Departments of
Communication Studies
and
Media & Journalism

Master of Arts in
Communication
Graduate Student Handbook
Table of Contents

Mission and Program Description.............................................................................page 4
Contacts and Faculty....................................................................................................page 6
Graduate Degree and Program Requirements
  Thesis track..............................................................................................................page 8
  Comprehensive Exam track....................................................................................page 8
Suggested Plan of Coursework
  Thesis track..............................................................................................................page 10
  Comprehensive Exam track....................................................................................page 14
Graduate School Policies and Procedures.................................................................page 18
Professional Development..........................................................................................page 19
Student Support Services..........................................................................................page 21
Additional Information on Graduate School Policies, Deadlines, and Forms.............page 22
Notice of Nondiscriminatory Policy............................................................................page 23
Mission

The MA in Communication graduate program at USD aims to provide an excellence-oriented learning environment for students who want to become communication professionals, leaders, or college/university faculty members. Our graduates will be able to understand and apply communication research in a broad spectrum of professional settings, and will also be prepared to pursue doctoral studies if they choose to continue their academic careers.

Welcome to the Master of Arts in Communication!

Master of Arts Degree

The 36-hour curriculum provides a foundation of research and theory. The MA requires a common core to ensure that graduates demonstrate mastery of research and theory consistent with the field. Additionally, this program allows elective courses and research options so that the student may develop a customized concentration in a subfield.

Program Description

The Masters in Communication examines human symbolic activity in a variety of contexts and through a variety of channels. We explore interpersonal identities and relationships, culture and organizational life, as well as traditional and new forms of media. After completing foundational courses in research and theory, students build on their own interests and goals by selecting courses from the Department of Communication Studies and the Department of Media & Journalism, as well as related departments throughout the University.

Sound, ethical practice, rigorous intellectual inquiry, and the free expression of ideas form the basis for studying communication practices, interactions, discourses, strategies, messages, and effects. Students come to the graduate program from a variety of undergraduate programs, such as communication, mass communication, psychology, sociology, business, English, political science, counseling, and education.

The curriculum prepares students for leadership positions in a variety of fields – business, education, law, politics, social and human services, health care management, human resource development, public relations, advertising, marketing, technology, public administration, and the arts and entertainment. The program also prepares students for doctoral study, and for teaching at the secondary and post-secondary levels.

Principal Fields for Specialization and Research: Based on their own professional and academic goals, graduate students are encouraged to design individual programs of study in areas such as interpersonal and relational communication, organizational communication, health communication, political communication, intercultural and intergroup communication, media
studies, mass communication, strategic communication (advertising, integrated marketing and public relations), journalism and media management.

A student pursuing a graduate degree in communication may select between two options: Plan A (scholarly thesis and oral defense); Plan B (course work with comprehensive exam and oral defense).

**Principal Fields for Specialization and Research:**

- Communication Studies
- Mass Communication

A student pursuing a graduate degree in communication may select between **two options**:

- **Plan A**: 30 hours of course work, plus 6 hours of thesis credit, thesis completed and defended
- **Plan B**: 36 hours of course work, competency exams completed and defended

For additional information, please see the USD [Graduate Catalog](#).
Master of Arts in Communication: Contacts for Information

Dr. Kelly McKay-Semmler, Communication Studies Graduate Program Co-Director
Dakota Hall 316, 414 E. Clark Street
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Administrative Assistant
Cara McLaughlin
Dakota Hall 319, 414 E. Clark Street
Vermillion, SD 57069
605-677-5476
Cara.McLaughlin@usd.edu

FACULTY

Department of Communication Studies

Associate Professors:

  Kelly McKay-Semmler, Ph.D., University of Oklahoma. Specializations: intercultural/intergroup communication and communication in conflict resolution

  Shane Semmler, Ph.D., University of Oklahoma. Specializations: persuasion, public speaking, entertainment education, political communication, and environmental communication

  Jill Tyler, Ph.D., University of Iowa. Specializations: interpersonal/relational communication and health communication

Assistant Professors:

  Leah Seurer, Ph.D., University of Denver. Specializations: interpersonal/family communication and qualitative methods
Other Faculty:

Nicole Ackman, Instructor, M.S., South Dakota State University. Specializations: communication pedagogy, organizational and leadership communication, gender and communication

Aimee Sorensen, Instructor, M.A., University of South Dakota. Specializations: communication pedagogy, interpersonal/relational communication, political communication

