

# Handbook of GRADUATE STUDY

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CU BOULDER Dept. of Communication | rev. August 2023

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CMCI | COLLEGE OF MEDIA, COMMUNICATION, & INFORMATION

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION LEADERSHIP



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For more information about the University of Colorado Boulder's Communication Department, see:  
<https://www.colorado.edu/communication/>

For more information about the University of Colorado Boulder's Graduate School and its policies, see: <https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview of Graduate Program .....	5
Graduate Areas of Study and Faculty Members .....	5
Community & Social Interaction .....	5
Organizational Communication .....	6
Rhetoric & Culture .....	7
Graduate Courses .....	8
The Master's (MA) Degree .....	12
General Information .....	12
MA Program Requirements: Thesis Option .....	13
MA Program Requirements: Comprehensive Examination Option.....	13
MA Timetable/Checklist .....	14
The Doctoral (PhD) Degree .....	15
General Information .....	15
PhD Coursework Requirements .....	16
PhD Advisor and Committee Composition .....	17
Identity Statement and PhD Plan of Study Document .....	18
Research Expectations .....	19
Admission to PhD Degree Candidacy .....	20
PhD Comprehensive Examination (legacy policy) .....	20
PhD Comprehensive Examination (current policy) .....	22
Registering for Dissertation Hours .....	27
PhD Students Taking Only Dissertation Hours .....	27
Dissertation .....	27
PhD Timetable/Checklist .....	28
General Information for Graduate Students.....	30
Graduate School Rules and Regulations.....	30
New Graduate Students' Responsibilities.....	30
Colorado Residence and In-State Tuition Classification.....	30
Funding.....	31
Teaching Assistantships.....	31
Pre-Doctoral Fellowships .....	32
Summer Dissertation Fellowships .....	32
Career Grants .....	33
BIPOC Support Grants.....	33
Additional Sources of Funding.....	33
Duration of Committee Meetings .....	34
Evaluation of Academic Progress .....	34
Leave of Absence Policy .....	35
Faculty Sabbatical Policy .....	35
Grievance Procedures .....	36
Communication Graduate Student Association.....	36
Department Intellectual Opportunities.....	37
Forms.....	38

COMM 5930: Internship Contract .....	38
COMM 6840/8840: Independent Study Contract .....	40
MA Program of Study Form... ..	42
PhD Plan of Study Document Guidelines.....	44
PhD Dissertation Hours Contract .....	45
Advising Conversation Guide .....	47

## OVERVIEW OF GRADUATE PROGRAM

The Department of Communication at the University of Colorado Boulder offers a highly respected, top-rated graduate program that leads to the Master of Arts (MA) and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees, with emphases in (a) Community & Social Interaction, (b) Organizational Communication, and (c) Rhetoric & Culture. Graduate students craft individualized programs of study within or across those areas.

Graduate study within and across those areas focuses on engaged scholarship (research and teaching) that addresses communication-based issues and problems arising from recent social and technological changes, especially those associated with interaction, collaboration, deliberation, and advocacy. Using both social-scientific and humanistic research methodologies, graduate students study a variety of social phenomena to develop distinctly communication-based theories and explanations about the complexities of human and non-human interaction. The array of scholarship conducted in the department is integrated by cross-cutting themes that include practice, organizing, culture, circulation, race, justice, and affect. Running throughout the program are an interest in (a) pushing the boundaries of current communication theorizing, (b) anti-racist scholarship (with special attention to countering anti-Black racism), (c) field-based research, and (d) critical/cultural studies approaches.

CU Boulder's communication graduate program emphasizes the development of students primarily as scholars but also as advocates and professionals by graduate peers, faculty advisors, committee members, and the faculty as a whole. This document conveys the spirit of the graduate program and outlines expectations held by the faculty for graduate study. This document contains important rules and information, but it is not exhaustive. Specific aspects of students' programs are negotiated among students, their advisor, and committee members. Student also should be aware, and are responsible for following, rules and regulations of CU Boulder's Graduate School (which are extensive; see <https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/graduate-school-policies-procedures>).

## GRADUATE AREAS OF STUDY AND FACULTY MEMBERS

The department offers three areas of study for graduate students: Community & Social Interaction, Organizational Communication, and Rhetoric & Culture. Those areas and the tenured and tenure-track faculty members comprising them are explained below.

### **Community & Social Interaction (CSI)**

Faculty and students in this area examine practices and processes of interaction in natural contexts to understand, theorize, and change social and political problems. For theses and dissertations, students select a theoretical issue about discourse that crosses contexts and/or study discourse within a societal site; sample foci include use and circulation of communication ideas in society, communication activism for social justice, cultural resources for public participation, training programs for mediation or parenthood, local and international governance bodies, and courts and policing. Tenured and tenure-track area faculty members are:

DAVID BOROMISZA-HABASHI (PhD, University of Massachusetts), Associate Professor, specializes in the ethnography of communication and cultural discourse theory, with a focus on the use and global circulation of linguistic resources for participation in public discourse.

DANIELLE HODGE (PhD, University of Colorado Boulder), Assistant Professor, employs a critical race theoretical approach to identity, culture, and language. In particular, she is concerned with how systems of oppression and conceptions of liberation inform the identities, discursive practices, and experiences of African Americans.

NATASHA SHRIKANT (PhD, University of Massachusetts), Associate Professor, uses ethnography and discourse analysis to analyze how participants navigate racial, ethnic, gender, and other identities through everyday talk in institutional contexts. Also examines relationships between everyday talk, identity negotiation, and empowerment of minority groups.

LEAH SPRAIN (PhD, University of Washington), Associate Professor, focuses on democratic engagement, studying how specific communication practices facilitate and inhibit public action. Her engaged scholarship often involves community partnerships that respond to environmental issues. She has current projects on energy democracy and engagement across difference.

CINDY H. WHITE (PhD, University of Arizona), Associate Professor, studies interpersonal communication and discourse around relationships, examining how social expectations shape relational processes and the connection between communication training programs and communication practices. She has current projects on communication in the family about money and consumption as well as how classroom learning about communication is shaped by prior communication experiences.

## **Organizational Communication (OC)**

Faculty members teaching and researching in this area are widely recognized for critical and interpretive scholarship on the constitutive role of communication in human organizing. Theorizing communicating and organizing through constitutive, cultural, and material perspectives, and integrating qualitative, critical, and quantitative methodologies, connections among organizational change, power, culture, technology, gender, identity, knowledge, and discourse are explored across a variety of organizing contexts (e.g., corporate, nonprofit, community, and government). Faculty members are especially committed to reforming organizing practices to serve the greater common good. Tenured and tenure-track area faculty members are:

KAREN LEE ASHCRAFT (PhD, University of Colorado Boulder), Professor, examines how relations of difference, such as gender, race, and sexuality, come to matter in work and organizational life. She studies these issues through qualitative approaches to a range of scenes, including different modes of organization (e.g., bureaucratic, feminist) and specific industries (e.g., social services, commercial aviation, tech, academic labor).

JOËLLE CRUZ (PhD, Texas A&M University), Associate Professor, specializes in alternative organizations (indigenous, grassroots, social movements), with a focus on disenfranchised organizational actors and how they negotiate local-global tensions as well as their resistance strategies.

JODY JAHN (PhD, University of California, Santa Barbara), Assistant Professor, uses mixed methods to examine how members of hazardous organizations communicate to negotiate action and interface with organizational safety policies and documents.

MATTHEW KOSCHMANN (PhD, University of Texas), Associate Professor, focuses on organizational collaboration and cross-sector partnerships, especially in the civil society sector, studying how stakeholder interactions constitute collaborative partnerships and enable collective action.

TIM KUHN (PhD, Arizona State University), Professor, examines the communicative constitution of agency and authority in organizing in the midst of late capitalism. He's particularly interested in considering how new materialisms influence theory and research concerning activist influence on corporations, along with how the communicative negotiation of knowledge, identities, and values unfolds in emerging and unconventional organizations.

BRYAN C. TAYLOR (PhD, University of Utah), Professor, specializes in critical and cultural studies of organizational communication—particularly, the topics of organizational aesthetics, culture, ethnography, identity, rhetoric, and power/control. He is particularly interested in security organizations (e.g., military, defense, counter-terrorism, and policing), and the changing conditions of the post-modern and neo-liberal workplace (e.g., digital transformation).

## **Rhetoric & Culture (R&C)**

This area offers a distinctive program that integrates contemporary rhetorical approaches with cultural studies and the interpretive turn in social science. Area members are linked by a common interest in historical and historically inflected studies of rhetoric and its media, including discourses, technologies, and bodies. Rhetoric is studied in the context of popular, public, and intellectual cultures, via historical, ethnographic, textual, and critical methods and frameworks of analysis. The program, thus, combines traditional rhetorical education with a contemporary focus, offering diverse methodological training to produce cutting-edge critical work and innovative theory development. Tenured and tenure-track area faculty members are:

JOHN M. ACKERMAN (PhD, Carnegie Mellon), Associate Professor, studies the economic circumstances of late-industrial communities by considering the catalytic properties of artificial and biological environments, bodily movements and traversals, ordinary commemorative artifacts, and the performance of local economies—all helping to constitute everyday life.

AMBER E. KELSIE (PhD, University of Pittsburgh), Assistant Professor, works and studies in/with Rhetoric and Media Studies, Black Studies, Decolonial and Abolitionist movement and rhetoric, Poststructuralism, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Science and Technology Studies. They are invested in undermining the philosophical and material productions of Man in the modern/colonial world system.

OMEDI OCHIENG (PhD, Bowling Green State University), Associate Professor, specializes in Africana philosophy & rhetoric, rhetorical theory & criticism, and comparative intellectual history. Much of his thinking, research, and teaching limns the contours and textures of radical imaginations across ecology, politics, ethics, and aesthetics.

PHAEDRA C. PEZZULLO (PhD, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Associate Professor, has expertise in a range of interdisciplinary and intersectional topics, including environmental communication, environmental justice, climate communication, social movements, tourist studies,

public advocacy, qualitative research, and cultural studies. She also is co-director of the Just Transition Collaborative, which advocates public engagement and policy for environmental equity, and Inside the Greenhouse, which fosters creative climate communication.

BRYAN C. TAYLOR (PhD, University of Utah), Professor, specializes in critical and cultural communication studies, rhetorical field methods, and technology studies. His principal research program focuses on the rhetoric and culture of U.S. national security, with a particular emphasis on nuclear weapons. He is currently working on a project focused on the dynamics of media and mimesis (imitation) in the ongoing Global War on Terror.

## GRADUATE COURSES

*(\* Asterisk indicates variable-topic courses; may be taken multiple times for credit on different topics – check the online course catalogue for information on how many times a given course can be taken.)*

COMM 5000 is only for the Organizational Leadership program. It isn't part of the graduate curriculum for the Department of Communication.

COMM 5210: Readings in Communication Theory: Critical overview of leading theoretical traditions in communication studies, with attention given to metatheoretical issues, including epistemological foundations, structure of communication theory as a field, and reflexivity between communication theory and cultural practice.

COMM 5220\*: Seminar: Functions of Communication: Topical seminar on the functions of communication across interpersonal, group, organizational, and public contexts that reviews current theory and research on topics such as communication and conflict, persuasion, and ethical dimensions of communicative practices.

