



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

# Communication MA Graduate Program Handbook

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# Communication MA

Together, the [Graduate Student Handbook](#) and your graduate program handbook should serve as your main guide throughout your graduate career. The Graduate Student Handbook includes university information, policies, requirements and guidance for all graduate students. Your program handbook describes the details about graduate study and requirements in your specific program. While both of these handbooks are wonderful resources, know that you are always welcome to talk with faculty and staff in your program and in the Graduate College.

The central activities and missions of a university rest upon the fundamental assumption that all members of the university community conduct themselves in accordance with a strict adherence to academic and scholarly integrity. As a graduate student and member of the university community, you are expected to display the highest standards of academic and personal integrity.

Here are some resources to help you better understand your responsibilities:

- [Academic Honesty](#)
- [Academic Integrity Training](#) - Open to all graduate students at no cost
- [Plagiarism](#)

## Introduction

### Mission Statement

The Communication MA Program is dedicated to serving its students, faculty, the Central Florida community and the professions associated with the field of communication. The mission of the program is to offer high-quality, academically challenging graduate education in Mass and Interpersonal Communication; to mentor students in the conduct of research and creative activities; to provide the program's students with the educational development that will enhance the intellectual, cultural, environmental, and economic development of the metropolitan region; to develop students' academic and professional competencies; to establish UCF as a major presence in local and global communication related professional and academic communities; and to support the mission and vision of the University of Central Florida as a whole.

### Course Requirements

#### Required Courses—9 Credit Hours

All required courses must be completed with a grade of B- or higher.

- COM 5312 Introduction to Communication Research (3 credit hours)
- COM 6008 Proseminar in Communication (3 credit hours)
- COM 6401 Introduction to Communication Theory (3 credit hours)

#### Research Methods Concentration—3 Credit Hours

Students are required to complete one course, but may choose to complete the second as an elective. This course is required to be completed with a minimum B- grade.

- COM 6303 Qualitative Research Methods in Communication (3 credit hours)
- COM 6304 Quantitative Research Methods in Communication (3 credit hours)

## Elective Courses—18 Credit Hours

In addition to the courses listed below, special topics courses, study abroad courses, up to 6 credit hours of approved independent studies, directed research, internship, and graduate-level courses taken outside the Nicholson School of Communication may be counted as restricted electives, pending approval by the program director.

- ADV 6209 Advertising and Society (3 credit hours)
- COM 5932 Topics in Communication Theory and Research (3 credit hours)
  - May be repeated for credit if the topic is different
- COM 6025 Health Communication (3 credit hours)
- COM 6046 Interpersonal Communication (3 credit hours)
- COM 6047 Interpersonal Support in the Workplace (3 credit hours)
- COM 6048 Communication in Close Relationships (3 credit hours)
- COM 6121 Communication Management (3 credit hours)
- COM 6145 Organizational Communication (3 credit hours)
- COM 6425 Symbolism in Terrorism (3 credit hours)
- COM 6463 Studies in Intercultural Communication (3 credit hours)
- COM 6466 Persuasion in the Media (3 credit hours)
- COM 6467 Studies in Persuasion (3 credit hours)
- COM 6468 Communication and Conflict (3 credit hours)
- COM 6525 Communication Strategy and Planning (3 credit hours)
- COM 6815 Risk Communication (3 credit hours)
- MMC 6202 Legal and Ethical Issues for Communication (3 credit hours)
- MMC 6266 Communications Convergence and Media Planning (3 credit hours)
- MMC 6307 International Communication (3 credit hours)
- MMC 6407 Visual Communication Theory (3 credit hours)
- MMC 6567 Seminar in New Media (3 credit hours)
- MMC 6600 Media Effects and Audience Analysis (3 credit hours)
- MMC 6607 Communication and Society (3 credit hours)
- MMC 6612 Communication and Government (3 credit hours)
- MMC 6735 Social Media as Mass Communication (3 credit hours)
- PUR 6005 Theories of Public Relations (3 credit hours)
- PUR 6403 Crisis Public Relations (3 credit hours)
- PUR 6215 Communicating Corporate Social Responsibility (3 credit hours)
- PUR 6405 Communication and Public Relations in Politics and Government (3 credit hours)
- SPC 6340 Teaching Communication (3 credit hours)
- SPC 6442 Small Group Communication (3 credit hours)

## Special Electives

Students may choose to supplement their plan of study with special electives, which include independent study, directed research, internship, courses taken from another graduate program (either at UCF or transferred), traveling scholar, and study abroad. Each option requires approval from the NSC Graduate Program Director in order to be credited to the plan of study. With the exception of participation in study abroad, no more than half of a student's elective (a maximum of twelve credits) should come from this category.

### Independent Study\*

An independent study course is a specialized course developed together by a student and faculty member with experience in the subject. It allows the student to study a subject that is not available as a regular class and obtain credit for it. The course of study must be specified in writing and approved by the student, the instructor (who must be a member of the graduate faculty), and the NSC director prior to enrollment. Students are allowed

to credit up to six hours of independent study to the electives portion of their plan of study. However, students expecting to matriculate to a PhD program should limit their independent study hours to three.

### **Directed Research\***

Directed research involves participation in, or execution of, a research project developed together by a student and faculty member who oversees the student's work. The project can be a self-contained research project conducted from start to finish by the student over the course of a semester or can be part of a larger research project in which the student takes on a significant role. The project should be specified in writing and approved by the student, the instructor (who must be a member of the graduate faculty), and the NSC director prior to enrollment. Students are allowed to credit up to six hours of directed research to the electives portion of their plan of study. However, students expecting to matriculate to a PhD program should limit their independent study hours to three.

**\*Any research using human subjects should obtain IRB approval before the project is approved by the program director.**

### **Internship**

An internship is a course of study that provides professional on-the-job training experiences for students in their discipline. Students may count three hours of internship credit to the electives portion of their plan of study. Internships are not considered formal coursework but must add some academic value to the student's graduate experience. Students should consult the COM6946 syllabus for details of the academic work required for graduate credit for an internship. In addition, students must complete at least 3 hours of work per week at the internship site for every hour of internship credit they earn (a minimum of 144 hours total for a three credit internship). However, a maximum of three credit hours can be earned from an internship no matter how many hours the student works. All internships are supervised and graded by the NSC Graduate Program Director and require his approval prior to enrollment. Students may not receive internship credit for work performed in a job the student is already working. To obtain approval, the student must have the internship site supervisor contact the NSC Graduate Program Director with a description of the internship, the number of hours the student will be working, and the contact information of the internship site supervisor. If the internship is approved, the student will be authorized to enroll.

**NOTE:** Non-degree-seeking students and students from non-NSC graduate programs are not eligible to earn NSC graduate internship credit. No exceptions are made. Students in their first semester are not eligible to earn internship credit. Exception may be made at the discretion of the NSC Graduate Program Director.

### **Transfer Coursework and Courses from Outside the NSC**

Students may take up to three courses from another graduate program at UCF outside the Nicholson School of Communication as electives. Courses must be approved by the NSC Graduate Program Director before they will be added to the plan of study and count toward degree completion.