Department of Media & Journalism

Full Professor:

Charles Lubbers, Ph.D., University of Nebraska. Specializations: public relations, advertising, pedagogy, travel and tourism, health communication, and integrated marketing communications

Assistant Professors:

Lori Costello, Ph.D., Texas A&M University. Specializations: public relations, advertising, integrated marketing communications, and agricultural communications

Travis Loof, Ph.D., Texas Tech. Specializations: social media marketing, narrative engagement, advertising, entertainment education, and human-AI interaction

Kyle Miller, Ph.D., University of Iowa. Specializations: digital journalism, sports communication, radio, community media, college media, and podcasting

Michelle Van Maanen, Ed.D., University of South Dakota. Specializations: journalism, media promotion, media management, higher education, and mass communication theory

Other Faculty:

Janet Davison, Lecturer, Ph.D., University of South Dakota. Specializations: newswriting (print and broadcast), radio production, media history, and literary journalism

Gary Larson, Lecturer, Ed.S., University of South Dakota. Specializations: sports marketing and management and audience response
Graduate Degree and Program Requirements At-A-Glance

There are two tracks available for this program. The Thesis track (Plan A) requires the 12 hour core plus 18 hours of elective credit and 6 hours of thesis credit. The Non-thesis track (Plan B) requires the 12-hour core plus 24 hours of elective credit, and a comprehensive exam during your final semester of coursework.

Master of Arts in Communication, Plan A (Scholarly Thesis): Total 36 credit hours

Major Area Coursework

- SPCM 701 / MCOM 792\(^1\) - INTRODUCTION TO GRADUATE STUDY (C) 3 cr hrs
- SPCM 705 - QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS 3 cr hrs
- SPCM 706 - QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES 3 cr hrs
- SPCM 798 or MCOM 798\(^2\) - THESIS RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION (C) 1 to 6 cr hrs (6 credit hours required)
- Communication Elective Courses 12 credit hours from SPCM or MCOM courses numbered 500 – 700
- Supporting courses outside of communication (not SPCM or MCOM) 6 credit hours
- Note that 50 percent of your program of study must be at the 700-course level or above

Select one of the following (3 cr):

- MCOM 701 - MASS COMMUNICATION ETHICS 3 cr hrs
- SPCM 716 - RHETORICAL THEORY AND CRITICISM 3 cr hrs

Master of Arts in Communication, Plan B (Comprehensive Exams): Total 36 credit hours

Major Area Coursework

- SPCM 701 / MCOM 792\(^2\) - INTRODUCTION TO GRADUATE STUDY (C) 3 cr hrs
- SPCM 705 - QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS 3 cr hrs
- SPCM 706 - QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES 3 cr hrs
- Communication Elective Courses 18 credit hours from SPCM or MCOM courses numbered 500 – 700

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\(^1\) Students with an emphasis on Media & Journalism who wish to have MCOM 792 Topics: Introduction to Graduate Study listed on their transcript rather than SPCM 701 (they are the same course) will need to have this substitution approved by the graduate program director and the graduate school.

\(^2\) Students with an emphasis on Media & Journalism who wish to have MCOM 798 Thesis Research in Communication listed on their transcript rather than SPCM 798 will need to have this substitution approved by the graduate program director and the graduate school.

\(^3\) Students with an emphasis on Media & Journalism who wish to have MCOM 792 Topics: Introduction to Graduate Study listed on their transcript rather than SPCM 701 (they are the same course) will need to have this substitution approved by the graduate program director and the graduate school.
- Supporting courses outside of communication (not SPCM or MCOM) 6 credit hours
- Note that 50 percent of your program of study must be at the 700-course level or above

Select ONE of the following (3 cr):
- MCOM 701 - MASS COMMUNICATION ETHICS 3 cr hrs
- SPCM 716 - RHETORICAL THEORY AND CRITICISM 3 cr hrs

Degree requirements for areas of study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication MA</th>
<th>Plan A (Thesis)</th>
<th>Plan B (Comp. Exams)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Courses</td>
<td>12 credit hours</td>
<td>12 credit hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Elective Courses</td>
<td>12 credit hours</td>
<td>18 credit hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis or Project Research</td>
<td>6 credit hours</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting courses (outside Communication)</td>
<td>6 credit hours</td>
<td>6 credit hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Written Exam</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Defense</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MA in Communication: Suggested plan of coursework, THESIS track:

To be a full-time graduate student, you must be enrolled in 9 credit hours per semester. Note that 50 percent of your program of study must be at the 700-course level or above.

