

# Graduate Handbook

## Department of Communication Studies

### University of Kansas

Welcome to the Graduate Program in Communication Studies at the University of Kansas! This handbook is meant to help you navigate the regulations and procedures that govern the program. Keep it bookmarked, save a copy, and refer to it frequently. Please note that the information in the handbook can change frequently; the most up-to-date version will always be posted on the department's website: [coms.ku.edu](http://coms.ku.edu).

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## I. DIRECTORY

### Important Departmental Contacts

**Department Chair:** Main contact for questions about financial support for conference travel or summer funding. Secondary contact for all other questions of department policy and procedure.

Dr. Jay Childers, Bailey 111, [jaychilders@ku.edu](mailto:jaychilders@ku.edu) 785-864-7257

**Graduate Director:** Main contact for prospective and current graduate students regarding admission, research progress, course credit towards degree, dissertation and MA Thesis/Portfolio, and department policies and procedures.

Dr. Yan Bing Zhang, Bailey 101, [ybzhang@ku.edu](mailto:ybzhang@ku.edu) 785-864-9678

**Graduate Academic Advisor:** Main contact for advising questions regarding university requirements, resources, petitions, program milestones, exam scheduling, graduation, GRA/GTA/GA hiring, and any other questions related to student success or KU policy.

Desirée Neyens, Bailey 310, [dneyens@ku.edu](mailto:dneyens@ku.edu)

**Administrative Associate:** Assistant to the chair, office manager, scheduling officer, and primary support for faculty and lecturers.

Suzanne Grachek, Bailey 112, [sgrachek@ku.edu](mailto:sgrachek@ku.edu) 785-864-9867

**Administrative Assistant:** Department receptionist, communications outreach, and general faculty and student support.

John Fackler, Bailey 102, [communicationstudies@ku.edu](mailto:communicationstudies@ku.edu) / [jf2@ku.edu](mailto:jf2@ku.edu) 785-864-3633

## **Key Offices at KU**

The Communication Studies Department's Graduate Director and Graduate Academic Advisor are your first stop for any questions related to graduate study or requirements. If you would like to research an issue in advance of speaking with the Graduate Director or if you still have questions, the following offices can provide assistance:

### **College Office of Graduate Affairs (COGA)**

COGA oversees graduate affairs and administers University policy for programs within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The [COGA website](#) contains comprehensive information on requirements and processes pertaining to graduate education at KU. Most common questions can be answered with the information provided there, including questions regarding [enrollment changes or forms](#), University policies regarding [exams](#) and committee requirements, and University [graduation requirements](#). The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences' [Master's Hooding Ceremony](#) is coordinated by COGA.

COGA reviews all [student petitions](#) of University and College policy, issuing decisions on behalf of [the College](#) or referring as required to a faculty committee and/or the Office of Graduate Studies. The more common student petitions relate to [Enrollment](#), [Leave of Absence](#), and [Time Limit Extensions](#).

COGA is a resource if you have questions about petitions or graduation requirements that your department is unable to answer. Refer to the COGA website for current staff contact information.

### **Office of Graduate Studies**

Graduate Studies is the office of the Dean of Graduate Studies at KU. The Executive Council of Graduate Studies sets policies and regulations governing graduate study, and offers various programs for graduate students throughout the year. While COGA should be your first stop for any questions your department cannot answer, you may be referred to Graduate Studies for certain matters, especially for questions about [GTA/GRA/GA appointments and policies](#).

### **Graduate Admissions** (Within the Office of Graduate Studies)

Your Graduate Academic Advisor should be your first stop for questions regarding the KU application for Graduate Study, ADMIT system / Prospect, English proficiency requirements, and official transcripts. However, you may be referred to Graduate Admissions for certain matters.

### **Office of the Registrar (OUR)**

Contact OUR for questions related to enrollment (if the question cannot be resolved via the enrollment changes link provided above under COGA), tuition, campus fees, the Academic Calendar, and fee petitions.

### **Financial Aid**

Contact Financial Aid for questions related to the disbursement of scholarships, fellowship award, loans, and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students have an

opportunity to complete a FAFSA for each academic year. They must submit their application no later than April 15. Completing the FAFSA does not obligate students to take out loans, rather, it opens up opportunities to receive different types of funding. Eligibility for KU Tuition Grants, some scholarships, and work-study positions are determined by the information provided on the form. The department recommends all students to fill out a FAFSA each year. KU Graduate Studies estimates it takes about 20 minutes to complete the graduate student version of the form. Students who already have their tuition funded (GTA, GRA, GI bill, etc.) are not eligible for KU Tuition Grants. Please contact KU's Office of Financial Aid for further questions: <http://affordability.ku.edu/>.

### **International Student Services (ISS)**

Contact ISS for questions related to international students, including enrollment requirements, international student insurance, obtaining a social security card, I-20 questions, and any issue related to student visas. While other offices on campus such as the [Applied English Center](#), [Human Resources](#), or the [Registrar](#) may also handle related matters, because the students' legal status in the country may be affected, it is recommended that students contact ISS first.

### **Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE)**

The Center for Teaching Excellence is a University office dedicated to assisting instructors, including GTAs, to develop effective instructional techniques. The expert staff of CTE can introduce instructors to the pedagogical technology available at the University and help instructors develop new approaches to teaching. CTE specialists work with instructors individually, and also offer a diverse array of workshops and discussions. They also can guide instructors to useful scholarly literature on the subject of college teaching and learning.

## **II. DEPARTMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Admission**

The Communication Studies graduate program offers a Master of Arts (M.A.) and a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), as well as a Graduate Certificate in Professional Workplace Communications at the Lawrence campus. In addition, Communication Studies offers a Master of Arts (M.A.) at the Edwards campus. Graduate students at the Lawrence campus are expected to work within one of the department's two main research areas:

- **Relationships & Social Interaction:** Faculty in this area study interpersonal, intercultural, and organizational communication using quantitative and qualitative methods. Theories of relationships (e.g., family, romantic, friend, professional) and social identities (e.g., cultural, race, social class, age, gender) guide their research.
- **Rhetoric & Political Communication:** Faculty in this area focus on rhetorical and argumentation studies, and both quantitative and humanistic approaches to political communication. Their work engages, among other things, issues related to democratic inclusion, digital media, political institutions, and public memory, with particular concern for matters related to gender, race, nationality, and other cultural indices.

Graduate students in the M.A. program at the Edwards campus focus on applied work with organizational communication.

### Deadlines

To be considered for a funded position as a Graduate Teaching or Research Assistant, applications must be received and complete by **January 5**. Applications for fall admission are accepted until **May 5**. Applications for summer session are due by **April 15**.

### Minimum Requirements and Prerequisites

For [University Requirements](#) for admission to graduate study, please see “Admission” in the University Policies and Degree Requirements section of the Handbook.

In addition to these requirements, the Department requires substantial undergraduate coursework in a Communication program or a closely related department (e.g., English, Political Science, Sociology).

### MA and PhD Application Materials and Procedures

#### **Application Materials**

All application materials must be received prior to evaluation. A complete application consists of the following:

- Complete [online application](#) submitted to Graduate Studies along with KU's graduate application fee (\$65 for domestic applicants and \$85 for international applicants).
- Official GRE or TOEFL scores (*KU code 6871*). All domestic applicants must submit GRE scores. International applicants must submit TOEFL scores unless they have earned a degree within the United States. In this case, GRE scores must be submitted instead of TOEFL
- One copy of [official transcripts](#) of all previous undergraduate and graduate institutions. Transcripts may be submitted online or mailed to the address below. If accepted, official transcripts must be sent to [Graduate Admissions](#).
- Three (3) letters of recommendation from individuals in a position to comment meaningfully on the applicant's potential for graduate work. Individuals writing letters will be sent an e-mail from College Net with instructions to fill out an evaluation form.
- Statement of purpose (2-3 pages) indicating the importance of your goals and academic interests and how they relate to the sub-fields of Communication Studies upon which currently faculty focus. If there are faculty members whose research/teaching you find particularly interesting, please list them at the conclusion of your statement.
- Current resume or curriculum vita
- Research writing sample (sample of academic work, e.g., senior thesis, seminar paper, Master's thesis)
- English Proficiency: If an applicant is not a native speaker of English, they must verify their English proficiency. Please see Graduate Admissions' [English Proficiency Requirements](#) for Official TOEFL or IELTS scores

Applicants may submit their application, application fee, statement of interest, and resume through the application link above. GRE scores and TOEFL scores should be sent directly to KU

using institution code 6871. Digital copies of transcripts may be emailed directly from the degree-granting institution to [graduateadm@ku.edu](mailto:graduateadm@ku.edu).

Official transcripts can also be mailed to the address below:

University of Kansas, Graduate Admissions  
1450 Jayhawk Boulevard  
Strong Hall, 313  
Lawrence, KS 66045

Applicants are evaluated on the overall strength of their materials based on holistic application review.

### **Non-Native Speakers of English**

The Office of Graduate Studies requires applicants, [international](#) or domestic, whose native language is not English to [demonstrate English proficiency](#). International students must send official TOEFL, IELTS, or PTE scores to provide proof of English Proficiency. See “Admissions” under the University Policies and Degree Requirements section of the Handbook for more information regarding the University’s requirements for providing proof of English proficiency.

### **Financial Aid**

Applicants who wish to be considered for [financial aid](#) should check the appropriate box in the checklist provided in the online application. Funding decisions are made based on the quality of the application for admission; no further materials are required.

### **Provisional Admission**

On rare occasions the department may recommend an applicant who does not meet the University's minimum requirements for provisional admission. This may occur, for example, if a student's overall undergraduate GPA is deficient but the major GPA, GRE scores, and admissions essay suggest strong potential for success in graduate study. All recommendations for provisional admission are contingent on approval by the College and University. To continue in the program, students admitted provisionally must meet with the Graduate Director at the start of the academic term, must comply with any requests for additional meetings or communications, and must earn at least a 3.0 GPA in the first semester of graduate coursework at KU.

### **Admissions Contact Information**

Questions about graduate admission in Communication Studies should be directed to the department’s [Graduate Director](#) (see Directory). If you have technical questions regarding the online application or required documentation, you may contact the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#).

### **Notification of Admission**

After the due date for which application materials must be received, the graduate committee will review applications and make recommendations. When recommendations are made, applicants will be notified by e-mail regarding the department's final decision. Applicants who are approved for admission and indicate their intention attend KU will receive further information concerning procedures for acceptance and enrollment.

### **Transfer and waiver of credits**

Up to 9 hours of transferred credit may apply toward the Master's or Doctoral degree pending CLAS and departmental approval. Students planning to transfer graduate credit from other institutions are urged to secure advance approval from the Department and College of Liberal Arts and Sciences first.

Students who enter the Ph.D. program with a completed Master's degree from another graduate program may have 24 graduate credit hours waived, within the following restrictions:

- a. Up to 15 hours of graduate credit may be utilized toward the satisfaction of the research methodology requirement
- b. Up to 18 hours of graduate credit may be utilized toward the satisfaction of the elective hours requirement
- c. Up to 6 hours of graduate credit may be utilized as independent study hours

In each case, it is the responsibility of the student to demonstrate how the courses relate to KU's PhD requirements.

