

Department of Communication and Journalism

Graduate Degree Program in Professional Communication

Graduate Handbook



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Note: The faculty of the UAF Department of Communication and Journalism gratefully acknowledges the UAF Department of Anthropology Faculty of Graduate Studies for making available their publication, "Department of Anthropology Graduate Student Manual," from which some of the following information has been taken.

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Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Alaska Native nations upon whose ancestral lands our campuses reside. In Fairbanks, our Troth Yeddha' Campus is located on the ancestral lands of the Dena people of the lower Tanana River.

Communication Acknowledgment

We honor the communication norms and values of the Indigenous people and their ancestors who care for these lands. While the communication norms we teach may be based in Western practice, we acknowledge that there are many diverse ways of communicating and knowing.

Disclaimer

The graduate student handbook is a living, breathing document that is subject to frequent revision. Current students will be notified via email of all changes.

Program Overview

Welcome to COJO! This guide assists graduate students, teaching assistants (TAs) and communication center coaches in completing their degree program. Specifically, this guide provides department-specific requirements along with responsibilities associated with your role as a TA and coach.

This program is designed to a.) prepare students for the rigor of doctoral study, and b.) prepare practitioners for application of Communication knowledge in professional settings.

Concentration of Study

Communication seeks to understand the processes of generating meaning that underlie interaction within and across various contexts. Courses in Communication acknowledge that communication occurs between people who are diverse in a variety of ways, such as gender-identity, cultural background, and beliefs, and that such diversity is becoming increasingly apparent in an ever more complex and interdependent global society.

Mission

Our mission is to advance the Communication competence of our communities by promoting relationship development, facilitating belonging, and cultivating reciprocity.

Vision

Our vision is to create the space and provide the support for students to identify the problems they want to solve using communication.

Values

- Learners bring with them rich knowledge systems and cultures that must be honored.
- Knowledge flows multi-directionally.
- Showing up in an authentic space is critical for creating a community of learning.
- Our focus is on what we want to see in the world.
- The canon should be critically evaluated and challenged to understand how our discipline is shaped and influenced by our current social climate.
- We are committed to Identity and associated values of relationality, respect, reciprocity, responsibility, resilience, and relevance.
- By embracing many ways of knowing, we create opportunities for all learners to feel a sense of belonging.

Credit Hours & Requirements

The Master of Arts in Professional Communication is a 30 to 40 credit degree program in the College of Liberal Arts. Graduate students earn a minimum of 30 credit hours. Graduate TAs earn 40 credit hours, which includes Mentored Teaching classes each teaching semester.

We support full-time and part-time enrollment for both virtual and face-to-face students choosing to study at the Troth Yeddha' campus in Fairbanks, Alaska.

The program consists of the following requirements::

- 18 credits of required Communication coursework
- 6 to 9 credits of elective coursework
- 6 thesis or project credit hours
- Oral Thesis/Project Defense in a public forum

Faculty & Staff

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M.A. Degree Requirements

Requirements for the M.A. Degree in Professional Communication

1. Complete the general university requirements and Master's degree requirements.
2. Students may advance to candidacy when their advisory committee deems that they have made satisfactory progress in both academic and writing areas.
3. Pass a prospectus defense of the Thesis/Non-Thesis Project.
4. Pass an Oral Defense of the Thesis/Non-Thesis Project.

Course Requirements (30 – 40 credits)

Complete a minimum of 24 credits at the 600 level (a maximum of 6 credits of approved 400-level courses may be included in the 30-40 credit requirements).

Required Courses (24 credits):

COJO 625 – Communication Theory
COJO 601 – Communication Research Methodologies (Social Science)
COJO 602 – Communication Research Methodologies (Human Science)
COJO 622 – Interpersonal Interaction
COJO 631 – Team Building
COJO 635 – Organizational Culture and Communication
COJO 680 – Communication and Diversity in the Professional World
COJO 698 – Non-Thesis/Project Procedures (6-9 credits) or COJO 699 – Thesis (6-9 credits)
COJO 661 – Mentored Teaching (required only for TAs and is 1 credit per semester, total of credits for a 2 year degree completion).

