**New Mexico State University**

**Department of**

**Communication Studies**

**Graduate Student Handbook**

**August 2023**

The Master of Arts in Communication Studies provides students with a social scientific approach to the study of human interaction, using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Our curriculum is designed to explore how communication takes place interpersonally, within organizations and groups, within political systems, and among cultures.

All graduate students take courses in communication theory and research methods as well as interpersonal, organizational, political, and/or cultural communication. We also offer courses on topics such as communication technology, family communication, health communication, leadership, persuasion, nonverbal communication, sports communication, and strategic communication.

The program offers a wide variety of courses, allowing students in the program an opportunity to select topics pursuant to their particular interests. In addition to courses, students can obtain practical experience by participating in professional activities offered by the department, for example, graduate teaching assistantships, research, colloquia, and internships.

**Degree Requirements**

The department offers a thesis, non-thesis, and applied project options in its Masters of Arts program. All options call for a minimum of 36 credits, which may include courses from outside the department. The thesis option requires at least 30 credits of coursework, six credits of thesis (COMM 599), and an oral defense of the thesis and coursework. The non-thesis option requires 36 credits of coursework plus a six-hour comprehensive written examination followed by an oral defense. The applied project option requires at least 30 hours of coursework, six credits of applied project (COMM 598), and an oral defense of the project. All options require a minimum of 30 credit hours of Communication courses.

Graduate students are required to take COMM 505: Quantitative Research Methods or COMM 506: Qualitative Research Methods, and COMM 583: Seminar in Theories of Communication in **their** **first year of enrollment**. These courses serve as a foundation for other coursework in Communication Studies. Students are also expected to take at least one other core content course each semester in their first year of enrollment (see below).

Graduate students can take undergraduate courses listed at the 450 level or higher. Graduate students must take graduate-level versions (500 vs. 400 level) of any dual listed course when offered. However, the Graduate School only allows two courses (6 hours) at the undergraduate level to count toward the M.A. degree in Communication Studies.

**Master's Degree Program**

 Both of the following courses are required (6 hours):

* COMM 505 Quantitative Research Methods **or**

COMM 506 Qualitative Research Methods 3 hrs.

* COMM 583 Seminar in Theories of Communication 3 hrs.

 Three of the following four core content courses are required (9 hours):

* COMM 540 Seminar in Political Communication 3 hrs.
* COMM 570 Seminar in Organizational Communication 3 hrs.
* COMM 576 Seminar in Communication and Culture 3 hrs.
* COMM 584 Seminar in Interpersonal Communication 3 hrs.

Communication COMM Electives

Electives in Other Departments (graduate levels; numbered 450+) 3-6 hrs.

Applied Project Option: COMM 598 Applied Project 6 hrs.

Thesis Option: COMM 599 Thesis 6 hrs.

Non-Thesis Option: Additional Graduate COMM Electives 6 hrs.

Thirty-six credit hours are required for the degree, 30 of which must be in Communication.

**Transfer of Credits**

Students who have previously taken graduate-level courses (either at NMSU in another department or at another university) can transfer and apply up to 6 credit hours toward the Communication Studies M.A. degree. However, according to the NMSU graduate school, transfer credits cannot be more than seven years old from the time you begin your graduate coursework at NMSU. The Department Head must approve all transfer credits.

Transfer credits will NOT be approved for COMM 505: Quantitative Research Methods, COMM 506 Qualitative Research Methods, or COMM 583: Seminar in Communication Theories. These courses must be taken at NMSU in the Department of Communication Studies.

**Grades and Grading**

Communication Studies graduate students are expected to apply themselves intensively to studying the material covered by the courses they are enrolled in. Accordingly, a high level of performance is required. A Communication Studies Graduate student must maintain an overall GPA of at least 3.0 in all graduate and undergraduate courses taken as a graduate student at NMSU. All graduate COMM courses must have a final grade of B- or better for the student to proceed into comprehensive exams, thesis, or earning the degree. Courses transferred from other programs at NMSU will be included in determining a cumulative GPA. Grades from other universities or colleges will not be used to calculate GPA.

Although C grades earned at New Mexico State University may be counted toward the requirements for an advanced degree, this is not considered acceptable graduate-level performance in Communication Studies courses. Courses in which students earn a C, D, or F are considered failing grades and may not be counted toward a graduate degree. However, such grades are calculated in determining the GPA. COMM classes in which a student has not received a B- or better must be retaken for the courses to count toward the M.A. in Communication Studies degree.

**Graduate Faculty**

* Greg G. Armfield (Ph.D. 2004, University of Missouri-Columbia). Professor of Organizational Communication. Specific Interests: Organizational Culture and Communication and Sports.
* Jeanne Flora (Ph.D. 1998, University of Kansas). Professor of Interpersonal Communication. Specific Interests: Family Communication, Relationship Development, and Maintenance.
* Anne Hubbell (Ph.D. 2000, Michigan State University). Professor of Organizational and Health Communication and Associate Dean of the Honors College. Specific Interests: Trust and Deception in the Organization and Health Disparities among Minorities.
* Sangwon Lee (Ph.D. 2020, University of Wisconsin-Madison). Assistant Professor of Political Communication and New Media Technologies. Specific Interests: Misinformation, polarization, and social movement.
* Gabriela I. Morales (Ph.D. 2017, University of New Mexico). Assistant Professor of Culture and Health Communication. Specific Interests: Health Disparities among Minoritized Populations, Underrepresented Population Health Narratives, DEI, and Environmental Health.
* Duli Shi (Ph.D. 2022, University of Maryland). Assistant Professor of Strategic and Organizational Communication. Specific Interests: Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Social Advocacy, and Social Media.

**Selecting an Advisor**

Students are assigned a temporary faculty advisor, the Department Head, as soon as they are admitted to the program. The role of the temporary faculty advisor is to orient new students to the Communication Studies department, provide support and encouragement during the first semester of coursework, and guide students toward their academic goals.

During the student's second semester in the program, they will select a permanent advisor. Students should consult with the faculty member they would like as their new advisor to determine their availability and fit. The permanent advisor's role is to provide support and encouragement throughout the rest of the student's program and to chair the student's comprehensive oral exam OR thesis/special project prospectus and defense meetings. Students are encouraged to select a permanent advisor with similar academic interests as they do before they begin their second academic year. Each student must follow their advisor's advice regarding graduate courses. Failing to follow their advisor's direction is a possible means for dismissal from the program or a forced advisor change.

