



HANDBOOK FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

The Master of Arts in Communication (MACOM) is housed in the School of Communication, a unit within the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Northern Arizona University. The Master of Arts in Communication is completed with an emphasis: Communication Studies, Documentary Studies, or Strategic Communication.

The Communication Studies emphasis prepares students for careers in higher education, government, business, and community service, as well as for PhD programs in communication and other advanced degrees.

The Documentary Studies emphasis prepares students for today's world of cutting-edge multimedia journalism, nonfiction storytelling, creating your own media business, as well as preparation for PhD programs in cinema and media studies.

The Strategic Communication emphasis is suited for students who plan to enter the advertising, public relations, or other strategic communication industries as well as for those who plan to continue on to doctoral studies in communication studies, media studies, or strategic communication.

In addition to one of the three emphasis areas, the core courses in the M.A. in Communication insure that all graduates have a basic understanding of the scope, theories, and methods of the broad field of communication.

The elective courses available in each emphasis allow students to explore diverse areas and develop more specialized skills and knowledge.

The culmination of the degree is completion of a master's thesis or a master's project. Guided by a faculty advisor and supervised by a master's thesis or project committee, students plan and execute a research, applied, or creative project; present their completed project or thesis in a public forum; and defend their thesis or project to their supervisory committee, composed of their advisor and two additional faculty members.

This handbook is intended as a description of graduate work in the program, as well as a guide to aid you in your progress through the program once you begin. This handbook is often suggestive and is not intended to represent all policies and procedures. Be aware that policies of NAU's Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGPS, formerly known as "the Graduate College"), Northern Arizona University (NAU), and the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) supersede any material found herein, although every effort is made to ensure that this handbook is consistent with OGPS, NAU, and ABOR policies.

Please refer to [NAU's academic policies that pertain to graduate students](#) and the relevant year of the [NAU academic catalog](#) for governing requirements and policies.

If you need further explanation of anything here, you should contact your graduate advisor or the M.A. in Communication's Graduate Coordinator.

As a graduate student, it is your responsibility to consult with your advisor to develop an appropriate plan of study. You must take the initiative in making sure that your plan meets the requirements of NAU, the OGPS, and the M.A. in Communication.

However, this handbook should give you some direction, and remember—your advisor is available to help, as is the Graduate Coordinator for the M.A. in Communication.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

A minimum of thirty-six (36) units is required for graduation with an M.A. in Communication, at least fifteen (15) of which must be numbered 600 or above. All students must also complete at least twenty-four (24) units of formal coursework selected in consultation with their graduate advisor—that is, courses other than independent studies, directed readings, research, theses, and projects. All requirements for the master's degree must be completed within six (6) years, including any courses taken as part of another graduate program prior to admission to the M.A. in Communication.

Core Courses

Regardless of their emphasis, all M.A. in Communication students are required to complete four “core” courses, comprising twelve (12) units:

- COM 600 Communication Theory and Application
- COM 601 Graduate Study in Communication
- COM 602 Critical Methods or COM 603 Qualitative Methods or COM 604 Quantitative Methods (see emphasis areas, below, for requirements regarding which of these research methods courses you can take)
- COM 698 Seminar in Communication Theory

Emphases

Students in the Communication Studies emphasis (previously the “Communication Coursework” option) are required to complete 18 or 21 units of elective coursework, primarily under the COM and CST prefixes. See the Electives section below for more details. Students in the Communication Studies emphasis can select from any of the three research methods courses required for the core.

The Documentary Studies emphasis requires three (3) additional courses comprising nine (9) units:

- COM 535 Documentary Skills and Storytelling Practicum
- COM 550 Documentary Research Practicum
- COM 605 Documentary Issues, Theories, and Methods

Students in the Documentary Studies emphasis are also required to complete 9 units of elective coursework (see the Electives section below for more details) and should take COM 603 Qualitative Methods to fulfill the research methods courses required for the core (a different methods course can be taken with advisor approval).

The Strategic Communication emphasis requires three (3) additional courses comprising nine (9) units:

- COM 525 Mass Communication and Human Behavior
- COM 546 Social Media Analytics
- COM 560 Crisis Communication

Students in the Strategic Communication emphasis are required to complete 9 or 12 units of elective coursework (see the Electives section below for more details) and should take COM 603 Qualitative Methods or COM 604 Quantitative Methods to fulfill the research methods courses required for the core (a different methods course can only be used to fulfill the methods requirement with advisor approval).

