

Graduate Handbook

Department of Communication Studies

Revised October 9, 2013

# Department of Communication Studies Graduate Handbook

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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 constituents, within our political system, and between and within cultures. All graduate students take courses in communication theory and research methods as well as interpersonal communication, organizational communication, political communication and/or cultural communication. We also offer courses in topic areas such as health communication, leadership, persuasion, nonverbal communication, and new communication technologies.

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

## DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The department offers both thesis and non-thesis options in its Masters of Arts program. Both options call for a minimum of 36 credits, which includes not only Communication courses but courses from outside the department as well. The thesis option requires at least 30 credits of coursework, 3-6 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 comprehensive written examination (8 hours minimum), followed by an oral defense. Both options require a minimum of 30 credit hours of Communication courses.

Graduate students are required to take COMM 505: Research Methods and COMM 583: Seminar in Theories of Communication their first year of enrollment. These two courses serve as a foundation for other coursework in Communication Studies. Students are also expected to take at least one other core content course their first year of enrollment.

Graduate students are allowed to take undergraduate courses listed at the 450-level or higher. However, the Graduate School only allows two courses 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 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

COMM Electives 9 - 12 hrs

*Electives in Related Fields*\*\*\* (graduate levels; numbered 450+) 3 - 6 hrs

Thesis Option: COMM 599 Thesis 3 - 6 hrs

Non-Thesis Option: Additional Graduate COMM Electives 3 - 6 hrs

\* COMM 505, 570, & 576 are offered only once every year, usually in the Spring.

\*\*COMM 583, 540, and 584 are offered only once every year, usually in the Fall.

\*\*\*Anthropology, Education, English, Government, Psychology, Journalism, Management, Marketing, Sociology, &/or Women's Studies.

## 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. All transfer credits must be approved by the Department Head.

No transfer credits will be approved for COMM 505: Research Methods or COMM 583: Seminar in Communication Theories. Both of these courses must be taken at NMSU in the Department of Communication Studies.

## GRADES & GRADING

Communication Studies graduate students are expected to apply themselves intensively to the study of the material covered by the courses in which they are enrolled. Accordingly, a high level of performance is required. The student must maintain a 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 in order for the student to proceed into comprehensive exams, thesis, or earning the degree. Courses transferred from other programs at NMSU or from other institutions will be included in determining a cumulative GPA.

### Grades

The grades awarded in all courses are indicative of the quality of work done. Their significance is as follows:

Letter Grade	Description
A--	Excellent Work
B--	Better than Average Work
C--	Average Work
D--	Below Average Work
F--	Failing Work
I--	Incomplete Work
W--	Withdrawal from Course
CR--	Credit for Work—No Grade
S--	Satisfactory Work
U--	Unsatisfactory Work
AU--	Audit—No Grade
N--	No Grade

Distinctions within a letter grade may be indicated by the use of plus or minus, and these will become part of the official record.

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. Courses in which a student earns a 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. Core classes in which a student has received a failing grade must be re-taken in order for the student to graduate with an M.A. in Communication Studies.

## **GRADUATE FACULTY**

- Greg Armfield (Ph.D. 2004, University of Missouri-Columbia) Assistant Professor of Organizational Communication. Specific Interests: Organizational Culture and the Intersection of Cultural Influences on Mass Media use.
- Ivan Dylko (Ph.D. 2011, Ohio State University) Assistant Professor of Political Communication. Specific Interests: Influence of Information Technology on Political Outcomes, Media Effects, and Methods.
- Jeanne Flora (Ph.D. 1998, University of Kansas) Associate Professor of Interpersonal Communication. Specific Interests: Family Communication, Relationship Development and Maintenance.
- Kenneth Hacker (Ph.D. 1986, University of Oregon) Professor of Political Communication. Specific Interests: New Media Networking, Political Communication, and National Security and Communication Issues.
- Anne Hubbell (Ph.D. 2000, Michigan State University) Associate Professor of Organizational Communication, Health Communication. Specific Interests: Trust and Deception in the Organization and Health Disparities among Minorities.
- Eric Morgan (Ph.D. 2002, University of Massachusetts-Amherst) Associate Professor of Intercultural Communication, Environmental Communication. Specific Interests: Cultural/Intercultural Discourses of Environment and Place in Diverse Contexts.

