



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Communication MA Graduate Program Handbook

Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Last updated May 19, 2020

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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 at the Nicholson School of Communication and Media (NSCM) 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 Communication; to mentor students in the conduct of research and creative activities; to provide the 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

Students must fulfill both the core and elective course hour requirements.

Students are required to achieve a minimum grade of B- in all core classes.

Students must complete all required and elective courses with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 to qualify for graduation.

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 total of approved independent studies, directed research, internship, and graduate-level courses taken outside the Nicholson School of Communication and Media 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. Maximum **SIX** credit hours in total.
- 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)
- 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)

Note: Students can take up to **SIX credit hours at the 7000 level within NSCM** to be counted toward their elective credits.

Special Electives

In addition to the courses listed above, students may choose to supplement their Plan of Study with special electives, pending approval by the Graduate Program Coordinator. A maximum of **SIX credit hours** can come from this category, which include:

- COM 6908 Independent Studies
- COM 6918 Directed Research
- COM 6946 Internship
- COM 6958 Restricted Electives (may include study-abroad courses, special topics courses, or courses taken outside of the NSCM)

COM 6908 Directed Independent Studies

An independent study course is a specialized course developed jointly by the student and a graduate faculty member. Students who has an original research idea and wants to develop/complete the project with a faculty member usually take this option. Students need to secure the approval from a graduate faculty member and the Graduate Program Coordinator before enrolling the class. A course syllabus from the faculty member is also needed before the course is approved. Students are allowed to apply **THREE** credit hours of independent study to the electives portion of their Plan of Study.

COM 6918 Directed Research

Directed research involves students' participation in a larger research project in which the student takes on a significant role. Students need to secure the approval from a graduate faculty member and the Graduate Program Coordinator before enrolling in the class. A course syllabus is needed from the faculty member before the course is approved. Students are allowed to apply **THREE** credit hours of directed research to the electives portion of their Plan of Study.

COM 6946 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 towards the electives portion of their Plan of Study. Though Internships are primarily experiential, they must add some academic value to the student's graduate experience. Students should consult the Graduate Program Coordinator for details of the academic work required. In addition, students must complete at least **THREE** 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). A maximum of **THREE** credit hours can be earned from a given internship no matter how many hours the student works. All internships are approved, supervised, and graded by the Graduate Program Coordinator. To obtain approval, the student must have the internship site supervisor contact the Graduate Program Coordinator with a description of the internship, the number of hours the student will be working, and the contact information of the internship site supervisor.

Non-degree-seeking students and students from non-NSCM graduate programs are NOT eligible to earn NSCM graduate internship credit. No exceptions are made. Students in their first semester are not eligible to earn internship credit. Exceptions may be made solely at the discretion of the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Transfer Coursework and Courses from Outside the program

Students may take up to **TWO courses (up to SIX credit hours)** from another UCF graduate program that are beyond the Communication MA program elective courses. Courses must be approved by the Graduate Program Coordinator before they will be added to the plan of study and count toward degree completion.

A student may also request up to **SIX hours** of graduate credit completed prior to admission to the NSCM 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. All transfer coursework must be approved by the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Culminating Experience—3 Credit Hours

Students must choose one of three options (thesis, comprehensive examinations, or applied professional project) to complete their course of study.

COM 6971 Thesis Option

The thesis option requires a minimum of THREE 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, NSCM, and College of Graduate Studies.

The student's permanent faculty advisor will chair their committee. The committee chair and at least one member must be members of the NSCM graduate faculty. The other committee member can be a UCF graduate faculty outside of NSCM.

After selecting a topic, the student will, in conjunction with their permanent advisor, 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.

Comprehensive Examinations

The Comprehensive Examinations option is a FOUR-examination requirement that assesses students' coursework competency. Students who choose the COMPs option must take one additional elective course (total of 21 credit hours) to be eligible for this option. The examinations will cover research methods, communication theory, and elective areas selected together by the student with their comprehensive examination committee. The student's permanent faculty advisor will chair their committee, which will include two additional graduate faculty members in the NSCM.

The grading system for the comprehensive exam questions is Pass/Fail. If a student fails to pass any of the comprehensive exam questions, they are allowed TWO additional attempts to take the failed question(s) to satisfy the comprehensive exam requirement.