You don’t have to know whether you want to do a thesis until the end of your second semester.

The MA in Communication has four required core courses that will be offered within a two-year period. SPCM 701 is offered every fall, and SPCM 705, SPCM 706, SPCM 716, and MCOM 701 will usually be offered one per semester. You should take each course when it is offered in order to complete the MA degree on schedule:

- **SPCM 701/MCOM 792**: Introduction to Graduate Study (3 credit hours); this course is offered every fall semester and should be taken at your first opportunity
- **SPCM 705**: Quantitative Research Methods (3 credit hours); offered once every two years; take the course when offered
- **SPCM 706**: Qualitative Research in Communication Studies (3 credit hours); offered once every two years; take the course when offered
- **SPCM 716**: Rhetorical Theory and Criticism OR **MCOM 701**: Mass Communication Ethics (3 credits); you only need to take one or the other, and both will be offered within a two-year period, so take the course that more closely aligns with your degree interests (Communication Studies [SPCM 716] or Mass Communication [MCOM 701]).

1 Fall (9 credit hours) (although you can enter the graduate program in any semester, a fall entry is preferred for the most beneficial sequence of courses and for GTA assignment)

- SPCM 701/MCOM 792: Introduction to Graduate Study (3 credit hours)
- One of the following core courses (3 credit hours):
  - SPCM 705; SPCM 706: if offered, take whichever is offered
  - SPCM 716 or MCOM 701: if offered, take the course that more closely aligns with your degree interests
- **SPCM 505 Theories of Communication** (recommended if no undergraduate background in Communication Studies or Media & Journalism) (counts as an elective course), or some elective course in SPCM or MCOM at a graduate level (500, 600, or 700) (3 credit hours)
- If SPCM 716 or MCOM 701 is being offered this semester, but not the one you intend to take for your degree, you should choose another elective course in SPCM or MCOM at a graduate level (500, 600, or 700) (3 credit hours)

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4 Students with an emphasis on Media & Journalism who wish to have MCOM 792 Topics: Introduction to Graduate Study listed on their transcript rather than SPCM 701 (they are the same course) will need to have this substitution approved by the graduate program director and the graduate school.
2 Spring (9 credit hours)

- One of the following core courses (3 credit hours):
  - SPCM 705; SPCM 706: if offered, take whichever is offered
  - SPCM 716 or MCOM 701: if offered, take the course that more closely aligns with your degree interests
- Two elective courses (6 credit hours) in SPCM or MCOM at a graduate level (500, 600, or 700) and/or elective graduate courses outside of SPCM or MCOM
- If SPCM 716 or MCOM 701 is being offered this semester, but not the one you intend to take for your degree, you should choose another elective course in SPCM or MCOM at a graduate level (500, 600, or 700) or an elective graduate course outside of SPCM or MCOM (3 credit hours)

By the end of your second semester, you should choose a thesis advisor to consult about coursework and research. You may choose any graduate faculty member in either of the departments to be your advisor. You should complete preliminary work, such as the literature review, during the summer. You must complete at least 6 credit hours of thesis work for your degree.

3 Fall (9 credit hours)

- One of the following core courses (3 credit hours):
  - SPCM 705; SPCM 706: if offered, take whichever is offered
  - SPCM 716 or MCOM 701: if offered, take the course that more closely aligns with your degree interests
- Elective course in SPCM or MCOM at graduate level (500, 600, or 700) and/or elective graduate course outside of SPCM or MCOM (3 credit hours)
- If SPCM 716 or MCOM 701 is being offered this semester, but not the one you intend to take for your degree, you should choose another elective course in SPCM or MCOM at a graduate level (500, 600, or 700) or an elective graduate course outside of SPCM or MCOM (3 credit hours)
- Thesis hours (3 credit hours)

By midterm of your third semester, meet with your committee for thesis proposal approval. Based on an extensive literature review and method section you have written under the direction of your advisor, you will prepare a condensed version of this document (in consultation with your advisor) to present to your committee.

