School of Communication & Journalism

***Graduate Faculty Information & Policies Approved 10/27/20***

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# Graduate Program Positions & Responsibilities

## Graduate Program Officer

The graduate program of the School of Communication and Journalism is overseen by the Graduate Program Officer (GPO) in consultation with the Graduate Faculty. The Graduate Program Officer is an elected position. A simple majority of the voting School Graduate Faculty elects the Graduate Program Officer. The election is called and conducted by the Director of the School. Only Graduate Faculty may vote. Candidates for the GPO position must be tenured members of the School’s Graduate Faculty. The GPO serves for a three-year term, renewable for up to a total of six years.

The GPO works closely with the School Director, the Deans of the Graduate School, the School Associate Directors, the Graduate Internship Director, and the Basic Course Director. The GPO, in consultation with the School Director, may negotiate a one or two course administrative reduction per year.

The GPO is responsible for planning the graduate course rotation in consultation with the Associate Director of each program, assisting in the Fall School Graduate Student orientations, making GTA offers, overseeing GTA Research service assignments, maintaining adherence to the graduate policies of the School and the Graduate School, GTA discipline, graduate policy matters, and other duties relating to the graduate program as required.

## Graduate Internship Director

For students choosing a nonthesis capstone project, the Graduate Internship Director oversees graduate student internships in consultation with the GPO and a student’s Advisory Committee, including student paperwork, approval of the internship, communication with internship supervisors, and evaluation of internship reports (Student advisory committees are responsible for a student’s comprehensive exams and reviewing their final internship paper).

## Basic Course (COMM 1000) Director

When the School budget allows, the GPO is assisted by a Basic Course Director (BCD). The Basic Course Director, working with the GPO, oversees GTA teaching assignments and responsibilities, as well as other duties associated with directing the Basic Course.

# Admissions

Admission decisions are made by the GPO in conjunction with a three-member Faculty Review Committee. The GPO sets the standards for admission with the advice and consent of the Graduate Faculty. Student admission policies are outlined in the Graduate Student Policy Manual.

# Graduate Student Advising

## GPO as Advisor

The GPO acts as the advisor for all graduate students from the time of admission until the completion of Qualifying Exams.

## Advisory Committee Chair & Members

Following successful completion of qualifying exams, students set up a three-member Advisory Committee, consisting of a Chair and two committee members. They also complete and submit a Plan of Study to the GPO (see Appendix B). In the School of Communication & Journalism, this committee can only include members of the Graduate Faculty unless approved by the GPO or School Director.

Having faculty members as unofficial committee members (i.e., providing significant help with a thesis, writing and evaluating written comprehensive exam questions) is discouraged, as such members traditionally do not receive recognition for their service to the student’s committee. This does not preclude students from asking advice of other faculty members.

***Timing Committee Service***

All graduate faculty are expected to serve on graduate student advisory committees. Chairing a thesis committee often requires the greatest level of commitment. In contrast, nonthesis committees generally require less work than thesis committees.

Tenure track faculty typically begin serving on committees in their second year. To provide new faculty time to learn graduate faculty and advisory committee expectations, tenure track faculty are encouraged to wait until their third year to Chair a committee, particularly a thesis committee. Faculty should also carefully consider service during research leave, etc. For example, some research leaves may preclude such service. In other cases, significant service may compromise a faculty member’s ability to meet research expectations.

The above said, faculty should be mindful of the importance of serving on committees to enable students to complete their studies in a timely manner and so that other graduate faculty are not serving on an excessive number of committees. Faculty are encouraged to discuss service levels with mentors, the GPO, and the School Director.

***Composition of the Advisory Committee***

Students should first identify the Chair of their Advisory Committee, then work with the Chair to identify the remaining members of the Advisory Committee. The composition of the Advisory Committee varies with the choice of a thesis or nonthesis capstone project.

* ***Thesis Capstone Project:*** Because the thesis is an original research project, students should be encouraged to choose a chair and committee members that best fit with the nature of the thesis project.
* ***Nonthesis Capstone Project:*** Members of the nonthesis Advisory Committee including the Chair, are chosen from faculty who have taught or will be teaching the student’s elective courses.