Elective Courses (6 – 9 credits) [6 for Grad Students / 9 for TA's – see below]:

COJO 642 – Health Communication
COJO 682 – Seminar in Communication
COJO 675 – Training and Development/Applied Communication
COJO 633 – PR Theory

Alternatively, students may take 400 and 600 level courses in Art, Business Administration, Communication, Criminal Justice, Education, English, Journalism, Marketing, and Northern Studies as well as graduate level Independent/Directed Studies to fulfill the 6 credit elective requirement, if approved by the student's committee. Students will also be allowed to apply up to 6 credits of appropriate graduate level coursework from other universities in the elective area, if approved by the student's committee.

Coursework and Thesis Sequencing for M.A. Degree Requirements

Coursework, Thesis Sequencing & Committee Selection

The sequence of courses and thesis work assumes a two-year span for completion of the M.A. degree, which is the expected time to completion for Graduate TAs. Students planning a longer span for degree completion are strongly advised to follow the same overall sequencing, completing the courses listed each semester before advancing to subsequent coursework. UAF regulations state that all requirements for the M.A. must be completed within a seven year period.

1st Semester

601, 625, and 622 (plus 1 unit 661 for TAs) and/or electives based progress toward degree completion.

2nd Semester

602, 631, and 680 (plus 1 unit 661 for TAs) and/or electives based progress toward degree completion.

Request **Graduate Committee** and **Chair/Thesis/Non-Thesis Project Advisor**. **Complete and obtain signatures for Appointment of Advisory Committee and Graduate Study Plan (GSP) forms** before the end of the second semester, or the completion of 18 graduate credits.

3rd Semester

635, two 3-credit elective courses, 3 credits of COJO 698 [non-thesis/project] or COJO 699 [thesis], and 1 unit of COJO 661 (for TAs only)

In addition to required coursework:

1. **Research Prospectus Comprehensive Exam (see Appendix A)**

Early in this semester (by the end of the first month of the semester), or before progressing beyond 21 credits, submit **thesis or non-thesis/project research prospectus (RP)** to Thesis/Non-thesis Project Advisor and full committee. The RP serves as the comprehensive exam and must be successfully defended prior to conducting the study.

2. **IRB**

After successfully defending your RP, prepare a complete IRB protocol application (to be discussed and planned with your committee and submitted to the Office of Research Integrity (ORI via IRBNET at www.irbnet.com), schedule a **Thesis/Non-Thesis Prospectus meeting** with your Committee to discuss the proposed research, and get **signed Committee approval** (student cannot move forward in the program until approval is granted). At this point submit your application for **Advancement to Candidacy**. Students completing a Non-Thesis/Project do not submit their project to

the Graduate School for formal review. However, the Graduate School requires that you submit a copy for their records.

3. By the end of the semester, prepare the full literature review, and full discussion of methodology (chapters 1 & 2 of the M.A. thesis/non- thesis), and get **required Thesis/Non-Thesis Progress signatures** from committee members. You will not be able to advance if you fail to secure these signatures.

4th Semester

Six Thesis credits—COJO 698/COJO 699 (and for TA's only, one 3-credit elective course, plus 1 unit 661).

In addition to required coursework:

Complete your research and prepare your thesis/non-thesis for **Oral Defense of Thesis/Non-Thesis in a Public Forum**. Obtain approval signatures of your Committee on Thesis/Non-Thesis and submit the thesis to the Graduate School by the due date established by the Graduate School. Students are required to post flyers to advertise the event. The student should see the department Administrative Assistant for available time slots and campus locations for the Defense and for help in producing and distributing the flyers.