## **SELECTING AN ADVISOR**

Students are assigned a temporary faculty advisor, usually 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 to guide students toward their academic goals.

During the student's second semester in the program, he/she will select a permanent advisor. Students should consult with the faculty member they would like as their new advisor, in order 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 prospectus and defense meetings. Students are encouraged to select a permanent advisor who has similar academic interests as they do. Once you select this advisor you need to fill out a Change of Advisor Form (all forms are available on the Graduate School website). You should also fill out a Plan of Study form with this new advisor and it must be typed. The Advisor must sign off on it first and then the Department Head.

Each student must follow his/her advisor's advice with regard to their graduate courses. Failing to follow his/her advisor's advice is a possible means for dismissal from the program.

## **ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY**

After the student successfully completes the first semester of coursework, he/she needs to file an "Application for Admission to Candidacy" or "Program of Study" form with the Graduate School no later than after the completion of 12 credits of graduate work. This form formally lists curriculum requirements for the student's program of study. It is completed in consultation with the student's advisor and is approved by the Communication Studies Department Head before being sent to the Graduate School. A copy of this form will be placed in the student's permanent office file.

Students may complete a "Change of Program of Study" form to identify course changes in the program. This form must have advisor approval.

## **APPLICATION FOR DEGREE**

The student must file an "Application for Degree Form" (See Graduate School website) and pay the graduation fee the semester she/he intends to graduate. The Graduate School publishes graduation deadlines each semester.

## **THESIS OPTION**

Some students in our department choose the thesis option, which gives them the opportunity to pursue original research in their specific area of interest. Students selecting the thesis option will complete a minimum of 30 credit hours of courses and a minimum of 6 hours of thesis work (COMM 599), totaling at least 36 credit hours.

Students are required to use the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* in preparing the thesis proposal. The completed thesis must also conform to guidelines established by the Graduate School's *Guidelines for Preparing a Thesis or Dissertation*, which is published annually. Whenever human subjects are to be involved as research participants, the NMSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is required. On-line training about human subjects in research must be completed prior to data collection.

### **Advisors and Graduate Committee**

When a student has chosen a research area to pursue for 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 most likely serve as the student's course advisor as well. The thesis advisor and student work together on a time-line for completion of the thesis.

The student and advisor will select a graduate faculty committee comprised of 1-2 additional graduate faculty members from the Department of Communication Studies and 1 faculty member from a related field. (Please note that these are minimum department requirements. All must have Graduate Faculty Status from the Graduate School. Additional internal and/or external faculty can serve as committee members with the student, advisor, and Department Head's agreement and/or approval). The student should talk in person with potential committee members to ascertain their willingness and availability to serve on the thesis committee. These committee members will be present at the Prospectus Meeting and the Oral Defense Meeting.

## **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 form the basis for the first few chapters of the thesis: 1) introduction/rationale for the research; 2) a review of the relevant research literature and theory guiding the research; 3) a statement of research questions or hypotheses and the rationale for the choices made; 4) a detailed description of proposed research methodology; and 5) a detailed description of proposed data analysis techniques. Although prospectuses vary in length, the average paper is 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 a Human Subject's Approval Form prior to 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. The student should consult with his or her advisor on requirements for the Prospectus. The student is responsible for scheduling the meeting at a time convenient for all members of the committee. The student will deliver copies of the Prospectus to each committee member at least two weeks (10 business days) prior to 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 recommended modifications; it is uncommon for a student's thesis prospectus to be rejected.

