Department of Communication and Journalism
Graduate Degree Program in
Professional Communication
Graduate Handbook

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Department of Communication and Journalism
College of Liberal Arts
101 Bunnell Building
Phone: (907) 474-7761
e-mail: fyvcomm@uaf.edu
www.uaf.edu/comm/

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Department of Communication and Journalism

This guide is intended to assist graduate students in completing their academic career as expeditiously and as meaningfully as possible, while still complying with general UAF regulations.

Concentration of Study

The Master of Arts in Professional Communication is a 30 to 40 credit degree program in the College of Liberal Arts (Note: Graduate students earn a minimum of 30 credit hours while Graduate Teaching Assistants must earn 40 credit hours which includes Mentored Teaching classes each teaching semester). The program is comprised of 18 credits in required Communication coursework and 6 to 9 credits of elective coursework. Students successfully completing coursework and comprehensive examinations will finalize degree qualifications with a minimum of 6 thesis or project credit hours and an Oral Thesis Defense in a public forum. This program is defined both to prepare students for the rigor of doctoral study and to prepare practitioners for application of Communication knowledge in professional settings.

Mission Statement

Communication focuses on understanding the processes that occur when individuals interact with one another, whether in interpersonal, small group, family, organizational, or public situations. Courses in Communication emphasize understanding what happens in direct verbal and nonverbal interactions between people, as opposed to written communication, or to interaction via television, radio, or film. Courses in Communication acknowledge both that communication occurs between person who are diverse in gender, cultural background, and beliefs, and that such diversity is becoming increasingly apparent in an ever more complex and interdependent global society.
Department Chair

Charles Mason
Professor and Chair
(907) 474-6217
cwmason@alaska.edu

Faculty Specializing in Professional Communication

Peter A. DeCaro, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
(907) 474-6799
padecaro@alaska.edu

Amy May, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
(907) 474-6591
amay11@alaska.edu

Kevin L. Sager, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
(907) 474-5060
ksager2@alaska.edu

Karen M. Taylor, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
(907) 474-6818
kmtaylor4@alaska.edu

Staff

Courtney Pagh
Administrative Assistant III
(907) 474-6591
fycomm@uaf.edu
M.A. Degree Requirements

Requirements for the M.A. Degree in Professional Communication

1. Complete the general university requirements and Master’s degree requirements.
2. Pass the written comprehensive examination, which is to be taken as soon as possible after the student completes the required courses, i.e. 18 credits, apart from thesis (normally given in December).
3. Students may advance to candidacy when their advisory committee deems that they have made satisfactory progress in both academic and writing areas.

Course Requirements (30 – 40 credits)

Complete a minimum of 24 credits at the 600 level (a maximum of 6 credits of approved 400-level courses may be included in the 30-40 credit requirements).

Required Courses (24 credits):

- COJO 600 – Introduction to Professional Communication
- COJO 625 – Communication Theory
- COJO 601 – Communication Research Methodologies (Social Science)
- COJO 602 – Communication Research Methodologies (Human Science)
- COJO 675 – Training and Development/Applied Communication
- COJO 680 – Communication and Diversity in the Professional World
- COJO 698 - Non-Thesis/Project Procedures (6-9 credits)
  or
- COJO 699 – Thesis (6-9 credits)
- COJO 661 – Mentored Teaching (required only for Graduate Teaching Assistants and is 1 credit per semester, total of 4 credits for a 2 year degree completion).

Elective Courses (6 – 9 credits) [6 for Grad Students / 9 for TA’s – see below]:

- COJO 622 – Interpersonal Interaction
- COJO 631 – Team Building
- COJO 635 – Organizational Culture and Communication
- COJO 642 – Health Communication
- COJO 682 – Seminar in Communication

(Alternatively, students may take 400 and 600 level courses in Art, Business Administration, Communication, Criminal Justice, Education, English, Journalism, Marketing, and Northern Studies as well as graduate level Independent/Directed Studies to fulfill the 6 credit elective requirement, if approved by the student’s committee. Students will also be allowed to apply up to 6 credits of appropriate graduate level
coursework from other universities in the elective area, if approved by the student’s committee.)

Coursework and Thesis Sequencing for M.A. Degree Requirements

Coursework and Thesis Sequencing

The sequence of courses and thesis work assumes a two-year span for completion of the M.A. degree, which is the expected time to completion for Graduate Teaching Assistants. Students planning a longer span for degree completion are strongly advised to follow the same overall sequencing, completing the courses listed before each semester before advancing to subsequent coursework. (UAF regulations state that all requirements for the M.A. must be completed within a seven year period).

