

Communication Management Graduate Handbook

HANDBOOK FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS IN COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Master of Arts in Communication Management was created with the primary objective of providing advanced educational opportunities to professionals currently working in Jefferson and surrounding counties.

The Birmingham area is the communication center of the state. Obtaining such degrees typically stressed skills-based communication courses. Earning a graduate degree will often help as employees move into managerial-level positions in communication entities and departments. The M.A. in Communication Management will take skills-based employees to a higher level in which they learn methods for resolving practical and applied communication-based managerial problems in their workplaces based on theories and research. The program's emphasis on analysis will be of substantial value to students in a variety of workplaces.

Ideally, in the process of working through theories that can inform good practice, and applying those theories to various projects, the graduate students will become better equipped to help their communities by providing assistance for companies and governmental agencies.

Essentially, the M.A. in Communication Management strives to produce individuals who can solve communication-related problems that would have been more problematic or impossible for a communication practitioner with less experience.

GRADUATE HANDBOOK

This Handbook was written to provide prospective and current students in Communication Management at the University of Alabama at Birmingham with a detailed description of the Department and its policies. For additional information on graduate study at UAB consult the Graduate School Policies and Procedures available from the Graduate School.

In selecting a University for graduate study, it is important not only to consider such hard facts as the number of credits that must be earned, but also the spirit and academic philosophy of the Department.

This handbook is designed to convey both. The Department places its highest priority on academic ability, including both breadth and specialization within one's chosen area of study. The department emphasizes both quantitative and qualitative research skills and encourages students to develop an individualized program.

Prospective students should study the remainder of this Handbook and other information available through the UAB Graduate School and then determine whether this may be a program that will serve their aims. If it seems it might then contact the UAB Graduate School and initiate an application. All applications for graduate study at UAB must be initiated with the Graduate School using the appropriate links found on the Department's website. DO NOT mail transcripts or other required material directly to the department.

Each application must include the following:

- An "Application for Admission."
- An official transcript of your complete academic record from each undergraduate and graduate school you have attended. If you are currently attending an undergraduate program when you apply, you must send both a current and a final transcript after graduating.
- Your Official TOEFL score (or equivalent, i.e. IELTS) if you are an international student . GRE scores if you are applying for a GTA position. The GRE is not required for general admission
- Letters of recommendation from three persons who are capable of judging your potential for successful graduate study, research, and professional achievement. Though not required, it is usually a good idea to solicit letter from college professors who are familiar with your work. A standard form for these letters will be emailed directly to your references with instructions on how to submit their recommendations.
- An essay of intent.
- Resumes are optional

The UAB Graduate School only accepts on-line applications.

ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

It is the policy of the University to accept qualified applicants without regard to race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, or national origin. Each year the entering class of graduate students is selected from among applicants who have:

- Sufficient breadth of undergraduate training within and outside the field of communication and overall average of 3.0 or better (on a 4.0 scale). Students with major areas other than communication are encouraged to apply, but may be asked to take specific undergraduate or graduate courses to provide needed background. Applicants with an overall G.P.A. lower than 3.0 may be accepted on probationary status with the approval of the Department's Graduate Director and the UAB Graduate School.
- International students are expected to achieve a score on their TOEFL that demonstrates command of the English language in all areas (Reading, Speaking, Listening, etc.).
- Letters of recommendation that speak to the candidate's maturity, commitment to their studies and specific academic skill necessary for success.

PROBATIONARY ADMISSION

Students who have a substandard undergraduate record may be admitted on probationary status. The Graduate Director will notify applicants if they fall into this category and will monitor their academic progress. Probationary students must make a B in all of their classes in their first semester or they will be dismissed from the program. If they successfully complete their first semester their status will revert to normal.

Applicants may enroll as non-degree students with incomplete admissions materials and after completing no more than 12 hours of graduate study may be evaluated for admission to the degree program. No one may count more than 12 hours of graduate classes as non-degree student towards their program of study, though they are free to take as many as they please.

The Department welcomes applications from qualified foreign nations. International students wishing to enroll as graduate students should consult with the Graduate School for a checklist of material and applications needed.

It should be noted that admissions to the graduate program does not make one a candidate for and advanced degree. A student becomes a candidate for a degree upon acceptance of his or her Application of Candidacy by the Graduate School (See Graduate School Web site: <http://www.uab.edu/graduate/apply/acrobat/admitmas.pdf>). As is explained more fully below, the application is made once the student has completed his or her course work and has successfully passed a comprehensive examination (qualifying exam).

TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

At this time, the department does offer a limited number assistantships or fellowships. Students interested in a GTA position should contact the Graduate Director for further information. It is required that all GTA's take the GRE, even if they are already in the program.

TRANSFER CREDITS

The Department will accept up to six hours of appropriate graduate credit from other universities as credit towards a Master's Degree; only courses in which a grade of "B" or better will be considered for transfer. The student must negotiate decisions about transfer credits with their academic advisor and the Graduate Director.

ADVISING

A graduate degree is granted in recognition of high attainment in a particular field of study, rather than in simple recognition of a certain number of courses taken or years in residence. It therefore requires independence of spirit and accomplishment. Nevertheless, it also depends upon close collaboration between student and teacher.