**It is NOT the responsibility of the advisor to track the thesis or non-thesis deadlines. Graduate School deadlines can be found on the** [**Graduate School Website**](https://gradschool.nmsu.edu/)**.**

**Application for Degree**

The student must file an "Application for Degree Form" via [my.nmsu.edu](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cshiduli%5CDownloads%5Cmy.nmsu.edu) and pay the graduation fee for the semester the student intends to graduate. The Graduate School publishes deadlines for graduation each semester.

**Thesis Option**

Some students in our department choose the thesis option, allowing them to pursue original research in their area of interest. Students selecting the thesis option will complete at least 30 credit hours of courses COMM, 6 hours of thesis work (COMM 599), and at least three credits of coursework outside the department, totaling 36 credit hours.

Students must use the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) in preparing the thesis proposal. It is the responsibility of the student to learn APA, not the advisor's responsibility to proofread and edit a student's manuscript. The completed thesis must also conform to guidelines established by the Graduate School's Guidelines for [Preparing a Thesis or Dissertation,](https://eltnmsu.sharepoint.com/sites/GraduateSchool/SitePages/Master%27s-Thesis-Students.aspx) published annually. Whenever human subjects are to be involved as research participants, the NMSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is required. [CITI training](https://research.nmsu.edu/RIC/IRB/Training.html) must be completed, and [IRB approval](https://research.nmsu.streamlyne.org/simplesaml/module.php/multiauth/selectsource.php?AuthState=_e9cb09c964647aa48af746d470de55de9d6007a6c1%3Ahttps%3A%2F%2Fresearch.nmsu.streamlyne.org%2Fsimplesaml%2Fsaml2%2Fidp%2FSSOService.php%3Fspentityid%3Dhttps%253A%252F%252Fresearch.nmsu.streamlyne.org%26RelayState%3Dhttps%253A%252F%252Fresearch.nmsu.streamlyne.org%252FprotocolProtocol.do%26cookieTime%3D1669870449) (log-in with SSO) must be received before data collection.

Writing a thesis is a big undertaking and involves continuous engagement with your advisor. In most cases, if you fail to defend your proposal before the end of your first semester, your advisor will have you switch to a comprehensive exam track. Consult your APA manual for examples of guidelines and chapter breakdown or organization. You can also complete theses in our department on [ProQuest](https://www.proquest.com/pqdtlocal1006289/advanced?accountid=12810) through the NMSU library. (If you are not on campus, you may need to sign in using the VPN). You can limit your search to the Department of Communication Studies. Additionally, an older bound thesis can be found on COMM 302. You may borrow these copies, but please return them.

**Advisors and Graduate Committee**

When a student has chosen a research area to pursue the thesis, the student should ask a graduate faculty member in the appropriate area of specialty to serve as the student's thesis advisor. This faculty member will serve as the student's course advisor as well. The thesis advisor and student work together on a timeline for completion of the thesis.

The student and advisor will select a graduate faculty committee comprised of one additional graduate faculty member from the Department of Communication Studies and one graduate faculty member from outside the department to serve as the Dean's Representative. Additional internal and/or external faculty can serve as committee members with the student and advisor's agreement and approval. The student should talk in person or through Zoom with potential committee members to ascertain their willingness and availability to serve on the thesis committee. Thesis committee members will be present at the prospectus and oral defense meetings. We do not encourage more than four faculty members to attend these meetings.

# **Thesis Prospectus Meeting**

This meeting will be held with the student's committee to approve the thesis prospectus. The thesis prospectus and the thesis prospectus meeting serve as preparation before the student starts to collect data for the thesis research. The prospectus usually includes the information that will serve as the basis for the first few chapters of the thesis. At a minimum, the proposal should address the first three chapters of a traditional five-chapter structure:

* Chapter 1 – Introduction: Introduction and rationale for the research
* Chapter 2 – Literature Review: A review of the relevant research literature and theory guiding the study; A statement of research questions and/or hypotheses and the rationale for the choices made.
* Chapter 3 – Methodology: A detailed description of the proposed research methods and proposed data analysis techniques.
* Chapter 4 – Results: A report of your findings.
* Chapter 5 – Discussion, limitations, and conclusion.

Although prospectuses vary in length, the average manuscript should be sufficiently detailed to demonstrate a grasp of the relevant research literature and demonstrates a thoughtful approach to the research method proposed for the student's study. Please note: It is not appropriate to submit an IRB form before the prospectus meeting unless the student has approval from all committee members.

In consultation with the advisor and committee members, a two-hour prospectus meeting will be scheduled no later than finals week of the semester prior to graduation. The student should consult with their advisor on requirements for the prospectus. The student is responsible for scheduling the meeting at a time convenient for all committee members and reserving a room through the department administrative assistant. The student will deliver the prospectus to each committee member at least two weeks (10 working days) before the meeting.

There are three possible outcomes following the evaluation of the thesis prospectus by the faculty committee: approval, approval contingent upon recommended modifications, or rejection. It is common for a student to receive approval contingent upon changes recommended; it is uncommon for a student's thesis prospectus to be rejected.

Once your committee approves your thesis committee approves your thesis, you may continue your research, including the IRB proposal. An IRB proposal cannot be submitted until your committee has approved your thesis proposal. Students who fail to defend their thesis proposal in the first semester may have to complete the program by taking comprehensive exams at their advisor's request.