COMM 5225: Environmental Communication: Investigates key concepts in environmental communication and considers which theoretical frameworks and practical actions can inform the effects of various constituents to address environmental issues.

COMM 5230: Applied Communication: Examines the study of applications of communication concepts, theories, methods, interventions, and other practices to address real-world issues and problems, discussing conceptual issues framing applied communication, examining purposes and methods informing such scholarship, and providing opportunities to evaluate and propose research.

COMM 5300\*: Seminar: Rhetoric: Reviews current theory and research on topics such as rhetoric and publics, rhetoric as an interpretive social science, and rhetoric of social movements and political campaigns.

COMM 5310: Contemporary Rhetorical Criticism: Advanced critical analysis of rhetorical texts in terms of how they shape issues and appeals for judgment, create identities for speakers and their audiences, and construct perceptions of time, space, and the human condition.

COMM 5320: Readings in Rhetoric: Survey of classical and contemporary readings in rhetoric.



COMM 5435: Readings in Community and Social Interaction: Focuses on how everyday communication practices shape and are shaped by community contexts. Contains theoretical and empirical readings that illustrate how interactions among group members negotiate and maintain distinct communities and how group communication practices reflect shared norms among community members. Also reviews methods to study everyday interactions among community members (e.g., discourse analysis, qualitative coding, surveys and applied approaches / methods).

COMM 5600\*: Seminar: Organizational Communication: Reviews current theory and research on topics such as communication and organizational decision making, organizational culture, gender relations, communication technology, and power and control in organizations.

COMM 5610\*: Organizational Ethnography: Focuses on the historical influence of the ethnographic tradition in organizational communication studies. Reviews landmark studies of organizational culture and power/control, emphasizing issues of ethics and politics associated with the writing and reading of organizational ethnography. Reviews trends in contemporary organizing such as neoliberal globalization and the adoption of artificial intelligence, and their implications for the future of ethnography.

COMM 5620: Readings in Organizational Communication: Survey of historical and contemporary readings in organizational communication, treating theory, research, and application from a variety of perspectives.

COMM 5720: Readings in Communication and Technology: Survey of multidisciplinary research that examines various relationships between communication and technology, with students developing critical skills in perceiving assumptions and perspectives that motivate major theories in this area, and examining how these phenomena have changed over time.

COMM 5930: Internship: Offers opportunities for graduate-level communication-related work projects. Limited to 3 hours in spring and fall semesters, 6 hours in summer. The 6-hour limit at the MA level and 9-hour limit at the PhD level applies to any combination of independent study and internship credit (see Internship Contract).

COMM 6010: Communication Research and Theory: Provides an introduction to graduate study of communication, offering an overview of the discipline and its scholarship.

COMM 6020: Quantitative Research Methods: Introduction to the practice of quantitative research in communication: conceptualization and critique of research projects, measurements, methods (e.g., experimental and survey), statistical data analysis, and written reports.

COMM 6030: Qualitative Research Methods: Introduction to epistemology, methodology, and representational practices associated with qualitative communication research; fieldwork methods emphasized include participant observation, interviewing, and document/artifact analysis.

COMM 6200\*: Seminar: Selected Topics: Facilitates understanding of current and past theory and research on a selected topic in communication and the ability to develop new theory and research on that topic.

COMM 6310\*: Rhetorical Criticism: Reviews current critical methods and issues related to rhetorical criticism, such as contemporary theory of rhetorical criticism, continental discourse theory, and critical theory.

COMM 6320\*: Rhetorical Theory: Reviews current theory and research on topics such as contemporary rhetorical theory, rhetoric and public life, rhetoric as an interpretive social science, and rhetoric of social movements and political campaigns.

COMM 6330: Rhetoric of Inquiry: Surveys foundational texts and contemporary research in the rhetoric of inquiry, focusing on the role of persuasion in the production of knowledge, and critical analysis of major theoretical and methodological traditions and topics, with an emphasis on social dimensions of inquiry.

COMM 6340\*: Rhetoric and Civic Community: Considers performances of public life as rhetorical inducements of civitas; topics include negotiation of self-regulation among interdependent partners, rhetorical exclusions and/or counterpublics, and dialectical tensions of public/private as these contribute to and have civic consequences for publicness, community, and social will.

COMM 6350: Seminar in Argumentation: Surveys foundational texts and contemporary research in argumentation, analyzes distinctions between philosophical and rhetorical approaches to argument, and critical analysis of major theoretical and methodological traditions and topics, with an emphasis on social dimensions of argument.

COMM 6360: Social and Cultural Theory: Traces select traditions in social and/or cultural theory, emphasizing how those traditions affect and are affected by the field of rhetoric studies, examining origins and resolutions of major debates in social and/or cultural theory from a rhetorical perspective.

COMM 6410: Discourse Analysis: Acquaints students with the main types of discourse analysis—conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, and rhetorically informed discourse approaches—teaching how to conduct discourse analysis, including transcribing, selecting excerpts, documenting inferences, and linking findings to scholarly controversies.

COMM 6420\*: Interaction Analysis: Examines one of a selected set of methodological specializations used in the study of human interaction.

COMM 6425: Writing, Reporting, and Publishing: Helps students hone their abilities to write, report, and publish a scholarly article in the field of communication and beyond. Students gain familiarity with the genre of the scholarly article, engage with theories of writing genres, delve into the politics of scholarly publishing, and learn various strategies for crafting a scholarly article. Students are expected to develop a manuscript for submission to a peer-reviewed journal or other scholarly forum.

COMM 6440: Grounded Practical Theory: Examines theory, method, and application of grounded practical theory, an approach to building normative theory through description, critique, and theoretical reconstruction of situated communicative practices; semester project involves analysis of a sample of discourse from a public or field observation setting.

COMM 6445: Intercultural Communication: Focuses on cultural foundations of social interaction, with a special emphasis on ideology (including potentially contested cultural norms, values and premises) as a basic condition of meaningful interaction. Identities are discussed as culturally variable, historically embedded interactional accomplishments, constructed from communicative resources such as language and other types of signs that serve the purpose of participation in communal life.

COMM 6455: Community-based Research Methods: Facilitates and supports graduate student-led community-based research. Working from multiple CBR traditions, students develop a thoughtful rationale for conducting CBR and practice a repertoire of CBR methods (e.g., group decision-making, managing ethical dilemmas, collaborative data collection and analysis, and communicating findings).

COMM 6460: Ethnography of Communication: Introduces graduate students to the theory, methodology, and practice of the ethnography of communication. Students read existing literature in the tradition, and design and implement a field-based project that centers on culturally patterned forms and styles of communicative conduct. Prior graduate-level coursework in basic qualitative research methods is required.

COMM 6470: Public Deliberation and Dialogue: Explores the theory, research and practices of deliberative democracy and dialogue. Considers "ideal" communicative conduct and common interactional troubles, cross-cultural differences and routine communication practices.

COMM 6730: Constitutive Approaches to Organizational Communication: Explores theory and research that explain how organizing processes are constituted through communication. Course themes might include collaboration, authority, identity, knowledge, risk/resilience, or socio-material arrangements.

COMM 6740: Theory and Philosophy of Organizing and Organizations: Reviews theory and philosophy of organizations and organizing where communication processes are seen as constitutive, focusing on discursive and material practices in the formation and change of organizational structure, culture, and operation.

COMM 6750\*: Critical-Cultural Approaches to Organizational Communication: Addresses critical and cultural approaches to communicating and organizing. Topics include relations of culture, power, resistance, identity, and difference and theorized in and around organizational life. Major theoretical works on these topics are highlighted throughout, although specific themes may vary.

COMM 6780: Roles, Relationships, and Identities in Interaction: Examines how social roles influence communicative practices, the development of relationships, and the impact of relationships on identity, considering these processes in contexts, such as personal relationships and institutional settings, with topics varying

COMM 7118: Foundations of Environmental Justice: Examines environmental justice movements, policies, institutions, objectives, and scholarship. Identifies factors that contribute to environmental inequality, and efforts to reduce it. Formerly offered as a special topics course.

COMM 6840: Master's Independent Study (see Independent Study Contract)

COMM 6940: Master's Degree Candidate for Degree

COMM 6950: Master's Thesis

COMM 6910: Communication Research and Theory Practicum

COMM 8840: Doctoral Independent Study (see Independent Study Contract)

COMM 8990: Doctoral Dissertation

## THE MASTER'S (MA) DEGREE

### General Information

The MA degree provides students with knowledge of selected bodies of communication scholarship and develops their ability to analyze complex communication situations. The program is intended to serve two groups of students: (a) those planning to pursue the PhD degree, either at CU Boulder or at another institution; and (b) those interested in finding employment in other sectors (e.g., for-profit businesses, government, nonprofit organizations, and other types of community groups). Students wishing to continue in the department's PhD program following completion of the MA degree must reapply at that time and be accepted into the program.

Administration of the MA program conforms to all CU Boulder's Graduate School rules regarding matters such as residency requirements, time for completion of degree, and maximum number of transfer credit hours. The MA program has two options for the completion of requirements: *thesis* or *comprehensive examination*.

In the first semester of the MA program, students should consult their *temporary advisor* about these two program options, appropriate coursework, and faculty members who might best serve as a *permanent advisor* and as *committee members* for the program options, with students subsequently meeting with those faculty members to discuss common interests. By the second semester (before the completion of 12 credit hours), students should select a permanent advisor and decide whether they will choose the thesis or comprehensive examination option. For a guide to conversations with potential and current advisors, see the Advising Conversation Guide at the end of this handbook.

In the beginning of their second year (assuming a course load of 9 hours per semester), students should complete an *MA Program of Study Form* (which indicates all coursework to be completed). Students selecting the thesis option should hold a committee meeting early in that second year to approve the thesis proposal. Toward the end of their second year, a final committee meeting is held for students to orally defend the thesis or the comprehensive examination. Students must be registered on the CU Boulder campus as regular degree-seeking students during the semester that the final comprehensive examination is passed.

For both the thesis option and the comprehensive examination option, coursework may include a *maximum of 6 hours of independent study and/or internship combined. A maximum of 9 hours may be transferred*

from graduate work completed in/at other programs and/or institutions (including other University of Colorado campuses, such as CU Denver). *A maximum of 9 credit hours of courses may be taken outside the department. Transfer and outside department courses combined may not exceed 12 credit hours.* Courses in which a grade of C or below is received are not counted toward the MA degree.

### **MA Program Requirements: Thesis Option**

Students pursuing the MA thesis option are required to complete *at least 30 graduate credit hours*, including *24 credit hours of coursework* (at the 5000 level or higher) and *6 thesis hours* (including oral defense of the thesis; additional thesis hours cannot be taken). Course requirements include:

- Communication Research and Theory (COMM 6010)
- At least one methods course (COMM 5310, 6020, or 6030)
- At least two readings courses (COMM 5210, 5320, 5435, 5620, or 5720)
- Four additional graduate-level courses

Students choosing the thesis option should select a permanent graduate faculty advisor from the department (a person with a regular or tenured Graduate Faculty appointment) prior to completing 12 credits of coursework. In consultation with their advisor, students should select two additional committee members (who, most often, are from the department; at least one of those members must be from the department) and, by the beginning of the second year (assuming a course load of 9 hours per semester), complete the MA Program of Study Form, and a written thesis proposal (with the thesis designed such that it can be completed during students' final planned semester in residence). After the committee has read the thesis, a final oral defense is conducted in conformity with the Graduate School's rules. Students must have an affirmative vote from the majority of committee members to pass the thesis. Students who fail the thesis defense may attempt it once more after a period of time that is determined by the committee. Students who fail the second defense are dismissed from the MA program. The final submitted thesis must comply with the Graduate School's rules regarding the formatting of theses and dissertations.