A student may also request up to nine hours of graduate credit completed prior to admission to the Nicholson School of Communication MA program be transferred into the plan of study. These hours may have originated from another graduate program at UCF, from a graduate program at another university, credit earned in Senior Scholars program or as a non-degree-seeking graduate student. Only courses with a grade of B or higher (a B- does not qualify) are eligible to be transferred into the student's plan of study.

Overall, students may not transfer more than 9 total credit hours originating in programs outside of the NSC as credit toward the completion of the Communication MA degree. Transferred courses (except for courses that meet the statistics requirement or courses taken within the NSC prior to official program admission) will count only as electives. All core courses must be completed at UCF in the NSC. All transfer coursework must be approved by the NSC Graduate Program Director. Communication courses from other programs will not be automatically approved.

Graduate College policies for independent study and transfer coursework can be found here: [catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=204](http://catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=204).

### **Traveling Scholar**

Students who wish to take graduate coursework elsewhere while enrolled as a student at UCF must apply and be accepted as a Traveling Scholar. Graduate credits earned as a Traveling Scholar are considered "resident" credits that are earned at UCF and are applicable to the plan of study without being subject to the nine-hour limit. They require approval from the NSC Graduate Program Director. Consult the section on Traveling Scholars in the Graduate Catalog for more information.

### **Global Studies Program**

The Nicholson School of Communication is pleased to partner with Ilmenau University of Technology to provide a semester-long graduate study abroad experience. Students who are graduate degree-seeking and have a minimum GPA of 3.0 are eligible to participate in the NSC Global Studies graduate program. Students may not study abroad during their first or last semesters of study. Interested students should contact the Graduate Program Adviser for more information. Students may choose from a variety of courses and, upon successful completion, will receive graduate credit for those courses from University of Central Florida.

## **Culminating Experience—3 Credit Hours**

In order to demonstrate mastery of the learning objectives for the Communication M.A., students are required to complete a culminating experience. Students must choose one of three options (thesis, comprehensive examinations, or applied professional project) to complete their course of study.

### **Thesis Option**

The thesis option requires a minimum of 3 hours of thesis credit and a successful defense of a thesis. Students may enroll in thesis hours after they have successfully completed the three core courses and their thesis committee has been approved by the department, college, and Graduate Studies.

The student's permanent faculty adviser will chair their committee, which also will include two additional graduate faculty members in the Nicholson School of Communication. One additional member, who is also a graduate faculty member, may be added from outside the NSC. All members of the thesis committee are selected in consultation with the student's permanent faculty adviser.

When a topic has been selected, students, in conjunction with their permanent adviser, will develop a thesis proposal. Copies of the proposal will be routed to members of their thesis committee and a proposal hearing scheduled. All students must pass a proposal hearing as well as a final oral defense of their thesis. Students who elect to write a thesis should become familiar with the university's requirements and deadlines for organizing and submitting the thesis.

- COM 6971 Thesis (minimum of 3 credit hours, can be taken individually)
- Successful defense of thesis project

### **Non-thesis Options**

Students who decide not to complete a thesis may choose to complete either the comprehensive examination non-thesis option OR an applied professional project non-thesis option.

#### *Comprehensive Examinations*

The non-thesis comprehensive examination option is a four-examination requirement that assesses students' coursework competency. Students who choose the comprehensive examination option must take one additional elective course (three credit hours) and successfully complete the comprehensive examinations. Upon completing

their 18th hour in the program, students must select a permanent adviser and form a comprehensive exam committee. The examinations will cover research methods, communication theory, and elective areas selected together by the student with their comprehensive examination committee. In order to fulfill the comprehensive exam requirement the student must earn a passing grade on all exams. If a student fails to pass any of the comprehensive exam area questions, they are allowed two additional attempts to satisfy the comprehensive exam requirement. Once an exam in an area is passed, the student does not have to sit for that exam area again. Students are allowed three attempts to satisfy the comprehensive exam requirement. Students are expected to refer to the NSC Graduate Program handbook for the comprehensive examination protocol.

- Elective (3 credit hours)
- Successful completion of comprehensive examinations

### *Applied Professional Project*

The non-thesis applied project option requires students to demonstrate their ability to apply the knowledge and skills learned in the graduate program to a problem/topic related to the area of communication which combines scholarship with extensive experiences in a non-academic workplace that integrates the range of communication theory, practice, and research presented throughout the program. Upon completing their 18th hour in the program, each student must select a permanent adviser and form an applied project committee. The student will work directly with a faculty adviser to develop a project and the adviser will supervise the project. The grading system for the project is Pass/Fail. Students who receive a grade of Pass will be allowed to graduate assuming all other requirements are met.

- COM 6909 Research Report (3 credits)
- Successful presentation of applied professional project

## **Equipment Fees**

Full-time students in the Communication M.A. program pay a \$16 equipment fee each semester that they are enrolled. Part-time students pay \$8 per semester.

## **Advising**

All incoming students will be appointed a temporary adviser. The temporary adviser will work with the student to develop an initial Graduate Plan of Study that should be filed by the end of the student's first semester. The temporary adviser will also assist the student in finding a permanent adviser. We encourage students to develop a mentoring relationship with their permanent faculty member and all decisions pertaining to the student's final plan of study must be approved by the student's permanent adviser by the end of the student's second year (or 18 hours of course work). Advisers can provide valuable guidance regarding career aspirations, preparation for applying to doctoral programs, selection of coursework, developing a research record, and development of a curriculum vitae (CV).

The adviser, staff, and faculty of the Nicholson School of Communication Graduate Program are important resources for students and will provide guidance on overall academic and program requirements, as well as university policies and procedures. Ultimately, it is the student's responsibility to seek out information about all Nicholson School Graduate Program, College of Sciences, and College of Graduate Studies policies and procedures ([catalog.ucf.edu/index.php?catoid=4](http://catalog.ucf.edu/index.php?catoid=4) > Policies). Graduate program policies and procedures will not be waived nor will any exceptions be granted because a student is not informed of a policy or procedure. This handbook is the first stop in the search for this information.