**Organization and Content of the Thesis**

All theses must conform to guidelines established by the Graduate School as discussed in the [Preparing a Thesis or Dissertation](https://eltnmsu.sharepoint.com/sites/GraduateSchool/SitePages/Master%27s-Thesis-Students.aspx) document reference earlier. Keeping this in mind, the typical thesis will have the following [sections](https://eltnmsu.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/r/sites/GraduateSchool/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B514D7F2F-7E00-43D4-BBE6-139E532A91D1%7D&file=3.Master-Sample-Thesis-Formatted-Word-File-3-11.doc&action=default&mobileredirect=true):

* + - * Title Page
			* Acceptance/Approval page
			* Acknowledgments (optional)
			* Vita or Resume
			* Abstract
			* Table of Contents
			* List of Tables with page references (required if present)
			* List of Figures with page references (required if present)
				+ Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale
				+ Chapter 2: Literature Review and Hypothesis(es) and/or Research Question(s)
				+ Chapter 3: Methodology
				+ Chapter 4: Results/Findings
				+ Chapter 5: Discussion and Evaluation in Relation to the Literature and Conclusion
			* Appendix(ces)
			* References

# **Oral Defense Meeting**

Upon completion of the thesis and with the advisor's approval, students will send their thesis to the committee and schedule a two-hour oral defense meeting with the thesis committee. Students are responsible for contacting all committee members to determine the best time for the meeting and then schedule the thesis defense through the department administrative assistant. Students are expected to give the committee 10 to 14 days to read the thesis before holding the meeting. During this two-hour meeting, the student is questioned about the completed thesis and M.A. courses. Students must pass the defense to graduate.

Thesis deadlines are earlier in the semester than Project and comprehensive exam deadlines. Typically, a thesis deadline is in early November or April. Students are responsible for meeting all Graduate School procedures and deadlines. Students should submit the Master's Final Examination Form with all necessary signatures to the Graduate School at least ten working days before their oral defense.

**Applied Project Option**

Some students in our department choose the applied project option, which allows them to pursue a specially designed project under the direction of a faculty member whose expertise and research interests are aligned. Students selecting the applied project option will complete at least 30 credit hours of courses in Communication, three credits outside of the department, 6 hours of applied project work (COMM 598), and 36 total credit hours. In most cases, if you fail to defend your project proposal before the end of your first semester, your advisor will have you switch to a comprehensive exam track.

**Advisors and Graduate Committee**

When a student has chosen an area of coursework to apply as a project, the student should ask a graduate faculty member in the appropriate area of specialty to serve as the student's project advisor. This faculty member will serve as the student's advisor and work with the student on a timeline for project completion. All full-time students are expected to complete their project proposal before the end of their first semester of project hours.

The student and advisor will select a graduate faculty committee comprised of one additional graduate faculty member from the Department of Communication Studies and one graduate faculty member from outside the department to serve as the Dean's Representative. Additional internal and/or external faculty can serve as committee members with the student advisor's agreement and/or approval. The student should talk in person or through Zoom with potential committee members to ascertain their willingness and availability to serve on the project committee. These committee members will be present at the prospectus meeting and the oral defense meeting. We do not encourage more than four faculty members to attend these meetings.

Students must use the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association in preparing written aspects of the applied project proposal. The completed project must also conform to the Department of Communication Studies guidelines below.

**Guidelines for Applied Project**

1. The applied project consists of a plan and implementation of the plan designed to address a real-world problem or issue related to course material.
2. The candidate will clearly define the problem or issue they wish to address through the applied project.
3. Students will investigate and report past and current methods or practices used to solve the problem.
4. Because the Applied Project involves a systematic study and application, candidates must review scholarly literature related to their inquiry.
5. The plan of action will include the actual materials to be used in either concept or final form, a timeline and plan for their application, and a method for tracking the results of the application.
6. The project will close with a discussion and evaluation of the action plan, including reflections on theory/literature and practical implementation/feedback.

# **Choosing a Topic and Project Prospectus Meeting**

It is recommended that a topic for the project be determined at the beginning of the student's last year in the M.A. program. In consultation with the advisor, the student should submit a proposal introducing the project, a brief literature review on the topic, an action plan describing the project to be developed and applied, and the expected outcomes of the application (i.e., the potential for implementation). See sections one through six below.

Candidates may choose to create an Applied Project as part of their responsibilities in their current place of employment. In this case, some elements of the plan may be developed in collaboration with the candidate's coworkers. If this is the case, the candidate should identify which parts will be under their supervision and which elements they will be directly responsible for.

**Organization and Content of the paper should be as follows:**

* + - * Title Page
			* Acceptance/Approval page
			* Acknowledgments (optional)
			* Table of Contents
			* List of Tables with page references (required if present)
			* List of Figures with page references (required if present)
			* Student Resume
			* Body of Report:
				+ Section 1 Introduction and Rationale for Project
				+ Section 2 Review of Relevant Literature
				+ Section 3 Situation Analysis and Target Audience Analysis
				+ Section 4 Goals and Objectives
				+ Section 5 Description of Deliverable to be Applied (including any sample material)
				+ Section 6 Recommended timeline and plan for implementation
				+ Section 7 Evaluation
				+ Section 8 Discussion in Relation to Literature and Conclusion
			* References
			* Appendices

In consultation with the advisor and committee members, a two-hour prospectus meeting will be scheduled no later than finals week of the semester before graduation. The student is responsible for scheduling the meeting at a time convenient for all committee members and reserving a room through the department administrative assistant. The student will deliver the prospectus to each committee member at least two weeks (10 working days) before the meeting.

**Expectations for Writing and Planning**

A candidate should expect multiple drafts or revisions of their work. The written project should conform to the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Careful time management should be exercised to prepare the revised drafts. Careful time management is also expected to appropriately apply the project according to a timeline that allows time to reflect and report on the application.

**Presentation and Defense**

Project sections one through six of the projects must be presented by the end of the first semester of student hours. This is similar to a thesis proposal. A typical project proposal should be more than 20 pages, double-spaced, not including references. Once the student's committee approves the project, the student can continue. Students who fail to defend their project in the first semester may have to complete the program by taking comprehensive exams at their advisor's request.

The final project shall consist of all the sections detailed above. After the candidate has approval from their advisor, the student should again consult their committee to schedule the project defense meeting. A final project draft should be delivered to all committee members no later than two weeks before the defense date. The project must be defended by the last week of classes in the semester prior to when the student wishes to graduate. All committee members should agree upon the defense date. Keep in mind faculty commitments during the last week of the term, so plan defense dates early. Once you and your committee have agreed on a date, complete the Master's Final Exam form and submit it to the graduate school at least two weeks before your defense. It is the student's responsibility to meet all dates established and published by the graduate school.