Thesis or Project

All students must select a thesis or project option (described later in this document). Six (6) thesis units (COM 699) or three (3) or six (6) project units (COM 690) are required, though you may end up registering for more of these units (as explained later in this document). A 3 unit project means that those students take an additional 3 units of electives compared to those who complete a thesis or 6 unit project. Documentary Studies students do not have the three (3) unit project option, only a six (6) unit project or a thesis. A student's thesis or project must be within the broad boundaries of their chosen emphasis area, as determined by their master's supervisory committee.

Electives

The remaining units in all three emphases are comprised of elective courses.

Students in the Communication Studies emphasis must complete 18 units of electives under the thesis option or the six (6) unit project option, or 21 units of electives under the three (3) unit project option. The following courses are accepted for elective credit in the Communication Studies emphasis and do not require advisor approval:

- CST 503, CST 524, CST 560, CST 565, CST 568, CST 571, CST 572, CST 575, CST 577, CST 599 (can be taken a second time under a different topic), CST 623
- Up to six (6) units from COM 525, COM 546, COM 560
- Up to three (3) units from COM 535, COM 599, COM 605
- Up to six (6) additional units from COM 602, COM 603, COM 604 (any of these courses not used to meet the core research methods requirement)
- COM 698 is a required core course; however, it is a variable topics course that can be repeated for under a different topic, so a second or third section of COM 698 can count toward your elective units
- A maximum of six (6) units of independent study or research (regardless of prefix), including COM 685, COM 697, CST 685, CST 697

Students in the Documentary Studies emphasis must complete nine (9) units of electives under the thesis and project options. Electives should be selected in consultation with your advisor, and can include courses in COM, CST, or outside of the School of Communication. Note that COM 550 and COM 698 can be repeated for up to nine (9) units; units in excess of three (3) can be used as electives (the first three units of each class fulfilling the emphasis or core requirements).

Students in the Strategic Communication emphasis must complete nine (9) units of electives under the thesis option or the six (6) unit project option, or 21 units of electives under the three (3) unit project option. Electives should be selected in consultation with your advisor, and can include courses in COM, CST, or outside of the School of Communication. The following courses are accepted for elective credit in the Strategic Communication emphasis and do not require advisor approval:

- CST 503, CST 568, CST 572, CST 575
- Up to six (6) additional units from COM 602, COM 603, COM 604 (any of these courses not used to meet the core research methods requirement)
- COM 698 is a required core course; however, it is a variable topics course that can be repeated under a different topic, so a second or third section of COM 698 can count toward your elective units

Note that all Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) employed in the School of Communication are required to take CST 503 (Communication in Instruction) as one of their elective courses in the earliest semester that it is offered.

Outside Electives

For all emphases, a maximum of nine (9) units outside of Communication (COM) and Communication Studies (CST) may be selected to use as electives in your degree program. All courses outside of COM or CST require advisor approval.

400-Level Courses

With advisor approval, you may use up to six (6) units of 400-level courses to count toward completion of your program of study. 400-level courses are generally only allowed when a corresponding graduate-level course is not available during the time of your studies. You and your advisor must complete an “Out of Career” enrollment form and submit it to the Registrar after you have enrolled for the class and before you complete the class. This form can be obtained from the [Registrar’s Forms page](#) or the [Forms page of the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies](#). Without completing this form, you will be allowed to enroll for the class and receive a grade, but the course will be marked on your transcript as not counting toward a graduate degree.

400-level courses taken as an undergraduate cannot count toward completion of your graduate coursework unless you are part of an accelerated program and the courses are approved for dual use in that accelerated program (see section on [Accelerated Programs](#), below).

Students who have taken a specific 400-level course at NAU are generally not allowed to count that course’s 500-level counterpart as part of their graduate degree program. Advisor approval is required to override this prohibition.

Note: In [Appendix D](#) of this handbook you will find descriptions of the graduate-level courses we offer. Be aware that our graduate courses are offered under two prefixes: COM (Communication) and CST (Communication Studies).

Course Formats

The M.A. in Communication offers a combination of face-to-face on-campus and asynchronous online courses. All students will end up taking at least three, but probably more, asynchronous online courses. None of the emphases are available purely online, requiring some face-to-face classes that are only offered on the Flagstaff Mt Campus.

Some 500-level courses, mostly in CST, are offered in a co-convened format, in which a 400-level (undergraduate) course and its 500-level (graduate) counterpart are taught together, with a separate syllabus and roughly 30% more and higher level of work for the graduate students enrolled in the 500-level course. Graduate students in these courses may be called upon to play leadership roles in these classes, helping to facilitate the learning of the undergraduates in the 400-level course.

