptability of the thesis prospectus and whether the student has demonstrated preparedness to begin independently working on a thesis. Approval is determined by a vote of the supervisory committee with a simple majority determining the outcome. If a tie vote occurs, the student’s prospectus is not considered approved.

- If a thesis prospectus is approved, important revisions might still be recommended by the Supervisory Committee and a student may be required to resubmit a revised prospectus to the Supervisory Committee. While another meeting with the Supervisory Committee may be useful, it is not required.
- If a thesis prospectus is not approved, the Supervisory Committee should confer and provide the student with specific and detailed guidance on what areas need to be revised or improved in order for the thesis prospectus to be approved. When the prospectus is revised and improved, another prospectus defense can be scheduled.
- Only when a thesis prospectus is approved (and IRB approval is attained, if needed) can a student begin gathering data or engaging in other research in support of the thesis project.
- If a graduate student's Supervisory Committee has approved a thesis prospectus, a student is considered to have a valid thesis study. If a student's supervisory committee changes after a successful thesis prospectus defense, a new defense is not required.

### **Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval**

- If the thesis involves human subjects, approval by Boise State's Institutional Review Board must be attained prior to any data collection can begin.
- For more information on when IRB approval is needed and how to attain IRB approval, see <https://research.boisestate.edu/compliance/institutional-review-board-irb-home/>
- If IRB is needed, requests for IRB approval can be made prior to the thesis prospectus defense with approval from the student's Major Advisor. If IRB approval has been attained prior to the prospectus defense, a student shall still not begin any data collection until approval has been attained by the Supervisory Committee in a prospectus defense.

### **Apply for Graduation**

- When a student nears the end of the semester prior to taking the comprehensive examination and has an approved Supervisory Committee form and an approved Application for Admission to Candidacy form, she or he may apply for graduation. Applying for graduation initiates a final audit of the student's academic records by the Registrar, and reserves an official embossed diploma or certificate.
- The month of the expected date of graduation is May for students finishing in the spring semester, August for students finishing in the summer session, and December for students finishing in the fall semester.
- To apply for graduation log on to myBoiseState in the Student Center and choose the Apply for Graduation option from the drop down box under Academics. The process should be completed no later than the deadline published in the academic calendar for the semester or summer session in which the student intends to complete the degree or certificate requirements. (see the specific semesters in the academic calendar at: <https://registrar.boisestate.edu/boise-state-academic-calendars/>).
  - Specific dates for upcoming semesters are listed in the Suggested Timeline and Checklist section of this handbook
- Students who miss their expected date of graduation twice are placed on inactive status by the Registrar and are required to contact the Registrar before attempting to establish a new graduation date.

### Thesis Development and Thesis Credits

- Graduate students must register for COMM 593 Thesis credits to represent work on a thesis. At least 6 credits of COMM 593 Thesis are required for the culminating activity. A student may register for more than 6 credits. The student's Major Advisor serves as the instructor for COMM 593 Thesis.
- A graduate student must register for at least one credit of COMM 593 Thesis in any semester or session in which the student is engaged in thesis activity (including the semester or session of the final oral examination) regardless of the number of 593 Thesis credits already accumulated by the student.
- A graduate student cannot take the final oral examination unless 6 credits of COMM 593 Thesis have been accumulated (or will be accumulated at the end of the semester or session in which the final oral examination is conducted) to meet the degree requirements.
- A graduate student must be registered for at least 1 credit of COMM 593 Thesis during the semester in which the thesis is submitted to the Graduate College.
- A graduate student is not required to register for COMM 593 Thesis credit in the semester or session subsequent to the semester or session in which the Graduate College receives the format review copy of the thesis and all completed forms (i.e., the Defense Committee Approval page, the Final Readings Approval page, and Access Agreement form).
- The final thesis must be formatted per guidelines of the Graduate College. The Graduate College offers a thesis template that contains all required content and formatting. Graduate students can either write their document from within the template or apply the template's formatting to previously created work (to access the Graduate College's thesis template please see <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu/thesisdissertation/template/>).

### Thesis Defense (Final Oral Examination)

- A thesis defense (also called the final oral examination) is required for a master's student completing a thesis as a culminating activity for the M.A. in Communication.
- The Major Advisor is expected to serve as the first reader of the thesis, and graduate students should plan on revising the thesis a number of times before a Major Advisor determines it is ready a thesis defense (final oral examination) with the student's Supervisory Committee. Each Major Advisor may have a different approach to advising graduate students, thus graduate students should discuss expectations for reviews with her or his Major Advisor.
- When a Major Advisor feels the completed thesis is ready to be presented and defended, a thesis defense (final oral examination) should be scheduled with the student's Supervisory Committee. Graduate students are typically responsible for scheduling the thesis defense meeting with the Supervisory Committee.
- The thesis defense meeting (final oral examination) should be scheduled for 3 hours.
- The thesis defense meeting (final oral examination) should occur with sufficient time for a final revision and processing of the thesis so that a student who passes the final oral examination has a reasonable chance for graduation in the same semester or session. The date by which a thesis defense should occur is specified in the academic calendar as the "*Recommended last day for final oral dissertation, thesis, or project defense for graduate degrees to be awarded*" in the semester listed (see the specific semesters in the academic calendar at: <https://registrar.boisestate.edu/boise-state-academic-calendars/>).

- Specific dates for upcoming semesters are listed in the Suggested Timeline and Checklist section of this handbook
- A graduate student should consult with her or his Major Advisor about how to best prepare for the thesis defense.
- Announcement of the public presentation to the University community is required and should be made at least two weeks prior to the defense. Thus, when the thesis defense meeting is scheduled, students should complete the online **Defense Notification** form to notify the Graduate College that a graduate defense has been scheduled and provide details for public announcement. This announcement is due immediately upon scheduling the thesis defense meeting (see the list of Forms on the Graduate College website: <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu/forms/>).
- Additionally, graduate students should inform the Director of Graduate Studies via e-mail to make an announcement to the Department of Communication. Please send an e-mail to the Director of Graduate studies detailing (a) the title of the thesis, (b) the date and time of the defense, (c) the location of the defense, (d) the name of the Major Advisor, (e) the names of the other members of the Supervisory Committee, and (f) a brief abstract of the thesis.
- When the thesis defense meeting is scheduled, graduate students should provide a copy of the final thesis to members of the Supervisory Committee with enough time for the committee members to review it prior to the defense meeting (typically two weeks).
- Prior to the thesis defense, a graduate student is responsible for preparing two forms: (1) a **Defense Committee Approval** page and (2) a **Report of Failure of a Final Oral Examination**. These forms should be prepared and copies brought to the student's thesis defense meeting (see the list of Forms on the Graduate College website: <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu/forms/>).
- The final oral examination consists of three sequential parts in which the student presents and defends the completed thesis research: (1) a public presentation (in which the graduate student is asked to provide a brief presentation about the thesis), (2) a public question and answer session (in which all attending the thesis defense are invited to ask any questions to the student and the student is expected to respond to these questions), and (3) a private question and answer session with the student's Supervisory Committee (during this part of the session, any public attendees may be excused from the defense meeting by the Supervisory Committee).
- The student's Major Advisor, chair of the Supervisory Committee, is responsible for conducting all three parts of the final oral examination according to procedures established by the Graduate College. However, at the request of the student or academic unit, a Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR) may be appointed to the defense committee as a nonvoting member by the Dean of the Graduate College. The GFR must be a member of the Graduate Faculty and a member of an academic unit not represented on the Supervisory Committee. If invited, the GFR conducts all three parts of the final oral examination according to procedures established by the Graduate College.
- When the three parts of the final oral examination are complete, the Supervisory Committee will excuse the graduate student (and any remaining members of the public) from the meeting, discuss the defense privately, and vote on the acceptability of the completed thesis. The result of a final oral examination for a master's student can only be reported as pass or fail. The determination of pass or fail is by a vote among the members of the Supervisory Committee with a simple majority determining the outcome. If a tie vote occurs, then the student is considered to have failed the final oral examination.

- The committee may decide to pass a thesis contingent upon minor changes. Any required changes will be decided by the Supervisory Committee and explained to the graduate student either in the defense meeting or very soon after the defense meeting by the Major Advisor.
- A result of pass is immediately documented by the signatures of the Supervisory Committee on the **Defense Committee Approval** form that is to be bound with the paper copies of the thesis.
- A result of fail is immediately documented on a **Report of Failure of a Final Oral Examination** form that is submitted to the Graduate College by either the Major Advisor (chair of the Supervisory Committee) or the GFR. A final oral examination that is failed on the first attempt can be repeated once, but only if a second attempt is requested by the student and approved by the academic unit responsible for the program. See the procedures in the Graduate Catalog under “Failure of a Final Oral Examination”.