1st Semester: 600, 601 or 602, and 625 (plus 1 unit 661 for TA’s). These courses form the core of the M.A. Program.

2nd Semester: 601 or 602, 675, and 680 (plus 1 unit 661 for TA’s). Request Graduate Committee and Chair/Thesis/Non-Thesis Project Advisor. Complete and obtain signatures for Appointment of Advisory Committee and Graduate Study Plan (GSP) forms before the end of the second semester, or the completion of 18 graduate credits (make copies of both completed forms for your files and one for your Thesis Advisor prior to submission to the Graduate School).

3rd Semester: Two 3-credit elective courses, 3 credits of COJO 698 [non-thesis/project] or COJO 699 [thesis], and 1 unit of COJO 661 (for TAs only). Early in this semester (by the end of the first month of the semester), or before progressing beyond 21 credits, get thesis or non-thesis/project RQ solidified and approved with Thesis/Non-thesis Project Advisor, which involves preparing an executive summary of relevant literature and the methodology to be employed.

If you are studying human beings, by the end of the first full month of your third semester (at the latest) prepare a complete IRB protocol application (to be discussed and planned with your Thesis and submitted to the Office of Research Integrity (ORI via IRBNET at www.irbnet.com), schedule a Thesis/Non-Thesis Prospectus meeting with your Committee to discuss the proposed research, and get signed Committee approval (student cannot move forward in the program until approval is granted). At this point submit your application for Advancement to Candidacy (make copies for Department files, your files, and for Thesis Advisor prior to submission to the Graduate School). Students completing a Non-Thesis/Project do not submit their project to
the Graduate School for formal review. However, the Graduate School requires that you submit a copy for their records.

By the end of the semester, prepare the full literature review, and full discussion of methodology (chapters 1 & 2 of the M.A. thesis/non-thesis), and get **required Thesis/Non-Thesis Progress signatures** from committee members. You will not be able to advance if you fail to secure these signatures.

**Comprehensive Exams** are normally scheduled in December, just before the Fall Semester ends.

4th Semester: Six Thesis credits—COJO 698/COJO 699 (and for TA’s only, one 3-credit elective course, plus 1 unit 661).


Students are required to post flyers to advertise the event. The student should see the department Administrative Assistant for available time slots and campus locations for the Defense and for help in producing and distributing the flyers.

**Master’s Degree Core Advisory Committee**

For the first year of graduate study the student will have a “committee of the whole,” after which the student will request a specific advisor and core advisory committee. The core advisory committee for Master’s degree students must consist of three approved University of Alaska Fairbanks faculty members. Any faculty participating above this number are considered additional committee members. Committee membership must be approved by the Department, CLA Dean, and the Dean of the Graduate School. Retired and/or Emeritus faculty of the University of Alaska Fairbanks may serve as either core or additional committee members on Master’s advisory committees, upon expressed approval by the Department. They may not serve as the chair of an advisory/thesis/non-thesis project committee.

**M.A. Written Comprehensive Examinations**

**Examination Components**
The required comprehensive exams will cover four focal content areas of the department:

a. Communication Theory
b. Communication Methodologies and Methods
   (Human Science Methods & Social Science Methods)
c. Diversity and Communication
d. Training & Development OR Organizational Culture
Timing and Administration of Comprehensive Written Exams

Each graduate student in Communication is required to pass an integrated four-part written comprehensive exam at the end of the third semester of study (normally scheduled in December during the week of final exams). Sample questions for the written comprehensive examination are available in the Department.

Evaluation of the Comprehensive Examinations

Comprehensive examinations are evaluated by the core faculty and are graded as follows: High pass, Pass, Low Pass, Fail. Earning a “low pass” on an examination or a specific question in the exam constitutes that a student has passed, but with some noticeable insufficiencies in the understanding of the content of the material. While it is not required, it makes good sense to schedule an appointment with the appropriate professor(s) to discuss such a problem and how one’s mastery of the content might be strengthened. In the event that a student does not pass a particular comprehensive exam, the student will be given a maximum of one additional opportunity to retake that exam, and will be given a maximum of one year (starting from the date of initially taking the exam) to retake that exam.

