



Graduate Student Handbook

Department of Communication

Graduate Student Handbook

Disclaimer: The Graduate Student Handbook represents the best available summary of policies and procedures for graduate studies in Communication, as approved by the Graduate Faculty. However, the Graduate Catalog provides the University's official position on all issues related to graduate studies at UTRGV. In any instance where this Handbook differs from the official policies of the University, as stated in the Graduate Catalog, the Handbook is in error, unless prior arrangements have been made officially established.

In regard to policies specific to the Department of Communication, the department reserves the right to alter and/or interpret policy described in this Handbook as circumstances dictate, and through due process of decision-making by the Graduate Faculty, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Chair and faculty of the Department of Communication. In the event of substantive changes, reasonable efforts will be made to inform students affected by said policy changes in a timely manner.

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Graduate Handbook

Master of Arts in Communication

The University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) was created by the Texas Legislature in 2013 as the first major public university of the 21st century in Texas. This transformative initiative provided the opportunity to expand educational opportunities in the Rio Grande Valley, including a new School of Medicine, and made it possible for residents of the region to benefit from the Permanent University Fund – a public endowment contributing support to the University of Texas System and other institutions.

UTRGV has campuses and off-campus research and teaching sites throughout the Rio Grande Valley including in Boca Chica Beach, Brownsville (formerly The University of Texas at Brownsville campus), Edinburg (formerly The University of Texas-Pan American campus), Harlingen, McAllen, Port Isabel, Rio Grande City, and South Padre Island. UTRGV, a comprehensive academic institution, enrolled its first class in the fall of 2015, and the School of Medicine welcomed its first class in the summer of 2016.

The Master of Arts degree in Communication is a broad-based and individualized degree program that addresses all of the essential dimensions of Communication. Substantial flexibility exists for the student to design a program that fits his or her unique educational and professional goals.

To contact the department write or call:

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Please note: This document is offered to prospective and current graduate students in communication. Any policies mentioned are those of the Department of Communication at the time of publication, and they are subject to change. They may not be the policies of other departments or of the Graduate College. Details on University regulations are published in official college catalogs and bulletins.

THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

The Department of Communication is an energetic, multidisciplinary department made up of programs in Communication Studies and Mass Communication. The department teaches both the theoretic and practical applications of the various fields of communication through a variety of classes, special projects and activities in which students can gain experience and information for their specific goals. At the graduate level, the program also emphasizes students' research abilities in line with UTRGV's goals to become a top-tier research institution.

The faculty members are student-centered professionals who are committed to helping students achieve their professional and academic goals. The faculty prides itself on its open-door policy, accessibility to students and small classes, all of which help promote critical thinking and overall academic success. The faculty also maintains strong ties to businesses in the Rio Grande Valley community.

I. ADMISSION INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

To earn graduate-level credit, one must formally apply to and be officially admitted by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Graduate College and the department. Both the Department of Communication and the Graduate College use a holistic approach to graduate admission. While there are guidelines for clear admission, the philosophy for conditional admission is evolving. Below are the current conditional requirements, however these guidelines will be updated for the 2020 enrollment cycle.

The Graduate College uses an online application process. To apply, go to:

<http://www.utrgv.edu/graduate/onlineapplication>

With few exceptions, the requirements for entering the Master's of Arts degree in Communication are identical to those required for admittance into the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Graduate College. In no instance do departmental requirements supersede those of the Graduate College. **Every graduate candidate is responsible for ensuring that she/he meets all Graduate College requirements. These requirements are:**

1. An undergraduate GPA of 3.00 or above for CLEAR admission, or an undergraduate GPA of 2.75 to 2.99 for CONDITIONAL admission.
2. GRE – Graduate Record Examination Scores
3. Undergraduate (and graduate transcripts if available) transcripts
4. Three (3) letters of recommendation.
Do not have reference send letters. Provide names and emails addresses for each reference.

References will be contacted by the Graduate School and given a PIN number that will allow them to add their recommendation to the candidate's online file.

5. Writing Sample/Essay

500 word essay addressing: "*Why I want to pursue a graduate degree in Communication at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.*" This essay should be entered directly into the Candidate's online application. Do not send this essay to the Graduate School or the Department.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Graduate School Catalog provides a detailed description of admission requirements for graduate study. Be sure to reference the catalog associated with your first year of graduate study.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our office at (956) 665-3583 or visit <http://www.utrgv.edu/graduate>

Based on these materials, Candidates may be granted CLEAR or CONDITIONAL admission

Clear Admissions: for "CLEAR Admission" to the Communication graduate program, the applicant must:

1. Meet all Graduate College admission requirements by the published deadline date for semester for which they are applying (UTRGV Catalog)
2. Should have a minimum of 24 semester hours in undergraduate credit within the area of Communication (or a closely related area).
3. MUST have an overall GPA of 3.0 or above.

Conditional Admissions: In cases where the Candidate:

1. Has a 2.75 to 2.99 overall GPA.
2. Has fewer than 24 hours in undergraduate credit within the area of Communication (or a closely related area).

Conditional Admission #1 If an applicant has a GPA that is less than 2.99, but greater than 2.75, he/she may be afforded "Conditional" admittance into the Communication graduate program. Conditional admission is limited to 12 graduate hours with no grade less than "B." At the end of the semester in which 9 graduate hour are earned, if the graduate GPA is 3.0 or above with no grade less than a "B" the admission classification will be changed to "clear."

Conditional Admission #2 The Communication Department regularly admits students with fewer than 24 hours in Communication. Such students may be required, as a condition of admission, to enroll in 6-12 hours in undergraduate courses to address perceived deficiencies. The applicant will be required to complete all assigned undergraduate courses work with no grade less than a “B” in order to qualify for graduate candidacy. The hours earned in effort to address deficiencies do not count in the 36 hours required for graduation.

In addition, a student may gain Conditional Admission to start his/her program during the spring semester. Applicants will be advised of their admission standing (i.e., Clear, Conditional) by the Graduate College.