### **MA Program Requirements: Comprehensive Examination Option**

Students pursuing the coursework with comprehensive examination option are required to complete *at least 30 graduate credit hours* (at the 5000 level or higher), *a written comprehensive examination*, and *an oral defense of that written comprehensive examination*. Course requirements include:

- Communication Research and Theory (COMM 6010)
- At least one methods course (COMM 5310, 6020, or 6030)
- At least two readings courses (COMM 5210, 5320, 5425, 5620, or 5720)
- Six additional graduate-level courses

MA students choosing the comprehensive examination option should select a permanent graduate faculty advisor from the department (a person with a regular or tenured Graduate Faculty appointment) prior to completing 12 credit hours. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS; also known as the Associate Director of Graduate Studies) serves automatically as a committee member, and students, in consultation with their advisor, select a third committee member, who, most often, is from the department. By the beginning of the second year of graduate work (assuming a course load of 9 hours per semester), students should complete the MA Program of Study Form. The

comprehensive examination includes three questions: (a) two standardized questions, created by the DGS, that are completed by all MA students taking the examination (at the same time) that semester about communication theory (90 minutes) and about research methods (90 minutes); and a question, created by students' advisor, that is unique to students' expertise area (2 hours). A 1-hour oral defense then must be held within 2 weeks of completing the written comprehensive examination.

Committees determine if and when students have passed the comprehensive examination. Should parts of the written comprehensive examination be judged as unsatisfactory (by more than one committee member), students may retake only those parts; if all parts of the examination are failed, all parts must be retaken. Students retaking the written comprehensive examination must repeat the oral defense. Prior to retaking the comprehensive examination, students may be required to complete additional coursework and/or research projects. Should the committee be reconstituted prior to the retaking of the written examination, new committee members determine (using majority rule) whether students must retake questions written by prior committee members that were passed successfully and/or whether any new questions need to be asked. Students can retake the written and/or oral comprehensive examination only once; students who fail either of them a second time (as judged by more than one committee member) are dismissed from the MA program.

### **MA Timetable/Checklist**

*Note:* The following list highlights activities and forms (in the approximate order to be completed) that students should attend to as they move through the MA program.

First and/or Second Semester (prior to completion of 12 credit hours)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Select permanent advisor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Decide on thesis *or* comprehensive examination option
- \_\_\_\_\_ Select two members for the thesis committee *or* an additional member for the comprehensive examination committee (the DGS serves automatically)
- \_\_\_\_\_ For thesis option, begin draft of thesis proposal

Third Semester (or as soon as possible after completing activities above)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit MA Program of Study Form
- \_\_\_\_\_ For thesis option, complete thesis proposal and hold committee meeting to have it approved (typically, scheduled for 60 minutes)

Final Semester

- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete Graduate School paperwork regarding composition of committee and intention to graduate at least 2 weeks before exam or thesis defense
- \_\_\_\_\_ Distribute thesis to committee members 2 weeks before scheduled oral defense
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hold committee meeting to orally defend thesis or written comprehensive examination or (typically, scheduled for 60 minutes)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Revise thesis as necessary and submit it to the Graduate School and to the Communication Department

*Note:* Committee meetings should be scheduled between the third to fourth weeks of the semester. Meetings should not be planned for the first 2 weeks of classes, the last week of classes, or during the final examination period.

## THE DOCTORAL (PHD) DEGREE

### General Information

Students are admitted to the PhD program after having completed an MA degree. Depending on the extent of students' prior academic work in communication, and their rate of progress, the degree can be achieved in 3 to 4 years.

All PhD applicants, with the exception of CU Boulder MA students who are applying to the PhD program, must submit their materials online. CU Boulder MA students should submit the following materials to the Graduate Program Manager and to the Associate Chair: (a) statement of purpose, (b) updated curriculum vitae, (c) funding form, and (d) a writing sample; they also need three letters of recommendation to be sent from letter writers to the Graduate Program Manager and to the Associate Chair.

According to Graduate School requirements, PhD students must enroll in residence (i.e., as a student) for at least six semesters beyond the BA degree. Two semesters of residence credit may be allowed for an MA degree from another institution; however, at least four semesters of residence credit, two of which must be consecutive in one academic year, must be earned for work completed at CU Boulder. One semester's residency is earned by registering as a full-time student during the fall or spring semester, or during two summer sessions. Full-time PhD students must carry one of the following semester course loads: a minimum of 5 credit hours of graduate-level coursework or dissertation credit hours before passing the comprehensive examination or a minimum of 5 dissertation hours after passing the comprehensive examination. Students need 5 CH / semester to maintain full-time status while on assistantship. Prior to taking their comprehensive examination, in a semester when they are neither enrolled in coursework nor defending their comprehensive exams, students may enroll in 1 dissertation credit to maintain full-time status.

PhD students are expected to complete all degree requirements within 6 years from the semester in which they are admitted and begin coursework in the doctoral program. Students who fail to complete the degree in this 6-year period may be dismissed from their program with the concurrence of students' advisor and DGS (in consultation with the department chair). To continue, the student must file a petition for an extension of the time limit with the Dean of the Graduate School. Such petitions, which may be granted for up to 1 year, must be endorsed by the student's major advisor, the department DGS, and the department chair.

### PhD Coursework Requirements

- A. Students' individual coursework requirements must be specified in a *PhD Plan of Study document* that is approved by students' advisor and committee members (hereafter, committee); any changes to that PhD Plan of Study document must be formally approved by students' advisor, committee members, and the DGS. *A minimum of 54 graduate credit hours of coursework is required, plus 30 hours of dissertation credit, for a minimum total of 84 credit hours. At least 30 graduate credit hours of coursework must*

*be communication courses, taken either at CU Boulder or at previous institutions (see transfer credit guidelines below).*  
Requirements for PhD courses include:

1. COMM 5210: Readings in Communication Theory
  2. COMM 6910: Communication Research & Theory Practicum (students entering without a MA in Communication may be advised to take COMM 6010)
  3. Two of the following three research methods courses:
    - A) COMM 5310: Rhetorical Criticism
    - B) COMM 6020: Quantitative Research Methods
    - C) COMM 6030: Qualitative Research Methods
  4. Advanced expertise in a primary area of specialization. This requirement is satisfied by taking courses, seminars, and/or independent studies (including those outside the department) in the primary specialty that is declared in students' approved PhD Plan of Study document.
  5. Expertise in a secondary area of specialization: This requirement is satisfied by taking courses, seminars, and/or independent studies (including those outside the department) in students' approved PhD Plan of Study document.
  6. Advanced expertise in a primary methodology that is appropriate to students' primary area of specialization, such that they can conduct competent research that satisfies professional standards in that area. This requirement is satisfied by taking methodology courses in communication and/or cognate disciplines; methodological expertise also can be developed through independent studies and participation in research projects. The methodology may be primarily qualitative (e.g., discourse analysis, ethnography, and/or rhetorical criticism) or quantitative (e.g., experimental, survey, content analysis, and/or interaction analysis), or it may include a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. Although the PhD program requires that students choose two of the three methods courses (see point 3 above), those seeking to claim a scholarly identity as a social scientist (as opposed to a humanist) are strongly encouraged to take both the quantitative (COMM 6020) and qualitative (COMM 6030) research methods courses.
- B. *A maximum of 12 transfer credits* from prior graduate coursework at another institution can be applied to the PhD program if those courses are included in students' approved PhD Plan of Study document. Any graduate courses completed at CU Boulder (including courses completed for the MA in communication) can be applied to the PhD program if they are included in students' approved PhD Plan of Study document. (Graduate courses taken at CU do not count as transfer credits, and therefore do not count toward the transfer credit limit.) When evaluating prior coursework for transfer and substitution credit, typically, committees consider the following criteria: recency (generally, coursework older than 5 years is not eligible), course content (substance and extent of duplication of courses offered at CU Boulder), and quality of the institution and instructor (e.g., graduate faculty status). Depending on the focus and relevance of prior coursework to students' primary or secondary areas of PhD specialization, committees may determine that the PhD Plan of Study document should include more than 54 hours of coursework.



- C<sub>1</sub>. Independent Study/Internship Credit Hours – Legacy Policy (applicable to PhD students who began the program in fall semester 2018 or earlier):

*Typically, a maximum of 9 independent study and/or internship credit hours combined* can be counted toward the PhD degree; however, based on justification, committees may approve a maximum of 18 credit hours.

- C<sub>2</sub>. Independent Study/Internship Credit Hours – Current Policy (applicable to PhD students who began the program in fall semester 2019 or later):

A maximum of 6 independent study and/or internship credit hours combined can be counted toward the PhD degree; with sufficient justification, committees may approve a maximum of 9 credit hours.

- D. To achieve and remain in good academic standing, students must satisfy Graduate School residence requirements, make appropriate progress toward completing what is indicated on the PhD Plan of Study document, maintain a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.00, and resolve any outstanding incompletes in a timely fashion. Courses in which a grade of C+ or lower is received are not counted towards the PhD degree.

### **PhD Advisor and Committee Composition**

- A. All new PhD students are assigned by the DGS to a temporary advisor. Students should meet regularly with that temporary advisor during their first semester to discuss matters such as selecting a permanent advisor, committee members, and courses for the next semester.
- B. Students should select a permanent advisor from the department (a person with a regular or tenured Graduate Faculty appointment; co-advisors are permitted) on the basis of shared professional interests and compatibility, and, in consultation with the permanent advisor, construct a comprehensive examination committee early in their second semester in residence. For a guide to conversations with potential and current advisors, see the Advising Conversation Guide at the end of this handbook.
- C. Students work with their advisor to create an identity statement and PhD Plan of Study document (see below), which is approved by their comprehensive examination committee, with a signed copy of that document (by the student, advisor, and DGS). It will be archived by the DGS.
- D. PhD comprehensive examination committees contain *a minimum of five members*. Prior to and during the examination period, typically, the five members consist of four department graduate faculty (including the advisor), with an additional department graduate faculty member serving as a “reader” (who, typically, does not write questions but reads all answers). Students may include an “outside” member (a graduate faculty member from another CU Boulder department) as part of their examination committee (including serving as the reader). To successfully complete the comprehensive examination, students must receive affirmative votes from a majority of committee members. Following a successful oral defense, typically, the reader (if from the communication department) is replaced by a faculty member from another CU Boulder academic department (*there must be at least one member from another CU Boulder academic department*,

*a.k.a. the “outside” member*). At that point, the comprehensive examination committee is renamed as the “dissertation committee.”

E. Students’ advisor and comprehensive examination and/or dissertation committee composition may change over time (e.g., if students’ interests change).

## Identity Statement and PhD Plan of Study Document

The *Identity Statement* is a short description (usually, 2–3 pages) of students’ academic and professional background, and their goals for the PhD program and beyond. The *PhD Plan of Study* document (usually, 3–5 pages) shows how the PhD program is designed to achieve goals articulated in the Identity Statement, describing in detail areas to be pursued in the program, how all degree requirements will be satisfied, courses to be taken at CU Boulder or transferred from an MA program, independent studies, internships, research projects, teaching experiences, and other relevant activities completed or planned.

