



A Handbook for  
Graduate Students  
*in*  
Communication

2021-2022

**Missouri  
State**

DEPARTMENT *of*  
COMMUNICATION

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## **Applying for Graduate Study in Communication**

### **Overview**

Applying for graduate study in the Department of Communication at Missouri State University (MSU) requires that you:

1. meet the minimum requirements for admission to the Graduate College,
2. fulfill the entrance requirements for the Communication Graduate Program, and
3. complete the online application through the university's centralized application system.

### **Graduate College Admission Requirements**

The Graduate Council sets the minimum standards for full admission to graduate study. Additional requirements and higher standards may be stipulated for specific graduate programs, and applicants should check for such requirements in the departmental section of this catalog. The minimum requirements for graduate admission are:

1. A bachelor's degree from a college or university accredited by agencies recognized by Missouri State University, AND a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.75 on a 4.00 scale; OR at least a 2.75 grade point average on a 4.00 scale for the last 60 hours of academic course work; OR at least a 2.75 grade point average on a minimum of 9 hours of graduate credits; OR have a combined score of 290 (875 under the old scoring system before August 1, 2011) on the verbal and quantitative sections of the Graduate Record Examination; OR
2. A bachelor's degree from a college or university NOT accredited by an agency recognized by Missouri State University, a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.75 on a 4.00 scale; OR at least a 2.75 grade point average on a 4.00 scale for the last 60 hours of academic course work, AND a combined score of 290 (875 under the old scoring system before August 1, 2011) on the verbal and quantitative sections of the Graduate Record Examination; OR
3. A bachelor's degree from a college or university recognized by Missouri State University, AND recommendation in writing by both the department head of the student's desired major area and the dean of the college in which that discipline is located, and the approval of the Dean of the Graduate College.

### **Communication Graduate Program Admission Requirements**

To be admitted into the communication graduate program, you must fulfill the entrance requirements listed below:

1. The applicant must have received an undergraduate degree from a regionally accredited college or university.

2. The applicant must hold an undergraduate degree with an academic major in communication (speech or mass communication, journalism, rhetorical studies) or a related discipline (e.g., anthropology, English, history, psychology, or sociology), *or* have completed a minimum of 15 hours of undergraduate course work in communication to demonstrate an adequate background for graduate work in the field of communication. *Additional undergraduate courses may be required as prerequisites to the student's graduate program. Prerequisites are determined by the Department of Communication and relayed to the Graduate College as conditions of admission.*
3. The applicant must have attained a GPA of at least 3.00 on a 4.00 scale for the last 60 credit hours of academic work.
4. Applicants who do not meet the standard entrance requirements, but who show an indication of high promise, will be considered for admission on a case-by-case basis.
5. The applicant must submit a 500-700 word letter of application. This letter should address the following questions:
  - Why are you interested in pursuing a graduate degree in Communication?
  - Why did you choose to apply for graduate study in the Department of Communication at Missouri State University?
  - How does your background (educational and otherwise) prepare you for graduate study?
  - What professional goals do you hope this degree will help you achieve?
6. The applicant must submit at least two letters of reference, of which one is from an assistant professor, associate professor, or professor who has had the student in class. Applicants more than six years out of their bachelor's degree must submit a letter of recommendation from a supervisor or another person adequately qualified to evaluate the student's suitability for graduate study.
7. Acceptance decisions for fall semester will begin in early February. **All application materials must be submitted by February 1.**
8. Meeting the above entrance requirements does not guarantee admission to the Master of Arts in Communication. The decision to accept a graduate student is competitive and complex. It is based on multiple factors, only one of which is meeting the entrance requirements listed above.
9. All other University and Graduate College requirements for admission to a degree program will also apply. Please refer to the requirements given in the graduate catalog.

## Application Procedures

All graduate applications are collected through a centralized application service (GradCAS). Applicants must provide required materials, submit official transcripts showing coursework for their bachelor's degree and any graduate-level work, and pay the application fee through the GradCAS service. To complete the application process, you should:

1. Review the admission requirements listed above.  
International students should visit the International Programs website (<https://international.missouristate.edu/services/requirements-for-graduate-admissions.htm>) for additional admission requirements.
2. Apply online.  
Access the application at: <https://www.missouristate.edu/futurestudents/applynow.aspx>. Applicants will create a user login and password. Filter by Missouri State University and find the program to which you wish to apply. Admission requirements and program deadlines are included in the GradCAS application. Applicants should:
  - a. provide the program-required materials,
  - b. request and submit official transcripts showing coursework for their bachelor's degree and any graduate-level work, and
  - c. pay the application fee through the GradCAS.

## Other Types of Applications

### Reactivate Application

Students who have attended Missouri State University as a graduate student and have been out more than one year and plan to return to the same graduate program in which they were previously enrolled can submit the Reactivate Application (found online via: <https://graduate.missouristate.edu/futurestudents/Apply.htm>). If applying to a new/different graduate program, students must submit a new application through the appropriate online Centralized Application Service (GradCAS).

### Certificate Programs

If you are a **new** applicant and applying **only** to a certificate program, you will need to apply through the GradCAS application process described above.

If you are a **current** MSU graduate student applying to **add** a certificate program, you will need to complete the Reactivate Application described above.

## Gathering Application Materials

The process of applying for graduate study takes sufficient planning and time. You should begin compiling your application materials well before the February 1 deadline. Talk with potential references and begin drafting your letter of application well in advance. You may find it helpful to provide potential references with a copy of your

resume or curriculum vitae (CV) and a draft of your letter of application. You should also note that references will submit their letters of recommendation via the GradCAS system. In order for them to be provided with the appropriate link to submit their letters, you will first need to create your user login and password and then add their contact information into the GradCAS system.

## **Other Important Admission Policies**

### **International Students**

The graduate program in the Department of Communication welcomes applications from individuals across the globe. Missouri State University is authorized under federal law to enroll non-immigrant international students. International students should visit the International Programs website (<https://international.missouristate.edu/services/requirements-for-graduate-admissions.htm>) for additional admission requirements.

### **Accelerated Master's Admissions**

Eligible undergraduate majors in the School of Communication Studies may apply for early admission to the Master of Arts in Communication during the second semester of their junior year. Once accepted for early admission, students are able to take up to 12 credit hours at the 600-700 level that apply to both their undergraduate and graduate programs. Students **MUST** enroll in COM 701 during the fall semester of their senior year as part of the accelerated program. Before enrolling in courses to be counted for both undergraduate and graduate credit, an undergraduate student must be accepted into the accelerated master's program **AND** receive prior approval from the Director of Graduate Studies, the Department Head, and the Dean of the Graduate College (on a Mixed Credit form). Admission requirements are:

1. The applicant must be of junior standing with a cumulative GPA of 3.25.
2. The applicant must have a declared major in the School of Communication Studies or the equivalent, having completed 15 hours in the major department, including at least six hours at the 300-level or above, with a GPA in the major of 3.50 or better.
3. The applicant must submit three letters of recommendation, two of which must be written by a graduate faculty member in the School of Communication Studies.
4. The applicant must submit a letter of application of no more than 2 pages. This letter should address the following questions:
  - Why are you interested in pursuing an accelerated graduate degree in Communication?
  - Why did you choose to apply for accelerated graduate study in the Department of Communications at Missouri State University?
  - How does your background (educational and otherwise) prepare you for accelerated graduate study?