The candidate will present their work for 15-20 minutes, followed by the committee's questions and discussion. The committee will then deliberate and provide feedback to the candidate regarding the project. At this time, the project may be approved, or the committee will request specific revisions to the project. Rarely will a project not be allowed to proceed. The entire defense will last no more than two hours.

Students are responsible for meeting all Graduate School procedures and deadlines. Students should submit the Master's Final Examination Form with all necessary signatures to the Graduate School at least ten working days before their oral defense. Deadlines can be located on the Graduate School Website.

**Non-Thesis Option**

Students opting for the non-thesis or comprehensive exam track will complete at least 36 hours of coursework. A minimum of 30 hours of coursework must be completed in Communication Studies and three credits outside the department.

The comprehensive examination allows the student to demonstrate an ability to integrate broad and specific knowledge of the discipline of Communication. Integration, roughly, involves reasoned synthesis, application, and communication from a social science perspective of knowledge gained from empirical research, theory, and even practical experience in the discipline of Communication. The comprehensive exam is an outcome measure of the graduate program curriculum. We are assessing to what degree you can demonstrate content knowledge in Communication, thinking grounded in theory, and critical thinking about concepts and issues in Communication. Students will be able to demonstrate such abilities in their written and oral responses.

# **Advisors and Graduate Committee**

Students will work with their advisor to choose a graduate faculty committee comprised of their advisor and, at least one additional faculty member from the Department of Communication Studies, and one graduate faculty member from a related area (usually a faculty member from whom the student has taken courses) to serve as the Deans Representative. All faculty members must have Graduate Faculty Status from the Graduate School. This committee will write exam questions and be present at a two-hour oral defense meeting of the exam answers and coursework. We do not encourage more than four faculty members to attend these meetings.

# **Written Examination and Oral Defense**

During the last semester of residence, students will undergo a comprehensive six-hour written examination over six course areas they have studied. Students will meet with their advisor to determine areas they will be examined (at least one hour in Communication Theory and one hour in Research Methods is required). It is common for students to receive rewrites on portions of their original answers. A student can only receive ONE rewrite per question. If a student fails the rewrite, the student fails the comprehensive exam and fails to graduate with an M.A. in Communication Studies that semester. To retest, the student must enroll in the following (i.e., fall or spring) semester and carry a minimum of 3 credit hours of Communication Studies courses to take their written examinations a second time and potentially proceed to an oral defense. If a student fails the written exams a second time, they must appeal to the Department Head to continue in the examination process. Otherwise, the student fails to graduate with an M.A. in Communication Studies. Students must complete the written portion of the exam by passing all written questions before scheduling the two-hour oral defense. During this two-hour oral defense meeting, students are questioned on their written exams and all coursework. Students must pass this oral defense as a requirement for graduation. If a student fails the oral examination, regardless of the outcome of the written exam, the student fails to graduate with an M.A. in Communication Studies.

# **Criteria for Evaluating Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination Answers**

The results of the total comprehensive examination (both written and oral) will be evaluated by the student's committee.

* Answers should respond to the question. Regardless of the other criteria, answers should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the important issues presented in the question.
* Answers should present accurate knowledge of communication literature and theory. Answers should demonstrate that the student's knowledge base has both depth (i.e., employing of specific literature with appropriate citations) and breadth (i.e., articulating conceptual considerations).
* Answers should exhibit the integrative thinking indicative of a social scientist. The response should be thoughtful in that it integrates empirical thinking. Answers should demonstrate critical thinking rather than simple rote information.
* Answers should be organized and communicate ideas clearly and coherently.

# **Steps in Completing Your Comprehensive Exams**

1. The student meets with their advisor to discuss written/oral examination procedures. The student and advisor put together a committee of two or three Communication Studies graduate faculty members (this includes the student's advisor) and one graduate faculty member from a related discipline (usually, the student has taken coursework from this person). The student must ask the faculty members to write one or two exam questions and/or be on the committee. Not all question writers have to serve on the committee. **Note: A grade of B- is required in ALL COMM courses. Overall, you must have a GPA of 3.0 or better before exams are planned.**
2. The student and advisor will agree on a "grouping" of the student's work by content areas and/or faculty members. One hour must cover "Theories," while the second hour must cover "Methods." The student and their advisor will decide on the other four (one-hour questions). The student and advisor may seek questions from other faculty for courses not represented by faculty members on the committee. The length of the written exams shall be a maximum of six questions for six hours total. All questions have to be answered within a 10-business day timeframe.
3. The advisor will compile the breakdown of the committee members, subject areas, and writing times (length) into a memorandum, with a copy going to each faculty questioner and the department administrative assistant.
4. Students may confer with each faculty member for whom they are writing. The student and faculty member may discuss the subject areas for the questions, and the faculty member may suggest areas of concentration for the student. The faculty member should make sure the student understands if any materials (e.g., outlines, articles, etc.) other than the question are allowed during the exam and that approval of additional materials is needed by a specific deadline. Most faculty members do not allow supplemental materials. Be forewarned that if a faculty member allows supplemental materials, those must be approved in advance, or the department administrative assistant will not allow the material during the examination. Do not expect to get supplemental material approved by a faculty member less than 24 hours before your scheduled examination time.
5. Students typically schedule their written exams about the 10th week of their final semester and complete them within two weeks. Any rewrites should be completed as soon as possible after the initial ten working day (two weeks) testing period. Rewrites occur often, and the student must allow enough time for faculty members to grade (typically a week) and students to rewrite their questions. The committee should also be given two weeks to prepare for the student's defense.
6. Students should determine the exam schedule with their advisor, not the administrative assistant. Students will answer the exam questions using a departmental laptop. After the student and advisor agree on an exam schedule, the student should schedule a room and computer with the department administrative assistant. If the administrative assistant determines the room or computer is unavailable, the student should consult with their advisor on a modified schedule.
7. The student must complete the "Master's Final Examination Form," found on the [Graduate School Website](https://gradschool.nmsu.edu/Current%20Students/Graduate%20Forms.html) under Current Students/Graduate Forms. Before completing the form, the students must confirm the oral defense's date, time, and location. This form must be submitted to the Graduate School no later than ten working days before the oral exam.
8. Faculty members will submit their questions for the written exam to the advisor at least three working days before the exam. The questions should be clearly marked as to the length of time the student has to answer and indicate what (if any) additional items the student can use during the exam.
9. The advisor will prepare each exam question and attach a cover sheet (i.e., indicating the name of the student, the name of the questioner, the length of time the student has to complete the question, and indicate any additional materials the student can use during the exam) to each question for the department administrative assistant to.
10. The department administrative assistant will distribute the questions according to the advisor's instructions. Students can keep a copy of their answers. The original copies of the questions and answers will be returned to the questionnaire for grading, and a copy of the original question and answer will be returned to the student's advisor.
11. The questioners will evaluate each question as "pass," "rewrite," or "fail" and will mark that assessment on the cover sheet. Questioners will return the cover sheets to the advisor within one week after receiving the student's answer.
12. Before proceeding with the oral examination, students must receive a "pass" for all parts of the written exam. Any portion of the exam given a "rewrite" must be made up by rewriting that portion of the exam to achieve an evaluation of "pass" for that portion. Only one rewrite is permitted per each original question. If a student fails a rewrite, then the student fails that question. If a student fails a question, they are not allowed to progress to the oral defense and will fail to graduate with an M.A. in Communication Studies that semester. The student must retake all questions the following spring or fall semester while concurrently enrolled in a minimum of 3 credit hours of coursework in the Department of Communication Studies.
13. The oral examination will be held with all committee members present and will typically last 2 hours. The advisor will chair the oral examination. The Dean's Representative (the outside faculty member) will submit the ballots and the final report to the Graduate School, per graduate school policy.
14. During the exam, student notes are restricted to their exam answers, blank paper, and only what was allowed during the exam (the questions, approved outlines, and/or articles). No other course notes, study notes, research articles, or papers are allowed.
15. Upon completion of the oral examination, one copy of the student's answers will be kept in the student's file in the department office.