## **Oral Defense Meeting**

Upon completion of the thesis and with the approval of the advisor, a two-hour Oral Defense Meeting is held with the thesis committee. Students are responsible for contacting all committee members to determine the best time for the meeting and then scheduling the defense through the department administrative assistant. During this two-hour meeting the student is questioned on the completed thesis and M.A. courses. Students must pass the defense in order to graduate.

Students are responsible for meeting all Graduate School procedures and deadlines. Students should submit the Masters Final Examination Form with all necessary signatures to the Graduate School at least 10 business days prior to his/her oral defense.

## **NON-THESIS OPTION**

Students opting for the non-thesis plan will complete a minimum of 36 hours of course work. A minimum of 30 hours of course work must be completed in Communication Studies.

The comprehensive examination is an opportunity for the student to demonstrate an ability to integrate broad and specific knowledge of the field 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 field of Communication. The comprehensive exam is an outcomes measure of the graduate program curriculum. We are assessing to what degree you can demonstrate the following: content

knowledge in Communication, thinking grounded in theory, and critical thinking about concepts and issues in Communication. Students will have the opportunity 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 2-3 graduate faculty members from the Department of Communication Studies (this includes the student's advisor) and 1 graduate faculty member from a related field (usually a faculty member from whom the student has taken courses). All must have Graduate Faculty Status from the Graduate School. This committee will write exam questions and will be present at a two-hour Oral Defense Meeting of the exam answers and course work. Also, we do not encourage more than 4 faculty members to be present in these meetings.

## **Written Examination and Oral Defense**

During the last semester of residence, students will undergo a comprehensive eight-hour written examination over the course areas they have studied. Students will meet with their advisor to determine areas over which they will be examined (at least one hour in Communication Theory and one hour in Quantitative Research Methods is required). It is common for students to receive re-writes on portions of their original answers. A student can only receive ONE re-write per question. If a student fails the re-write, the student fails the comprehensive exam and fails to graduate with an M.A. in Communication Studies. Students must successfully complete the written portion of the exam before scheduling the two-hour oral defense. During this two-hour meeting the student is questioned on his/her written exams and M.A. courses. Students must pass this defense as a requirement for graduation.

## **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 general understanding of the important issues presented in the question.
- Answers should present accurate knowledge of communication literature and theory. Answers should demonstrate that this 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 answer is 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 his/her advisor to discuss written/oral examination procedures. The student and advisor put together a committee of 2-3 Communication Studies graduate faculty members (this includes the student's advisor) and 1 graduate faculty member from a related discipline (usually the student has taken course work from this person). The student must ask the faculty members to write the exam questions and/or be on the committee. Please note that a minimum GPA of 3.0 is required in both COMM courses and all outside courses before exams are planned.

- 2) The student and advisor will agree on “grouping” the student’s work by content areas and/or faculty members. One hour must cover “Theories” while a second hour must cover “Methods.” Then the student and advisor will decide who the student will write for, in what areas, and for how many hours. The student and advisor may seek questions from other faculty for courses that are not represented by faculty members on the committee. The length of the written exams shall be 8 hours (NMSU Graduate Catalog states a minimum of 6 hours).
- 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 to 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 additional materials.
- 5) Students typically schedule their written exams about the 11<sup>th</sup> week of their final semester, and complete them within *two weeks*. Any re-writes should be completed as soon as possible after the initial two-week testing period.
- 6) Students should determine the exam schedule with his/her advisor, not with the administrative assistant. Students should indicate whether they will answer the exam using a computer or if they will handwrite the answers. The student may request access to a notebook/laptop computer to be used for taking their examination. If the student chooses to use a computer then she/he must schedule his/her examination when a computer is available. After the student and advisor agree on an exam schedule and after computer availability has been determined, then the student should schedule a room and computer (for students using a computer) via the department administrative assistant for the written exam.
- 7) The student must complete the “Committee for Final Examination” form, which delineates the committee members and the date and time of the oral defense of the examination. This form must be submitted to the Graduate School no later than 10 working days before the oral exam.
- 8) Faculty members will submit their questions for the written exam to the advisor at least 3 days prior to the exam. The questions should be clearly marked as to length of time the student has to answer and indicate what (if any) additional items the student is allowed to use during the exam.
- 9) The advisor will prepare each exam question and each yellow cover sheet for the department administrative assistant to distribute (i.e. indicating the name of the student, the name of the questioner, the length of time the student has to complete the question, the format of the student’s answers—handwritten or computer, and indicate any additional materials the student is allowed to use during the exam).