- What professional goals do you hope this degree will help you achieve?
5. The applicant must submit a sample of sole-authored academic writing of no less than 3 pages.
  6. Admission decisions will be made by the Graduate Faculty in the Department of Communication. Meeting the above entrance requirements does not guarantee admission to the Master of Arts in Communication Accelerated Program. The decision to accept an accelerated graduate student is competitive and complex. It is based on multiple factors, only one of which is meeting the admission requirements listed above.
  7. Acceptance decisions for fall semester will begin in early February. Date for first consideration for applications is February 1.

### **Late Applications for Admission**

If your admission materials are received after the priority deadline of February 1, full admission into the program for the desired semester may not be possible. At the discretion of the Dean of the Graduate College, you may be admitted as a non-degree seeking student until your application materials can be reviewed. On admission to the program, your status would be changed to that of a degree-seeking student.

### **Transfer Credits**

No more than nine semester hours of transfer credits from another accredited institution may be counted in the minimum total of 33 hours required for a master's degree. Courses taken on a pass/not pass basis will not be accepted for transfer. Course work presented for transfer must be verified by official transcript and completed in a period not to exceed eight years prior to graduation from this master's program.

### **Grade Requirements**

Graduate students at Missouri State University become ineligible for graduate study if they earn more than nine semester hours of C+ or below in their graduate course work. Any course completed with a grade of C- or below will not be applied toward a graduate degree.

### **Readmission Process**

If you were admitted as a Communication MA student and are going to remain in this program, but have not taken classes for a one-year period, you may send an email to Graduate Admissions ([GraduateAdmissions@MissouriState.edu](mailto:GraduateAdmissions@MissouriState.edu)) requesting your application and/or admission semester be changed. If the time period has been more than one (1) year, you must submit the Reactivate Application.

## **MA in Communication: Degree Requirements**

### **Required Courses**

There are 15 hours of required courses specified in the Communication M.A. degree: nine (9) hours in theory and research and six (6) hours in the methodology of inquiry. In drawing up this required program of coursework, the graduate faculty of this department were guided by one question: what minimum knowledge and skills are appropriate for someone possessing a master's degree in communication? Consensus was achieved by the faculty on three points:

1. All students in the Communication MA program need to complete a course that introduces them to advanced study in the discipline. COM 701: Introduction to Graduate Study was created to serve this need and is intended to be taken in the first semester of a student's program of study.
2. Approximately twenty percent of any student's total program should include opportunities to acquire a broad understanding of the body of theory which serves to guide and define this discipline. COM 702: Theory and Research in Communication and COM 706: Rhetorical Theory were established as required courses because these classes are devoted to learning mainstream theories in communication (interpersonal, small group, organizational, etc.) and rhetoric.
3. Approximately 20 percent of any student's total program should be devoted to acquiring a working understanding of methods important to conducting research in the discipline. Someone who holds an MA in Communication should, at minimum, possess sufficient understanding of research methods to read and understand the content of research-reporting journals relevant to this and related disciplines. Hence, six hours of required coursework are devoted to research methods. Graduate students choose any combination of six hours from:
  - a. COM 712: Quantitative Research Methods in Communication
  - b. COM 714: Qualitative Research Methods in Communication
  - c. COM 716: Rhetorical Research Methods in Communication
  - d. COM 718: Applied Communication Research Methods

A student may choose to take all 12 hours of methods courses as part of their 33-hour total to complete the degree. In such cases, 6 hours of methods will be applied to the degree as electives.

### **Electives**

Because the MA in Communication requires a total of at least 33 hours, only about half of your program is taken up with required courses. The remaining 18+ hours are electives. Consider the following issues as you choose electives.

1. In many cases, students choose to select electives that cluster around a topical theme and provide an area of specialization in your master's degree (e.g., organizational

- communication, interpersonal and conflict communication, communication and culture, or rhetoric and political communication).
2. You may take as many electives as you want from the Department of Communication or the Department of Media, Journalism, and Film. However, you may take a maximum of nine (9) hours of coursework from departments other than those two.
  3. Some of your electives may come from non-class instruction. Three courses fall in this category: COM 795: Communication Internship, COM 796: Independent Study, and COM 799: Masters Thesis. You may count a maximum of eight (8) hours total in any combination of these courses toward your 33 hours of master's degree coursework.

### **Course Sequencing**

Course sequencing is generally determined by pragmatic issues such as course availability and convenience to your schedule. That said, there are a few guiding principles to keep in mind when making choices about what courses to take first and what courses to leave until later.

1. COM 701 is an introductory course that should be taken in your first semester in the program.
2. COM 702 and COM 706, as well as *one* of your methods classes, should be taken as early in your program as possible. These are foundational courses that will lay the groundwork for satisfying your research requirement and successfully completing other COM courses.
3. Prerequisites to keep in mind:
  - a. COM 795 – Communication Internship has completion of 12 graduate credit hours in Communication as a prerequisite. This course also requires permission of the Director of Graduate Studies.
  - b. COM 796 – Independent Study requires permission of the supervising faculty member and the Director of Graduate Studies.
  - c. COM 799 – Master's Thesis requires completion of a minimum of nine graduate credit hours in Communication, permission of the Director of Graduate Studies, and admission to Thesis Option.

## The Research Requirement

The principal purpose of the research requirement in our MA program is to demonstrate a capacity to complete focused research and analysis. A distinguishing mark of the graduate scholar is the ability to perform well-disciplined, conceptually solid, original research. You may satisfy this research requirement in one of three ways: by producing a thesis, writing a seminar paper, or completing a professional project.

### Thesis

To fulfill the research requirement of the MA in Communication, you may choose to complete a thesis approved by a thesis committee and the Graduate College. A maximum of 6 credit hours of COM 799 may be used for the purpose of completing a thesis. Selecting the thesis option requires 12 hours of electives in the MA program (rather than 15 hours required of students completing a seminar paper or professional project).

#### *What is a Thesis?*

A thesis typically reports results of theory-guided, original analysis or inquiry relevant to the field of communication based on accepted methods of humanistic or social scientific research. A thesis may be an instance of social scientific inquiry, employing appropriate quantitative or qualitative methods, or it may be an example of rhetorical analysis and critique based on rhetorical theory and the humanistic methods mainstream to that mode of inquiry.

Thesis lengths vary widely, often dependent on the topic and method of research. Between 80 and 100 pages is the typical length of a thesis in this department.