4 Spring (9 credit hours)

- One of the following core courses (3 credit hours):
  - SPCM 705; SPCM 706: if offered, take whichever is offered
  - SPCM 716 or MCOM 701: if offered, take the course that more closely aligns with your degree interests
• Elective course in SPCM or MCOM at graduate level (500, 600, or 700) and/or elective graduate course outside of SPCM or MCOM (3 credit hours)
• If SPCM 716 or MCOM 701 is being offered this semester, but not the one you intend to take for your degree, you should choose another elective course in SPCM or MCOM at a graduate level (500, 600, or 700) or an elective graduate course outside of SPCM or MCOM (3 credit hours)
• Thesis hours (3 credit hours)

Writing the MA in Communication Thesis

Choosing a Topic

Your thesis topic should emerge from your graduate coursework. If you enter the program with a particular topic in mind, you can often design many of your coursework papers to prepare you for the thesis. For example, in the SPCM 701 course, you might begin compiling a literature review that explores the topic. In your methods courses you might experiment with how different methods will help you examine different parts of the topic.

However, many graduate students enter their graduate studies without a clear thesis topic in mind. In the process of studying methods and communication theories, they discover their passion. Don’t worry if everyone else seems focused on an idea. The first two semesters are meant to be exploratory.

Timeline

However, you must decide on a thesis project by the beginning of your third semester. **If you have not decided (and have not done preliminary work) on your topic by this time, you cannot expect to graduate in four semesters.** If you choose, you may continue work on a thesis beyond the four semester timeline, but you will either need to pay for additional thesis credit hours or, if applicable, apply for a leave of absence. (See [Graduate School Policies and Procedures](#) webpage for more information.) However, faculty might NOT be available for advising or reading drafts during the summer, and sometimes faculty members retire or resign before you complete your thesis.

Selecting a Committee

In order to write a thesis, you must have a committee, which will consist of two faculty members from Media & Journalism and/or Communication Studies and one faculty member from another department. One of the M&J or Communication Studies faculty will be your advisor. Choose faculty members who are interested in and/or knowledgeable about your topic and/or your method.
Your Thesis Proposal

You should meet with your advisor frequently as you choose your topic and prepare your proposal. You should conduct an extensive literature review, propose original research questions and/or hypotheses, and describe how you will explore your questions. The length of your thesis proposal (which should be distributed to your committee members by midterm of your third semester) will be determined in consultation with your advisor; however, it must be sufficiently detailed for your committee to provide useful feedback on the soundness of your research questions and study design. The proposal should conform to APA 6th edition style guidelines.

Defending Your Thesis

Your advisor will read several drafts of your thesis as it emerges. You may consult your other committee members for their expertise as needed. When your advisor indicates that you are ready to defend your thesis, you will set a date and place for the defense (after consulting with the committee members). Please send a printed or electronic copy of your thesis to each member at least two weeks in advance of your defense. Bring the required approval forms to your thesis defense. Thesis defenses are open to department faculty and graduate students, and others whom you may want to invite. Depending on the committee’s recommendations, you may have to revise your thesis before submitting it to the Graduate School and being approved for graduation.
MA in Communication: Suggested plan of coursework, COMPREHENSIVE EXAM track:

To be a full-time graduate student, you must be enrolled in 9 credit hours per semester. Note that 50 percent of your program of study must be at the 700-course level or above.

The MA in Communication has four required core courses that will be offered within a two-year period. SPCM 701 is offered every fall, and SPCM 705, SPCM 706, SPCM 716, and MCOM 701 will usually be offered one per semester. You should take each course when it is offered in order to complete the MA degree on schedule:

- **SPCM 701/MCOM 792\(^5\): Introduction to Graduate Study** (3 credit hours); this course is offered every fall semester, and should be taken at your first opportunity
- **SPCM 705: Quantitative Research Methods** (3 credit hours); offered once every two years; take the course when offered
- **SPCM 706: Qualitative Research in Communication Studies** (3 credit hours); offered once every two years; take the course when offered
- **SPCM 716: Rhetorical Theory and Criticism OR MCOM 701: Mass Communication Ethics** (3 credits); you only need to take one or the other, and both will be offered within a two-year period, so take the course that more closely aligns with your degree interests (Communication Studies [SPCM 716] or Mass Communication [MCOM 701]).