Students holding a Master's degree with a professional rather than scholarly orientation (i.e., a degree program not requiring the production of a thesis or other major scholarly research) will normally be required to demonstrate early in their doctoral program a research aptitude. This may be accomplished through enrollment in Investigation and Conference (Courses 898 and 998) or some equivalent procedure. Details should be worked out during consultation with the student's academic advisor.

### **Application for Admission from the MA to the Doctoral Program**

Students currently enrolled as MA students in the Department of Communication studies must submit the following materials for possible admissions to the PhD program: (1) cover letter expressing their interest in advancing to the PhD program and (2) have two current departmental faculty members submit letters of support to the Director of Graduate Studies.

It is expected that students will have successfully defended their Master's thesis before beginning the doctoral program. In the event this does not occur, students have until the end of their first semester in the PhD program to complete and defend their Master's thesis. Failure to do so will result in students being put on academic probation and restricted from enrolling in any courses other than COMS 899.

### **General Guidelines**

**1. Grading and Good Standing:** The University requires a grade of C or higher for a course to count towards a graduate degree. To be considered in "good standing," the University requires graduate students to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (or "B" average) and be making timely progress toward meeting their degree requirements. For more information, see "Grading" and "Probation & Dismissal" in the University Policies & Degree Requirements section of the Handbook.



**2. Academic Integrity and Misconduct:** Graduate students are expected to adhere to principles of academic integrity in every aspect of their scholarship. This means that students acknowledge the sources they use in their academic work and cite them fully; not acknowledging a source constitutes plagiarism. Students should consult with faculty well before due dates if they are not sure about how to handle a source. Academic integrity also means that work on examinations and assignments must be carried out by authorized means. Students are subject to sanctions by the University for Academic Misconduct if they violate these principles. See [University Senate Rules and Regulations, Article 2, Section 6](#).

**3. Advising:** Unless otherwise designated, the Graduate Director serves as the initial primary advisor for all students with regard to course selection and completion of program requirements. In addition, all students must select an official faculty advisor by the end of their first year of coursework. The role of the advisor is to supervise the preparation and defense of the student's Portfolio or Thesis, and to serve in a mentorship capacity regarding progress through the program and the articulation and exploration of future professional goals (e.g., application to PhD programs).

Students are responsible for contacting the faculty member with whom they would like to work and, with the faculty member's agreement, for notifying the Graduate Director and the Graduate Advisor of their selection. This should be done by the last day of classes of the student's second term in the program (i.e., end of Spring semester). In the event a student needs to later choose a different Academic Advisor, this same process should be followed.

[The COGA Graduate Advisor](#) serves as the official advisor for all technical aspects of students' progress to their degree. The COGA Graduate Advisor is the point of contact for all questions regarding departmental and university policies and procedures including: admission, enrollment, GTA/GRA/GA employment requirements, academic policies, required training, petitions, final exams, and graduation requirements.

### **COMS Changing Advisors Policy:**

In the Department of Communication Studies, it may be appropriate for a graduate student to be paired with a new faculty advisor. We define "advisor" as the faculty member who supervises a student's graduate program and/or chairs a student's graduate committees (e.g., comprehensive exams and thesis/dissertation committees). Certain circumstances may come about for varied reasons, including changes in research focus, need for additional expertise, departure or retirement of faculty advisor, and/or perceived incompatibility of student and advisor. It is primarily the student's decision to change advisors.

Students may initiate this process as soon as they feel it is necessary and/or desirable by contacting either their current advisor, the Department Chair, Director of Graduate Studies, or Graduate Academic Advisor. Please refer to these individuals (or other faculty mentors) who can help with this assessment. Students may consider consulting extra-departmental resources such as the [University Ombudsman](#), who can also provide support in the process. Advice is especially

important if students are attempting to change faculty advisors toward the final phase (e.g., after they have defended their dissertation proposal) of their graduate program. This procedure intends to assist students in thinking through the advisor change process. The below are non-sequential steps for changing advisors:

- Refer to extra-departmental resources (mentors, Graduate Studies, University Ombudsman, Human Resources) who can assist in an objective analysis of the costs and benefits of changing advisors.
- After discussion with the Director of Graduate Studies, the Department Chair, or Graduate Academic Advisor, approach another faculty member about being your advisor. Frame your approach positively, and include new factors and interests.
- Be professional at all times. Focus discussions on your interests and academic goals, and not on negative incidents.
- Discuss and arrange a timeframe for completing any remaining work with your current advisor before the change takes place. If you wish to continue a project that was initiated with the original advisor, details of transferring the project should be worked out in consultation with the Department Chair or Director of Graduate Studies, who can mediate the process.
- Ensure you contact the Director of Graduate Studies and Graduate Academic Advisor so they may update this information for department tracking purposes.
- Make sure your former advisor is notified about the change.

Note: The former advisor is prohibited from taking any form of retaliatory action, including adversely affecting a student's grade.

**4. Annual Review:** Each spring the Department conducts a review of current graduate students, in which all regular faculty members participate. Results of the review are communicated in writing to each student by the Graduate Director. The review is meant to help students understand how well they are meeting departmental expectations and to assist them in planning the remainder of their time in the program. It also aids in financial aid decisions for the upcoming year.

**5. Grievance Procedures:** The Department advises that graduate students make an attempt to resolve issues directly with the instructor or party involved, or with the department chair. If a grievance arises that cannot be resolved directly, or if the student does not feel comfortable attempting to resolve the issue with the department chair, the student should then follow the department's [official grievance procedure](#).

**6. Petitions:** If a graduate student has compelling reason to seek exemption from a program requirement or University policy, they may submit a petition to the department's graduate faculty.

Petitioners should write a letter, addressed to the graduate faculty, explaining the reasons why the student is seeking exemption from specific rules, as well as how the educational goals the

rules reflect will still be fulfilled. Where applicable, this petition should be accompanied by a letter of support from the student's advisor and/or the appropriate supporting materials. The letter should be sent to the Graduate Director, who then refers the petition to the graduate faculty, which will convene to consider the petition.

In cases where the policy or requirement is a departmental requirement (for example, a course requirement for degree) the graduate faculty will issue a final decision.

In cases where the policy or requirement being petitioned is a University policy, the graduate faculty will decide whether to support the student's petition. If the faculty is in support, the department will submit a petition form to the College Office of Graduate Affairs accompanied by supporting materials as required. The COGA Graduate Advisor will submit a petition form to the College Office of Graduate Affairs accompanied by supporting materials as required. The [petition form](#) specifies the supporting material needed for each kind of petition. These materials must accompany the petition sent to COGA. COGA's [petitions webpage](#) provides additional information regarding University petitions, including supplemental documentation that may be required by the University.

Additional information regarding the more common university petitions, such as Leave of Absence, Enrollment requirements, and Time Limit Extensions may also be found in the University Policies and Degree Requirements section of this document. The COGA Graduate Advisor is also available to answer any questions regarding petitions and the supplemental materials that are required.

In cases where the graduate faculty declines to support a University petition, no paperwork may be submitted to COGA. COGA only accepts student petitions in cases where there is documented departmental support and when the petition itself is submitted by a representative of the department.

Students should always consult with the Graduate Director prior to submitting a petition to the graduate faculty to ensure that a petition is necessary and that all the appropriate supporting documentation is accounted for.

### **Financial Aid**

**1. Graduate Teaching Assistantships** carry a fixed stipend and list of benefits. Stipends are disbursed as a biweekly paycheck through Human Resources. (See Information for Graduate Teaching Assistants below).

**2. Departmental Scholarships** are disbursed twice annually, at the beginning of Fall and Spring semesters. Scholarships generally require that the recipient is in good academic standing (GPA of 3.0 or above) and is enrolled full-time (9 credit hours). For help with scholarship questions, see the department's Administrator.

**3. Reapplication:** Returning students must reapply for funding each year, unless multi-year funding was part of the student's aid package at the time of admission. The simple application form is available on the Department's webpage and is due each **February 1**.

#### 4. Special Funding Opportunities:

- **Conferences:** The department makes annual funds available to support graduate student travel to present at or attend academic conferences. Guidelines for application can be found via the [Graduate Travel Awards](#) link.
- **Research/Academic Development Travel Award:** Occasionally funds are available to support activities directly related to a student's academic program that are not otherwise funded by scholarships, grants, or other university or departmental funds. Eligible activities could include, for example, intensive language study, field or archival research, or short-term workshop or skill development opportunities. Interested students should also apply through the department's [Graduate Travel Awards](#) page.
- **Other awards and scholarships:** Each spring, over \$25,000 in awards and scholarships are available from the Department of Communications. More information about these individual graduate awards may be found under the [Financial Assistance](#) page:
  - E.C. Buehler Outstanding First-Year Teaching Fellowship
  - E. C. Buehler Teaching Fellowship
  - Kim Giffin Research Award
  - Sene and Louella Carlile Scholarship
  - William A. Conboy Outstanding Graduate Student Award

#### **Information for Graduate Teaching Assistants**

**1. Course Assignment:** GTAs in the Department teach or assist with two courses per semester. All new GTAs are required to teach COMS 130: Speaker-Audience Communication their first year. After that, the Department has several courses that are available for GTAs to teach or assist with. Assignments are made on the basis of a variety of factors, including area of interest, previous experience, and departmental needs. GTAs will be informed of their course assignments for the fall semester in the late spring and for the spring semester in early fall. Summer GTA assignments are available on a limited basis; qualified GTAs must apply to teach a summer course during the spring semester.

**2. Workload:** GTA workload and responsibilities vary from course to course and throughout the semester, but are not to exceed an average of 20 hours/week. In some courses, the GTA is primarily responsible for grading, administration, and leading discussion sections (with guidance from the course's instructor of record). In other courses, the GTA is the instructor of record.

**3. Evaluation:** The University requires that all GTAs be evaluated on an annual basis, and that GTAs in their first year be evaluated once each semester. GTA evaluations are conducted by the instructor of record or course supervisor and must be discussed with the GTA. The results are then reported to Human Resources.

- [GTA Performance Evaluation page](#) (Human Resources)
- [Policy on Performance Evaluations for GTAs](#)

**4. Reappointment:** For students who serve as GTAs, reappointment is expected, though conditional upon successful performance as demonstrated by the annual evaluation, maintenance

of good academic standing, and departmental needs. GTA term limits for Communication Studies are as follows: 6 semesters for MA students, 10 semesters for PhD students, and 12 semesters for MA+PhD students. Per University policy, term limits do not include summer teaching assignments.