Consult your faculty adviser regarding:

- Developing a thesis from inception to final defense (see section on thesis process for more information)
- Selecting and preparing for a non-thesis culminating experience
- Developing a research record
- Pursuit of an academic career
- Career opportunities outside academia
- A plan for academic work after completion of the MA
- Developing a Graduate Plan of Study

Consult the NSC Graduate Program Director regarding:

- Transfer coursework
- Outside coursework at UCF
- Explanation/clarification of UCF graduate policy
- Academic progress
- Conditional Retention Plans
- Admissions decisions
- Independent study approval
- Internship approval
- Thesis project expectations and committee selection
- Selection of a mentor
- Any exception to UCF graduate policy

Consult the NSC Graduate Program Adviser regarding:

- Admissions standards
- Application procedures for admission and for assistantships
- Preparation of Graduate Plan of Study
- Enrollment into Communication MA courses
- Completion of hiring paperwork for assistantships
- Processing of independent study, internship, and thesis enrollment paperwork
- Certification of graduation

Consult the NSC Director regarding:

- GTA performance assessments
- Decisions regarding hiring and retention of GTA assistants
- Nicholson School GTA employment policies

## **Graduate Plan of Study**

The Graduate Plan of Study (GPS) is a projected plan to completion of the Communication MA degree. The plan of study is developed under the guidance of the student's academic adviser and prepared in partnership with the Graduate Program Adviser and under the supervision of the NSC Graduate Program Director. Typically, the GPS is completed during the student's participation in COM6008 (Proseminar). Once the plan of study is complete, the student is responsible for enrolling in courses in a timely way to ensure course availability. The UCF College of Graduate Studies requires all graduate students to have a GPS on file by the end of their ninth hour of enrollment. Once the plan of study has been completed, it will be forwarded to the NSC Graduate Program Director for approval.

Students are encouraged to meet with their adviser for guidance with the GPS if the student is unable to enroll in courses listed on the plan of study, has poor academic performance, and/or is withdrawing from courses. A

student is required to revise the plan of study when changing tracks or changing the culminating experience. Students may revise their GPS once a semester via appointment with the NSC Graduate Program Adviser.

## **UCF Golden Rule**

All students of the University of Central Florida are required to adhere to its Golden Rule. The Golden Rule outlines a student's rights and responsibilities. It is provided to answer any questions a student may have about the university rules and regulations. The Golden Rule can be accessed online at: [goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/](http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/).

## **Disability Accommodation Statement**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services before or immediately after admission ([sas.sdes.ucf.edu/](http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/)). The Nicholson School of Communication is committed to accommodating students with disabilities as long as these conditions are documented with Student Disability Services.

## **Grievance Procedures**

The UCF College of Graduate Studies allows for petitions of university requirements and their academic matters. Academic matters are those involving instruction, research, or decisions involving instruction or affecting academic freedom. Any student who wishes to file a grievance should consult with the NSC Graduate Program Director first.

The academic grievance procedure is designed to provide a fair means of dealing with graduate student complaints regarding a specific action or decision by a faculty member, program or college, including termination from an academic program. Academic misconduct complaints associated with sponsored research will invoke procedures outlined by the Office of Research and Commercialization. Specific information about the grievance procedure can be found at the following web address: [catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=201](http://catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=201).

## **Graduate Student Center**

The College of Graduate Studies has a Graduate Student Center, located in suite 213 of Trevor Colbourn Hall. This space allows the opportunity for multipurpose study and collaboration, presentation, and study and data analysis. They offer free printing (students must provide their own paper) and weekend hours. For more information: [graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-student-center/](http://graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-student-center/).

## **Curriculum**

Please visit the [Graduate Catalog](#) to see the current curriculum for our program.

# **Nicholson School of Communication Policies**

## **Student Access and Privileges**

The Nicholson School of Communication Graduate Program strives to provide opportunity for its students to collaborate on their studies, as well as develop a sense of community within the NSC. A graduate student office, located inside the Nicholson Academic Student Service Center (NASSC), is available for use by Communication M.A. degree-seeking students and students taking NSC graduate courses. There are eight computers, loaded with standard software, as well as SPSS and Adobe Acrobat Pro, in the graduate student offices (NSC143E/F). Students have printing privileges, but are expected to act responsibly when employing this privilege. Responsible

use includes printing of assignments and papers, as well as printing file copies of presentations. Students may print a limited amount for free via the Student Government Association computer labs and an unlimited amount via the UCF Graduate Student Center (if they provide their own paper). The Technology Commons provides printing services and The Spot has photocopying capabilities for reasonable prices.

The Graduate Student Office is stocked with basic office supplies for the student's use in the fulfillment of coursework and assistantship duties. Students are expected to behave professionally and interact cooperatively while using the Graduate Student Office. The office is accessible Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., depending on faculty/staff availability. Students are not authorized to remain in the office without a faculty or staff member present in NASSC. Students are encouraged to use the Graduate Student Center on weekends and after hours (if applicable).

The computer classroom in NSC208 is also loaded with the latest SPSS software and has printer access for use in printing assignments. However, this is a classroom and not an open computer lab. Students found using the lab without faculty or staff supervision will be asked to leave.

There are conference rooms available for reservation for student defense of thesis projects. NSC213 is designated a research room and is available to aid with the completion of research projects, either for a faculty member or a class. To reserve a conference room or the research room, please contact 407-823-1711. When requesting, students are expected to inform the administrative staff member making the reservation whether the request is for a thesis defense, a meeting, or a class project (specify which class). If the room is required after-hours, the student has to request to borrow a key, which is subject to approval by the Nicholson School of Communication.

Rooms are available for check-out at the UCF Library and the Graduate Student Center for study groups or similar collaboration.

Mailboxes, keys, and limited storage are privileges reserved for those students on assistantship. Photocopier access is a privilege reserved for GTAs serving on the teaching team.

The Nicholson School of Communication office staff and administrators are available to provide guidance and assistance to graduate students. Graduate students are expected to behave courteously and professionally, be self-sufficient with personal academic record-keeping and academic performance, and clean up after themselves to ensure a neat and maintained workspace for their colleagues. Abuse and/or misuse of any privileges can result in the revocation of them.

## **Enrollment Policy**

Enrollment in all graduate courses in the Communication M.A. program is done by "Department Consent Only." Students are expected to contact the NSC Graduate Program Adviser to receive department consent in order to enroll. Department consent will not be issued until the day of the student's enrollment appointment—exception will be made for UCF and State of Florida staff members using their tuition waiver. Specific dates will be announced via KnightsMail when those individuals may request space in their courses. Department consent for the summer and fall terms is granted based on the student's enrollment appointment, but the Nicholson School of Communication Graduate Program does not allow enrollment for the spring semester until mid-September (specific date is announced in early August).

Enrollment into thesis, independent study, directed research, and internship hours requires special department approval. Students interested in enrolling in any of these courses are asked to see the NSC Graduate Program Adviser for guidance on seeking approval. Students will complete an enrollment request. If approved, the request will be forwarded to the College of Sciences Graduate Services office and the student will be enrolled by the College of Sciences.

The Nicholson School of Communication welcomes collaboration from other graduate programs. Students in graduate programs outside the Nicholson School of Communication are encouraged to contact the NSC Graduate Program Adviser for enrollment assistance. Elective courses have a percentage of their capacity available for immediate enrollment by these students. After this number is reached, students in programs outside the Communication M.A. program are placed on a waiting list for space availability. The NSC Graduate Program Director determines when the waitlists will be opened for a specific term. Once the waitlists have been opened and those on the lists accommodated, enrollment into Communication MA program graduate classes is granted on a “first come, first served” basis.

A student’s failure to request department consent in a timely fashion does not merit an exception to the policy nor an override into a class, even if it means the student’s graduation will be delayed. Students must be enrolled for the semester in which they plan to graduate.

