

New Mexico State University

**Department of
Communication Studies**

Graduate Student Handbook

September 2026

MA Communication Studies

The Master of Arts in Communication Studies offers students a social scientific approach to understanding human interaction, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Our curriculum is designed to examine how communication occurs interpersonally, within organizations and groups, through the media, and across cultures.

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

The program offers a wide variety of courses, providing students with the opportunity to choose topics based on their particular interests. In addition to coursework, students can gain practical experience by participating in professional activities offered by the department, such as graduate teaching assistantships, research, colloquia, and internships.

Degree Requirements

The department offers thesis, non-thesis, and applied project options in its Master of Arts in Communication Studies on main campus. All options require of 36 credits, 30 credits of which must be in COMM. The thesis option requires at least 30 credits of coursework, six credits of thesis (COMM 5999), and an oral defense of the thesis. The non-thesis option requires 36 credits of coursework, four hours of written exams over the candidate's coursework, and an oral defense. The applied project option requires 30 hours of coursework and 6 credits of applied project (COMM 5996). All options require a minimum of 36 credit hours, 30 of which must be in Communication courses.

Graduate students are required to take COMM 5110: Seminar in Theories of Communication, COMM 5130: Quantitative Research Methods, and COMM 5140: Qualitative Research Methods 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 4500 level or higher. Graduate students must take graduate-level versions (5000 vs. 4000 level) of any dual-listed course when offered. On occasion, Professors will restrict graduate-level courses. In these cases, if the professor does not grant a graduate student permission to enroll, the graduate student is not allowed to enroll in the undergraduate section. The Graduate School only allows two courses (6 credits) at the undergraduate level (4500 to 4999) to count toward the M.A. degree in Communication Studies.

Master's Degree Program

All of the following courses are required (18 credits):

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|-------------|--|--------|
| ○ COMM 5110 | Seminar in Theories of Communication (fall only) | 3 crs |
| ○ COMM 5130 | Quantitative Research Methods (spring only) | 3 crs. |
| ○ COMM 5140 | Qualitative Research Methods (fall only) | 3 crs. |
| ○ COMM 5510 | Organizational Communication (fall only) | 3 crs. |
| ○ COMM 5610 | Interpersonal Communication (spring only) | 3 crs. |
| ○ COMM 5710 | Communication and Culture (spring only) | 3 crs. |

Electives (18 credits total):

- | | |
|--|------------|
| COMM electives | 12-18 crs. |
| Optional electives from other disciplines (not required) | 0-6 crs. |
| Applied Project Option: COMM 5994 MA Project | 0-6 crs. |
| Thesis Option: COMM 5999 Thesis | 0-6 crs. |

Total: **36 crs.**

36 credit hours are required for the degree, 30 of which must be in COMM

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 5110: Seminar in Communication Theories, COMM 5130: Quantitative Research Methods, or COMM 5140: Qualitative Research Methods. 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 students must achieve a final grade of B- or better in all COMM courses before they can proceed to comprehensive exams, thesis, or project and earn the degree. Courses transferred from other programs at NMSU will not be included in determining a cumulative GPA. Grades from other universities or colleges will not be used to calculate GPA. All courses transferred from other institutions will earn credit (CR) only.

Although C grades, including a C+, earned at New Mexico State University may be considered acceptable progress, these grades will not be counted toward the requirements for an advanced degree and is not considered acceptable graduate-level performance in the Department of Communication Studies Graduate Programs. Courses in which students earn a C, D, or F are considered failing grades and will not count toward a graduate degree. However, such grades are calculated in determining the student's GPA. Any COMM course in which a student has not

earned the minimum grade acceptable (B-) 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 and Department Head. Specific Interests: Organizational Culture, Leadership, Media, and Communication and Sports.
- Maya Blitch (Ph.D. 2026, University of Texas at Austin). Professor of Crisis Communication. Specific interests: Adaptation, Resilience, and Communication Ecologies.
- Leah Dajches (Ph.D. 2022, University of Arizona). Assistant Professor of Communication in Social Influence and New Media Technologies. Specific interests: Persuasion/Social Influence, Media Theory/Effects, Adolescent/Youth Development, and Fandom and Marginalized Communities.
- Jason Feltz (Ed.D. 2018, Grand Canyon University). College Assistant Professor of Organizational Leadership. Specific interests: Leadership Development, Organizational Culture, Teams, Critical Thinking and Practical Theory Assessment in Online Course Design, and Case Study Method Application in Online Curriculum Design.
- Jeanne Flora (Ph.D. 1998, University of Kansas). Professor of Interpersonal and Family Communication. Specific Interests: Relationship Development and Maintenance.
- Anne Hubbell (Ph.D. 2000, Michigan State University). Associate Dean of the Honors College and Professor of Organizational and Health Communication. Specific Interests: Ethics and Equity in Organizations, Invisible Disabilities and Mental Health, and Health Disparities among Minorities.
- Gabriela I. Morales (Ph.D. 2017, University of New Mexico). Assistant Professor of Culture and Health Communication. Specific Interests: Health Disparities, Underrepresented Population Health Narratives, Health Literacy, DEI & Social Justice, and Feminist research.
- 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

Main campus students are assigned a temporary faculty advisor, the Graduate Student Advisor or Graduate Program Coordinator for their respective campus as soon as they are admitted to the program. The role of this faculty advisor is to orient new students to the Communication Studies department, provide support and encouragement throughout their first semester, and continue to support them as they progress toward their academic goals in the second semester.