1 Fall (9 credit hours) (although you can enter the graduate program in any semester, a fall entry is preferred for the most beneficial sequence of courses and for GTA assignment)

- SPCM 701/MCOM 792: Introduction to Graduate Study (3 credit hours)
- One of the following core courses (3 credit hours):
  - SPCM 705; SPCM 706: if offered, take whichever is offered
  - SPCM 716 or MCOM 701: if offered, take the course that more closely aligns with your degree interests
- **SPCM 505 Theories of Communication** (recommended if no undergraduate background in Communication Studies or Media & Journalism) (counts as an elective course), or some elective course in SPCM or MCOM at a graduate level (500, 600, or 700) (3 credit hours)
- If SPCM 716 or MCOM 701 is being offered this semester, but not the one you intend to take for your degree, you should choose another elective course in SPCM or MCOM at a graduate level (500, 600, or 700) (3 credit hours)

2 Spring (9 credit hours)

- One of the following core courses (3 credit hours):
  - SPCM 705; SPCM 706: if offered, take whichever is offered

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\(^5\) Students with an emphasis on Media & Journalism who wish to have MCOM 792 Topics: Introduction to Graduate Study listed on their transcript rather than SPCM 701 (they are the same course) will need to have this substitution approved by the graduate program director and the graduate school.
SPCM 716 or MCOM 701: if offered, take the course that more closely aligns with your degree interests

• Two elective courses (6 credit hours) in SPCM or MCOM at a graduate level (500, 600, or 700) and/or elective graduate courses outside of SPCM or MCOM

• If SPCM 716 or MCOM 701 is being offered this semester, but not the one you intend to take for your degree, you should choose another elective course in SPCM or MCOM at a graduate level (500, 600, or 700) or an elective graduate course outside of SPCM or MCOM (3 credit hours)

If you have NOT decided on a thesis topic before beginning your third semester, you should plan to take comprehensive exams. However, if you are willing to spend additional time to complete a thesis, you can still choose to write a thesis after beginning your third semester. Regardless of whether you choose to write comprehensive exams or decide to write a thesis on an extended schedule, you should choose an advisor by the beginning of your third semester. You may choose any graduate faculty member in either of the departments to be your advisor.

3 Fall (9 credit hours)

• One of the following core courses (3 credit hours):
  o SPCM 705; SPCM 706: if offered, take whichever is offered
  o SPCM 716 or MCOM 701: if offered, take the course that more closely aligns with your degree interests

• Elective courses in SPCM or MCOM at graduate level (500, 600, or 700) and/or elective graduate courses outside of SPCM or MCOM (6 credit hours)

• If SPCM 716 or MCOM 701 is being offered this semester, but not the one you intend to take for your degree, you should choose another elective course in SPCM or MCOM at a graduate level (500, 600, or 700) or an elective graduate course outside of SPCM or MCOM (3 credit hours)

By midterm of your third semester, meet with your advisor to plan for your comprehensive exams. You must also choose two (or more) other faculty members (at least one outside of Media & Journalism or Communication Studies) to ask questions on your comprehensive exams. **Schedule your comprehensive exams during the 4th semester.** Please see the next section on Comprehensive Exams for details on how to study and plan for your exams.

4 Spring (9 credit hours)

• One of the following core courses (3 credit hours):
  o SPCM 705; SPCM 706: if offered, take whichever is offered
  o SPCM 716 or MCOM 701: if offered, take the course that more closely aligns with your degree interests

• Elective course in SPCM or MCOM at graduate level (500, 600, or 700) and/or elective graduate course outside of SPCM or MCOM (3 credit hours)
• If SPCM 716 or MCOM 701 is being offered this semester, but not the one you intend to take for your degree, you should choose another elective course in SPCM or MCOM at a graduate level (500, 600, or 700) or an elective graduate course outside of SPCM or MCOM (6 credit hours)

Writing the Comprehensive Exams for the MA in Communication

The comprehensive exam process requires you to demonstrate both the breadth and depth of your understanding of Communication, based on your coursework here at The University of South Dakota. Over the course of two weeks, you will write five answers. The questions will be written and graded by the members of your committee, with guidance from your advisor.

I. Identify your Advisor. You may choose any graduate faculty member in either the Communication Studies or Media & Journalism departments to be your advisor. Your advisor will help facilitate the collection of your exam questions and distribution of your responses to your other committee members. This person should also prepare a question for you.

II. Identify Committee Members. You may select three to five members of the graduate faculty. Each faculty member will write one or two questions that reflect on the coursework you have done with that faculty member. No faculty member may write more than two questions. One member of your committee must come from outside the Departments of Media & Journalism and Communication Studies. In rare cases, a faculty member who has left USD may be willing to write a question for a student.