Certain features of thesis style and format are required to be consistent across the university, but other features in this regard may differ. The Graduate College provides all thesis writers with access to a ***Thesis Blackboard Course***. Materials in this course shell describe the specifications that apply to all submitted theses and provides a variety of resources to help you fulfill all requirements. If you elect the Thesis Option, it is recommended that you self-enroll in this course as early as possible. (Find more information at: <https://graduate.missouristate.edu/currentstudents/ThesisResources.htm>.)

#### *Prerequisites*

To complete a thesis in the Department of Communication, you must meet the following prerequisites:

1. Completion of at least nine (9) graduate credit hours in communication.
2. Permission of the Director of Graduate Studies.
3. Completion of three (3) graduate credit hours in one of the following method courses: COM 712, 714, 716 or 718.
4. Admission to Thesis Option.

### ***Procedures***

If you elect to pursue this option, chances are you'll be tackling your very first master's thesis. Members of the graduate faculty in this department do not expect you to be an expert at conceiving, conducting, and reporting research of the stature typical to such an endeavor. Most graduate faculty are more than willing to guide you through this particular learning process. Nevertheless, you are solely responsible for the research activities and writing that results in your finished thesis. Consequently, the quality of the piece and the time it takes to complete it will hinge on the effort you invest in the process. What follows are the detailed steps thesis writers should take to complete their project.

#### Step 1: Compose a thesis statement and research question.

The first step in your inquiry is to identify what you wish to investigate. Composing a clear, concise thesis statement and research question will serve you in two ways: it will have a focusing effect on your research and it will help you to assemble a better thesis committee.

#### Step 2: Apply for admission to the Thesis Option.

To apply for admission to the Thesis Option, you compile an application packet and submit it to the Director of Graduate Studies via email. Your application packet should include:

1. A complete Application to Thesis Option form (see the Forms and Paperwork section of this handbook)
2. A brief rationale for your thesis
3. An outline of at least the first three chapters of your thesis
4. A writing sample (common submissions include a paper completed in a previous graduate class or the beginnings of the thesis prospectus)
5. A timetable for thesis completion.

Part of your application will include identifying your ***thesis advisor*** and having that person commit to working with you in that capacity. Selecting your advisor is perhaps the most important decision you can make at this stage. Your thesis advisor should be someone who is interested in your thesis topic or research question and has relevant knowledge and research experiences (which underscores the importance of completing Step One first). Your advisor also needs to be someone who has the time and necessary expertise to guide you. They should be someone you can work with on a fairly close and extended basis. Your advisor is your primary source of guidance and often functions as a liaison between you and the rest of your thesis committee. While approval of your prospectus and your thesis ultimately rests with the full committee, your director often controls the flow of communication between you and your committee and generally supervises your research and the composition of its report. Remember that serving as a thesis advisor is a time-consuming and demanding responsibility. As such, it is important to develop a strong relationship with your potential thesis advisor and ask them to serve in this capacity early in the process.

After selecting your advisor and submitting your Application to Thesis Option, the

graduate faculty will consider your application and make a recommendation about admission to the Thesis Option. If the graduate faculty does not approve your admission to the Thesis Option, you must complete a seminar paper or professional project to satisfy the research requirement for your degree.

Step 3: Carefully select the rest of your thesis committee.

It is your responsibility to select a committee of three members of the graduate faculty. One member of this committee will be your thesis advisor and you should discuss the options for other members with your advisor. At minimum, your thesis advisor and at least one other member of your committee must hold rank in the Department of Communication or the Department of Media, Journalism, and Film. You may also get permission from the Graduate School to include someone from the undergraduate faculty who possesses special expertise relevant to your thesis to serve as a fourth member.

As with your advisor selection, committee members should be selected with care. Whether your committee is composed entirely of members of this department or includes someone from another academic field, each should possess an interest in your topic and sufficient expertise to guide your research. Choosing wisely in this regard again hinges on the thought you have invested in completing Step One.

Step 4: Submit a clear and complete prospectus.

A prospectus is a written proposal, usually between 15 and 20 pages, which offers a fairly detailed explanation of what you intend to investigate and how you plan to go about investigating it. *Do not pursue actual investigation prior to prospectus approval.* For example, do not perform content or message analysis, administer a test, make field observations, conduct an experiment, or send out questionnaires without having your prospectus approved by your committee.

Completing a prospectus is not a mere formality nor an arbitrarily imposed encumbrance. The prospectus is an important document that serves as an agreement between you and your committee about what you will do. Once it is agreed to by all, committee members may not arbitrarily alter features of your project. You also are limited in your ability to change your mind without committee approval. An approved prospectus is a binding document which diminishes the chances of upheaval due to unplanned or arbitrary changes later in the process. A well-composed prospectus is an important part of your thesis endeavor.

Although the specific format will vary according to the sort of inquiry you are pursuing (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, rhetorical/critical, etc.), there are certain elements which need to be included in every prospectus. The following outline sketches the information essential to almost any prospectus:

**I. Thesis statement and rationale**

What thesis statement, hypothesis, or research question serves as impetus and guides this inquiry? What is its importance? Why should others in the field care about your findings?

## II. Conceptual/theoretical background

Also referred to as the review of literature, this section describes the specific body of theory and research which guides and supports your inquiry and details what may already be known about your topic or research variables.

## III. Method

This section is important whether you intend to complete a social scientific study or engage in humanistic research. This is where you explain exactly what you are going to do, how you intend to do it, and report a time frame for its completion.

The following issues are typically addressed in this section of the prospectus:

- a. *Design*: What, specifically, is your research design or method of rhetorical analysis and why is it appropriate to your study?
- b. *Observation*: What are you going to observe or analyze and how are you going to measure or evaluate it? If it is a scientific study, how do you operationalize major variables? How will you assure a degree of validity and reliability to your study or analysis?
- c. *Methodological procedures*: What procedures will you use to assemble samples for study or examples for analysis? If it is a scientific study, how will you collect and measure data and assure representativeness in your sampling?
- d. *Time frame*: What realistic schedule do you anticipate for conducting this inquiry?

### Step 5: Obtain prospectus approval and IRB approval (if using human research participants).

The prospectus must be committee-approved before you can actually begin conducting your study or analysis. Work closely with your thesis director until they consider your prospectus ready to be reviewed by the full committee.

It is important that you work with your advisor first. While you should feel free to ask committee members for advice and guidance at this point, it is not necessary for them to receive every working draft of your prospectus as you mold it into final form. When your director is convinced it is sufficiently clear and complete, they will ask you to give copies of the prospectus to the rest of the committee. Once all committee members have had a chance to examine it, you or your director will schedule the Prospectus Meeting between you and the full committee to discuss the study along with any appropriate changes. You may have to redraft portions of your prospectus to satisfy the committee's concerns or incorporate any changes they may propose.