Summer Courses

We occasionally offer one online course over the Summer term, but such offerings are dependent on faculty availability and enough students enrolling in them. All scheduled Summer courses may be canceled before their start date due to low enrollment. We do not offer graduate courses in the Summer Pre-Session or the Winter session, as the time frame for those terms is too short for our graduate courses. There may be Summer courses offered by other departments that would be appropriate to fulfill an elective requirement (e.g., English, Education).

Part-time and Full-time Status

Students enrolled in the M.A. in Communication have the option of attending full- or part-time. Full-time students normally take three classes per semester (9 units) for up to four semesters (in some very rare cases, 12 units per semester may be appropriate). Part-time students take fewer units, usually one or two classes (3-6 units) each semester. GTAs and others receiving certain forms of financial aid are required to maintain full-time status.

Normally, full-time students can expect to complete their graduate program in two years (four semesters), depending on the number of units completed each semester and sufficient progress toward completion of a thesis or project. Part-time students can expect to complete their course work in six to eight semesters (approximately three to four years) or more, again depending on the number of units completed each semester and sufficient progress toward completion of a thesis or project.

Continuous Enrollment Policies

You are expected to pursue your graduate degree with a minimum of interruption and maintain continuous enrollment. If you do not enroll for three consecutive semesters (excluding Summer), you will be withdrawn from the program and university, and must reapply for admission to resume your degree program. While Summer is not counted as part of the three consecutive semesters limit, taking courses in Summer counts towards your enrollment and will reset the three semester limit. If you choose to take courses in some terms (semesters) but not others, you should familiarize yourself with [NAU's policies regarding continuous enrollment for graduate students](#).

Even after you have completed all formal courses required for your degree, you may need to use university facilities to carry out a required independent study, thesis research,

and/or projects. For the protection of both you and the university, NAU requires that you be enrolled for at least one (1) unit during any term that you use university facilities and/or require the professional time of faculty members. This includes work on your thesis (COM 699) or project (COM 690).

Continuous Enrollment Relating to Master's Theses (COM 699). When you begin enrolling for any master's thesis units (COM 699), the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGPS, aka the "Graduate College") expects you to enroll each regular semester from the time you begin this work until completion of your degree, even if you are not actively working on your thesis. Once you begin enrolling for COM 699, you must register for a minimum of one (1) unit each Fall and Spring semester. If you are using research or other university facilities, and/or the professional time of faculty members, you should enroll for at least one (1) unit, including during the Summer terms. During the semester you complete and defend your thesis (even if this will be in the Summer term), you must also enroll for at least one (1) unit to reflect the increased demands on the time of both faculty and the staff of the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGPS). You must finish with at least six (6) units of COM 699, although you might end up with more than six (6) units of COM 699 due to the above requirements; those additional units are required but will not count toward your degree.

If you do not maintain continuous enrollment after your work has begun on your master's thesis and you do not have an approved leave of absence on file with the OGPS and wish to resume work, you must register for additional units of thesis (COM 699) in an amount equal to the number of such units missed while not maintaining continuous enrollment.

To avoid having to sign up for additional units after the term in which you defend, you upload the final approved copies of your thesis to the OGPS's Thesis and Dissertation office by their submission deadline, typically the Friday of finals week (generally the first day of commencement ceremonies). If you do not meet this deadline, you must enroll for one (1) unit of thesis (COM 699) each term after your defense until you submit your final approved thesis to the OGPS. For more information, see the [Requirements for Theses and Dissertations Requirements policy](#) and the [Thesis and Dissertation section of the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies website](#).

Continuous Enrollment Relating to Master's Projects (COM 690). For the protection of both you and the university, NAU requires that you be enrolled for at least one (1) unit during any term that you use university facilities and/or require the professional time of faculty members. If you enroll for three (3) project units (COM 690) in a single term but do not complete the project in that term, you will likely need to register for at least one (1) unit of project (COM 690) in any subsequent term in which you are actively working on your project. Consult with your project advisor to determine if such enrollment is necessary. Therefore, while three (3) units of COM 690 is required to complete your degree, you may end up with more than three (3) units of COM 690; those additional units are required but will not count toward your degree.

Leave of Absence. In extenuating circumstances, you may petition for exception to the continuous enrollment policy. The petition form, which is available from the [OGPS forms page](#), must be approved by your advisor and the MACOM Graduate Coordinator and sent

to the email address listed on the form for final approval by the Associate Vice Provost of the OGPS. Leave of Absence requests must be filed no later than the deadline for adding a class during the semester in which the leave is to start. A Leave of Absence cannot be granted retroactively.