COM 6909 Applied Professional Project

The Applied Professional 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. The student's permanent faculty advisor will chair the applied project committee. The second member may be any member of the NSCM graduate faculty. A third member is optional and may be a member of the UCF faculty or the relevant professional community. The grading system for the project is Pass/Fail.

Advising

All incoming students will work with a temporary advisor before they choose a permanent advisor. We expect students to have a settled Plan of Study by the 18th credit hours of their course work.

Plan of Study

The Graduate Plan of Study (GPS) is a projected plan to completion of the Communication MA degree. This document is developed under the guidance of the student's academic advisor. Once the Plan of Study has been completed, it will be forwarded to the Graduate Program Coordinator for approval.

Students are encouraged to meet with their advisor 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 course enrollment or the culminating experience.

Program Policies

Student Responsibility

It is the student's responsibility to keep informed of all rules, regulations, and procedures required for graduate studies. Graduate program regulations will not be waived or exceptions granted because students plead ignorance of the regulations or claim failure of the advisor to keep them informed.

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 NSCM via their KnightsMail and are expected to monitor the account to remain informed. The NSCM will not be held responsible for missed deadlines or lack of information because a student is not using KnightsMail. Information regarding KnightsMail is located at: <https://extranet.cst.ucf.edu/kmailselfsvc>

Student Access and Privileges

The Graduate Student Office space within CMB will be assigned to students based on availability. The UCF Graduate Student Center (Main Campus, Trevor Colbourn Hall Building 213) provides rooms, computers, and other useful facilities for graduate students. Space and facilities are available on both campuses to aid students meeting with one another or conducting research. Rooms are also available at the UCF Library (Main Campus) and in Dr. Phillips Academic Commons, DPAC, (Downtown Campus) 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. Abuse and/or misuse of any privileges can result in their revocation.

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.

Course 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 NSCM Graduate Admissions Specialist 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.

Enrollment into thesis, independent study, directed research, and internship hours requires a form available from the Admissions Specialist and approval from the Graduate Program Coordinator

NSCM welcomes collaboration from other graduate programs. Students in graduate programs outside the NSCM are encouraged to contact the NSCM Graduate Admissions Specialist 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 Graduate Program Coordinator 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.

Annual Performance Evaluation

All enrolled students are required to complete an annual evaluation form regarding their academic progress in the program in April of each year. The Graduate Admissions Specialist may mandate this prior to approving enrollment for subsequent academic terms. This short report includes information about progression through coursework and research activities. These are reviewed annually by the Graduate Program Coordinator in consultation with the NSCM Graduate Committee.

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/.

Disability Accommodation Statement

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services before or immediately after admission (sas.sdes.ucf.edu/). The NSCM 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 NSCM Graduate Program Coordinator 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 online in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

Withdrawal Policy

The NSCM follows the UCF College of Graduate Studies policy on withdrawing from a class. For more information on the grade system, please visit: <http://catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=15&navoid=1228#grade-system>.

If a student chooses to withdraw from the university, s/he is encouraged to meet with the Graduate Program Coordinator 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 Graduate Program Coordinator.

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. Please read the [Continuous Enrollment](#) policy.

Graduate Student Center

The College of Graduate Studies has a Graduate Student Center, located in suite 213 of Trevor Colbourn Hall on the Main Campus. 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/.

Curriculum

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

Timeline for Completion

Below are SAMPLE timelines for completion of program, based on FALL admission. Please note that, with the exception of a student's first semester, this is a suggested timeline. Students are expected to develop their own timeline in consultation with their faculty advisor.