Graduate Candidacy File: A personal candidacy file will be created for each Graduate Candidate.

Content will include:

1. Signed Degree Program Form (**See Appendix B**)
2. Degree forms/substitutions
3. Change in status notification (i.e, probation, conditional enrollment, etc.)
4. Degree Completion Forms (i.e., successful completion of written/oral exams or thesis)

II. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Candidates are strongly encouraged to work closely with the Department’s Graduate Coordinator (DGC) to ensure they meet all requirements for continued enrollment and for graduation.

A. The Graduate Candidate is **RESPONSIBLE** for:

1. Being familiar with all of the requirements for the degree sought
2. Insuring that the proper forms have been submitted to and approved by the Office of the Registrar
3. Meeting all deadlines established by the Department and the University and keeping all personal records up to date.

B. Thesis or Non-Thesis.

Both are 36-credit hour programs.

Thesis Option: The candidate is required to complete 30 credit hours of designated course work and 6 credit hours for the successful complete and Oral

Defense of a personally-authored thesis (i.e., 30 credit hours of course work + 6 credit hours for thesis = 36 credit hours).

Non-Thesis Option: The candidate is required to complete 36 credit hours of designated course work. In addition, the candidate must take three written comprehensive examinations (Research Methods, Theory, Area of Choice), and successfully orally defend his/her written answers.

III. Academic Requirements

A. Core Requirements: All students are required to take a core of 12 credit hours

COMM 6300: Quantitative Research
COMM 6301: Qualitative Research
COMM 6320: Communication Theory
COMM 6322: Culture and Communication

1. Students **MUST** enroll in both core classes offered during the fall and spring semesters.
2. Students **MUST** achieve a grade of “B” or better in ALL core classes.
3. Students **MUST** repeat any core class that does not achieve a B-level or above evaluation.
4. Students **SHOULD NOT** drop a core class.
Students who drop a core class risk forfeiting their candidacy in the program (i.e., the graduate faculty may recommend suspension for a candidate who drops a core class). At the minimum, candidates who drop a core class will extend the time required to complete the program by a year.

B. Designated Electives: All candidates select 12 hours of **DESIGNATED ELECTIVES** (6000 or 7000-level courses) from the course listings in Communication. Candidates receive credit toward their graduate degree only from graduate courses.

C. Free Elective (Graduate-Level Courses): Candidates must take six (6) hours of **Free Electives**. Candidates may select graduate-level (6000-7000-level) Communication or Non-communication (e.g., English, history, political science, psychology, sociology, etc.) courses to fulfill this requirement.

D. Transfer Credits: A maximum of nine (9) credit hours of graduate-level course work may be taken at another institution, and /or as online courses. These credits must conform to ALL of the following:

1. Credits must have been earned at an accredited university.
2. Credit must be properly documented as having been taken for graduate credit.
3. Courses must carry a grade of “B” or better.

E. Independent Research/Study, Directed Readings Credit: A maximum of nine (9) hours of work may be taken “collectively” via these alternative instructional methods*. However, any transfer credits will be considered as part of this nine (9) credit hour total. (**other alternative instructional methods include: classes taken at another accredited university and courses taken online from an institution other than The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley*).

NOTE: No **Core Course** may be taken by any of these alternate formats. Further, approval must be secured from the Graduate Collee and /or the Candidate’s graduate committee for each course to be taken by an alternate format.

F. Graduate Candidates may be enrolled either **full-time** or **part-time** each semester. Full-time graduate enrollment requires the Candidate to be registered for nine (9) or more hours credit during the current semester.

NOTE: Teaching Assistants (TAs)/Research Assistants (RAs) MUST BE enrolled full-time and may **NOT** drop a course if it leaves them with too few hours to qualify for full-time status.

G. Graduate Candidates must maintain a graduate GPA of 3.0 or higher. Per the UTRGV Scholastic Probation and Suspension policy (p. 63 in 2018/19 catalog): In order for a degree-seeking student in a master’s program to remain in good academic standing, the student must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (3.0=B on a 4.0 scale). A student whose overall GPA falls below a 3.0 in a given semester is automatically placed on academic probation the following semester. Master’s students are ineligible to continue if they receive a grade of C or lower in 9 semester hours of credit attempted for graduate credit, regardless of the student's classification, whether or not in repeated courses. **A student whose overall GPA falls below 3.0 in a given semester is automatically placed on academic probation the following semester.** Within the following nine semester credit hours, the overall GPA must return to 3.0 or the student will be suspended for a minimum of one semester.

A student who receives an F in any course is automatically dismissed from the graduate program

To petition for readmission into a graduate program, the suspended student must submit a written request through the Director of Graduate Program and the Dean of the College to the Graduate College Dean. The Graduate College Dean may approve or deny admission to the graduate program.

H. All requirements for the Master of Arts degree must be completed within seven years seven-year time limit: All requirements must be completed within one seven-year period. Work more than seven years old will not meet graduation requirements and can be reinstated only by special permission of the Dean for the Graduate College.

I. Residency: One-third of the credits towards a graduate degree must be earned through instruction offered by UTRGV. Transfer students may be required to complete additional hours above those on their degree plan to meet this requirement.

IV. Program Options

The candidate will select either the **Non-Thesis** option or **Thesis** option to complete the final 6 credit hours for her/his degree. The Candidate's Advisor/Chair should submit a **CANDIDATE CONFIRMATION FORM** to the Department and to the Graduate Coordinator on or before the semester in which the candidate will be completing all requirements for the selected Option (for copy of this form **See Appendix C**)

A. Non-Thesis Option REQUIREMENTS.

1. Core Requirements (12 credits)
2. Designated Electives (12 credits)
3. Free Electives (6 credits)
4. Communication Electives (6 credits). Candidate is required to complete an additional 6 credit hours of Designated Electives (6000-7000-level Communication course).
5. Comprehensive Examinations. Candidate is required to take Written and Oral Comprehensive Examinations.