The Identity Statement and PhD Plan of Study document are expected to evolve over the course of the PhD program. An initial version of the statement and plan of study is prepared for PhD students’ first committee meeting. Typically, the comprehensive examination committee is constructed and the identity statement and plan of study are approved in the second semester of the program. **To move effectively through the program, PhD students should have constructed their comprehensive examination committee and had their PhD Plan of Study approved prior to November 1 of the third semester of the program.** Failure to do so may trigger an extended review at the graduate review meeting.

The initial version of the PhD Plan of Study, undoubtedly, will be tentative in some respects; for example, it may list alternative courses or types of courses to be taken, depending on known availability in future semesters. The committee approves the proposed PhD Plan of Study document (or any revised plan that results from that meeting) and a signed copy of that document (without the Identity Statement) signed by the student and by the advisor (with the date of the committee meeting at which the document was approved), and signed by the DGS will be archived by the DGS. Updated versions of the Identity Statement and the PhD Plan of Study document are prepared as needed, with major changes (e.g., a shift to a different specialization area) presented to the committee for approval, and the revised document signed (by the student, advisor, and the DGS). When the committee meets to plan the comprehensive examination, students’ Identity Statement and PhD Plan of Study document (updated to reflect courses and research projects actually completed, etc.) are the bases for designing and evaluating examination questions.

Students should address the following things in the order noted in their Identity Statement and PhD Plan of Study document:

A. Identity Statement: Academic and professional background, professional goals, academic and research interests, methodological expertise, and teaching philosophy and goals (e.g., courses the student would prefer to teach during and after their graduate studies)

B. PhD Plan of Study Document (for more details, see the Appendix):

1. Identification Information: Names of student, advisor, and committee members

2. Transfer Credits Requested (a maximum of 12 credit hours)
3. Coursework by Area (coursework must equal at least 54 credit hours, with at least 30 of those credit hours being communication courses):
  - A) Broad-Based Communication Background (must include COMM 5210 and COMM 6010, COMM 6910, or equivalents)
  - B) Primary Area of Specialization
  - C) Secondary Area of Specialization
  - D) Methodological Expertise (Must include two of the following courses or their equivalent: COMM 5310, COMM 6020, and COMM 6030)
4. Coursework by Chronological Order
5. Teaching Experiences
6. Research Projects (at least two must be completed; see below)
7. Signatures and Dates: The PhD Plan of Study document is signed by the student and the advisor, using the date of the committee meeting at which that document was approved; it then is signed and dated by the Associate Chair of Graduate Studies.

Ordinarily, PhD students in their fifth semester of residence provide their committee with a portfolio consisting of an updated Identity Statement, updated PhD Plan of Study document, and two essays that have been presented (or accepted for presentation) at professional conferences or published (or in press) in scholarly outlets to meet the research expectations (explained below).

### **Research Expectations**

- A. PhD students are expected to be involved regularly in research projects (which often transcend, but also can be based on, coursework assignments), conducted independently or with faculty members and/or other graduate students. Students should take the initiative to bring about this involvement by meeting with faculty members to discuss common research interests.
- B. Prior to taking the comprehensive examination, PhD students are expected to have completed *two research projects* of sufficient scholarly quality that they have been selected for conference presentation or publication. Those projects, ideally, are supervised by different faculty members.

### **Admission to PhD Degree Candidacy**

To advance from the status of “PhD student” to the status of “PhD candidate,” students must:

- A. Fulfill the PhD Plan of Study document
- B. Receive final grades for all coursework, including incompletes
- C. Demonstrate individual scholarly development, by meeting the research expectations

- D. Demonstrate other appropriate professional competencies (e.g., teaching and training and development)
- E. Successfully complete the PhD comprehensive examination

### **PhD Comprehensive Examination (legacy policy)**

If you began the PhD program in the fall semester of 2022 or earlier, you have the option of taking the PhD comprehensive examination under either the legacy guidelines or the current guidelines. Please consult with your advisor about the best option to pursue.

#### **A. Structure and Content**

1. The PhD comprehensive exam consists of four questions, to be selected from the following list:

- theory
- method
- field (or primary area of concentration)
- subfield
- pedagogy

The structure and scope of the exam will be determined in conversation between the student, advisor, and doctoral exam committee. In recognition of the theoretical and methodological differences that exist within the Department of Communication, the student's committee is empowered to determine how best to negotiate the relationship between theory and method within the context of the exam.

2. A substantial essay of publishable quality may be submitted to the student's PhD comprehensive exam committee in lieu of two of the four questions outlined in part A.1. The essay is expected to consist of significant, original research and, ideally, function as a signature piece.

The student must be sole or lead author of the essay, and it must demonstrate, clearly and substantially, their own original contributions. The student should consult with the doctoral committee in determining an ideal publication venue for which to prepare the essay, the standard for which is an NCA or ICA journal, or equivalent. The selected venue will then provide the basis for evaluation. The student is expected to work closely with the doctoral supervisor in preparing the essay for submission to exam committee. If the student co-authors the piece with their supervisor, then the student will instead prepare the essay in direct consultation with one or more other doctoral committee members.

The student may opt to submit a previously published essay to the examination committee, provided it has appeared in a significant publication such as an NCA or ICA journal, or equivalent. The student must be sole or lead author of the piece. The student's doctoral committee is empowered to make determinations as to the appropriateness of the publication venue. In the event of uncertainty, the Graduate Program Committee will make the final determination.

3. An oral defense will follow within three weeks of the completion of the written portion of the PhD comprehensive exam. All documents submitted to the committee, including any

publication-quality essay outlined in A.2, are subject to oral examination. Students are permitted to use notes during this portion of the exam.

#### B. Timetable and Exam Administration

The student is expected to finalize the exam format and any reading lists with their doctoral committee by the end of the semester immediately prior to the semester in which the comprehensive exam will be taken. Additionally, if the student has chosen to pursue option A.2, they must secure approval of the completed essay (with any final minor revisions and deadlines stipulated) from the whole of the PhD comprehensive exam committee by the close of the semester prior to the written exam. Please note that the essay must be available for committee review in sufficient time for approval to occur; the advisor should take the lead coordinating this process and timing.

The student must resolve any outstanding incompletes before taking the comprehensive examination.

Part A.1 can be completed in whatever setting the student chooses. The student may refer to notes, readings, and other relevant scholarly resources while completing these questions. The committee is welcome to request reading lists from the student, but formal bibliographies for each question are not required. It is expected that the student will not have seen final versions of these questions prior to the start of the comprehensive exam. The student is encouraged to seek out a substitute instructor to cover any teaching obligations they may have during the exam week.

Questions need to be completed within a week. A four-question exam must be completed in 5 business days, and a two-question exam in 2.5 business days. The department's Administrative Assistant will distribute all questions to the student by 8 a.m. on the first day of the exam period. The student is expected to email the Administrative Assistant to confirm receipt of the questions. In any case, a guideline for the length of the written response to each question should be between 3,500 and 4,500 words.

Responses to all questions should be composed using Microsoft Word or equivalent software. In cases where students have documented need for special accommodation relevant to this policy, such as writing examination answers by hand, they must present their specific need in a timely fashion to their committee.

#### C. Disposition of the Comprehensive Exam

Students are expected to file a "Doctoral Comprehensive Exam" form two weeks before the date of their exam. Typically, the comprehensive exam proceeds as follows: (1) student and comprehensive exam committee members assemble; (2) student leaves, committee members briefly discuss their general assessment of the student's responses and the order of questioning; (3) student returns, committee members ask questions about the student's responses and paper (if the student had opted for option A.2) which the student answers; (4) student leaves, committee members discuss their assessment of the student's performance in the defense; (5) student returns, the advisor conveys the committee's decision about the outcome of the defense. The comprehensive exam committee determines if and when the student has passed the comprehensive examination. Should parts of the written comprehensive examination (section A.1) be judged as unsatisfactory by more than one committee member, students may retake only

those parts; if all parts of the examination are judged unsatisfactory, the exam is considered failed and all parts must be retaken. Students retaking the written comprehensive examination may repeat the oral defense. Prior to retaking the comprehensive examination, students may be required to complete additional coursework and/or research projects. Should the committee be reconstituted prior to the retaking of the written examination, the new committee determines (using majority rule) whether students must retake questions written by prior committee members that were passed successfully and/or whether any new questions need to be asked. Students can retake the written and/or oral comprehensive examination only once; students who fail either of them a second time (as judged by more than one committee member) are dismissed from the PhD program.

### **PhD Comprehensive Examination (current policy)**

The PhD comprehensive exam provides you with three kinds of opportunities: (1) to synthesize what you have learned during your coursework, (2) to show that you have developed a foundation of knowledge that will allow you to carry out a successful dissertation project, and (3) to move your existing research forward toward a dissertation project and/or building a publication record. The comprehensive exam allows your committee members to support you in your efforts to become an intellectually well-rounded Communication scholar.

If you began your PhD program in the Fall semester of 2023 or later, only this policy applies to you. Students who began their program before that semester can opt into these guidelines with their committees' approval.

#### **A. Comprehensive exam options**

You are expected to choose a comprehensive exam option in consultation with your committee prior to the beginning of the semester in which you plan to take the exam. You must resolve any outstanding incompletes before taking the comprehensive exam.

In consultation with their supervisors and committees, students can select one of the following three PhD comprehensive exam options. Each student's comprehensive exam format will be the result of negotiations with their committee members and tailored to the student's unique scholarly needs at the time they encounter the exam.

Whatever option you choose, committees will assess the following capacities:

- comprehensive understanding of research traditions;
- ability to think across research traditions;
- ability to take positions within / outside particular research traditions;
- ability to express the above in writing and improvised conversation (including acknowledging the strengths and limitations of one's own intellectual position while embracing intellectual risk and exploration).

You have almost an entire academic semester to prepare the written materials (i.e., responses to questions and/or essays) you will submit to your committee. During the semester in which you take

the comprehensive exam you are entitled (but not required) to take a doctoral independent study (COMM 8840) with your advisor(s). (This will not count toward the 6 or 9 credit hour limit on independent studies for PhD students.) The independent study simply creates a placeholder for consultations with advisors and committee members early on in the semester, and for independent writing following those consultations. Your performance in the independent study will be evaluated as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Evaluation will occur separately from your performance in the comprehensive exams - meaning, a satisfactory evaluation of the independent study will not guarantee passing the exam, and passing the exam will not guarantee a satisfactory evaluation in the independent study.

You are expected to work on developing your written materials independently. As explained in Section B below, all early consultations about your questions and/or essay should conclude by week 3 of the semester in which you are taking the comprehensive exam. Independent work on your materials means that between the end of Week 3 and the date when your responses are due to your committee, you are not permitted to share your written materials with any of your committee members and ask for feedback. Both advisors and students should keep in mind that the role of advisors and committee members during the exam preparation process is to guide students in performing the joint tasks of synthesizing materials and answering exam questions independently.

Option 1: Questions. This option addresses four of the following topic areas:

- Theory
- Method
- Field (or primary area of concentration)
- Subfield
- Pedagogy

During the semester, you work with your advisor(s) and committee members on the following (specific timelines presented in Section B):

- co-designing questions and related reading lists;
- determining the relationship between individual questions and your future dissertation project (e.g., will responses work toward chapters in the dissertation, or will they serve a different purpose?);
- identifying additional readings you had not encountered in your coursework but that are
- essential elements of your scholarly development; and
- reviewing best practices for responding to individual questions as needed.