When the prospectus is approved by the full committee, all members will sign the Thesis Prospectus Approval Form (see the Forms and Paperwork section of this handbook). The completed form should then be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies.

If your thesis involves data collection from or observation of human participants, you must gain approval of your proposed study from the university's Institutional Review Board. You must provide documentation that you have completed the required ethics

training, fill out a Human Subjects Application, and submit your proposal to the IRB as described by the university's policies for Human Research Participants. Be advised that you may not collect any data until you have received IRB approval. Keep a copy of the IRB approval form to submit with your completed thesis. **No thesis involving human research participants will be approved by the department nor the Graduate College in the absence of IRB approval.**

Step 6: Complete the thesis on a chapter-by-chapter basis.

If you have done a thorough job with the prospectus, you have a head start on the task of writing the thesis or research report. Much of the prospectus usually gets incorporated into the early chapters of the thesis.

As with writing the prospectus, you should compose your thesis with the guidance of your advisor. Your advisor may ask you to establish a work calendar that stipulates specific deadlines for consecutive chapters. Usually, this calendar marks progression toward the deadline for thesis deposit stipulated by the Graduate College. Again, feel free to consult with other committee members as necessary, but let your thesis advisor manage the flow of communication. The committee should receive a draft only when your thesis advisor judges it ready for review.

Step 7: Defend your thesis to your committee.

After committee review of your completed thesis, you or your advisor should schedule a meeting with your full committee (commonly referred to as your Thesis Defense). This meeting provides you with the opportunity to complete the public forum presentation requirement in our department and also receive feedback from your committee on the full thesis. After your Thesis Defense, you may need to continue work with your advisor to finalize your thesis document. When all members judge the thesis to be in final form, it qualifies for formal approval.

Step 8: Follow the prescribed thesis approval process.

To satisfy the research component of the degree, your thesis must be approved by the full committee, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate College.

Your thesis advisor and committee certify their approval by signing the approval sheets included at the beginning of the thesis document (see the Thesis Template provided on the Thesis Blackboard Course). Your advisor and committee should also sign the Thesis Approval Form (also provided on the Thesis Blackboard Course).

You should then send a review copy to the Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Communication and complete the Thesis Submission process on the Thesis Blackboard Course. This step must be completed on or before the Graduate College deadline. The Graduate College will then initiate their review and your document will be checked for correct mechanics, scholarly form, and adherence to Graduate College guidelines. You may be asked for edits and revisions during the Graduate College Review, in which case you will need to resubmit the revised document via the Thesis Blackboard Course.

Although it rarely happens, occasionally a thesis does not pass approval at the Graduate College Review level. Those rare occasions are almost always brought on by inattention to writing mechanics, documentation style, or the Graduate School's requirements regarding format, margins, and so forth. Be certain your thesis adheres to all necessary requirements. Do not assume your committee members will alert you to every glitch in this regard. The responsibility to ensure your final report meets the Graduate School's requirements is entirely yours. Once the thesis is accepted by the Graduate College, and you have met all other requirements for the degree, you are cleared for graduation.

Incidentally, the university does not require bound, print copies of your thesis. If you would like to purchase bound copies for yourself, the Thesis Blackboard Course lists recommendations for print services. The Director of Graduate Studies may also request an electronic version of your complete, approved thesis to purchase a bound copy to retain in the department.

## **Seminar Paper**

To fulfill the research requirement of the MA in Communication, you may choose to complete a seminar paper approved by the graduate faculty and the Director of Graduate Studies. The department requires a public presentation of the seminar paper. A maximum of 3 credit hours of COM 796 may be used for the purpose of completing a seminar paper. Selecting the seminar paper option requires 15 hours of electives in the MA program.

### ***What is a Seminar Paper?***

A seminar paper is an original composition of publishable quality that explores a topic or answers a question relevant to the field of communication through bibliographic and empirical research. To illustrate, seminar papers often resemble published articles in communication-based academic journals. They survey, report, and draw conclusions from published theory and research on the topic or question under analysis and typically report original data findings.

For a seminar paper to be judged publishable in quality, it must meet certain expectations regarding form and content. The writing is of a professional quality and the documentation conforms to the journal style appropriate to the topic. In sum, it is a paper you and your advisor would judge adequate to submit to a professional conference or to a journal for publication. Most seminar papers are between 20 and 40 pages in length.

### ***Procedures***

Students selecting this option must submit an approved seminar paper to satisfy the research component of the degree. There is a prescribed series of steps to completing and submitting an approved seminar paper; these steps are detailed below.

#### **Step 1: Compose a topic statement or research question.**

Many seminar papers have their genesis in specific course work. Sometimes students are intrigued by a certain course topic and wish to explore it further through original

research. Other times students take a completed course paper and make *extensive* refinements and additions for it to become an approved seminar paper. Either way, the seminar paper needs to survey a topic or answer a question relevant to the field. A concise topic statement or research question can provide you with a useful starting point as you seek out a faculty member to serve as your seminar paper advisor.

Step 2: Select a faculty advisor.

It is your responsibility to select a seminar paper advisor. The seminar paper advisor must be a graduate faculty member in the Department of Communication or the Department of Media, Journalism, and Film who possesses interest and expertise in your topic or research question, which reinforces the importance of first completing Step One. If the impetus of your paper is a certain course, consider asking the professor who taught that course to serve as your seminar paper advisor.

Remember that serving as seminar paper advisor is a time-consuming and demanding responsibility. As such, it is important to develop a strong relationship with your potential advisor and ask them to serve in this capacity early in the process.

Step 3: Compose the paper.

If you are starting your paper from scratch, your advisor may suggest some background reading. Ultimately, however, the research and the writing are yours. Your seminar paper advisor is neither your collaborator nor coauthor. Expect your seminar paper to require multiple drafts. The thoroughness of the research, the clarity of the writing, and the time it takes to complete the project are dependent on your effort and investment.

If you begin this project with a paper you have already written, expect to make extensive revisions and additions. An initial paper might satisfy certain course requirements, but the same piece, unchanged, is unlikely to meet the requirements of a seminar paper.

Keep in mind that the seminar paper generally should conform to 7th edition APA style (unless other writing styles are deemed appropriate by your advisor), and the following elements must be included:

- Title page and abstract with key words
- Clearly stated purpose or goal(s) of the seminar paper
- Review of relevant literature
- Rationale for all research questions and/or hypotheses
- Clearly described method that is appropriate for the topic
- Presentation of original findings or/or clearly stated theoretical conclusions drawn
- Discussion and/or conclusion

When your advisor believes the paper is ready for submission to the departmental Faculty Review Committee, they should sign the Seminar Paper Approval Form (see the Forms and Paperwork section of this handbook). You should include this form with your seminar paper submission to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Step 4: Secure approval.

