Graduate Program Handbook

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Admission to the Graduate Programs

A. **Undergraduate Degree-**Students holding a bachelor's degree or an equivalent degree from a foreign country can be admitted to the graduate program.
B. **GPA-**Applicants must have a GPA of 3.0 or better in overall undergraduate studies.
C. **Application Process-** The process is detailed on the following page**:** graduate application process
D. **Application Deadlines-**New students must apply for admission to a program 3-4 weeks before the beginning of a new semester (August 1st for fall, December 1st for spring, and April 30th for summer). The deadline for applicants seeking graduate assistantships is usually around mid-February. International students should follow the deadlines set by the Kearney Center for International Student Services.

Retention requirements

Applicants admitted to the Communication Studies graduate programs must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0. Detailed information about the scholastic standards set by the College of Graduate Studies and Research is available at Graduate College Policy and Course Requirements

Funding Graduate Education

Our Department offers a number of assistantships. Students could serve as teaching assistants for the recitation sections of CMST 100/CMST 102 and the forensics team. In addition, students are encouraged to apply for university-wide assistantships and federal and state financial aid if they are eligible. Detailed information about financial assistance and policies regarding the same are available at graduate financial resources

A. Criteria for Funding Graduate Assistants

The following criteria establish a hierarchy for the funding of graduate assistants in the Department of Communication Studies:
1. Graduate students who are applying for a third year of funding to earn an MFA in Communication Studies
2. Graduate students who are applying for a second year of funding to earn a master's degree in Communication Studies
3. Graduate students who are applying for a first year of funding to earn a master's degree in Communication Studies
   First-year funding has the following additional hierarchical criteria:
   a. Full admission to Communication Studies graduate program
   b. Undergraduate major/minor in Communication Studies
   c. Undergraduate major/minor in a related/supporting field to Communication Studies
   d. Background in teaching /forensics
   e. Probationary admission to Communication Studies graduate program

4. Graduate students applying for a third year of funding to earn a master's degree in Communication Studies (MA/MS only)
5. Graduate students in multi-disciplinary programs with Communication Studies as one of their emphases (1st or 2nd year of funding)
6. Students with a background in Communication Studies enrolled in other graduate programs (1st or 2nd year of funding)
7. Graduate students in multi-disciplinary programs with Communication Studies as one of their emphases (3rd year of funding)
8. Students with a background in Communication Studies enrolled in other graduate programs at the university (3rd year of funding)

B. Scholastic Requirements – Graduate assistants should demonstrate satisfactory academic progress toward their degree (a cumulative GPA of 3.0).

Program Process

A. Advisor and Capstone Descriptions

When a student is admitted into a Communication Studies graduate program, the department's Graduate Studies Coordinator will automatically be assigned as the advisor. An appointment can be scheduled with the advisor to discuss the student's program, interests, and course options. After completing 50% of the coursework, the student needs to select a capstone advisor and a committee. Capstone Project Descriptions:

1. T**hesis**: A thesis is an independent work of a creative or investigative type related to a student's major field of study. It should demonstrate independent thought in the recognition, investigation, and analysis/interpretation of a communication problem or phenomena and be oriented towards original research that contributes to new knowledge.
2. **Alternate Plan Paper (APP)**: An APP is a less extensive research endeavor than a thesis. It can be an expanded work of a term paper or papers prepared for a course that involves an extensive review, analysis, and synthesis of secondary sources. The research quality should be better than that of a course paper.
3. **Internship Paper:** The Internship paper is based on an applied project which combines scholarship with extensive experience in a non-academic setting. The written component of the project should involve a combination of review, analysis, and synthesis of secondary sources and an application of that material to a workplace situation.
4. Detailed information about the various capstone projects is available at **capstones**

B. Selecting a Capstone Advisor and Committee

1. Committee Requirements:

   a. **MA & MFA Thesis:** Two graduate faculty members from the Department of Communication Studies and one graduate faculty member from outside the department

   b. **Alternate Plan Paper:**

      i. *MS in Communication Studies*-Two graduate faculty members from the Department of Communication Studies
      ii. *MS in Communication and Composition*-One graduate faculty member from the Department of Communication Studies and one graduate faculty member from the Department of English
      iii. *MS in Communication and Composition*-If you plan to do a Composition paper, your advisor/chair needs to be from the Department of English, and your committee member needs to be from

the Department of Communication Studies and vice-versa if you plan to do a Communication Studies paper.