10) The department administrative assistant will distribute the questions according to the advisor's instructions. *Students should keep a copy of their answers.* The original copies of the questions and answer will be returned to the student's advisor.

11) The advisor will attach a yellow cover sheet to each answer and promptly distribute to the faculty questioner. Advisors should retain one copy of the answers. Questioners will evaluate each question as "pass" or "rewrite" 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 re-write is permitted per original question. If a student fails a re-write, then the student fails that question, is not allowed to orally defend their answers, and fails to graduate with an M. A. in Communication Studies.** Exceptions to this policy must have Department Head approval.

13) The oral examination will be held with all committee members present and will normally 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.

14) During the exam, student notes are restricted to his/her 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 PROGRAMS

Below are two sample programs. One is patterned after the thesis option; the other follows the non-thesis option. Neither program is an exact representation of a past student's program. These are composite models that illustrate the balance between required COMM courses and other courses that enhance a program of study. For the most part, the courses listed below are offered in the fall and/or spring semesters. Some students also attend summer school. Be advised, though, that the offerings in the summer are not very extensive. Note that both options include 30 credit hours of Communication courses.

**Thesis Option**

<b>First Semester</b>	COMM 540	Seminar in Political Communication
	COMM 583	Seminar in Theories of Communication
	COMM 584	Seminar in Interpersonal Communication
<b>Second Semester</b>	COMM 505	Research Methods
	COMM 576	Seminar in Communication and Culture
	COMM 591	Special Topics: Advanced Family Communication
<b>Third Semester</b>	COMM 545	Seminar in Ethnicity, Racism, and Communication
	COMM 599	Master's Thesis (3 credit hours)
	C EP 517	Cultural Diversity
<b>Fourth Semester</b>	COMM 595	Communication Internship
	COMM 599	Master's Thesis (3 credit hours)
	ANTH 500	Women, Gender, and Culture

**Non-Thesis Option**

<b>First Semester</b>	COMM 540	Seminar in Political Communication
	COMM 583	Seminar in Theories of Communication
	COMM 584	Seminar in Interpersonal Communication
<b>Second Semester</b>	COMM 505	Research Methods
	COMM 570	Seminar in Organizational Communication
	COMM 577	Seminar in Conflict Management
<b>Third Semester</b>	COMM 550	Seminar in Communication Technologies
	COMM 551	Seminar in Persuasion
	PSY 471	Industrial and Organizational Psychology
<b>Fourth Semester</b>	COMM 591	Special Topics
	COMM 595	Communication Internship
	MGT 582	Organizational Change and Development

While the required courses will be the same for all of our students, elective courses within and outside the department are chosen by the student **with the approval of her/his 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 6-9 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 8 graduate level credits as a minor. If you wish to have these credits count as a minor, check with the Graduate School. It is important that you consult with your advisor and with the relevant department(s) before choosing your outside courses.

## **UNDERGRADUATE COURSES**

Students are allowed to take up to 6 hours of undergraduate courses numbered 450 – 499 with approval from the student's advisor. Grades earned in undergraduate courses to be applied toward the student's graduate degree must be a C 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 APA (American Psychological Association) is suggested. First, this style is used predominately by journals in the fields of social sciences. Also, the APA style guide is recognized by the graduate school as one which is allowed for thesis work. Students should purchase the APA guide book for future reference.