## **Withdrawal Policy**

The Nicholson School of Communication follows the UCF College of Graduate Studies policy on withdrawing from a class. For more information on withdrawing from a course, please refer to: [catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=237](http://catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=237).

If a student chooses to withdraw from the university, s/he is encouraged to meet with the NSC Graduate Program Director to determine viable options for degree completion. Often, a student chooses to withdraw to pursue professional opportunity, to attend to family, personal, or medical issues, or to transfer to another university. A decision regarding withdrawal from the university or pursuit of a Special Leave of Absence can be made in conjunction with the NSC Graduate Program Director. More information on the Special Leave of Absence can be found here: [catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=201](http://catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=201).

Students must be enrolled for at least one semester of every three consecutive semesters in order to maintain active student status. Students who do not meet this enrollment requirement will be removed from active student status and must reapply for admission. For more information: [catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=201](http://catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=201).

## **Student Responsibility**

The Nicholson School of Communication adheres to the university policy on the student’s responsibility to be informed, located at: [catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=201](http://catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=201).

The Nicholson School of Communication also supports the university policy on the student’s responsibility for university communication, located at: [catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=201](http://catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=201).

In addition to this, the Nicholson School of Communication’s policy on student communication is that only a KnightsMail email address will be acceptable and must be used for all university business, including class rosters, webcourses/Canvas, financial aid, advising, etc. Basic application, admissions, and advisement information will be provided to a non-UCF-affiliated email account UNTIL the student declares intent to attend the university. At this point, the student is expected to sign up for a KnightsMail account and use it for any future UCF-related business. Students will receive communication from the Nicholson School of Communication via their KnightsMail and are expected to monitor said account to remain informed. The Nicholson School of Communication will not be held responsible for missed deadlines or lack of information because a student is not employing KnightsMail. Information regarding KnightsMail is located at: [extranet.cst.ucf.edu/kmailselfsvc](http://extranet.cst.ucf.edu/kmailselfsvc)

Additionally, students can “like” the NSC Graduate Program on Facebook, which is used like a virtual bulletin board to provide another outlet for information on deadlines, internship and employment opportunities, NSC events, etc.

# Examination Requirements

## Comprehensive Examination Requirements

In the semester of the student's 18th hour of coursework, the student will select a permanent adviser. The student will work with adviser to identify two additional committee members to the comprehensive examination committee. Students will answer four questions (two hours each) over the course of two days. One will be a general theory question followed by an applied theory question (related to the student's content area specialization). The other will be a general methods question followed by an applied methods question (related to the student's content area specialization).

The three-person committee (adviser and two faculty members) will compile the questions based on the student's content area specialization and grade the questions. The adviser will determine the outcome of the comprehensive exam based on input from the committee. Students may ultimately be graded in one of three ways:

- **Pass:** All committee members were satisfied with the written responses. No more action is required.
- **Conditional Pass:** If there is some concern about the student's response to a question, the committee can elect to evaluate the student with a conditional pass. In this case, the adviser (as advised by the committee members or together with the committee members) will schedule and participate in an oral defense of that question to do a "minor revision" of the answer.
- **Fail:** Students that fail a question (or more) must retake the comprehensive exams the following semester. Students will have an opportunity to retake the exam twice (which is status quo procedure).

A student must be enrolled in order to take comprehensive exams. If the student has completed all coursework, he/she should contact the Nicholson School of Communication Graduate Program for enrollment assistance.

The comprehensive exams shall be scheduled near the 6th week of the semester. The comprehensive exam period consists of two four-hour sessions that are scheduled typically on a Friday evening (session one) and the following Saturday afternoon (session two).

Students who fail one or more of their comprehensive exams are encouraged to review the failed exams with their faculty adviser before retaking the exams. Advisers who return an exam with a grade of FAIL are required to meet with the student if the student makes such a request. The adviser should provide detailed feedback that explains the basis for the failing grade. Faculty are strongly encouraged to use a detailed rubric when grading comprehensive exams to help identify weaknesses and strengths in students' comprehensive exam responses. Student grievances over failed comprehensive exam grades will be handled using procedure outlined in the graduate handbook.

Students who fail to satisfy the comprehensive exam requirement after taking the exams three times will be reviewed by the NSC Graduate Committee. The committee will consult the student's comprehensive examination committee and will determine a course of action for the student. This may include additional coursework designed to strengthen the student's knowledge and proficiency in areas where the comprehensive exam performance is deficient. The student will not be allowed to retake the exams again until s/he has complied with the committee's recommendations.

## Thesis Requirements

A student may choose to complete his/her program by writing comprehensive examinations or by writing a thesis.

## University Dissertation Requirements

The College of Graduate Studies [Thesis and Dissertation page](#) contains information on the university's requirements for dissertation formatting, format review, defenses, final submission, and more. A step-by-step completion guide is also available on [Thesis and Dissertation Services](#) Site.

All university deadlines are listed in the [Academic Calendar](#). Your program or college may have other earlier deadlines; please check with your program and college staff for additional deadlines.

### The following requirements must be met by dissertation students in their final term:

- Submit a properly formatted file for initial format review by the format review deadline
- Submit the Thesis and Dissertation Release Option form well before the defense
- Defend by the defense deadline
- Receive format approval (if not granted upon initial review)
- Submit signed approval form by final submission deadline
- Submit final dissertation document by final submission deadline

Students must format their dissertation according to the standards outlined in [Thesis and Dissertation Webcourse](#). Formatting questions or issues can be submitted to the Format Help page in the [Thesis and Dissertation Services](#) site. Format reviews and final submission must be completed in the [Thesis and Dissertation Services](#) site. The Dissertation Approval Form is also available in the Thesis and Dissertation Services site.

The College of Graduate Studies offers several thesis and dissertation [Workshops](#) each term. Students are highly encouraged to attend these workshops early in the dissertation process to fully understand the above policies and procedures.

The College of Graduate Studies thesis and dissertation office is best reached by email at [editor@ucf.edu](mailto:editor@ucf.edu).

## Thesis Process

The Master's thesis is the capstone of a student's graduate training. Although some students have a thesis topic in mind early in their graduate career, other students develop ideas as they progress through their classes. It is always a good idea to discuss ideas early with the faculty who have expertise in that area. Sometimes students write a seminar paper that sparks their interest while others develop their thesis projects based on their involvement in a research project with a faculty member.

The thesis process requires the student to work closely with a faculty member on a research project resulting in a research report, which is evaluated by a faculty committee. The objectives of the project are:

- Application of research skills acquired in the classroom
- Demonstration of both oral and written communication skills
- Demonstration of the student's advanced understanding of research and theory in a particular area of communication scholarship
- Completion of a research project from inception to final report
- Contribution to the research literature through publication in a referred journal or presentation at a regional, national or international conference
- Major components of the thesis process include the thesis proposal and the thesis defense.

## Thesis Proposal

The thesis proposal process begins when the student identifies a topic area and/or research question. The process continues with a rigorous and in-depth review of the literature in the topic area, discussions with program

faculty, identification of a thesis chair and evaluation committee, a written thesis proposal, and a formal thesis proposal meeting. Normally this process should begin no later than the beginning of the third semester for full time students.