As soon as possible after identifying their advisory committee chair and members, the student should be directed to complete a Plan of Study and submit it to the Graduate Program Officer.

***See Appendix A for an outline of Chair and Advisory Committee member responsibilities when directing a capstone project. See Appendix B for the Plan of Study Form.***

# Academic Honesty Issues

Faculty are urged to have regular conversations with graduate students on issues associated with academic honesty (e.g., global, patchwork, self-plagiarism; misrepresentation of sources; inappropriate assistance for other students; mishandling of exams, etc.). Such conversations reduce confusion over what constitutes misconduct, and reminds graduate students that academic integrity is of the utmost importance both when researching and when teaching.

When academic misconduct is identified, faculty are strongly urged to file academic misconduct charges in keeping with University policies. In doing so, it emphasizes that we as graduate faculty take academic honesty seriously.

# Coursework Related Polices

## Student Registration

Graduate students are responsible for registering for classes as soon as registration opens. Any problems resulting in their failure to do so is the student’s problem. Faculty should not feel pressured to take on student overloads, to support non-CMJN graduate course enrollments, or agree to independent study courses because a student delays their registration.

Students cannot directly enroll in Capstone course classes. The Internship Director handles enrollment of students into the nonthesis class. Students will enroll in thesis hours under the direction of the chair of their advisory committee. The chair of the committee makes arrangements for enrollment.

## Taking Non-CMJN Graduate Courses

Because graduate students take a limited number of CMJN courses while pursuing their degree, graduate students are discouraged from taking courses outside our graduate program. This said, students interested in making a case for a non-CMJN class should:

1. have passed their qualifying exams;
2. have selected a Major Advisor and Advisory Committee members; and,
3. make a strong case to the Advisory Committee for the need to take an outside class. *When making the case to the committee, the student must show how the course(s) pertain to their program of study in the clearest manner possible.*

The Advisory Committee, in consultation with the GPO, will grant approval (or not) for taking the class(es). With Advisory Committee approval, graduate students may take up to six (6) hours of classes that are in a closely related area.

## Independent Study Courses

For the reasons stated above and because graduate faculty are not compensated for their time, graduate faculty are generally discouraged from directing Independent Study courses with graduate students. Exceptions are made when a student’s Advisory Committee strongly endorses the need for specialized study that can only be gained via an Independent Study course. Procedures for petitioning to take an Independent Study class are the same as that for taking a non-CMJN graduate level course. Only one independent study class will be applied to a student’s plan of study. Because of reduced student enrollment in summer/fall classes, graduate faculty are strongly advised against conducting Independent Study courses during the summer semester.

## Incomplete Grades in Graduate Courses

Because of the nature of graduate coursework, incomplete grades are awarded only for exceptional circumstances and should be negotiated with the student in advance of the last day of classes. Once an incomplete grade has been negotiated, the student has until the end of the 10th day of classes in the next term (including Summer semester) to turn in all work. If they miss this deadline, the faculty member should compute the final grade with a zero credit assigned to all missed work. Because of its implications for a student’s GPA, the final grade should be reported to the registrar as soon as possible.

# Qualifying Exams

Faculty who teach the required graduate courses (COMM 7000, COMM 7010, and COMM 7020) constitute the Qualifying Exam Committee. Each member writes and evaluates their respective section of qualifying exams (Qualifiers) for both Spring and the Fall terms. *Exams may not be taken at other locations or by “distance,” including another computer lab on campus, the student’s home, the student’s workplace, etc.* Any exceptions to this policy are strongly discouraged and must be approved by the GPO and the School Director in advance.

## GPO Responsibilities

The GPO coordinates and administers qualifying exams and any exam rewrites, and handles all student communications regarding qualifiers.