## **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. Also, 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, she/he 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 basic course, please adhere to the following guidelines if you wish to use our students as participants.

1. Permission must be granted by the Basic Course Director before data collection can be approved and scheduled. Prepare a full description of the data collection procedures, including time required and copies of the research measures.
2. Data collection in lab sessions of the basic 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. You may also request copies to be put in your permanent office file.
4. Extra Credit can only be offered in the basic course by the Basic Course Director and other Communication Studies faculty.

## DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES

The department subscribes to all of the policies of the Graduate School. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with university policies and with graduation requirements and deadlines. For graduate teaching assistants, staff policy statements are located in the Faculty Handbook and the Administrative Policies and Procedures 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 6 credit hours in independent study courses (COMM 590 or any other independent study numbers on campus) can be counted toward fulfillment of the minimum hours needed for graduation.
2. Graduate students must enroll in at least one COMM course per year to remain active majors.
3. Students should note that the Graduate School policy for completion of the master's degree is 5 years (or 6 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 colloquia, symposia, and special seminars arranged by the department.

## ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC CONDUCT

According to the NMSU Student Code of Conduct:

**Academic Misconduct** - 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 source 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 student's work, unpublished materials, or oral sources. Intentional and unintentional instances of plagiarism are considered instances of academic misconduct. It is the responsibility of the student submitting the work in question to know, understand, and comply 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

**This list is not meant to include all possible examples of plagiarism. See the University Library's web page on plagiarism for further examples (<http://lib.nmsu.edu/plagiarism/>).**

3. Unauthorized possession of examinations, reserve library materials, laboratory materials, or other course-related materials.
4. 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.
5. Nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records in, or for, academic departments or colleges.

**Non-Academic Misconduct** - The following list constitutes violations for which students and student organizations are 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, or 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 true.
7. Unlawful possession, use, distribution, or sale of any narcotic or dangerous drug as defined by the statutes of the State of New Mexico.
8. Theft of, or unwarranted damage to, University property or property of any member of the University community.
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 (refer to Student Special Care Policy).
11. Entry into, or use of, any building, facility, or 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 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.**

All Communication Studies graduate students are required to sign an *Acknowledgement of Understanding* regarding academic and non-academic misconduct. This document acknowledges that the student understands what academic and non-academic misconduct are and that the student will not knowingly commit any such misconduct. This document must be signed and returned to the department within one month after the beginning of the student's first semester of graduate coursework in the Department of Communication Studies.

If after the document is signed and put on file, the student commits any known type of misconduct, then he/she can be immediately dismissed from the program. The Department of Communication Studies has a no-tolerance stance on academic and non-academic misconduct.

## SELECTIVE REVIEWS

If a student fails to achieve competency or sufficient skill development, displays inappropriate professional behavior or dispositions, or inadequate ethical judgment, is found guilty of any academic or non-academic misconduct, or is in any way not progressing satisfactorily, the student will have a selective review with the Department of Communication Studies Selective Review Committee. At any time a COMM faculty member may request the graduate faculty to convene and evaluate a student's lack of progress/deficit. The faculty member making the request will not be a member of the review committee and will have no decision making responsibilities.

The purpose of the selective review meeting is to offer the Department Head suggestions on how to handle the situation for which the committee was called to meet (e.g. plagiarism or concern about progress in program). To that end, the committee will hold a meeting where they will attempt to listen to the student's point of view, for the faculty to ask clarifying questions, and to directly express the faculty's concern about the situation. The outcome of the selective review may include the following:

- The student has made, or is currently making adequate adjustments that the concern is considered corrected or needs no further intervention,
- The student having difficulty demonstrating minimum competencies or behaving inappropriately will be so informed and recommendations for remediation will be given by the committee,
- The duration of remediation activities and assessment of remediation outcome are based on the needs of the student and available resources, or
- Failure to achieve minimum competencies following remediation efforts can result in students being dismissed from the program due to lack of progress.