B. Thesis Option: REQUIREMENTS

1. Core Requirements (12 credits)
2. Designated Electives (12 credits)
3. Free Electives (6 credits)

4. Thesis (6 credits) candidates must register for six (6) credit hours of thesis coursework and successfully complete and defend a personal authored and defended research thesis.

NOTE: For an inventory of courses offered see **Appendix G**.

NON-THESIS COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

V. Written Examinations

All non-thesis candidates for the Master of Arts degree in communication will be required to successfully complete written and oral comprehensive examinations. These examinations are related to information, materials and course work in communication and elective areas covered in the candidate's degree plan.

1. The candidate is eligible to schedule and take his/her comprehensive examinations upon completion of 24 credit hours of graduate work (including **ALL** communication core courses). Typically, students take their exams during the final semester of coursework.
2. Comprehensive examinations **are typically** scheduled on a Saturday. See the Graduate Coordinator for specific dates.
Fall: 2nd or 3rd Saturday in October
Spring: 1st or 2nd Saturday in March
5. Written examinations will be taken over subject matter in THREE (3) areas (See **Appendix D**-Comprehensive Examination Worksheet Form)
6. The Department designated Areas designed to cover the CORE courses are:

AREA I: RESEARCH – consisting of the content from the following:
 - a. COMM 6300 – Quantitative Research
 - b. COMM 6301 – Qualitative Research
AREA II: THEORY – consisting of the content from the following:
 - a. COMM 6320 – Seminar in Communication Theory
 - b. COMM 6322 – Culture and Communication
7. The candidate will designate the content area and related two courses for AREA 3.
 - a. Each candidate-designated area **MUST** cover the content from two (2) classes drawn from the candidate's degree plan.

- b. One (1) or both of the courses may be non-communication courses.
- 8. A “three-hour” questioning standard will be used for each area
 - a. The questions candidates will be required to answer for any one (1) area should take approximately 3 hours to adequately and effectively complete.
 - b. Each content Area Related course will adhere to a “one and one half hour” questioning standard.
- 10. The Examination will consist of questions over subject matter distributed as Follows:
 - Area 1: Comm Theory & Culture & Communication
 - a. Questions pertaining to Communication Theory – 90 minutes.
 - b. Questions pertaining to Culture and Communication – 90 minutes.
 - Area 2: Research Methods
 - a. Questions pertaining to Qualitative methods – 90 minutes
 - b. Questions pertaining to Quantitative methods – 90 minutes
 - Area 3: Candidate Designated Content
 - a. Questions pertaining to subject 1 – 90 minutes
 - b. Questions pertaining to subject 2 – 90 minutes

11. ALTERNATE FORMAT:

Given special circumstances and agreement of the Graduate Faculty and the Candidate’s committee, an Alternative Format may be used for testing the Candidate’s comprehension of the content of any Area-related course. *

- a. Examples of Alternative Formats are take-home examinations, report, projects, portfolios, independent research...etc.
- b. Alternative formats are afforded one month to complete.
- c. The candidate may NOT start traditional testing (i.e., remaining proctored examines) until the Alternative Format portion of the examination process is completed.

** The Alternative Format option should be use judiciously. Further, if the candidate does not receive consensual support from both the Graduate Faculty and the Candidate’s Examination committee the Alternate Format*

option may not be employed as a means for testing the content area of concern.

d. If consensus is achieved, the Committee Member and the Candidate should Determine jointly the style/format or means to be used to test the Content of any Area-related course.

e. The decision to adopt an Alternative Format means for testing the content of any area-related course **MUST** be agreed upon by both the committee member and the candidate.

f. If consensus is not achieved, by default, traditional testing means (i.e., proctored examination) will be employed for testing the content of that srea-related course.

B. Selecting an Examination Committee

1. The composition of the Examination Committee will be determined by those areas the candidate selects for testing.

a. The committee member responsible for testing a content area **MUST BE** the faculty member who was the instructor of record for that course. *

b. Two Committee members **may** be from outside the department or discipline.

**If the instructor of record for a given content area is no longer a member of the UTRGV faculty, the candidate will need to invite a current, qualified member of the UTRGV graduate faculty to serve the examiner for that area. The selected faculty member will be responsible for all duties assigned to a member of the Examination Committee.*

C. Selecting a Chair for the Examination Committee

1. The Chair **MUST BE** a full member of the UTRGV Graduate Faculty.

2. The Chair will convene a meeting of the committee and the candidate to determine the preparation procedures for the examinations.

a. At this meeting, the type and style of questions for each area will be determined.

i) Questions will reflect the breadth of the discipline with regard to theories, concepts, and research methodologies.

- ii) Questions **SHOULD** address, specifically, the course work emphasized by an individual candidate's degree plan.

D. Written Examination Procedures

1. Each committee member will submit to the committee chair her/his questions at least five (5) working days before the date scheduled for the written comprehensive examination.
2. The graduate coordinator and /or a committee member will be responsible for proctoring the examination.
3. The candidate will sit for examination within the Department of Communication.
 - a. All MATERIALS necessary for completing the examination will be provided by the Department (e.g., pens/pencils, computer, etc.)
 - b. Due to security issues, only those "personal" computers provided by the department may be used to complete the examination.

E. Grading Written Examinations

1. On the day following completion of **ALL** examinations, the Graduate Coordinator will distribute copies of the Candidate's answers for **ALL** areas being tested to each committee members.
2. Upon receipt of the candidate's examination responses, committee members, will have five (5) working days to grade/provide feedback regarding the candidate's responses.
3. Multiple graders will be assigned to grade the **Research** and **Theory Areas** of the exam (Core Areas)
 - a. Two or three faculty members (including the professor of record for the area being test) will be assigned to each candidate's exams in the core areas.
 - b. The professor of record for the exam will be responsible for assigning the official grade to the exam; however, input from the other grader(s) should be considered when making this assessment.