**Sample Program**

Below is a sample program for all three (thesis, project, or non-thesis) options. The example is not an exact representation of a past student's program. This schedule is a composite model to illustrate the balance between required COMM courses and other courses that enhance a program of study. Most courses listed below are offered in the fall and/or spring semesters. Some students also attend summer school. Be advised that offerings in the summer are not very extensive. Note that both options include 33 credit hours of Communication courses and one out of department elective.

**Two Year Course Schedule**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| First Fall Semester | COMM 583COMM 540 orCOMM 570 orCOMM | Seminar in Theories of Communication Political Communication Seminar in Organizational CommunicationCommunication Elective  |
| First Spring Semester | COMM 505/506COMM 576 orCOMM 584 orCOMM | Research MethodsSeminar in Communication and CultureSeminar in Interpersonal CommunicationCommunication Elective  |
| Third Semester | COMMCOMM 598 or 599 | Outside ElectiveCommunication Elective Master's Thesis/Project (3 credit hours) or Elective |
| Fourth Semester | COMMCOMM 598 or 599 | Communication Elective Communication or Outside Elective Master's Thesis/Project (3 credit hours) or Elective |

While the required courses will be the same for all students, the student chooses elective courses within and outside the department with the approval of their advisor. Since each student's program is unique, these sample programs are not intended to be duplicated.

**Outside Courses**

Students majoring in Communication Studies may take up to six credits of courses outside of the department. This may or may not constitute an official minor. The Graduate School recognizes the completion of at least nine graduate level credits as a minor. If you wish to have these credits count as a minor, check with the Graduate School. It is crucial that you consult with your advisor and with the relevant department(s) before choosing an outside course. If you take more than six hours of classes outside the department, you still have to complete the required 30 credits of COMM courses for your degree.

**Undergraduate Courses**

Students can take up to six hours of undergraduate courses numbered 450 - 499 with approval from the student's advisor. Grades earned for undergraduate courses to be applied toward the student's graduate degree must be a B- or higher. Grades of D or F will not count toward the degree but will be calculated into the GPA.

**Writing Style Guides**

Graduate students are expected to engage in a considerable amount of writing before graduation. Consequently, adhering to a recognized style guide is required. For most writing purposes, the most recent version of the APA (American Psychological Association) style guide is suggested. First, this style is used predominately by journals in the disciplines and fields of the social sciences. Also, the graduate school recognizes the APA style guide as one which is allowed for thesis work. Students should purchase the APA style guide for future reference. The department expects all graduate students to understand APA guidelines and use them in all classes and writing.

**Master's Accelerated Program**

NMSUs Master's Accelerated Program (MAP) provides the opportunity for academically qualified undergraduate students to begin working on a master's degree during their junior and senior years while completing a bachelor's degree. Typically, a bachelor's degree requires four years to complete, and a master's degree requires an additional two years.

Students may take up to four of the following six courses:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Course to Enroll in** | **Course Topic** | **Counts for Undergraduate** |
| COMM 550 | Communication Technology | COMM 450 |
| COMM 557 | Strategic Communication | COMM 457 |
| COMM 562 | Family Communication | COMM 462 |
| COMM 565 | Nonverbal Communication | COMM 465 |
| COMM 571 | Sports Communication | COMM 471 |
| COMM 595 | Internship | COMM 495 |

The Department of Communication Studies allows up to 12 credits of coursework of the above courses to count towards the completion of a master's program of study. Students must receive a B- or higher grade to receive graduate credit for up to 12 credit hours. MAP courses completed with a grade of C+ or lower are not eligible for graduate credit. Students must apply and complete a contract to be accepted into the MAP program, and during their last semester of studies in their undergraduate program, apply to the Graduate School. All MAP credits will then transfer to their Graduate credits upon the confirmation of their undergraduate degree. MAP students must maintain a minimum 3.25 GPA and earn a B- or better in all courses to receive MAP credit. For additional information about MAP and all the requirements to participate in MAP, please visit with the Department Head of Communication Studies. Enrollment in graduate courses requires the approval of the Department Head of Communication Studies.



**Research Opportunities**

Several courses may require research papers, but your research opportunities are not limited to coursework. Faculty members will frequently approach graduate students for assistance and collaboration on research projects. Furthermore, you should feel free to approach faculty members if you would like to participate in one of their research projects or would like assistance on one of your own. If your project is not required in a faculty member's class, faculty may request appropriate authorship on the research project. Such collaboration has produced, in the past, a large number of convention papers and published articles.