### Final Thesis Approvals and Graduate College Format Review

- After a thesis has been successfully defended by the student at the final oral examination, it must also be granted final reading approval by the Major Advisor (chair of the Supervisory Committee) and it must pass a format review by the Graduate College. The thesis in final form must also be approved by the Dean of the Graduate College, and because the thesis is expected to be available to other scholars and to the general public, the entire thesis must be archived and made publicly accessible.
- When a graduate student has successfully defended her or his thesis in a final oral examination, revisions may still be needed. The student is responsible for completing any final revisions that might be needed or requested by the Supervisory Committee during the defense. This is also a recommended time to ensure the thesis is formatted per the guidelines of the Graduate College (to access the Graduate College's thesis template please see <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu/thesisdissertation/template/>).
- When all revisions are completed the graduate student should prepare a **Final Reading Approval** page and deliver this page along with the final thesis (with all revisions and in proper Graduate College format) to her or his Major Advisor to conduct a final reading (see the list of Forms on the Graduate College website: <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu/forms/>).
- When the final reading is approved, the graduate student should complete the **Access Agreement** form detailing how she or he wishes the thesis to be made available (see the list of Forms on the Graduate College website: <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu/forms/>).
- When the final thesis is complete and ready to submit, the graduate student is responsible for submitting the signed **Defense Committee Approval** page, the completed **Final Readings Approval** page and the **Access Agreement** form to the Thesis and Dissertation office of the Graduate College (please be sure to scan and send these forms electronically to your Major Advisor as well as the Director of Graduate Studies to have a backup copy available, if needed).
- Finally, upload the format review copy (the student's final thesis) to ScholarWorks to initiate the Graduate College's Format Review process. Go to <http://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/td/> and click on the "submit research" link on the left menu list. As the Graduate College conducts their format review, be prepared to receive requests for revisions and respond quickly making any edits as requested.
- The student must have the signed Defense Committee Approval page, the final Readings Approval page, the Access Agreement form submitted to the Thesis and Dissertation office of the Graduate College, as well as have the format review copy uploaded to Scholar Works by the deadline established by the Graduate College. The date by which this should occur is specified in

the academic calendar as the “*Last day to submit advisor-approved version of dissertation or thesis with signed Final Reading Approval and Access Agreement for a Thesis or Dissertation to the Thesis and Dissertation Office for graduate degrees to be awarded*” in the semester listed (see the specific semesters in the academic calendar at: <https://registrar.boisestate.edu/boise-state-academic-calendars/>).

- Specific dates for upcoming semesters are listed in the Suggested Timeline and Checklist section of this handbook
- If a graduate student does not meet the dates above a student can still complete all work during that semester. In this case a graduate student must have the signed Defense Committee Approval page, the final Readings Approval page, the Access Agreement form submitted to the Thesis and Dissertation office of the Graduate College, as well as have the format review copy uploaded to Scholar Works no later than the last day of the final exam week of the semester or session. Failure to meet this deadline will require the student to register for at least one credit of COMM 593 Thesis in the subsequent semester or session to account for thesis work completed while submitting the final thesis.

### **Final Grades for Thesis Credits**

- All COMM 593 Thesis credits are graded in-progress (IP) until a final grade of either pass (P) or fail (F) is assigned by the Major Advisor. A grade of pass (P) is assigned to all COMM 593 credits if the final oral examination is passed, and a grade of fail (F) is assigned to all COMM 593 credits if the student fails the final oral examination. The same grade of pass (P) or fail (F) is assigned to all COMM 593 Thesis credits registered by the student during her or his career in the program.
- When the thesis and accompanying forms are submitted to the Thesis and Dissertation Office of the Graduate College prior to the end of the last day of the final exam week of the semester or session, the Major Advisor can submit final grades for COMM 593 Thesis.
- If the final thesis and accompanying forms have not been submitted to the Thesis and Dissertation office of the Graduate College by the end of the last day of the final exam week of the semester or session, the Major Advisor should submit a grade of in-progress (IP) for that term. And the graduate student must register for at least 1 credit of COMM 593 Thesis during the semester or session in which the final thesis and accompanying forms are submitted.

## Project Option

A project option documents a substantial exercise demonstrating the ability of an M.A. in Communication to carry out independently and successfully a professional activity similar to what may be encountered in the workplace. A project is often characterized by successfully applying particular communication perspectives and concepts in practice. The project must be grounded in relevant literature in the field of communication and demonstrate the ability of the student to independently and successfully generate communication reports, portfolios, activities, films, or other communication “outputs” as may be encountered in the workplace.

The following are the required components for completing the M.A. in Communication with a project as the chosen culminating experience.

### Project Proposal

- Prior to beginning a project, a graduate student must develop and present a project proposal and have it approved by her or his supervisory committee. A project proposal typically defines the background rationale for the project (typically grounded in appropriate literature), the project objectives, the scope of the project, the project site (if applicable), the process for conducting and completing in the project, and a timeline for the project.
- Graduate students working on a project proposal must register for at least one credit of COMM 591 Project.
- Any substantive work on a project proposal completed by a graduate student prior to the appointment of the Supervisory Committee or any work represented by credit other than COMM 591 Project (such as COMM 596 Independent Study) is not acceptable for the project under any conditions.

### Project Proposal Defense

- Approval of a project proposal is typically achieved through a “proposal defense” meeting with the Supervisory Committee. The aim of a proposal defense is for the graduate student and the Supervisory Committee to engage in a rigorous conversation about the proposed project to ensure the student’s work is well grounded, the project is appropriate to serve as a culminating experience, and the student is prepared to engage in an independent project.
- When the student’s Major Advisor feels the project proposal is well-developed and the graduate student is ready to defend the proposal, a project proposal defense meeting is scheduled with the student’s Supervisor Committee. Typically, the graduate student is responsible for scheduling this meeting.
- The graduate student should provide a copy of the project proposal to the members of his or her Supervisory Committee with enough time for the committee members to review it prior to the defense meeting (typically two weeks).
- During the project proposal defense meeting, the graduate student is typically asked to provide a brief overview of the project proposal. The committee members then ask questions in ways that help assure the graduate student is ready to begin an independent project. After the defense and extended discussion, the graduate student will be excused from the meeting and the committee will confer on the acceptability of the project proposal and whether the student has demonstrated preparedness to begin independently working on the project. Approval is determined by a vote of the supervisory committee with a simple majority determining the outcome. If a tie vote occurs, the student’s is project proposal is not considered approved.

- If a project proposal is approved, important revisions might still be recommended by the Supervisory Committee and a student may be required to resubmit a revised proposal to the Supervisory Committee. While another meeting with the Supervisory Committee may be useful, it is not required.
- If a project proposal is not approved, the Supervisory Committee should confer and provide the student with specific and detailed guidance on what areas need to be revised or improved in order for the project proposal to be approved. When the project proposal is revised and improved, another proposal defense can be scheduled.
- Only when a project proposal is approved can a student begin activities in support of completing the project.
- If a graduate student's Supervisory Committee has approved a project proposal, a student is considered to have a valid project. If a student's Supervisory Committee changes after a successful project proposal defense, a new defense is not required.

### **Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval**

- For most projects approval from Boise State's Institutional Review Board is not needed.
- Because projects typically do not involve collecting information or any data from human subjects, approval by the IRB is typically not required. However please consult with your Major Advisor and/or the IRB if there is any chance IRB approval might be needed.
- For more information on when IRB approval is needed and how to attain IRB approval, see <https://research.boisestate.edu/compliance/institutional-review-board-irb-home/>
- If IRB is needed, requests for IRB approval can be made prior to the project proposal defense with approval from the student's Major Advisor. If IRB approval has been attained prior to the proposal defense, a student should not begin any data collection until approval has been attained by the supervisory committee in a proposal defense.

### **Apply for Graduation**

- When a student nears the end of the semester prior to taking the comprehensive examination and has an approved Supervisory Committee form and an approved Application for Admission to Candidacy form, she or he may apply for graduation. Applying for graduation initiates a final audit of the student's academic records by the Registrar, and reserves an official embossed diploma or certificate.
- The month of the expected date of graduation is May for students finishing in the spring semester, August for students finishing in the summer session, and December for students finishing in the fall semester.
- To apply for graduation log on to myBoiseState in the Student Center and choose the Apply for Graduation option from the drop down box under Academics. The process should be completed no later than the deadline published in the academic calendar for the semester or summer session in which the student intends to complete the degree or certificate requirements. (see the specific semesters in the academic calendar at: <https://registrar.boisestate.edu/boise-state-academic-calendars/>).
  - Specific dates for upcoming semesters are listed in the Suggested Timeline and Checklist section of this handbook

- Students who miss their expected date of graduation twice are placed on inactive status by the Registrar and are required to contact the Registrar before attempting to establish a new graduation date.