Master's Degree Core Advisory Committee

For the first year of graduate study the student will have a “committee of the whole,” after which the student will request a specific advisor and core advisory committee. The core advisory committee for Master's degree students must consist of three approved University of Alaska Fairbanks faculty members. The chair must be a faculty member in Communication. Any faculty or community participants serving above this number are considered additional committee members. Committee membership must be approved by the Department, CLA Dean, and the Dean of the Graduate School. Retired and/or Emeritus faculty of the University of Alaska Fairbanks may serve as either core or additional committee members on Master's advisory committees, upon expressed approval by the Department. They may not serve as the chair of an advisory/thesis/non- thesis project committee.

Comprehensive Examination: Written & Oral Defense (see Appendix A)

The Research Prospectus (RP) serves as the comprehensive exam. Students will submit their RP to their committee and complete an oral defense. The committee will determine pass/conditional pass/fail and direct the student on any additional action needed.

If the student receives a conditional pass or fail, they will work with their committee to develop a remediation plan that is approved by the Chair of the department and the graduate school. The remediation plan may include additional course requirements, directed study, student support services, and any other action deemed necessary by the committee members. Any student who fails or receives a conditional pass will have no more than two years to successfully complete the

remediation plan and pass the RP (both written, oral, or both).

The written RP must include the following sections:

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
3. Research question(s)
4. Methods
5. Data Analysis (qualitative and/or quantitative)
6. Anticipated challenges or difficulties
7. Contribution to the Communication discipline
8. Any study design materials as appendices (survey instrument, interview questionnaire, etc.)

The oral defense is designed to assess the learner's ability to clarify and expand the written RP. Students may be asked questions to assess their knowledge/defend their use of relevant literature, theory, and choice of methods. Students will be required to address Committee member feedback and critique, and have Committee member signatures that you have completed feedback, etc., prior to proceeding with IRB approval and further research.

COJO698 Project & Oral Defense

1. If necessary, submit IRB (Institutional Review Board) protocol for IRB approval via IRBNET by the end of the first full month of your third semester. This will require creating an IRBnet profile (see www.uaf.edu/irb), and working closely with your advisor. (Remember: All students must complete the CITI Training required by the IRB before the University will allow one to conduct research). You should be working very closely with your Project Chair at this point on drafts of Project chapters, and specifically on completing an exhaustive review of the literature and on preparing a complete explanation of your project research methodology and methods.
2. After collection and analysis of data, write the draft of the analysis and conclusions chapters and submit to the Project Chair. The final version must be in your Project Chair's possession *no later than three weeks* before the scheduled **Project Defense date**. When your Project Chair gives his/her approval, arrange a date for the oral defense of the project, together with a room and public notice. During this time you will need to send a note to the CLA newsletter service and place flyers throughout the campus notifying the campus of your oral defense time, date, and place of defense.
3. After making changes deemed essential by your Chair and upon approval of him/her, copy the (perceived) final draft and distribute to committee members **at least 2 weeks** prior to scheduled defense.
4. **Project Defense:** As specified in the UAF catalog, the Defense will consist of a Formal Oral Presentation (video-taped) by the Candidate. The length of the presentation will be determined by the Committee Chair. Following the presentation there will be a Questioning Period conducted by the Committee Chair. At the conclusion of the Committee Questioning Period, the Chair, as a general rule, will open questioning to the public. Immediately afterward, the Committee will meet in closed session to evaluate whether the student has successfully defended all aspects of the project in a public forum.
5. Complete any necessary revisions recommended by the Committee and approved by your Chair. The student will then submit the revised project for the Committee's final approval in accordance with UAF regulations.