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, thesis, or applied project. Students are encouraged to select a permanent advisor with similar academic interests as they do before they began to register for their third semester of study, which is traditionally their second academic year. All students 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, forced advisor change, and/or not graduating on an expected timeline.

It is NOT the responsibility of your advisor to track the thesis or non-thesis deadlines. Graduate School deadlines can be found on the [Graduate School Website](#).

Students taking courses on NMSU Global are advised their entire time by the Global Coordinator. Should the Global Coordinator not be available, the student should contact the Department Head. When the student is ready for project hours, their advisor for their project will be the professor who is assigned to teach the project course. This will likely not be the Global Coordinator, whose role is to advise students on courses, not advise their final project.

Application for Degree

The student must file an "Application for Degree Form" via my.nmsu.edu and pay the graduation fee for the semester in which the student intends to graduate. The Graduate School publishes graduation deadlines 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 require 36 credits, including at least 30 credit hours of courses in Communication. Up to 6 credits may be taken outside the department, but students can opt to take all coursework in the Department of Communication Studies. Students on the thesis track must complete 6 credits of MA Thesis work (COMM 5999) as part of their 36 credits. In most cases, if you fail to defend your thesis proposal before the end of your third semester, your advisor will switch you to a non-thesis comprehensive examination track.

Students must use the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) in preparing the thesis proposal and final thesis. It is the student's responsibility to learn APA, not the advisors 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](#), published annually. Whenever human subjects are to be involved as research participants, the NMSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is required. [CITI training](#) must be completed, and [IRB approval](#) (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 third semester, your

advisor will have you switch to a comprehensive exam track. Consult your APA 7th Edition manual for examples of guidelines and chapter breakdown or organization. You can also review the theses completed in our department on [ProQuest](#) through the NMSU library (off-campus access may require VPN access) and on the bookshelves in COMM 302. You can limit your search to the Department of Communication Studies on ProQuest. If you borrow a thesis from the bookshelves in Room 302 in the Communication Sciences Building, please return it.

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 and committee chair as well. The thesis advisor and student work together to develop a timeline for completing the thesis.

Once the thesis topic is determined and the advisor agrees to oversee the thesis, the student should enroll in thesis hours. For a full-time student on main campus this must be after they have completed 18 credit hours, and thesis hours must be taken in two concurrent semesters, typically semester three and four for a student taking 36 credits across four 16-week semesters. If a student brings credits into the department, such as a MAP student, then the thesis should be completed during that last two concurrent fall and spring semesters so that the student graduates during the same semester they complete their additional coursework.

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 may serve as committee members with the student's and the advisor's agreement and approval. The student should meet in person or via Zoom with potential committee members to assess their willingness and availability to serve on the thesis committee. Thesis committee members must 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 collecting data for the thesis. 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 and evaluation in relation to the literature, 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 demonstrate 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 for a project or thesis unless the student has approval from all committee members.

In consultation with the advisor and committee members, a 90-120-minute prospectus meeting will be scheduled no later than finals week of the semester before 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's 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 the committee approves the student's thesis, you may continue your research, including the IRB proposal. An IRB proposal should not be submitted until your committee has approved your thesis proposal. Students who fail to defend their thesis proposal in their third semester may have to complete the program by taking comprehensive exams at their advisor's request.

Expectations for Writing and Planning

A candidate should expect multiple drafts or revisions of their work. The thesis should conform to the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). Careful time management should be exercised to prepare the revised drafts, as well as to allow time to reflect and report on the findings.

Organization and Content of the Thesis

All thesis must conform to guidelines established by the Graduate School as discussed in the [Preparing a Thesis or Dissertation](#) document referenced earlier. Keeping this in mind, the typical thesis will have the following [sections](#):

- 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, Limitations, and Conclusion
- Appendix(es)
- 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 scheduling the thesis defense through the department's administrative assistant. Students are expected to give the committee 10 to 14 days to read the thesis before holding the meeting. During this meeting, the student is questioned about the completed thesis. The thesis defense outcome can result in a pass, a fail, or an adjournment. In the case of adjournment, the candidate will consult with their advisor on what needs to be corrected and when a second defense can be scheduled. In the event of failure, the candidate does not graduate. The thesis defense will last no more than two hours.

Thesis deadlines are earlier in the semester than 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.

Non-Thesis: 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 must complete 36 credits, including at least 30 credit hours of Communication courses. Up to 6 credits may be taken outside of the department, but students can opt to take all coursework in the Department of Communication Studies. Students on the project track must complete 6 credits of MA Project (COMM 5994) as part of their 36 credits. In most cases, if you fail to submit a completed project proposal before the final week of the first semester, your advisor will switch you to a non-thesis comprehensive exam track.