## 5. Resources:

- Information about the [Mandatory GTA Training](#) for all new GTAs on campus
- [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#) (PDF)  
All GTA/GRA appointments are governed by the MOA between the University of Kansas, Lawrence, the Kansas Board of Regents, and the Kansas Association of Public Employees.
- [GRA, GTA, and GA Appointments: General Guidelines and Eligibility](#)
- Full list of [GTA/GRA/GA Benefits](#)
- [GTA/GRA/GA Health Insurance Information](#)
- [HR/Pay System](#)  
GTA paychecks are viewable in the HR Pay System beginning the Monday before a pay day. If using the system for the first time, the system will need to register the login and then go through an update before any information is accessible. Log in and then log out. Wait a few hours and then log in again. The system has registered you as a user when the main home page menu shows the Self Service option. Navigate to Self Service → View Paychecks. Current deductions and direct deposit information may also be viewed and updated via the HR/Pay system.
- [Center for Teaching Excellence \(CTE\)](#)  
The CTE is a University office dedicated to assisting instructors, including GTAs, to develop effective instructional techniques.
- CTE's [GTA Guide To Teaching at KU: A Handbook of Resources](#) (PDF)

## 6. Role of GTAs: Courses Taught by Graduate Teaching Assistants

All new Graduate Teaching Assistants are assigned to teach COMS 130: Speaker Audience Communication. Because this course meets a University-wide Oral Communication Requirement, the course is overseen by the Department's Introductory Course office, and all new GTAs are required to enroll their first semester in COMS 920: Introduction to Teaching Oral Communication, which is a 3-hour seminar that meets weekly.

### Opportunities to Teach Courses Other than COMS 130:

After gaining experience in COMS 130, GTAs may apply to teach other courses. GTAs interested in a specific course should contact the faculty supervisor (see below). The faculty supervisor of the course will let the GTA know about necessary qualifications and experience to teach the course and the application process. In general, students should have appropriate coursework and other background preparing them for teaching the class and should be prepared to present a portfolio demonstrating their qualifications. Any interested GTA with appropriate experience and background may apply to teach any course. GTAs also may apply to work as

graders, with Lambda Pi Eta (faculty coordinator, Dr. Angela Gist-Mackey), and in the position as an Assistant to the Chair and Assistant to the Graduate Director. In those cases, the graduate student should apply to the faculty member in charge of the organization.

COMS 210 Communication in Organizational Contexts	Dr. Angela Gist-Mackey
COMS 230 Fundamentals of Debate	Dr. Scott Harris
COMS 235 Introduction to Rhetoric and Social Influence	Dr. Robert Rowland
COMS 244 Interpersonal Communication Theory	Dr. Alesia Woszidlo
COMS 246 Introduction to Intercultural Communication	Dr. Yan Bing Zhang
COMS 310 Introduction to Organizational Communication	Dr. Hannah-Oliha-Donaldson
COMS 320 Communication on the Internet	Dr. Alcides Velasquez
COMS 330 Effective Business Communication	Dr. Angela Gist-Mackey
COMS 331 Persuasive Speaking	Dr. Jay Childers
COMS 342 Problem Solving in Teams and Groups	Dr. Adrienne Kunkel
COMS 356 Introduction to Behavioral Research Methods	Dr. Jeff Hall

Nature of the Introductory Course (COMS 130) Program:

All bachelor degree candidates at the University of Kansas are required to satisfy an Oral Communication Requirement. Two course taught out of the Introductory Course—COMS 130 and COMS 322—play a significant role in helping students meet that requirement.

## **Degree Requirements**

### **Master's Degree Requirements**

The primary mission of the Master of Arts in COMS is to introduce graduate students to the process of conducting original research in human communication. The majority of our MA students go on to pursue a PhD in communication or a related field. Others use the MA as preparation for careers in business, legal consulting, politics, social work, or other related areas of employment. See course options for [COMS Graduate Courses](#) and the full [KU Academic Catalog](#).

## **1. Program and Course Requirements**

There are two options available for the Master of Arts degree:

### **Thesis Option**

This option is designed for students who are interested in becoming researchers in the Communication Studies field, and/or view themselves as potential Ph.D. candidates. Students must satisfy a minimum 6-hour thesis requirement, with a minimum of 30 semester credit hours of coursework and final oral thesis defense. **See Appendix II.**

- a. Satisfactory completion of the following required courses:

851 Communication Research: Historical and Descriptive (3)

**-OR-**

852 Comm. Research: Experimentation and Quantitative Analysis (3)

b. One additional methods course:

859 Proseminar in Communication Studies (3)

c. At least 6 hours in each of 2 areas of communication (12 total hours)

d. 3 additional credit hours from any Communication Studies courses or from outside the department (3)

e. Master's Thesis hours: COMS 899 (6)

f. Final Oral Examination (Thesis defense)

### **Non-Thesis Option**

This option is designed for students who are primarily interested in acquiring knowledge and skills that they can apply in the areas of their professional activities. Students finish a minimum of 30 semester credit hours of coursework and then must pass a written and oral comprehensive examination. **See Appendix I.** Specific requirements for the 2 non-thesis options are as follows:

a. Satisfactory completion of COMS 859, and one of the following courses:

851 Communication Research: Historical and Descriptive (3)

**-OR-**

852 Comm. Research: Experimentation and Quantitative Analysis (3)

b. At least 9 hours in each of two areas of communication (18 total hours)

c. 6 hours of electives

d. General Examination. Each student must successfully complete an examination over the 2 areas of course work concentration. See "Examinations" below for the department's guidelines for MA examination logistics. The examination is structured as follows:

- 1 hour written over content from COMS 859 and COMS 850
- 2 hours written over the first major area of communication
- 2 hours written over the second major area of communication
- 1 hour oral examination

## **2. Master's Final Exam and Defense**

### **Examinations**

Master's students are examined by a [committee](#) comprised of their departmental faculty advisor and two additional members. The committee is determined through consultation among the student, the student's advisor, and the COMS Director of Graduate Studies. A graduate faculty member from outside the department may be substituted for the third member of the committee, or a fourth member, either from inside or outside the department, if approved by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. These members should be appointed early in the development of the thesis to assist in its preparation. However, the thesis advisor is chiefly responsible for supervising the preparation of the thesis, and will normally chair the student's oral examination.

To be eligible for the examination, the candidate must have finished or currently be enrolled in their final coursework with a minimum 3.0 GPA. If applicable, the thesis should be complete, with input from the graduate committee. Students must be enrolled in at least 1 credit hour in the semester in which they graduate.

### **Request Procedures for all Oral Examinations**

Ensure completion of all graduation requirements before and following the oral defense (see: [Master's Degree Checklist](#)). Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for the published Graduation Deadline, which [varies by semester](#). Exams (thesis defense or non-thesis oral exams) must be pre-approved by the College Office of Graduate Affairs (COGA) at least **two weeks prior** to the intended exam date. Students and their advisors should therefore begin finalizing a defense date at least one month in advance. It is the student's responsibility to work with committee members to determine a mutually agreeable defense date and time. Work directly with the COGA Advisor to reserve rooms and any necessary equipment (computer, digital projector, etc.). All final exams require approval by the DGS and CLAS prior to taking place.

### **Thesis Option**

As a requirement of the thesis option M.A. degree, students must orally defend their thesis. The examination usually lasts 1 to 1.5 hours and includes content from the thesis as well as relevant coursework.

### **Prospectus**

As soon as possible after the appointment of their advisory committee, and before beginning the actual preparation of their thesis or dissertation, students must submit to the committee a proposal for their thesis or dissertation. This prospectus must include: the purpose, scope, rationale, relevant theory and literature, and scholarly method of this investigation. The committee members and the student must meet collectively to discuss the prospectus and approve the project's continuation. Final approval must be given by the committee via signed form. See **Appendix IV and V**.

Please work with your committee and the Graduate Academic Advisor to schedule the prospectus defense. Plan for 1.5 hours for the MA thesis prospectus, and 2 hours for the PhD prospectus.

### **Preparing the Manuscript**

Instructions regarding the preparation of manuscripts may found via the [College Office of Graduate Affairs](#). See KU's [guidelines on thesis formatting](#). *It is the responsibility of the student to comply in every respect with the thesis and dissertation regulations established by the University of Kansas.*

### **Processing the Thesis**

At least two weeks prior to the final oral examination, degree candidates must send copies of their thesis to each member of the committee so all may have an opportunity to read it prior to the examination. After the oral examination the student will be asked to make corrections, if



necessary. All committee members will sign the title page, and the acceptance page is signed by the faculty advisor only.

Submission of the final draft of the thesis or dissertation is done electronically. Students must comply with all University requirements for [formatting](#) and [electronic submission](#) of the thesis. There is no University requirement that students provide a bound or printed copy of the draft.

### **Non-Thesis Option**

In their final semester, degree candidates must satisfactorily complete both a written and oral examination. The examination is administered by the student's graduate committee. Each student must successfully complete an exam over their 2 focus areas of course work concentration. The examination is structured as follows:

- 1 hour written over content from basic communication theories & methods (COMS 859 and COMS 850)
- 2 hours written over the first major area of communication
- 2 hours written over the second major area of communication
- 1 hour oral examination

Obtain specific instructions about the written Master's examination from the Director of Graduate Study. The student's comprehensive committee shall grade the examination. A passing vote requires a majority of the members evaluating the examination. In the event the committee finds the answers unsatisfactory, the committee may elect to have the student rewrite the same or different questions: they may require additional oral or written clarification, such as an essay; they may require additional course work. The committee shall take the remedial action felt most appropriate to the situation. If the first written examination is failed, the candidate shall have 2 other opportunities to pass the written comprehensive exams.

Once the candidate has passed all sections of the written examination, they are eligible for the oral comprehensive examination.

### **3. Outcomes**

The student's comprehensive committee shall grade the examination. A passing vote requires a majority of the members evaluating the examination. In the event the committee finds the answers unsatisfactory, the committee may elect to have the student rewrite the same or different questions: they may require additional oral or written clarification, such as an essay; they may require additional course work. The committee shall take the remedial action felt most appropriate to the situation. If the first written examination is failed, the candidate shall have 2 other opportunities to pass the written comprehensive exams.

For both the non-thesis and the thesis defense, the committee may judge the candidate to have passed, to have failed, or to have passed with honors. A "pass" should be regarded as an excellent result and in no way a sign of a committee's dissatisfaction with the quality of a student's work.

An MA thesis receiving a nomination for departmental honors should show high quality writing, compelling argumentation, and a thorough review of the literature. The methods and analyses should be performed competently, showing an attention for detail, and development of the student's abilities. The conclusions/discussion ought to carefully attend to prior literature, not over-claim its findings, and recognize how the work ties into theory or past literature. A proposal for honors should not come from the committee chair, but from one of the other two members. A secret ballot will then be conducted. Honors requires a ballot with at least two votes for honors among the members of the committee other than the chair.

After successful completion of the oral defense, the Committee signs the Exam Outcome Form and forwards it to the COGA Advisor.

#### **4. Graduation**

Students who have concerns or questions about fulfillment of graduation requirements may arrange for a Graduation Appointment with the [College Office of Graduate Affairs \(COGA\)](#) following the defense or final exam and in advance of the applicable Application for Graduation deadline. While this appointment is not a requirement, it can be useful to review all degree requirements with a COGA staff member, verify that the Application for Graduation and Thesis/Dissertation submissions have been completed, and receive guidance on any pending items.

At the beginning of the semester in which a student plans to graduate, please apply for graduation. [Step by step instructions can be found here.](#)

#### **Doctoral Degree Requirements**

The primary mission of the Doctor of Philosophy in COMS is to train students in the process of conducting original research in human communication. With few exceptions, our PhD graduates pursue careers doing research and teaching in higher education. See course options for [COMS Graduate Courses](#) and the full [KU Academic Catalog](#).