COJO 699 Thesis Procedures

1. Submit IRB (Institutional Review Board) protocol for IRB approval via IRBNET by the end of the first full month of your third semester. This will require creating an IRBnet profile (see www.uaf.edu/irb), and working closely with your advisor. (Remember: All students must complete the CITI Training required by the IRB before the University will allow one to conduct research). You should be working very closely with your Thesis Chair at this point on drafts of Thesis chapters, and specifically on completing an exhaustive review of the literature and on preparing a complete explanation of your research methodology and methods. A Thesis Format Workbook should be obtained from the Graduate School (see the grad school website listed at the end of this document for the on-line version). Students must conform to thesis format requirements and to thesis submission deadlines as specified by the Graduate School (Note: exceptions to these deadlines are rare.)
2. After collection and analysis of data, write the draft of the analysis and conclusions chapters and submit them to the Thesis Chair. The final/final/FINAL version must be in your Thesis Chair's possession ***no later than three weeks*** before the scheduled **Thesis Defense date**. When your Thesis Chair gives their approval, arrange a date for the oral defense of the thesis, together with a room and public notice.
3. After making changes deemed essential by your Chair and upon approval of him/her, copy the (perceived) final draft and distribute to committee members **at least 2 weeks** prior to scheduled defense.
4. **Thesis Defense:** As specified in the UAF catalog, the Defense will consist of a Formal Oral Presentation (video-taped) by the Candidate. The length of the presentation will be determined by the Committee Chair. Following the presentation there will be a Questioning Period conducted by the Committee Chair. At the conclusion of the Committee Questioning Period, the Chair, as a general rule, will open questioning to the public. Immediately afterward, the Committee will meet in closed session to evaluate whether the student has successfully defended all aspects of the thesis project in a public forum.
5. Complete any necessary revisions recommended by the Committee and approved by your Chair. The student will then submit the revised thesis for the Committee's final approval in accordance with UAF regulations.
6. Submit the final copy to the Graduate School by published deadline

Graduate Teaching Assistantships (TAs)

TAs are paid for a maximum of 20 hours per week while school is in session. Communication TAs must be registered for 10 credits during the fall and spring semesters (no audits).

Teaching assistantships include a tuition payment by the university:

- a. for no more than 10 credits if the workload is 20 hours per week.
- b. if the assistantship appointment begins on or before the first day of instruction and ends on or after the last day of final examinations for that semester (16 or more weeks).

Communication TAs must be registered full-time (10 credits consisting of a minimum of 9 graduate credits and 1 credit if mentored teaching). For further information on Graduate Assistantships, see Graduate Assistantships under the Financial Aid section of the UAF online Catalog.

Graduate Teaching Assistants are expected to work approximately 20 hours per week including teaching in the classroom, preparing course lectures, assignments, and exercises, and holding office hours. TAs are expected to schedule and to be available for 3 office hours per week to meet with students when needed.

Teaching Assignments

TAs will be assigned a workload based on the needs of the department. Assignments may include the following:

1. Teach two sections of the department's service course (COJO121X Interpersonal Communication OR COJO 131X Small Group Communication OR COJO 141X Public Speaking) per semester
2. Teach one section of the department's service course (COJO121X Interpersonal Communication OR COJO 131X Small Group Communication OR COJO 141X Public Speaking) and work 10 hours as a coach in the Public Speaking Center.
3. Work 20 hours as a coach in the Public Speaking Center.
4. Other assignments as needed by the department and approved by the Dean.

Teaching Policies and Expectations

Every semester the Faculty Mentor will visit each TA's classroom (physical classroom or virtual learning community) for observation, providing both feedback on teaching approaches and evaluating effectiveness in instruction. Continuing as a TA requires:

1. faculty's concurrence on effectiveness
2. classroom presence
3. maintaining appropriate grade average
4. personal behavior
5. adhering to UAF policies

TAs are expected to attend to their teaching assignments. If a TA fails to show for their service assignment, then they are responsible for having another TA cover for them in advance. If a TA fails to show for their service assignment and does not have that assignment covered, then they will be given a written reprimand, with a copy placed in their personnel folder. If the TA fails to show for their service assignment a second time, then they will be dismissed from the program as a Teaching Assistant.

Please refer to the *Resource Manual for Graduate Teaching Assistants Pursuing a Master's Degree in Professional Communication* for a complete description of policies and expectations.

Academic Progress and Graduate Student Evaluation

Below are the standards for adequate academic progress in the graduate program in Communication and the consequences of failing to meet those requirements.