### **Project Development and Project Credits**

- Graduate students must register for COMM 591 Project credits to represent work on a project. At least 6 credits of COMM 591 Project are required for the culminating activity. A student may register for more than 6 credits. The Major Advisor serves as the instructor for COMM 591 Project.
- A graduate student must register for at least one credit of COMM 591 Project in any semester or session in which the student is engaged in project activity (including the semester or session of the final oral examination) regardless of the number of 591 Project credits already accumulated by the student.
- A graduate student cannot defend their project unless 6 credits of COMM 591 Project have been accumulated (or will be accumulated at the end of the semester or session in which the project defense is conducted) to meet the degree requirements.
- A graduate student must register for at least 1 credit of COMM 591 Project the semester in which the project is submitted to the Department of Communication.
- A graduate student is not required to register for COMM 591 Project credit in the semester or session subsequent to the semester or session in which the Communication Department receives the final copy of the all completed forms (i.e., the Project Defense Committee Approval form and the Final Project Approval form).
- If the project is in the form of a written report, generally the project should follow APA guidelines and style guide. However, if the project takes another written form following other professional guidelines, then those guidelines should be followed. If the project takes a non-written form (i.e., documentary film, etc.) then digital copies should be provided for archiving. Because projects can take varied forms, if there is any uncertainty as to the format to submit to the Department, the student should consult with her or his Major Advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies to determine the best format to submit to the Department of Communication.

### **Project Defense**

- A project defense is required for a master's student completing a project as a culminating activity for the M.A. in Communication.
- The Major Advisor is expected to serve as the first reviewer of the project. Graduate students should plan on having the project reviewed several times before a Major Advisor determines if the project ready a project defense with the student's Supervisory Committee. Each Major Advisor might have a different approach to advising graduate students, thus graduate students should discuss expectations for reviews with her or his Major Advisor.
- When a Major Advisor feels the completed project is ready to be presented and defended, a project defense should be scheduled with the student's Supervisory Committee. Graduate students are typically responsible for scheduling the project defense meeting with the Supervisory Committee.
- The project defense meeting should be scheduled for 3 hours.

- The project defense meeting should occur with sufficient time for any final revisions of the project to be completed and submitted formally to the Department. The date by which a project defense should occur is specified in the academic calendar as the “*Recommended last day for final oral dissertation, thesis, or project defense for graduate degrees to be awarded*” in the semester listed (see the specific semesters in the academic calendar at: <https://registrar.boisestate.edu/boise-state-academic-calendars/>).
  - Specific dates for upcoming semesters are listed in the Suggested Timeline and Checklist section of this handbook
- A graduate student should consult with her or his Major Advisor about how to best prepare for the project defense.
- Announcement to the Department community is required and should be made at least two weeks prior to the defense. Thus, when the project defense meeting is scheduled, graduate students should inform the Director of Graduate Studies via e-mail to make an announcement to the Department of Communication. Please send an e-mail to the Director of Graduate Studies detailing (a) the title of the project, (b) the date and time of the defense, (c) the location of the defense, (d) the name of the Major Advisor, (e) the names of the other members of the Supervisory Committee, and (f) a brief statement describing the project.
- When the project defense meeting is scheduled, graduate students should provide final copy of the final project or make the final project available for review by members of the Supervisory Committee with enough time for the committee members to review it prior to the defense meeting (typically two weeks).
- Prior to the defense, a graduate student is responsible for preparing two forms: (1) a **Project Defense Committee Approval** form and (2) a **Report of Failure of a Project Defense** and bringing a copy of each form to the project defense. (Download these forms from the Department website: <https://communication.boisestate.edu/graduate-forms/>)
- The project defense consists of three sequential parts in which the student presents and defends the completed project: (1) a public presentation (in which the graduate student is asked to provide a presentation of the project), (2) a public question and answer session (in which all attending the project defense are invited to ask any questions to the student and the student is expected to respond to these questions), and (3) a private question and answer session with the student’s Supervisory Committee (during this session, any public attendees may be excused from the defense meeting by the Supervisory Committee).
- The student’s Major Advisor, chair of the Supervisory Committee, is responsible for conducting all three parts of the project defense according to procedures established by the Department of Communication.
- When the three parts of the project defense are complete, the Supervisory Committee will excuse the graduate student (and any remaining members of the public) from the meeting, discuss the defense privately, and vote on the acceptability of the completed project. The result of a project defense for a master’s student can only be reported as pass or fail. The determination of pass or fail is by a vote among the members of the Supervisory Committee with a simple majority determining the outcome. If a tie vote occurs, then the student is considered to have failed the final oral examination.
- The committee may decide to pass a project contingent upon minor changes. Any required changes will be decided by the Supervisory Committee and explained to the graduate student either in the defense meeting or very soon after the defense meeting by the Major Advisor.

- A result of pass is immediately documented by the signatures of the Supervisory Committee on the **Project Defense Committee Approval** form that is to be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies.
- A result of fail is immediately documented on a **Report of Failure of a Project Defense** form that is submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies by the Major Advisor (chair of the Supervisory Committee). A project defense that is failed on the first attempt can be repeated once, but only if a second attempt is requested by the student and approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

### Final Project Approvals and Submission

- After a project is successfully defended by the student at the final oral examination, it must also be granted a final approval by the Major Advisor (chair of the Supervisory Committee) and must be submitted to the Department of Communication to be archived and made accessible as needed.
- When a graduate student has successfully defended her or his project in a project defense, revisions may still be needed. The student is responsible for completing any final revisions that might be needed or requested by the Supervisory Committee during the defense.
- When all revisions are completed the graduate student should prepare a **Final Project Approval** form and deliver this form along with the final project to her or his Major Advisor to conduct a final review. (Download this form from the Department website: <https://communication.boisestate.edu/graduate-forms/>)
- When the final review is complete, the graduate student is responsible for submitting the signed **Project Defense Committee Approval** form and the **Final Project Approval** form to the Director of Graduate Studies (please be sure to scan and send these forms electronically to your Major Advisor to have a backup copy as needed).
- Finally, the final copy of your project must be submitted to the Department no later than the last day of the semester or session. The date by which this should occur is specified in the academic calendar as the date that “*course instruction ends*” for the Fall or Spring semester and as the “*Last day to submit final copies of dissertation or thesis*” for the summer term (see the specific semesters in the academic calendar at: <https://registrar.boisestate.edu/boise-state-academic-calendars/>).
  - Specific dates for upcoming semesters are listed in the Suggested Timeline and Checklist section of this handbook
- Failure to meet this deadline will require the student to register for at least one credit of COMM 591 Project in the subsequent semester or session to account for work completing the project.

### Final Grades for Project Credits

- All COMM 591 Project credits are graded in-progress (IP) until a final grade of either pass (P) or fail (F) is assigned by the Major Advisor. A grade of pass (P) is assigned to all COMM 591 credits if the final oral examination is passed, and a grade of fail (F) is assigned to all COMM 591 credits if the student fails the final oral examination. The same grade of pass (P) or fail (F) is assigned to all COMM 591 Project credits registered by the student during her or his career in the program.
- When the final project and accompanying forms are submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies prior to the end of the last day of the final exam week of the semester or session, the Major Advisor can submit final grades for COMM 591 Project.

- If the final project and accompanying forms have not been submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies by the end of the last day of the final exam week of the semester or session, the Major Advisor should submit a grade of in-progress (IP) for that term. And the graduate student must register for at least 1 credit of COMM 591 Project during the semester or session in which the final project and accompanying forms are submitted.

## Comprehensive Examination Option

A comprehensive examination assesses a student's depth and breadth of knowledge of communication. A comprehensive examination consists of a six-hour written examination testing the students' knowledge and understanding of the three competency areas claimed by the student including: (1) the theoretical foundations of the student's main area of communication inquiry, (2) relevant methodological approaches, and (3) research literature in the student's area of specialization.

The following are the required components for completing the M.A. in Communication with a comprehensive examination as the chosen culminating experience.

### Defining Competency Areas

- When determining comprehensive examination as a culminating experience, a graduate student should (in consultation with their Major Advisor) identify specific competencies areas or areas of specialization to be tested: (1) the theoretical foundations of the student's main area of communication inquiry, (2) relevant methodological approaches related to the students area of interest, and (3) research literature in the student's area of specialization. Competency areas should be grounded in communication perspectives, yet may reach beyond material covered in a student's completed coursework.
- The comprehensive examination should be taken during the student's final semester, and all three credits of COMM 590 Comprehensive Examination should taken together during the student's final semester. The student's Major Advisor should be the instructor for these credits.
- A comprehensive examination cannot be attempted until the student has completed all core courses required by the program (i.e., COMM 501, COMM 505, and COMM 598), has completed a Plan of Study, and until the student has been admitted to candidacy (i.e., the Application for Admission to Candidacy form has been completed and approved by the Graduate College).