Full-time enrollment (SAMPLE)	
Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COM 6008 Proseminar in Communication (3 credits) • COM 5312 Introduction to Communication Research (3 credits) • Elective (3 credits) • Draft Plan of Study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COM 6401 Communication Theory (3 credits) • COM 6303 Qualitative Research Methods or Elective (3 credits)* • Elective (3 credits) • Complete Plan of Study with faculty advisor • Select Culminating Experience and choose permanent faculty advisor
Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COM 6304 Quantitative Research Methods or Elective (3 credits)* • Elective (3 credits) • Elective or Culminating Experience (3 credits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elective or Culminating Experience (3 credits) • File intent to graduate

**Students select COM 6303 or COM 6304, both are not required.*

Part-time enrollment (SAMPLE)	
Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COM 6008 Proseminar in Communication (3 credits) • COM 5312 Introduction to Communication Research (3 credits) • Draft Plan of Study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COM 6401 Communication Theory (3 credits) • COM 6303 Qualitative Research Methods or Elective (3 credits)*
Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COM 6304 Quantitative Research Methods or Elective (3 credits)* • Elective (3 credits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elective (3 credits) • Elective (3 credits) • Select Culminating Experience and choose permanent faculty advisor
Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elective or Culminating Experience (3 credits) • Elective (3 credits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elective or Culminating Experience (3 credits) • File intent to graduate

**Students select COM 6303 or COM 6304, both are not required.*

Culminating Experience Requirements

In order to demonstrate mastery of the learning objectives for the Communication M.A., students are required to complete a culminating experience. Students must select from either a non-thesis (comprehensive examination or applied professional project) or thesis option.

Before beginning any culminating experience project, the student must complete the Culminating Experience Declaration, which includes obtaining the required faculty and administrative signatures. The Culminating Experience Declaration form is available from the Graduate Program Assistant.

Regardless of Culminating Experience selected, students must have 3.0 GPA to graduate with a Master's degree in Communication.

Thesis Requirements

A student may choose to complete his/her program by writing comprehensive examinations or by writing a thesis. Check the website of College of Graduate Studies <https://graduate.ucf.edu/thesis-and-dissertation/> for requirements. Students should check UCF Academic Calendar for important dates and deadlines.

The following requirements must be met by thesis students:

- 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 thesis document by final submission deadline

Thesis Committee

The student should first find a faculty advisor to chair the thesis committee. The committee chair and at least one member must be members of the NSCM Graduate Faculty. The other committee member can be a UCF graduate faculty outside of NSCM.

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. 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, data analysis plan, and a complete list of references and supporting literature. This proposal is shared with committee members, and a face-to-face or virtual meeting to defend the proposal is held with the student, committee chair, and committee members in attendance.

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. The thesis committee makes all final decisions regarding the thesis project.

Projects what involve human subjects should be approved by IRB before data collection.
(<http://www.research.ucf.edu/Compliance/irb.html>)

The Thesis and Dissertation Services site https://ww2.graduate.ucf.edu/ETD_Student_Services/ is a good resource to start with.

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. At this time, the student should request the Defense Approval Form through the College of Graduate Studies. 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 should be scheduled for approximately 1.5 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.

The oral defense usually begins with an oral presentation of the research project. 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 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.

The student is expected to acquire the additional signatures for the Defense Approval form, which includes the Graduate Program Coordinator, the Director of the Nicholson School of Communication and Media, and the Dean of the College of Sciences. Thesis committee members must sign the form in person, or through an online authenticated signature.

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 advisor 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. Students should also be discouraged from providing food or drink at proposal defense and final defense meetings.

Thesis Enrollment Requirement

To be considered full-time after completion of coursework, students must be continuously enrolled in three hours of thesis research (COM 6971) 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 of thesis research (COM 6971) every semester after the initial three hours (including summers), until successful defense and graduation.

Comprehensive Examination Requirements

Each student will select a permanent advisor and will work with his or her advisor to appoint two additional committee members (NSCM graduate faculty) to the comprehensive examination committee. Students will usually answer four questions (two hours each). Committee will determine the exam time/location. Students can take one exam questions per day over a four-day period or take two exam questions over a two-day period. It is recommended that students follow the thesis defense deadlines set by the College of Graduate Studies of UCF which can be found at <https://calendar.ucf.edu/> . The comprehensive exams are typically closed-book.

The three-person committee will compile the questions based on the student's content area specialization and grade the questions. The advisor 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 one or more questions, the committee can elect to evaluate the student with a conditional pass. In this case, the advisor (as advised by the committee members or together with the committee members) will schedule and participate in an oral defense in which the student will present a revision of the answer. The committee will then vote to pass or fail the student's revised response.