The number of questions to which you are expected to respond is determined by your committee. (This means that, although students are typically asked to respond to four questions, you and your committee may decide that you should respond to fewer or more than four questions.) You develop your responses to the questions you co-design with your committee members in the course of the semester in which you choose to take the comprehensive exam. The comprehensive conversation (a.k.a. defense, see Section C) will be scheduled for a date close to the end of that semester. You must submit all of your responses two weeks prior to the comprehensive conversation.

The combined length of your responses should be approximately 15,000-16,000 words (excluding references). Responses to all questions should be composed using Microsoft Word or equivalent software, and submitted in .docx or .pdf format.

Option 2: Practicing publication. This option consists of two substantial essays of publishable quality submitted to your PhD comprehensive exam committee. The essays are expected to feature significant, original research that can be theoretical and/or empirical in nature, and to be significantly different in content from one another. Essays can be revised versions of conference submissions, papers written for graduate courses, or papers of any other origin. You must be the sole author of the essays and must demonstrate, clearly and substantially, your own original contributions. You should consult with your committee in determining ideal publication outlets for which to prepare the essays, and with your advisor regarding the choice of papers to develop into publishable essays. In the spirit of comprehensive examinations, the essays should provide a broad foundation of knowledge for your dissertation project.

An important distinction between practicing publication and actual publication is that comps committees evaluate essays in the context of students' overall progress and development, whereas reviewers do not. To honor this distinction, and to create a clear boundary between the comprehensive examination and the publication process, the essays cannot be entered into the publication process at the time they are initially submitted to the student's committee. (They can, however, be entered into the process any time afterwards.) When evaluating essays, committees will not take into account reviews resulting from the publication process.

During the first 3 weeks of the semester in which you take your comprehensive exam you will work with your advisor(s) and committee members on

- reviewing best practices of scholarly publication;
- identifying target journals and understanding their publication criteria (committees have latitude in identifying target journals); and
- developing a set of criteria for evaluating the two papers (including, but not limited to, your committee members' feedback on your initial submission).

You will submit two early, complete drafts of your essays to your committee no later than the first week of the semester in which you plan to take the comprehensive exam. The committee provides an initial round of feedback to you no later than week 3 of the semester, with two members commenting on one essay and two on the other. Committee members assess your essays using general publication criteria and the specific criteria of your target outlet. You then work on revising the papers into publishable essays during the semester. Revised essays are due to the committee two weeks before the date of the comprehensive conversation along with printouts or summaries of the target outlets' evaluation criteria. Committee members evaluate the essays using faculty reviews of the papers and the criteria developed with the advisor and the committee during the doctoral independent study they take the same semester.

The combined maximum length of the two essays should be 16,000 words (excluding references). The papers should be composed using Microsoft Word or equivalent software, and submitted in .docx or .pdf format.



Option 3: Hybrid. This option consists of a combination of Options 1 and 2, namely a set of questions and one essay of publishable quality. The number of questions addressing the two areas will be determined by your committee.

You will submit an early, complete draft of one substantial essay of publishable quality no later than the first week of the semester in which you plan to take the comprehensive exam, and two members of your committee (i.e., members who are not writing questions) provide you feedback no later than week 3 of the semester. The revised essay, along with printouts or summaries of the target outlets' evaluation criteria, and your responses to a question or questions that address two out of the five topic areas listed in Option 1 are due to the committee two weeks before the comprehensive conversation (scheduled towards the end of the semester in which you take your comprehensive exam). The combined length of the essay and responses should be approximately 15,000-16,000 words (excluding references). The comprehensive conversation will focus on your ability to adequately respond to committee members' evaluation of the essay and the responses.

## B. Timelines

### Option 1 (Questions)

1. Student & committee establish that student chooses Option 1 prior to the end of the semester before the one in which student takes comps
2. Student co-designs and finalizes questions and readings lists by week 3 of the semester in which they take comps
3. Student schedules the comprehensive conversation for a time toward the end of the semester
4. Student submits responses to committee two weeks before the comprehensive conversation
5. Comprehensive conversation

### Option 2 (Practicing publication)

1. Student & committee establish that student chooses Option 2 prior to the end of the semester before the one in which student takes comps, and identify which committee members respond to the first drafts of which essays
2. Student submits first drafts of two essays to their committee no later than the first week of the semester in which they take comps
3. Committee members send feedback on both essays no later than week 3 of the semester
4. Student works on revising their essays, and schedules the comprehensive conversation for a time toward the end of the semester
5. Student submits essays to committee 2 weeks before the comprehensive conversation
6. Comprehensive conversation

### Option 3 (Hybrid)

1. Student & committee establish that student chooses Option 3 prior to the end of the semester before the one in which student takes comps; they identify two committee members who will respond to the first draft of the essay
2. Student submits first draft of one essay to their committee no later than the first week of the semester in which they take comps

3. Committee members (i.e., the two not writing questions) send feedback on the essay no later than week 3 of the semester
4. Student co-designs questions and readings lists during the first 3 weeks of the semester in which they take comps; they work on revising the essay; they schedule the comprehensive conversation for a time toward the end of the semester
5. Student submits responses to questions and revised essay to committee 2 weeks before the comprehensive conversation
6. Comprehensive conversation

### C. The comprehensive conversation (a.k.a. “defense”)

This event provides you with an opportunity to further develop, defend, and explore the limits of the intellectual positions you expressed in writing, in conversation with your committee members. Your committee prepares for this event by reading all of the materials you submitted and preparing questions as they see fit. Typically, the event proceeds as follows: (1) you and your committee members assemble; (2) you leave the room, committee members briefly discuss their general assessment of your responses and/or essays and the order of questioning; (3) you return, the comprehensive conversation takes place; (4) you leave again, committee members discuss their assessment of your performance; (5) you return, the advisor conveys the committee’s assessment.

The comprehensive exam committee determines if you were able to satisfactorily demonstrate the ability to further develop, defend, and explore the limits of the intellectual positions you expressed in writing. Should parts of the written comprehensive examination (Option 1) or either one of the student’s essays (Option 2), or parts of their written responses and/or their essay (Option 3) be judged as unsatisfactory by more than one committee member, students may rewrite only those parts / essays; if all parts of the examination or both essays are judged unsatisfactory, the exam is considered failed and all parts must be retaken. Students retaking the written examination may repeat the comprehensive conversation.

Prior to retaking the comprehensive exam, you may be required to complete additional coursework and/or research projects. Should the committee be reconstituted prior to the retaking of the written examination (Options 1 and 3), the new committee determines (using majority rule) whether you must retake questions written by prior committee members that were passed successfully and/or whether any new questions need to be asked. Should the committee be reconstituted prior to the submission of revised essays (Options 2 & 3), the new committee determines (using majority rule) whether new evaluation criteria are necessary. You can retake the written and/or oral comprehensive examination only once; students who fail either of them a second time (as judged by more than one committee member) are dismissed from the PhD program.

### **Registering for Dissertation Hours**

The Graduate School does not place restrictions on when PhD students begin registering for dissertation hours, although students need to keep in mind that they need to maintain continuous registration each fall and spring after their comprehensive examination through the semester of defense; therefore it is advisable not to take a large number of dissertation hours before

comprehensive exams. Students must continue to register for dissertation hours, taking no more than 10 hours per semester, for a minimum total of 30 hours. Students who completed all coursework prior to the semester in which they are defending their comprehensive exam must register for at least 5 hours during the semester in which they defend. A student who seeks to graduate in 4 years needs to take 10 hours in the spring semester of the third year (when comprehensive examinations are taken), 10 hours in the fall semester of the fourth year, and 10 hours in the spring semester of the fourth year. A student who fails to register continuously (as a full-time student, meaning 5 dissertation hours in the fall and spring semesters of each year, unless the person is offsite, which then means 3 hours per semester) after passing the comprehensive examination must retake and pass the examination, to regain status as a student in good standing in the Graduate School. The department may require that the student validate coursework more than 5 years old. At its discretion, the department may petition the Dean of the Graduate School for a time limit for completion of all degree requirements of up to 1 year after the retaking of the comprehensive examination. The department must petition to Dean of the Graduate School to waive the requirement to retake the comprehensive examination.

### **PhD Students Taking Only Dissertation Hours**

PhD students who have completed the comprehensive examinations successfully and are taking *only* dissertation hours have the option to complete *each* semester with their advisor a contract that specifies what will be completed that semester with regard to the dissertation (see PhD Dissertation Hours Contract).

### **Dissertation**

A. Students first prepare and present a written proposal (a.k.a. prospectus) of their research project for approval by their dissertation committee, *comprised of at least five persons, three of whom must be CU Boulder communication graduate faculty, plus a fourth member from another academic department at CU Boulder (a.k.a., the “outside” member); the remaining member may be from the communication discipline or another discipline, and from CU Boulder or elsewhere.* Any committee member not from CU Boulder must be approved to serve in that capacity (consult the Graduate Program Manager about the approval form that needs to be completed). Although the dissertation proposal varies based on the goals of the project and research methods employed, typically, the document ranges from 30 to 70 pages, and it includes an introduction to the topic and its significance; a review of literature; research problem(s), issue(s), or question(s) being addressed; methods of gathering and analyzing data; and sequence and content of chapters. Committees meet with students to review the proposal, provide advice, and approve the research project. The meeting is conducted as a defense in order to provide students with an opportunity to prepare for the dissertation defense by practicing how to formulate, articulate, and address criticism of their dissertation projects. The dissertation project should be designed realistically such that it can be completed after admission to candidacy and during students’ final planned year in residence. Some students, in consultation with their advisor and committee, may commence dissertation work (e.g., data collection) prior to that period. In the case of a (rare) unsuccessful proposal defense committees determine the criteria and timeline for drafting and submitting a new proposal.

B. PhD students may want to make a presentation in a department research occasion or colloquium.

- C. The faculty does *not* encourage PhD students to leave the program “ABD” (“all-but-dissertation”).
- D. After the dissertation has been read by committee members, an oral defense of it is conducted in conformity with the Graduate School’s rules (e.g., students must fill out the Graduate School’s “Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Form” at least 2 weeks before their scheduled defense date and the defense must be scheduled no later than the posted deadline for the semester in which the degree is to be conferred). Typically, the dissertation defense progresses as follows: (1) student and committee members assemble; (2) student leaves, committee members briefly discuss their general assessment of the dissertation and the order of questioning (the “outside” member or the member from another university are typically invited to ask their questions first); (3) student returns and holds a brief (max. 10 minute) presentation of their project, the contents of which are previously determined in consultation with the advisor(s); (4) committee members ask questions which the student answers; (5) student leaves, committee members discuss their assessment of the dissertation and the student’s performance in the defense; (6) student returns, the advisor conveys the committee’s decision about the outcome of the defense (satisfactory, or unsatisfactory).
- E. More than one dissenting voice disqualifies students in the oral defense of the dissertation. Students who fail the defense may attempt it once more after a period of time that is determined by the committee. Students who fail the defense a second time are dismissed from the PhD program.
- F. The final approved dissertation that is submitted must conform to the Graduate School’s formatting rules.