### Apply for Graduation

- When a student nears the end of the semester prior to taking the comprehensive examination and has an approved Supervisory Committee form and an approved Application for Admission to Candidacy form, she or he may apply for graduation. Applying for graduation initiates a final audit of the student's academic records by the Registrar, and reserves an official embossed diploma or certificate.
- The month of the expected date of graduation is May for students finishing in the spring semester, August for students finishing in the summer session, and December for students finishing in the fall semester.
- To apply for graduation log on to myBoiseState in the Student Center and choose the Apply for Graduation option from the drop down box under Academics. The process should be completed no later than the deadline published in the academic calendar for the semester or summer session in which the student intends to complete the degree or certificate requirements. (see the specific semesters in the academic calendar at: <https://registrar.boisestate.edu/boise-state-academic-calendars/>).

  - Specific dates for upcoming semesters are listed in the Suggested Timeline and Checklist section of this handbook

- Students who miss their expected date of graduation twice are placed on inactive status by the Registrar and are required to contact the Registrar before attempting to establish a new graduation date.

### Comprehensive Examination Planning Meeting

- During the first few weeks of the semester in which a comprehensive examination is being conducted, the student should schedule a comprehensive examination planning meeting with her or his Supervisory Committee. The aim of the planning meeting is to discuss the student's identified competency areas and plan the logistics of the comprehensive examination.
- First, at the comprehensive examination planning meeting, the student should present three competency areas and discuss these with the Supervisory Committee. The meeting should result in agreement on the student's chosen competency areas and consensus on: (1) the theoretical foundations of the student's main area of communication inquiry, (2) relevant methodological approaches, and (3) research literature in the student's area of specialization. In structuring the comprehensive examination, the committee should consider asking one question for each of the three competency areas identified by the student. The committee is not limited by topics taken in a student's coursework. Students are expected to study beyond the material covered in regular coursework. *Note: During this session the focus is on defining the three competency areas; specific examination questions within each competency area may not necessarily be defined. If a student studies a particular competency area, a question can be defined later that will evaluate the student's level of competency in that area.*
- Second, at the comprehensive examination planning meeting, the committee should define the amount of time dedicated to each of the three questions. While the hours can be split equally across all the questions (two hours to answer each question), the time can be adjusted if one question is more extensive than another. However at least one hour must be dedicated to each question and a total of six hours is required; no more than six hours can be scheduled.
- Third, at the comprehensive examination planning meeting, the graduate student and the Supervisory Committee should agree upon the two-week timeframe for taking the comprehensive examination and schedule the comprehensive examination defense meeting at least two weeks after the comprehensive examination has been completed. It is recommended that the two-week comprehensive examination period should conclude at least two weeks prior to the final week of the semester or session, and it is recommended that the comprehensive examination defense meeting (final oral examination) be conducted during final week of the regular session (the week prior to final examination week).
- Upon the conclusion of the comprehensive examination planning meeting, the graduate student is responsible for scheduling a private space for each testing session (the conference room on the second floor of the communication building is a preferred space for these examinations) as well as reserve use of a department computer to use during this examination. If the student needs any help scheduling a space or reserving a computer to use, please ask Sharon Brown or the Director of Graduate Studies for assistance.
- Finally, upon the conclusion of the comprehensive examination planning meeting, the graduate student is expected to complete and submit a **Comprehensive Examination Plan** to her or his Major Advisor and to the Director of Graduate Studies (download the form from the Department website: <https://communication.boisestate.edu/graduate-forms/>).

### Comprehensive Examination Study and Preparation

- After the Comprehensive Examination Plan is submitted, the student should have confirmation of their specific competency areas and begin preparing for the examination. Students prepare for their examination by engaging in independent research and study focused on the three areas of competency defined in their plan.

- As a student prepares for the examination, the Supervisory Committee should be available to meet with the student, as needed, to advise and provide guidance helpful for the student's examination preparation.
- Specific questions directly related to each of the three competency areas (as detailed in the comprehensive examination planning meeting and form), should then be developed and agreed upon by members of the Supervisory Committee and submitted to the Major Advisor at least two weeks prior to the first examination session.

### **Two-week Examination Period and Individual Testing Sessions**

- During the two-week examination period, the student and the student's Major Advisor should schedule three individual testing sessions (totaling six hours) to respond to each of three comprehensive examination questions. The amount of time per each question should be documented in the comprehensive examination plan submitted after the comprehensive examination planning meeting. The timing of the examination sessions should be confirmed by the Major Advisor two weeks prior to taking the exam. A student is not expected to conduct all three testing sessions in the same day.
- The two-week comprehensive examination period and the comprehensive examination defense (final oral examination) should be completed with enough time to review responses, conduct meetings, and submit grades when grade reports are due. Thus, it is recommended that the two-week comprehensive examination period take place at least two weeks prior to the last day of classes of the semester or session.
- The Major Advisor is responsible for administering the comprehensive examination and each testing session.
- The Major Advisor should coordinate attaining the specific comprehensive examination questions from the Supervisory Committee at least one week prior to the two-week examination period agreed upon in the planning meeting and detailed in the comprehensive examination plan.
- As the two-week comprehensive examination period approaches, the Major Advisor should confirm the schedule of each testing session and ensure the student has a private space for the examination and a department computer to use during the exam.
- At the start of each of the three testing sessions, the Major Advisor should meet the student and provide the specific question being asked in the testing session. The student will have 1 to 4 hours to write their response to the question (per the agreed amount of time per question defined in the comprehensive examination plan). Students are not allowed any books, articles, notes, information available vis the Internet, or other material during the exam. Students are expected to reference major sources in their responses.
- When each of the three testing sessions are complete, the student should immediately print and/or e-mail their response to their Major Advisor (and retain a copy for themselves).
- When all three testing sessions are complete, the Major Advisor shall send the student's responses to all three comprehensive examination questions the Supervisory Committee for review and confirm the date for the comprehensive examination defense (to take place at least two weeks after the last testing session, to allow time for the committee members to review responses prior to the defense meeting).

### **Comprehensive Examination Defense**

- A comprehensive examination defense is required for a master’s student completing a comprehensive examination as a culminating activity.
- The comprehensive examination defense meeting should be scheduled for 2 hours.
- The comprehensive examination defense should occur no later than the end of last day of classes of the semester or session in which the examination is being conducted (and credits earned). The date by which the defense should occur should correspond with the date specified in the academic calendar when “*course instruction ends*” for the Fall or Spring semesters and as “*Last day to submit final copies of dissertation or thesis*” for the summer term (see the specific semesters in the academic calendar at: <https://registrar.boisestate.edu/boise-state-academic-calendars/>).
  - Specific dates for upcoming semesters are listed in the Suggested Timeline and Checklist section of this handbook
- Upon completion of the three comprehensive examination testing sessions, the graduate student should inform the Director of Graduate Studies via e-mail to make an announcement of the upcoming defense to the Department of Communication. Please send an e-mail to the Director of Graduate Studies detailing (a) the three questions asked during the examination, (b) the date and time of the defense, (c) the location of the defense, (d) the name of the Major Advisor, and (e) the names of the other members of the Supervisory Committee.
- Prior to the comprehensive examination defense, a graduate student is responsible for preparing two forms: (1) **Comprehensive Examination Defense Committee Approval** form (download the form from the Department website: <https://communication.boisestate.edu/graduate-forms/>) and (2) a **Report of Failure of a Comprehensive Examination** (see the list of Forms on the Graduate College website: <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu/forms/>). These forms should be prepared and copies brought to the student’s comprehensive examination defense meeting.
- The comprehensive examination defense consists of three sequential parts in which the student presents and defends their examination responses: (1) a public presentation (in which the graduate student is asked to provide a brief overview of each response to each question), (2) a public question and answer session (in which anyone attending the defense are invited to ask any questions to the student and the student is expected to respond to these questions), and (3) a private question and answer session with the student’s Supervisory Committee (during this session, any public attendees may be excused from the defense meeting by the Supervisory Committee).
- The student’s Major Advisor, chair of the Supervisory Committee, is responsible for conducting all three parts of the comprehensive examination defense according to procedures established by the Department of Communication.
- When the three parts of the comprehensive examination defense are complete, the Supervisory Committee will excuse the graduate student (and any remaining members of the public) from the meeting, discuss the defense privately, and vote on the acceptability of the students comprehensive examination responses. The result of a comprehensive examination defense for a master’s student can only be reported as pass or fail. The determination of pass or fail is by a vote among the members of the Supervisory Committee with a simple majority determining the outcome. If a tie vote occurs, then the student is considered to have failed the comprehensive examination defense.
- The committee may decide to pass a comprehensive examination contingent upon minor changes to any responses. Any required changes will be decided by the Supervisory Committee

and explained to the graduate student either in the defense meeting or very soon after the defense meeting by the Major Advisor.

- A result of pass is immediately documented by the signatures of the Supervisory Committee on the **Comprehensive Examination Defense Committee Approval** form. This form should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies.
- A result of fail is immediately documented on a **Report of Failure of a Comprehensive Examination** form that is submitted to the Graduate College by the Major Advisor (chair of the Supervisory Committee). A comprehensive examination that is failed on the first attempt can be repeated once, but only if a second attempt is requested by the student and approved by the academic unit responsible for the program. See the procedures in the Graduate Catalog under “Failure of a Comprehensive Examination”.