#### **1. Current Program and Course Requirements**

\*Current PhD program and course requirements are listed below. As of Fall 2020, new guidelines will be in place. See Future (Fall 2020) PhD program and course requirements below, page 20.

Current PhD Requirements: 69 Total credit hours, in addition to post-comprehensive dissertation hours.

24 graduate credit hours a COMS MA program may count, with approval from COMS Director of Graduate Studies. **See Appendix III.**

A. 9 hours of core Communication Theory courses: COMS 859, COMS 958, & COMS 959\*

\*COMS 859 (Proseminar) is waived for students with a Masters in COMS)

B. A minimum of 15 hours of Research Methodology

Required:

COMS 851 Communication Research: Historical and Descriptive (3)

- OR -

COMS 852 Communication Research: Experimentation and Quantitative Analysis (3)

C. 12 additional hours from the following appropriate to the student's research/dissertation interest. Research electives may include courses from the following areas:

1. Experimental and Quantitative Empirical Methods
2. Historical/Critical
3. Qualitative-Empirical

Acceptable Research Methodology Substitutions:

1. In lieu of 3 hours of methodological course work, a student may elect to enroll in 3 hours of applied research in which the student produces original research using one of the above methods. The final paper must meet the approval of the student's advisor and must be submitted to a professional society for presentation on a convention program or to a professional journal for possible publication.
2. In lieu of 3 hours of methodological course work, a student may elect to demonstrate a high level of writing competence in one foreign language if they can show that knowledge of this language directly relates to their research and academic interests. Competence levels will be determined through consultation with the appropriate language department or program.

D. 18 hours of graduate electives, which may be chosen from COMS or other departments. Electives may be used to broaden or intensify the program as long as they constitute a meaningful course of study. Only 6 of these 18 hours may be in independent study. Students holding Master's degrees from other universities can satisfy this elective requirement with hours from their Master's program.

E. A minimum of 27 hours of additional subject matter courses:

1. These courses must represent 2 areas of emphases, to be developed by the student in consultation with an advisor and the Director of Graduate Study.
2. If a student holds a Master's degree in Communication Studies (or equivalent), up to 24 hours of appropriate coursework from this degree may be used as part of the 27 hours of subject matter course requirements.

F. Satisfactory completion of the written and oral comprehensive examination

G. Doctoral dissertation

H. Final oral examination (defense) of the dissertation

**Future (Fall 2020) PhD Requirements:** 66 Total credit hours, in addition to post-comprehensive dissertation hours.

Successful completion of the Ph.D. program requires (1) a completed M.A. degree in Communication Studies or closely related field, (2) total of 42 course hours beyond the M.A. degree, with at least 30 of those course hours in COMS,\* (3) written comprehensive exams, (4) an oral examination of the written comprehensive exams, (5) a written dissertation, and (6) an oral examination of the written dissertation. In addition, only one 500-level course and two independent studies (either 997 or 998) may count toward the Ph.D.

If COMS MA degree was received from another institution, 24 graduate credit hours from a COMS MA program may count, with approval from COMS Director of Graduate Studies. See **Appendix III**.

If COMS MA degree was received from the University of Kansas, 30 graduate credit hours from COMS MA program may count, with approval from COMS Director of Graduate Studies. See **Appendix III**

A. COMS 859: Proseminar (If already taken, 3 additional hours from C, D, E)

\*If course has already been taken and student is wanting to waive this requirement a petition must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies (Dr. Yan Bing).

B. COMS 851 or 852 (If already taken, 3 additional hours from C, D, E)

- C. 12 additional hours from the following appropriate to the student's research/dissertation interest. Research electives may include courses from the following areas:
1. Experimental and Quantitative Empirical Methods
  2. Historical/Critical
  3. Qualitative-Empirical

Acceptable Research Methodology Substitutions:

1. In lieu of 3 hours of methodological course work, a student may elect to enroll in 3 hours of applied research in which the student produces original research using one of the above methods. The final paper must meet the approval of the student's advisor and must be submitted to a professional society for presentation on a convention program or to a professional journal for possible publication.
2. In lieu of 3 hours of methodological course work, a student may elect to demonstrate a high level of writing competence in one foreign language if they can show that knowledge of this language directly relates to their research and academic interests. Competence levels will be determined through consultation with the appropriate language department or program.

D. 18 hours of content area courses

- a. These courses must represent two areas of emphases, to be developed by the student in consultation with an advisor and the Director of Graduate Study.

If a student holds a Master's degree in Communication Studies (or equivalent), up to 30 hours (24 if received degree from another institution) of approved coursework from this degree may be used as part of the 27 hours of subject matter course requirements.

E. 6 hours of electives

F. Satisfactory completion of the written and oral comprehensive examination

G. Doctoral dissertation

H. Final oral examination (defense) of the dissertation

NOTE: All new GTAs must take COMS 920: Seminar in Teaching Oral Communication, this can be an elective or potentially part of a content area.

\*Any adjustment to the required number of COMS course hours must be approved by the Graduate Committee through a formal petition. That petition should offer a full explanation of why the adjustment is being requested and have the full support of the advisor.

### Sample 4-Year Program

Year 1:

Fall 2020 3 Courses, 9 Hours

Spring 2021 3 Courses, 9 Hours

Year 3:

Fall 2022 2 Courses, 6 Hours

Spring 2023 Comprehensive Exams/Prospectus

Year 2:

Fall 2021 3 Courses, 9 Hours

Spring 2022 3 Courses, 9 Hours

Year 4:

Fall 2023 Dissertation

Spring 2024 Dissertation

## 2. Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship

All doctoral students must meet the [Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship requirement](#) before proceeding to comprehensive exams. The requirement must include at least two components:

- **Every doctoral student is required to have training in responsible scholarship pertinent to the field of research.**
- **Every doctoral student is required to obtain research skills pertinent to the doctoral level of research in their field(s).**

For both of these requirements, it is the responsibility of the department to report when the student completed the requirement and how the requirement was met via the Progress to Degree

form. Meeting this requirement is determined by the program/department according to the department's approved research skills requirement plan.

All doctoral programs must have a research skills requirement plan approved by the school/College and the Office of Graduate Studies.

In order to obtain appropriate research skills and learn responsible scholarship, all COMS doctoral students are required to take a minimum of 5 courses in research methodology. One of these courses must be either 851 or 852. The other 4 courses must be approved by the student's advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.

### **3. Comprehensive Exams**

When the Ph.D. aspirant is in the last semester of coursework and has met all other departmental and KU requirements, the student will complete the [comprehensive examination](#). The exam will be given in two sections - written and oral. The process of written and oral examination will be undertaken within one semester, and barring unforeseen circumstances, should be completed within a 3-week period of time. The candidate is encouraged to schedule the oral examination and written examination at the same time. Any comps exam must be pre-approved by the COMS Director of Graduate Studies and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Please contact your [COGA Graduate Advisor](#) prior to scheduling any exam. The COGA advisor will submit your exam request to the College, which requires 2 weeks' notice.

Students must be enrolled in a minimum of 3 credit hours in the semester in they expect to take the comprehensive exam. However, students must be enrolled in at least 6 hours in order to count them as "post-comps" hours. See KU's policy on [post-comprehensive enrollment](#).

#### **Committee and procedures**

The Ph.D. candidate will have a 4-person faculty [committee](#) in charge of the written exams. These members may be from the department. For the oral exam, a 5th member must be added as a representative from the graduate school, and must be appointed from outside the department. The committee chair (ideally, the student's faculty advisor) will coordinate the examination logistics with the Director of Graduate Studies and the COGA advisor.

The student's comprehensive committee will grade the examination. A passing vote requires a majority of the members evaluating the examination. The committee chair will forward the results to the Director of Graduate Studies. The results of the exam will be reported to the College as either pass or fail.

In the event the committee finds exam answers unsatisfactory, the committee may elect to have the student rewrite the same or different questions: they may require additional oral or written clarification (such as an essay) or additional coursework. The committee shall take remedial action most appropriate to the situation. If the first written examination is failed, the candidate has 2 additional opportunities to pass the written comprehensive exams.

The Department will give no oral examinations between the end of the summer session and the beginning of the fall semester. See KU's [Academic Calendar](#).

### **The written examination**

The written comprehensive examination is usually taken in four parts: (1) communication theory; (2) research methodology; (3) first emphasis area; and (4) second emphasis area. The requirement may be fulfilled in one of three ways:

**A. Examination only:** Completing a 14-hour written exam that consists of 3 hours in communication theory, 3 hours in research methodology, and 4 hours each (8 total) covering the first and second areas of emphasis. Usually 1 day is needed per exam area, with exams in all 4 areas completed in a 2-3 week period.

1. **Communication Theory Examination:**

- i. The student will suggest 5 theme areas relevant to their program. Each theme is to be accompanied by a bibliography of 7-10 articles/readings.
- ii. When the themes have been approved by the student's committee, the chair shall request questions on those themes. The outside graduate representative may be enlisted both in the creation of questions and in their evaluation, as determined by the committee.
- iii. There will be a 3 hour exam, with 1 question per hour.

2. **Research Methodology Examination:**

- i. The student shall suggest 5 theme areas in methodological areas relevant to the student's research. The themes should each have an accompanying bibliography of 7-10 articles/readings.
- ii. When the themes have been accepted by the student's committee, the chair shall request questions on those themes. The outside graduate representative may be enlisted in both the creation of questions and in their evaluation, as determined by the committee.
- iii. The exam will be 3 hours long, with 1 question per hour.

3. **Emphasis Area Examinations:**

- i. The written comprehensive in the emphasis areas are devised by the advisor and the comprehensive examination committee. The student, in consultation with the advisor, shall prepare a list of 10 to 15 themes representing 2 subject matter areas. These themes shall be presented and approved by the four person committee. Each theme shall have an accompanying list of sources (usually 7 to 10 articles, chapters, and so forth) the student feels appropriate to study in that area.
- ii. The advisor shall solicit questions based on these topics from the comprehensive committee (or from the outside graduate representative). When an appropriate list of questions has been compiled, the advisor may then consult with the committee concerning possible revision of the questions and which questions to use on the examination.
- iii. Students shall write a total of 8 hours, usually 4 hours in each emphasis area, although a split of 5 and 3 is also possible.

**B. Paper only:** Completing papers for the 4 components (theory, research methodology, two focus areas). Usually 3 weeks are needed per paper, with papers in all 4 areas completed in a 12-13 week period. The student will prepare a proposal that includes for each paper:

1. The topic/purpose and ways in which the topic addresses the exam area or areas.
2. Scope of the paper (outline and anticipated length).
3. A bibliography of at least 20 sources.
4. The paper should constitute substantively new work and not something written for other purposes or classes. A substantively new paper building on earlier work may be accepted if it represents significant new work and extensions of the earlier work. The student should specify in the proposal whether the paper is an extension of an earlier work.
5. Length: A paper of approximately 20 pages is expected for either of the emphasis area exams and a somewhat shorter paper of approximately 15 pages might be appropriate for theory or method.
6. The writing component is to be completed within a span of 3 weeks for each paper, without feedback prior to submission.
7. A paper can reflect the content area, theory, or method pertaining to the student's future dissertation, but should not propose the study design or methodology.
8. The proposal for each paper must be formally approved by the student's committee before starting the paper.