Advisor

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 project chair 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. On main campus, an advisor and project chair may ask for a second graduate faculty member to consult with the student and chair during the completion of the student's project. This will typically occur if the student is working on something that might be outside of the advisor's field of expertise.

Students must use the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) in preparing the 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 and literature, as well as practical implementation/feedback.

Choosing a Topic and Preparing a Proposal-Meeting with an advisor or chair

It is recommended that a topic for the project be determined at the beginning of the student's last year (i.e., third semester) in the M.A. program. In consultation with the advisor, the student should submit a proposal introducing the project along with a brief literature review on the topic and an action plan describing the project to be developed and applied, and the expected outcomes of the application (i.e., the potential for implementation). This should be completed as the student nears the completion of 18 credit hours.

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.

Once the project scope is determined and the advisor agrees to oversee the project, the student should enroll in project hours. For a full-time student on main campus this must be after they have completed 18 credit hours, and project hours must be taken in two concurrent semesters, typically semester three and four for a student taking 36 credits across four 16-week semesters. If a student brings credits into the department, such as a MAP student, then the project should be completed during the last two concurrent fall and spring semesters so that the student graduates during the same semester they complete their additional coursework.

Organization and Content of the paper should be as follows:

- Title Page
- Acknowledgments (optional)
- Table of Contents
- Student Resume
- Body of Report: (Order may be changed by advisor and/or committee)

- Section 1: Introduction (Why this matters)
- Section 2: Application of Theory or Concepts
- Section 3: Situation Analysis and Target Audience Analysis
- Section 4: Goals and Objectives (Rationale)
- 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, Limitations, and Conclusion
- References
- Appendices

Although project proposals vary in length, the average manuscript should be sufficiently detailed to demonstrate a grasp of the background, relevant literature, and methodology for the student's project. Keep in mind, each advisor may ask for a different order and optional content for individual projects. Projects can vary widely, and each project will require different content and organizational approaches. The student will deliver the prospectus to their advisor before finals week of the first semester in which they enrolled in project hours.

Please note: It is not appropriate to submit an IRB form before the proposal meeting unless the student has approval from all committee members.

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 (APA)*. 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.

Project sections 1 through 6 must be completed and submitted to the student's advisor before the end of the first semester in which the student is enrolled in project hours. This is similar to a thesis proposal. A typical project proposal should be approximately 20 pages, double-spaced, not including references. Once the student's advisor approves the project, the student can continue. Students who fail to obtain their advisor's approval in the first semester may have to complete the program by taking comprehensive exams at their advisor's request.

Final Project Submission

The final project shall consist of all the sections detailed above (Sections 1-8 and additional material as appendices). After the candidate completes the project, the advisor must approve it in order for the student to pass project hours. The final project and all deliverables must be provided to the advisor no later than two weeks before the defense date.

Projects on the main campus and global are not subject to oral defenses, and the Master's Final Exam form is not required to be submitted in order for the student to receive their degree. Student must pass all six of their project hours.

Students are responsible for meeting all Graduate School procedures and deadlines. Deadlines can be located on the Graduate School Website.

Non-Thesis: Comprehensive Exam Option

Students opting for the non-thesis comprehensive exam track require 36 credits, including at least 30 credit hours of courses in Communication. Up to 6 credits may be taken outside of the department, but students can opt to take all coursework in the Department of Communication Studies.

The comprehensive examination allows the student to demonstrate an ability to integrate broad and specific knowledge of the discipline of Communication. Integration 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 Studies. The comprehensive exam is an outcome measure of the graduate program curriculum. We assess the degree to which the student can demonstrate content knowledge in Communication Studies, 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, at least one additional faculty member from the Department of Communication Studies, and one outside graduate faculty member from a related area (usually a faculty member from whom the student has taken courses) to serve as the Dean's Representative. All faculty members must have Graduate Faculty Status from the Graduate School. This committee will write exam questions and attend a two-hour oral defense 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 students' last semester, they will undergo four hours of comprehensive written examinations over four course areas they have studied. Students must meet with their advisor to determine the areas they will be examined in, as well as who they would like to write the questions. All students must write a one-hour question on Communication Theory and a one-hour question on either quantitative or qualitative methods. 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, they fail the comprehensive exam and will not 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 in a Communication Studies course to retake their written examinations 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 will not 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 ideas should be communicated 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- or better is required in ALL other COMM courses. In addition, you must have an overall 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 two (one-hour questions). The length of the written exams shall be a maximum of four questions for four 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 member and the department administrative assistant.
4. Students may confer with each faculty member for whom they are writing by the 2nd or 3rd week of the semester. 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 ensure the student understands whether any materials (e.g., outlines, articles, etc.) other than the question are allowed during the exam and that approval of additional materials is required by a specific deadline before