### **Final Grades for Comprehensive Examination**

- If the student passes the comprehensive examination defense and the Comprehensive Examination Defense Committee Approval form has been completed, the Major Advisor may submit a grade of pass (P) for all three COMM 690 credits.
- If the student does not pass the comprehensive examination defense the Major Advisor shall submit a grade of fail (F) for the three COMM 690 credits. However, if the student requests an opportunity to have a second defense, and the request is granted, then the Major Advisor shall submit a grade of incomplete (I) for the three COMM 690 credits and the Department shall follow the procedures described in the Graduate Catalog under “*Failure of a Comprehensive Examination*”.

## Suggested Timelines and Checklists

The following are suggested timelines for completing the M.A. in Communication. The actual timeline conducted by a student could vary depending on the methods chosen for a particular study or the type of thesis or project being conducted. Additionally, those needing more time to complete the degree (such as those working full time) may work with the Director of Graduate Studies and their Major Advisor to develop a schedule appropriate for the unique circumstances and document this in their plan of study.

### Suggested Coursework Timeline

The following is a recommended checklist for completing coursework in two years.

#### **First year of study:**

<input type="checkbox"/> COMM 501 Research Methods	1 <sup>st</sup> Semester (Fall)
<input type="checkbox"/> COMM 598 Communication Seminar	1 <sup>st</sup> Semester (Fall)
<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course	1 <sup>st</sup> Semester (Fall)
<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course	1 <sup>st</sup> Semester (Fall)
<input type="checkbox"/> COMM 505 Communication Theory and Philosophy	2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester (Spring)
<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course	2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester (Spring)
<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course	2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester (Spring)

#### **Second year of study, for the Thesis Option:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course	3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester (Fall)
<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course	3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester (Fall)
<input type="checkbox"/> COMM 593 Thesis credits (for thesis prospectus)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester (Fall)
<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course (optional)	Final Semester (Spring)
<input type="checkbox"/> COMM 593 Thesis credits	Final Semester (Spring)

#### **Second year of study, to the Project Option:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course	3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester (Fall)
<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course	3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester (Fall)
<input type="checkbox"/> COMM 591 Project credits (for project proposal)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester (Fall)
<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course (optional)	Final Semester (Spring)
<input type="checkbox"/> COMM 591 Project credits	Final Semester (Spring)

#### **Second year of study, for the Comprehensive Examination Option:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course	3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester (Fall)
<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course	3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester (Fall)
<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course	3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester (Fall)
<input type="checkbox"/> Elective Course (optional)	Final Semester (Spring)
<input type="checkbox"/> COMM 690 Master's Comprehensive Exam	Final Semester (Spring)

## Thesis Option Checklist

The following is a recommended checklist for completing the thesis option in two years.

### Select Major Advisor and Supervisory Committee:

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Select a Major Advisor                                   | Early 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Select a Supervisory Committee                           | Middle 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Submit form: <b>Appointment of Supervisory Committee</b> | Middle 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester |

### Complete a Plan of Study and Apply for Candidacy:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss overall plan of study with Major Advisor           | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Submit form: <b>Plan of Study</b>                          | End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Submit form: <b>Application for Admission to Candidacy</b> | Per the academic calendar<br><i>June 24, 2016</i> for December 2016 graduation<br><i>October 7, 2016</i> for May 2017 graduation<br><i>February 17, 2017</i> for August 2017 graduation |

### Develop and Defend Thesis Prospectus:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work with Major Advisor to narrow thesis topic          | End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Review relevant literature and develop thesis rationale | Summer  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Develop Thesis Prospectus                               | Early 3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Successfully defend Thesis Prospectus                   | Middle 3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apply for graduation                                    | Per the academic calendar<br><i>August 26, 2016</i> for December 2016 graduation<br><i>January 13, 2016</i> for May 2017 graduation<br><i>June 2, 2017</i> for August 2017 graduation |

### Conduct and Defend Thesis:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct thesis research and writing                       | 3 <sup>rd</sup> and Final Semesters  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Submit form: <b>Defense Notification</b>                  | Two weeks prior to defense   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notify Director of Graduate Studies of defense date, etc. | Two weeks prior to defense   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Successfully defend Thesis (Final Oral Examination)       | Per academic calendar<br><i>October 14, 2016</i> for December 2016 graduation<br><i>March 3, 2017</i> for May 2017 graduation<br><i>June 16, 2017</i> for August 2017 graduation |

### Final Thesis Approvals and Submission:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make any final edits as needed, per defense  | Immediately after defense  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have Major Advisor conduct a final review  | Immediately after final edits  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Submit forms: <b>Defense Committee Approval Page</b> , <b>Final Readings Approval Page</b> , and <b>Access Agreement</b> , and upload Thesis to ScholarWorks for Graduate College Review | Per academic calendar<br><i>November 4, 2016</i> for December 2016 graduation<br><i>March 17, 2017</i> for May 2017 graduation<br><i>July 7, 2017</i> for August 2017 graduation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make edits requested by Graduate College, as needed  | Upon Request   |

## Project Option Checklist

The following is a recommended checklist for completing the thesis option in two years.

### Select Major Advisor and Supervisory Committee:

- Select a Major Advisor
- Select a Supervisory Committee
- Submit form: **Appointment of Supervisory Committee**

Early 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester  
Middle 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester  
Middle 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester

### Complete a Plan of Study and Apply for Candidacy:

- Discuss overall plan of study with Major Advisor
- Submit form: **Plan of Study**
- Submit form: **Application for Admission to Candidacy**

2<sup>nd</sup> Semester  
End of 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester  
Per the academic calendar  
**June 24, 2016** for December 2016 graduation  
**October 7, 2016** for May 2017 graduation  
**February 17, 2017** for August 2017 graduation

### Develop and Defend Project Proposal:

- Work with Major Advisor to narrow project topic
- Review relevant literature and develop project rationale
- Develop a Project Proposal
- Successfully defend Project Proposal
- Apply for graduation

End of 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester  
Summer  
Early 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester  
Middle 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester  
Per the academic calendar  
**August 26, 2016** for December 2016 graduation  
**January 13, 2016** for May 2017 graduation  
**June 2, 2017** for August 2017 graduation

### Conduct and Defend Project:

- Conduct Project
- Notify Director of Graduate Studies of defense date, etc.
- Successfully defend Project (Final Oral Examination)

3<sup>rd</sup> and Final Semesters  
Two weeks prior to defense  
Per academic calendar  
**October 14, 2016** for December 2016 graduation  
**March 3, 2017** for May 2017 graduation  
**June 16, 2017** for August 2017 graduation

### Final Project Approvals and Submission:

- Make any final edits as needed, per defense
- Have Major Advisor conduct a final review
- Submit forms: **Project Defense Committee Approval Page**, and **Final Approval for Project**; and submit project to the Department

Immediately after defense  
Immediately after final edits  
Per academic calendar  
**December 9, 2016** for December 2016 graduation  
**April 28, 2017** for May 2017 graduation  
**August 4, 2017** for August 2017 graduation

## Comprehensive Examination Checklist

The following is a recommended checklist for completing the comprehensive examination option in two years.

### Select Major Advisor and Supervisory Committee:

- Select a Major Advisor
- Select a Supervisory Committee
- Submit form: **Appointment of Supervisory Committee**

Early 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester  
 Middle 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester  
 Middle 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester

### Complete a Plan of Study and Apply for Candidacy:

- Discuss overall plan of study with Major Advisor
- Submit form: **Plan of Study**
- Submit form: **Application for Admission to Candidacy**

2<sup>nd</sup> Semester  
 End of 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester  
 Per the academic calendar  
*June 24, 2016* for December 2016 graduation  
*October 7, 2016* for May 2017 graduation  
*February 17, 2017* for August 2017 graduation

### Plan for Comprehensive Examination:

- Work with Major Advisor to narrow competency areas
- Apply for Graduation
- Meet with Supervisory Committee to plan comprehensive exam
- Submit form: **Comprehensive Examination Plan**

3<sup>rd</sup> Semester  
 Per the academic calendar  
*August 26, 2016* for December 2016 graduation  
*January 13, 2016* for May 2017 graduation  
*June 2, 2017* for August 2017 graduation  
 Start of Final Semester  
 Start of Final Semester  
*September 15, 2016* for Dec. 2016 graduation  
*January 31, 2016* for May 2017 graduation  
*May 15, 2017* for August 2017 graduation

### Take and Defend Comprehensive Examination:

- Study for Comprehensive Examination
- Take Comprehensive Examination
- Successfully Defend Comprehensive Examination (Final Oral Examination)

Final Semester  
 End of Final Semester  
 By last day of classes  
*December 9, 2016* for December 2016 graduation  
*April 28, 2017* for May 2017 graduation  
*August 4, 2017* for August 2017 graduation

### Final Comprehensive Examination Approval:

- Submit form: **Comprehensive Examination Defense Committee Approval**

Immediately following defense

## Graduate Course Offerings

The following are the graduate courses offered in the M.A. Program in Communication.