Consultation with the program director, or any other graduate faculty, can facilitate the initial stages of the thesis proposal process. Early in the process, the student should approach faculty members to determine the faculty members' interest in the project along with their ability and willingness to serve as a committee member or chair.

In conjunction with the chair of the thesis advisory committee, the student will identify a minimum of two other faculty members to serve on the thesis evaluation committee. Great care should be taken in selecting committee members. Issues such as interest, expertise, and availability should all be taken into account. The thesis committee makes all final decisions regarding the thesis project.

Two of the three members of the thesis advisory committee (including the chair) must be NSC faculty who possess a terminal degree and who are members of the UCF graduate faculty. The third member may come from a related field, the NSC faculty, or the professional community and must hold at least the rank of Graduate Faculty Scholar. Additional members of the committee are optional, but must meet the same qualification criteria.

Once the committee is chosen, the student must obtain and complete the Thesis Advisory Committee Approval form, gather the signatures of all committee members and the NSC Graduate Program Director then return the paperwork to the NSC Graduate Program Adviser. Students will not be allowed to enroll for thesis hours until they have an approved thesis committee on file with the College of Graduate Studies.

Under the supervision of the thesis chair, the student prepares a formal thesis proposal that includes an abstract, introduction, review of relevant literature, proposed research methodology, statistical analysis plan, and a complete list of references and supporting literature. A formal thesis committee meeting must be held to review the proposal, address any concerns raised by committee members, and formalize the activities the student must perform to complete the thesis. The thesis advisory committee chair should obtain signatures and committee members' required revisions on the Thesis Proposal Defense form at the time of the formal proposal meeting. Ordinarily, data should not be collected (although IRB approval may be obtained) until the entire committee has approved of the thesis proposal (however in some circumstances this may not be feasible). The proposal meeting should be thought of as an agreement between the student and committee members about what the student plans to produce as a final product.

## **Thesis Defense**

Once the student has completed the work agreed upon at the proposal meeting, and after the thesis advisory chair agrees that the student is ready to defend, a thesis defense meeting may be scheduled. The entire committee must receive a copy of the penultimate draft of the thesis at least one week prior to the scheduled meeting. All committee members are obligated to read the thesis before the meeting occurs and prepare questions for the student. A date, time and place for the meeting shall be posted at least one week prior to the actual date along with a notice of examination. This is done by preparing a Thesis Defense Announcement (a sample of the appropriate format is available from the program adviser) and submitting to the NSC Graduate Program Director, who will review and approve the announcement on behalf of the Nicholson School of Communication and invite the campus community. At this time, the student should request the Thesis Approval form through the College of Graduate Studies. The form will be automatically populated with the student's thesis project and committee information, and needs to be submitted to the NSC Graduate Program Adviser for final customization. The student brings this form to the thesis defense meeting. The thesis defense meeting represents an opportunity for the intellectual exchange of ideas as well as an evaluation of the worthiness of the research report. The thesis defense meeting is an open meeting, and may be attended by other students, faculty, or members of the community. The thesis defense meeting should be scheduled for approximately one and one half hours. The format of the meeting includes an oral presentation of the research, a question and answer session, and a closed executive session attended only by the thesis committee members.

With prior approval from the Nicholson School of Communication, one committee member may participate via tele- or video-conferencing in the thesis final defense. The student, committee chair, and one other committee member MUST be physically present at the thesis defense.

The oral defense usually begins with an oral presentation of the research project that includes some discussion of the literature, a description of the methodology, an explanation of how the data was analyzed, an interpretation of the research results, and a discussion the implications of the study. The presentation is followed by a question and answer session in which each committee member will be expected to ask questions regarding the student's thesis project. Finally, the student and guests will be excused from the room and a closed session will be conducted. In the closed session the committee chair shares results of the iThenticate.com originality report with the committee followed by the committee's discussion of the merits of the project and a vote on the acceptability of the thesis. A majority of committee members must vote in favor of a passing grade on the project for the student to qualify for graduation. The committee may decide to accept the thesis as is, accept the thesis with minor revisions (requiring no rescheduled meeting), or in the event that a majority of committee members do not vote to pass the project, the student will be asked to make major revisions to the thesis (requiring that a new thesis defense meeting be rescheduled after revisions are completed). Once the committee has decided on a result, the student will be invited back into the room and the adjudication by the committee will be shared with the student. If the committee accepts the project, they will sign the Thesis Approval form.

The student is expected to acquire the additional signatures for the Thesis Approval form, which includes the NSC Graduate Program Director, the Director of the Nicholson School of Communication, and the Dean of the College of Sciences. It is not necessary for the student to acquire the signature of the Vice Provost and Dean of the College of Graduate Studies before submitting the form with the final thesis project. He will sign the form when he accepts the project on behalf of UCF.

Thesis committee members may not designate another person to sign on their behalf for thesis final defense approval. Members who participate remotely must either sign ahead of the defense or be able to sign, scan, and email a copy of the approval form. Only members of the NSC graduate faculty are qualified to approve of a thesis defense on behalf of the NSC Graduate Program and Nicholson School of Communication.

Gifts for the thesis advisory chair and committee members with any kind of intrinsic value are highly discouraged. This would include gift cards with a monetary value, a bottle of wine, gift baskets, and so forth. The advisory chair and committee members are paid by the state of Florida for the time and effort they put into to a candidate's thesis project so they are not owed any sort of valuable consideration from the candidate. Additionally, receiving a gift with intrinsic value constitutes a conflict of interest for the committee members and adviser as they are responsible for assigning a grade to the student's academic work. Gifts with only sentimental value, such as a framed photograph, a handwritten thank you note on nice stationery, a flower arrangement, and so forth are not considered gifts of intrinsic value so they are not covered by this rule.

## **Thesis Enrollment Requirement**

To be considered full-time after completion of coursework, students must be continuously enrolled in three hours of thesis research every semester (including summers) until successful defense and graduation. This enrollment each semester reflects the expenditure of university resources. Students that wish to enroll in part-time hours must enroll for a minimum of one credit hour. For more details about enrollment, please refer to the Thesis Enrollment Requirement and the Full-time Enrollment Requirements policies of the UCF Graduate Catalog.

# Applied Professional Project

## Applied Professional Project (APP) Requirements

The applied project option requires students to demonstrate their ability to apply the knowledge and skills learned in the graduate program to a problem/topic related to the area of communication. The applied project is a research based work—such as a case-study, article-length paper, sample corporate communication strategy, crisis communication plan, research project for a corporate or organizational client, or a communication project which combines scholarship with extensive experiences in a non-academic workplace that integrates the range of communication theory, practice, and research presented throughout the program. Students are required to articulate a problem/topic, design an argument, and complete a plan for investigating the problem/topic. The project should be designed for a professional audience. The finished product must be composed in a manner worthy of presentation either to a professional organization or decision-makers in the area of study.