III. Schedule your comprehensive exams. Work with the department secretary to schedule a room and computer to use for your exams. Allow several weeks (6-10 weeks) of careful review and study before your exams. Each question should take three hours to address. You may do two questions a day for two and a half days; or you may write three hours a day for five days. You may choose the order in which you receive the questions. You have ten working days (two weeks) to schedule these sessions. You can have a day or two off between questions.

IV. Comprehensive exams will include:
   a. Theory question: Addresses material from SPCM 701 and all graduate courses
   b. Methods question: Specifically addresses the material from SPCM 705 and 706; 716 and/or MCOM 701.
   c. Outside question: From your courses outside of SPCM or Media & Journalism, but it should be relevant to communication
   d. Two or three questions that reflect your areas of emphasis in communication
V. Schedule an appointment with each member of your committee:

You will talk about the question(s) that the member will pose. Suggest some ideas about what the question(s) should cover, based on your coursework and your professional interests. The faculty member determines the questions s/he will pose, but you the student could suggest, for example: "I spent a lot of time on theories of persuasion and compliance gaining, and I would like my theories question to deal with those theories. I also did most of my work in interpersonal communication, so an interpersonal context would be interesting."

Then, the faculty member would probably write something like (here's a sample question):

*Use three theories of persuasion or compliance gaining to describe how a parent might persuade a child to improve the child's grades. Discuss what strategies the parent might use and why. Describe what situational variables may influence the choice of strategies and the strategy's effectiveness. As a scholar, identify how each theory would break down the parent's communication: use relevant terms, concepts, and models. Finally, argue for which theory best describes persuasion and compliance-gaining in this context.*

In some cases, your committee member may assign you additional readings which will become the focus of your question.

VI. Exam Days

On the day(s) you are scheduled to write, you will be given a departmental laptop computer and will be assigned to a quiet room to write. **You may NOT bring ANY materials into the room with you.** You will have no access to notes, books, or the internet. You may NOT have your cell phone. This exam explores what you know and your reasoning/writing skills. You will have three hours to answer each question. Each question should be about 5-8, typed, double-spaced pages. Be sure to carefully read and answer all parts of the question. You’ll then transfer the answer to a flash drive and the departmental secretary will deliver it to the designated member of your committee. You will receive a copy of what you wrote.

You also should arrange a time and place for the oral part of the exam. All of the committee members will meet with you as a group to ask questions about your written responses, for the purpose of clarifying or extending what you wrote. You should prepare for this exam by reviewing what you wrote and thinking about what you might be asked. This oral exam should be scheduled within two weeks after you complete the final questions.

The committee can issue a passing grade, ask you to rewrite some parts, or fail you. If you are asked to rewrite, the committee will set a deadline and conditions for the rewrite. Failure on the rewrite will result in failure of your comprehensive exams.
Academic Standing, Probation, and Dismissal

The 2020-21 Graduate Catalog (section on Academic Standards and Progress) states “In addition to overall satisfactory performance, graduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA average of 3.0 or above in all work included in the program of study submitted for their degrees. Furthermore, no more than one-third of the credit hours with grades of ‘C’ are permitted.” The Communication MA program permits graduate students only two course grades of “C” before probationary action is taken. The Graduate Catalog further states, “A cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher is required to progress in the Graduate School. All grades of ‘Incomplete’ on the program of study must be removed prior to graduation. Grades of ‘D’, ‘F’, or other unsatisfactory designations are not acceptable for graduate credit…credit for courses in which such grades have been earned will not be counted toward a graduate degree although they are included in GPA calculations. For repeated courses at the undergraduate and graduate level, only the last grade is used in computing the grade point average...If a student has more than one course of unsatisfactory work and/or has not maintained a 3.0 term or cumulative graduate GPA, the academic program places the student on warning, or probation or dismisses him/her from the program in keeping with department and Graduate School policies.”

Continuous Enrollment

Students should be continuously enrolled after matriculation. If circumstances do not allow a student to be continuously enrolled and they must stop out of their program, they may return within three semesters (including summer) without needing to reapply for admission. Stopping out of a degree program does not change the time frame for degree completion, therefore, students will be subject to the time limits discussed before the stop out occurred. Students returning after three consecutive semesters of stop out need to contact the Graduate School before re-enrolling. Students enrolled in programs that have been discontinued or inactivated must maintain continuous enrollment during the teach-out process.