### **Core Sequence Courses**

COMM 501 RESEARCH METHODS (3-0-3)(F). Provides an overview of foundational methodological approaches to research in the field of communication and media studies. Introduces students to issues of epistemology, scholarly inquiry, and criticism as aligned with common approaches to the study of communication.

COMM 505 THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION (3-0-3)(S). Provides an overview of leading theoretical traditions in communication studies and the philosophy of communication. Emphasizes meta-theoretical issues and understanding communication theory and theorizing as a lens for understanding everyday communication practices.

COMM 598 SEMINAR (F). Provides an introduction to graduate studies in Communication.

### **Relational and Organizational Communication Studies Courses**

COMM 506 INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION (3-0-3)(F/S). Explores contemporary theory and research related to the practice of interpersonal communication. Addresses contemporary issues with relational development, maintenance, and decline as well as varied types of relationships and relational contexts.

COMM 507 ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION (3-0-3)(F/S). Explores contemporary theory and research associated with the practice of organizational communication. Emphasizes communication as constitutive of organization and communication as essential in creating, maintaining, and changing organizational structures, cultures, identities, and power relations.

COMM 520 COLLABORATION AND CONFLICT (3-0-3)(F/S). Explores contemporary communication theory and research on collaboration and conflict. Attends to issues of conflict, conflict suppression, decision making, participatory practices, and workplace democracy.

COMM 521 DISCOURSE AND IDENTITY (3-0-3)(F/S). Examines discourse as a way to explore the intersections of communication and identity. Addresses the ways communicative practices create knowledge of the self with attention to issues of gender, race, ethnicity, disciplinary power, bio-politics, consent, and control.

COMM 522 COMMUNICATION PEDAGOGY AND TRAINING (3-0-3)(F/S). Explores teaching and learning scholarship focusing on communication pedagogy and the practice of teaching communication. Helps prepare students to teach in academic and other organizational settings.

### **Media Studies Courses**

COMM 508 MEDIA THEORY AND CRITICISM (3-0-3)(F/S). Examines a broad range of theoretical perspectives on media institutions, practices, and effects. Emphasis is given to the implications of media theory and research for citizens, members of civic or professional organizations who work with media, as well as media practitioners.

COMM 509 MEDIA LAW AND ETHICS (3-0-3)(F/S). Examines varied legal and ethical issues facing media practitioners and the public as consumers of media. Topics include First and Fourth Amendment, the right to privacy, censorship, libel and slander, copyright, and media and national security considerations.

COMM 530 MEDIA, POLITICS, AND POWER (3-0-3)(F/S). Explores the role of media in politics, governance and citizenship, with emphasis on the American media system. Focuses on the institutional relationships that control and influence media coverage of politics, campaigns, elections and policymaking, and examines the impact of digital technology and the Internet on participatory democracy.

COMM 531 MEDIA AND INSTITUTIONS (3-0-3)(F/S). Explores the influences of social forces and institutions on media organizations. Topics include the ways advertising, public relations, social media, and legal, regulatory, and political systems influence media economics, content, and competition.

COMM 532 MEDIA AESTHETICS AND CULTURE (3-0-3)(F/S). Explores the philosophical and cultural implications of media theory through the lens of aesthetics. With attention to the historical progression of theory addressing the moving image, this course focuses on the mutually dependent relationship between form and content in understanding, analyzing, and interpreting visual media texts.

### ***Critical/Cultural Communication Studies Courses***

COMM 510 COMMUNICATION, COMMUNITY AND POLITICS (3-0-3)(F/S). Explores the connections between theory and practice in communication studies, community organizing, and politics. Examines the exercise of power, conflicts between autonomy and control, and intersections between political and social life.

COMM 511 CRITICAL THEORIES (3-0-3)(F/S). Provides an overview of critical perspectives of media, society, and organizations by exploring the work of the Frankfurt School, postmodern perspectives, as well as feminist and other critical theories in the field of communication.

COMM 512 CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION (3-0-3)(F/S). Examines current issues and theoretical perspectives in the study of communication within particular cultural contexts. Topics include the history of the terms “culture” and “communication,” and the evolution of theoretical perspectives on both terms.

COMM 540 COMMUNICATION, GENDER, AND DIFFERENCE (3-0-3)(F/S). Explores the intersections of communication and gender. Attends to difference and diversity as communicative accomplishments and examines issues of identity, language, power, and hegemony.

COMM 541 RHETORIC AND CIVIC LIFE (3-0-3)(F/S). Examines the intersections of rhetorical theory and practice with civic life. Addresses issues of civic engagement, public sphere(s), rhetorical performance, citizenship, and the construction of (im)possibility.

### ***Other Elective Courses***

COMM 590 PRACTICUM/INTERNSHIP. Offers students the opportunity to engage in supervised practical application of previously studied theories.

COMM 595 READING AND CONFERENCE. Offers students the opportunity to conduct topical research, assigned readings, or literature reviews. The graduate faculty advisor and the student prepare and sign an agreement describing the amount and type of work to be accomplished.

COMM 596 INDEPENDENT STUDY. Offers students the opportunity to pursue advanced study of a specialized topic in which the student works with a high degree of independence to meet well-defined goals under the supervision of a member of the graduate faculty. An independent study cannot be substituted for a course regularly offered.

COMM 597 SPECIAL TOPICS IN COMMUNICATION. Provides instruction on a topic that is not included in the catalog of regular graduate courses in communication. If offered, a description of the special topics course is provided in the Schedule of Classes published each semester.

***Graduate Culminating Activities***

COMM 591 PROJECT. Execution of a substantial exercise that demonstrates the ability to successfully and independently carry out a professional activity similar to what is encountered in the professional workplace. The resulting project must be defended at a final oral examination.

COMM 593 THESIS. Independent research at the master's level. The resulting thesis must be defended at a final oral examination.

COMM 690 MASTER'S COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION. A culminating examination attempted after completion of all required core courses and admission to candidacy. Resulting examination responses must be defended at a final oral examination.

## Graduate Course Rotation Plan

### Graduate Course Scheduling

To provide a variety of graduate course offerings for students, four (4) graduate courses are planned to be offered every semester (with the addition of the one-credit COMM 498 Communication Seminar also offered in the Fall).

And with an interest in offering graduate classes on days/times that best meet a variety of graduate student needs, while also adhering to standard timeslots to schedule courses, the following days and times are the standard course offering times for graduate courses:

- Mondays 4:30 – 7:15 p.m.
- Tuesdays 4:30 – 7:15 p.m.
- Wednesdays 4:30 – 7:15 p.m.
- Thursdays 4:30 – 7:15 p.m.
- Mondays/Wednesdays 1:30 – 2:45 p.m.
- Tuesdays/Thursdays 12:00 – 1:15 p.m. or 1:30 – 2:45 p.m.
- Wednesdays/Fridays 1:30 – 2:45 p.m.

Typically three courses will be offered once a week from 4:30 – 7:15 p.m. with one class offered twice a week on Mondays/Wednesdays, Tuesdays/Thursdays, or Wednesdays/Fridays in the early afternoon (with the addition of COMM 598 Communication Seminar being offered one day a week in the early afternoon).

Graduate courses may be offered alternative days and times, upon approval from the Director Graduate Studies and the Department Head. However, graduate course offerings should conform to the standard class times offered by the university.

## Graduate Course Offerings

The graduate course offerings and corresponding two-year course rotation plan are guided by the notion that each semester, students should have an access to one class from each of the three interrelated and mutually-supportive areas of study offered by the program (Relational and Organizational Studies, Media Studies, and Critical/Cultural Studies). Additionally, students should have access to the list of courses planned to be offered during their two-year course of study so they can appropriately plan their graduate learning experience.

Regarding the core course offerings, the aim is to offer all three core courses in the first year of a graduate student's studies. As such, the core course offerings are typically:

- COMM 501 Research Methods offered in the Fall
- COMM 598 Communication Seminar offered in the Fall
- COMM 505 Theory and Philosophy of Communication offered in the Spring

Regarding elective course offerings, the aim is to ensure students have the opportunity to study within and across all areas of study while also ensuring a variety of courses are offered from year to year and that courses are not repeated during a graduate student's two-year time in the program: As such, the elective course offerings follow these guidelines:

- One elective course from each of the three interrelated and mutually-supportive areas of study will be offered each semester (Relational and Organizational Studies, Media Studies, and Critical/Cultural Studies).
- Any elective course should not be repeated within the same two-year time frame. In other words, any particular course should only be taught only once every two years.