NOTE: *Grades should be accompanied by sufficient criticism to inform the Candidate of the quality of his/her performance.*

Each Content Area/Question will receive one of three Grades:

Pass • Pass with Reservations • Fail

NOTE: Though all committee members should review **ALL** answers, each committee member will provide a grade for **ONLY** his/her area (with the exception of the core areas).

4. Definitions for **Grade** awarded:

- a. **Pass** – indicates that the candidate’s response(s) were judged, at minimum, as adequate and competent.
- b. **Pass with Reservations** – indicates that the candidate’s responses, though to some extent accurate, those answers did not satisfactorily demonstrate the necessary completeness nor competence required.

NOTE: This grade highlights the candidate’s need to further demonstrate his/her mastery of the material, either through additional written work or by special attention and effort during the oral examination.

- c. **Fail** – indicates that the candidate’s response(s) did NOT provide sufficient nor adequate evidence of understanding, nor mastery of the material addressed.

5. Should a Candidate FAIL on (1) or more questions/content area, the committee will immediately prepare a course(s) of action for the candidate to follow. The committee should:

- a. Agree upon a time frame to retake those failed portions of the examination.
- b. Assign Readings or other “make-up” work to be completed before Failed portions of the examination can be re-administered.
- c. Require additional course work be completed successfully before failed portions of the examination can be re-administered.

NOTE: Re-examination should not be scheduled for at least a minimum of one (1) week following the failure of a portion of the examination.

6. Candidates **MUST PASS ALL** content areas (Pass or Pass with Reservations) before he/she can schedule and take oral examinations.

7. A memorandum specifying student’s performance must be filed with the department and the graduate office.

F. Oral Examination

1. The Committee will **Schedule a Date** for the oral examination at least three (3) days, but not more than ten (10) working days, following the successful completion of all criteria for the written examination.
 - a. Candidate will sit for the oral examination within the department of communication.
 - b. Method of testing and ordering of questioning for the oral exam will be determined by the committee chair, candidate and examining committee member.
 - c. Typically, oral examinations last between 90 and 150 minutes in length.
2. The **procedure** for questioning the candidate during the oral examination will be determined by the chair. FOR EXAMPLE:
 - a. Each committee member, in turn, will ask ALL questions related to his/her area(s) before relinquishing the floor to the next committee member.
 - b. Each committee member, in turn, will question the candidate for a set period of time (e.g., 10 minutes)
 - i. After the established time period expires, the responsibility for questioning will be assumed by the next committee member.
 - ii. This alternating procedure will continue until all committee members have questioned the candidate satisfactorily.
 - c. Continuing or Discontinuing the Oral Examination process is dependent on the quality of the Candidate's answers.

NOTE: *All committee members are encouraged to participate in the questioning of the candidate in ALL areas of the examination, not just her/his assigned area.*

NOTE: The Oral Examination should NOT be seen as a last chance effort to teach the candidate the correct information. The examination is an opportunity for the candidate to perform, demonstrating his/her knowledge of the information under review, and not a forum for the committee member to lecture or explain information related to his or her content area.

- d. If the Candidate fails to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the required material during the oral examination, the process should be stopped, the candidate should be asked to leave the testing area, and the committee should discuss whether the examination should continue.
- e. If the committee agrees that the candidate's performance is unsatisfactory, the examination should stop and a future date for re-examination should be scheduled.
- f. If the committee decides to stop an examination, this decision constitutes a conditional fail evaluation for the candidates performance.

G. Grading Oral Examinations

1. When the Committee is satisfied that the Candidate has addressed sufficiently their concerns, the committee will excuse the candidate and meet in executive session to render a judgment on the candidate's performance.
2. Each committee member can award the candidate one of four possible evaluations: Unconditional Pass, Conditional Pass, Conditional Fail, or Unconditional Fail.

a. **Unconditional Pass** – The Candidate passed the exam without the further need to demonstrate mastery of content area.

b. **Conditional Pass** – The Candidate demonstrates passing performance on some parts of the examination while failing other parts of the exam. The Committee member believes that the Candidate should be afforded the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of those sections failed. The committee member recommends scheduling a **SECOND** oral examination

***NOTE:** This evaluation (Conditional Pass) can only be employed once for any student (i.e., the candidate cannot be awarded an Unconditional Pass on his/her re-examination).*

c. **Conditional Fail** – The candidate did not demonstrate mastery of material, but the committee member believes that the candidate should be given another chance to improve his/her understanding of required material. At the committee's discretion, such candidates are directed to take additional course work, individual directed studies or other remedial work prior to retaking all or part of the written and/or oral examination.

d. **Unconditional Fail** – The candidate did not demonstrate mastery of program material and the committee member does not see any basis for another attempt.

3. Given the individual committee member's evaluations, an **"Overall" Evaluation** on the Candidate's performance will be made.

a. **Consensus Evaluation** – The final evaluation of the candidate's performance will be based on a consensus of the committee.

b. A majority **IS NOT** sufficient. All committee members must agree on the final evaluation.

4. Upon completion of all areas of the comprehensive examination, the chair of the examination committee will forward the committee's formal, written recommendation to the candidate's adviser.

***NOTE:** Candidates who conditionally fail their comprehensive examinations may **NOT** reconstitute a new committee for the purpose of retaking the examination. A member or members of the original comprehensive examination committee may be excused from the committee and a new member or members added **ONLY** with the advanced written permission of the comprehensive examination committee member, the committee chair, and the graduate coordinator.*

5. Re-examination cannot be scheduled for at least a minimum of three (3) working days following a Conditional Pass evaluation of the oral examination.

6. **Confirmation of Successful Completion.** Upon successfully completing ALL criteria for the oral examination (and by inclusion, criteria for the written examination), a letter pronouncing the candidate's achievement will be drafted, signed by all committee members, and sent to the Chair of the Communication Department and the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts.

MASTER'S THESIS

Candidate who elect to complete a thesis **ARE NOT REQUIRED** have to take written nor oral comprehensive examinations.