* The GPO contacts the Biggio Center in the third week of the Fall/Spring semester to set up Qualifiers. Students take all three, two-hour exams on the same day.
* Immediately after, the GPO notifies students of the exam day/time/place, meets with them to explain the process, particularly that communication and questions about the exam should be directed to the GPO.
* Following the exam, the GPO will removes identifying information from the exams, and uses a code name/number with the goal of allowing for as anonymous evaluation of student exams as possible.
* The GPO informs students of the results of the exams and handles “Retakes.”
  + Students who fail all three sections of the exam are informed that they failed the Exam and are removed from the program.
  + Students who fail one or two sections of the exam are provided one opportunity (one hour for each section) to revise their exam response.
  + Students who fail their “retake” will not be able to continue in the program.
  + Graduate students who fail do have an appeals process, as outlined in the *Graduate Student Policy Manual.*
* The GPO informs students of the results of their retakes, handles any student-initiated appeals, and notifies the Graduate School that failing students should be dropped from the program.

## Faculty Responsibilities

* Qualifying Exam Committee members will evaluate exams for both Fall and Spring semesters (typically the week after finals), and are expected to be available during this period (including evaluating rewrites). In the unlikely event that one of these faculty members is unavailable, the GPO will take responsibility for evaluating the exams and may identify a substitute.
* Questions for the exam should be provided to the GPO a minimum of five (5) working days prior to the scheduled exams.
* Students may approach faculty for clarification on course material, but should not pressure faculty for the nature/type of questions on the exam. If this occurs, faculty should contact the GPO, who will communicate with students.
* Exam Evaluation:
  + Faculty evaluating the exams should bear in mind that the exams are evaluated on a pass/fail basis. Thus, students may do poorly on one section of the exam, but do very well on another.
  + The faculty member will judge whether the student’s performance on their section of the exam *overall* merits a “pass.”
  + At their discretion, faculty may provide written feedback to students who must retake a segment of their exam. Feedback should be provided to the GPO to relay to the student.

# Capstone Project

All students must complete a capstone project prior to graduation. Faculty responsibilities varies with the choice of the thesis or the nonthesis option. **Below is a general overview, see Appendix A for a more detailed outline.**

## Students Choosing the Thesis Option

All candidates under the **thesis option** will successfully complete an original research project.

* The thesis project includes a thesis prospectus that is reviewed by and approved by the student’s Advisory Committee.
* The student then completes the research project, submitting it to the Advisory Committee at a time allowing for adequate review of the thesis by committee members (typically one week).
* There is a public oral defense of the project. The defense is coordinated by the Chair of the Advisory Committee, who sends an invitation to attend to graduate faculty and graduate students of the School one week prior to its scheduled time.
* It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that Graduate School deadlines for graduation are met.

## Students Choosing the Non-Thesis Option

* All candidates under **the non-thesis option** will successfully complete elements of their internship, including satisfactory completion of both a written and oral capstone (comprehensive) exam.
* The exam typically covers the program of study as represented by the members of the Advisory Committee as well as any research or special projects associated with the internship.
* There is a public oral defense of the exams. The defense is coordinated by the Chair of the Advisory Committee, who sends an invitation to attend to graduate faculty and graduate students of the School one week prior to its scheduled time.
* It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that Graduate School deadlines for graduation are met.

## Capstone Project Pass/Fail Policy

Successful completion of the capstone project requires the unanimous support of all members of the Advisory Committee, who evaluate all written materials (thesis, exams, and research papers) on a pass/fail basis.

***Thesis Capstone Project***

* If any element of a student’s **thesis project** (i.e., thesis, oral defense, revisions) is deemed unacceptable, the committee, with a unanimous vote, may allow for a one semester extension to make suggested revisions to the project and/or orally defend the project. The student and GPO will be notified by the advisory committee. If the thesis or oral defense is again deemed unacceptable, the student and the GPO will again be notified by the advisory committee. Only in extraordinary circumstances will an additional extension be awarded. The committee will notify the GPO if the student’s thesis is found unacceptable. The GPO notifies the Graduate School that the student failed their thesis capstone project and should be removed from the program.