1. The core required courses should be successfully completed as soon as possible.
2. Successful completion means the student has earned no grade below B (3.0) in the core courses. If the student earns a C or below in any core course, the course must be repeated. Core courses can only be repeated one time.
3. All courses to be counted toward the minimum hours requirements must carry a grade of B (3.0) or better.
4. Failure to have an approved guidance committee and program of study by the end of the third semester or the completion of 18 graduate credits may constitute lack of satisfactory academic progress.

The faculty will meet at the end of the spring semester to formally review the progress of all graduate students. Additional reviews will be scheduled as necessary.

Academic Probation

Students who have a cumulative grade-point average of less than 3.0 will be placed on Academic Probation. Students on Probation are required to meet with their graduate advisor, discuss the steps to be taken to remediate the problems that led to the probationary status, and devise a written plan of action to be submitted to the advisory committee. Students failing to meet the conditions in the written plan of action will be subject to academic dismissal.

Communication Center

TAs may also serve as coaches in the Communication Center (CC). The CC is a campus resource center that works one-on-one with learners across our academic community to build communication competence.

Performance expectations include but are not limited to the following:

1. Arrive on time for your shift.
2. Meet project deadlines.
3. Prioritize workflow. Your #1 priority during your assigned shift is to provide high quality coaching services to our students. Your 2nd priority is to complete any assigned CC projects. If all other assigned tasks have been completed, you may work on outside projects.
4. During your assigned CC shift, you are required to be available for your CC shift whether coaching virtually or face-to-face.
5. Take care of your personal business on your own time. It is not ok to schedule personal appointments during your CC shift. Make sure you bring everything you need to your assigned shift.
6. Critically evaluate the work of students during appointments. Use the competency matrix to ensure students have a well-developed outline/presentation. This will help ensure consistency between coaches.
7. Respond to all emails from the Director/Assistant Director using “reply all.” This will ensure all critical information is acknowledged.
8. If you have questions/concerns/need clarification, come directly to the Director/Assistant Director for clarification. Model effective and direct communication to maintain a positive climate/culture in the speaking center.
9. If you can't make your shift, it is your responsibility to find a substitute. Tori McDermott is your first point of contact (516-404-5828).
10. You are required to work nine hours per week in the CC . If you miss a shift, you are required to make up that time. If you have been assigned a special project, the 9 hours per week commitment does not change. At any point, special projects can be removed and reassigned based on performance-related issues and/or speaking center demand.
11. If you are in violation of 1-10:

First occurrence: One-on-one with Director

Second occurrence: One-on-one with Director and Chair of COJO

Third occurrence: Notification of CLA Dean with possible termination of employment

Appendix A: Research Prospectus (RP) Requirements

Learners are required to work with their committee chair to determine when they are ready for the thesis/project phase. Students will submit a written RP to their committee chair for review. When the chair deems the prospectus sufficient, the full committee will review and provide additional feedback. Learners are required to address all concerns in the written RP prior to moving forward with the oral defense of the RP. No data should be collected prior to a successful prospectus defense.

All prospectuses, regardless of methodology or project/thesis status, must include the following sections:

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
3. Research question(s)
4. Methods
5. Data Analysis (qualitative or quantitative)
6. Anticipated challenges or difficulties
7. Contribution to the Communication discipline
8. Any study design materials as appendices (survey instrument, interview questionnaire, etc.)

For a more detailed explanation of each section please see below:

Introduction

The introduction should provide readers with a full overview of the proposed prospectus. The introduction should include an explanation of the overall value of the study and emphasize the “so what” the study seeks to answer. The introduction should also provide a brief overview of the experimental design.

Review of Literature

The review of literature should provide a comprehensive overview of the foundational literature related to the topic. The literature review should include theoretical grounding.

Methodology

The methodology section should provide a comprehensive overview of the experimental design of the study. The methodology section should overview how data will be collected and analyzed, as well as explain the positionality of the author (e.g., epistemology, ontology, etc.).

Limitations and Timeline

The final section of the prospectus should be the potential limitations of the prospectus based on proposed study design and/or current literature. A timeline of completion should also be provided.

Study design materials

Provide any study design materials that may help your committee understand the experimental

design of your project, for example a filled out IRB application.