Submit your advisor-approved seminar paper to the Director of Graduate Studies via email by the departmental deadline for submission of seminar papers. This deadline is published each fall and spring semester and distributed through print and on the departmental website. Seminar papers are neither accepted nor reviewed in the summer semester.

The Director of Graduate Studies will distribute copies of your seminar paper to two graduate faculty members in the School of Communication who serve on the Faculty Review Committee and who will read and evaluate your seminar paper. Each reader will make one of the following recommendations to the Director of Graduate Studies: paper approved; paper approved with minor revisions; or paper to be revised and resubmitted. The Director of Graduate Studies will inform the student of the committee's decision.

Please note: The function of the Faculty Review Committee is to evaluate the acceptability of seminar papers and professional projects. It does not function as an editorial committee. The assumption is that submitted papers require few, if any, revisions. If the committee decides that more substantial revisions are necessary, they will recommend revising and resubmitting the paper in a following semester, and the student should work with their advisor for necessary editing.

Step 5: Present your paper in a public forum.

Once your seminar paper is approved, you will share your work with others. A variety of forums exist for sharing the product of your work. You may choose to participate in the department's colloquium series, serve as a guest lecturer in an appropriate class, submit your paper for presentation at a conference, or schedule a presentation to a group of faculty and peers. Your seminar paper advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies may assist in scheduling an appropriate forum for meeting this requirement, and one or both of these individuals must attend your presentation.

When you have completed your seminar paper and presented it, you have satisfied the research component of the degree. If you have completed all other requirements for the degree, you are then cleared for graduation.

**Professional Project**

To fulfill the research requirement of the MA in Communication, you may choose to complete a professional project approved by the graduate faculty and the Director of Graduate Studies. The department requires a public presentation of the professional project. A maximum of 3 credit hours of COM 796 may be used for the purpose of completing a professional project. Selecting the professional project option requires 15 hours of electives in the MA program.

***What is a Professional Project?***

Graduate students choose the professional project option to extend their academic

experience by engaging in the development, enactment, and assessment of an applied communication project. Each project is unique, but examples include workshops, campaigns, trainings, and communication assessments. Graduate students develop professional projects based on the student's chosen area of study. While project types vary, all students completing a professional project are required to submit a written professional project portfolio documenting their work.

*Note:* For purposes of forms and requirements, professional projects are referred to as a special type of seminar paper. As you will read below, the required forms for this option will fall under seminar paper forms.

### ***Procedures***

Students selecting this option must submit an approved professional project to satisfy the research component of the degree. There is a prescribed series of steps to completing and submitting an approved professional project; these steps are detailed below.

#### **Step 1: Develop a topical area of interest and purpose statement.**

Professional projects are focused on using communication knowledge and skills to solve “real world” problems. The project needs to address a specific issue or set of issues and fulfill a clear purpose. A project may have its genesis in a specific graduate course or in your own professional experience. Regardless of the topic chosen, it should be well connected to communication studies via a review of relevant literature.

#### **Step 2: Select a faculty advisor.**

It is your responsibility to select a professional project advisor. The advisor must be a graduate faculty member in the Department of Communication or the Department of Media, Journalism, and Film who possesses interest and expertise in your topical area of interest, which reinforces the importance of first completing Step One. If the impetus of your project is a certain course, consider asking the professor who taught that course to serve as your professional project advisor.

Remember that serving as professional project advisor is a time-consuming and demanding responsibility. As such, it is important to develop a strong relationship with your potential advisor and ask them to serve in this capacity early in the process.

#### **Step 3: Develop a project design proposal and timeline.**

Working with your faculty advisor, you will develop a detailed design proposal for the professional project. This proposal should include the plan for the development, enactment, and assessment of the applied communication experience. For example, if you are designing a training and development module for an organization, you will include in your proposal the purpose of the training, how you will develop the materials, the target audience, the plan for delivery and assessment. Also include a timeline for completing the professional project and identify materials to be submitted to document the process and outcomes of the project.

Completion of the proposal and timeline will be an informal step in the process; you

should work with your advisor to agree upon any specifics to be included in this step.

Step 4: Implement and complete the project.

In this step, you will enact the professional project as outlined in the proposal. The project should be documented at all stages to be included in the final project portfolio. For example: a training and development module can be submitted along with any conducted evaluations of the module; communication campaign materials should be included; a case study developed for teaching or training purposes should be included. In all cases, the graduate student should work closely with the faculty advisor in determining (via the project proposal) how best to document the process and outcomes of the project. The final portfolio should also include an executive summary, a review of relevant literature, and a self-reflection (see the Professional Project Portfolio Instructions section below) and should be written in 7<sup>th</sup> edition APA style, unless another style is deemed appropriate by your advisor.

Your advisor will indicate approval of your project by signing a departmental Seminar Paper Approval Form (see the Forms and Paperwork section of this handbook) that should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies when submitting your project.

Step 5: Secure approval.

Once the faculty advisor has approved the completed project, the graduate student submits the completed Professional Project Portfolio electronically to the Director of Graduate Studies (see the Professional Project Portfolio Instructions below). The Director of Graduate Studies will distribute copies of the portfolio to the departmental Faculty Review Committee, who will review the materials in detail. Each committee member will make one of the following recommendations: (1) project approved; (2) project approved with minor additions or revisions; (3) project to be revised and resubmitted. The Director of Graduate Studies will inform the student of the committee's decision.

Please note: The function of the Faculty Review Committee is to evaluate the acceptability of seminar papers and professional projects. It does not function as an editorial committee. The assumption is that submitted papers require few, if any, revisions. If the committee decides that more substantial revisions are necessary, they will recommend revising and resubmitting the paper in a following semester, and the student should work with their advisor for necessary editing.

Step 6: Present your project in a public forum.

Once your professional project is approved, you will share your work with others. A variety of forums exist for sharing the product of your work. You may choose to participate in the department's colloquium series, serve as a guest lecturer in an appropriate class, submit your paper for presentation at a conference, or schedule a presentation to a group of faculty and peers. Your seminar paper advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies may assist in scheduling an appropriate forum for meeting this requirement, and one or both of these individuals must attend your presentation.

When you have completed your project and presented it, you have satisfied the research

component of the degree. If you have completed all other requirements for the degree, you are then cleared for graduation.

***Professional Project Portfolio Instructions***

Project portfolios should include:

1. An executive summary of the project, including:
  - a. Summary of the project, goals, and outcomes.
  - b. Summary of assessment results for the project.
2. A review of relevant literature and research consulted to conduct the project.
3. All documents created for the project, including (but not limited to):
  - a. Training manuals with all handouts, assessments, surveys, slides, etc.
  - b. Digital materials, including hyperlinked URLs as appropriate.
  - c. Campaign materials, including formative research, materials, contacts, and message strategies as appropriate.
4. An assessment in the form of a self-reflection and/or analysis of the project's impact (e.g., post-training evaluations, campaign feedback solicited from sample audiences or formative research, case study or instructional feedback from peer review).
5. Additional documents used for project that might assist in committee review.