Time Limits

You must complete all requirements for your master's degree within a six-year period. If you take courses from other institutions and transfer them to your program at NAU (which is very unusual) or if you are using courses taken for other graduate programs at NAU to fulfill some requirements for the M.A. in Communication, they must also be taken within the six-year period. The six-year period begins at the start of the semester in which you take your first course (including transfer courses or those taken for other graduate programs at NAU). For more information, see NAU's [Requirements for Master's Degrees policy](#). The petition for an extension to the time limit is available from the [OGPS forms page](#).

Enrollment Status

NAU defines full-time enrollment for graduate students as nine (9) units during Fall and Spring terms. The minimum full-time course load is nine (9) units during Fall or Spring terms, and 16 units is the maximum (12 units for graduate assistants).

Graduate students are considered "full-time" during the Summer term if they carry 5 units accumulated over any combination of summer sessions. You cannot take more than six (6) units during any five-week summer session or more than three (3) units during the pre-session.

In some situations, enrollment in fewer than 9 units during the Fall or Spring terms (or 5 units for Summer), can be considered "full-time" by NAU and the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGPS). These situations include graduate students in the final semester of their degree who are writing or defending a thesis or graduate students who have completed all coursework and have only a thesis or capstone project to finish. In these instances, the Associate Vice Provost of the OGPS has the authority to approve a "full-time" status designation for semester loads below the units otherwise established in this policy; work with your advisor and/or the Graduate Coordinator to obtain this status. The Exception to 9 Units form is available from the [OGPS forms page](#).

Overloads. You can only carry an overload (more than the maximum units as explained in the previous paragraphs) with the approval of your advisor, the Director of the School of Communication (or their designee, such as the Graduate Coordinator), and the Associate Vice Provost of the OGPS. To enroll for an overload, you must submit the appropriate approval form when you enroll. The Unit Load Override approval form is available from the [OGPS forms page](#). For more information, see the [Graduate Course Loads and Overloads policy](#).

Transfer Credit Requirements and Procedures

Transferring credits to a graduate degree program is not done routinely. If you have been admitted to our graduate program and have earned resident graduate credit at another institution, you can petition the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGPS) to apply such credit toward your graduate degree. Only courses deemed by your advisor to

be relevant to your program of study and approved by the MACOM Graduate Coordinator or Director of the School of Communication as well as the Associate Vice Provost of OGPS will be accepted. Be aware that the OGPS has the authority to grant final approval for all transfer credits; the OGPS may deny transfer credits even if your advisor approves them. The number of units you transfer from other institutions cannot exceed nine (9) units of the total minimum of 36 units required for your master's degree. For additional details and requirements, see the [Transfer Credit – Graduate policy](#). Master's students must complete the Petition for Transfer Credit form, available from the [OGPS forms page](#).

Note that the M.A. in Communication does not offer transfer credit through prior learning assessment.

Grade Point Average Requirements

If you are working toward a graduate degree, you must maintain a 3.0 grade point average for all courses taken and for all courses required in your plan. No more than six (6) units of C grades can be counted toward a master's degree. A grade below C does not earn graduate credit.

At the time of graduation and posting of your degree, if you have earned a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.9 for all courses taken at NAU as a graduate student, you are recognized with the notation "with distinction" on your transcript and diploma.

Admission to a program may be denied or revoked for any graduate student who receives unsatisfactory grades (any grade of D or F, or Cs in excess of 6 units). If you have more than six units of graduate work with a grade of C or below, receive any D or F grades, or if your GPA falls below 3.0, you will be placed on academic probation by the OGPS.

Academic Probation

Students who fail to maintain Good Academic Standing or to meet any Conditional Admission Standards will be automatically placed on academic probation by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGPS) at the end of each regular academic term for any of the following reasons:

- Any grades of "D" or "F"
- 6 or more units of "C" grades
- GPA below 3.00
- failure to meet their Conditional Admission Standards

The MACOM program may also recommend academic probation for failure to meet academic requirements, including Academic Progress, by notifying the student in writing with a copy to the OGPS of specific failures leading to the recommendation of probation.

A student who is on academic probation is required to meet with their academic advisor to discuss the steps necessary to remediate problems that led to probation and to devise a written action plan. This written action plan must be submitted to the Director of the School of Communication (or their designee, e.g., the Graduate Coordinator) and the OGPS for approval and to releases any related holds on a student's account (e.g., blocked from future enrollment).