The objectives of the applied professional project are:

- To exhibit the ability to articulate a problem within the field of communication.
- To identify a methodology appropriate for examining the chosen problem.
- To formulate a proposal to address of the chosen problem including any potential benefits from its investigation.
- To illustrate appropriate writing and messaging skills of an advanced student of communication.
- To complete a final product/document (e.g., a final report, a teaching module, a small-scale study of a community organization or focus group, etc.) appropriate for understanding findings relevant to the problem examined.

The major components of the applied professional project include application, enrollment in and successful completion of applied professional project hours, and completion of the project, which includes a reflective write-up and an oral presentation of their work.

## APP Application Process

Students must apply to complete an applied professional project (and to secure the applied professional adviser) during the semester they are enrolled in their 18th credit hour in the Communication MA program. The Graduate Program Director must approve all applied capstone project applications.

All applications will be immediately approved given they meet the following criteria:

- The student has a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- An NSC Graduate Faculty member has signed an agreement to be the student's applied professional project adviser.
- Two additional Communication faculty members have signed an agreement to be on the applied professional project committee. At least one of the faculty members must be members of the Graduate Faculty. One committee member may be a NSC full-time faculty member who has professional experience/expertise in the area of communication upon which the project is based OR a member of the community with professional experience in the area upon which the project is based. The inclusion of a non-graduate faculty member on the committee must be approved by the student's adviser and the graduate program director.

Exceptions to any of the criteria for application approval will be rare; and any such requests should be in written form and attached to the applied professional project application.

## **APP Enrollment for Research Hours**

Students must complete an enrollment request form in order to be allowed to enroll in applied professional project hours. At least 3 applied professional project hours are required although some students take a bit longer. Regardless of the number of hours taken for the project, all projects will be evaluated in conjunction with the same standards for quality; and all students are required to complete 33 hours of approved courses to earn the Master of Arts in Communication degree.

Students may opt to enroll in 1 to 3 hours of applied professional project in a given semester but must be enrolled in at least 1 hour in the semester s/he graduates.

Any student who has not completed an applied professional project after three hours of applied professional project enrollment must enroll in one hour of continuing professional credit each semester after the semester where the third hour of applied professional project credit was attempted. Evidence of project progress must be submitted with a new enrollment request form.

## **APP Completion of Research Hours**

If the project involves any type of research involving human subjects the student must gain proper approval in accordance with Federal guidelines. This includes any quizzes or surveys that may be administered to project stakeholders in order to generate the reflection component of the project.

A project description and timeline should be generated and submitted to all committee members for approval in advance of making agreements with community partners. Once approved, the student will work with the adviser in conjunction with the community partners to complete the project.

Advisers and committee members should respond to all writing submissions from students within four weeks. Students should submit quality drafts. Students should inquire with advisers about their preferences and expectations in completing the applied professional project process. Many advisers have a general list of rules and expectations that they will share with students.

A traditional written master's level applied professional project is a practical project that is not a part of the student's normal work load, makes a clear connection to communication scholarship, and requires a strong display of expertise and skill on the student's part.

## **Applied Professional Project Reflection, Defense, and Presentation**

Upon review of the student's written reflection, the committee will determine whether or not the student may proceed to defending the project. At this time, the student will schedule a defense with their committee and present their project for review and evaluation. The committee will announce its decision to the applied professional project candidate in private and immediately following their deliberation. The committee may demand corrections to the written document as part of their provisions for passing the student, and the adviser will work with the student to make the corrections. The adviser will also announce the results of the defense to the Graduate Program Director so that appropriate paperwork can be filed on the student's behalf.

Candidates who pass the defense of their applied professional project will be expected to present it during a showcase, scheduled near the end of each semester. NSC Administration, faculty and students, as well as the UCF and Central Florida community will be invited to attend. The student will be expected to make a presentation as well as complete a question-and-answer session on the project. Feedback may be provided after the showcase.

If a student fails the project defense, he or she will immediately set up a meeting with the Graduate Program Director to enter the comprehensive examination process. If the Graduate Program Director and the student both feel that the exams can be approached during the current semester, then the exams will be administered accordingly. If not, then they will be administered during the next available semester.

## Graduate Research

### NSC Graduate Faculty and their Research Interests

A list of current faculty members is available on the [Nicholson School of Communication webpage](#), along with contact information and areas of research interest. Students are encouraged to use this information to identify faculty with whom they might wish to work. Please note that only faculty certified by the College of Graduate Studies are eligible to supervise graduate student research.

### Research Projects

Conducting and sharing original research is an important part of graduate training. Therefore, students are highly encouraged to submit their work for presentation at conferences and for publication in communication journals. The submission of a research project to a conference should occur in close consultation with a faculty adviser or course instructor to maximize the probability of success. In some circumstances, faculty members will approach students who complete excellent course projects to encourage them to submit their work to conferences and/or a journal for publication. Conference participation and/or publication of research is essential for students interested in obtaining the PhD.

Students are also encouraged to work on faculty members' ongoing research projects. Most faculty members will welcome a graduate student's participation on a project. In many cases, a graduate student may earn three hours of independent study credit for their work on a faculty member's research project. If a graduate student plays an important role on the project, the student will often receive credit for her/his work in the form of a co-authorship on the final product. This type of credit for research participation can be very valuable when applying for admission to doctoral programs. Students may also receive three hours of credit for directed research in which the student works on her or his own project under the direction of a faculty member.

Students are bound by UCF's Golden Rule (see [goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/](http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/)), which contains Student Rights and Responsibilities including regulations on academic honesty, plagiarism, and codes of conduct. If a student is found to be engaged in plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, this can result in dismissal from the program.

### Support for Conference Presentation

The College of Graduate Studies offers a presentation fellowship that provides funding for enrolled master's, specialist, and doctoral students to share their research at a professional meeting. Students must be the primary author and presenter. More information is here: [graduate.ucf.edu/presentation-fellowship/](http://graduate.ucf.edu/presentation-fellowship/).

The UCF Student Government Association funds individuals for travel. Student Outreach Services in the Student Union, room 208, provides a brochure describing the steps in applying for this travel funding. Students can also pick up this brochure in the Graduate Student Center in Trevor Colbourn Hall 213. For more information, contact Student Outreach Services at: [sosgrad@ucf.edu](mailto:sosgrad@ucf.edu) (email), Graduate Knights (Facebook), or @UCFGradKnights (Twitter).

Students presenting research at a local, regional, national, or international conference are eligible for \$500 of travel expense assistance from the Nicholson School of Communication. Contact the NSC Graduate Program

Director for more information about this award. Students who receive this award from NSC are required to submit a proposal their research to the UCF Graduate Research Forum ([graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-research-forum/](http://graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-research-forum/)). Students are eligible to receive this award once a year as students and once overall as an alumni (if applied within 2 years of graduation).