As a first step in fostering a spirit of close cooperation with the faculty, new students should schedule a conference with the Graduate Advisor immediately upon arrival on campus. Within the first few weeks of the semester, students will be assigned, on a temporary basis, to a faculty advisor. The Graduate Advisor will help the new student learn about their new environment, and help plan a preliminary program of study. During the first semester here, one's preliminary advisor should be a principle source of information about the Department and the University.

During the first year in residence students will have ample opportunity to become acquainted with the faculty and to learn of their particular interests and abilities. By the end of their first year students should select an "academic advisor" from among the Graduate Faculty in the department. It is the student's responsibility to determine the faculty member will be effective in fulfilling their educational goals. Many factors, particularly the large number of advisees he or she already may have, may make it impossible for a given faculty member to accept this role. While it is entirely up to the individual faculty member whether they want to take on a given advisee, there should be little difficulty in finding an academic advisor appropriate to the student's plan of study.

The academic advisor is charged with the following responsibilities:

- To help the student devise a program of study and complete the “Program of Study” worksheet. The Graduate Advisor must approve this worksheet.
- To assist the student in forming an Advisory Committee to help develop a Final Project (either Plan I or II). It is the student’s responsibility to obtain the consent of the faculty members who will serve on the committee. The Advisory Committee must be formed before the student takes his or her comprehensive Qualifying Exam. For Plan I students the committee will include their advisor, one other member from inside the department and one UAB faculty member outside the Department of Communication Studies. For Plan II students the committee must consist of at least three faculty members: The Student’s Academic advisor, two other faculty members from the department. All committee members MUST have an appointment to the UAB Graduate Faculty. The Graduate Director and Department Chair will be De Facto members of all committees.
- To prepare and administer, with the help of the Advisory Committee, a comprehensive examination. Members of the committee from the department will submit exam questions. The outside member may submit questions, but is not required to do so. This examination will be read and evaluated by the Advisory Committee.
- To assist, in consultation with the Advisory Committee, in developing the student’s Plan II final project or I. And chair the final defense of this project.
- To keep the department, the Graduate Director, and the Graduate School informed about the student’s progress.

Upon mutual consent, a student may change advisors, or members of the committee. The Graduate Director should be notified if the committee membership changes for any reason. No record of the reason for change will be created.

The academic advisor’s major function is to assist by way of providing advice.

PLEASE NOTE: While the advisor will assist the student in achieving his or her academic goals, it is the student’s ultimate responsibility to make sure that he or she is in compliance with all University and Departmental policies.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The Master of Art's requires successful completion of a minimum of 36 semester hours of graduate work, with a grade of B or higher in all classes, completion of a comprehensive examination and completion of a Plan I or II research project. Specifically the M.A. requires:

1. Completion of additional 36 hours of graduate classes with the following restrictions:

- Only classes where a grade of A or B may be counted towards the student's plan of study.
- Up to 6 hours may be taken outside of the department, with prior approval of the student's advisor and the Department's Graduate Director.
- 6 hours of Plan I (CM699) if the student chooses the thesis option.
- Up to 6 hours of project hours (CM696) if the student chooses the non-thesis project option . Please note that Plan II are not required to take any project hours and may fulfill their hour requirement through coursework alone.
- The student's committee and the Graduate Advisor must approve all programs of study. All nontraditional classes, (i.e., Internships, Independent studies, Directed Studies) may only be taken by graduate students who have completed 24 Graduate Hours or more, are in good standing and have prior written approval of his or her advisor, the faculty member directing the project, the Graduate Director and the Department Chair.

2. Successful completion of a comprehensive Qualifying Exam on the student's course work and research interests.

3. Successful completion of a Plan I or II Proposal defense (not required for Plan II students who are not doing a project, rather satisfying all hour requirements through course work).

4. Successful completion of a Plan I or II research project. The student will receive 6 hours of credit for a Plan I Thesis (CM699), or up to 6 hours of credit for a Plan II project (CM698). In any case, the student must successfully complete 36 graduate semester hours

5. Timely observance of all Graduate School requirements, including application to Candidacy, Application for Degree and requirements for final format of Thesis (Plan I).

APPLICATION TO CANDIDACY

Since it is necessary that one's academic work culminate in a program of study, each student must choose an Academic Advisor. After the advisor has been determined, the student and the advisor

together propose the faculty member within and outside the department who will be asked to join the student's Advisory Committee. With the help of the Academic Advisor and the Advisory Committee the student then proposes a program objective. The Advisory Committee then designs a written exam that reflects the student's course work and research objectives. Departmental committee members will submit questions and the outside member may (but is not required to) submit questions. The Academic Advisor will then administer the written exam to the student and the Advisory Committee will evaluate it.

The Advisory Committee may make one of the following evaluations:

1. The student passes and is admitted to M.A. Candidacy.
2. The student does not successfully pass the examination, but is given a conditional pass providing the student provides further work that demonstrates their abilities and knowledge. This may include taking further course work. This option should be used if the Committee does not feel that the student's abilities were accurately demonstrated on the test.
3. The student does not successfully pass the examination and must then retake all or part of the exam. This option is to be used when it is clear that the student is ill prepared to be admitted to candidacy by their performance on the exam.