**C. Blended option:** Completing a blended approach consisting of a combination of exams and papers. Variable depending on the division between examinations and papers: 1 day per exam area at a usual rate of 2 exams per week; 3 weeks per paper.

1. The blended option allows the student to complete one or more papers fulfilling content area(s), theory, and/or method and completing remaining areas through examination.
2. The rules for the papers are the same as under the papers option and the rules for the examination are the same as under the examination option. Students are allowed three weeks for each paper and one to two weeks for the examinations, depending upon the number completed. In the blended option, papers should be turned in 1 week prior to starting the written exams.

Regardless of which option is selected and absent exceptional circumstances, written comprehensive exams should be completed within one semester. Deviations from these standards require approval by the Graduate Committee.

In most circumstances, the division between the areas will be either 4 hours in each area or a 5 hour major exam and a 3 hour minor concentration examination. With the agreement of their committee, the student may substitute papers for one or both emphasis area exams, but not for the methods or theory exams.

#### **4. Comprehensive Exam Outcomes**



The student's comprehensive committee shall grade the examination in each area on a pass/fail basis. Members shall provide their grades to the committee chair within **two weeks** of receiving the student's answers or papers. The committee chair shall forward the results to the Director of Graduate Study ideally two weeks before the date of the oral exam, and, no later than one week prior to the oral exam

The committee may judge the candidate to have passed, to have failed, or to have passed with honors.

**Pass:** A "pass" should be regarded as an excellent result and in no way a sign of a committee's dissatisfaction with the quality of a student's work. A passing vote requires a majority of the members evaluating each area of the examination. After a committee member has submitted to the advisor a passing grade for a written examination or paper, the grade may not be changed and the orals will proceed on schedule. Any concerns remaining may be addressed during the oral examination.

**Fail:** In the event the committee finds one or more of the answers or papers unsatisfactory, the committee may elect to have the student rewrite the same or different questions or papers: they may require additional oral or written clarification, such as an essay; they may require additional course work. The committee shall take the remedial action felt most appropriate to the situation. The committee chair will notify the Director of Graduate Study of the remedial plan.

If a student fails any area of the first written examination or paper, the candidate shall have 2 other opportunities to pass the written comprehensive exam or rewrite the paper. Upon a third failure, the student will not be allowed to proceed further in the doctoral program.

**Honors:** A comprehensive exam receiving a nomination for departmental honors should show mastery of all four areas of writing: theory, method, and two content areas. Both oral and written responses should be comprehensive and show critical and analytical thinking. There should be no major mistakes, flaws, or inaccuracies in either the oral or written responses to the exam questions/writing prompts. Only superlative written and oral defenses should be nominated for departmental honors. A proposal for honors should not come from the committee chair, but from one of the other four members. A secret ballot will then be conducted. Honors requires a ballot with at least three votes for honors among the members of the committee other than the chair.

After successful completion of the oral examination, the Committee signs the Exam Outcome Form and forwards it to the COGA Advisor.

### **The oral examination**

After the candidate has passed all sections of the written comprehensive examination, they can take the oral comprehensive examination. As with the written portion, please contact the COGA Advisor to provide CLAS at least two weeks advance notice. The committee for this examination includes the four readers of the written comprehensive exam and one Graduate School faculty member outside the Communication studies Department.

It is the student's responsibility to work with committee members to determine a mutually agreeable defense date and time. Work directly with the COGA Advisor to reserve rooms and any necessary equipment (computer, digital projector, etc.).

## **5. Post-Comprehensive Enrollment**

After passing the comprehensive oral examination, the Office of Graduate Studies requires that doctoral candidates must be continuously enrolled in at least six hours each fall or spring semester, including at least one dissertation hour, until 18 hours have been completed **or** until graduation, whichever comes first. See "Doctoral Enrollment" under University Policies and Procedures.

After 18 hours post-comp are completed, the student must enroll in at least one dissertation hour per semester until all requirements for the degree are met. Post-comprehensive enrollment may include enrollment during the semester or summer session in which the comprehensive oral examination has been passed provided that the exam is taken before the first day of the term's final exam period.

Post-comprehensive students are not required by the Office of Graduate Studies to enroll during summer session. Doctoral students should consult with their advisors and departmental graduate staff to determine whether any other policies require them to enroll during the summer.

## **6. Final Oral Examination (Dissertation Defense)**

When the dissertation has been tentatively accepted by the dissertation reading committee, but before it is submitted for publication, the final Ph.D. examination is held. The committee for this examination shall consist of at least five members (four from the departmental dissertation committee and one outside member of the Graduate Faculty). The time and place of the final Ph.D. examination will be publicly announced by the University.

The final oral examination for the Ph.D. in Communication Studies is, essentially, a defense of the dissertation. See the department's specific [dissertation guidelines](#). A minimum of five (5) months must elapse between completion of the oral comprehensive examination and final dissertation defense.

To be eligible for the examination, the candidate must have finished or currently be enrolled in their final coursework with a minimum 3.0 GPA. If applicable, the thesis should be complete, with input from the graduate committee. Students must be enrolled in at least 1 credit hour in the semester in which they graduate.

### **Request Procedures for all Oral Examinations**

Ensure completion of all graduation requirements before and following the oral defense (see: [Doctoral Degree Checklist](#)). Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for the published Graduation Deadline, which varies by semester. Exams must be pre-approved by the College Office of Graduate Affairs (COGA) at least **two weeks prior** to the intended exam date.

Students and their advisors should therefore begin finalizing a defense date at least one month in advance. It is the student's responsibility to work with committee members to determine a mutually agreeable defense date and time. Work directly with the COGA Advisor to reserve rooms and any necessary equipment (computer, digital projector, etc.). All final exams require approval by the DGS and CLAS prior to taking place.

### **Prospectus**

As soon as possible after the appointment of their advisory committee, and before beginning the actual preparation of their thesis or dissertation, students should submit to the committee a proposal for their thesis or dissertation. This prospectus should indicate (1) the purpose of the investigation, (2) its scope, (3) its importance, and (4) its scholarly method. The committee members and the student must meet collectively to discuss the prospectus and approve the project's continuation.

### **Preparing the Manuscript**

Instructions regarding the preparation of manuscripts may found via the [College Office of Graduate Affairs](#). See KU's [guidelines on dissertation formatting](#). *It is the responsibility of the student to comply in every respect with the thesis and dissertation regulations established by the University of Kansas.*

### **Processing the Dissertation**

At least one month prior to the final oral examination, degree candidates must send copies of their thesis to each member of the committee so all may have an opportunity to read it prior to the examination. After the oral examination the student will be asked to make corrections, if necessary. All committee members will sign the title page, and the acceptance page is signed by the faculty advisor only.

Submission of the final draft of the thesis or dissertation is done electronically. Students must comply with all University requirements for [formatting](#) and [electronic submission](#) of the thesis. There is no University requirement that students provide a bound or printed copy of the draft.

## **7. Dissertation Defense Outcomes**

For the dissertation defense, the committee may judge the candidate to have passed, to have failed, or to have passed with honors. Thus, a "pass" should be regarded as an excellent result and in no way a sign of a committee's dissatisfaction with the quality of a student's work.

A dissertation receiving a nomination for departmental honors should be original, significant, and innovative. It should be very well written, use compelling arguments, and address an important or innovative topic. The review of past theory or pertinent literature should be comprehensive and show critical, analytical, and integrative thinking. The methods or approach should be well-conceived, consistent with contemporary scholarship, and/or innovative. The analyses should be sophisticated, insightful, and/or innovative. The conclusions ought to place the work in a wider context, tie the work to theory, and/or point to a future program of research. A dissertation receiving a nomination for departmental honors should have a high likelihood of future publication. A proposal for honors should not come from the committee chair, but from

one of the other four members. A secret ballot will then be conducted. Honors requires a ballot with at least three votes for honors among the members of the committee other than the chair.

After successful completion of the oral defense, the Committee signs the Dissertation Outcome Form and forwards it to the COGA Advisor.

## **8. Graduation**

Students who have concerns or questions about fulfillment of graduation requirements may arrange for a Graduation Appointment with the [College Office of Graduate Affairs \(COGA\)](#) following the defense or final exam and in advance of the applicable Application for Graduation deadline. While this appointment is not a requirement, it can be useful to review all degree requirements with a COGA staff member, verify that the Application for Graduation and Dissertation submissions have been completed, and receive guidance on any pending items.

At the beginning of the semester in which a student plans to graduate, please apply for graduation. [Step by step instructions can be found here.](#)

### [Graduate Certificate in Professional Workplace Communication Requirements](#)

The KU Professional Workplace Communication Certificate takes you beyond the numbers to understand what really makes organizations tick – the everyday communication practices we too often take for granted. Beyond emails, meetings and those informal hallway discussions, workplace communication is the hidden element within every organization that brings people and ideas together. It's the dimension of any workplace that explores the human side of organizations – and helps facilitate career success. See course options for [COMS Graduate Courses](#) and the full [KU Academic Catalog](#).

## **1. Graduate Certificate Admissions and Procedures**

### **Deadlines**

Certificate applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Students may apply for the certificate up to and including to the last semester in which they are enrolled in active certificate coursework.

### **Minimum Requirements and Prerequisites**

For [University Requirements](#) for admission to graduate study, please see “Admission” in the University Policies and Degree Requirements section of the Handbook.

### **Application Materials**

All application materials must be received prior to evaluation. A complete application consists of the following:

- Complete [online application](#) submitted to Graduate Studies along with KU's graduate application fee (\$30).
- English Proficiency: If an applicant is not a native speaker of English, they must verify their English proficiency. Please see Graduate Admissions' [English Proficiency Requirements](#) for Official TOEFL or IELTS scores.

In addition, KU Students are required to submit the following:

- Statement of interest in the Professional Workplace Communication certificate program and its relationship to your graduate course of study
- An unofficial copy of your KU transcript (degree progress report)
- A letter of support from your graduate degree program (faculty advisor or graduate director)

In addition, non-KU Students are required to submit the following:

- Statement of Interest in the program, and its relationship to your graduate course of study
- One copy of [official transcripts](#) of all previous undergraduate and graduate institutions. Transcripts may be submitted online or mailed to the address below. If accepted, official transcripts must be sent to [Graduate Admissions](#).
- Letter of support from your graduate degree program (faculty advisor or graduate director)

Applicants may submit their application, application fee, statement of interest, and resume through the application link above. Digital copies of transcripts may be emailed directly from the degree-granting institution to [graduateadm@ku.edu](mailto:graduateadm@ku.edu).

Official transcripts can also be mailed to the address below:

University of Kansas, Graduate Admissions  
1450 Jayhawk Boulevard  
Strong Hall, 313  
Lawrence, KS 66045

Applicants are evaluated on the overall strength of their materials based on holistic application review.