the student begins writing their exam questions. 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's 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 8th 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 days (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 a computer with the department's administrative assistant. If the administrative assistant determines that the room or computer is unavailable, the student should consult their advisor about a modified schedule.
7. The student must complete the [Master's Final Examination Form](#), found on the [Graduate School Website](#) 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 written exam questions to the advisor at least a week before the exam. The questions should be marked to indicate the time allowed for the student 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 is allowed to use (during the exam) while answering each question for the department administrative assistant.
10. The department's 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. Candidates are only allowed one rewrite per each original question. If a student fails a rewrite, then the student fails that question. If a student fails a question, they may appeal to the Department Head for a second rewrite. If a student fails a question, they will not be allowed to progress to the oral defense and will fail to graduate with an M.A. in Communication Studies that semester. The student must enroll in the following spring or fall semester and retake all 4 written exams while concurrently enrolled in communication coursework.
13. The oral examination will be held with all committee members present and will typically last 90 to 120 minutes. 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 the Graduate School policy. The oral exam outcome can result in a pass, a fail, or an adjournment. In the case of adjournment, the candidate will consult with their advisor on what needs to be corrected and when a second oral defense can be rescheduled. In the event of failure, the candidate does not graduate.
14. During the oral 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 advisor's office or department office.

Sample Program

Below is a sample program for all three options (thesis, project, or non-thesis). 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 summer offerings are not extensive. Note that both options include 33 credit hours of Communication courses and one optional out-of-department elective. Students may graduate by completing all 36 credits in the Department of Communication Studies.

Two Year Course Schedule

First Fall Semester	COMM 5110	Theories of Communication
	COMM 5140	Qualitative Research Methods
	COMM 5510 or	Organizational Communication or
	COMM	Communication Elective

First Spring Semester	COMM 5140 COMM 5710 or COMM 5610 or COMM	Quantitative Research Methods Communication and Culture or Communication Elective Interpersonal Communication or Communication Elective
Third Semester	COMM COMM 5994 or 5999	Communication Elective or Optional Outside Elective Communication Elective Master's Thesis (3 credit hours), MA Project (3 credit hours) or an Elective Course
Fourth Semester	COMM COMM 5994 or 5999	Communication Elective or Optional Outside Elective Communication Elective Master's Thesis (3 credit hours), MA Project (3 credit hours), or an Elective Course

While the required courses will be the same for all students in the program, students can choose 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, but you must choose from a minor listed in the Graduate School Catalog. If you wish to have these credits count as a minor, check the [Graduate School Catalog](#) and visit with your advisor before enrolling in courses. 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 will 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 4500 - 4999 (or 450 – 499 in departments with 3-digit courses) 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 C+ or lower will not count toward the degree but will be included in the GPA. Any coursework taken below the 4500 level will not count towards a graduate degree but may be calculated into the student's GPA.

Writing Style Guides

Graduate students are expected to write extensively 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 predominantly by journals in the disciplines and fields of the social sciences. Also, the graduate school recognizes the APA style guide as one that 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.

NMSU Global MA

Non-Thesis: Applied Project Option

The Department of Communication Studies offers three concentrations through NMSU Global that lead to a Master of Arts in Communication Studies. The MA offered on NMSU Global and the MA offered on the Main Campus have different required courses. Depending on which campus a student wants to graduate from, the student will have to complete all of the required courses for that campus. Further, while students are allowed to transfer between the two campuses by applying to the second campus after beginning their studies on the other campus, all students seeking a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) must be enrolled on the main campus and complete an application for the Main Campus program, submitting all required materials to be considered for a GTA. All GTAs are required to be enrolled on the Main Campus. Students who want to transfer campuses are highly advised to speak with the Graduate advisor or Graduate Coordinator for the appropriate campus they intend to transfer to or the Department Head of Communication Studies.

All Global students in our department will graduate under the applied project option, and the faculty member who is teaching the MA Project course will serve as their advisor for the project. On rare occasions a Global student could graduate through the thesis option under the oversight of a faculty member and committee chaired by a member of the Communication Studies Department. All thesis requirements are discussed earlier in the manual.

The MA Project course should be completed during the semester in which the student intends to graduate (spring or fall). Project hours are not available for students to enroll in during the summer terms. Therefore, students who plan to graduate during the summer should take the MA Project course during the spring semester prior to their expected graduation. All students on Global are advised by the Global Program Coordinator for the duration of their studies regardless of their chosen concentration. However, the student's project will be advised and chaired by the professor or instructor of record for the project course offered on the Global campus. If the Global Program Coordinator is unavailable to advise a student for enrollment, the student should contact the Department Head of Communication Studies for guidance.

All concentrations on Global require a total of 36 credits, including at least 18 credit hours of courses in Communication to complete an MA in Communication Studies. Up to 18 credits may be taken outside the Department of Communication Studies on the Global campus, but students may opt to take all coursework in the Department of Communication Studies. Students must also complete 6 credits of MA Project (COMM 5994) as part of their 36 credits. A GPA of 3.0 or better must be maintained overall, and grades in each course must be a B- or better. Two courses (6 credits) with numbers 4500+ can be counted.

Concentration in Leadership Communication

The concentration in Leadership Communication, resulting in a Master of Arts with a major in Communication Studies, is designed to equip students to develop effective leadership skills in individual, group, team, and organizational contexts for professionals who work in organizations of any type (private, government, non-profit).