c. Internship Paper:

    i. *MS in Communication Studies*-Two graduate faculty members from the Department of Communication Studies
    ii. *MS in Communication and Composition*-One graduate faculty member from the Department of Communication Studies and one graduate faculty member from the Department of English
    iii. *MS in Communication and Composition*-If you plan to do a Composition internship, your advisor/chair needs to be from the Department of English, and your committee member needs to be from the Department of Communication Studies and vice-versa if you plan to do a Communication Studies internship.

2. **Selection of Thesis or Alternate Plan Paper/Internship Advisor/Committee:**

When choosing a chair/advisor and committee members, the student needs to consider the following aspects:
a. Do all committee members have graduate faculty status?
b. Does the student feel comfortable and confident with the chair/advisor and the committee members they are considering?
c. Do the chair/advisor and committee members have expertise in the subject area the student plans to study?
d. Do the chair/advisor and committee members have expertise in the methodologies the student plans to use?

3. **Requesting Faculty Members to Serve as Advisor or Committee Members:**

a. The graduate student should contact the faculty member and inquire if they are willing to serve as an advisor/committee member.
b. Taking on a graduate student as a capstone advisee or serving on the committee is at the discretion of the graduate faculty member. The faculty member may decline to serve for a number of reasons (e.g., an area of study outside the faculty member's interest, methodological expertise, number of current advisees/committees, other professional obligations, etc.).

4. **Completing the Paperwork:**

Once the advisor and committee are in place, the student must submit a Change of Advisor/Committee Form (see the section Graduate Forms) to the Graduate Studies Coordinator and request permission to enroll in CMST 650-Capstone Prospectus.

C. Colloquium Presentation

Before graduation, all graduate students must present at least once at a department colloquium. These presentations will be oral reports of the thesis or APP research or internship projects. Online/distance students may choose to prepare a digital/online/streaming presentation.

Planning and Completing the Capstone Project and Degree (Thesis, Alternate Plan Paper, Internship Paper)

A. Planning and Completing the Thesis Option

1. The student will prepare a thesis proposal and submit it to the capstone advisor, who will then send it to the other committee members. A thesis proposal review meeting involving all the committee members should take place with the student before significant research begins. All the committee members need to approve the student's planned study (e.g., topic selection, data collection and analysis procedures, etc.).
2. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) form must be completed and attached to the thesis proposal for any research involving human participants.
3. Like in the case of the proposal, the final paper should be first submitted to the advisor, who will then forward it to the other committee members. The final copy of the paper should be sent to the committee at least two weeks before the scheduled date of defense.
4. An oral defense of the thesis is required. It should be scheduled at least 3-4 weeks before the College of Graduate Studies's deadline for thesis submissions to allow sufficient time for revisions. The student is responsible for coordinating the defense day and time with the committee members.

B. Planning and Completing the Alternate Plan Paper (APP) Option

1. Before writing the paper, the student will prepare an APP proposal and submit it to the capstone advisor, who will then forward it to the other committee member. The committee members need to approve the student's planned study (e.g., topic selection and project goals).
2. If human participants are included in the APP research, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) form must be completed and attached to the proposal.
3. Like in the case of the proposal, the final paper should be first submitted to the advisor, who will then forward it to the other committee member.
4. The final copy of the paper should be sent to the committee at least two weeks before the scheduled date of defense. The defense date should be at least 3-4 weeks before the anticipated graduation date to allow time for

revisions. The student is responsible for coordinating the defense day and time with the committee members.