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.

Students who fail one or more of their comprehensive exams are encouraged to review the failed exams with their faculty advisor before retaking the exams. Advisors who return an exam with a grade of FAIL are required to meet with the student if the student makes such a request. The advisor 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.

Students who fail to satisfy the comprehensive exam requirement after taking the exams three times will be reviewed by the NSCM 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.

Applied Professional Project 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 an applied research work—such as a case-study, sample corporate communication strategy, crisis communication plan, a project serving the communicative needs of 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 major components of the applied professional project include enrollment in and successful completion of applied project hours, and completion of the project, which includes a reflective write-up and an oral presentation of their work. Students with a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher are eligible for this option.

Students are required to fill out a registration form to enroll in applied professional project hours (COM 6909). At least THREE applied professional project hours are required.

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.

Applied Professional Project Process

A Culminating Experience Declaration form needs to be completed first. Students need to secure an advisor, or project chair, and at least one additional committee member from the NSCM graduate faculty. A third committee member is optional. A third committee member can be a community member with professional experience in the area upon which the project is based.

Under the supervision of the project adviser, the student prepares a project proposal that includes a clear plan of how the project is to be completed. This includes reviewing relevant information and previously conducted research on the topic or problem to be solved, as well as details on the research method and/ plan for creating the final deliverable project. This proposal is shared with committee members, and typically a face-to-face meeting or virtual meeting to discuss the proposal is held with the student, project adviser, and all committee members. If students want to publish the project in the future, they need to complete the IRB review at UCF before data collection. (<http://www.research.ucf.edu/Compliance/irb.html>)

This proposal should be approved by any community partners prior to carrying out the research/ implementing the communication deliverable. A meeting reviewing the study proposal is typically done the semester prior to the completion of the project, but may be completed in the same term.

An oral defense of the project is needed once the project is fully completed. The procedure is the same as the thesis defense meeting. An Applied Professional Project Approval Form needs to be turned in after the oral defense meeting.

It is recommended that students follow the thesis defense deadlines set by the College of Graduate Studies of UCF which can be found at <https://calendar.ucf.edu/>. All general rules and expectations from the committee should be discussed and shared with students before a project starts.

If a student fails the written part of the project, he or she will immediately set up a meeting with the Graduate Program Coordinator to enter the comprehensive examination process.

Graduate Research

NSCM Graduate Faculty

Please consult the list of NSCM Communication Graduate Faculty at the end of the handbook.

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.

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: <https://graduate.ucf.edu/funding/>

The UCF Student Government Association funds individuals for travel. Student Outreach Services, check out the Student Outreach Services <http://sos.sdes.ucf.edu/contact>

Students presenting research at a local, regional, national, or international conference are eligible for travel expense assistance from the NSCM. A student can only receive up to \$500 per semester and no more than twice in an academic year. The application will be reviewed by the program coordinator and approved by the NSCM Graduate Committee. Students should apply for the fund at least one month in advance before the trip. Students who receive this award from NSCM are required to submit a proposal of their research to the UCF Graduate Research Forum (<https://graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-research-forum/>).

Research Policies and Ethics Information

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

- (1) support an academic environment that stimulates the spirit of inquiry
- (2) develop the intellectual property stemming from research
- (3) disseminate the intellectual property to the general public

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: <http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html>

Financial Support

Assistantships and Tuition Waivers

The Nicholson School of Communication and Media 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 NSCM. 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.

For more information about Graduate Education Funding, visit <https://graduate.ucf.edu/funding/>

Incomplete Grades

Students with two or more excessive Incomplete (I) grades (2 or more) must resolve those grades within one semester or they will not be eligible to receive future financial support from NSCM 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.

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 and Media. These seminars are detailed when the GTA is presented with his/her contract.

The NSCM 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. All employment of graduate teaching assistants is overseen by the Director of the NSCM.

Graduate Employment Evaluation

At the completion of each semester, GTAs (graders, assistants and associates) are required to be evaluated by the Assistant Director of Communication. The Assistant Director, or Chair, will consult with faculty to whom the student was assigned. If the student is serving as the instructor of record, the Assistant Director will review Student Perceptions of Instruction and be involved in the assessment process. 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 annual performance evaluation will also result in a loss of future assistantships.