All of the following courses are required (18 credits):

- COMM 5510 Organizational Communication (summer and fall) 3 crs.
- COMM 5530 Leadership Communication (summer and fall) 3 crs.
- COMM 5550 Case Studies in Leadership Communication 3 crs.
- COMM 5560 Ethics & Diversity in Leadership Communication 3 crs.
- COMM 5994 MA Project 6 crs.

Electives (18 credits)

Electives from COMM or other disciplines 18 crs.

Total: 36 crs

Two Year Course Schedule

First Fall Semester	COMM 5530 COMM 5550 COMM	Leadership Communication Case Studies in Leadership Communication Communication Elective
First Spring Semester	COMM 5510 COMM 5560 COMM	Organizational Communication Ethics & Diversity in Leadership Communication Communication Elective
Third Semester	COMM COMM COMM	Communication Elective Communication Elective Communication Elective
Fourth Semester	COMM COMM 5994	Communication Elective MA Project (6 credit hours)

Concentration in Organizational Communication

The concentration in Organizational Communication, resulting in a Master of Arts with a major in Communication Studies, is designed to equip students to develop effective organizational communication and leadership skills in individual, group, team, and organizational contexts for professionals working across all professional settings. This program will help students develop organizational and leadership communication skills in a time of dynamic change in global organizations, diversity, technology, and digital skills.

All of the following courses are required (18 credits):

- COMM 5230 Strategic Communication 3 crs.
- COMM 5510 Organizational Communication (summer and spring) 3 crs.
- COMM 5530 Leadership Communication (summer and fall) 3 crs.
- COMM 5610 Interpersonal Communication
- or COMM 5630 Family Communication 3 crs.
- COMM 5994 MA Project 6 crs.

Electives (18 credits)

Electives from COMM or other disciplines 18 crs.

Total: 36 crs.

Two Year Course Schedule

First Fall Semester	COMM 5230 COMM 5530 COMM	Strategic Communication Leadership Communication Communication Elective
First Spring Semester	COMM 5510 COMM 5610 COMM 5630	Organizational Communication Interpersonal Communication Family Communication or Communication Elective
Third Semester	COMM 5550 COMM COMM	Case Studies in Leadership Communication Communication Elective Communication Elective
Fourth Semester	COMM COMM 5994	Communication Elective MA Project (6 credit hours)

Concentration in Analysis and Decision-Making

The concentration in Analysis and Decision-Making, leading to a Master of Arts with a major in Communication Studies, is designed to enhance professional skillsets in a time of dynamic change in global business, diversity, technology, and digital skills. The degree requires 36 credit hours of coursework, with at least 18 credits completed in the Communication Studies Department.

All of the following courses are required (18 credits):

- AXED 5110 Management of Change, Diffusion, and Adoption of Innovations 3 crs.
- AXED 5320 Risk and Crisis Communication in Agriculture, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences 3 crs.
- I E 537 Large Scale System Engineering 3 crs.
- I E 563 Topics in Engineering Administration 3 crs.
- COMM 5994 MA Project 6 crs.

Electives (18 credits)

- COMM Electives 12 crs.
- Electives from COMM or other disciplines 6 crs.

Total: 36 crs.

Two Year Course Schedule

First Fall Semester	AXED 5320 I E 537 COMM	Risk and Crisis Communication in Agriculture, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences Large Scale Systems Engineering Communication Elective
First Spring Semester	AXED 5110 I E 563 COMM	Management of Change, Diffusion, and Adoption of Innovations Topics in Engineering Administration Communication Elective
Third Semester	COMM COMM COMM	Communication Elective Communication Elective Communication Elective
Fourth Semester	COMM COMM 5994	Communication Elective MA Project (6 credit hours)

Global MA Project

The MA Project on Global spans two 8-week sessions (6 credits). The Global MA project involves conducting skills related to organizational case study analysis assigned by the instructor of the MA project course. All components of the first 8-weeks (3-credits) of the MA project must be successfully completed before students can progress to the second 8-weeks (3 credits) of the MA project. Students who fail to receive approval from their advisor in the first 8-week term may not be able to continue in the second 8-week term and graduate during that semester. Students must also receive approval from their advisor for the second 8-weeks of MA project in order to pass the MA project and graduate. The final project and all deliverables must be submitted by the deadline set by the Global professor or instructor of record for the project course

Organization and Content of the paper should be as follows:

- Title Page
- Acknowledgments (optional)
- Table of Contents
- Student Resume
- Body of Report: (Order may be changed by advisor and/or committee)
 - Section 1: Introduction (Why this matters)
 - Section 2: Application of Theory or Concepts
 - Section 3: Situation Analysis and Target Audience Analysis
 - Section 4: Goals and Objectives (Rationale)
 - 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, Limitations, and Conclusion
- References
- Appendices

Although project proposals vary in length, the average manuscript should be sufficiently detailed to demonstrate a grasp of the background, relevant literature, and methodology for the student's project. Keep in mind, each advisor may ask for a different order and optional content for individual projects. Projects can vary widely, and each project will require different content and organizational approaches. The student will deliver the prospectus to their advisor before end of the first 8-week course in order to enroll in the second 8-week project course.