Based on the above guidelines, the following are typical Fall and Spring course offerings:

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Courses Offered</b>
Fall	COMM 501 Research Methods (3 credits) COMM 598 Communication Seminar (1 credit) One Relational/Organizational Communication Course (3 credits) One Media Studies Course (3 credits) One Critical/Cultural Studies Course (3 credits)
Spring	COMM 505 Theory and Philosophy of Communication (3 credits) One Relational/Organizational Communication Course (3 credits) One Media Studies Course (3 credits) One Critical/Cultural Studies Course (3 credits)

### Two-Year Course Rotation Plan

The following two-year course rotation plan is intended to serve as a guide for scheduling graduate courses in the associated two-year term. This two-year plan will be updated each year as actual course offerings are scheduled.

It is important to recognize that this plan intended as a guide to course scheduling. Actual course scheduling may vary and this plan will change, as needed, to accommodate varied needs across the department.

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Courses Offered</b>
Fall 2016	COMM 501 Research Methods (3 credits) COMM 598 Communication Seminar (1 credits) COMM 521 Discourse and Identity (3 credits) COMM 530 Media, Power and Politics (3 credits) COMM 510 Communication, Community and Politics (3 credits)
Spring 2017	COMM 505 Theory and Philosophy of Communication (3 credits) COMM 520 Collaboration and Conflict (3 credits) COMM 531 Media and Institutions (3 credits) COMM 540 Communication, Gender, and Difference (3 credits)
Fall 2017	COMM 501 Research Methods (3 credits) COMM 598 Communication Seminar (1 credits) COMM 507 Organizational Communication (3 credits) COMM 532 Media Aesthetics and Culture (3 credits) COMM 510 Critical Theories (3 credits)
Spring 2018	COMM 505 Theory and Philosophy of Communication (3 credits) COMM 522 Communication Pedagogy and Training (3 credits) COMM 509 Media Law and Ethics (3 credits) COMM 541 Rhetoric and Civic Life (3 credits)

## Other Graduate Policies and Guidelines

The M.A. in Communication is guided by the policies of graduate study as outlined by the Graduate College. For a complete list of graduate policies please see the Graduate Catalog at <https://graduatecatalog.boisestate.edu/>.

The following policies are particular the M.A. in Communication. If a policy below relates to a specific Graduate College policy, this is noted by the phrase “per the Graduate College policy”.

### Graduate Elective Course Substitutions

- A student may substitute up to three graduate courses, totaling no more than 9 credits, to meet the elective requirements. These courses may be from departments outside of the Department of Communication, yet should align with a student’s overall plan of study.
- A student concurrently enrolled in a Graduate Certificate program may substitute up to two graduate courses from the certificate program, totaling no more than 6 credits, to meet the elective requirements, and these 6 credits may account for 6 (of 9) elective credits that can be substituted.
- Per the Graduate College policy, approval for elective course substitutions is required by the student’s supervisory committee and the graduate program coordinator, and the substitutions must be consistent with all applicable regulations of the Graduate College.
- Formal approval is attained with approval of a Plan of Study and an Application for Admission to Candidacy form.

### Credits from Graduate Certificate Programs

- Per the Graduate College policy: A student may be enrolled simultaneously in a graduate certificate program subject to the following conditions: (1) the content of the two programs are logically related; (2) the specific policies of the two programs permit co-enrollment; (3) the co-enrollment is approved by the chair of the supervisory committee or the advisor and the coordinators of the graduate certificate and degree programs.
- Students pursuing a graduate certificate program concurrently with the M.A. in Communication may substitute up to two graduate courses, totaling no more than 6 credits, to meet the elective requirements. And these credits would count toward the total of 9 credits of elective substitutions.
- The M.A. in Communication does not allow graduate credits previously applied to meet the requirements of a completed Boise State graduate certificate to also be applied to meet the requirements for the M.A. in Communication.

### Restrictions on Undergraduate Courses

- Undergraduate courses are typically not appropriate for meeting the graduate elective requirements for the M.A. in Communication.
- However, if the graduate student has a compelling need to take an undergraduate course (e.g., it is a course topic not offered in the M.A. in Communication or another graduate program at Boise State, aligns directly with a student’s plan of study, and is necessary for satisfying a student’s plan of study) then, with approval from the student’s Major Advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies, an undergraduate class may be applied to meet elective requirements, subject to the following restrictions (per the Graduate College policy):
  - The course must be an upper-division course and must be in a discipline outside the major field of study of the master’s program.

- A grade of B or better must be earned in the course.
- The course cannot represent effort for an undergraduate thesis, internship, practicum, independent study or research, conference or workshop, experiential learning, study abroad, seminar, or colloquium.

### Participating in Commencement

- Per Graduate College policy, candidates for graduate degrees are eligible to participate in commencement if cleared to do so by the Registrar. A student completing a graduate certificate program is not eligible to participate in commencement unless he or she is also a candidate for a graduate degree and has been cleared for participation by the Registrar.
- In order to be cleared by the Registrar, a graduate student must accomplish the following by the dates specified in the academic calendar (see the specific semesters in the academic calendar at: <https://registrar.boisestate.edu/boise-state-academic-calendars/>):
  - Successfully Admitted to Candidacy (i.e., the Application for Admission to Candidacy form has been approved by the Graduate College)
  - Applied for Graduation
  - Successfully defended a Thesis, Project, or Comprehensive Exam:
    - For a Thesis, the student has submitted a completed Advisor-Approved version of their Thesis (i.e., Review Copy) as well as the signed Final Reading Approval and Access Agreement form to the Graduate College's Thesis and Dissertation Office by the date specified in the academic calendar (and listed in the checklist/timeline section of this handbook)
    - For a Project, the student has submitted a completed Project Defense Committee Approval Page as well as a Final Approval for Project; and has submitted the project to the Department by the date specified in the checklist/timeline section of this handbook.
    - For a Comprehensive Examination, the student has submitted a Comprehensive Examination Defense Committee Approval form by the date specified in the checklist/timeline section of this handbook.
- Students who have not been cleared by Register cannot participate in commencement.

### COMM 590 Practicum/Internship

- Student's pursuing a M.A. in Communication may take 3 to 6 credits of COMM 590 Practicum/Internship.
- Graduate-level Practicums or Internships offer students an experiential learning opportunity that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skill development in a professional setting. Graduate-level Practicums and Internships are intended to offer students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience in professional fields potentially being considering as a career path.
- COMM 590 Practicum/Internship opportunities should maintain a graduate-level learning experience equivalent to a graduate-level seminar or other graduate level course. As such, Practicums or Internships should focus on developing connections between the graduate-level coursework in Communication, evaluating the successful application of knowledge and theory of Communication at the graduate level, and supporting an overall graduate-level learning objectives for the M.A. in Communication.
- Students interested in a Practicum or Internship opportunity should determine whether they are engaging in a practicum or an internship, per the following descriptions:

- An **Internship** provides experiential learning at an organization not directly associated with Boise State University. An Internship requires partnering with a supervisor at the organization (serving as the Organizational Supervisor) who will work directly with the graduate student to guide her or his graduate-level learning experiences. Examples might include serving as an Intern for a non-profit organization, corporation, government entity, or social movement group in the community applying graduate-level knowledge and theory of communication in a professional setting.
  - A **Practicum** involves experiential learning at an organization directly associated with Boise State University. A Practicum requires partnering with a graduate faculty member (serving as the Organizational Supervisor) who will work directly with the graduate student to guide her or his graduate-level learning experiences. Examples might include working with an organization on campus, serving a non-paid Teaching or Research Assistant, or assisting with academic programming in ways that apply graduate-level knowledge and theory of communication in a professional or academic setting.
- A Practicum or Internship opportunity requires approval from both the Department’s Graduate Internship Coordinator and an Organization Supervisor.
- The **Department Graduate Internship Coordinator** is responsible for reviewing application for COMM 590 and ensuring the opportunity meets graduate-level learning experience. Department Head, Todd Norton, is the Department’s Graduate Internship Coordinator.
  - The **Organization Supervisor** also needs to approve the application for COMM 590 and is responsible for guiding the graduate-level learning experience. If engaging in an Internship opportunity, the Organization Supervisor should be an employee or member of the organization at the internship site where work will be conducted. If engaging in a Practicum opportunity, the Organization Supervisor should be a Graduate Faculty member in the Department of Communication (see the list of Graduate Faculty in the Graduate Catalog). If a student is interested in a Practicum guided by a graduate faculty member outside the department, please discuss this with the Director of Graduate Studies.
- Engaging in a Practicum or Internship requires planning and coordination with the Organization Supervisor and the Department Graduate Internship Coordinator. A student interested in enrolling in COMM 590 should meet with the Department Internship Coordinator to determine whether it is an opportunity that can be considered for graduate credit.
- To assist the Department Internship Coordinator evaluate the proposed Practicum or Internship experience to ensure that it meets department guidelines, students should meet with the Organization Supervisor and develop a **Learning Plan** that includes the following:
- A description of the professional site and details as to the type of work the student will be conducting to earn Practicum/Internship credits.
  - A description of how the Practicum/Internship will relate to graduate level learning in pursuit of an MA in Communication.
  - A list of learning objectives for the Practicum/Internship experience. These learning objectives should be specific in terms of graduate-level development and/or application of knowledge and theory of communication.
  - A detailed assessment plan for evaluating the learning objectives for the Practicum/Internship. Please clear on any formal professional evaluations or assignments such as exams, essays, reflection essays, or other forms of assessment.
  - The proposed work schedule detailing the days/time the student will be expected to work in this capacity. Note: Graduate students are not expected to work more than 20 hours a week on Practicum/Internship credits. And if a graduate student is serving as a Graduate Assistant (expected to work 20 hours a week in this capacity) while earning a