## **2. Program and Course Requirements**

The Professional Workplace Communication Graduate certificate requires completion of 12 credit hours, including 2 required courses and 2 elective options. The Director of Graduate Studies must approve all elective courses.

A. Required: COMS 811: Applied Organization Communication

B. Required: COMS 730: Writing and Speaking for Decision Makers

C. Electives: Students will choose seminar electives from the available COMS 930 topics. Two courses are offered each year:

- i. Communication and Organizational Change
- ii. Micro-level Organizational Communication
- iii. Stakeholders and Organizations
- iv. Communication and Leadership
- v. Communication in Teams and Groups

### 3. Graduation and Transcript Endorsement

In the last semester for which coursework will count toward the degree, the student should contact academic advisor, and provide them a list of approved coursework they would like to count toward the certificate. The student must apply separately for graduation for the certificate. [Step by step instructions can be found here](#). This may be completed prior to the completion of another program (MA or PhD), if applicable.

#### Non-Degree Seeking Admission to COMS Graduate Courses

Students with a completed Bachelor's degree who have demonstrated academic competence and wish to take an upcoming graduate-level course in COMS may apply as a [non-degree seeking \(NDS\) student](#).

Undergraduate prerequisite course completion is typically necessary to succeed in graduate-level coursework. If students intend to enroll in coursework via NDS status for non-graduate study pursuits and personal interests, they must specify what courses you would like to complete in the department in the personal statement. Not all courses may be open to NDS students.

Individuals may apply to be non-degree-seeking students within a COMS. This process is separate from any degree seeking program (including certificate program).

Non-degree-seeking applicants do not intend to work for an advanced degree. If a non-degree-seeking student later applies for admission as a regular degree-seeking student and is accepted by a department, the total of transfer credit [may not exceed nine \(9\) hours](#).

### 1. Non-Degree Seeking Admissions and Procedures

#### Deadlines

[Applications](#) are accepted per the following deadlines: Spring semester – January 1. Summer semester – May 1. Fall semester – August 1

#### Minimum Requirements and Prerequisites

For [University Requirements](#) for admission to graduate study, please see “Admission” in the University Policies and Degree Requirements section of the Handbook.

#### Application Materials

All application materials must be received prior to evaluation. A complete application consists of the following:

- Complete [online application](#) submitted to Graduate Studies along with KU's graduate application fee (\$30).
- Proof of Bachelor's degree- one copy of [official transcripts](#) of all previous undergraduate and graduate institutions. Transcripts may be submitted online or mailed to the address below.

- English Proficiency: If an applicant is not a native speaker of English, they must verify their English proficiency. Please see Graduate Admissions' [English Proficiency Requirements](#) for Official TOEFL or IELTS scores.
- Statement of interest (300-500 words explaining academic and career goals)
- Resume or curriculum vita

Applicants may submit their application, application fee, statement of interest, and resume through the application link above. Digital copies of transcripts may be emailed directly from the degree-granting institution to [graduateadm@ku.edu](mailto:graduateadm@ku.edu).

Official transcripts can also be mailed to the address below:  
 University of Kansas, Graduate Admissions  
 1450 Jayhawk Boulevard  
 Strong Hall, 313  
 Lawrence, KS 66045

Applicants are evaluated on the overall strength of their materials based on holistic application review.

## 2. Program and Course Requirements

None. Completion of NDS coursework to fulfill prerequisites will not guarantee admission to the KU graduate program in Communication Studies. Students who have studied communications and/or gained appropriate experience via self-study and who lack fulfillment of academic area prerequisites may consider applying to the department as NDS students to make up any gaps in academic study.

## **III. UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS**

This section contains information on requirements and policies of the Office of Graduate Studies and the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, both hereafter referred to as “the University”. It is not a complete list of all policies pertaining to graduate students. Only those policies that most commonly affect graduate students are included.

Policies are described in general terms and are intended to help students understand what is expected. They do not reflect the exact language of the official policy and should not be confused with official policy. Specific information and restrictions as well as links to relevant forms may be accessed by clicking on the policy headings. Links to the official policies in the KU policy library are found at the bottom of each policy description. Students are accountable to and should familiarize themselves with the University's official policies.

### **General Policies**

The following University policies apply to ALL graduate students regardless of degree, program, or department. These are minimum general requirements. COMS may have more restrictive policies in any of these areas.

### **[Admission](#)**

Degree or non-degree seeking applicants must have a bachelor's degree (as evidence by an official transcript from the institution the degree was obtained) and a minimum GPA of 3.0 in the most recent degree that was obtained.

Students\* not meeting these requirements *may* be admitted provisionally upon recommendation by the department; however, restrictions on certain type of funding, including GTA/GRA/GA funding, apply to students on provisional admission status. Students should consult the program admissions advisor or Director of Graduate Study (DGS) on their eligibility for funding with admission.

\*By Federal regulation, International students seeking F-1 status must meet the standards of Regular Admission. Provisional admission is not sufficient to issue the Form I-20.

**Related Policies and Forms:**

- [Admission to Graduate Study](#)

**English Proficiency Requirements**

The University requires all applicants, international or domestic, to demonstrate English proficiency for admission to any graduate program at KU. There are three ways to prove English proficiency:

1. Declaration of native speaker status on the online application for graduate study.
2. Graduation with a baccalaureate degree (or higher) earned in residence from an accredited English-medium U.S. college or university or a college or university in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, English-speaking province of Canada, or an English-speaking Caribbean country, with instruction conducted in English. Degrees earned online may not be used to verify English proficiency. Note: this option is not sufficient for employment as a Graduate Teaching Assistant.
3. Official scores from an English proficiency standardized test (e.g. TOEFL, IELTS-Academic, or PTE), sent by the testing agency to the University of Kansas. Official scores must be less than two years old.

Applicants that do not meet the minimum scores should review the English Proficiency Chart, provided via the link above, for information about provisional admission and petition processes based on exceptional circumstances. Applicants should submit their scores directly to the Office of Graduate Studies:

Office of Graduate Studies  
213 Strong Hall  
1450 Jayhawk Blvd.  
Lawrence KS 66045-7535

**Related Policies and Forms:**

- [English Proficiency Requirements for Admission to Graduate Study](#)
- [Spoken English Language Competency of Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants, Kansas Board of Regents Policy](#)



- [Graduate Credit](#)

### **Enrollment**

For graduate students in the College, advising on enrollment and course selection take place at the department level. While units within the College may define full-time enrollment more stringently, the University defines it as follows:

Fall and Spring semesters:

- Enrollment in 9 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;
- Doctoral candidates enrolled in dissertation hour(s). \*See Doctoral post-comprehensive enrollment.

Summer sessions:

- Enrollment in 6 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 3 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;
- Enrollment in 3 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;
- Doctoral candidates enrolled in dissertation hour(s).

Graduate students are not normally permitted to enroll for more than 16 hours a semester or more than 8 hours in summer session.

While these are KU's definitions of full-time enrollment, other institutions may have different definitions. Be sure to consult with your financial aid and/or health insurance providers before making enrollment decisions.

**Student not enrolled by 11:59pm the day before the first day of classes will be assessed a late enrollment fee. The University Registrar then deactivates the KU ID of any not enrolled by the last Friday in October (for Fall) or last Friday in April (for Spring). Students who wish to enroll after that must pay a fee to be reactivated.**

Students who wish to leave their graduate program should inform the department of such plans in writing so that a Voluntary Withdrawal form may be submitted on their behalf.

Deadlines for adding, changing, dropping, or withdrawing from courses entirely, as well any fines associated with the change, are set by the University. **Deadlines vary from year to year. Students should carefully review the current [Academic Calendar](#).**

The College Office of Graduate Affairs' (COGA) website has a very useful [Enrollment Changes Guide](#), which provides comprehensive guidance on the forms and endorsements required for different enrollment situations, including late enrollment changes after the published deadlines.

You may also wish to consult the Registrar's page on [Effects of Dropping or Withdrawing on your Transcript](#).

#### **Related Policies:**

- [Discontinued Enrollment](#)
- [Enrollment](#)
- [Enrollment Regulations](#) (CLAS)
- [Full-time Enrollment for Graduate Students](#)
- [Graduate Coursework Expiration Dates](#)
- [Master's Enrollment Requirements](#)

#### **Graduate Credit** (Including Transfer Credit)

The Office of Graduate Studies [policy](#) on Graduate Credit defines KU's conditions for the following:

- Definition of graduate credit for the purposes of a course “counting” towards a graduate degree or graduate certificate at KU;
- Transfer of graduate credit to KU from an outside institution;
- Reduction in the required number of graduate hours for Master's students;
- Counting credit hours taken as non-degree seeking student towards a later graduate degree at KU;
- Counting credit hours taken as a certificate seeking student toward another graduate degree.

#### **Transfer Credit**

The transfer credit option allows master's students to add graduate-level coursework completed at another institution to their KU transcript to count toward their KU degree. Upper level coursework taken as an undergraduate, even courses numbered at the graduate level, is not eligible for transfer in any case. Additional restrictions apply to what non-KU graduate courses and the number of credit hours that can be counted toward a KU master's degree, so students should carefully review the information provided in the link above and the related policies below, as well as consulting with their DGS. In all cases, transfer credit must first be approved at the department or program level. To begin the transfer process, students should consult with their DGS to submit the required transfer materials. These include a transcript reflecting the courses to be transferred and descriptions and/or syllabi for the courses in question.

No transfer of credits is allowed for the Ph.D. In circumstances where students enter the Ph.D. program with an M.A. from another institution or relevant graduate coursework, it may be possible for students to request a reduction in the number of hours required for the Ph.D. Students should consult with their DGS about their enrollment plan.

#### **Reduced Credit Hour Degree**

KU policy defines 30 hours as the minimum for master's degrees. Departments may petition for a reduced hour degree Master's degree for individual students in cases where they may provide

evidence that the student entered the program especially well-prepared to complete a graduate-level degree and the student is able to maintain a superior grade point average. A reduction in hours is distinct from a transfer of credit. It is reserved for students that may, in some cases, be based on coursework that was already used to fulfill requirements towards a completed degree, or non-coursework (e.g. internships, study abroad). There are no modifications on the transcript.

Restrictions apply to the number of credit hours that can be reduced for a master's degree, so students should carefully review the information provided in the link above and the related policies below.

In all cases, a reduction in hours must first be approved at the department or program level, so to begin the process for approval, students should consult with their DGS. Students must also provide documentation of the coursework or experience being used to justify the reduced hours (e.g. transcripts, program descriptions).

Because there is no minimum number of required hours for the Ph.D., reduction of required hours based on prior degrees or experience is determined solely at the program level. Doctoral students should consult with their DGS about their enrollment plan.

### **Count Toward Degree**

The [Count Toward Degree form](#) is an Office of the Registrar Form that allows graduate credit hours taken at KU as a non-degree seeking student to count towards a later degree at KU.

As with transfer credit and reduced hour degrees, restrictions apply, so students should carefully review the information in the link above and the related policies below, and consult with their DGS.