Additional Financial Aid

Requirements that need to be met for federal loan eligibility supersede 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 [UCF Global](#) for more information about the types of employment available and the requirements and restrictions based on visa-type. The NSCM strongly encourages all international students to adhere to the restrictions based on visa type so as to ensure their continued ability to study at NSCM and to avoid creating problems with future visa applications.

Conferences and Associations

Graduate students in the Nicholson School of Communication and Media are welcome to pursue membership in any NSCM-endorsed student organization and events. Some of these include: Radio-TV Digital News Association (RTDNA), WNSC, Lambda Pi Eta, Quotes, and Debate and Speech teams.

The NSCM is proud to host the International Crisis and Risk Communication (ICRC) professional conference each March. A number of graduate students are sponsored by NSCM to attend the conference at no cost to themselves. The opportunity is announced in mid-February.

Graduate students are encouraged to present their research at different UCF, local, regional, and national, and international conferences.

Professional Development

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 are 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 to attend an in-person one-day seminar, covering course development, learning theories, lecturing, and academic freedom. This seminar is available to any student who desires additional training. <https://graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-teaching/>

GTA Coursework (mandatory for employment as a GTA)

GTAs in the NSCM are expected to serve as instructor of record in their own courses by their third semester. All GTAs in NSCM 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

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. Completion of the 12-week [Preparing Tomorrow's Faculty Program](#) satisfies the requirement for GTA Grader, Assistant, and Associate Trainings.

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. <https://graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-research-forum/>

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. Please visit the [Pathways to Success](#) website.

Awards

Each year, the Department of Communication at NSCM offers graduate students who strive for academic and professional excellence the opportunity to be recognized for their work. The award categories include the following:

Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Research

This award is for students who have shown outstanding research record in the past academic year. This award focuses on both the quality and quantity of the research projects completed, presented, or published by the student.

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.

Meeske Graduate Student of the Year

This award recognizes a student who has demonstrated exceptional academic and scholarship contributions to the Communication MA program in the Department of Communication.

Useful Resources:

UCF Resources:

- IRB: <http://www.research.ucf.edu/Compliance/irb.html>
- IT: <https://it.ucf.edu/>
- UCF College of Graduate Studies: <https://graduate.ucf.edu/>
- UCF Golden Rule: <https://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/>

External Resources:

- Florida Communication Association: www.flcom.org
- Florida Public Relations Association: www.fpra.org
- Southern States Communication Association: www.scca.net
- Conference of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) thesis and dissertation award: <http://www.csgs.org/awards/student-award-winners/>
- Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication: <http://www.aejmc.org/>
- National Communication Association: www.natcom.org
- International Communication Association: www.icahdq.org
- Public Relations Society of America: www.prsa.org
- Society of Professional Journalists: www.spj.org

Grad Faculty

Brown, Tim

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Media and Society, New Media in Journalism, New Media in Education, Industry/Academy Relationship

Contact Info: timbrown@ucf.edu

Collins, Steven

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Journalism, International Communication, Social Media

Contact Info: Steven.Collins@ucf.edu

Dodd, Melissa

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Activism, Corporate Communication, Public Relations, Corporate Social Responsibility, Social Media, Social Capital

Contact Info: melissa.dodd@ucf.edu

Dusseau, Michelle

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Human Communication

Research interests: Gender Communication, Family Communication, Non-Verbal Communication, Group Dynamics, Conflict Management, Corporate Communication

Contact Info: Michelle.Dusseau@ucf.edu

Francies, Regina

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Social construction of health among women, Living in an independent retirement community

Contact Info: Regina.Francies@ucf.edu

Hanlon, Christine

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Advertising, Gender, LGBTQ+, Military Recruitment and Integration

Contact Info: Hanlon@ucf.edu

Hastings, Sally

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Communication and Bereavement, Communication and Marginalization, Intercultural, Interpersonal

Contact Info: Sally.Hastings@ucf.edu

Kight, Erica

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Hispanic Media, Spanish-language Media, Hispanic/LatinX audiences, Diversity in Media, Representation of People of Color in Media

