

I. Introduction

The School of Communication offers graduate programs leading to the Master of Arts and the Doctor of Philosophy degrees, both of which provide the opportunity for students to develop a broad range of professional and scholarly competencies. One of the most important roles of the graduate program in Communication is to nurture a vibrant community of scholarship, where a plurality of methods and theories can flourish in intellectual counterpoint to one another. We believe diversity of intellectual perspectives, scholarly discussion, and debate among and between representatives of those perspectives are essential to understanding human communication processes, yet we seek new collaborative models for developing the potential of the field as well as improving human communication. We believe communication should be studied across local, regional, national, and international communities; therefore student and faculty engagement in a variety of cultural and other contexts is encouraged.

II. Mission

The Masters program in communication strikes a purposeful and creative balance between the study and practice of human communication. This program will provide a rigorous learning environment, foster excellence in teaching, research and application, consistent with the University's liberal arts tradition. The intent of the M.A. program is to graduate students with professional and scholarly competencies enabling them to be leaders in assessing and improving public communication and/or pursuing an advanced degree.

The Ph.D. program in communication and public discourse provides the opportunity to explore the range of ways human symbolic activity affects the public sphere. This program will provide a rigorous learning environment, foster excellence in teaching, research and application, consistent with the University's liberal arts tradition. The intent of the Ph.D. program is to graduate students with scholarly competencies enabling them to assume roles as intellectual leaders of the field of communication as well as public intellectuals stimulating discussion of significant communication issues.

III. Assessment Process and Schedule

The School of Communication graduate program continually assesses the progress of its graduate students and the quality of its Masters and Ph.D. program. Assessment of student learning occurs to improve achievement of specified goals for student learning. Student learning in the graduate program occurs in scheduled courses as well as other experiences available to students, including a research colloquium, teaching series, faculty-led research projects, independent readings and projects, department and university service, professional conference participation, and scholarly publication. Students are encouraged to actively seek out ways to develop their professional and scholarly competencies.

1. Responsibilities. While the responsibility for learning ultimately rests with the student, the responsibility for ensuring that assessment of student learning takes place rests with the

Graduate Director (or a designee) and the faculty. Advisors and committee chairs, in conjunction with the individual student and with input from committee members, are responsible for the assessment of learning by individual students. The Graduate Committee reviews assessment information aggregated by the Graduate Director and plans appropriate changes to the curriculum and student experiences and expectations based on that information. The Graduate Director, with the Graduate Committee, is responsible for ensuring that the changes are implemented.

2. Schedule. An assessment file is kept for each student in a centralized location. A review of student learning by the advisor, student, and committee members should occur at least three times prior to the student's completion of the program: first, at a meeting discussing the student's program of study and goals for learning; second, at a meeting following comprehensive examinations; and third, at the final oral examination or defense. A copy of the completed assessment review is provided to the student and to the Graduate Director, who aggregates information from all students. The Graduate Committee meets annually for the purpose of evaluating assessment findings and planning improvements. The Graduate Director and committee chairs/advisors are responsible for working together to ensure deadlines and proper procedures are followed. However, it is also important for the student to be active in this process as well.

3. Results. The point of assessment of student learning is to improve student learning by using assessment results as the basis for decisions about curriculum and student learning experiences. The Graduate Director communicates assessment results and the uses made of the results in an annual report of assessment activities given to the Graduate Faculty and the University.

IV. Goals for Student Learning—Master of Arts

A. In the area of communication **theory**, M.A. graduates are expected to:

1. Distinguish between and explain basic tenets of major theoretical positions in the field
2. Compare and contrast at least two models or definitions of communication
3. Demonstrate breadth of knowledge about at least two significant topics or concepts relevant to communication or depth in one topic or concept
4. Apply or develop a communication theory to frame a research project
5. Explain the development of communication studies as an academic discipline
6. Acquire particular expertise in an area of communication scholarship relevant to their career
7. Critically assess the implications of communication practices for civic discourse