### **PhD Timetable/Checklist**

Note: This list highlights activities and forms (in the approximate temporal order that they are completed) that students should attend to as they move through the PhD program.

#### **By End of First Year**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Select a permanent advisor by the beginning of the second semester
- \_\_\_\_\_ Select four other comprehensive examination committee members (for a total of five members, one of whom will serve as a reader)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Write initial Identity Statement and PhD Plan of Study document and hold first committee meeting to approve that PhD Plan of Study (typically, scheduled for 30 minutes); turn in signed PhD Plan of Study document (with student, advisor, and DGS signatures) to the DGS (Note: At the latest, a student’s comprehensive examination committee must approve the PhD Plan of Study by November 1 of the third semester of the program; failure to do so will result in that student being dropped from all courses in which he or she enrolls for the fourth semester of the program)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Coordinate with the Graduate Program Manager on paperwork for transfer credits
- \_\_\_\_\_ If your committee has anyone who is not a regular CU faculty member, alert the Graduate Program Manager so necessary paperwork can be filled out.

#### By End of Third Year

- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete coursework
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Suggested:* complete and submit two research projects for acceptance as conference presentations or as publications
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit form to Graduate School for approval of 5-person PhD comprehensive examination committee (required at least 2 weeks before the second committee meeting)
- \_\_\_\_\_ If your committee has anyone who is not a regular CU faculty member, alert the Graduate Program Manager so necessary paperwork can be filled out.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hold second committee meeting to approve any revised Identity Statement and PhD Plan of Study document (and submit that document with appropriate signatures to the DGS), and to plan the PhD comprehensive examination (typically, scheduled for 30 minutes)\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Select a comprehensive exam option with your committee prior to the end of the semester before you plan to take comps (select options by the end of the spring semester if comping in the fall; select options by the end of the fall semester if comping in the spring)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take PhD comprehensive examination
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hold PhD comprehensive conversation (a.k.a. defense; scheduled for 2 hours) (fill out the appropriate Graduate School form at least 2 weeks before the exam!)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Committee members sign form stating that the PhD comprehensive examination was passed successfully (with copies filed and sent to Graduate School)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete and circulate dissertation proposal to committee members
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hold dissertation proposal defense (scheduled for 90 minutes)

#### By End of Fourth Year

- \_\_\_\_\_ *Suggested:* present dissertation proposal at a department research occasion as soon as possible following committee approval

#### Final Semester before Graduation

- \_\_\_\_\_ Send form to Graduate School listing dissertation committee composition and stating intention to graduate
- \_\_\_\_\_ Distribute dissertation to committee members at least 2 weeks before scheduled oral defense
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hold dissertation oral defense (scheduled for 2 hours) (fill out the appropriate Graduate School form 2 weeks before the exam!)
- \_\_\_\_\_ If necessary, dissertation committee identifies desired revisions and process of submitting and approving revised dissertation; students submit revised dissertation to advisor and, if appropriate, committee members; and, when appropriate, committee members sign form stating that the dissertation has been completed successfully
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit dissertation to Graduate School and Communication Department

Note: PhD students who entered from CU Boulder's MA communication program, in general, should complete the checklist for the end of the third year and the end of the fourth year by the end of the second and third years, respectively. There is, however, some flexibility; students should talk with their advisor and with the DGS about the timetable.

Note: Committee meetings should be scheduled between the third to fourth weeks of the semester; meetings should not be planned for the first 2 weeks of classes, the last week of classes, or during the final examinations period.

## General Information for Graduate Students

### Graduate School Rules and Regulations

Students are responsible for knowing and following all rules and regulations established by the Graduate School. Students should check with the Graduate Program Manager periodically to ensure that they have obtained, completed, and submitted appropriate forms to the Graduate School. The document titled Graduate School Rules and all Graduate School forms are available from the Graduate School's website.

### New Graduate Students' Responsibilities

New graduate students will be contacted by the Graduate Program Manager about completing necessary paperwork. New graduate students are responsible for three tasks before the fall semester in which they are admitted:

- A. Have a CU Boulder e-mail address by July 1.
- B. Have a place to live and a rental agreement in place by the day before the first day that classes begin in August. This requirement is crucial to establishing Colorado residency and acquiring in-state tuition classification (see below).
- C. Attend new graduate student orientation, which starts two weeks before the first day of fall semester.

### Colorado Residency and In-State Tuition Classification

Funded graduate students (U.S. citizens or permanent residents) who are not residents of Colorado need to establish residency in Colorado upon arrival to qualify for in-state tuition. Establishing residency includes obtaining a Colorado driver's license, registering a motor vehicle, registering to vote, and paying Colorado state income tax (see specific instructions on the registrar's website: <https://www.colorado.edu/registrar/students/state-residency/guidelines>).

Forms are available in the Department of Communication office or at the Registrar's Office (Regent Hall).

It is very important to petition for in-state tuition classification and to adhere to the dates/deadlines indicated. For in-state tuition classification, if students are not Colorado residents and are qualified persons, they must petition for Colorado in-state tuition classification within one year to be eligible for in-state tuition for your second year of graduate study. *Failure to establish residency will result in students having to pay out-of-state tuition and being ineligible to hold a monthly appointment at the university.*

Residency in Colorado remains in effect until students declare residency in another U.S. state. While having Colorado residency, students are charged in-state tuition fees regardless of where they live.

### Funding

The department offers various forms of funding for graduate students, including Teaching Assistantships (TAs and GPTIs, who teach stand-alone courses), Pre-Doctoral Fellowships,

Summer Dissertation Fellowships, Professional Travel Awards, Summer Partial Tuition Fellowships, and Graduate School Summer Fellowships. Each of these forms of funding are explained below.

#### A. Teaching Assistantships

1. Some graduate students are offered teaching assistantships (as TAs or as GPTIs). Generally, MA students receive 2 years of funding and PhD students receive 4 years (in both cases, continuous from the first semester enrolled), unless they enter the PhD program directly from CU Boulder's MA communication program, in which case the typical funding for the MA and PhD degrees combined is 5 years. Enrolled students who have not been funded may be appointed on a semester or yearly basis when funding is available.
2. TAs and GPTIs with half-time appointments are expected to devote, on average, approximately 20 hours per week to their teaching responsibilities. In addition to normal classroom responsibilities (e.g., preparing for classes, testing, and grading), they are expected to:
  - A) Attend fall and spring graduate student orientations, and regularly scheduled teaching workshops
  - B) Meet regularly with any course supervisor(s)
  - C) Consult with the lead teaching assistant
  - D) Hold regular/consistent office hours
  - E) Arrange for evaluations of teaching performance (e.g., Faculty Course Questionnaires [FCQs] and classroom observations by course supervisor and by others)
  - F) Comply with department and university policies about teaching and examination schedules
  - G) Meet specific expectations for courses taught, as set by any course supervisor(s) and by good academic practice
3. Summer teaching sometimes is available to graduate students, with assignments determined by the department chairperson, on the basis of seniority, need, and expertise. The summer pay schedule for GPTIs (the type of appointment) is: Term A: approximately 75% of total paycheck received on July 1, with remaining 25% received on July 31; Term B: approximately 75% of total paycheck received on July 31, with remaining 25% received on August 31.
4. TAs and GPTIs are evaluated on their teaching performance at the annual faculty review of graduate students. They also receive regular feedback from any course supervisors.
5. Lead Graduate Student Fellowship: Each year, the department faculty appoints a graduate student to serve as the Lead Graduate Student (Leads), which is part of Lead Network administered by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL); for further information see <https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/programs/lead-graduate-student-fellowship>). In the Department of Communication, Leads are nominated and voted on by faculty. The CTL has two goals for graduate students who serve as Leads: (a) to develop the leads themselves as future academic managers, leaders, teachers, and consultants; and (b) to assist departments with internal TA preparation to improve undergraduate education. Lead training focuses on academic management, academic leadership, consultation, college teaching, and collaboration. Interested students should consult with the current Lead in Communication, their advisor, and with the DGS.

6. Overloads for Teaching Assistants: Graduate students who are on a 50% (= 20 hours per week) teaching assistantship, with permission from the graduate director, may petition the Graduate School for an exception to the 50% rule. Teaching assistants are limited to 62.5% maximum appointment, which means that, with permission, they may work an additional 5 hours per week. The overload petition form is available from the Graduate School's website.
7. Extension of Teaching Assistantship Funding: Continuous TA funding is dependent on the availability of funds and on students remaining in good academic standing. Students who do not complete their degree program within the normal period of assistance may request extended TA funding, under the following conditions:
  - A) Students recognize that the department is under no obligation to provide extended TA funding, and that the risk of funding availability is borne by students
  - B) The decision to make extended TA funding available is based on:
    - 1) Availability of funds
    - 2) Undergraduate course demands
    - 3) Demonstrated ability to teach needed courses
    - 4) General quality of teaching, as assessed by FCQs and faculty evaluations
    - 5) Assurance by students' advisor that funding will assist, and not inhibit, students' program completion
    - 6) Recommendation from students' thesis/comprehensive examination or dissertation committee that they be funded
8. Cases that require exceptions to these guidelines may be brought to the faculty to decide.

#### B. Pre-Doctoral Fellowships (summer)

Some PhD students are offered Pre-Doctoral Fellowships, typically in the summer, funded by CMCI. These fellowships are only for students without other university-funded activities (e.g., teaching assignments, research assistantships, or fellowships). Students are eligible for the summers after the first-third year of their doctoral programs.

The fellowship involves working for and with a faculty member on that faculty member's research. To the extent possible, students are matched with faculty members who are engaged in research that connects to the student's desired expertise area. These fellowships give students research-related experience that is part of their paid work and, thereby, helps them to build a stronger profile that will enable them to do better on the job market.

#### C. Summer Dissertation Fellowships

Summer Dissertation Fellowships are awarded to students to provide time to work on their dissertation. PhD students may be awarded only one dissertation fellowship during their program, typically in the summer after completion of the PhD comprehensive examination. Students submit to the associate chair of graduate studies a one-to-three paragraph description of the proposed dissertation work, along with a letter of support from their advisor.



#### D. Career Grants

The Department of Communication allocates a portion of its annual budget to fund graduate student research, travel, internship, and other career related activities. Specific amounts are determined year-to-year based on available budget. Awards are available to support a range of activities and materials including, but not limited to:

- research participant recruitment
- travel to conferences, research sites, internship-related activities
- professional association membership fees
- conference registration fees
- transcription services
- equipment and/or software purchase/rental
- translation services
- acquisition of archival materials

These activities must be independent of direct faculty participation (although they likely are advised by a faculty member). Funds cannot be used to cover living expenses (food, rent, healthcare, etc.). Students can apply for up to the total during the Fall and Spring semesters. Funds they apply for in the Fall must be used for the Fall semester only, with those funds expiring at the end of that term. If they apply for, and receive, the full amount in the Fall they are not eligible to apply for a Spring career grant.

Career Grants are announced close to the beginning of the Fall and Spring semesters. Students apply for these grants via a Google Form.

#### E. BIPOC Support Grants

Graduate students who identify as BIPOC are eligible for \$250 every Fall and Spring semester. The DGS announces the grant close to the beginning of the semester. BIPOC-identifying graduate students can add their name to a Google Sheet to indicate their interest in the grant. No further application materials are required.