Detailed Procedures for Master's Thesis Option

A. Select a Chair for the Thesis Committee

1. The chair **MUST BE** member of the faculty in communication
2. The committee chair will become your primary adviser.
3. The candidate should discuss the make-up of his/her committee with the chair of the thesis committee.
4. The candidate should give serious consideration to the chair's advice, but not be controlled by the chair.

B. Form Thesis Committee

1. Each candidate will select a thesis committee comprised of a minimum of three (3) professors (at least two (2) must be from within the communication program).
2. **Option:** One (1) committee member may be a professor from outside of the department or discipline.
3. A candidate may have more than three (3) members. However, be cautious it is possible for "*Too many cooks to spoil the broth.*"

Recommendation: The Graduate Faculty of the Communication Department recommends that the Candidate select Committee members who can provide a mix of content area expertise, methodological skills, and editorial input, emotional support, and a personal/professional challenge.

C. Extend a personal invitation to each of the faculty members that you wish to serve on your thesis committee.

1. Tell each invited member who the chair of the thesis committee will be.
2. Provide each invited member with a 2 to 3 page abstract of the proposed project.

3. Ask the following questions of each faculty member invited to serve on the committee.

- a. Would you be willing to serve as committee member?
- b. What suggestions for readings and /or methods?
- c. What type of role would you like to play on the thesis process?

D. File the *Application for Thesis Committee Form* (See Appendix E)

- 1. The Interactive form is available on the graduate office website <http://www.utrgv.edu/graduate> select “For new and current students”, go to forms and Thesis & Dissertation Forms.
- 2. Complete form, signed by student advisor, the Dean of the College and by the Dean of the Graduate College.

E. Three criteria for successful completion of COMM 7300 (i.e., candidate’s first semester thesis class.)

- 1. Complete the formation of thesis committee form
- 2. Receive committee approval for his/her prospectus/proposal
- 3. Receive IRB approval for her/his prospectus/proposal

F. Submit Proposal to the Human Subjects Committee – Institutional Review Board (IRB)

- 1. If human subjects are used (as opposed to content analysis, rhetorical research), prior approval from the IRB on Protection of Human Subjects is required. Visit UTRGV.edu/IRB
 - a. Name, Location, Phone Number, email of Chair/Coordinator for IRB
 - b. Candidate MUST BE IRB certified.
 - c. Committee Chair MUST BE IRB certified.
- 2. Depending on the nature of your research one of three protocols will be required: Exempt, Expedited, or Full Committee Review. See UTRGV.edu/IRB for further definition, forms and processes.

***NOTE:** If your study involved data collection that does not place your subjects “at risk” the protocol is granted an exemption from full committee review.*

G. Enrolling for Thesis Credit – Once the faculty has reviewed the abstract, the Candidate is eligible to enroll in thesis credit. (e.g., 7300-7301)

1. The Candidate should be registered for at least 3 hours of thesis credit during the first two semester(s) he/she is working on his/her thesis— COMM 7300 and COMM 7301, respectively.
2. When enrolled in 7300 or 7301, the professor of record will be the chair of the candidate’s thesis committee.
3. The Candidate will receive a letter grade for both COMM 7300 & COMM 7301. If the candidate earns the grade “US” (unsatisfactory), “I” (incomplete) or a “C” or lower, the candidate is required to repeat that course.
4. The thesis chair, in consultation with other committee members, determine the grade for the candidate’s work, and all “Incompletes” for 7300/7301 credits will be changed to that grade.
5. University policy requires all candidates to remain continuously enrolled in thesis classes until the completed manuscript has been accepted by the committee and the University.
6. After a candidate has successfully completed 7300/7301, he/she may maintain continuous and “full-time” enrollment by enrolling for COMM 7101 (a 1 credit course)

NOTE: If a Candidate changes his/her program to the non-thesis option after taking one or more 7302-7303 courses:

1. The grade for completed thesis courses will be changed to “Drop Pass”
2. The credit hours earned for those classes WILL NOT apply to the completion of the candidate’s degree plan.

H. Finalize Thesis Prospectus – The candidate will provide all committee members with a formal, typed copy of the prospectus/proposal. This prospectus should include:

1. Introduction – providing a description of the focus and rationale for the research project.
2. Review of related literature – justifying the proposed research project on the basis of prior scholarship.
3. Methodology – providing a description and explanation of the procedures to be used for conducting the research project.

4. The Candidate should address adequately all concerns voiced by the committee.

I. Proposal Meeting – The Candidate will schedule a meeting of his/her committee to Review and approve the proposed research project (i.e., topic, design, procedures, population, and data collection/analysis methods)

1. All committee members should be given ten (10) working days to review the formal prospectus.
2. The candidate will defend the appropriateness of his/her proposed project at this meeting.
3. Committee members will provide constructive feedback regarding the conceptualization, research design, and methodology for the proposed project.
4. The candidate should address adequately all concerns voiced by the committee.

J. Tenure-Track Faculty Abstract – After the candidate's committee approves the thesis proposal, a 1-5 page abstract of the proposal must be circulated to all tenure-track faculty in the Department of Communication.

1. Faculty that are not members of the candidate's thesis committee are encouraged to review each candidate's proposal.
2. These faculty may provide feedback to the thesis committee chair.
3. The chair is under **NO** obligation to conform to recommendations made.

***NOTE:** The inclusion of ALL tenure-track faculty in the thesis process is a courtesy. Their participation is primarily voluntary, and designed to be informative, rather than binding.*

K. Data Collection – Having received approval from the IRB and the thesis committee, the candidate may begin collecting data.

***WARNING:** The Candidate **MUST NOT** initiate data collection for the research project until approval has been given by the IRB and the Thesis Committee.*

L. Progress Drafts/ Reading Copies – In conjunction with his/her committee, the candidate should create a calendar of deadlines for drafts and reading copies of the thesis. These deadlines should be designed to encourage/promote efficient progress toward completion of the thesis.