**Policies:**

If a research project involves collecting data in our introductory course, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Permission must be granted by the Basic Course Director before data collection can be approved and scheduled. Prepare a complete description of the data collection procedures, including the time required and copies of the research measures.
2. Data collection in lab sessions of the introductory course will not be permitted. Instead, students will be offered extra credit to participate in the study outside of class.
3. All Institutional Review Board requirements (training and applicable forms) for using human subjects must be completed before data can be collected. Copies of your training certificate and your IRB application/forms should be given to your advisor.
4. Extra Credit can only be offered in the introductory course by the Basic Course Director.

**Departmental Policies**

The department subscribes to all the policies of the Graduate School. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with university policies, graduation requirements, and deadlines. For Graduate Teaching Assistants, additional policies and procedures are located in the Graduate Teaching Assistantship Policy Manual. In addition to university guidelines, students majoring in Communication Studies will be expected to adhere to the following departmental guidelines:

1. No more than six credit hours in independent study courses (COMM 590 or any other independent study numbers on campus) can be counted toward fulfilling the minimum hours needed for graduation.
2. To remain active majors, graduate students must enroll in at least one COMM course per semester.
3. Students should note that the Graduate School policy for completing the master's degree is five years (or six successive summers).
4. Students not maintaining a 3.0 in their COMM courses may be dropped from the program.
5. Students are expected to attend colloquia, symposia, and special seminars arranged by the department.

**Academic and Nonacademic Misconduct**

All Communication Studies graduate students are expected to hold themselves to the highest standards of academic integrity. This includes,

* Being prepared and having read all class materials before class.
* Attend and participate in class discussions.
* Take exams honestly, relying on only your own knowledge.
* Giving proper attribution of sources without plagiarizing the work of others
* Avoiding self-plagiarism.
* Supporting and assisting your classmates appropriately, ethically, and legally.

Allegations regarding academic misconduct of graduate students shall be brought immediately to the Academic Conduct Officer (ACO). All Graduate Students, by policy, will receive a Level 2 Sanction. Academic miscount is discussed in APR [5.10](https://arp.nmsu.edu/5-10/) and [5.11](https://arp.nmsu.edu/5-11/). Nonacademic misconduct is reviewed in the policy on [student conduct](https://studentlife.nmsu.edu/conduct/index.html).

According to the NMSU Student Code of Conduct, any student found guilty of academic misconduct shall be subject to disciplinary action. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:

1. Cheating or knowingly assisting another student in committing an act of cheating or other forms of academic dishonesty.
2. Plagiarism is using another person's work without acknowledgment, making it appear to be one's own. Any ideas, words, pictures, or other sources must be acknowledged in a citation that gives credit to the source. This is true no matter where the material comes from, including the Internet, other students' work, unpublished materials, or oral sources. Intentional and unintentional instances of plagiarism, including self-plagiarism and submitting similar research papers in more than one course, are considered academic misconduct. Self-plagiarism or plagiarizing yourself is the use of content from another course assignment, whether current or past, for another course's requirement. Self-plagiarism and plagiarism violate the NMSU policy on Academic Integrity and will be reported as such. The student submitting the work in question is responsible for knowing, understanding, and complying with this policy. If no citation is given, then borrowing any of the following would be an example of plagiarism:
	1. An idea or opinion, even when put into one's own words (paraphrase)
	2. A few well-said words, if these are a unique insight.
	3. Many words, even if one changes most of them.
	4. Materials assembled by others, for instance, quotes or a bibliography.
	5. An argument
	6. A pattern or idea
	7. Graphs, pictures, or other illustrations
	8. Facts
	9. All or part of an existing paper or other resource
	10. AI-assisted content
3. Self-plagiarism

This list is not meant to include all possible examples of plagiarism. See the University Library's webpage on plagiarism for further examples.

1. Unauthorized possession of examinations, reserve library materials, laboratory materials, or other course-related materials.
2. Unauthorized changing of grades on an examination, in an instructor's grade book, or on a grade report; or unauthorized access to academic computer records.
3. Nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records in, or for, academic departments or colleges.

This policy is taken from the NMSU student handbook. This is a university policy! For more information, including your rights, should you be accused of academic misconduct, see [ARP 5.10](https://arp.nmsu.edu/5-10/).

Students who engage in disruptive activities in an academic setting (e.g., classrooms, academic offices, or academic buildings) are subject to disciplinary action in accordance with Part III: Standards for Student Social Conduct. Such students are also subject to administrative actions in accordance with [the NMSU Graduate and Undergraduate Catalog](https://catalogs.nmsu.edu/nmsu/) and ARP [5.10](https://arp.nmsu.edu/5-10/) and [5.11](https://arp.nmsu.edu/5-11/).

Nonacademic Misconduct or violations of the [Student Conduct and Community Standards](https://studentlife.nmsu.edu/conduct/index.html) can include the following, which is not an inclusive list, and will be subject to disciplinary action:

1. Actual or threatened physical injury to any person (including self) on university owned or controlled property or at a university-sponsored or supervised function, including conduct that endangers the health or safety of a person.
2. Engaging in individual or group conduct that is violent (including sexual misconduct, attempted suicide, or threats of either), abusive, indecent, unreasonably loud, or similar disorderly conduct that infringes upon the privacy, rights, or privileges of others or disturbs the peace or the orderly process of education on campus.
3. Unauthorized use, possession, or storage of any weapon or explosive (including fireworks) on university premises or at university sponsored activities.
4. Forgery, counterfeiting, alterations, or misuse of any university record, document, or identification card of a nonacademic nature (e.g., housing applications or parking permits).
5. Unauthorized entry into or alteration of any university computer records or violation of Computer Center policies.
6. Reporting the presence of a fire, bomb, explosive, or incendiary device on the university campus without good reason to believe the facts reported are accurate.
7. Unlawful possession, use, distribution, or sale of any narcotic or dangerous drug as defined by New Mexico State University Policy and the State of New Mexico statutes.
8. Theft of, or unwarranted damage to, university property or property of any University community member.
9. Failure to comply with Housing regulations.
10. Failure to comply with the lawful directives of university employees acting within the scope of their duties, including those directives issued by a university administrator to ensure the safety and well-being of students.
11. Entry into, or use of, any building, facility, room or other university property or grounds without authorized approval. This also includes the unauthorized possession or use of university keys, lock combinations, or other access codes.
12. Participation in illegal gambling activities on university-owned or -controlled property or at a function identified with the university.
13. Possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages in contradiction of state law and/or university policy.
14. Entering or attempting to enter any athletic contest, dance, social event, or other event without proper credentials for admission (e.g., ticket, identification card, or invitation).
15. Failure to make a satisfactory settlement for any debts to the university.
16. Failure to comply with university traffic rules and regulations.