#### F. CMCI Research/Creative Project Funding

CMCI provides once per year funding for a research or creative project. Similar to the career grant above this can support a range of work including conference travel. The exact amounts that students are eligible for depend on budget available each year. This funding is not competitive between students—each application is evaluated individually.

#### G. CMCI Scholarship

CMCI has a competitive scholarship award tied to funding an ongoing or upcoming scholarly project. Students must be enrolled in coursework to apply. These funds do not go towards tuition; instead, they fund a budget for a project. The deadline for application is in the fall, often around Nov 1. Specific details are released each year.

## H. Additional Sources of Funding

Each year, various travel and research funds, grants, and fellowships are available from the College of Media, Communication and Information (CMCI), the Graduate School, and the Graduate Professional and Student Government (GPSG). Information about these grants and fellowships are announced by the DGS and are available online. Note: some graduate school grants have restrictions about how often a graduate student can apply during their time at CU.

- Graduate School Awards & Grants:  
<https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/funding/awards-grants>
- GPSG Travel Grants: <https://www.colorado.edu/gpsg/grants-awards/travel-grants>

## Duration of Graduate Committee Meetings

Faculty in the Department of Communication have adopted these guidelines for MA and PhD committee meetings. They are advisory only. While meetings should be scheduled in accordance with the timetables provided below, they may run shorter or longer due to situational conditions.

MASTER'S PROGRAM	MEETING DURATION/ADVICE
Program of Study/Identity Statement Meeting	No committee meeting required; POS crafted in consultation with MA program advisor
Comps Planning Session	No committee meeting required; discussion with MA program advisor required and DGS recommended
Comps Defense	60min
Thesis Proposal Defense	60min
Thesis Defense	60min

DOCTORAL PROGRAM	MEETING DURATION/ADVICE
Plan of Study/Identity Statement Meeting	30min
Comps Planning Session	30min
Comprehensive Conversation	2hrs
Dissertation Proposal Defense	90min
Dissertation Defense	2hrs

## **Evaluation of Academic Progress**

The department's graduate faculty meets annually (typically, early in the Spring semester) to evaluate graduate students' academic (e.g., coursework, research, and teaching) progress, and to make recommendations regarding retention and funding renewal. Prior to that annual meeting, students should meet with their temporary or permanent advisor, and they should complete the Graduate Review Feedback Document, available online, and submit it by the due date determined by the DGS.

Following that graduate faculty meeting, advisors use the same online document to provide feedback to advisees about their progress toward completion of their respective degree, identifying specific areas where students' performance is excellent, satisfactory, and/or in need of improvement. When appropriate, advisors and students should develop specific plans to address areas where improvement is needed. In periods between annual review sessions, faculty members may refer cases for consideration and action to the DGS or the Graduate Program Committee (chaired by the DGS).

To remain in good academic standing, graduate students must:

- A. Satisfy Graduate School residence requirements and make appropriate progress toward completing what is outlined on their PhD Plan of Study document.
- B. Maintain a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.00. Course grades of C- or lower are not counted toward the MA degree; course grades of C+ or below are not counted toward the PhD degree. Courses taken to fulfill MA or PhD requirements may not be taken pass-fail.
- C. Resolve any incompletes in a timely fashion.
- D. If funded as a teaching assistant (TA) or as a graduate part-time instructor (GPTI), maintain satisfactory teaching performance.

## **Leave of Absence Policy**

Graduate students who need to temporarily leave the university may apply to the Graduate School for a Leave of Absence (LOA) for a period three semesters (including summer; up to four with restrictions). The LOA allows students in good standing to *not* enroll in courses during that time period and to preserve their admission to the university and the department. The LOA does not automatically extend graduate students' time limit for funding and/or completion of the degree but it may be used as a justification in requests for extension of time limits. Further information about the LOA (including the approval process, eligibility, benefits, deadlines, and the application form) is available at <https://www.colorado.edu/registrar/students/withdraw/leave-of-absence>

## **Faculty Sabbatical Policy**

Faculty members on sabbatical are technically "off duty" with regard to teaching and service. We understand and respect that faculty members who take sabbaticals can make choices about their service activities. To support a vibrant graduate program, there is a need to establish shared expectations between students and faculty members. Therefore, the Department has established

this list of best practices to help guide faculty and graduate student expectations about sabbatical leaves. CU institutional policy makes clear that faculty members are on leave from teaching and, by choice, service activities for the duration of the sabbatical.

- A. The department, via the Graduate Director, should maintain a working list of upcoming faculty sabbaticals. The list should be made readily available to both faculty and graduate students in COMM.
- B. Prior to beginning sabbatical, faculty members should communicate with students on whose committees they serve about their availability during the sabbatical period. Examples include, but are not limited to: meetings, exams, letter writing, advising, and related duties.
- C. Graduate students should schedule a meeting in advance of a faculty member's sabbatical to articulate their specific needs relative to advising, meetings, return of work, etc., so that the faculty member can respond about their ability to fulfill them. Students should keep faculty on sabbatical up to date on any significant changes in their academic plans and discuss any new expectations.
- D. Should a faculty member's availability change during sabbatical, faculty should contact the graduate students with whom they are working to alert them to the change and discuss any new expectations.
- E. Faculty members should not take on new advisees or graduate student committee memberships during sabbatical unless they are willing to fulfill the responsibilities and obligations of doing so.

## **Grievance Procedures**

The department seeks to create and maintain a professional climate that respects diversity and fosters excellence. Students who believe that a faculty or staff member has treated them unfairly or inappropriately may pursue the department's grievance procedure. Grounds for this treatment include (a) violation of terms and conditions of an appointment by a supervising faculty member; (b) deviations from stated grading procedures (exclusive of individual grade challenges); and (c) individual students' actions that violate department, college, and/or university policies. The grievance policy, including the steps to follow in filing, can be accessed from the Graduate School's website: <https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/graduate-school-policies-procedures>.

## **Communication Graduate Student Association**

The Communication Graduate Student Association (CGSA) serves as an advocate for graduate students' interests and seeks to foster a collegial and engaged academic community in CU Boulder's Department of Communication. Since its inception in 2002, the CGSA has become the central representative body and has sought to promote the professional development and social well-being of the department's graduate students. The CGSA serves as an important forum for developing personal and professional relationships with other graduate students; fostering a sense of community and support; representing voices of all graduate students in the department; supporting intellectual and pedagogical interests of graduate students through various programming; promoting diversity and engaging in service activities; communicating relevant information to the department's graduate student body; and assisting with recruitment, orientation, and integration of incoming and current graduate students.

As an advocate, the CGSA represents interests, concerns, and experiences of the department's graduate student community to the department and to the university. Two members (a PhD student and an MA student) are elected by communication graduate students as co-chairs, who act as liaisons to the department chairperson, DGS, faculty, and staff on matters of practices and policies affecting the communication graduate student community, and, thereby, have a voice in shaping the future of the department. The CGSA has a voting representative to faculty meetings and selects representatives who hold voting positions on departmental committees, including the undergraduate program (one student), graduate program (one student), instructional fees advisory (one student), and hiring (one senior PhD student) committees. The CGSA also elects two graduate student representatives to the United Government of Graduate Students (UGGS). Several graduate students are elected as chairs of various CGSA committees. Graduate students who take on leadership positions within the CGSA gain valuable administrative experience.

In line with the organization's purposes, the CGSA initiates a variety of programs and activities to buttress communication graduate students' academic pursuits through community, mentorship, professional development, and outreach. The CGSA serves an important role by gathering graduate students for social events that are intended to develop personal and professional relationships with other graduate students, and to foster a sense of community and collegiality. The CGSA also provides opportunities for graduate students to pursue intellectual discussion together in less formal ways. Committed to professional development, the CGSA sponsors lecture and workshop series, as well as participates in service activities and promotes diversity in the community.

### **Department Intellectual Opportunities**

The department promotes a vibrant intellectual climate for graduate students and faculty members by offering numerous opportunities to present and discuss scholarly (research and teaching) work. Those opportunities include colloquia, research occasions, and other gatherings.

- A. Colloquia: The department holds colloquia several times a year where presentations are given (often, by visitors from other universities). Colloquia offer graduate students with opportunities to hear visible scholars whose work they are or will be reading, and to begin building relationships with scholars from other universities. Attendance at colloquia is expected of all department graduate students and faculty members.
- B. Research Occasions: Members of each area of the department (Community & Social Interaction, Organizational Communication, and Rhetoric & Culture) convene for an hour-long discussion of a scholarly project on which faculty members or graduate students currently are working. Presenters talk for 20 to 25 minutes, laying out their project and its basic arguments, followed by a group discussion. Research occasions offer area community members opportunities to come together to talk about ideas, try out arguments, and consider how to strengthen what they are doing. Those research occasions serve at least three interrelated purpose: (a) to provide a friendly site to engage regularly in serious intellectual conversation, (b) to deepen everyone's knowledge about scholarship being conducted by others in an area of the department, and (c) to provide graduate students with a safe practice ground in which to hone skills of public discourse (e.g., questioning, responding, and arguing) that are key to academic life. PhD students are expected to attend research occasions; MA students are strongly encouraged to do so.

C. Other Gatherings: Other intellectual gatherings that involve subsets of students and faculty members meeting occur frequently. Those gatherings, announced via e-mail, include topic-specific reading groups and data sessions (that examine textual/video/audio materials).

## COMM 5930: Internship Contract

**Important Notes:** A maximum of 3 hours may be taken in the fall and spring semesters; up to 6 hours may be taken in the summer. A maximum of 6 hours for MA students and 9 hours for PhD students of internship and/or independent study combined is allowed toward coursework. Students are expected to devote at least 25 hours of effort for each credit hour assigned. **International students:** you will need to submit a Curricular Practical Training (CPT) request to International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) before you register for internship credits.

**Student Name and ID Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Faculty Sponsor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Internship Sponsor and Site:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Semester and Year:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Credit Hours:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose of Internship and Relevance to Program of Study:**

**Student Activities for Internship:**

**Criteria for Determining Grade for Internship:**

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Student's Signature & Date

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Faculty Sponsor's Signature & Date

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Internship Sponsor's Signature & Date

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Associate Chair of Graduate Study's Signature & Date

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Staff Member's Signature (who registers student) & Date



## COMM 6840/8840: Independent Study Contract

**Important Note:** A maximum of 6 hours for MA students and 6 hours for PhD students (9 with the approval of their committees) of independent study is allowed toward the respective degree coursework. Students are expected to devote at least 25 hours of effort to this project for each credit hour assigned. If this project requires approval by the Human Subjects Committee, attach appropriate information and documentation.