If the student does not pass a second a second attempt and is not admitted to Candidacy. His or her status as a graduate student in the department is then terminated.

Once a student has been admitted to Candidacy, then he or she may begin working on their final Plan I or II research project.

PROPOSAL

Prior to beginning their Plan I or II Project, M.A. candidates must present to their Advisory Committee a research proposal.

A Plan I (Thesis) proposal should be for original research conducted by the candidate. All committee members must approve the proposal. Once approved the student should begin their project. If the project involves the use of human subjects then the student should submit the appropriate documents to the UAB IRB. The student may submit to the IRB before presenting the proposal to the committee

with the understanding that the committee may require changes to the research design that will necessitate that the student resubmits the new design to the IRB.

The committee does not necessarily have to meet as a group to approve the proposal, but each member must sign off on the proposal.

A Plan II (non-thesis) proposal should be a project that demonstrates to the Advisor that student is capable of conducting Master's level work. This project may take multiple forms, and must be negotiated with, and approved of, by the advisory committee. Ultimately, what differentiates Plan I from Plan II is that plan II has an applied, pragmatic focus using theory to illuminate real-world issues. Options include, but are not limited to, an organizational analysis or audit, a communication manual, a case study, or the construction of a consulting plan.

A Plan II option may be satisfied through additional coursework. In such cases no proposal is required. This Plan also requires approval of the committee.

After the approval of the proposal the student shall submit a timetable for completing the project that shall be approved by the advisor. The timetable should reflect whatever milestones deemed reasonable by the advisor (i.e. data collection, literature review, fist draft, etc.). In any case, all projects will conform to the timetables expressed below and in the graduate catalog.

DEFENSE OF FINAL PROJECT I (THESIS)

All Plan I projects need to be approved by a majority of the Advisory Committee after an oral defense of the final project. A Defense of Thesis will be scheduled and advertised by the Academic Advisor. The defense will be open to departmental graduate students and interested UAB Faculty. After the defense the committee, by majority vote (at a minimum, your advisor and one other member of the committee), may elect to:

1. Accept the Thesis, as is, at which point the Candidate applies for their degree.
2. Conditionally accept the Thesis contingent upon certain changes being made to the Thesis. Once the changes have been approved the Candidate applies for their degree.
3. Reject the Thesis. The student may resubmit a new proposal and begin a second project.

4. Reject the Thesis a second time at which point his or her status as a graduate student in the department is then terminated.

Once the Thesis is accepted the Candidate must prepare the final document according to the standards of the UAB Graduate School. They may then apply for their degree.

Note: Plan II (non-thesis) defenses do not require a formal oral defense of the project, but the advisor and committee members may accept the Candidate's final work with the same options of the Thesis defense.

TIMETABLES

All Plan I or II projects may not be defended within four months of the proposal being approved by the student's committee.

All Plan I projects must be submitted in their final form according to the timetables set forth by the Graduate School. The Graduate School must approve all theses before the student may graduate (see graduate catalog).

All plan II projects must be submitted for final committee approval at least one month before the end of the semester in which the student graduates.

SATISFACTORY PROGRESS TOWARDS DEGREE

To be considered in good academic standing, the student must meet the following criteria:

1. Maintain a B or better in all graduate classes.
2. Must have no more than 6 outstanding hours of incomplete ("I") grades.

Additionally, students admitted on probation to the program must at the very least receive a "B" in the first 12 hours of their course work. Additional requirements may be placed on students who are admitted on probation including taking additional course work.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The UAB Graduate Handbook clearly state the nature of academic misconduct. The Department of Communication Studies fully supports the idea that cheating undermines the purpose of education and the credibility of the university, its programs and its graduates. To this end, a single substantiated

finding of academic misconduct will be considered grounds for immediate expulsion from this program.
Procedures for determination of academic misconduct

It is the responsibility of the professor making the claim of misconduct to make a formal written charge to the Graduate Director (Unless it is the Graduate Director, who then makes the charge to the Department Chair). The Director will convene an ad hoc committee of three graduate faculty members. The faculty member who brought the charge may not sit as a member of this committee. The students will be allowed to review all documents in support of the charge and respond to them in writing. Upon review of a first offence the committee may find: 1) No academic misconduct took place, 2) Academic misconduct took place, and the student should receive an F in the class in question, and a record of misconduct be placed in his or her file, or 3) Academic misconduct took place and the student should be expelled from the program.

Upon review of a second offence the committee may find: 1) No academic misconduct took place, or 2) Academic misconduct took place and the student should be expelled from the program. The committee's decision will be written and forwarded to the Graduate Director, with copies to; the student, the Department Chair, the student's advisor, the Graduate Dean, and the faculty member who initially brought the charge. The Graduate Director will then take appropriate action to comply with the committee's decision.

No departmental review will take place once the committee has made its determination, but the student may appeal to the Graduate Appeals Board.