#### **Related Policies:**

- [Graduate Credit](#)
- [Count Toward Degree Form](#)
- [Co-enrollment](#)
- [MA and MS Degrees](#) (on Reduced Hour Master's Degree)

### **Probation & Dismissal**

Probation is an academic status that can be assigned to a graduate student that is not making [satisfactory progress](#) toward completing their degree. The department initiates the probation process and will inform the student of why they are not making satisfactory progress, what they must do to return to good standing, and the deadline for doing so.

### **Students are most commonly placed on probation due to their graduate cumulative [GPA](#) dropping below a B average (3.0 on a 4.0 scale).**

In these cases, probation occurs automatically and is reflected on the student's record for the semester following the semester in which the student's GPA drops below 3.0. If the student's cumulative GPA is raised to 3.0 by the end of the probationary semester, the student will be automatically returned to good academic standing.

Students may also be placed on probation by their departments for other reasons that constitute a failure to make satisfactory progress towards degree. These may include, but are not limited to; failure to make adequate progress on a thesis or dissertation, unacceptable academic performance on program components outside of coursework (e.g. exams), an unsatisfactory result in their department's annual evaluation, or as a result of going beyond their official time to degree. Students should carefully review the [Good Academic Standing policy](#) for graduate students at KU for more information on what constitutes making satisfactory academic progress.

Individual programs may also have additional measures of progress. Students should also consult the Annual Review section of their department graduate handbook and with their program advisor for more information.

If a student is unable to raise their cumulative GPA or otherwise meet departmental expectations for adequate academic progress by the end of the probationary period, the department will reconsider their continuation in the program, in most cases will recommend the student for dismissal, or that the student voluntarily withdraw from the program. Once dismissed, a student is no longer able to be enrolled in coursework and cannot complete their degree. Students dismissed from any graduate program may not be admitted to any other graduate program at the University of Kansas.

**A student on probation or facing dismissal should discuss their status with their advisor.**

**Related Policies:**

- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)
- [Probation and Dismissal \(CLAS\)](#)
- [Good Academic Standing policy](#)

**Grading**

The Office of Graduate Studies' [Grading policy](#) governs requirements for the grading of graduate students above those described in [Article II](#) of the University Senate Rules and Regulations. Additionally, individual schools, departments, or programs may have grading policies that are more stringent than those of Graduate Studies. Students should review the [College-specific grading information](#) and consult their adviser and the departmental section of this handbook for additional information that may affect them.

At minimum, for all graduate students at KU, at least a B average is required on course work counted toward any of the master's degrees at KU, and only courses graded A, B, or C (excluding C-) may be counted. Course work counted toward a doctorate, including that for a master's degree if obtained at KU, should average better than a B.

Additional information pertaining to graduate grading can be found on COGA's pages for [Retroactive Withdrawal](#), [Incomplete Grades](#), and [Graduate GPA](#). The Registrar's Office's also offers information on the [Credit/No Credit](#) option.

**Related Policies:**

- [University Senate Rules & Regulations](#)
- [Grading](#)

- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)
- [Probation and Dismissal \(CLAS\)](#)

### **Credit/No Credit**

The University supports and encourages interdisciplinary study, which may include graduate students enrolling in coursework at the graduate level that is outside of their primary discipline. The Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) is an option for graduate students who are taking a course that is not required for their degree or certificate and who do not wish to have the course grade reflected in their overall graduate GPA. Rather than a grade appearing on the transcript, the student receives a designation of CR or NC, which does not factor in the GPA.

**No course graded CR/NC will count toward the satisfaction of any graduate degree or certificate requirement.** This includes, but is not limited to, courses taken to fulfill the Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship requirement for doctoral students.

Students make the CR/NC election via the Registrar's CR/NC [online request](#) form. Elections and changes to elections can only be made during the specific CR/NC period. For regular semester courses, this period begins after the last day to add a class and extends for approximately two weeks. Exact dates may be found on the current KU [Academic Calendar](#). Please keep in mind, short courses may have [alternate dates](#).

The student should consult with their own program advisor about the appropriateness of the course prior to enrolling; however, in cases where CR/NC is elected, the course instructor is not informed of the election unless the student chooses to share this information. Additional restrictions apply. Students should carefully review the information in the link above.

### **Related Policies and Forms:**

- [University Senate Rules and Regulations \(USRR\), Section 2.2.7](#)

### **Time limits**

The University expects that master's degree should typically be completed in two (2) years of full-time study, the doctorate degree in five (5) years of study, and both the master's and doctorate together in six-seven (6-7) years of study.

Students who anticipate exceeding these targets should review the information in the link above and in the policies below, as well as consult with their program advisor to create a timeline for degree completion. In order to support this process, COGA offers departments and students a [Mentoring Agreement Template](#) to use and/or adapt to their own needs. The template may be used with students in danger of going beyond the program's expected time limits, or simply as an advising tool for all their students. It is especially useful for students in the dissertation or thesis phase.

### **Related Policies and Forms:**

- [Master's Degree Program Time Constraints](#)
- [Doctoral Program Time Constraints](#)
- [Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Time Constraints](#)
- [Doctoral Program Profiles with Time To Degree Information](#)

- [Graduate Degree Completion Agreement](#) (PDF)
- [Mentoring Agreement Template](#) (Doc)

### **Leaves of Absence**

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. cases of illness, emergency, financial hardship, military leave, to pursue family responsibilities, or to pursue full-time activities related to long-range professional goals) it may be necessary for graduate students to take a break from their program temporarily, without having to withdraw entirely from the program. An approved leave of absence allows a student to take a temporary break from enrolling in graduate coursework while remaining in good standing with the University and the department and while “stopping the clock” on their time to degree.

Requesting a Leave of Absence is done via a University petition. University petitions must first be approved and supported at the program level, so students wishing to initiate the petition process should first consult with their Director of Graduate Studies and review their department’s internal petition procedures. Units or the Director of Graduate Study may request documentation to support the student’s need for a leave of absence; however, the only document that the College requires for the petition is the Leave of Absence form, linked below.

Students on Leave of Absence are automatically reactivated after their leave is over and are eligible to enroll for their intended semester back during the normal enrollment periods. See the KU [Academic Calendar](#) for exact dates that enrollment begins. If at any time plans change and a student wishes to return and enroll before leave was supposed to end they may contact their department to be reactivated early.

### **Related Policies and Forms:**

- [Leaves of Absence](#)
- [CLAS Leave of Absence Petition Form](#) (PDF)

### **Oral Exams**

All graduate students must complete one or more exams as part of their degree requirements. In addition to department or program guidelines, the University has several policies pertaining to the following exams:

- Master's Exam/Thesis Defense for Master's degree
- Doctoral Comprehensive Oral Exam
- Doctoral Final Exam/Dissertation Defense

Before a student is allowed to sit for any of these three exams, pre-approval from the College is required in advance of the exam date. The College verifies that the student has fulfilled University requirements. The full list of these requirements may be found via the link in the heading above. Students should work with their departments well in advance of their planned exam date, to schedule their exams in a timely fashion and to ensure that all University policies relating to oral exams are being followed.

In many cases, programs may have additional exams, such as a written pre-qualifying exam. Exam pre-approval by the College applies ONLY to the oral portions of the three exams listed above.

The following are University policies pertaining to these oral exams:

### **Oral Exam Committee Composition**

For all oral exams, the committee members must be appointed members of the Graduate Faculty of KU. In addition, a majority of committee members serving on a graduate student oral examination committee must be tenured/tenure-track faculty holding regular graduate faculty or, in the case of doctoral committees, dissertation faculty status in the candidate's department/program of study.

Many additional restrictions apply, especially for doctoral exam committees. Master's and doctoral students should carefully review the University policies pertaining to exams, as well as consult with their Director of Graduate Studies when forming an exam committee.

### **Oral Exam Attendance (Physical Presence)**

The Oral Exam Attendance policy describes rules for physical versus mediated attendance (e.g. Skype or phone) at oral exams.

In all cases, a majority of committee members must be physically present with the student for an exam to commence. Both the chair and outside member (for doctoral exams) must form part of this majority. **In all cases where the student prefers that all committee members are physically present, the student's preference shall be honored.**

Master's and doctoral students should carefully review the policies below, as well as consult with their Director of Graduate Studies in the formation of an oral exam committee.

### **Related Policies and Forms:**

- [Master's Student Oral Exam Committee Composition](#)
- [Doctoral Student Oral Exam Committee Composition](#)
- [Oral Exam Attendance](#)
- [Graduate Faculty Appointments](#)

## **DOCTORAL DEGREE REQUIREMENTS**

In addition to the student's individual Ph.D. program's degree requirements, the following are University requirements for graduation with a Ph.D. at KU.

### **Residency Requirement**

Two semesters, which may include one summer session, must be spent in full-time resident study at the University of Kansas. During this period of residence, fulltime involvement in academic or professional pursuits may include an appointment for teaching or research if the teaching/research is directed specifically toward the student's degree objectives.

### **Related Policies and Forms:**

- [Doctoral Program Time Constraints](#)
- [Residency](#)

### **Continuous Enrollment for Post-Comprehensive Students**

During the semester in which the comprehensive exam is completed and each fall and spring semester that follows, doctoral candidates must enroll in at least 6 credit hours per semester until all requirements for the degree are completed **OR** until 18 post-comprehensive hours have been completed, whichever comes first. At least one of these credit hours each semester must be a dissertation hour (or an approved dissertation equivalent).

During the semester in which the student will complete this requirement, enrollment may be dropped to only the number of hours required to complete the 18. For example, if a student is entering the fall semester having completed 15 post-comprehensive hours, only 3 credit hours (which must include at least 1 dissertation hour) is needed for that fall.

After fulfilling the post-comprehensive enrollment requirement, enrollment may be reduced to as little as 1 dissertation per fall or spring semester up to and including the semester of graduation.

Summer enrollment for post-comp doctoral students is optional, with some exceptions. See the information in the header link above for a list of exceptions.

Students are strongly advised to closely review the University regulations on continuous enrollment for post-comprehensive students. Failure to properly comply with the policy could result in additional enrollment requirements and tuition expense near the end of your degree program.

Post-comprehensive enrollment requirements also apply to students with GTA/GRA/GA appointments, but these students must be certified to drop their enrollment levels. Departments are responsible for tracking student enrollment and will submit the certification form on the student's behalf **at least two weeks prior** to the beginning of the semester in which the enrollment will drop below 6 hours. Students who are certified to reduce hours continue to meet the University's definition of full time enrollment, as well as the enrollment requirements of their employment contract.

### **Related Policies and Forms:**

- [Doctoral Program Time Constraints](#)
- [Doctoral Candidacy](#)

### **Graduate Certificate Requirements**

The University offers a variety of [Approved Graduate Certificate Programs](#) to encourage current graduate students to pursue interdisciplinary study. Certificate programs also provide an option for a coherent course of advanced study for those not ready to commit to a full degree program. There are certain restrictions on the timing of admissions to a Graduate Certificate program and the granting of credit for courses completed. Students whose interests or career goals may be served by a Graduate Certificate should familiarize themselves with the University's policies



relating to Certificate programs (found below) early in their graduate career, in addition to individual certificate program requirements.