C. Planning and Completing the Internship Project Option

1. An internship may be a new position or a current position with new responsibilities/duties/tasks. The new responsibilities/duties/tasks form the internship project.
2. A student may have multiple internships, as long as each internship is linked to the educational goals of the student's program.
3. For registering for the internship, the student should submit an internship contract form. The student should contact their advisor for the form.
4. The student will prepare an internship proposal (see point 8 for specific guidelines) and submit it to the advisor, who will then forward it to the other committee member. Both the committee members need to approve the student's planned study and project goals. Like in the case of the proposal, the final paper should be first submitted to the advisor, who will then forward it to the other committee member. The final copy of the paper should be sent to the committee at least two weeks before the scheduled date of defense.
5. An oral defense is usually required. It should be scheduled at least 3-4 weeks before the anticipated graduation date to allow sufficient time for revisions. The student is responsible for coordinating the defense day and time with the committee members.
6. One internship credit is equivalent to 45 hours of work; the time spent writing the paper does not count toward the internship credits.
7. In addition to the committee members from the university, an onsite supervisor is required. An evaluation form will be sent to the onsite supervisor at the end of the internship project.
8. Internship Proposal Format:
   a. First section:
      i. Identify the organization(s) where the internship will occur.
      ii. Explain why the organization(s) interests you.
      iii. Explain your (new) responsibilities in the internship.
      iv. Explain what interests you regarding the responsibilities.
   b. Second section:
      i. Identify the specific element(s) related to your program of study in the internship responsibilities.
      ii. Explain how the internship will contribute new knowledge and advance your future career goals.
   c. Third section:
      i. List 3-4 goals (as related to your program of study) for undertaking the internship. Make the goals measurable, active, and specific (e.g., "At the end of the internship, I will know …"; "at the end of the internship, I will be able to …")
      ii. List the anticipated number of hours involved in the internship and the major sections of the final paper(organization of the paper).

iii. While doing the internship, the student is advised to record significant issues/experiences and note related theories for addressing the issues/experiences. This journaling will be helpful when writing the final paper.

D. Summer Defenses

Summer defenses should be planned ahead of time (usually by mid or end of the spring semester) as the availability of faculty members may be limited during summer terms.

E. Planning for Graduation

1. The Application for Graduation form (see the section Graduate Forms)must be completed, signed by all committee members, and submitted to the Graduate Studies Coordinator before the College of Graduate Studies' deadline for submitting the application. The deadline is usually 10-12 weeks before the end of the intended semester of graduation.
2. Following the successful defense of the capstone project, a Recommendation for Awarding the Degree form (see the section Graduate Forms) should be signed by all committee members and submitted to the Graduate Studies Coordinator, who will then submit it to the College of Graduate Studies and Research.
3. At least 50 % of the credits that have been earned should be at the 600- level. Credits earned for APP or thesis do not count toward this requirement. Additional information about graduation requirements are available at Graduate College Policy & Course Requirements

MFA Comprehensive Exam Policy

A. Enrollment Requirements

A student should complete 36 graduate credits before enrolling in CMST 651- Comprehensive Exams and successfully pass the exams to enroll in CMST 699- Thesis.

B. Procedure

1. At least eight weeks before the anticipated exam date, the student should notify the advisor and the capstone committee members of the intent to take the comprehensive exam.
2. The committee will prepare three questions for the exam. At their discretion, the committee may consult with the student or other faculty members when developing the questions. The questions will relate to the student's program of study and capstone project and will address the following areas:
   Q1: Communication theory relating to the program of study

       Q2: Research methods relating to the anticipated thesis project
       Q3: Specialized content area relating to the thesis project

3. The student is responsible for contacting the advisor and committee members to determine how to best prepare for the exam. The student should make sure they have a clear understanding of what is expected on the exam.
4. The student will have 168 hours (7 days) to answer all three questions. The committee may impose specific restrictions regarding page length, number of words, sources, etc.

C. Evaluation:

1. The advisor and the committee member(s) will evaluate the answers.
2. Each question will be evaluated as 'Pass'/'No-Pass'.
3. A Pass means the student has successfully met the expectations for the question.
4. A No-Pass means the answer did not meet expectations and must be rewritten or supplemented to correct deficiencies. The conditions associated with a rewrite are as follows:

   a. It should be done with guidance from the committee.
   b. The committee will determine the nature and scope of the rewrite.
   c. It must be completed the semester the student is enrolled for CMST 651.
   d. Receiving a No-Pass on any rewritten question may require retaking CMST 651.
   e. CMST 651 may be retaken only once. When retaking CMST 651, a No-Pass for any of the questions will result in the student failing the course and not being eligible to earn the MFA degree.