The Nicholson School of Communication displays poster presentations of student research in NSC143D and will pay to print a student's research poster, if the student consents to return the poster (in good condition) for display. Students requesting presentation funding are encouraged to contact the NSC Graduate Program Adviser for information on the availability of this opportunity. Students presenting at the UCF Graduate Research Forum will be approved for poster printing, while students presenting elsewhere will have their requests reviewed and approved based on funding availability.

## Research Policies and Ethics Information

UCF has three fundamental responsibilities with regard to graduate student research. They are to:

- Support an academic environment that stimulates the spirit of inquiry
- Develop the intellectual property stemming from research
- Disseminate the intellectual property to the general public

Students are responsible for being informed of rules, regulations and policies pertaining to research. Below are some general policies and resources.

UCF's Office of Research & Commercialization ensures the UCF community complies with local, state and federal regulations that relate to research. For policies including required Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval when conducting research involving human subjects (e.g. surveys), animal research, conflict of interest and general responsible conduct of research, please see their website: [research.ucf.edu/Compliance/irb.html](http://research.ucf.edu/Compliance/irb.html).

## UCF's Patent and Invention Policy

In most cases, UCF owns the intellectual property developed using university resources. The graduate student as inventor will, according to this policy, share in the proceeds of the invention. Please see the current UCF Graduate Catalog for details: [catalog.ucf.edu/index.php?catoid=4](http://catalog.ucf.edu/index.php?catoid=4) > Policies > General Graduate Policies.

## Financial Support

### Assistantships and Tuition Waivers

The Nicholson School of Communication is given a set number of tuition waivers each year. Distribution of the tuition waivers is based on fellowship/scholarship, the match between special skills of the student and the needs of the NSC, GRE scores, and undergraduate and NSC graduate program GPA. For complete information about university assistantships and tuition waivers, please see the UCF Graduate Catalog. The Nicholson School offers a number of Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) each year (the number offered will vary depending on the budget situation of the department). Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs) may also be offered through faculty members' grants. After completing 18 credit hours, students may also be eligible to teach their own course. Students are encouraged to reference the College of Graduate Studies for descriptions of each job category.

When granted a tuition waiver, students should understand the waiver only assists in the matriculation fees accrued. In addition to matriculation, students are also charged several university fees (athletic fee, distance fee, etc.) that the tuition waiver does not pay for. Students can reference the UCF website for the breakdown of tuition and fees. Non-resident graduate students should note that non-resident fees are only waived during periods of full

(20 hours per week) assistantship appointments or if awarded university-wide fellowships. For more information on residency requirements, students should refer to Residency for Tuition

## **Graduate Employment Requirements**

To be employed and to maintain employment in a graduate assistantship, the student must be enrolled full-time and meet all of the training requirements and/or conditions of employment noted within the current graduate catalog. Additionally, students on a graduate teaching assistantship are required to participate in training seminars hosted by the Nicholson School of Communication. These seminars are detailed when the GTA is presented with his/her contract.

The NSC will communicate training requirements to students at the time of hire, but the onus to fulfill all requirements by university deadlines is solely the student's responsibility. A failure to meet the requirements will result in the loss of an assistantship and all corresponding tuition waiver funds. Failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress can also result in the loss of financial support. Although GTA funding depends on the annual budget of the graduate program, assistantships are usually awarded for a two-year period. Under extenuating circumstances or according to the needs of the Nicholson School, some students may be awarded one extra year of funding. All employment of graduate teaching assistants is overseen by the Director of the Nicholson School of Communication.

## **GTA Performance Evaluation**

At the completion of each semester, students employed as GTAs (graders, assistants and associates) are required to be evaluated by the NSC Director. The Director will consult with faculty to whom the student was assigned. If the student is serving as the instructor of record, the Director will consult with the GEP Coordinator. These assessments will be used to review strengths and weaknesses in the student's performance in preparation for future employment. Multiple negative evaluations may cause the student to lose future assistantships. Additionally, a failure to submit an evaluation will also result in a loss of future assistantships.

## **Incomplete Grades**

Students with excessive Incomplete (I) grades (2 or more) that do not resolve those grades within one semester will not be eligible to receive future financial support from NSC in the form of Graduate Teaching Assistantships or Graduate Research Assistantships. A student will be considered eligible for this support once the "I" grades are satisfactorily resolved and the student is in good academic standing.

## **Additional Financial Aid**

Requirements that need to be met for federal loan eligibility override graduate full-time requirements. A student may be held to other enrollment requirements, as defined by financial awards, veteran status, employment or other outside agencies.

## **International Student Employment**

Several types of employment are available to international students, including on-campus employment. International students are encouraged to contact the International Student Center for more information about the types of employment available and the requirements and restrictions based on visa type.

# Graduate Student Associations

Graduate students in the Nicholson School of Communication are welcome to pursue membership in any NSC-endorsed student organization and events. Some of these include: Radio-TV Digital News Association (RTDNA), WNSC, Ad Club, Lambda Pi Eta, Quotes, and Debate and Speech teams. Information about these can be found on the Nicholson School of Communication website and flyers posted in NSC.

The Nicholson School of Communication is proud to host the International Crisis and Risk Communication (ICRC) professional conference each March. A limited number of graduate students are sponsored by NSC to attend the conference. The opportunity is announced mid-February each year.

## Professional Development

### Teaching and Learning

#### **GTA Training (mandatory for employment as a GTA)**

This online training provides information and resources for students who will be assisting instructors. A variety of topics is covered, including classroom management, learning styles, testing and grading, and university policies and procedures. Those who will be teaching are required to complete the online training as well as attend an in-person one-day seminar, which includes course development, learning theories, lecturing, and academic freedom. This seminar is available to any student who desires additional training. For more information, please refer to the College of Graduate Studies' GTA website: [graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-teaching/](http://graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-teaching/)

#### **GTA Coursework (mandatory for employment as a GTA)**

GTAs in the Nicholson School of Communication are expected to serve as instructor of record in their own courses by their third semester. All GTAs in the Nicholson School of Communication are required to enroll in SPC 6340 (Teaching Communication) and complete the course with a grade of B or better. Failure to enroll in the course or pass with a satisfactory grade may be grounds for contract termination.

#### **Preparing Tomorrow's Faculty Certificate**

Completion of the 12-week [Preparing Tomorrow's Faculty Program](#) satisfies the requirement for GTA Grader, Assistant, and Associate Trainings. The Preparing Tomorrow's Faculty course will only meet the GTA Training requirement if completed in a prior semester. It is not sufficient to attend the Certificate course concurrently with your first teaching experience, if you have not taken the GTA Grader, Assistant, and Associate Trainings. For more information: [fctl.ucf.edu/](http://fctl.ucf.edu/) > Events > GTA Programs or call 407-823-3544.

#### **The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning**

FCTL promotes excellence in all levels of teaching at the University of Central Florida. They offer several programs for the professional development of Graduate Teaching Assistants at UCF.

#### **Pathways to Success**

The UCF College of Graduate Studies coordinates free workshops for graduate student academic and professional development. These workshops include topics on academic integrity; pursuit, acquisition, and management of grant funding; personal strategies for success in graduate school; and professional development and advancement after graduation. For more information and an up-to-date schedule for workshop offerings, please refer to: [graduate.ucf.edu/pathways-to-success/](http://graduate.ucf.edu/pathways-to-success/).