Unethical behavior (e.g. plagiarism) may result in remedial plans or dismissal from the program. **While attempts at remediation are generally the first step in corrective action, there may be some actions that require immediate dismissal. Plagiarism can be, for example, a reason for dismissal from the Communication Studies Graduate Program.**

Formal letters regarding the recommendations rendered by the selective review committee detailing the student's performance and evaluation will be sent to the student. A copy of the decision will also be sent to the Graduate School, which may take additional action regarding the student's performance. A copy of the letter will also be placed in the student's permanent file in

the main department office, with the Dean of Arts and Sciences, and with the Dean of Students' office.

Most remediation plans do not have a timeframe, but rather a competency that needs to be met. Official closure of a selective review occurs when the student initiates the closure by writing a letter to the Department Head detailing how they feel they have met all the recommendations or remediation plan, and how they have resolved the concern. The Department Head will review this letter, potentially discuss the information with the student, and write a letter to the student indicating the extent to which the student was successful in correcting problems. If the Department Head determines that the student was not successful in meeting the recommendations or remediation plan, the student may be immediately dismissed.

### **ACADEMIC PROBATION AND SUSPENSION**

#### **The Department of Communication Studies**

Academic records of all Communication Studies graduate students are reviewed 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 so 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 committee), the student will be suspended from the Department of Communication Studies. 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, he/she must follow the appeal steps in the Graduate Student Appeals section of this handbook.

#### **The Graduate School**

Academic records of all graduate students are reviewed at the end of each semester. A student whose cumulative grade-point average at the end of any semester is less than 3.0 will be so informed and will be placed on probation. If, during the next enrollment period, a student fails to achieve a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or to show substantial improvement in the quality of work (as determined by the graduate dean in consultation with the student's primary department), the student will be suspended for one semester from the Graduate School. Students on suspension are barred from enrolling in graduate level courses at NMSU. Students on suspension who wish to continue Graduate School after suspension must re-apply to the Graduate School and the department of interest. Subsequent suspensions will be for one calendar year and the student must petition the graduate dean for re-admission. No NMSU graduate level course credit will be granted for courses taken at NMSU or other institutions while under suspension from NMSU.

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 under no obligation to write such a letter.

It is possible for a student to 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 in order to complete their graduate education.

### **GRADUATE STUDENT APPEALS**

Any graduate or prospective graduate student who believes that he or she has been unjustly treated within the academic process may proceed as far as necessary in the following steps to resolve his or her grievance. In general, there are three levels at which a grievance can be addressed: a course instructor or adviser, a department head, or the Associate Dean of Academics for the College of Arts and Sciences (for Communication courses). If the initial grievance is with an instructor or adviser, the process begins at Step 1. If the initial grievance is with a departmental committee, the process begins at Step 3. In all instances, the process must begin at the lowest possible level.

1. Under normal circumstances, the student should discuss the issue with the instructor or adviser.
2. If the student is unable to resolve the issue through consultation with the faculty member, the student must submit a written memorandum detailing the grievance to the course instructor or adviser within 10 calendar days of the beginning of the following full (i.e., fall or spring) semester. The person to whom the memorandum is addressed must respond in writing within 10 calendar days to the student.
3. If the student is not satisfied with the response from Steps 1-2, he or she must submit a written appeal to the Department Head within ten working days of the initial decision. If the student is initiating the appeal at the departmental level, he or she must do so, in writing, within 10 calendar days of the beginning of the following full (i.e., fall or spring) semester. The Department Head must respond in writing within ten working days to the student, the instructor or adviser (if one is involved), and the Dean of Graduate School.
4. If after the third step the student or any of the other parties involved is still not satisfied with the response, he or she must present to the Associate Dean Academics of the College in which the class and professor reside within ten working days a written complaint detailing the nature of the grievance. After receiving a written complaint, the Associate Dean of Academics for the College. The Associate Dean has 10 working days to respond to the grievance.
5. The student may then decide if the appeal/grievance has been resolved. If not, they may follow university policy regarding to whom they should next appeal.

### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

No leave of absence can be taken without the written permission of the student's faculty advisor and the Department Head. If such a leave is taken without notice and approval, then the student is automatically dismissed from the program and must re-apply to the Department in order to resume their graduate education in Communication Studies. A copy of the approval of the leave of absence must be placed in the student's permanent file in the Communication Studies office.

At times, special circumstances may occur in which the leave of absence is unavoidable. If this is the case, a student can provide evidence of the special circumstances and request a waiver of the re-application requirement. This waiver must be approved in writing by the student's faculty advisor and the Department Head. A copy of the waiver must be placed in the student's permanent file in the Communication Studies office.

## **GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS**

The Communication Studies Department awards a limited number of graduate teaching assistantships each year. Our selection process occurs usually each March and as needed thereafter. Faculty review all complete files and rate the candidates from the best to the least preferred. These are completely independent ratings, the faculty does 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 with the top scores. The Department Head does not select the Graduate Assistants, the Department Head calculates the scores and offers the assistantships. If positions unexpectedly open up we may go back to the scores but often we review the new files and the existing applicants all over to give newly applied students an opportunity to be considered for an assistantship.

Full-time graduate assistants receive a stipend, out-of-state tuition waiver, and office space. Graduate assistantships require 20 hours of service per week to the department, in most cases assisting in COMM 265G (Principles of Human Communication). Additionally, there may be opportunities for graduate assistants to teach in the summer.

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 the completion of the MA 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 basic course lab (6 classroom hours per week)
  - b. Attending weekly lectures (1 hour per week plus all exam sessions)
  - c. Attending weekly staff meetings (1 hour per week)
  - d. Maintaining office hours (3 hours per week)
  - e. Maintaining the Center for Communication Development (2 hours per week)
  - f. Teaching prep time (7 hours per week)

The Basic Course Director should be notified immediately and seek approval if a graduate assistant needs to miss a duty as listed above. (Graduate assistants are not allowed to cancel COMM 265G lab classes.) In the case of absences, the graduate assistant must follow the substitution policy. The substitution policy will be articulated by the Basic Course Director. 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/or Center for Communication Development hours.

## Department of Communication Studies Graduate Handbook

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If a GA fails to meet the performance criteria above, provide documentation for absences, or compensate substitutes, the GA may lose his/her assistantship. If a student loses his/her assistantship and wishes to appeal that loss, he/she can request a selective review.

Graduate assistants are expected to adhere to the following departmental guidelines:

1. GA's must enroll in at least 9 hours of graduate courses each semester.
2. GA's are expected to enroll in at least 6 credit hours of Communication Studies courses each semester (exceptions to be approved by advisor and department head).
3. GA's must enroll in at least 3 credit hours of actual courses per semester--exclusive of independent studies or thesis credits (exceptions to be approved by advisor and department head).
4. GA's are expected to attend colloquia, symposia, and special seminars arranged by the department.
5. Graduate Teaching Assistantships can be renewed for up to four semesters (excluding summers) for students fulfilling the above requirements. However, the department is not obligated to extend graduate assistantship stipends beyond four semesters of courses. Graduate teaching assistantships are not guaranteed. Each semester all assistantships will be reviewed for renewal.

## **ADDITIONAL DEPARTMENT POLICIES**

Any additional policy statements regarding the Department of Communication Studies, if necessary, will be distributed through the Department Head and/or the Basic Course Instructor. Any additional policy statements regarding graduate teaching assistantships, if necessary, will be distributed through the Department head and/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 needs analysis application to determine possible award (Free Federal Application for Student Financial Aid). The student must apply annually for financial assistance early and check deadlines with the financial aid office.

Several types of loans are available to graduate students including the National Direct Student Loan (Perkins Loan) and the Guaranteed Student Loan Program (Stafford Loan). The Financial Aid Office is located in the Educational Services building. For information concerning available financial assistance contact the Financial Aid Office at 646-4105. For information on fellowship and grant competitions through the Graduate School go to:  
<http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/fellowships/>.