If a student has not met the terms of the approved action plan or fails a second time to maintain Good Academic Standing, one or both of the following actions will be taken:

- The MACOM may initiate academic dismissal by notifying the student and the OGPS in writing of the program's intent to recommend dismissal. Refer to the section on [Dismissal Policies](#), below.
- The student will be blocked from future enrollment.

Graduate Teaching Assistants should not be on academic probation, or their assistantship may be withdrawn. Any GTA who has been or anticipates being placed on probation should contact their academic advisor, GTA supervisor, and the MACOM Graduate Coordinator immediately.

For more information on GPA requirements, academic probation, and related matters, see the [GPA Requirements – Graduate policy](#).

In-Progress

Courses that, by their content and requirements, normally require more time than the term or session for which you have enrolled can be marked as "IP." The only course in the MA in Communication eligible for an IP grade is thesis (COM 699). The OGPS automatically assigns an "IP" to any COM 699 units until the final thesis is submitted and approved to the OGPS. For more information, see the [Grades of Incomplete or In-Progress – Graduate policy](#). Be aware that "IP" grades do not carry some of the complications and consequences of an incomplete ("I," see next section).

Note that IP is not available for project (COM 690). If you do not complete your project in any term for which you register for COM 690, you will be given an incomplete (I), which must be completed within one calendar year from the end of the term in which you were registered for COM 690 units or the grade will become a permanent incomplete (I). If you do not complete your projects within this time frame, you will have to register for additional units of COM 690.

Incomplete

If you are unable to complete course work in a scheduled course within the term in which you are enrolled, you may petition your instructor to receive a grade of I. If your instructor agrees to give you an incomplete, you and the instructor must complete a written agreement indicating the exact work you need to do to finish the course.

This written agreement must also indicate the date by which you must complete this work, and that date cannot be longer than one calendar year from the end of the term in which you were enrolled in the course. By the end of the time agreed to in writing, your instructor must submit a grade for the course or the grade remains a permanent incomplete. Therefore, you must submit your work in enough time in advance of the one-year time limit in order to allow the instructor to evaluate your work as well as compute and submit your final grade. It is your responsibility, not the instructor's or your advisor's, to make sure you follow through and complete the required work within the specified time frame.

Assigning an incomplete at the end of a semester may in some cases be anticipated or expected due to the nature of the course, such as COM 690 (Project), COM or CST 685 (Graduate Research), and COM or CST 697 (Independent Study). Incompletes in formal coursework (other than theses, projects, independent studies, or research units) are not expected, nor should they be common. Note that instructors are not required to provide you with an incomplete, and incompletes are generally only provided when (1) there are compelling circumstances that prevent you from completing the required work within the allotted time and (2) you have already completed a substantial portion of the required work for the course. In addition, instructors are not required to give you the full year to complete the work. Non-attendance, poor performance, or intentions to repeat the course do not justify issuance of an "I." Instructors cannot assign an "I" unless the terms to resolve the incomplete are finalized and an Incomplete Contract is completed before the course ends.

If the instructor approves the request to give an incomplete grade, the student and the instructor must complete a written agreement using the Incomplete Contract - Graduate form, available from the [OGPS forms page](#). This form will specify course work to be completed by the student and due dates, in order for the incomplete grade to be replaced with a grade for the completed course. Due dates may not extend further than 12 months from the end of the term in which the student was enrolled in the course. The original form must be signed by the instructor and the student, after which a copy is filed with the M.A. in Communication Graduate Coordinator. Both the instructor and student should retain copies of the approved agreement. Once the specified due date in the contract has passed, the instructor will grade the work submitted by the student and submit a grade change form to the Registrar's Office.

For more information, see the [Grades of Incomplete or In-Progress – Graduate policy](#).

Be aware that in some cases there may be consequences to carrying an incomplete, such as certain scholarships or other forms of aid. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of these consequences and take any action necessary to address them.

Specifically, Graduate Teaching Assistants cannot carry an "I" into a semester in which they are a GTA, with the exception of a course that is anticipated to extend beyond a single semester (e.g., COM 685, 690, 697). If an "I" is awarded for a Fall course, the incomplete generally needs to be resolved before the start of the Spring semester; for a Spring course, it should be completed before the start of classes in Fall, assuming the student will be a GTA in the new academic year.

Repeating Courses

Graduate students do not normally repeat courses. However, if a grade of "C", "D", or "F" is received in a graduate course, students may repeat that course with advisor approval. Courses repeated under the regular grading scale do not replace the grade for the prior course, and both grades are used in the computation of the cumulative grade point average (GPA). Units earned for repeated courses may only be used once to fulfill graduation requirements. See the full [Course Repeat, Graduate policy](#). Graduate students who wish to repeat a course must submit the Graduate Course Repeat Enrollment form, available from the [OGPS forms page](#).