M. Final Draft of Thesis - The final draft of the candidate's thesis must be submitted to the chair and members of his/hers committee **NO LATER** than three (3) weeks prior to the University specified deadline for filing completed. Signed theses with the College Dean.

***NOTE:** For specific dates for filing signed copies of thesis to Dean, See the UTRGV Graduate Catalog.*

N. Oral Defense of Thesis – Arrange a defense date that is acceptable to all members of your committee. No earlier than ten (10) days after the Candidate's Committee receives the Final Draft of the Thesis.

1. All faculty, students, and guests are permitted to attend the oral defense.
2. The committee chair will be responsible for moderating the defense.
3. The candidate will orally present and defend his/her thesis within the Communication Department.
4. The Committee will question the candidate regarding his/her presentation and thesis.

O. Approval of Final Draft of Thesis

1. After the Committee has completed their questioning of the candidate, the floor will be opened to questions from the faculty, students and guests.
2. When the Committee is satisfied that the Candidate has addressed sufficiently their concerns (and audience questions have been exhausted), the committee will excuse the candidate and meet in executive session to render a judgment on the candidate's performance.
3. Each Committee member can award the candidate an evaluation of Pass or Fail.
4. Given the individual Committee member's evaluations, an **"Overall" Evaluation** of the Candidate's thesis will be made.
 - a. **Consensus Evaluation** – The final evaluation of the candidate's thesis will be based on a consensus of thec.
 - b. A majority **IS NOT** sufficient. All committee members must agree on the final evaluation.

5. The Committee may recommend modifications and/or additions to the final draft.
6. The Candidate should address adequately all concerns voiced by the committee.
7. The committee chair is responsible for policing all requested modification.

***NOTE:** If the candidate conscientiously seeks advisement from all committee members during the development of his/her final project, little modification should be required at this stage in the thesis process.*

P. Confirmation of Successful Completion. Upon successfully completing the oral defense of his/her thesis and all requested/required modification to the final draft of the thesis all committee will sign three (3) copies of the Approval Page for this thesis.

Q. Final Signed Copies of Thesis to Dean – Upon candidate's successful defense of his/her thesis, a completed signed copy of the thesis must be filed with the Dean of Liberal Arts

NOTE: Typically, for December Graduates (Fall) the deadline falls during the first week of October and for May Graduation (Spring) the deadline falls during the first week of March. The specific dates for these deadlines are listed in the UTRGV Graduate Catalog.

R. Submitting Thesis to University

1. The original thesis must be submitted online following the procedure outlined by Graduate Office.
2. In addition, the candidate should make arrangements to provide the Communication Department with one (1) signed, bound copy of the thesis.
3. The thesis committee may request additional copies of the thesis be provided to the chair and committee members.

***NOTE:** Additional copies of the thesis bound for personal/departmental/Committee use, are provided by the University at an additional cost to the Candidate.*

FACULTY

A talented and diverse faculty is a primary attraction for graduate study in the Department of Communication. Faculty members are nationally recognized authorities in specialized areas of communication. You can reap the benefits of their expertise while in their classes, as well as in conversations outside the classroom setting.

Agbese, Aje-Ori (Ph.D., Bowling Green State University) is an Associate Professor with interests in mass communication, journalism, media law, intercultural communication.

Chang, Yanrong (Yvonne) (Ph.D., University of Iowa) is a Professor with interests in language and social interaction, intercultural communication, interpersonal communication, persuasion, ethnography of communication and identity.

Chang, Wan-Lin (Ph.D., George Mason University) is an Assistant Professor with interests in health communication, instructional communication, and intercultural communication.

Falk, Louis (Ph.D., University of Southern Mississippi) is a Professor with interests in advertising, public relations, mass communication, public speaking.

Garcia, Juliet V. (Ph.D., The University of Texas at Austin) is a Professor with interests in language, leadership, Latinas, and advocacy.

Hodgson, Nikki (Ph.D., Our Lady of the Lake University) is an Assistant Professor with interests in Speech Act Theory in meternal relationship across ethnic groups, leadership language in politics, social media and relationships.

Lemanski, Jennifer (Ph.D., University of Florida) is a Professor with interests in advertising, mass communication, and consumer psychology. Dr. Lemanski is the Chair of the Department of Communication.

Lim, Youngjoon (Ph.D., Ohio University) is an Associate Professor with interests in public relations, strategic communication, and communication theory.

McQuillen, Jeffrey (Ph.D., University of Oklahoma) is an Associate Professor with interests in research methodology, interpersonal communication and communicative development.

Rehman, Sharaf (Ph.D., Bowling Green State University) is a Professor with interests in film, theatre and mass media.

Saavedra, Dora E. (Ph.D., University of Kansas) is an Associate Professor with interests in applied organizational communication, communication theory, conflict management, leadership and interpersonal communication.

Selber, Gregory (Ph.D., University of Texas, Austin) is a Professor with interests in mass communication, journalism, and sports broadcasting.

Selber, Kimberly (Ph.D., University of Texas, Austin) is an Associate Professor and Graduate Program Coordinator for the Department of Communication with interests in advertising, branding, mass communication, communication history, and creative strategies.

Strong, William F. (Ph.D., University of Arizona) is a Professor and Fulbright Scholar with interests in persuasion and influence and intercultural communication.

Waskie, Ben (Ph.D., Louisiana State University) is an Associate Professor with interests in visual communication, diffusion of new technologies, survey methodology and new media and design.