- Practicum/Internship credits, the Practicum/Internship should not entail more than 10 hours a week, and priority for work shall remain on the Graduate Assistantship.
- Determination if the number of credits for the Practicum/Internship. Note: Students earn one credit for each 45-50 hours of work.
  - Determination if assessment will be Pass/Fail or Graded. If graded, please provide a description of how the grade will be determined.
  - The name, title, and contact information for the Organization Supervisor.
- If assistance is needed to facilitate the development of a Practicum or Internship Learning Plan (especially when working with Organization Supervisors outside the Department), please discuss with the Director of Graduate Studies.
  - When the Learning Plan is completed, the student should review the plan with the Department Graduate Internship Coordinator to ensure it meets graduate-level learning expectations and that number of credits assigned is appropriate. If any changes are recommend, it may entail working with the Organization Supervisor to amend or revise the Learning Plan.
  - When the Learning Plan is agreed upon by both the Organization Supervisor and the Department Internship Coordinator, the application process can begin.
  - Students interested in pursuing a practicum or internship experience will need to register for COMM 590 Practicum/Internship credits. Registering for this course requires following the “Registration Process for an internship for academic credit” through the career center. Graduate students can follow the process to “Enroll in Special Graduate Courses” by clicking on the link for an “Application for Practicum/Internship” on the Graduate College forms page: <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu/forms/>. This will take you to the Career Center website where process involves the following:
    - Access the Internship Application for Academic Credit found on-line at the career center’s website at <http://career.boisestate.edu>. Click on the left hand side where it says: Internship Application for Academic Credit <https://web.boisestate.edu/internships/>
    - Log in using your Boise State username and password.
    - To create your application, hit the plus (+) sign next to Internship Application for Academic Credit on the left hand side of the page. Click on the option Create an Application
    - Enter all required information (fields with \* are required)
    - For Department choose: **Communication** and for Subject choose: **Masters of Communication**
    - Then hit SUBMIT (if you do not have all the information you can hit SAVE and come back to it at another time; remember it is not submitted until you hit SUBMIT)
    - Once submitted, the application will be routed to the Department Internship Coordinator for approval – he/she will get an email notification asking them to approve your internship
    - Once approved by department internship coordinator, it will then be routed to your Organization Supervisor for approval via email
    - Once approved by the organization supervisor, it will be routed via email to the Registrar’s Office and the approved internship course will be added to your class schedule in my.Boisestate.
    - PLEASE NOTE: you will not be registered for your internship course until your department internship coordinator and organization supervisor approve your internship application.

### **COMM 595 Reading and Conference**

- Students pursuing the M.A. in Communication may take 3 to 6 credits of COMM 595 Reading and Conference. However, students are limited to 6 total credits of COMM 595 Reading and Conference and COMM 596 Independent Study to meet elective requirements (e.g., two COMM 595 classes for 6 credits; or two COMM 596 classes for 6 credits; or one COMM 595 class and one COMM 596 class for a total of 6 credits).
- A graduate-level Reading and Conference offer students an opportunity to conduct topical research, engage assigned readings, and/or develop literature reviews or other scholarly work. Reading and Conference courses must have well-defined goals and operate under the close supervision of a member of the graduate faculty. A Reading and Conference should maintain a graduate-level learning experience equivalent to a graduate-level seminar or other graduate level course.
- A Reading and Conference cannot be substituted for a course regularly offered at Boise State, nor can reading and conference credits be used to improve a grade in a course the student has already taken.
- Students interested in pursuing COMM 595 Reading and Conference should consult with the graduate faculty instructor guiding this learning experience to determine the content and focus, and then submit an “Application for Reading and Conference 595”. This form can be found on the Graduate College forms page: <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu/forms/>.
- Graduate faculty offering COMM 595 Reading and Conference are expected to develop a syllabus that provides at minimum a description of the Reading and Conference, a list of readings, learning outcomes, and assessment methods.

### **COMM 596 Independent Study**

- Students pursuing the M.A. in Communication may take 3 to 6 credits of COMM 596 Independent Study. However, students are limited to 6 total credits of COMM 595 Reading and Conference and COMM 596 Independent Study to meet elective requirements. (e.g., two COMM 595 classes for 6 credits; or two COMM 596 classes for 6 credits; or one COMM 595 class and one COMM 596 class for a total of 6 credits).
- A graduate-level Independent Study should offer students an opportunity to study a specialized topic and/or design and complete a specific scholarly project with a high degree of independence. An Independent Study must have well-defined goals and operate under the close supervision of a member of the graduate faculty. An Independent Study should maintain a graduate-level learning experience equivalent to a graduate-level seminar or other graduate level course.
- An Independent Study cannot be substituted for a course regularly offered at Boise State, nor can independent study credits be used to improve a grade in a course the student has already taken.
- Students interested in pursuing COMM 596 Independent Study should consult with the graduate faculty instructor guiding this learning experience to determine the content and focus, and then submit an “Application for Graduate Independent Study”. This form can be found on the Graduate College forms page: <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu/forms/>.
- Graduate faculty offering COMM 596 Independent Study are expected to develop a syllabus that provides at minimum a description of the independent study, a list of readings, learning outcomes, and assessment methods.

### **COMM 597 Special Topics in Communication**

- The Special Topics in Communication course is intended to serve as a way for graduate faculty to teach a course aligned with a special interest or current area of research that is not on the list of regularly offered graduate courses.
- A special topics course should align with one (or more) the three interrelated areas of study in the department (Relational and Organizational Studies, Critical/Cultural Studies, or Media Studies).
- If a special topics course is offered for three credits it will replace the course listed in the rotation plan most closely associated with the area of this special topics class. For instance, if it is a special topics in Media Studies, it will replace the scheduled course in media studies being offered the semester in which the special topics course is offered. If a special topics course is offered for less than three credits, it may be offered in addition to the courses listed in the course rotation plan, pending approval from the Director of Graduate Studies and Department Head.
- Graduate faculty interested in teaching a special topics course must submit a brief description and outline of the course and have it approved by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Head in order to have it added to the schedule of courses. This should take place prior to the course planning efforts for the semester in which the course is desired to be offered.
- Specific descriptions for the special topics courses is given in the *Schedule of Classes* published each semester
- Only one special topics course can be offered each semester. And, to help ensure a quality rotation of courses, a particular Special Topics course should not be offered again for three years.
- Special Topics courses can be repeated for credit. As such, if a student took a Special Topics course, she or he can take another special topics course, if offered.

# Appendix

## Plan of Study M.A. in Communication Boise State University

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

Expected Graduation Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Course #	Course Title	Credits	Completion Date (Semester and Year)
<i>Required Core Courses (7 credits)</i>			
COMM 501	Research Methods	3	
COMM 505	Communication Theory and Philosophy	3	
COMM 498	Communication Seminar	1	
<i>List Graduate Elective Courses below (18 – 21 credits)</i>			
<b><i>Check chosen culminating activity</i></b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> COMM 591 Project (6 credits) Requires at least 18 credits of Graduate Elective Courses			
<input type="checkbox"/> COMM 593 Thesis (6 credits) Requires at least 18 Credits of Graduate Elective Courses			
<input type="checkbox"/> COMM 690 Master’s Comprehensive Exam (3 credits) Requires at least 21 credits of Graduate Elective Courses			
<i>List Culminating Activity Below (3 – 6 credits)</i>			

**Credits:**

Total Credits of Core Courses:	<u>7</u>	
Total Credits of Elective Courses:	+ _____	18 or more for a Thesis or Project 21 or more for a Comprehensive Exam
Total Credits of Culminating Activity:	+ _____	6 or more for a Thesis or Project 3 or more for a Comprehensive Exam
TOTAL CREDITS	= _____	31 or more

**Identity Statement:**

Include a brief statement below that defines your primary area(s) of study; individual graduate learning objectives; explains how your graduate studies will help you advance your personal, professional, or scholarly interests; identifies which culminating activity you will be pursuing; and explains why this culminating activity is best to support your learning.

**Approvals:**

Graduate Student Name	Signature	Date
Committee Chair/Advisor Name	Signature	Date
Director of Graduate Studies Name	Signature	Date