**Student Name and Number:**

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**Faculty Member:**

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**Semester and Year:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Credit Hours:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose of Independent Study and Relevance to Program of Study:**

**Student Learning Activities and Criteria for Determining Grade for Independent Study:**

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Student's Signature & Date

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Faculty Sponsor's Signature & Date

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Associate Chair of Graduate Study's Signature & Date

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Staff Member's Signature (who registers student)      & Date

**MA Program of Study Form**  
**(Must be Completed by Beginning of the Second Year)**

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Advisor Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MA Option (Specify):** \_\_\_\_\_ Comprehensive Examination      \_\_\_\_\_ Thesis

**Two Additional Committee Members** (Associate Chair of Graduate Studies automatically serves for comprehensive examination option):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Requirements for All MA Students**

**(indicate final grade or semester to be taken)**

**Tally**

\_\_\_\_\_ COMM 6010: Communication Research & Theory (3 Hrs)      3CR

Required Methods Course (One of the following; 3 Hours)

\_\_\_\_\_ COMM 6020: Quantitative Research Methods

\_\_\_\_\_ COMM 6030: Qualitative Research Methods      6CR

Readings Courses (Two of the following; 6 Hours)

\_\_\_\_\_ COMM 5210: Readings in Communication Theory

\_\_\_\_\_ COMM 5320: Readings in Rhetoric

\_\_\_\_\_ COMM 5425: Readings in Community and Social Interaction

\_\_\_\_\_ COMM 5620: Readings in Organizational Communication

\_\_\_\_\_ COMM 5720: Readings in Communication & Technology      12CR

Additional Graduate Courses (identify course department, number, and title; if not 3 credit hours, specify number; must total to at least 18 credit hours, with, for thesis option, 6 hours being COMM 6950: Thesis Hours)

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**Total: 30 Credits**

The following rules apply to the credit hours of coursework completed:

1. A maximum of 6 credit hours of Independent Study (COMM 6940)
2. A maximum of 9 credit hours can be transferred from graduate work completed in/at other programs and/or institutions (including other CU campuses)
3. A maximum of 9 credit hours can be completed outside of CU Boulder's Communication Department
4. A maximum of 12 credit hours of transfer and outside department courses combined

**Signatures Approving Plan:**

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Student/Date

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Advisor/Date

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Associate Chair of Graduate Study/Date

Additional Notes:

## PhD Plan of Study Document Guidelines

The form must include the following information in the order noted:

### A. Identification Information

1. Student's Name
2. Advisor's Name
3. Committee Members' Names (indicate CU Boulder department, if a member is not from the Communication Department, and indicate university, if not from CU Boulder)

### B. Transfer Credits Requested (*a maximum of 12 credit hours*): List each course, describe it (if possible, use the university's catalog description), and explain why it is included in the PhD Plan of Study document; attach a copy of your transcript.

### C. Coursework by Area: List all courses that are relevant to the four areas below (courses may be listed more than once), with any grades received (Note: *Coursework must equal at least 54 credit hours, with at least 30 of those credit hours being communication courses*):

1. Broad-Based Communication Background (must include COMM 6010: Communication Research and Theory, and COMM 5210: Readings in Communication Theory, or equivalents)
2. Primary Area of Specialization (construct a descriptive title for this specialization area)
3. Secondary Area of Specialization (construct a descriptive title for this specialization area)
4. Methodological Expertise (must include two of the following courses or their equivalent: COMM 5310: Contemporary Rhetorical Criticism, COMM 6020: Quantitative Research Methods, and COMM 6030 Qualitative Research Methods)

### D. Coursework by Chronological Order: List all courses chronologically, by semester taken or anticipated, with any grades received

### E. Teaching Experiences: Identify courses taught, semesters that they were taught, and their class structure (e.g., recitation or stand-alone)

### F. Research Projects (at least two must be completed): Identify titles of essays, faculty supervisors, and conferences or journals to which they were (or will be) presented or published

### G. Signatures and Dates: The PhD Plan of Study document is signed by the student and the advisor, using the date of the committee meeting at which the document was approved; the document then is signed and dated by the Associate Chair of Graduate Studies.

## PhD Dissertation Hours Contract

**Important Note:** This form can be completed every semester that PhD students take only dissertation hours. Ideally, it serves as a prompt for advisor and graduate student to develop a shared plan for work for the semester.

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Advisor Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Semester and Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of Dissertation Hours:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dissertation Work to be Completed that Semester:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature     /Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor's Signature/Date

**Advisor's End of Semester Evaluation:** \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Unsatisfactory

**Advisor's Comments if Unsatisfactory Evaluation:**

**Advisor's Comments (cont'd.)**

## Advising Conversation Guide

Organized, supportive, and mutually respectful advising is beneficial to both the advisor and advisee. This document is meant to facilitate conversations about expectations between graduate students and their (potential) advisors that take place before and over the course of the advising relationship. Following this guide should not constitute additional labor either for graduate students or faculty; the guide's function is to summarize and lend additional structure to conversations that are already happening.

In particular, this guide contains questions guiding advising conversations about the following topics:

- One-on-one meetings
- Intentional communication
- Documentation and record keeping
- Teaching expectations and requirements
- Graduation and milestone completion timeline
- Building a professional identity
- Publication expectations
- Feedback
- Boundaries
- Conflict resolution

**One-on-one meetings:** Feedback is critical to student success and clear expectations will help ensure that both parties are successful and supported during the advisee/advisor relationship. Depending on where the student is in the graduate degree process, meetings may need to be more or less frequent.

- How often will we meet this semester / academic year?
- How will we identify an agenda for our meetings? (Who will propose the agenda, and who will add to it? What channel of communication will we use to draft the agenda?)

**Intentional communication:** Both advisee and advisor should properly prepare for meetings and adhere to the agenda.

- What preparation will we expect for our meetings?
- What should happen if the advisee or advisor lacks the necessary preparation for a meeting, or fails to adhere to the agenda?

**Documentation and record keeping:** Both advisee and advisor should take notes during meetings. The advisee should email a description of discussion topics and any agreed upon next steps to their advisor. The advisor will let the student know if any corrections or modifications need to be made. These notes will help clarify expectations and provide records for both parties.

**Teaching expectations and requirements (TA and GPTI appointments):** Students who have teaching appointments should be informed about the responsibilities for the courses they are assigned to teach along with key contacts for the appointment. Advisees and advisors should discuss



how the advisee can learn about expectations for the courses to which the Department Chair assigns them.

- Will the advisee serve as TA or GPTI?
- How many preps should they expect to prepare each semester?
- How can students voice their teaching preferences?
- Will their teaching loads be regular or should they expect changes from semester to semester?
- How many students will they have in each course?
- Who are their designated course supervisors?
- Will the syllabus and course content be provided, or should students expect to create their own?
- What sort of support / accountability can students expect from course supervisors, and the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies? What documents can they review to learn about structures of support and accountability?

**Graduation and milestone completion timeline:** Advisee and advisor should discuss progression and timelines related to graduation at an early point in the student's graduate career. Advisee and advisor should have knowledge of [Graduate School](#) and program requirements, guidelines and expectations for graduation. Advisees should discuss the timeline of important milestones with their advisors and make sure they understand what is expected at each step. The timeline should be evaluated each semester and updated if necessary.

Milestones marked with \* are required by the Graduate School; other milestones are COMM specific. Other milestones can be added as necessary. Specificity can be added to this document by noting whether the milestone should be completed during a fall or spring semester, if necessary.

In order to have the degree awarded in any given semester, advisees and advisors should be aware of relevant [deadlines](#) set by the Graduate School. Completion dates for these milestones should be set with those deadlines in mind.

- Where can students find relevant forms online?
- What relevant information is featured in the Graduate Handbook? What is the most up-to-date version of the Handbook?
- Who are key contacts that can provide the advisee with relevant information (e.g., CMCI Graduate Program Manager)?
- How will the advisee assemble a committee (including readers and outside members)? What are expectations for altering the composition of the advisee's committee?
- What are expectations regarding switching advisors and reconstituting committees?

Academic Milestone	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Notes
Forming committee						

Identity statement and plan of study meeting						
Comps planning meeting						
Completing coursework*						
Comprehensive examination*						
Thesis proposal defense						
Thesis defense*						
Dissertation proposal defense						
Dissertation defense*						
Submission of approved dissertation*						

**Building a professional identity: Graduate students build professional identities through their presence in the department, at conferences, and online.** Advisees should be aware of department meetings and events that they are encouraged or required to attend. Any service expectations, professional opportunities should also be discussed with the advisee. The advisor should discuss conference attendance recommendations and requirements. Advisors should also explain how advisees can obtain funding for travel. Building and maintaining an online presence should also be a topic of discussion.

- What kinds of department meetings are graduate students involved in?

- When will the advisee (PhD) present a research colloquium prior to the dissertation defense?
- What are conference attendance expectations toward MAs vs PhDs?
- What are conference attendance expectations toward advisees who do not plan to pursue academic careers?
- What are the costs and benefits of conference attendance? Which conferences should the advisee target?
- What are the costs and benefits of service to the department and other organizations? What kinds of opportunities are available to the advisee?
- What kinds of research and travel funding are available to the advisee?
- What are some considerations (dos and don'ts) and resources for building a professional identity online?
- What other ways can advisees build and manage a desired professional identity? What are available resources?

**Publication expectations:** The advisee and advisor should discuss topics and timeline for student papers/publications. The advisee and advisor should discuss how the work will be edited and submitted. Advisees should have a clear understanding of primary authorship and co-authorship expectations on papers they publish prior to graduation.

- What are publication expectations for MAs vs PhDs?
- What co-authorship opportunities, if any, exist between advisee and advisor? What might the process look like for inviting one another to co-author?
- What is the format of the thesis / dissertation?
- What is the process for selecting among PhD comprehensive exam options? Does the advisor have relevant preferences?
- What must be complete/published prior to the dissertation defense?
- What publication expectations apply to advisees who are not planning to pursue academic careers?

**Feedback:** Prior to submitting any work to the advisor, the advisor and advisee should discuss the feedback process. Advisors should commit to providing feedback in a timely fashion based on upcoming milestone goals. Advisors should provide regular academic performance updates, including clarifying expectations surrounding level and quality of work. Advisors should let advisees know if they are making adequate progress, and what they need to do to meet graduate school level expectations to secure graduation.

- Should the advisee ask for specific feedback from the advisor?
- What is the nature of the feedback that will be provided by the advisor?
- Does the advisor do line-by-line edits or should the advisee plan on using campus writing support services for documents edits?
- What are the expectations for turnaround time between when a draft is submitted and when the advisee can expect feedback?

**Boundaries:** Both advisee and advisor should be clear on one another's personal and professional boundaries. The power differential in this dynamic could convolute the working relationship, and both advisor and advisee should discuss and agree to the work that needs to be done and how it will come to completion.

- How will the advisee and advisor communicate (email, text, phone calls, etc.)?
- What kind of response time should both parties anticipate?
- What kinds of social media posts about the advisee-advisor relationship are appropriate?
- How do the advisee's and advisor's positionalities shape the kinds of boundaries they expect and require, and the kind of support they need and are able to provide?
- What kinds of boundaries apply to sabbatical leave? (See the "Faculty Sabbatical Policy" section of the Graduate Handbook.)

**Conflict Resolution:** If conflict should arise, the student advisee and faculty advisor should first attempt to resolve the issue informally. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or Department Chair may also be contacted for context and guidance. The [Ombuds](#) office can act as a confidential resource for conflict resolution, along with assisting with mediation in some cases.

If resolution cannot be reached informally, students may consider additional avenues for their complaint. The Graduate School grievance process and procedures document includes information about jurisdiction for a variety of issues, and explains the process for grievances which fall under the purview of the Graduate School. [Resources](#) related to conflict resolution and information on the [grievance process](#) can be found on the Graduate School website. Conflicts related to discrimination and harassment or sexual misconduct should be reported to the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](#). If the student is employed by CU and has an employment grievance, they should consult [Faculty Affairs](#) for guidance.

In conclusion, this document can assist in establishing productive professional relationships. This document serves both the advisee and the advisor by providing guidelines and a plan for clarifying expectations, lessening conflict, and providing structure.