COJO 698 Non-Thesis/Project Procedures

1. Write a Non-Thesis/Project Prospectus/Executive Summary of Literature and Methodology under your Non-Thesis/Project Advisor’s guidance (see Proposals that Work [a text used in COJO 600] for guidelines). Prepare a complete IRB Protocol submission (if required) in conjunction with your project advisor. The Non-Thesis/Project Prospectus is a clear statement of the (prior approved) Project and its significance. The Prospectus will include a substantial Literature Review that addresses the general area of the project topic under investigation. You will also explain the Methodology (research strategy) that will be employed in researching the topic and addressing your particular RQ. This should also be substantiated with reference to relevant Communication literature.

2. Submit the completed Prospectus/Executive Summary (and IRB Protocol if required) to your Committee (after coordination, review/approval by project chair) and schedule a Project Prospectus Meeting. The written Prospectus will receive a review by your Committee, and you will make an informal Oral Presentation of the Prospectus at your scheduled Prospectus Meeting, at which time the Committee will approve/disapprove and offer feedback and critique regarding how to further proceed in your research. You will be required to complete Committee member feedback and critique, and have Committee member signatures that you have completed feedback, etc., prior to proceeding with further research.
3. If necessary, submit IRB (Institutional Review Board) protocol for IRB approval via IRBNET by the end of the first full month of your third semester. This will require creating an IRBnet profile (see www.uaf.edu/irb), and working closely with your advisor. (Remember: All students must complete the CITI Training required by the IRB before the University will allow one to conduct research). You should be working very closely with your Project Chair at this point on drafts of Project chapters, and specifically on completing an exhaustive review of the literature and on preparing a complete explanation of your project research methodology and methods.

4. After collection and analysis of data, write the draft of the analysis and conclusions chapters and submit to Project Chair. The final version must be in your Project Chair’s possession no later than three weeks before the scheduled Project Defense date. When your Project Chair gives his/her approval, arrange a date for the oral defense of the project, together with a room and public notice. During this time you will need to send a note to the CLA newsletter service and place flyers throughout the campus notifying the campus of your oral defense time, date, and place of defense.

5. After making changes deemed essential by your Chair and upon approval of him/her, copy the (perceived) final draft and distribute to committee members at least 2 weeks prior to scheduled defense.

6. **Project Defense:** As specified in the UAF catalogue, the Defense will consist of a Formal Oral Presentation (video-taped) by the Candidate. The length of the presentation will be determined by the Committee Chair. Following the presentation there will be a Questioning Period conducted by the Committee Chair. At the conclusion of the Committee Questioning Period, the Chair, as a general rule, will open questioning to the public. Immediately afterward, the Committee will meet in closed session to evaluate whether the student has successfully defended all aspects of the project in a public forum.

7. Complete any necessary revisions recommended by the Committee and approved by your Chair. The student will then submit the revised project for the Committee’s final approval in accordance with UAF regulations.

**COJO 699 Thesis Procedures**

1. Write a Thesis Prospectus/Executive Summary of Literature and Methodology under your Thesis Advisor’s guidance (see Proposals that Work [a text used in COJO 600] for guidelines). Prepare a complete IRB Protocol submission in conjunction with your thesis advisor. The Thesis Prospectus is a clear statement of the (prior approved) Research Question and its significance. The Prospectus will include a substantial Literature Review that addresses the general area of the research topic under investigation. You will also explain the Methodology
(research strategy) that will be employed in researching the topic and addressing your particular RQ. This should also be substantiated with reference to relevant Communication literature.

2. Submit the completed Prospectus/Executive Summary and IRB Protocol to your Committee (after coordination, review/approval by thesis chair) and schedule a Thesis Prospectus Meeting. The written Prospectus will receive a review by your Committee, and you will make an informal Oral Presentation of the Prospectus at your scheduled Prospectus Meeting, at which time the Committee will approve/disapprove and offer feedback and critique regarding how to further proceed in your research. You will be required to complete Committee member feedback and critique, and have Committee member signatures that you have completed feedback, etc., prior to proceeding with further research.

3. Submit IRB (Institutional Review Board) protocol for IRB approval via IRBNET by the end of the first full month of your third semester. This will require creating an IRBnet profile (see www.uaf.edu/irb), and working closely with your advisor. (Remember: All students must complete the CITI Training required by the IRB before the University will allow one to conduct research). You should be working very closely with your Thesis Chair at this point on drafts of Thesis chapters, and specifically on completing an exhaustive review of the literature and on preparing a complete explanation of your research methodology and methods. A Thesis Format Workbook should be obtained from the Graduate School (see the grad school website listed at the end of this document for the on-line version). Students must conform to thesis format requirements and to thesis submission deadlines as specified by the Graduate School (Note: exceptions to these deadlines are rare.)