B. In the area of communication **research**, M.A. graduates are expected to:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the basic principles and issues of social scientific, humanistic, rhetorical, and critical communication research methods
2. Be conversant with the range of methodologies used in communication research, including quantitative/qualitative approaches
3. Identify the main scholars, scholarship, and journals applicable to their area of interest
4. Conceptualize and design an independent research project
5. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of published communication studies

6. Find and evaluate information relevant to an area of professional practice
7. Conduct research leading to usable research findings

C. In the area of **professional practice**, M.A. graduates are expected to:

1. Understand the possible relationships between practice and theory
2. Transfer and apply findings of communication research to professional practice
3. Display highly competent verbal and written communication skills
4. Integrate emerging communication technologies into the workplace
5. Serve the public interest by using communication theory and research to address practical, real-world situations
6. Exhibit competence in teaching (if applicable)
7. Provide informed leadership in their area of professional practice (if applicable)

V. Goals for Student Learning—Ph.D. Program

A. In the area of communication **theory**, Ph.D. graduates are expected to:

1. Understand the ontological, epistemological, and ideological principles and differences of major theoretical positions in the field
2. Contribute to critical discussion of models and definitions of communication
3. Demonstrate depth of knowledge about at least three significant topics or concepts relevant to communication
4. Be familiar with major scholars and works across the spectrum of communication studies
5. Conduct a comprehensive literature review of work relevant to a scholarly project
6. Generate new theoretical insights from critical reading, analysis, and research
7. Integrate theoretical insights into an in-depth analysis of an aspect of public discourse

B. In the area of communication **research**, Ph.D. graduates are expected to:

1. Understand the basic principles of social scientific, humanistic, rhetorical, and critical communication research approaches
2. Compare positions on the role of and relationships between theory and research
3. Contribute to critical discussion of research issues, methods, and ethics
4. Know the range of methodologies and their logic used in communication research
5. Demonstrate expertise in using at least two research methodologies
6. Design, propose, seek funding for, and carry out independent research projects
7. Describe the use, significance, and limitations of their research results

C. In the area of **professional practice**, Ph.D. graduates are expected to:

1. Be knowledgeable of the field of communication, its historical development, professional associations, and major debates and issues
2. Demonstrate teaching competency
3. Articulate a philosophy of service or engagement to guide contributions to the field, higher education or other professional setting, and the public

4. Be familiar with processes of submission, review, presentation, and publication of scholarly work
5. Have exemplary skills in writing and presenting scholarly work for a variety of audiences
6. Contribute to public discussion of significant communication issues

VI. Assessment Methods—Master of Arts

A. Direct Measures

1. Scholarly or professional portfolio, including:
 - Resume or curriculum vitae
 - Papers, exams, and research projects
 - Samples of professional work (if relevant)
 - Evidence of teaching effectiveness (if relevant)
2. Comprehensive written and oral examinations
3. Thesis or independent project
4. Presentation of independent or multi-authored research results to a public, professional, or scholarly audience

B. Indirect Measures

1. Program evaluation (conducted according to the University's schedule and process)
2. Exit interview and survey (conducted with each graduating student)
3. Survey of alumni (conducted at 3-5 year intervals)
5. Employment placement analysis (conducted at 3-5 year intervals)

VII. Assessment Methods—Ph.D.

A. Direct Measures

1. Scholarly portfolio, including (as appropriate and determined with chair or committee)
 - Curriculum vitae
 - Evidence of teaching ability (e.g. teaching philosophy, teaching effectiveness, self-reflexive pedagogy, sample syllabi, sample assignments, sample student work, teaching evaluations)
 - Samples of professional work
 - Course papers, exams, research projects
 - Conference and other scholarly presentations
 - Published papers or reports (if available)
 - Evidence of public, professional, or university service
2. Comprehensive written and oral examinations
3. Dissertation
4. Presentation of a sole or lead-authored research paper at a scholarly conference

B. Indirect Measures

1. Program evaluation (conducted according to the University's schedule and process)
2. Exit interview and survey (conducted with each graduating student)
3. Survey of alumni (conducted at 3-5 year intervals)

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