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 (APA)*. 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.

Project sections 1 through 6 must be completed and submitted before the end of the first semester of student hours to the student's advisor. This is similar to a thesis proposal. A typical project proposal should be approximately 20 pages, double-spaced, not including references. Once the student's advisor approves the project, the student can continue. Students who fail to obtain their advisor's approval in the first semester may have to complete the program by taking comprehensive exams at their advisor's request.

Final Project Submission

The final project shall consist of all the sections detailed above (Sections 1-8 and additional material as appendices). After the candidate completes the project, the advisor must approve it in order for the student to pass project hours. The final project and all deliverables must be provided to the advisor no later than two weeks before the defense date.

Projects on the main campus and global are not subject to oral defenses, and the Master's Final Exam form is not required to be submitted in order for the student to receive their degree. Should students have any conflict working with their advisor or feel that they have a grievance, all grievances will be handled by the Department Head of Communication Studies. Should the student feel that the grievance was not satisfactorily addressed by the Department Head, they may appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School or to any other official in the Graduate School, as deemed appropriate by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Undergraduate Courses

Students may take up to six hours of undergraduate courses numbered 4500-4999 with approval from their advisor. Grades earned in these upper-level undergraduate courses can be applied toward the student's graduate degree. The student must earn a B- or higher. Grades of C+ or lower will not count toward the degree but will be included in the student's GPA.

Writing Style Guides

Graduate students are expected to write extensively 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 predominantly used by journals in the social sciences. Second, the graduate school recognizes the APA style guide as one that 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

NMSU's 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 takes 4 years to complete, and a master's degree takes an additional 2 years.

Students may take up to four of the following courses:

Course to Enroll in	Course Topic	Counts for Undergraduate
COMM 5210	Political Communication	COMM 4210
COMM 5220	Communication Technology	COMM 4220
COMM 5230	Strategic Communication	COMM 4230
COMM 5310	Sports Communication	COMM 4310
COMM 5530	Leadership Communication	COMM 4530
COMM 5550	Case Studies in Leadership Communication	COMM 4550
COMM 5560	Ethics & Diversity in Leadership Communication	COMM 4560
COMM 5630	Family Communication	COMM 4630
COMM 5640	Nonverbal Communication	COMM 4640
COMM 5996	Special Topics (up to 9 credits)	COMM 4996
COMM 5997	Independent Study (up to 6 credits)	COMM 4997
COMM 5998	Internship	COMM 4998

The Department of Communication Studies allows up to 12 credits of coursework from 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 the contract with the graduate school to be accepted into the MAP program. During their last semester of undergraduate studies, they must apply to the Graduate School. All MAP credits will then transfer to their chosen Communication Studies Graduate program upon confirmation of their undergraduate degree. MAP students may choose either graduate program (Main Campus or Global) upon completion 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 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, the faculty member may request appropriate authorship on the research project. Such collaboration has produced, in the past, conference 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 unless approved by the Basic Course Director. Typically, students will be offered extra credit to participate in the study outside of class as opposed to in lab sections.
3. All Institutional Review Board requirements (training and applicable forms) for the use of 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 or the instructor of record.

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 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 5997 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 who do not maintain a 3.0 in their COMM courses may be dropped from the program.
5. Students are expected to attend department-organized colloquia, symposia, and special seminars.

Academic and Nonacademic Misconduct

All Communication Studies graduate students are expected to hold themselves to the highest standards of academic integrity. This includes, but is not limited to:

- 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
- Avoid self-plagiarism and the use of AI unless AI use is specifically allowed by the professor and stated in the class syllabus.
- Support and assist your classmates appropriately, ethically, and legally.

This is not an exhaustive list, and **unauthorized usage of AI in the classroom, or for any classroom assignments, especially those misrepresented as student work, is considered Academic Misconduct** in the Department of Communication Studies. Allegations regarding academic misconduct of graduate students shall be brought immediately to the Academic Conduct Officer (ACO). All Graduate Students will, by policy, receive a Level 2 Sanction.

Academic misconduct is discussed in APR [5.10](#) and [5.11](#). Academic and nonacademic misconduct is reviewed in the policy on [Student Conduct and Community Standards](#) and the [NMSU Student Handbook](#).

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 the submission of 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 a different course's requirement. Self-plagiarism and plagiarism violate NMSU's Academic Integrity policy and will be reported accordingly. 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:
 - An idea or opinion, even when put into one's own words (paraphrase)
 - A few well-said words, if these are a unique insight.
 - Many words, even if one changes most of them.
 - Materials assembled by others, for instance, quotes or a bibliography.
 - An argument
 - A pattern or idea
 - Graphs, pictures, or other illustrations
 - Facts
 - All or part of an existing paper or other resource
 - AI-assisted content
3. Self-plagiarism
4. Unauthorized possession of examinations, reserve library materials, laboratory materials, or other course-related materials.
5. 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.
6. Nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records in, or for, academic departments or colleges.

This list is not meant to include all possible examples of plagiarism. Additional examples can be found in [ARP 5.10-A](#). 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](#).