## Academic Degree Requirements Checklist

Included below is a complete list combining the degree requirements of the Graduate College with those of the Department of Communication. Consider checking them off as you complete them to track your progress on your MA.

- Completed *at minimum* 33 semester hours of graduate-level course work. Remember, it is okay to have more than 33 hours, if you choose.
- Completed *a minimum* of 16 semester hours in courses at the 700 level (again, it is okay to have more than 16 hours at the 700 level).
- Have a GPA of at least 3.0 on all graduate course work.
- Completed a research requirement (thesis, seminar paper, or professional project)
- Passed comprehensive exams. (*\*See public presentation below.\**)
- Completed specific program requirements:
  - COM 701 Introduction to Graduate Studies
  - COM 702 Theory and Research in Communication
  - COM 706 Rhetorical Theory
  - 1<sup>st</sup> methods class: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> methods class: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Public presentation of thesis, seminar paper, or professional project. (*\*The oral presentation of your research requirement fulfills the comprehensive exam requirement.\**)
- No more than 8 semester hours of COM 795, 796 and 799 combined.
- Completed all requirements in an eight-year period.

## Forms and Paperwork

Throughout your graduate program, it will be necessary to complete and submit a variety of forms and paperwork. Below is a list of potentially necessary forms along with important information to consider when completing them.

**Form Access:** Unless otherwise noted, all forms described below can be found on the Department of Communication's website at:

<https://communication.missouristate.edu/communicationgrad/forms.htm>

**Form Submission:** Unless otherwise noted, all forms described below should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies via email.

### **Graduate Program Plan of Study**

Your program plan of study lists all courses that will count toward your MA degree. It is a planning tool and tracking system to make sure you complete the required courses and a coherent program of elective courses for your MA degree. You will fill it out early in your graduate program, usually during COM 701. Pay special attention to course modality and periodicity for a select course. You may encounter changes as you progress with your graduate studies, particular in selected electives. Remember that you must complete all academic degree requirements for your program.

### **COM 795 Communication Internship Approval Form**

This form acts as a contract between you and the Director of Graduate Studies for what work you will complete for internship credit and how a grade will be assigned for your internship.

Completing the Form:

1. The COM 795 Communication Internship Approval Form must be completed and signed by all required parties *prior to* registration for COM 795 credits. You will not be allowed to register for COM 795 if this form is not completed.
2. To fill out the COM 795 Communication Internship form:
  - a. Find an internship site and come to an agreement as to hours and duties for your internship. Usually, the number of credit hours in an internship is associated with the number of hours you spend working at the internship.
  - b. Meet with the Director of Graduate Studies to agree on the academic component of the internship. Usually, the academic component consists of a paper that links academic scholarship (research and/or theory) with the pragmatics of your experience at the internship.
  - c. Make sure the details of both agreements (work duties and academic components) are specified on the form, sign it, and obtain the signature of the Director of Graduate Studies.
3. Your completed and signed form will be sent to the department's Administrative Assistant, who will grant you permission to register for the appropriate class section.

### **COM 796 Independent Study Approval Form**

This form acts as a contract between you and your independent study professor for what work you will complete for independent study credit and how a grade will be assigned for this class. Your COM 796 course may or may not be used for completion of a seminar paper or professional project.

Completing the Form:

1. The COM 796 Independent Study Approval Form must be completed and signed by all required parties *prior to* registration for COM 796 credits. You will not be allowed to register for COM 796 if this form is not completed.
2. To fill out the COM 796 Independent Study form:
  - a. Find an independent study advisor and come to an agreement as to what work you will complete for your independent study and how a grade will be assigned. Note this agreement on the form and obtain the COM 796 advisor's signature
  - b. Deliver the form to the Director of Graduate Studies for approval.
3. Your completed and signed form will be sent to the department's Administrative Assistant, who will grant you permission to register for the appropriate class section.

### **COM 799 Master's Thesis Credit Approval Form**

This form allows the department to track which students are taking thesis hours and which faculty members they are working with (so we know who to ask for your grade).

Completing the Form:

1. The COM 799 Master's Thesis Credit Approval Form must be completed, signed by all required parties *prior to* registration for COM 799 credits. You will not be allowed to register for COM 799 if this form is not complete.
2. To fill out the COM 799 Master's Thesis form:
  - a. Complete the Thesis Option admission process.
  - b. Once you are admitted to the Thesis Option, fill out the form, sign it, and get your advisor's signature.
  - c. Deliver the form to the Director of Graduate Studies for approval.
3. Your completed and signed form will be sent to the department's Administrative Assistant, who will grant you permission to register for the appropriate class section.

### **Seminar Approval Form**

This form informs the Director of Graduate Studies know that your advisor believes that your seminar paper or professional project is ready for committee review. It also informs the Graduate College when you have completed the research requirement. Submit the form when electronically submitting your paper to the Director of Graduate Studies for committee review.

Once your seminar paper or professional project is approved by the committee and you have made any necessary revisions, the Director of Graduate Studies will sign the form

and deliver it to the Graduate College on your behalf. At this point the Graduate College will certify that you have completed the seminar paper requirement, and you and the department will receive completed copies of the form for record-keeping purposes.

### **Thesis Option Application Form**

The explicit purpose of this form is to give the graduate faculty the information they need to make a decision about whether to grant admission to the Thesis Option. Implicitly, however, the processes of filling out all the required elements of this form will assist you in planning your thesis and getting a solid start on your prospectus. When submitting this completed form to the Director of Graduate Studies, it should be accompanied by all required application packet materials.

### **Thesis Prospectus Approval Form**

The Thesis Prospectus Approval Form documents that your thesis prospectus has received the approval of your entire committee. You should prepare this form and bring it with you to your thesis prospectus meeting. Once your prospectus is approved, acquire signatures from your committee members and thesis chair. Submit the completed form to the Director of Graduate Studies.

### **Graduate College Comprehensive Exam Form**

Once you have completed your research requirement (both the written component and the oral presentation), consult with the Director of Graduate Studies on the completion of this form. For thesis writers, it is typically submitted after the thesis defense. For seminar paper or professional project writers, it is typically submitted after the presentation of your work in a public forum.

### List of Forms (Quick View)

Name of Form	When to Submit
Graduate Program Plan of Study (GPS)	Prior to completion of 14 hours of coursework (typically submitted in COM 701 course)
Internship Approval	Prior to registering for COM 795: Communication Internship
Independent Study Approval	Prior to registering for COM 796: Independent Study
Thesis Credit Approval	After being admitted to thesis option and before registering for COM 799
Seminar Approval Form	When submitting seminar paper or professional project for evaluation
Thesis Option Application	Prior to beginning thesis work
Thesis Prospectus Approval	After prospectus is approved
Graduate College Comprehensive Exam Form	After completing your research requirement (both the written component and the oral presentation)

## **Graduate Certificate in Applied Communication**

The Graduate Certificate in Applied Communication is designed for individuals who are highly motivated to develop applied communication skills for a professional environment. Admission is competitive and meeting the minimum standards for admission will not guarantee acceptance into the certificate program.