***Nonthesis Capstone Project.***

* For the **nonthesis internship**, if a student fails to satisfactorily complete any part of the internship evaluated by the Internship Director, the Internship Director will notify the student, the GPO, and the student’s advisory committee members that the student has failed the internship. Only when there are significant extenuating circumstances will a student be allowed to engage in a second internship (which cannot be with the same company/organization) and only with permission of the Graduate School.
* If the student fails the **nonthesis capstone exam** (written or oral), one reexamination may be given if recommended by the student’s Advisory Committee and with approval of the Graduate School. If a student fails the oral examination, the Advisory Committee may also direct the student to take a second round of written exams the following semester. The advisory committee members will determine if all or part of the exam must be retaken.
* The student’s **nonthesis research paper** is evaluated by the advisory committee members, with the Chair holding primary responsibility. If the paper is deemed unacceptable, the committee, with a unanimous vote, may allow for a one semester extension to make suggested revisions. If the paper is again deemed unacceptable, the student and the GPO will be notified by the advisory committee. The student will fail the nonthesis project.

***If an extension is granted, all failed elements of the capstone project will be scheduled for the next semester (including summer semester).*** The student is responsible for any enrollment and all funding requirements.

***Failing the Capstone Project:*** The GPO will notify the Graduate School; the student will be removed from the program, but may petition for a Graduate Certificate. The determination to award a Graduate Certificate will be made by the Advisory Committee, in conjunction with the GPO, and approval of the Graduate School.

## Scheduling Capstone Written and Oral Exams

Committee Chairs bear the primary responsibility for scheduling capstone written and oral examinations.

* Exams (written or oral) should not be scheduled either the first or last week of classes or during final exams. No exams should be scheduled for the periods between semesters.
* All parties should be aware of the deadlines imposed by the Graduate School calendar for each semester. Failure to complete comprehensive exams by the deadline will delay a student’s graduation.
* In scheduling written exams, the School suggests that the committee chair allow the committee members at least one week to write their questions and at least one week to read and evaluate the student’s answers before the scheduled oral examination.
* The student and their Chair should work closely with Advisory Committee to schedule oral comprehensive exams.
* Once the oral examination is scheduled, the GPO and Graduate Faculty should be notified via an email announcement, ideally, one week in advance of the exam.

## Administering Written Capstone Exams

Capstone written exams consist of three two-hour exam segments (one segment for each faculty member). Students must take the written exam within a three business day period. The exam may be completed in one day or across multiple days.

**The exam is administered at the University testing center.[[1]](#footnote-1)** The committee chair will contact the testing center well in advance to ensure space is available (typically, 4-6 weeks). *Exams may not be taken at other locations or by “distance,” including another computer lab on campus, the student’s home, the student’s workplace, etc.* Any exceptions to this policy are strongly discouraged and must be approved by the GPO and the School Director in advance.

All aspects of the comprehensive exam process are the committee chair’s responsibility primarily, and the committee members’ secondarily. The Chair is responsible for:

* scheduling the written and oral exams time with the student and committee members,
* soliciting exam questions from other committee members,
* making test reservations and sending written responses to committee members,
* and coordinating the oral defense (including conference room reservations).

If the Chair cannot be available for the exam process, other committee members must fill in (committee members are determined by those who are listed on the student’s Graduate School Graduation Application). The exam process cannot require and should not involve office personnel, the GPO, or the School Director.

*NOTE: It is important that a student’s internship supervisors be aware of and willing to schedule work schedules around the assigned capstone exam and oral defense schedule. It is the student’s responsibility to make arrangements with their supervisor. This policy includes students interning outside the Auburn local area.*

# Graduation Requirements

No student will be permitted to graduate who fails to complete the Graduate School’s [Graduation Approval](http://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/) the semester prior to expected graduation. At this time, graduation day is designated as the official last day of each semester and, therefore, is the deadline for submitting for Graduation Approval each semester.

# Working With GTAs

## Teaching Assistants

Faculty desiring a GTA for an upcoming class should contact the School Director. Assignment considerations include a number of factors such as the number of GTAs available and the number of students enrolled in the course. Assignments are made at the discretion of the School Director, in consultation with the BCD. A request does not guarantee the assignment of a GTA.

TA duties should be kept to a minimum. In particular, the duty of first year GTAs is primarily to observe. Typical duties involve taking attendance, handling student questions, leading group discussions, etc. TAs may be allowed to teach 2-3 times during the course of the semester. The instructor of record for the course will provide a written evaluation of any teaching to the TA, will review the evaluation with the TA, and will provide a copy of the written evaluation to the BCD.