SELECTING AN ADVISOR AND GRADUATE COMMITTEE

Temporary Advisor

You will be assigned a temporary advisor early in the first semester of enrollment. Your temporary advisor will assist you with course selection and approvals and the selection of a permanent advisor. The MACOM Graduate Coordinator can also assist you with these processes.

You will be provided with a Program of Study form for you to use to keep track of your progress and plan your upcoming course registration. This form is available in an electronic, fillable format so that you can fill it in as you register for and complete your coursework. Please keep this electronic form updated and ready to share with your advisor in order to streamline the advising process and avoid unforeseen problems with your degree progression. Programs of Study are available through the [NAU catalog](#) or from the [OGPS's Program of Study web page](#).

Selecting an Advisor

While you are welcome to seek advice from any member of the Graduate Faculty in Communication, you must obtain a specific faculty member to be your permanent advisor—preferably by the time you complete 18 units of course work (for full-time students, by the end of your second semester), although for part-time students it could be as late as upon completion of 24-27 units. Your permanent advisor will often be referred to as your advisor, but also as your “chair” (i.e., the chair of your master’s thesis or project committee).

You will work closely with your advisor in designing and carrying out your plan of graduate study. You should meet with your advisor regularly. However, be aware that it is your responsibility to initiate contact with your advisor to address any problems, concerns, and questions, as well as to ensure you are making appropriate progress in your plan of study. Your advisor is there to assist you with course selection and approvals, choosing the thesis or project option, forming your graduate committee, developing your prospectus (thesis) or proposal (project), and completing your thesis or project. Your advisor also serves as the chair of your thesis or project committee. Your advisor must be a member of the MACOM Graduate Faculty.

Identify possible advisors based on compatibility in terms of both expertise (someone whose areas of expertise in terms of subject matter and/or methodology fits with your areas of interest and particularly the anticipated focus of your thesis or project) and someone you believe you can work well with. It is not required that you have taken a course with this faculty member, but some students and faculty strongly prefer that to be the case. In [Appendix E](#) of this handbook you will find a listing of Graduate Faculty for the M.A. in Communication, including the emphasis or emphases with which they are affiliated and their areas of expertise. You can also access a list of current Graduate Faculty on the [M.A. in Communication website](#), which includes their contact information.

You are strongly encouraged to have conversations with multiple faculty concerning ideas for your thesis or project, as well as about potential advisors and the other members of your thesis or project committee (below), starting with your temporary advisor, the MACOM

Graduate Coordinator, and/or other faculty with whom you have had classes or are otherwise familiar with. The purpose of these initial conversations is two-fold:

1. Gaining more clarity as you talk through possible project/thesis topics with multiple faculty and get their input/suggestions.
2. Identifying possible faculty to chair your thesis/project committee, whether that is the faculty you are meeting with or other faculty that they suggest.

Once you have identified one or more possibilities for a permanent advisor, set up a meeting with the faculty member(s) to discuss the possibility of them being your advisor. Faculty may decline and/or recommend other possibilities. Once a faculty member has agreed to serve, remind them to inform the Graduate Coordinator that they are your permanent advisor and chair of your thesis or project committee.

Ultimately, both the student and the faculty member have to agree to work together. In addition, the topic, focus, and approach for your thesis or project is a negotiation between you and your chair. Not only does your chair guide you based on their expertise and experience (which means they may require alterations to what you want to do), but your chair needs to have the necessary expertise (which means you may need to adjust your project/thesis to something they are comfortable directing).

You are not obligated to keep the same advisor for both your course work and your project/thesis. In general, however, most students try to select the same advisor for both, especially given the short time frame for students completing the degree in two years. Advisors may be changed, at either the advisor's or the student's initiative, when necessary or appropriate (e.g., due to a change in focus of the student's thesis/project or the lack of availability of the faculty member due to sabbatical, administrative reassignment, or departure from the university).

In some situations it may be possible to have a faculty member who is not a member of the MACOM Graduate Faculty serve as the chair of your thesis or project committee (see the next section for more about this exception). In these instances, your second committee member (see below) should be your permanent advisor for the purpose of supervising your overall academic progress through the M.A. in Communication while your chair is focused on directing your thesis or project.