Completion Time Limits

All the work for a graduate degree must be completed within six years from the start of the program. The approval for completion beyond the six-year period is at the discretion of the College of Graduate Studies and Research.

Graduate Student Forms

The following forms---Application for Graduation, Change of Advisor/Committee, Recommendation for Awarding the Degree, Request for Extension of Time to Complete Program Requirements, and Request for Registration Overload---are available at graduate forms

Graduate Program Policy and Course Requirements

For more information about the policies of the College of Graduate Studies and Research, refer to the graduate college policy and course requirements

General FAQs

1. **Do I have to take the GRE to be accepted into the program?**

   No, we do not require the GRE for admission to our programs. However, if you seek to further your education beyond the master's level, admission to Ph.D. programs may require you to take the GRE.

2. **What classes do I have to take for my program?**

   Program requirements and course listings are available in the academic catalog.

3. **What courses should I take first?**

   We recommend starting with the core courses as soon as possible.

4. **What should my course load be?**

   To be considered a full-time student, a graduate student should be enrolled for at least six credit hours. Enrollments are limited to 12 credit hours during fall and spring semesters unless exceptions to this policy are approved by the student's advisor and the College of Graduate Studies and Research (Graduate College Policy & Course Requirements).

5. **If I earn a certificate in the department, can I use those credits toward completing a master's degree in the department?**

   Yes; The credits used to earn a graduate certificate in our program can (within a six-year timeframe) be applied toward completing a master's degree in our program.

6. **Can I transfer graduate credits into one of the programs?**

   Yes; The number of credits that may transfer is subject to department approval and is based on the transfer policies of the College of Graduate Studies and Research.

   The Department does not allow the transfer of core/required courses listed for each program but will consider and review previous graduate-level coursework to fulfill elective requirements.

7. **How do I find an internship?**

You can set up your internship experience at an organization of your choosing. If you are looking for some help in this regard, there are several resources on campus. Some faculty members in the department have connections to community organizations (the Chamber of Commerce, YWCA, etc.) and businesses in the Mankato and the Twin Cities areas. You can also find internship listings on Handshake. The **Career Development Center** can also help you identify internship opportunities.

8. **Can I do an internship if I am pursuing an MA Program?**

Yes; In fact, an internship (1-3 credits) can be quite valuable to pursue. Internships can help you gain experience and put the theoretical knowledge you get in classes into practice. If you are an MA student, you can list your internship credits as elective credits.

9. **How much are tuition and fees?**

For domestic students, details about tuition and fees are available at Tuition and Fees.

For international students, the costs of attending Minnesota State University is available at International Admissions.

10. **Does the university provide healthcare?**

Not at this time

11. **If I am awarded an assistantship position, when do I have to show up on campus?**

Classes begin at the end of August each year. All graduate teaching assistants have to attend a teaching workshop that starts two weeks before the start of classes.

12. **How many credits of Speech-Debate courses (NFL courses) will count toward a master's degree program?**

Six credits—Information about the NFL programs are available at Speech-Debate Program

13. **Who do I contact if I have questions about the graduate program, the courses I need to take, etc.?**

You can contact the Graduate Studies Coordinator of the department.

MFA FAQs

1. **Is the MFA in Communication and Forensics a terminal degree?**

   The Department of Communication Studies has designed the program as a terminal degree. Many colleges/universities already accept MFAs in Art, Theater, and English as terminal degrees. However, the acceptance of the MFA as a terminal degree depends on the institution's policies where one is hired/employed.

2. **How many graduate-level credits can I transfer to the MFA program?**

   The number of credits that may transfer is subject to the approval of the Department of Communication Studies and based on the transfer policies of the College of Graduate Studies and Research.

3. **Do I have to travel to speech and debate tournaments?**

   Yes, a requirement of the program is a minimum of two years of coaching, which will involve travel. Students pursuing the degree on campus will work with Maverick Forensics. The director of the program establishes the travel schedule for the team and graduate assistants.