Minor grading with objective answer keys (e.g., multiple choice exams, quizzes, fill-in-the-blank, etc.) may be done by GTAs. GTAs may grade subjective assignments if specific conditions are met:

* The GTA’s work outside of class should not exceed 3-4 hours per week.
* The instructor of record must remember that the GTA is not a subject matter expert.
* The instructor of record must train the GTA on how to grade and provide a rubric or some other standard of grading.
* Major assignments should be graded by the instructor of record.
* Prior to the start of the semester, the GPO will ask what kind of responsibilities faculty plan to assign GTAs. The GPO may request to see rubrics, sample assignments, or other materials used to train and aid GTA grading.
* The GPO will check with the GTA about the time and extent of the duties they have been asked to perform. **Faculty who give their GTAs too much work, do not give them clear grading guidelines, or otherwise over-extend their GTAs may lose the opportunity to have a GTA in the future.**

Problems with a TA should be reported to the BCD and the GPO as soon as they develop. TAs are typically inexperienced teachers who sometimes do not fully understand their teaching and classroom responsibilities. To provide the best classroom experience for our undergraduates, TA problems (large or small) should be addressed as quickly as possible.

## Research Assistants

As part of their Graduate Teaching Assistantship, graduate students provide graduate faculty and other members of the School with research or other service.

***Faculty Responsibilities.***

* The faculty member should provide meaningful *research* work for the RA (e.g., literature searchers, data collection and analysis, format checking, etc.). The goal is to build research skills while at the same time productively assisting graduate faculty with research and related projects.
* Faculty should keep in mind that graduate students are often new to the research process and, as a result, may take longer than expected to complete an assigned task. A conversation with the RA about their skill level at the beginning of their assignment will help determine the level of initial training a student may require.
* ***RA work is limited to five (5) hours each week of the regular semester.***
* Faculty experiencing any problems while working with a graduate student should first speak with the student. If problems are not resolved quickly, the faculty member should contact the GPO. The GPO will meet with the student to review GTA service responsibilities*. It is important to address issues as soon as they become problematic.*
* Faculty complete an RA evaluation at the end of the semester. Providing honest feedback is helpful for a student’s professional development and when the GPO has their yearly assessment meeting with the student.

***Student Responsibilities.***

* They are assigned to assist during the first week of classes.
* They should be proactive in maintaining contact, soliciting assignments, and completing them in a timely manner.
* They should provide a quality product (keeping in mind their initial skill level).

***GPO Responsibilities.***

* The GPO makes all service assignments.
* Assignment requests are made at the beginning of Fall and Spring semester.
  + The GPO will send out a request for research assistants via email (no assistants are available in the Summer).
  + Not all requests may be filled.
  + Generally, Assistant Professor requests are filled first, followed by Associate, then Full professor requests. Rarely are RAs assigned to nontenured faculty.
* The GPO will solicit faculty evaluations of their assigned RAs at the end of each semester. Evaluations become part of the student’s files and may be used in end-of-the semester evaluations, assigning summer teaching, or determinations of graduate student awards.

## GTA Exam Policies

GTAs should not handle tests except in highly supervised situations. In addition, it is recommended that GTAs assigned to assist in courses other than COMM 1000 (Public Speaking) hold undergraduate degrees from institutions other than AU. When they do not, course instructors should be aware of the possibility of increased exam leakage due to lasting friendships and social relationships outside of the academic environment.

Other exam-related activities that *should be avoided* include:

* having GTAs write, edit, or compile questions for exams;
* having GTAs proctor original exams without supervision;
* having GTAs answer students’ questions during the course of the exam period;
* having GTAs store old exams in their home or office; and,
* having GTAs shred or dispose of old exams.

All these activities increase opportunities for exam leakage.

# Graduate Faculty Criteria[[2]](#footnote-2)

## Levels of Membership

The School recognizes one level of membership on the Graduate Faculty. The faculty member may teach at the 6000 or 7000 level, may serve on both master’s and doctoral committees and may direct master’s theses.

## Initial Appointment

Candidates will hold a terminal degree recognized by the School, typically the Ph.D. or M.F.A and must have a full-time, tenure or tenure-track appointment at the rank of assistant professor or higher.