Academic Integrity

The College of Arts and Sciences considers plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty inimical to the objectives of higher education. The College supports the imposition of penalties on students who engage in academic dishonesty, as defined in the “Conduct” section of the University of South Dakota Student Handbook.

No credit can be given for a dishonest assignment. A student found to have engaged in any form of academic dishonesty may, at the discretion of the instructor, be:

a. Given a zero for that assignment.
b. Allowed to rewrite and resubmit the assignment for credit.
c. Assigned a reduced grade for the course.
d. Dropped from the course.
Addendum to the Academic Integrity Policy

Graduate students are expected to conduct themselves honestly and professionally both within and outside the department. Graduate students found to have engaged in dishonest conduct in their professional relationships, including in the production and submission of theses, dissertations, and work for publication, may be subject to sanctions, including but not limited to removal of departmental funding or dismissal from the program.

Students found to have engaged in academic dishonesty may be referred to the Graduate School for violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Academic Appeals

All students may appeal an academic decision involving such matters as final course grades and dismissal from the program. Appeals must be initiated by the student through discussion with the individual responsible for the decision.

For grades, students should contact the appropriate faculty member; for decisions regarding the program, students should contact either of the Co-Directors of Graduate Studies and the Chair of the department the course is listed under. The student must have this discussion within 30 calendar days of being notified of the decision that is being appealed. If notification occurs within 15 calendar days of the end of a term, the discussion must occur at the latest within 15 calendar days of the start of the next term. If a student wishes to pursue the appeal following this discussion, he or she should submit an Academic Appeal form (available from the Graduate School) within 5 working days of the meeting. Further information about the Academic Appeals process is available in the Graduate Catalog.

Time Limits to Degree Completion

According to USD Graduate School policy, all Master’s students must complete their Master’s degree requirements within seven years of entry into the program. The student, with support from the program, may petition the Graduate Dean to extend the time due to extenuating circumstances.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Graduate Student Research and Travel

Graduate students are strongly encouraged to pursue professional opportunities as part of their training in the discipline, including membership and service in professional organizations and
scholarly societies, conference presentations, and publication in peer-reviewed journals. Some travel funding for students who have had a paper accepted at an academic conference may be available from the Graduate School, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Office of Research, the Department of Communication Studies, or the Department of Media & Journalism. Students should contact the Chair to request research funding, which will depend upon availability.

**Assistantship Policies**

A limited number of funded graduate assistantships are available to Communication graduate students. These include university (departmental) funded teaching and research assistantships. Stipend amounts vary upwards from a minimum of $4,027 per semester, depending on the kind and amount of work required for the assistantship, a maximum of 20 hours per week. Other assistantships outside the department are sometimes available.

Per SDBOR Policy 5-22, resident graduate assistants shall be assessed fifty-three percent (53%) of the resident graduate tuition rate for all on-campus courses, in addition to 100% of the general activity fee and discipline fees. Nonresident graduate assistants shall be assessed sixty-three percent (63%) of the resident graduate tuition rate for all on-campus courses, in addition to 100% of the general activity fee and discipline fees. Any graduate assistants taking distance, off-campus, or University Center courses will receive a tuition reduction equal to the reduction applied to the resident graduate assistant on-campus tuition rate. The waived tuition is part of the compensation for the graduate work. Please note, not all graduate credit hours are eligible for the tuition remission or the discounted rate.

Usually, decisions awarding assistantships are made by April 15 for the following academic year. Please submit the application for graduate assistantships available on the Graduate School website by April 1 to be considered for an assistantship for the following academic year.

**Letters of Recommendation**

Students will need letters of recommendation for a variety of purposes during graduate school (e.g., support travel grants; research fellowships; internship; prospective employers). It is recommended that students approach each prospective faculty letter writer and personally request letters of recommendation. Provide each letter writer with a current CV, and any additional information that may be helpful (e.g., when letter is due, correct address, and, if any special interests or training foci need to be emphasized).
GRADUATE STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Financial Aid
Belbas Center
605-658-6250
http://www.usd.edu/financial-aid

Graduate School
Slagle Hall 304A
605-658-6173
grad@usd.edu
http://www.usd.edu/grad

International Office
Academic Commons 102
605-658-6255
https://www.usd.edu/international

Office of the Registrar
Belbas Center 223
605-658-3880
www.usd.edu/registrar

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Slagle Hall 107
605-658-3760
http://www.usd.edu/research/orsp-home

USD Veterans Services
Belbas Center 122
605-658-3881
http://www.usd.edu/veterans-services
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES, DEADLINES, AND FORMS

All graduate students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the various Graduate School policies and timelines found on the Graduate School website and in the Graduate Catalog. These include course registration, withdrawal, and refund dates, as well as other policies that affect their status and progress in the program. Students may find the current 2020-2021 Graduate Catalog by going to the website: http://catalog.usd.edu/index.php?catid=30.