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 [Undergraduate and Graduate School Catalog](#) as well as ARP [5.10](#) and [5.11](#).

Nonacademic Misconduct or violations of the [Student Conduct and Community Standards](#) 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 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 all-inclusive but offers examples of the types of prohibited conduct. More policy information on the [Student Social Code of Conduct](#) can be found in ARP [5.20](#) through [5.26](#).

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 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's 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 GPA will not be rounded up to 3.0.

If a student wishes to appeal any probation or suspension, the student must formally write a letter of appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School and the Department Head of Communication Studies, who will choose whether or not to write a letter of support for the student's appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Department Head is not obligated to write a letter of support. This decision will be made at the discretion of the Department Head.

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 reapply to the Department. If a student wishes to appeal the suspension to the Department, this appeal should be directed to the Department Head in the form of an official letter, not an email.

A student can also be admitted to the Graduate School as a [Master's Provisional](#). Graduate Students who transfer or whose GPA in the last half of their undergraduate work is less than 3.0 but have a minimum GPA of 2.5 can be admitted provisionally. Provisional students do not qualify for a Graduate Assistantship and must complete their first three courses and 9 credits of graduate work with a minimum GPA of 3.0. Any provisional student who does not obtain a 3.0 GPA average after 9 credits of graduate coursework is subject to dismissal.

A graduate student who has not decided on a specific graduate degree program and has an undergraduate minimum GPA average of 2.5 may be considered for admission as a [Master's Undeclared](#) student. International students with an F-1 visa are not eligible for undeclared master's status. Master's undeclared students with a GPA below 3.0 do not qualify for a Graduate Assistantship.

Graduate Student Grievance or 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](#). In short, all course appeals should begin with the instructor of record. If a student is

not satisfied with the decision made, they may appeal to the Department Head. Should a satisfactory conflict resolution not be found through consultation and working with the Department Head of Communication Studies. The parties may appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School or to any other official in the Graduate School, as deemed appropriate by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Grievance and Conflict Resolution

Students and graduate faculty are expected to conform to all NMSU policies, including the ones outlined in this manual, the [NMSU Student Handbook](#), and the [NMSU Graduate Faculty Manual](#). Students and advisors/graduate faculty are encouraged and frankly expected in a Department of Communication Studies to pursue informal discussions to resolve any contested matters. If the matter is in a course, the student needs to discuss the issues first with the course instructor. If the matter concerns their advisor, they should discuss any issues with them. Failing informal resolution, the Department Head of the Department of Communication should be consulted to see how a student or professor should proceed. Typically, the Department Head will meet with the student and/or professor and others to gather information and seek a resolution to the matter. Often, this results in a meeting with all the people involved. If it should arise that a student's parents or guardians want to speak with a professor, written permission signed and witnessed by a third party who is not involved in the issue. Should the issue result in a grade dispute, a FERPA waiver approved by NMSU legal must be obtained and presented to the Department Head before any discussion of grades will occur anyone outside of NMSU. For information about FERPA and the waiver process can be located here: <https://records.nmsu.edu/ferpa.html>.

Change of Program

Any graduate student who wants to transfer into or out of the Department of Communication Studies must formally apply and be accepted by the new program. Students who want to transfer between the main campus and the NMSU Global Campus may also need to make a new application to the program that they are applying to. If a student applies to Global and wishes to be considered for the Main Campus program, they may have to make a new application to the Main Campus and vice versa.

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 should work with the Registrar's Office (575) 646-3411 or registrar@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 reapply to the University after one academic year.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships

The Communication Studies Department awards a limited number of Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) annually. The current [Collective Bargaining Agreement binds all GTAs](#). The Graduate Assistant Resource page provides additional information and resources for the GTA Union.

The department's process usually occurs each March and November, and as needed thereafter. Graduate faculty and the Basic Course Director review all complete student files and ranks/rates the candidates from the most 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 or Graduate Advisor then generates a mean score from these ratings and awards assistantships based on those candidates who receive the highest scores. The Department Head does not select the Graduate Assistants. The Department Head or Graduate Advisor calculates the scores and the Department Head makes assistantship offers. If a position opens unexpectedly, the Department Head returns to the original rankings and if time permits often consults with the Graduate Advisor and the Basic Course Director. The graduate faculty and Basic Course Director will often review new files to allow newly applied students to be considered for an assistantship if a late or an unexpected opening occurs.

Full-time graduate assistants receive a stipend, out-of-state tuition waiver, small scholarship, access to technology for teaching courses, and office space for up to two years or four academic semesters, not including the summer semester while in the program. 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:
 - a. Effective teaching of the introductory course lab (6 classroom hours per week) and/or any special assigned duties by the Basic Course Director, Graduate Advisor, and/or Department Head.
 - b. Attending weekly lectures (1 hour per week plus all exam sessions if applicable).
 - c. Attending weekly staff meetings (1 hour per week) with additional meetings when necessary.
 - d. Maintaining office hours (3 hours per week).
 - e. Maintaining hours in the Center for Communication Development (2 hours per week).
 - f. Teaching prep time (4 hours per week).
 - g. Timely grading of assignments.