## Reappointment

Reappointment is based upon the following criteria:

* 1. Prior service as a member of the graduate faculty.
  2. During the term of appointment, the candidate has contributed to the graduate program by:
     1. Maintaining a level of teaching quality commensurate with the School peers in graduate courses as evidenced by relevant student and/or peer teaching evaluations,
     2. And, contributing in an active and positive fashion as either a chair or a member of graduate advisory committees.
  3. The candidate shall have a record of creative works, scholarly publication, or professional publication. The publication requirement should reflect the evaluation criteria as established by the Research/Creative/Professional Track outlined in the CMJN School Policies and Procedures manual.
     1. A record of publication will be satisfied typically by publication of at least three (3) full-length research articles in reputable refereed journals. ("Reputable journals" are those identified as such by faculty in the nominee's School or academic area.)
     2. The research methodology in these articles should reflect methodology appropriate to the nominee's field. The nominee must be the senior author on at least one of these publications.
     3. The publication of a book or research monograph can satisfy this requirement completely or in part if it makes a scholarly contribution to the author's field of specialization. Such publications must clearly demonstrate the author's research competence.
     4. In those areas where publication is not customarily the end result of the scholarly and creative activity, evidence of comparable achievement suitable for establishing professional standing must be presented and should be in keeping with the CMJN School Policies and Procedures Manual description of publication/output for creative and professional tracks.
  4. The candidate should have served on at least three (3) examining committees.

NOTE: In rare cases where the candidate has established a significant scholarly record, and demonstrated in some other outstanding way their ability to work with and mentor graduate students, the Graduate Dean may approve a reduction in the requirements for 4 above. Such strongly justified, written requests must be supported by a majority vote of the School's graduate faculty and School Director.

* 1. The candidate shall also demonstrate other significant professional scholarly commitment. Evidence of other significant professional scholarly commitment involving anyone, or any combination of such activities as a) reading papers before academic and professional organizations; b) writing book reviews, scientific and industrial reports, short notes, popular articles, or similar materials; c) acting as a judge at a juried competition; d) rendering any type of consulting service which provides evidence of the scholar's professional standing and competence in her/his special field; e) participating in the activities of appropriate scholarly , creative, and professional organizations by holding offices or serving in other responsible capacities; f) performing significant administrative duties connected with the graduate program of a School or of the university; or g) attainment of extramural support that is evidence of professional/creative/scholarly standing.

## Term of Appointment

The term of appointment shall be seven (7) years. Application should be made prior to assuming teaching responsibilities.

## Procedures for Nomination: Initial Appointment and Reappointment

***Initial Appointment***

The School Director shall notify candidates to apply for initial appointment. Application should be made via the Graduate Faculty Approval System (GFAST) on the Graduate School website. Information to be supplied by the candidate includes the current curriculum vitae. The School Director will be notified of the application.

***Reappointment***

The School Director shall notify candidates to apply for reappointment. Application should be made via the Graduate Faculty Approval System (GFAST) on the Graduate School website. Information to be supplied by the candidate includes the current curriculum vitae. The School Director will be notified of the application. For reappointment, application material will be made available to the graduate faculty. Prior to forwarding the nomination to the Graduate School, nomination materials shall be reviewed by all graduate faculty members within the School. Following that review the School Director shall call for a vote by the graduate faculty by secret ballot relative to support or non-support of the nomination. Input will be solicited from the Graduate faculty and a vote taken. The nominee shall have the support of the majority of the current graduate faculty in the School. Approval or rejection will be submitted to the Graduate School for action by the Dean of the Graduate School.

## Appeals Process

Candidates who are denied graduate faculty status (initial appointment or reappointment) may appeal the decision. Prior to appealing, the candidate shall meet with the School Director to solicit information as to why the candidate received an initial vote of non-support. If the candidate chooses to appeal, the candidate shall notify the School Director of the decision to appeal. The candidate shall then provide written justification and support addressing graduate faculty concerns that lead to the initial vote of nonsupport. The School Director will provide copies of the written appeal to the graduate faculty for review. Appeal materials shall be reviewed by all graduate faculty members within the School. Following that review the School Director shall call for a vote by the graduate faculty by secret ballot relative to support or non-support of the appeal. Input will be solicited from the Graduate faculty and a vote taken. The successful appeal shall have the support of the majority of the current graduate faculty in the School. Approval or rejection will be submitted to the Graduate School for action by the Dean of the Graduate School.