Contact Info: Erika.Kight@ucf.edu

Kim, Jihyun

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Communication and Technology, New Technology, Quantitative Methods

Contact Info: Jihyun.Kim@ucf.edu

Kinnally, William

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication and Mass Media

Research interests: Mass Media Effects, Effects and News Content, Social Judgement, Media Enjoyment

Contact Info: William.Kinnally@ucf.edu

Kolodziej-Smith, Renata

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Organizational and Intercultural Communication

Contact Info: Renata.Kolodziej-Smith@ucf.edu

Kohl, Patrice

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Science and Environmental Communication, Human Dimensions

Contact Info: Patrice.Kohl@ucf.edu

Littlefield, Robert (School Director)

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Intercultural, Risk/Crisis, Forensic Pedagogy

Contact Info: Robert.Littlefield@ucf.edu

Matusitz, Jonathan

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Terrorism, Islamic Jihad, International Communication, Globalization

Contact Info: Jonathan.Matusitz@ucf.edu

McCafferty, James

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Conflict Management, Negotiation, Management-Labor Relations, Grounded Theory Method

Contact Info: James.McCafferty@ucf.edu

Miller, Ann

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Intercultural Communication, Health Communication, Instructional Communication

Contact Info: Ann.Miller@ucf.edu

Musambira, George

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Bereavement and Communication, International and Intercultural Communication, Non-Government Organizations, Communication and Development in African Countries

Contact Info: George.Musambira@ucf.edu

Neuberger, Lindsay

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Health Communication, Risk Communication, Campaign Evaluation, Formative Research

Contact Info: Lindsay.Neuberger@ucf.edu

Parrish, Adam

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Health Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Persuasion, Risk and Crisis Communication

Contact Info: Adam.Parrish@ucf.edu

Rubenking, Bridget

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication and Mass Media

Research interests: Media Processing and Effects, New Media, Entertainment, Quantitative Methods

Contact Info: Bridget.Rubenking@ucf.edu

Sandoval, Jennifer

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Identity, Intercultural Communication, Health Policy, Sexual and Reproductive Health

Contact Info: Jennifer.Sandoval@ucf.edu

Scott, Andrea

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Family Communication, SOTL, Religious Communication

Contact Info: Andrea.Scott@ucf.edu

Sellnow, Deanna

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Communication

Research interests: Instructional Communication, Risk and Crisis Communication, Popular Culture

Contact Info: Deanna.Sellnow@ucf.edu

Sellnow, Timothy

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media
Disciplinary affiliations: Communication
Research interests: Risk and Crisis Communication
Contact Info: Timothy.Sellnow@ucf.edu

Smith, Kevin

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media
Disciplinary affiliations: Communication and Mass Media
Research interests: Film, Television, Documentary
Contact Info: K.Smith@ucf.edu

Spence, Patric

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media
Disciplinary affiliations: Communication
Research interests: New Technology, Risk and Crisis Communication
Contact Info: Spence@ucf.edu

Strawser, Michael

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media
Disciplinary affiliations: Communication
Research interests: Instructional Communication, Organizational Communication, Educational Development
Contact Info: MichaelStrawser@ucf.edu

Voss, Kimberly

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media
Disciplinary affiliations: Communication and Mass Media
Research interests: Women's Studies, Women and the Media, Journalism History, Food History, Media Law, Social Media
Contact Info: Kimberly.Voss@ucf.edu

Weger, Harry

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media
Disciplinary affiliations: Communication
Research interests: Interpersonal, Family Communication, Persuasion, Nonverbal Communication
Contact Info: Harry.Weger@ucf.edu

Yu, Nan

College: Nicholson School of Communication and Media
Disciplinary affiliations: Communication
Research interests: New Media, Health Communication, Science Communication, Quantitative Methods
Contact Info: Nan.Yu@ucf.edu

Contact Info

Bridget Rubenking, Ph.D.

Program Coordinator, Communication MA

Associate Professor

bridget.rubenking@ucf.edu

Communication & Media Building 170H

Kelsey Loftus

NSCM Graduate Admissions Specialist

nicholsongrad@ucf.edu

Telephone: 407-823-5595

Communication & Media Building 203