Selecting a Graduate Committee

Your master's project/thesis committee must be composed of three faculty members:

- your permanent advisor, who must be a member of the MACOM Graduate Faculty, and who serves as the chair of the committee (see prior section);
- a second member from the MACOM Graduate Faculty; and
- a third faculty member who may come from within or outside the MACOM Graduate Faculty and within or outside of the School of Communication—in short, any faculty member at NAU.

In some circumstances, a fourth member may be appropriate, especially when they have specialized knowledge regarding the topic of your thesis or project that other committee members lack. The use of a non-faculty member or faculty outside of NAU, however, should be limited to that of a non-voting, advisory member.

You should have your graduate committee in place by the time you begin working with your advisor on your thesis prospectus or project proposal (no later than the beginning of the semester in which you will graduate, but in most cases much earlier).

Your second and third members should be selected based on their areas of expertise in relation to the topic and/or methodology of your thesis or project, though the match need not be as strong as with your chair/advisor. Both the second and third faculty members must be selected in consultation with your graduate advisor. Work with your advisor to identify two or more options acceptable to both of you before you approach faculty members to formally ask them to be on your committee (in some cases, your advisor may want to talk to those potential members as well). Set up meetings with potential second and third members to discuss the possibility of them being on your graduate committee. Your advisor may wish to approach potential members before you set up these meetings; clarify the exact procedure with your advisor before proceeding. Faculty may decline to serve on your committee and/or recommend other possibilities.

Once you have finalized your graduate committee, remind your advisor to notify the MACOM Graduate Coordinator of the committee's full membership.

In some instances, an NAU faculty member who is not a member of the MACOM Graduate Faculty may be approved to serve as the chair of your thesis or project committee. Such exceptions are most appropriate when the outside faculty member possesses the expertise, experience, or research specialization to direct a particular thesis or project. If you, in consultation with a MACOM Graduate Faculty advisor, conclude that an outside faculty member is best suited to serve as the chair of your thesis or project committee, you must obtain an exception. The outside faculty member generally must hold a terminal degree (e.g., MFA or PhD) and have a research/creative or professional record relevant to your thesis or project. To explore pursuing such an exception, you must first consult with the MACOM Graduate Coordinator. If the Graduate Coordinator determines an exception may be possible, you will need to determine if this outside faculty member is willing to serve. To formally request an exception, provide the Graduate Coordinator with a detailed written rationale for your preference for the outside faculty member. The Graduate Coordinator will review your written request for an exception, possibly consult with faculty in your emphasis area regarding the exception, and the Graduate Coordinator will inform you of the decision. If an exception is approved, the outside faculty member will direct your thesis or project, and your second committee member will generally serve as your permanent advisor for the purpose of supervising your overall academic progress through the M.A. in Communication.

Working with Your Advisor and Committee in the Summer

Be aware that faculty members are generally not on contract over the summer (i.e., they are technically not employed by the university). Even if they are teaching in the summer, they are only contracted to teach one or more specific courses and are not expected to engage in other activities. It is up to individual advisors as to whether they are willing and able to work with you on your project or thesis over the summer. Additionally, it is up to individual committee members as to whether they are willing and able to read and/or attend prospectus/proposal meetings or thesis/project defense meetings over the summer.

If working with your advisor on your thesis/project and/or completing your thesis/project over the summer is important to you, be sure to address these issues with your advisor and/or committee members well in advance.

THESES AND PROJECTS

This section explains the differences between projects and theses, timeframes for completion of theses and projects, issues to consider in choosing a project versus a thesis, and detailed descriptions of the entire process for completing a project or thesis.

Graduate students in the MACOM program may select one of two options for completing their degree: the thesis track or the project track. You can register for project (COM 690) or thesis (COM 699) units during any Fall or Spring semester after receiving permission from your graduate advisor (summer enrollments may be possible—see above section regarding summer work on theses/projects). Completion of the M.A. in Communication requires a minimum of six (6) thesis units (COM 699) for the thesis track or either three (3) or six (6) project units (COM 690) for the project track.

The purpose of preparing a master's thesis or master's project is to give you experience in carrying out the kind of research and/or creative activity you can expect to do throughout your professional career. Through this process, we expect you to demonstrate your ability to work independently on a problem and to document your familiarity with the literature in your field, your command of the techniques and principles of research and/or creative production, and your ability to form products that conform to disciplinary or industry standards. Following the guidance provided by your advisor is essential, but your motivation, discipline, time, and commitment to the project or thesis are generally the determining factors in how long it takes to complete a defensible project or thesis.