Communication Department Directory

<u>Professor</u>	<u>Campus</u>	<u>Building</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Email</u>
Agbese, Aje-Ori	Edinburg	ELABS 147	665-2543	ajeori.agbese@utrgv.edu
Chang, Yanrong	Edinburg	ELABS 151	665-7205	yanrong.chang@utrgv.edu
Chang, Wan-Lin	Edinburg	ELABS 156	665-2338	wanlin.chang@utrgv.edu
Falk, Louis	Brownsville	MAIN 1.210C	882-8977	louis.falk@utrgv.edu
Hodgson, Nikkie	Brownsville	MAIN 1.210D	882-8857	nikkie.hodgson@utrgv.edu
McQuillen, Jeffery	Edinburg	ELABS 153	665-2376	jeffrey.mcquillen@utrgv.edu
Lemanski, Jennifer	Edinburg	ELABS 149	665-2542	jennifer.lemanski@utrgv.edu
Lim, Youngjoon	Edinburg	ELABS 158	665-3777	young.lim@utrgv.edu
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Saavedra, Dora E.	Edinburg	ELABS 157	665-5278	dora.saavedra@utrgv.edu
Selber, Gregory	Edinburg	ELABS 154	665-7201	gregory.selber@utrgv.edu
Selber, Kimberly	Edinburg	ELABS 146	665-5330	kimberly.selber@utrgv.edu
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Wasike, Ben	Brownsville	MAIN 1.210F	882-3878	ben.wasike@utrgv.edu

Administrative Assistant II
 Melissa Guajardo
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 1201 West University Drive
 ELABS 165
 Edinburg, Texas 78541-2999

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 (956) 665- 2685 (fax)

Appendices

Appendix A

GRADUATE STUDENT –CHECKLIST

- Acceptance into COMM Grad Program ☐
- Meet with Graduate Advisor ☐
- Sign and file degree plan with department of Comm ☐
- Maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher ☐
- Decided thesis or non-thesis ☐
- If thesis,
 - Select committee members ☐
 - Write thesis ☐
 - Schedule defense ☐
- If non-thesis,
 - Select comprehensive exam committee ☐
 - Schedule comprehensive exams ☐
 - Schedule oral exam ☐
- Apply for graduation nine months prior to graduation ☐
- Commencement and Celebration ☐

Appendix B



Master's Degree Plan

NON-THESIS

CORE: 12 HOURS			SEMESTER	GRADE	GRADE PTS	HRS
COMM	6300	Qualitative Research				
COMM	6301	Quantitative Research				
COMM	6320	Communication Theory				
COMM	6322	Culture & Communication				

[illegible]

FREE ELECTIVES: 6 HOURS			SEMESTER	GRADE	GRADE PTS	HRS

GPA	HRS EARNED
3.5	10
3.5	15
3.5	20
3.5	25
3.5	30
3.5	35
3.5	40
3.5	45
3.5	50
3.5	55
3.5	60
3.5	65
3.5	70
3.5	75
3.5	80
3.5	85
3.5	90
3.5	95
3.5	100
3.5	105
3.5	110
3.5	115
3.5	120
3.5	125
3.5	130
3.5	135
3.5	140
3.5	145
3.5	150
3.5	155
3.5	160
3.5	165
3.5	170
3.5	175
3.5	180
3.5	185
3.5	190
3.5	195
3.5	200
3.5	205
3.5	210
3.5	215
3.5	220
3.5	225
3.5	230
3.5	235
3.5	240
3.5	245
3.5	250
3.5	255
3.5	260
3.5	265
3.5	270
3.5	275
3.5	280
3.5	285
3.5	290
3.5	295
3.5	300
3.5	305
3.5	310
3.5	315
3.5	320
3.5	325
3.5	330
3.5	335
3.5	340
3.5	345
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3.5	365
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3.5	515
3.5	520
3.5	525
3.5	530
3.5	535
3.5	540
3.5	545
3.5	550
3.5	555
3.5	560
3.5	565
3.5	570
3.5	575
3.5	580
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3.5	595
3.5	600
3.5	605
3.5	610
3.5	615
3.5	620
3.5	625
3.5	630
3.5	635
3.5	640
3.5	645
3.5	650
3.5	655
3.5	660
3.5	665
3.5	670
3.5	675
3.5	680
3.5	685
3.5	690
3.5	695
3.5	700
3.5	705
3.5	710
3.5	715
3.5	720
3.5	725
3.5	730
3.5	735
3.5	740
3.5	745
3.5	750
3.5	755
3.5	760
3.5	765
3.5	770
3.5	775
3.5	780
3.5	785
3.5	790
3.5	795
3.5	800
3.5	805
3.5	810
3.5	815
3.5	820

SID #

Student

Graduate Advisor

Kimberly Selber

Dept. Chair

Jennifer Lemanski

THESIS: 6 HOURS			SEMESTER	GRADE	GRADE PTS	HRS
COMM	7300					
COMM	7301					

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Appendix C

Candidate Option Confirmation Form

Candidate _____ SID# _____

Phone () _____ - _____ Semester: _____ Email _____

THESIS OPTION: (6 HRS)

	Semester	Grade
COMM 7302 Thesis		

COMM 7303 Thesis_____

COMM 7301 Thesis_____

Thesis Title: _____

Thesis Chair: _____

*****//OR/*****

NON –THESIS OPTION: (6 HRS. PLUS COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS)

ADDITIONAL COURSES:

COMM _____

COMM _____

Comprehensive Examination: Date/Written _____
Date/Oral _____

Committee Chair

The Candidate's Advisor/Chair should submit this form on or before the semester in which the Candidate will be completing all requirements for the selected Option

Appendix D



Master's Degree Plan Comprehensive Exams

NAME: _____ SID # _____

AREA 1	RESEARCH		ADMINISTERING PROF	TIME	DATE
COMM	6300	Qualitative Research	_____	90 minutes	_____
COMM	6301	Quantitative Research	_____	90 minutes	_____

AREA 2	THEORY & CULTURE AND COMM		ADMINISTERING PROF	TIME	DATE
COMM	6320	Communication Theory	_____	90 Minutes	_____
COMM	6322	Culture & Comm	_____	90 Minutes	_____