This certificate is a transcribed degree program. This means that once you have completed the program, the degree will appear on your transcript and you can list it on your resume or vitae just as you would a bachelor's or master's degree.

This certificate program may be taken alone or in conjunction with another graduate-level degree. With permission, students can “double count” coursework in this graduate certificate program toward a master’s degree. Students are encouraged to consult with the Director of Graduate Studies if interested in pursuing the Applied Communication Graduate Certificate.

### **Admission Process**

Admission to the certificate program requires all of the following:

1. A bachelor's degree from a college or university accredited by agencies recognized by Missouri State University or equivalent education from a foreign university.
2. A GPA of 2.75 on a 4.00 scale for the last 60 hours of undergraduate course work or completion of 9 credit hours of graduate course work with a minimum GPA of 3.00.
3. Admission application (all materials) deadline is 35 days prior to the start of the desired beginning semester.
4. All additional University and Graduate College requirements for admission to a certificate program.

### **Required Courses**

Choose 4 courses (12 hours) from the list below:

- COM 611: Conflict and Communication
- COM 617: Communication and Diversity in the Workplace
- COM 619: Ethical Issues in Communication
- COM 713: Public Relations Campaigns
- COM 732: Theories and Concepts of Small Group Communication

Courses must be completed with a 3.0 GPA for successful completion of the certificate.

## **Certificate in Conflict and Dispute Resolution**

The Certificate in Conflict and Dispute Resolution provides an 18-hour graduate-level experience for students, educators, health care workers, business people, managers, workers, or community members who are interested in dispute resolution and conflict processes. The program provides for the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for understanding conflict and resolving disputes. The certificate is interdisciplinary in nature and has two required components: a theory skill component and an applied component. The 6 hours of electives allow the student to pursue study of conflict and its resolution in the context of their specific discipline or profession.

### **Admission Criteria**

To be considered for the program, a student must have a 3.00 grade point average as well as submit a Graduate Application. Students who do not meet the normal admission requirements, but who show an indication of high promise, will be considered for admission to the certificate. Admission to the certificate program does not constitute admission to any other Missouri State University graduate program.

### **Required Courses**

Required courses vary depending on if the student has previously earned Missouri State's Undergraduate Certificate in Conflict and Dispute Resolution. The requirements for those with and without the Undergraduate Certificate are described below.

Requirements without the Undergraduate Certificate:

- COM 611 (3 hours): Conflict and Communication
- COM 621 (3 hours): Communication, Mediation and Negotiation
- COM 623 (3 hours): Contemporary Topics in Conflict
- COM 794 (3 hours): Conflict Internship
- Electives in Conflict or Cognate Area (6 hours)\*

Requirements with the Undergraduate Certificate:

- COM 623 (6 hours): Contemporary Topics in Conflict
- COM 794 (3 hours): Conflict Internship
- BUS 650 (3 hours): Negotiation, Mediation, and Arbitration in Business
- Electives in Conflict or Cognate Area (6 hours)\*

\* The electives component of the certificate allows students to focus on conflict processes that are specific to their professional area. These courses allow a more discipline-specific focus, and there are elective options in most disciplines. Electives will be approved by the Program Director.

## **Departmental Graduate Assistantship Program**

In the Department of Communication, we invest in our graduate students by offering financial support opportunities through graduate assistantships. These assistantships are renewable for up to two calendar years and include both a stipend (approximately a little over \$10,000) for nine months and a full tuition and fee-waiver scholarship.

*The combined assistantship offer of a stipend and tuition/fee waiver includes a total funding package worth approximately \$35,000 over two academic years.*

### **Departmental Application Requirement and Procedures**

The Department of Communication offers a limited number of graduate assistantships each academic year, thus assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis. Minimum eligibility requirements include the following:

1. Admission to the MA in Communication program (or application under review at the time of GA application).
2. A *minimum* cumulative undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0; an undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0 in your last 60 hours; or a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 on 9 or more hours of your most recent graduate course work. Please note that 3.0 is the minimum accepted GPA required by the Graduate College at Missouri State University. Given the competitive nature of our departmental assistantship program, a benchmark GPA recommendation is **3.25**.

Application for a graduate assistantship is a formal process, with a submission deadline of **February 1<sup>st</sup>** each year. A completed application consists of the following documentation:

1. A completed Application for Graduate Assistantship Form (found at: <https://communication.missouristate.edu/communicationgrad/forms.htm>)
2. Three (3) submitted Graduate Assistantship Letters of Recommendation. You must request that three references complete the relevant form found at the link above. You may find it helpful to send your references the link electronically.

### **Ongoing Eligibility Requirements**

#### **Departmental Requirements**

The following requirements must be met to maintain ongoing assistantship eligibility in the Department of Communication:

- Enroll in COM 710 – Contemporary Communication Education during the first semester of assistantship. This course will be applied toward the minimum 33 hours of graduate credit required for the MA in Communication degree.
- Attend all required departmental and university trainings.
- Attend regular meetings with GA supervisor(s) and participate in department-sponsored events relevant to GA assignment.

### **Graduate College Requirements**

The following requirements must be met to maintain ongoing assistantship eligibility in the Graduate College:

- Complete graduate course work towards your degree of at least six hours during each fall and spring semester of appointment. A student may hold an assistantship in the summer without being enrolled in coursework, as long as the student is enrolled in the subsequent fall semester. The student needs to enroll only in the number of hours necessary to complete their degree or certificate (could be as little as one (1) hour) during their last semester. Audited classes do not count.
- Work 20 hours per week on average.
- Begin work the week prior to the start of classes and to continue through graduation.
- Maintain a 3.0 GPA.
- Complete the following required compliance training for graduate assistants and submit the completion certificates to your supervisor within your first 30 days of employment:
  - Preventing Discrimination and Harassment;
  - Preventing Sexual Misconduct (Title IX);
  - FERPA - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (Revised Nov. 2020); and
  - Information Security.

Note: You cannot hold any additional on-campus positions other than your graduate assistantship during the time of your appointment.

### **International Student Requirements**

If you did not receive both your primary and secondary education in a nation or territory where English was the primary language, you must meet the following requirements to qualify for graduate assistantships with teaching assignments according to Missouri law (RSMo Section 170.012):

- All graduate students, who have not previously lived in the United States, shall be given and complete a cultural orientation to prepare them for the teaching assignment. This includes international students and permanent residents;
- A graduate student who did not receive both primary and secondary education in a nation or territory in which English is the primary language shall not be given a teaching appointment during his/her first semester of enrollment at any public institution of higher education in the state of Missouri; and
- A graduate student who did not receive both his/her primary and secondary education in a nation or territory in which English was the primary language shall be tested for their ability to communicate orally in English in a classroom setting prior to receiving a teaching appointment.