# Appendix A: Directing the Capstone Project

Before joining or directing a thesis/non-thesis committee, the student must have successfully completed qualifying exams. Below is a general outline of project responsibilities. Committee members should familiarize themselves with related elements introduced earlier in this manual.

## Thesis Capstone Project

***Getting Started:***

* ***Thoroughly explore student interests.*** The more focused the student is at the onset of the project, the better for determining if you are the right Chair or committee member. Ideally, advisory committee members have research and/or methodological backgrounds compatible with the thesis topic. Any member of the Graduate faculty may serve on a thesis capstone project. The student is not required to have taken a class from the faculty member. The Chair will help the student develop a list of appropriate graduate faculty to serve on the committee (the GPO can also assist if needed). It is the student’s responsibility to approach potential committee members.
* ***Becoming an advisor or committee member***. When considering serving on committee, please keep in mind the amount of time that may be spent on the project and your availability (summer travel, sabbaticals, etc.). When considering serving on a thesis committee, you should consider how your research interests, background, methodology, etc. will contribute to the project.
* ***Committee Responsibilities & Duties.*** The Chair bears primary responsibility for the capstone project. In the case of the thesis option, the level and involvement of committee members varies. In some cases, they will act only as readers, while in other cases students may consult with committee members throughout the project about specific aspects of the thesis (e.g., methodology, etc.). The chair and committee members, along with the student should consult with each other to determine how involved committee members will be.
* ***Setting up a Schedule.*** Setting deadlines for components of the project and having regular meetings will help Chairs identify potential trouble spots and help keep the student on track for graduation. It is essential to be aware of Graduate School graduation deadlines.

***The Semester Prior to Graduation***

* ***Committee Responsibilities & Duties.*** While the Chair bears primary responsibility, the amount and level of committee member contributions can vary depending on the nature of the project and committee member expertise.
* ***Thesis Prospectus & Defense***. Graduate students writing a thesis complete and present a thesis prospectus to the advisory committee. Writing a prospectus helps graduate students more clearly delineate their project. Feedback from committee members in a formal prospectus meeting can help identify potential problems that can (and often should) be addressed early in the project.
* ***Filing the Plan of Study, Committee Selection Form, and Graduation Checks***. Once the committee is assembled, the graduate student is responsible for completing a graduation application and committee selection form with the Graduate School. Failure to do so will delay the student’s graduation. A School Plan of Study Form should be completed and sent to the GPO. (See Appendix B)

***The Semester of Graduation***

* ***Committee Responsibilities & Duties.*** Again, the primary responsibility lies with the Chair of the committee. The level of participation by committee members in activities such as reading drafts of the thesis, etc. is negotiated between the Chair and the committee members. Students bear the ultimate responsibility for meeting Graduate School deadlines such as those for format checks and submission of theses and supporting documentation.
* ***Scheduling.*** Typically, in the thesis option, the final draft of the thesis is delivered to the advisory committee no later than two weeks before the Graduate School’s deadline for thesis submission.
* ***Oral Defense.*** The oral defense is open to the public. The Advisory Committee Chair is responsible for scheduling the oral defense, reserving a meeting space, and notifying graduate faculty and students of its day/time a minimum of one week in advance.
* ***Submitting Graduate School Forms:*** Students must submit the approval form (Form 9 for thesis students) to the Graduate School by the date indicated on the official Graduate School calendar. Failure to do so will delay the student’s graduation.

## NonThesis Capstone Project

***Getting Started:***

* ***Explore Faculty Eligibility and Availability.*** Nonthesis Advisory Committee members are limited to faculty teaching a student’s elective coursework. It is the student’s responsibility to approach potential committee members. Students are directed to first approach a faculty member they would like to chair the committee, followed by other committee members. The Chair will help the student develop a list of appropriate graduate faculty to serve on the committee (the GPO can also assist if needed).
* ***Becoming an advisor or committee member***. When considering serving on committee, please keep in mind the amount of time that may be spent on the project and your availability (summer travel, research leave, etc.).