- h. Maintaining sufficient evaluations.
- i. Engaging in department service and outreach activities.
- j. Attend and participate in 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 sections, lecture, staff meetings, office hours, CCD hours, and/or special department obligations.

If a GTA fails to meet the performance criteria above or provide documentation for absences, they may lose their assistantship. If a student loses their assistantship and wishes to appeal the decision, they can appeal to the Department Head and, if unsatisfactory, to the Graduate School.

Graduate Teaching Assistants are expected to adhere to the following departmental guidelines:

1. TAs must enroll in at least 9 hours of graduate courses each semester, except their final semester.
2. TAs are expected to enroll in at least six credit hours of Communication Studies courses each semester (exceptions to be approved by the Graduate Student Advisor or Department Head).
3. TAs 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 Graduate Student Advisor or Department Head).
4. TAs can be renewed for up to 4 semesters (excluding summers) for students who meet the above requirements. The department is not obligated to extend a graduate assistantship stipend beyond four semesters despite the student's progress toward their degree. **Graduate Teaching Assistantships are not guaranteed.** All assistantships will be reviewed for renewal each semester. Decisions on the renewal of each GTA are based on the performance discussed above and in their contract.
5. TAs are not allowed to use their position or their access to university technology or systems to gain an advantage over any other graduate student who is enrolled in the program, regardless of whether you are a TA or RA in this department or any other department. Any misuse of this position for personal or academic gain undermines the trust, fairness, and credibility upon which the Department of Communication Studies is built. If you are found to have misused your position in any way, you will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program, university, and or termination from your position.

Additional Department Policies

Grievance and or Conflict Resolution

Students and graduate faculty are expected to conform to all NMSU policies, including the ones outlined in this manual, the [NMSU Student Handbook](#), and the [NMSU Graduate Faculty Manual](#). Students and advisors/graduate faculty are encouraged and frankly expected in a Department of Communication Studies to pursue informal discussions to resolve any contested matters. If the matter is in a course, the student needs to discuss the issues first with the course instructor. If the matter concerns their advisor, they should discuss any issues with them. Failing informal resolution, the Department Head of the Department of Communication should be consulted to see how a student or professor should proceed. Typically, the Department Head will meet with the student and or professor and others to gather information and seek a resolution of the matter. Often this results in a meeting between all people involved. If it should arise that a student's parents or guardians want to speak with a professor, written permission signed and witnessed by a third party who is not involved in the issue. Should the issue result in a grade dispute, a FERPA waiver approved by NMSU legal must be obtained and presented to the Department Head before any discussion of grades will occur. For information about FERPA and the waiver process can be located here: Ms. Carreon and I will no longer discuss any grading issues as it's a violation of FERPA. You can read about FERPA and FERPA waivers here: <https://records.nmsu.edu/ferpa.html>.

Should a satisfactory conflict resolution not be found through consultation and working with the Department Head of Communication Studies. The parties may appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School or to any other official in the Graduate School, as deemed appropriate by the Dean of the Graduate School.

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

Should students have any conflict working with their advisor or feel that they have a grievance, all grievances will be handled by the Department Head of Communication Studies. Should the student feel that the grievance was not satisfactorily addressed by the Department Head, they may appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School or to any other official in the Graduate School, as deemed appropriate by the Dean of the Graduate School.

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. They should also check deadlines with the financial aid office. For information concerning available financial assistance, contact the [Financial Aid Office](#).

Student Employment

In addition to assistantships, fellowships, work-study, and other employment options may be 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](#) options and other [career opportunities](#) at NMSU.

NMSU Policies

Discrimination and Disability Accommodation

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADA) cover 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
Phone: (575) 646-6840
Email: das@nmsu.edu

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 identify, 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. 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
Website: equity.nmsu.edu
Email: equity@nmsu.edu

Complaints may also be filed with the [US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights](#) the [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#), and/or the [New Mexico Human Rights Bureau](#).

If a student has a condition that may affect their ability to exit safely from the premises in an emergency or that may cause an emergency during class, they are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with the instructor, the Basic Course Director (if they are a TA), the Graduate Director for Communication Studies, the Department Head of Communication Studies, and/or the Director of Student Accessibility Services.

Main Campus Emergency Contact Information:

NMSU Police Department

(575) 646-3311 www.nmsupolice.com

Aggie Health & Wellness (Medical and
Counseling Services
NMSU Dean of Students
For Emergencies

(575) 646-1512 www.wellness.nmsu.edu
(575) 646-1722
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 parked 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](#) 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 modern, 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](#) (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).

Artificial Intelligence Use

The use of any AI tool in this department is considered inappropriate for any academic assignment unless strictly allowed by the professor of your course. You will be informed as to how, where, and when to use these tools, as well as guidance for proper attribution. It is important to note that if AI tools are permitted to be used for an assignment or in class, proper citation must be documented. Otherwise, the use of AI that is not cited correctly will be considered academic misconduct, consistent with the academic misconduct policy in this handbook and the Department of Communication Studies.

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](#) 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.