## **Graduate Research Forum**

The Graduate Research Forum will feature poster displays representing UCF's diverse colleges and disciplines. It is an opportunity for students to showcase their research and creative projects and to receive valuable feedback from faculty judges. Awards for best poster presentation in each category will be given and all participants will receive recognition. Students who receive travel funding from the Nicholson School of Communication are required to submit their research to the UCF Graduate Research Forum. The College of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Student Association invite all UCF students, community, and employers to attend the Graduate Research Forum. For more information, contact [researchweek@ucf.edu](mailto:researchweek@ucf.edu).

## **Graduate Excellence Awards**

Each year, the College of Graduate Studies offers graduate students who strive for academic and professional excellence the opportunity to be recognized for their work. For the nomination process and eligibility criteria, see the College of Graduate Studies website: [graduate.ucf.edu/awards-and-recognition/](http://graduate.ucf.edu/awards-and-recognition/).

The award categories include the following:

### **Award for Excellence by a Graduate Teaching Assistant**

This award is for students who provide teaching support and assistance under the direction of a lead teacher. This award focuses on the extent and quality of the assistance provided by the student to the lead instructor and the students in the class. (Not intended for students who are instructor of record)

### **Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching**

This award is for students who serve as instructors of record and have independent classroom responsibilities. The focus of this award is on the quality of the student's teaching and the academic contributions of those activities.

### **Award for the Outstanding Master's Thesis**

This award recognizes graduate students for excellence in the master's thesis. The focus of this award is on the quality and contribution of the student's thesis research. Excellence of the master's thesis may be demonstrated by evidence such as, but not limited to: publications in refereed journals, awards and recognitions from professional organizations, and praise from faculty members and other colleagues in the field. The university award will be forwarded to a national-level competition sponsored by the Council of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) when the thesis discipline corresponds to the annual submission request.

### **Meeske Outstanding Graduate Student of the Year**

Each spring, the Nicholson School of Communication Graduate Program names its student of the year, in honor of Dr. Milan "Mike" Meeske. Faculty can nominate Communication M.A. students and the award is based on student's academic performance, community and campus contributions, research record, as well as overall recommendation by NSC faculty.

## **Other Professional Development**

Students should take opportunities to present a poster or a topic of research at a conference. To obtain financial support to present at a conference (other than through your program) or to engage in comparable creative activity at a professional meeting, visit the Graduate Travel Fellowship section at [graduate.ucf.edu/fellowships/](http://graduate.ucf.edu/fellowships/).

For information about the Council of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) thesis and dissertation awards, see their website: [csgs.org/](http://csgs.org/) > Awards.

For grant-proposal writing resources: [uwc.cah.ucf.edu/](http://uwc.cah.ucf.edu/).

## Professional Affiliations

Below is a short list of professional affiliations our faculty have. These are great resources for scholarships, conferences, professional development, and employment opportunities. Most of these organizations have student memberships, with annual dues ranging from \$20-\$75.

- Ad 2—Orlando  
[ad2orlando.org](http://ad2orlando.org)
- American Society for Training and Development  
[td.org/](http://td.org/)
- Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication  
[aejmc.org/](http://aejmc.org/)
- Florida Communication Association  
[ficom.org/](http://ficom.org/)
- Florida Public Relations Association  
[fpra.org/](http://fpra.org/)
- International Association of Business Communicators  
[iabc.com/](http://iabc.com/)
- International Communication Association  
[icahdq.org/](http://icahdq.org/)
- National Communication Association  
[natcom.org/](http://natcom.org/)
- Public Relations Society of America  
[prsa.org/](http://prsa.org/)
- Society of Professional Journalists  
[spj.org/](http://spj.org/)
- Southern States Communication Association  
[ssca.net/](http://ssca.net/)

## Forms

- [College of Graduate Studies Forms and References](#)  
A complete listing of general forms and references for graduate students, with direct links, may be found here.
- [Graduate Petition Form](#)  
When unusual situations arise, petitions for exceptions to policy may be requested by the student. Depending on the type of appeal, the student should contact his/her program adviser to begin the petition process.
- [Traveling Scholar Form](#)  
If a student would like to take advantage of special resources available on another campus but not available on the home campus; for example, special course offerings, research opportunities, unique laboratories and library collections, this form must be completed and approved.

## Useful Links

- [Communication MA](#)
- [Nicholson School of Communication and Media](#)
- [College of Graduate Studies](#)
- [Academic Calendar](#)

- [Bookstore](#)
- [Campus Map](#)
- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Financial Assistance](#)
- [Golden Rule Student Handbook](#)
- [Graduate Catalog](#)
- [Graduate Student Association](#)
- [Graduate Student Center](#)
- [Housing and Residence Life](#)
- [Housing, off campus](#)
- [Knights Email](#)
- [Library](#)
- [NID Help](#)
- [Pathways to Success](#)
- [Recreation and Wellness Center](#)
- [Shuttles Parking Services](#)
- [Student Health Services](#)
- [Thesis and Dissertation \(ETD\)](#)
- [UCF Global](#)
- [University Writing Center](#)

## Grad Faculty

**Asterisk** = has previous committee experience, which qualifies the person to serve as chair, co-chair or vice chair.

### **Akita, Kimiko \***

College: Nicholson School of Communication

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Cultural Study, Gender Study, Ethnography, Intercultural Communication, International Communication

Contact Info: [kakita@ucf.edu](mailto:kakita@ucf.edu)

### **Bagley, George \***

College: Nicholson School of Communication

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Contact Info: [George.Bagley@ucf.edu](mailto:George.Bagley@ucf.edu)

### **Barfield, Rufus \***

College: Nicholson School of Communication

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Contact Info: [Rufus.Barfield@ucf.edu](mailto:Rufus.Barfield@ucf.edu)

### **Brown, Tim \***

College: Nicholson School of Communication

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Journalism, New Media in News, New Media in Education

Contact Info: [timbrown@ucf.edu](mailto:timbrown@ucf.edu)

**Butler, John \***

College: Nicholson School of Communication  
Disciplinary affiliations: Communication  
Contact Info: [John.Butler@ucf.edu](mailto:John.Butler@ucf.edu)

**Chandler, Robert**

College: Nicholson School of Communication  
Disciplinary affiliations: Communication  
Contact Info: [Robert.Chandler@ucf.edu](mailto:Robert.Chandler@ucf.edu)

**Collins, Steven \***

College: Nicholson School of Communication  
Disciplinary affiliations: Communication  
Contact Info: [Steven.Collins@ucf.edu](mailto:Steven.Collins@ucf.edu)

**Coombs, Timothy \***

College: Nicholson School of Communication  
Disciplinary affiliations: Communication  
Contact Info: [Timothy.Coombs@ucf.edu](mailto:Timothy.Coombs@ucf.edu)

**DeLorme, Denise \***

College: Nicholson School of Communication  
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