This list is not designed to be an all inclusive but offers examples of the types of prohibited conduct.

**Academic Probation and Suspension**

# The Department of Communication Studies reviews the academic records of all graduate students at the end of each semester when possible. A student whose cumulative GPA in Communication Studies courses at the end of any semester is less than 3.0 will be informed in writing and will automatically be placed on probation with the Department. If, during the next enrollment period, a student fails to earn a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or to show substantial improvement in the quality of work in Communication Studies (as determined by the department graduate faculty), the student will be suspended from the Department of Communication Studies. A GPA of less than 3.0 means any number numerically less than 3.0 with no rounding up. For example, a 2.99 is still less than 3.0.

If a student wishes to appeal any probation or suspension, the student must formally write a letter to the Dean of the Graduate School. The student must also ask The Department Head of Communication Studies to write a formal letter in support of the appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School. However, the Department Head is not obligated to write such a letter.

A student can be suspended from the Department but not the Graduate School. In these rare situations, students can continue to enroll in graduate courses in other departments. Students usually apply to a different program to complete their graduate education.

Students on suspension from the Department who wish to continue their M.A. education in Communication Studies after suspension must re-apply to the Department. If a student wishes to appeal the suspension with the Department, they must go to the Department Head.

**Graduate Student Appeals**

Any graduate student who believes they have been unjustly treated within the academic process may appeal following the educational grievance process for graduate students as outlined in ARP [5.14](https://arp.nmsu.edu/5-14/).

**Leave of Absence**

No leave of absence can be taken without the written approval of the student's faculty advisor and the Department Head. Students must submit a formal letter through the Department Head to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Graduate School will not accept an email. The request should include the beginning date and the anticipated ending date for the period of absence. A graduate student on leave of absence will be expected not to use university facilities and place no demands upon the university faculty and staff, and, therefore, will pay no fees. Time spent in the "leave-of-absence" status will not be counted toward the advanced degree time limits. A graduate student who fails to obtain a leave of absence from the Graduate School will be considered withdrawn from the university by the Graduate School. The student must go through the formal readmission process to resume studies after such absences.

Students seeking a medical leave of absence and work with the Registrar's Office (575) 646-3411 or registra@nmsu.edu. Students in the Military should work with the Office of Military and Veterans Programs (575) 646-4524 or mvp@nmsu.edu. All leave of Absence should be requested as soon as possible, depending on the circumstances. If the request is not fulfilled, students must re-apply to the University after one academic year.

**Graduate Teaching Assistantships**

The Communication Studies Department awards a limited number of Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) annually. All GTAs are bound by the current [Collective Bargaining Agreement](https://gradschool.nmsu.edu/ga-and-union/collective-bargaining-agreement.html). Additional information and resources for the GTA Union are available on the [Graduate Assistant Resource](https://gradschool.nmsu.edu/ga-and-union/Graduate%20Assistant%20Resources.html) page.

The department's process usually occurs each March and November, and as needed thereafter. Graduate faculty and the Basic Course Director review all complete files and rate the candidates from the best to the least preferred. These are entirely independent ratings, and faculty do not discuss their ratings, nor do they elaborate on them on their review sheet. The Department Head then generates a mean score from these ratings and awards assistantships based on those candidates that receive the highest scores. The Department Head does not select the Graduate Assistants. The Department Head calculates the scores and offers the assistantships. If a position opens unexpectedly, the Department Head returns to the original rankings. Still, the graduate faculty and Basic Course Director will often review new files to allow newly applied students to be considered for an assistantship.

Full-time graduate assistants receive a stipend, out-of-state tuition waiver, a small scholarship, and office space for up to two years or four academic semesters, not including the summer semester. Graduate Assistants are required to provide 20 hours of service per week to the department, in most cases assisting in COMM 1115G (Introduction to Communication). Additionally, on rare occasions, Graduate Assistants may have summer work opportunities.

The graduate assistantship stipend is intended to help you complete your education. Thus, the renewal of your assistantship is dependent on two requirements:

1. Adequate progress toward completing the M.A. degree (Minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0, taking required courses, meeting enrollment expectations, etc.).
2. Satisfactory performance of your graduate assistant duties:
	1. Effective teaching of the introductory course lab (6 classroom hours per week).
	2. Attending weekly lectures (1 hour per week plus all exam sessions if applicable).
	3. Attending weekly staff meetings (1 hour per week) with additional meetings when necessary.
	4. Maintaining office hours (3 hours per week).
	5. Maintaining hours in the Center for Communication Development (2 hours per week).
	6. Teaching prep time (6 hours per week).
	7. Timely grading of assignments.
	8. Maintaining sufficient evaluations.
	9. Attendance and participation at department workshops, colloquia, symposia, and special seminars arranged by the department.

The Basic Course Director should be notified immediately and seek approval if a Graduate Assistant must miss a duty listed above. Graduate Assistants are not allowed to cancel COMM 1115G lab classes. In the case of absences, the Graduate Assistant must follow the substitution policy listed in the lab instructor and policy manual. The Basic Course Director will articulate the substitution policy. Documentation of a valid excuse (e.g., hospitalization, death in the family, conference travel) may be required by the Basic Course Director and/or the Department Head for missing lab, lecture, staff meetings, office hours, and Center for Communication Development hours.

If a GTA fails to meet the performance criteria above, provide documentation for absences, or compensate substitutes, the GTA may lose their assistantship. If a student loses their assistantship and wishes to appeal that loss, they can appeal to the Department Head.