## **Student Employment**

In addition to assistantships, fellowships or college work-study, other employment options are available. The Personnel Office posts job listing for on-campus positions. Graduate students enrolled for a minimum of 9 hours per semester may be served by the Personnel Office. Student spouses/partners who seek full or part-time work may also apply through the Personnel Office.

## **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 harassment and retaliation.

For more information on discrimination issues, Title IX or NMSU's complaint process contact:

Gerard Nevarez or Agustin Diaz  
Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) - O'Loughlin House  
Phone: 646-3635 E-mail: [equity@nmsu.edu](mailto:equity@nmsu.edu)

## **Policy Statement against Sexual Harassment**

**For specific information please go to this link:**

**<http://www.nmsu.edu/~eeo/documents/policy-statement-against-sexual-harassment-poster.pdf>**

Website: <http://www.nmsu.edu/~eeo/>

## **Americans with Disabilities Act**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities 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:

Trudy Luken

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) - Corbett Center, Rm. 244

Phone: 646-6840 E-mail: [sas@nmsu.edu](mailto:sas@nmsu.edu)

Website: [www.nmsu.edu/~ssd/](http://www.nmsu.edu/~ssd/)

New Mexico State University complies with the American with Disabilities Act. If a student has, or thinks they may have, a disability that interferes with her or his 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.

## **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. After initial vehicle registration at the Parking Department, permits may be issued by mail. 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 Dept.).

## **STUDENT RESOURCES**

### **Counseling Center**

The Counseling Center, in 100 Garcia Annex, is a free service to undergraduate and graduate students at NMSU. All visits and services are strictly confidential. Certain counselors are designated to provide services for CP doctoral students because they are not involved in the supervision of doctoral students. If students indicate a preference, they have male or female counselors. Hispanic (bilingual) counselors are also available. The staff consists of professional counselors and psychologists who hold masters and doctoral degrees. They also have doctoral students from the Counseling and Educational Psychology Department, all of whom have Master's degrees and previous experience. For further information call 646-2731. This is the link to the Counseling Center: <http://www.nmsu.edu/~counsel/cc/index.html>

### **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 Speech Building.

The library system offers a plethora of electronic resources ranging from biographies, citation and style guides, to dictionaries, encyclopedias, and maps (go to: <http://lib.nmsu.edu>). Formal

instruction and tutorials on research, evaluating periodicals, and accessing and using the 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.

### **Health Services**

The Student Health Center is located on campus, at the corner of Breland Drive and Stewart Street. It provides general outpatient care to the student population. It is accredited by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations. It is a member of the American College Health Association. It houses a staff of medical doctors, nurse practitioners, and other health care professionals, including a psychiatrist.

All full time students and those part-time students enrolled for a minimum of 6 semester hours who choose to pay the health center fee are eligible for services. Routine Student Health Center visits are free for those who have paid the NMSU health fee. There are nominal charges, however, for laboratory procedures, prescriptions filled in the pharmacy, medical supply items, and special diagnostic procedures. Services offered at the SHC are outpatient primary health care (immunizations, routine check-ups, health education, nutrition counseling, psychiatry, wellness exams, etc.), urgent care assessment, an immunization and travel clinic, an on-call medical advice line, pharmacy, and an anonymous on-line screening for depression, eating disorders or alcohol problems.

### **Information and Communication Technologies**

Computer labs are open 24 hours a day with a support staff available during most of these hours. It provides access to the mainframe systems. The NMSU mainframe system connects to various systems throughout the world. All graduate students have access to the computer center and can establish an account free of charge.

### **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. By providing a vast array of services towards health promotion that cater to any and all fitness levels, we take pride in knowing that we are making a positive influence on our patrons' lives and well-being.

The Activity Center offers modern, extensive exercise equipment, 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.