Additional resources can be found through the USD University Portal. From the USD website homepage, select the “MYUSD” link found at the top of the page. Current students can log in to the portal with their USD username and password. Graduate School forms and policies in the portal can be accessed by selecting “Graduate School Resources” under the “Academics” tab. The information found there includes important deadlines for submitting graduation paperwork, a guide for finalizing your thesis manuscript, and various forms needed by graduate students.

Students are strongly advised – both upon admission and periodically during their time in the program - to look through the policies, deadlines, information, and forms that are found on the USD Graduate School website, listed under “Student Resources.”

December 2020 Graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/27/2020</td>
<td>Walk Early Form due to the Registrar’s Office (subject to change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/15/2020</td>
<td>Final Program of Study/Application for Degree due in Graduate School Office (if this is already on file with the Graduate School, please disregard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/4/2020</td>
<td>Graduation Approval Form filed with the Graduate School Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/6/2020</td>
<td>Thesis/Dissertation submitted online to ProQuest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/6/2020</td>
<td>Complete Survey of Earned Doctorates (Ph.D. students only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/8/2021</td>
<td>Graduate Commencement Ceremony at Sanford Coyote Sports Center - TBA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All candidates for graduation from the preceding summer and fall are invited to spring commencement unless Walk Early Form is submitted and approved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

May 2021 Graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/15/2020</td>
<td>Final Program of Study/Application for Degree due in Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/30/2021</td>
<td>Graduation Approval Form Filed with the Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/30/2021</td>
<td>Thesis/Dissertation submitted online to ProQuest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/30/2021</td>
<td>Complete Survey of Earned Doctorates (Ph.D. students only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/8/2021</td>
<td>Graduate Commencement Ceremony at Sanford Coyote Sports Center - TBA</td>
</tr>
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</table>
August 2021 Graduation

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<thead>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/15/2020</td>
<td>Final Program of Study/Application for Degree due in Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21/2021</td>
<td>Walk Early Form due in Graduate School Office (subject to change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/30/2021</td>
<td>Graduation Approval Form filed with the Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/30/2021</td>
<td>Thesis/Dissertation submitted online to ProQuest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/30/2021</td>
<td>Complete Survey of Earned Doctorates (Ph.D. students only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Graduate Commencement Ceremony at Sanford Coyote Sports Center - TBA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All candidates for graduation from the preceding summer and fall are invited to spring commencement unless Walk Early Form is submitted and approved.

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY

In accordance with the South Dakota Board of Regents Policy 1:19, the institutions under the jurisdiction of the Board of Regents shall offer equal opportunities in employment and for access to and participation in educational, extension and other institutional services to all persons qualified by academic preparation, experience, and ability for the various levels of employment or academic program or other institutional service, without discrimination based on sex, race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, gender, gender identification, transgender, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other status that may become protected under law against discrimination. The Board reaffirms its commitment to the objectives of affirmative action, equal opportunity and non-discrimination in accordance with state and federal law. Redress for alleged violations of those laws may be pursued at law or through the procedures established by the provisions of 1:18 of this policy. For additional information, please contact the Director, Equal Opportunity and Chief Title IX Coordinator: Jean Merkle, 205 Slagle Hall, Vermillion, SD 57069 Phone: 605-658-3665 Jean.Merkel@usd.edu Title IX office website: https://www.usd.edu/human-resources/titleix

Admission decisions are made without regard to disabilities. All prospective students are expected to present academic credentials at or above the minimum standards for admission and meet any technical standards that may be required for admission to a specific program. If you are a prospective student with a disability and need assistance or accommodations during the admission/application process, please contact the Office of Disability Services, The North Complex Commons, room 116 USD, Vermillion, SD 57069. Phone: 605-658-3745, Email: disabilityservices@usd.edu, website: www.usd.edu/ds