GTAs are expected to adhere to the following departmental guidelines:

1. GTA's must enroll in at least 9 hours of graduate courses each semester, except their final semester.
2. GTA's are expected to enroll in at least six credit hours of Communication Studies courses each semester (exceptions to be approved by the advisor and Department Head).
3. GTA's must enroll in at least three credit hours of actual courses per semester--exclusive of independent studies or thesis credits (exceptions to be approved by the advisor and department head).
4. Graduate Teaching Assistantships can be renewed for up to four semesters (excluding summers) for students fulfilling the above requirements. The department is not obligated to extend graduate assistantship stipends beyond four semesters of courses. Graduate Teaching Assistantships are not guaranteed, and all assistantships will be reviewed for renewal each semester. Decisions on renewal of each GTA are based on the performance discussed above and in their contract.

**Additional Department Policies**

If necessary, any additional policy statements will be distributed through the Department Head or the Basic Course Director.

**Financial Aid**

The university administers an extensive program of loans and work-study employment for graduate students. The awarding of loans and work-study is based on need and will require the student to complete a Federal Application for Student Financial Aid (FASFA) form to determine possible awards. Students must apply annually for financial assistance and work with the office of financial aid early and check deadlines with the financial aid office. For information concerning available financial assistance, contact the [Financial Aid Office](https://fa.nmsu.edu/).

**Student Employment**

In addition to assistantships, fellowships, work-study, other employment options are available. Human Resource Services posts job listings for on-campus positions. Graduate students enrolled for a minimum of nine hours per semester may be served by Human Resources. Student spouses/partners who seek full or part-time work may also apply through the Office of Human Resource Services. See [Student Employment](https://hr.nmsu.edu/general-resources/student-jobs.html) options and other [career opportunities](https://careers.nmsu.edu/jobs/search) at NMSU.

**NMSU Policies**

NMSU policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, retaliation, serious medical condition, sex, sexual orientation, spousal affiliation, and protected veterans’ status. Furthermore, Title IX prohibits sex discrimination to include sexual misconduct: sexual violence (sexual assault, rape), sexual harassment, and retaliation.

New Mexico State University, in compliance with applicable laws and in furtherance of its commitment to fostering an environment that welcomes and embraces diversity, does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, retaliation, serious medical condition, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, spousal affiliation, or protected veteran status in its programs and activities, including employment, admissions, and educational programs and activities. **You may submit a report online at**[equity.nmsu.edu](https://equity.nmsu.edu/)**. If you have an urgent concern, please contact the Office of Institutional Equity at 575-646-3635.**

**Title IX prohibits sex harassment, sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, stalking, and retaliation. For more information on discrimination or Title IX, or to file a complaint contact:**

Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) - O'Loughlin House,

1130 University Avenue
Phone: (575) 646-3635
Email: equity@nmsu.edu
[Office of Institutional Equity Website](http://equity.nmsu.edu/)

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADA) covers issues relating to disability and accommodations. If a student has questions or needs an accommodation in the classroom (all medical information is treated confidentially), contact:

Disability Access Services
Corbett Center Student Union Room 204
Aaron Salas, Director
575-646-6840
das@nmsu.edu

New Mexico State University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If a student has, or thinks they may have, a disability that interferes with their performance as a student in a class, they may wish to self-identify.

If a student has a condition which may affect their ability to exit safely from the premises in an emergency or which may cause an emergency during class, they are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with the instructor and/or the Director of Student Accessibility Services.

**Other NMSU Resources:**

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| --- |
| NMSU Main Campus emergency contact information |
| NMSU Police Department | 575-646-3311 | [www.nmsupolice.com](https://www.nmsupolice.com/) |
| Aggie Health & Wellness (Medical and Counseling Services | 575-646-1512 | [www.wellness.nmsu.edu](https://wellness.nmsu.edu/) |
| NMSU Dean of Students | 575-646-1722 |  |
| For Emergencies | 911 |  |

# **Student Parking**

All students who park on campus must register their vehicles annually with the NMSU Parking Department and obtain a parking permit on or before the date the vehicle is to be operated or parked on the campus. Registration of all motor vehicles, including motorcycles, motor scooters, and bicycles, owned or operated on the University campus by students is required. An annual registration charge will be assessed for each vehicle parking on campus. Parking lots are restricted. The parking permit indicates in which zone to park. (See Parking Zone Map available from the Parking Department).

**Student Resources**

# **Activity Center**

The [NMSU Activity Center](https://recsports.nmsu.edu/facilities/activity-center.html) is dedicated to helping members of the NMSU community reach their fitness goals and maintain a pure, balanced, and overall healthy lifestyle. The Activity Center offers modem, extensive exercise equipment, and a wide variety of classes, including aerobic, aquatic, intramural, open recreation, and outdoor adventure sports. The fitness/wellness services offered at the AC include such items as comprehensive fitness assessments, certified personal trainers, body composition testing, nutritional analysis, group fitness classes, and much more.

**Aggie Health and Wellness Center**

The [Aggie Health and Wellness Center](https://wellness.nmsu.edu/) (AHWC) provides integrated comprehensive medical, psychological, and recreational activity services to NMSU students. It is a nationally accredited out-patient ambulatory facility offering services in: Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Health education, outreach and programming, Immunizations (travel and preventative), Medical clearance for NMSU research, education and employment purposes, medical illness and prevention, Mental health and counseling, Treatment and case management of workers compensation injuries, and Women's health. The AHWC is located on the northeast corner of the building, at the corner of McFie and Breland Drive, across the street from Zuhl Library (AHWC, 2017).

# **Information and Communication Technologies**

Computer labs are open 24 hours a day, with a support staff available during most of these hours. All graduate students have access to the computer center and free software while concurrently enrolled at NMSU.

**Libraries**

New Mexico State University has a comprehensive library system and has two campus libraries, Zuhl and Branson. Both are located on the pedestrian walkway that runs through the middle of campus and are situated within easy walking distance of the Communication Science Building.

The NMSU [library](https://lib.nmsu.edu/) offers a plethora of electronic resources ranging from biographies, citations, and style guides to dictionaries, encyclopedias, and maps. Formal instruction and tutorials on research, evaluating periodicals, and accessing and using electronic databases and journals may be arranged for classroom instruction. Most of the time, students can access all the sources needed for literature reviews and classroom presentations from departmental or home computers.