### **Related Policies and Forms:**

- [Graduate Certificate Programs: Eligibility and Admission Criteria](#)
- [Policies & Procedures for Graduate Certificate Programs](#)

### **Graduation Requirements (M.A. & Ph.D.)**

In addition to all program requirements, students [planning to graduate](#) must complete all University graduation requirements **prior to the published Graduation Deadline** in a given semester. Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for the published Graduation Deadline, which varies by semester.

COGA's graduation checklists contain a comprehensive list of all University requirements for graduation and should be used by every graduating master's or doctoral student in the College.

### **[M.A. DEGREE GRADUATION CHECKLIST](#)** **[PH.D. DEGREE GRADUATION CHECKLIST](#)**

Submission of the final draft of the thesis or dissertation is done electronically. Students must comply with all University requirements for [formatting](#) and [electronic submission](#) of the thesis or dissertation. There is no University requirement that students provide a bound or printed copy of the draft.

Students who have concerns or questions about fulfillment of graduation requirements may arrange for a Graduation Appointment with the [College Office of Graduate Affairs](#) (COGA) following the defense or final exam and in advance of the applicable Application for Graduation deadline. While this appointment is not a requirement, it can be useful to review all degree requirements with a COGA staff member, verify that the Application for Graduation and Thesis/Dissertation submissions have been completed, and receive guidance on any pending items.

### **Graduate Studies Funding Opportunities**

The Office of Graduate Studies offers [funding opportunities](#) in several different categories. Students interested in applying should direct inquiries to the department's Director of Graduate Studies or to the Office of Graduate Studies. Some of the available funding includes:

**Graduate Scholarly Presentation Travel Fund:** intended for graduate students presenting a paper at a national or regional meeting of a learned or professional society. A student may receive an award (\$500) only once, and funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Dissertation Fellowships:** intended for doctoral students who have passed their comprehensive examinations; for one academic year, non-renewable.

**Summer Fellowships:** intended primarily for doctoral students.

**Doctoral Student Research Fund:** Designed to support KU doctoral students who need assistance to carry out research that advances progress toward the degree. Applications for this fund are accepted only for a limited time as funding is available. Students should check the link above for additional information and restrictions.

### [Graduate Travel Awards](#)

**COMS Departmental Award:** COMS departmental travel awards are intended for graduate students presenting a paper at a national or regional meeting of a learned or professional society. A student may receive an award (\$400) once per year. Students have access to this form through the Blackboard site moderated by the COMS Graduate Student Organization. Completed forms must be sent to the department chair and the [Shared Services Representative](#) for the department.

### **Additional Student Resources:**

[Academic and Writing Support](#)

[Financial Support and Services](#)

[International Student Resources and Services](#)

[Military-affiliated Student Resources](#)

[Legal Services and Conflict Assistance](#)

[Health and Self-Care Resources](#)

[Campus and Community Engagement](#)

[Careers and Professional Practice Resources](#)

**APPENDIX I: COMS MA Non-thesis Plan of Study (click [here](#) for fillable PDF)**

**COMS Plan of Study - MA Non-thesis**

	<u>Course</u>	<u>Credit Hours</u>	<u>Semester</u>
<b>Core Classes (6 hours)</b>			
Proseminar: COMS 859			
Methods: COMS 851 <u>or</u> 852			
<b>Content Areas (9 hours each)</b>			
<b>Content Area 1:</b>			
Course 1			
Course 2			
Course 3			
<b>Content Area 2:</b>			
Course 1			
Course 2			
Course 3			
<b>Teaching Seminar (GTA only)</b>			
COMS 930			
<b>Electives (6 hours)</b>			
Elective 1			
Elective 2			
Elective 3 ( <i>as needed</i> )			
<b>TOTAL CREDIT HOURS</b>		<b>30</b>	

Approved Topic:

Advisor (Committee Chair):

MA Committee Member:

MA Committee Member:

Semester of oral defense:

*For more information about the written and oral exam, please visit: <https://coms.ku.edu/examinations-1>*

**APPENDIX II: COMS MA Thesis Plan of Study (click [here](#) for fillable PDF)**

**COMS Plan of Study - MA Thesis**

	<u>Course</u>	<u>Credit Hours</u>	<u>Semester</u>
<b>Core Classes (9 hours)</b>			
Proseminar: COMS 859	_____	_____	_____
Methods: COMS 851 <u>or</u> 852	_____	_____	_____
Methods Elective	_____	_____	_____
<b>Content Areas (6 hours each)</b>			
<b>Content Area 1:</b>			
Course 1	_____	_____	_____
Course 2	_____	_____	_____
<b>Content Area 2:</b>			
Course 1	_____	_____	_____
Course 2	_____	_____	_____
<b>Teaching Seminar (GTA only)</b>			
COMS 930	_____	_____	_____
<b>Electives (3 hours)</b>			
Elective 1	_____	_____	_____
Elective 2 ( <i>as needed</i> )	_____	_____	_____
<b>Thesis Writing</b>			
COMS 899	_____	_____	_____
COMS 899	_____	_____	_____
COMS 899 ( <i>as needed</i> )	_____	_____	_____
<b>TOTAL CREDIT HOURS</b>		<b>30</b>	
<u>Approved Topic:</u> _____			
<u>Advisor (Committee Chair):</u> _____			
<u>MA Committee Member:</u> _____			
<u>MA Committee Member:</u> _____			
<u>Semester of oral defense:</u> _____			

*For more information about the thesis process, please visit: <https://coms.ku.edu/thesis>*

**APPENDIX III: COMS PhD Plan of Study** (click [here](#) for fillable PDF)

**COMS Plan of Study - Doctoral Dissertation**

24 hours may count from Master's program outside KU, 30 may count from KU

	<u>Course</u>	<u>Credit Hours</u>	<u>Semester</u>
<b>Core Classes (9 hours)</b>			
COMS 859 Proseminar*			
COMS 958 Comparative Theories			
COMS 959 Contemporary Theories			
<i>*Proseminar waived for students with MA in COMS</i>			
<b>Research Methodology (minimum 15 hours)</b>			
RM 1 COMS 851 -OR- 852			
RM 2			
RM 3			
RM 4			
RM 5			
Acceptable RM substitutes, with advisor approval:			
1. Relevant foreign language competence 2. Applied research as submitted to a conference or journal			
<b>Content Areas (27 total hours)</b>			
<b>Content Area 1:</b>			
Course 1			
Course 2			
Course 3			
Course 4			
Course 5			
<b>Content Area 2:</b>			
Course 1			
Course 2			
Course 3			
Course 4			
Course 5			
<b>Electives (18 hours, limit 6 hours independent study credits)</b>			
Elective 1			
Elective 2			
Elective 3			
Elective 4			
Elective 5			
Elective 6			
<b>TOTAL CREDIT HOURS</b>		<b>69</b>	
<b>Dissertation Writing</b>			
COMS 999			
COMS 999			
COMS 999 (as needed)			
COMS 999 (as needed)			
<u>Approved Topic:</u>			
<u>Advisor (Committee Chair):</u>			
<u>Dissertation Committee Member:</u>			
<u>Dissertation Committee Member:</u>			
<u>Dissertation Committee Member:</u>			
<u>Grad Studies Representative:</u>			
<u>Semester of oral defense:</u>			

**APPENDIX IV: Prospectus Outcome Form (click [here](#) for printable PDF)**

University of Kansas, Department of Communication Studies  
**Prospectus Outcome Form**

*This form should be completed by the committee immediately upon completion of the prospectus meeting. The student must receive a copy. Please return this form to Clare Thoman in hard copy or scanned PDF form: [clarethoman@ku.edu](mailto:clarethoman@ku.edu).*

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID#: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved with minor or moderate changes recommended

Extensive changes needed, second meeting required

Changes required:

Committee Chair/Thesis Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX V: MA Non-Thesis Exam Outcome Form (click [here](#) for printable PDF)**

University of Kansas, Department of Communication Studies  
**MA ORAL EXAM/DEFENSE OUTCOME FORM**

*This form should be completed by the committee immediately upon completion of the defense or exam and returned to Clare Thoman in hard copy or scanned PDF form to [clarethoman@ku.edu](mailto:clarethoman@ku.edu).*

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID# \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Defense/Exam \_\_\_\_\_

**Result of Portfolio Defense**

SATISFACTORY

HONORS

UNSATISFACTORY

Committee Chair Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Chair Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Member Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Member Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX VI: MA Thesis Defense Outcome Form** (click [here](#) for printable PDF)



University of Kansas, Department of Communication Studies  
**MA THESIS DEFENSE OUTCOME FORM**

*This form should be completed by the committee immediately upon completion of the defense or exam and returned to Clare Thoman in hard copy or scanned PDF form to [clarethoman@ku.edu](mailto:clarethoman@ku.edu).*

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID# \_\_\_\_\_

**Thesis Defense Outcome**

SATISFACTORY

HONORS

UNSATISFACTORY

Committee Chair/Thesis Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Instructions for Thesis Exam Only:**

The MA candidate should bring with them to the defense a blank, correctly formatted copy of the Title page and the Acceptance page.

If the outcome is Satisfactory or Honors, all present members of the committee should sign the TITLE page. Members participating by distance (phone or Skype) are not required to sign the Title page. The signed Title page should then be given to the student, who should keep the original and send a PDF copy to the College Office of Graduate Affairs ([COGADOCS@ku.edu](mailto:COGADOCS@ku.edu)).

The blank Acceptance page is given to the thesis advisor/committee chair to be held and then signed once all revisions to the thesis have been made and the final version is accepted. The advisor should make arrangements with the student to then return the signed Acceptance page to them PRIOR to the graduation deadline.

It is then the responsibility of the student to then submit the original, signed copies of the Title page and Acceptance page to the College Office of Graduate Affairs ([COGADOCS@ku.edu](mailto:COGADOCS@ku.edu)).

**APPENDIX VII: PhD Dissertation Defense Outcome Form (click [here](#) for printable PDF)**

University of Kansas, Department of Communication Studies  
**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION DEFENSE OUTCOME FORM**

*This form should be completed by the committee immediately upon completion of the defense and returned to Clare Thoman in hard copy or scanned PDF form to [clarethoman@ku.edu](mailto:clarethoman@ku.edu).*

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID# \_\_\_\_\_

**Dissertation Defense Outcome**

SATISFACTORY

HONORS

UNSATISFACTORY

Committee Chair/Dissertation Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate Studies Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Instructions for Dissertation Oral Defense:**

The PhD candidate should bring with them to the defense a blank, correctly formatted copy of the Title page and the Acceptance page.

If the outcome is Satisfactory or Honors, all present members of the committee should sign the TITLE page. Members participating by distance (phone or Skype) are not required to sign the Title page. The signed Title page should then be given to the student, who should keep the original and send a PDF copy to [cogadocs@ku.edu](mailto:cogadocs@ku.edu). The title page requires a majority of committee members' signatures.

The blank Acceptance page is given to the thesis advisor/committee chair to be held and then signed once all revisions to the thesis have been made and the final version is accepted. The advisor should make arrangements with the student to then return the signed Acceptance page to them PRIOR to the graduation deadline.

It is then the responsibility of the student to then submit the original, signed copies of the Title page and Acceptance page to the College Office of Graduate Affairs, 102 Strong Hall, by the graduation deadline.