4. After collection and analysis of data, write the draft of the analysis and conclusions chapters and submit to Thesis Chair. The final/final/FINAL version must be in your Thesis Chair’s possession no later than three weeks before the scheduled Thesis Defense date. When your Thesis Chair gives his/her approval, arrange a date for the oral defense of the thesis, together with a room and public notice.

5. After making changes deemed essential by your Chair and upon approval of him/her, copy the (perceived) final draft and distribute to committee members at least 2 weeks prior to scheduled defense.

6. Thesis Defense: As specified in the UAF catalogue, the Defense will consist of a Formal Oral Presentation (video-taped) by the Candidate. The length of the presentation will be determined by the Committee Chair. Following the presentation there will be a Questioning Period conducted by the Committee Chair. At the conclusion of the Committee Questioning Period, the Chair, as a general rule, will open questioning to the public. Immediately afterward, the Committee will meet in closed session to evaluate whether the student has successfully defended all aspects of the thesis project in a public forum.
7. Complete any necessary revisions recommended by the Committee and approved by your Chair. The student will then submit the revised thesis for the Committee’s final approval in accordance with UAF regulations.

8. Submit the final copy to the Graduate School by published deadlines (April 7 for spring semester, check Graduate School for other semester).

**Graduate Teaching Assistantships**

Graduate Teaching Assistants are paid for a maximum of 20 hours per week while school is in session. Communication TA’s must be registered for 10 credits during the fall and spring semesters (no audits).

Teaching assistantships include a tuition payment by the university:
  a. for no more than 10 credits if the workload is 20 hours per week.
  b. if the assistantship appointment begins on or before the first day of instruction and ends on or after the last day of final examinations for that semester (16 or more weeks).

Graduate Teaching Assistants are paid for a maximum of 20 hours per week while school is in session. Communication TA’s must be registered full-time (10 credits consisting of a minimum of 9 graduate credits and 1 credit if mentored teaching). For further information on Graduate Assistantships, see Graduate Assistantships under the Financial Aid section of the UAF online Catalog.

Graduate Teaching Assistants are expected to work approximately 20 hours per week including teaching in the classroom; preparing course lectures, assignments, and exercises; and holding office hours. TA’s are expected to schedule and to be available for 3 office hours per week to meet with students when needed.

**Teaching Assignments**

Graduate Teaching Assistants are expected to teach two sections of the department’s service course (COJO 131X Small Group Communication OR COJO 141X Public Speaking) per semester (the Department of Communication and Journalism Chair may assign Speaker Center hours in-lieu of one or two sections of COJO 131X or COJO 141X).

**Teaching Policies and Expectations**

Every semester the Faculty Mentor will visit each TA’s classroom for observation, providing both feedback on teaching approaches and evaluating effectiveness in instruction. Continuing as a TA requires:
  1. faculty’s concurrence on effectiveness
  2. classroom presence
3. maintaining appropriate grade average
4. personal behavior
5. adhering to UAF policies

Graduate Teaching Assistants are expected to attend to their teaching assignments. If a TA fails to show for their service assignment (classroom or speaking center), then they are responsible for having another TA cover for them in advance. If a TA fails to show for their service assignment and does not have that assignment covered, then they will be given a written reprimand, with a copy placed in their personnel folder. If the TA fails to show for their service assignment a second time, then they will be dismissed from the program as a Teaching Assistant.

Please refer to the Resource Manual for Graduate Teaching Assistants Pursuing a Master’s Degree in Professional Communication for a complete description of policies and expectations.

**Academic Progress and Graduate Student Evaluation**

Below are the standards for adequate academic progress in the graduate program in Communication and the consequences of failing to meet those requirements.

1. The core required courses should be successfully completed as soon as possible.
2. By successful completion is meant that the student has earned no grade below B (3.0) in the core courses. If the student earns a C or below in any core course, the course must be repeated. Core courses can only be repeated one time.
3. All courses to be counted toward the minimum hours requirements must carry a grade of B (3.0) or better.
4. Failure to have an approved guidance committee and program of study by the end of the third semester or the completion of 18 graduate credits may constitute lack of satisfactory academic progress.

The faculty will meet at the end of the spring semester to formally review the progress of all graduate students. Additional reviews will be scheduled as necessary.

**Academic Probation**

Students who have a cumulative grade-point average of less than 3.0 will be placed on Academic Probation. Students on Probation are required to meet with their graduate advisor, discuss the steps to be taken to remediate the problems that led to the probationary status, and devise a written plan of action to be submitted to the advisory committee.