Area 3	STUDENT SELECTED CONTENT AREAS	ADMINISTERING PROF	TIME	DATE
			90 MINUTES	
			90 MINUTES	

ORAL EXAM

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM COMMITTEE CHAIR

GRADUATE ADVISOR

Appendix E



APPLICATION FOR THESIS COMMITTEE

Student's name _____ Date _____
Student ID _____
Degree sought _____ in the department of _____
Thesis title: _____

TO BE APPROVED BY THE STUDENT'S ADVISOR, THE DEAN OF THE COLLEGE AND BY THE DEAN OF THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

Name of Committee Chair _____
Name of Committee Member _____
Name of Committee Member _____
Name of Committee Member _____
Type a brief statement of the proposed thesis topic:

I agree to supervise this student in the preparation of the thesis described above

Signature of the Committee Chair _____

APPROVAL OF THE COMMITTEE AS NOTED

Student's Graduate Advisor _____ Date _____
Dean of College _____ Date _____
Dean of the Graduate College _____ Date _____

*Edinburg Campus: 1201 West University Drive. MASS 1.158 Edinburg, Texas, 78541. PHONE (956) 665-3661 FAX (956) 665-2242
Brownsville Campus: One West University Blvd. Sabal Hall 1.202 Brownsville, Texas, 78520. PHONE (956) 882-6552 FAX (956) 882-7279*

Appendix E

GRADUATE COURSE LISTINGS FOR MA IN COMMUNICATION

From 2018-19 Graduate Catalog

COMM 6300 Qualitative Research: Provides students with the knowledge and skills on the major qualitative research methods used in communication disciplines to collect, describe, analyze, and interpret data. Students are expected to competently design and conduct a research project.

COMM 6301 Quantitative Research: Provides an understanding of quantitative research methods in communication disciplines, and prepares students to effectively and competently gather and analyze data using these methods. Students are expected to competently design and conduct a research project.

COMM 6319 Seminar in Communication Education: This course provides graduate students with helpful teaching tools and tips that can be applied in all areas of instruction. Students will learn how to develop and evaluate syllabi, assessments, assignments, teaching plans, and lectures.

COMM 6320 Seminar in Communication Theory: Study of the major developments in communication theory. Emphasis is on the effects of human interaction and of the media on individuals and society.

COMM 6321 Seminar in Instructional Communication: This course will examine interactions in educational contexts such as student/teacher interactions, student/student interactions and teacher/teacher interactions using instructional communication models and communication theories.

COMM 6322 Culture and Communication: Study of the relationship between culture and communication with emphasis given to social, psychological, linguistic and nonverbal problems in and the development of strategies for the practice of intercultural and international communication.

COMM 6323 Seminar in Interpersonal Communication: Current theories and research in interpersonal communication. Emphasis on symbolic interaction approaches to interpersonal communication and performance-centered theories of interpersonal communication.

COMM 6324 Seminar in Organizational Communication: Theories and models of communication in organizations, design and management of organizational communication systems.

COMM 6326 Seminar in Nonverbal Communication: Review and analysis of theory and research in nonverbal communication, including relationship of nonverbal communication to oral communication. Emphasis on intercultural and international nonverbal communication.

COMM 6327 Seminar in Health Communication: Provides an overview of theoretical and applied approaches to health communication. Students will be exposed to topics including delivery systems of formal care, health information sources, mediators and moderators of care and understanding, communication outcomes, research methods, and overarching issues in health communication.

COMM 6329 Special Topics in Communication: Course will focus on current communication theory and research in specialized areas of the discipline. May be repeated for credit when the topic varies.

COMM 6330 Seminar in Consulting and Training: This course explores communication training and development as a research and teaching focus for students interested in applied communication. Specifically, the course provides students with opportunities to identify and assess communication competence, to acquire the skills needed for developing training programs, and to gain an understanding of the theoretical and applied elements of adult education.

COMM 6332 Mass Media Campaigns: This course will examine the elements of effective campaigns and will analyze the role of the mass media in a variety of social, health and political settings.

COMM 6333 Seminar in Media Psychology: This course examines the relationship between media and human thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Emphasis on ways that media has an influence on audiences, how audiences influence media content, how various groups are portrayed, and the impacts of these portrayals on audiences.

COMM 6334 Seminar in Conflict Management: The objectives of this course are to provide the student with a theoretical understanding of the communication processes involved in conflict management, to enhance students' critical analysis of a variety of conflict situations, and to develop techniques and strategies for managing those conflicts more appropriately and effectively.

COMM 6339 Independent Research: This course provides the student with the opportunity for individual investigation of an advanced problem in Communication under the direction and supervision of a graduate faculty member. This course does not fulfill the requirements for any of the courses (COMM 7300, COMM 7301 or COMM 7101) for the thesis option. Prerequisite: With permission of instructor only.

COMM 6351 Communication Technology: This course surveys emerging communication technologies and examines their social and behavioral impact on human interaction

COMM 6352 Media, Race and Ethnicity: This course examines the historical and philosophical roots of the concepts of race and ethnicity, and their relation both to migration/immigration and personal/collective identity construction. It also examines the impact of mass media on racial and ethnic identity, using mass communication theory to understand the political and social dimensions of the concepts in question. Particular attention is given to racial and ethnic identity in the U.S.-Mexican border, and the media's influence on conceptions and perceptions.

COMM 6355 Professional Speaking: This course provides students with an understanding of the knowledge and skills used in business and professional situations. The emphasis is on the professionals' use of oral communication as a tool to identify issues, solve problems and communicate policy.

COMM 6356 Seminar in Persuasion: This course examines the theories, principles, models and research related to attitude change and social influence. The course takes a contemporary, interdisciplinary approach to persuasion.

COMM 6360 Historical Studies in Mass Media: Historical study of cultural, legal and technical movements in print, broadcasting and recorded mass media. May be repeated for credit when topics vary.

COMM 7101: Thesis Research: Continuing preparation of thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the master's degree.

COMM 7300 Thesis I: Preparation, completion and submission of an acceptable thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the master's degree.

COMM 7302 Thesis II: Preparation, completion and submission of an acceptable thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the master's degree.