***The Semester Prior to Graduation***

* ***Committee Responsibilities & Duties.*** Graduate students pursuing the nonthesis option should identify and confirm an internship. The internship must be approved by the Internship Director, and the internship organization.
* ***Setting up a Schedule.*** Setting deadlines for components of the internship project and having regular meetings with an Advisee will help Advisors identify potential trouble spots and help keep the student on track for graduation. It is important to be aware of Graduate School graduation deadlines.
* ***Filing the Plan of Study, Committee Selection Form, and Graduation Checks***. Once the committee is assembled, the graduate student is responsible for completing a graduation application and committee selection form with the Graduate School. Failure to do so will delay the student’s graduation. A School Plan of Study Form should be completed and submitted to the GPO. (See Appendix B)

***The Semester of Graduation***

* ***Scheduling Capstone Written Examinations.*** See [Scheduling Capstone Exams](#_Scheduling_Comprehensive_Exams) and [Administering Capstone Exams](#_Administering_Comprehensive_Exams) above. Written comprehensive exams for nonthesis students should be scheduled at least two weeks prior to the Graduate School’s deadline for submission of documentation of completion of nonthesis Master’s examinations. Committees may negotiate the actual dates.
* ***Evaluating Capstone Written and Oral Examinations.*** Examinations are pass/fail. Passing requires unanimous approval by all committee members. See [Capstone Exam Pass/Fail Policy](#_Comprehensive_Exam_Pass/Fail) above. Typically, oral examinations are scheduled a minimum of one week before the relevant Graduate School deadline. This time period allows the student time to make corrections made by the committee and/or to respond to concerns raised by the committee during the oral defense.
* ***Oral Defense.*** The oral defense is open to the public. The Advisory Committee Chair is responsible for scheduling the oral defense, reserving a meeting space, and notifying graduate faculty and students of its day/time a minimum of one week in advance.
* ***Evaluating the Final Research Paper.*** As part of their internship, students write a final research paper. While the research paper is typically related to some aspect of their internship, it is not required to be. The committee chair bears primary responsibility for reviewing the final research paper, but may solicit reviewers from among the committee members as is appropriate based on the nature and type of paper. Like other elements of the internship project, the paper is evaluated on a pass/fail basis (See [Capstone Project Pass/Fail Policy](#_Capstone_Project_Pass/Fail))
* ***Submitting Graduate School Forms:*** Students must submit the approval form (Form 8 for nonthesis students) to the Graduate School by the date indicated on the official Graduate School calendar. Failure to do so will delay the student’s graduation.

**CMJN Graduate Program Plan of Study Worksheet**

Notes:

Date:   
Name:   
Banner ID:   
Undergraduate Major:   
MA Emphasis Area:

**Courses at Auburn University:**    
There is a six (6) Year time limit for Master’s Coursework.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Course Title | Prefix / Course # | Sem / Yr | Sem Hours | Instructor/ Additional Notes |
| RQ: Communication Theory | COMM 7000 |  | 03 |  |
| RQ: Empirical Methods | COMM 7010 |  | 03 |  |
| RQ: Qualitative Methods | COMM 7020 |  | 03 |  |
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|  |  | **Total Hours:** |  |  |

**Transfer Courses**(maximum of six hours; Must be graduate level communication-related courses; Requests should be submitted to the GPO no later than the beginning of a student’s first semester of graduate course work)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Institution Name** | **Course Title** | **Prefix / Course #** | **Sem / Yr** | **Sem Hours** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **Total Hours:** |  |

**Totaled Credit Hours:**

0

1. These guidelines may be adapted if a student has a documented accommodation from the AU Office of Accessibility. In such cases, the committee chair, GPO, and student will work together to determine how best to accommodate the student’s needs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. With the exception of organization and minor edits, the wording from this section was directly drawn from the graduate school website at the time of approval of this manual. Faculty should consult the graduate website at the time of renewal for possible changes. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)