Oral English Proficiency examinations are to be coordinated by the hiring department and include a member of a committee appointed by the dean of the Graduate College.

## Types of Assistantships in the Department of Communication

Graduate Assistantship assignments are made at the discretion of the Head of the Department of Communication and are subject to change based on departmental need. Types of departmental assistantship assignments include teaching, administrative, and research assistantships.

### Teaching Assistantships

A teaching assistant is a graduate student entrusted with direct classroom instruction. Teaching assistants will complete a week-long orientation and training program conducted by the Director of the Basic Course the week before classes begin in the fall semester. New graduate teaching assistants are also required to enroll in COM 710 – Contemporary Communication Education during the first semester they hold an assistantship. COM 710 will apply toward the minimum 33 hours of graduate credit required for the degree.

The teaching responsibilities of assistants are generally associated with one of three undergraduate courses offered in the School of Communication Studies:

- **COM 115 – Fundamentals of Public Speaking.** A large, multi-section introductory course that fulfills an undergraduate general education requirement and is required for all communication majors. Teaching assistants are responsible for teaching assigned sections of this course as the instructor of record.
- **COM 209 – Survey of Communication Theory.** A large, multi-section introductory course. COM 209 is required for all communication majors. Students attend mass lectures and meet with individual graduate teaching assistants in laboratory sections.
- **COM 350 – The Rhetorical Tradition and Contemporary Applications.** A large, multi-section upper-division course. COM 350 is required for all communication majors. Students attend mass lectures and meet with individual graduate teaching assistants in laboratory settings.

### Administrative Assistantships

Graduate students who are awarded administrative assistantships generally serve in one of two capacities: as departmental assistant or forensics assistant.

- **Departmental assistant:** One form of administrative assistantship involves assisting the department with administrative concerns. Assisting with social media, planning and executing departmental events, and engaging in program development activities are typical responsibilities for administrative assistants with this assignment.
- **Forensics assistant:** A second kind of administrative assistantship is associated with the Holt V. Spicer Forensics Program. Forensics assistants are expected to work closely with the Director of Forensics and are typically assigned support responsibilities necessary to running a nationally competitive forensics program.

### Research Assistantships

Research assistantships are occasionally available in the Department of Communication. Research assistants are assigned to assist one or more faculty members with specific research projects. Typical assignments include literature or bibliographic searches, data collection or analysis, or assisting with report or manuscript preparation.

## **Other Assistantships at MSU**

Graduate assistantships are available through other departments and offices on campus. Current information on openings, deadlines, and application procedures for these assistantships are available from the Graduate College at the following link:

<https://graduate.missouristate.edu/CurrentStudents/Assistantships.htm>

## **Other Financial Aid Opportunities**

### **Scholarships**

The School of Communication Studies offers three scholarships available to graduate students. Please refer to the *Scholarship and Financial Aid Handbook* (available from the Financial Aid office) for details about departmental scholarships.

The three scholarships are:

- The Christina S. Drale Graduate Scholarship
- The Richard L. Stovall Graduate Scholarship
- The Berquist and Bourhis Engaged Scholar Award

The Graduate College offers two scholarships available to graduate students. Please refer to the Graduate College website for details about these scholarships as well as others.

The two scholarships are:

- The Aileen and Keith Ford Endowed Scholarship
- The Basil and JoAnn Boritzki Scholarship

### **Federal Financial Assistance**

Please see the *Graduate Catalog* for details about federal aid programs. Be aware that these programs are based on financial need. There is an application form to file to determine your eligibility for these programs. For several scholarship and financial aid considerations, you must submit information by March 1 for the upcoming academic year.

### **Student Employment Services**

Student Employment Services maintains an active file of permanent and temporary part-time jobs as well as a few full-time employment opportunities. The Student Employment Services office is in Shannon House, Room 113. For more information call (417) 836-5627 or visit the web site at <https://www.missouristate.edu/StudentEmp/>.

## **Support Systems for Graduate Students**

### **Advisement**

#### **Academic Advising**

In the Department of Communication, the role of academic advisor is primarily filled by the Director of Graduate Studies. Although all graduate faculty members are available to assist with your program of study, the director is your principal source of information with respect to registration, selecting elective course work, selecting a research option, college and departmental requirements for completing the degree, and choosing an advisor and committee members for satisfying the research requirement.

#### **Thesis, Seminar Paper, or Professional Project Advising**

At some point in your graduate program, usually your second or third semester, you will select a graduate faculty member to advise your thesis, seminar paper, or professional project. Although the Director of Graduate Studies is available to serve in this capacity when appropriate, graduate students almost always choose someone they have taken a graduate-level course with to advise a thesis, seminar paper, or professional project. Consider your choice of advisor carefully. It is usually best to select someone who has some expertise in the subject matter of your thesis or seminar paper and with whom you feel comfortable working.

#### **The Organization of Communication Graduate Students (OCGS)**

The purpose of the Organization of Communication Graduate Students (OCGS) is to connect graduate students in the discipline of communication to create comradery and to provide support systems for graduate students as they pursue their degrees. The organization hosts social, networking, and developmental events each long semester, in addition to their regularly scheduled meetings. You can find more information about OCGS and connect with other members on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/OCGS.MOState/>

#### **Graduate Student Senate**

The purpose of the Graduate Student Senate (GSS) is:

- To represent and advocate the interests of the graduate students of Missouri State University to the Dean of the Graduate College, the Graduate Council, the faculty, any others within the University whose actions or positions may affect the interests of graduate students, and any others outside of the University making decisions or taking positions that affect graduate students in their role as graduate students.
- To provide a channel of communication between graduate students and other members of the Missouri State University community.
- To encourage and facilitate interdisciplinary academic activities, graduate student organizations within each program, and inter-program social activities for graduate students. Graduate Student Senate is a university-sponsored body of graduate students composed of representatives from each of the departments or disciplines that offer a graduate degree at Missouri State University.

Find more information about GSS at: <https://organizations.missouristate.edu/gss/>

## **Contact Information**

Questions about graduate study in general may be directed to:

**Graduate College**

<https://graduate.missouristate.edu/>

(417) 836-4106

Questions about graduate study in the Department of Communication may be directed to:

**Dr. Carrisa Hoelscher**

Director of Graduate Studies

Craig Hall 361

[CHoelscher@missouristate.edu](mailto:CHoelscher@missouristate.edu)

(417) 836-6034

You may also request to speak with the Head of the Department of Communication:

**Dr. Brian Ott**

Department Head

Craig Hall 375

[BrianOtt@missouristate.edu](mailto:BrianOtt@missouristate.edu)

(417) 836-4423

If you wish, you are welcome to meet with other faculty members in the Department of Communication to discuss specific areas of study or research in communication.