Note that you cannot enroll yourself in COM 690 or COM 699 as you do with most regularly-scheduled classes. You must have a permanent advisor (thesis or project committee chair) in place and have their permission to enroll. Discuss how many units of COM 690 and COM 699 you should register for in any particular semester, as you can register for these in a single semester or over multiple semesters. If you and your advisor anticipate completion will take more than one semester, it is strongly recommended that you register for some of the required number of units in the semester in which you expect to complete and defend your project or thesis due to the continuous enrollment requirements with projects and especially with theses (see [Continuous Enrollment Policies section](#), above), although financial aid considerations may justify a different plan.

Time to Completion

Be aware that both the thesis and project options represent extensive work in terms of both time and skills. Since the thesis option represents a minimum of six (6) units of graduate credit, it should involve a total of at least 270 hours of work—the equivalent of the work and time involved in taking two three-unit graduate-level courses. Since the project option represents a minimum of three (3) units of graduate credit, it should involve a total of at least 135 hours of work—the equivalent of the work and time involved in taking one three-unit graduate-level course. In addition, both options are the culmination of your graduate work, and should demonstrate the skills and abilities fostered in 30-33 units of

previous or concurrent graduate-level course work. Due to the nature of both options, however, there is often time, energy, skills, and knowledge involved in addition to your prior course work and the time estimate stated above. Projects and theses must be brought to completion consistent with the proposal or prospectus approved by your committee, or a second proposal/prospectus meeting should be held to obtain the approval of your committee for substantive changes.

Projects and theses often involve unexpected turns of events, unforeseen problems, or additional but necessary work. While working closely with your advisor can help to minimize delays or additional work, the nature of graduate-level research and creative activity is that it is somewhat unpredictable (e.g., availability of your subjects, success in soliciting participants for your research or creative work, pandemics). In addition, faculty have many demands on their time, and can not always provide substantive help on short notice (e.g., reading and providing feedback on drafts). Finally, students working on theses and projects that involve the use of human subjects in scholarly research are required to obtain approval from NAU's Institutional Review Board before data may be collected from those subjects. Applications to the IRB generally require that your committee has already approved your project proposal or thesis prospectus, and the IRB review and approval process can take weeks or even months and typically involves revising and resubmitting your application based on feedback from the IRB (further prolonging the start of data collection). Your chair must also be included as your "faculty advisor/sponsor" on your IRB application.

This "it takes as long as it takes" nature of theses and projects is one of the defining differences between undergraduate and graduate education—it is not only about completion of formal coursework in fixed time frames, but requires an independent "capstone" experience that almost always requires more than a single semester to complete (three-unit projects being a possible exception). In short, no one can guarantee that you will complete a thesis or project within a fixed time frame, but we strive to help facilitate your completion of your degree in a timely fashion. Work closely with your advisor and listen to their advice!

Choosing a Project or a Thesis

A thesis is an original research project that both builds on and adds to the existing body of knowledge in the discipline. Projects, generally, apply existing knowledge to address a problem, situation, or need, though they can also involve original research or creative work. This distinction is not mutually exclusive—a thesis can involve application and a project can make contributions to the existing body of knowledge.

The project category is broader and more flexible than the thesis option. A project could be a research project similar to but narrower in scope than a thesis. A project could be oriented toward the production of some product (e.g., a promotional campaign, communication plan, educational curriculum, workshop, website, persuasive or educational video, or a documentary project), though you are also expected to produce a written component accompanying this product that explains and justifies the product by using existing research and/or theories.

A thesis usually involves the use of one or more specific research methods (qualitative, quantitative, or critical) involving the collection and analysis of a body of data of some kind. A thesis is grounded in existing literature (research and/or theories), but by definition goes beyond that literature in some way. Most theses could be turned into a research paper to be submitted to an academic journal; this may be the case with projects but is less likely. Documentary theses may vary in form from traditional theses; consult with your advisor about the expectations for such theses (which are not typical in the Documentary Studies emphasis).

Consistent with the continuous enrollment policies (see [Continuous Enrollment Policies section](#), above), once you have registered for thesis units you must continue to register (and pay) for at least one (1) thesis unit (COM 699) in each Fall and Spring semester until you are finished. You also must register for at least one (1) unit of thesis (COM 699) in the Summer if you submit your final approved thesis in the summer term. For the thesis track, you must register for a total of at least six (6) units of thesis (COM 699). For the project track, you must register for a total of at least three (3) or six (6) project units (COM 690). For projects, you will likely also have to register (and pay) for at least one (1) unit of project (COM 690) during each term in which you are actively working on the project (using university resources or faculty time), including the term in which you defend and complete your project, even if you have already registered for the required 3 or 6 units. For either track, you might end up registering (and paying) for more than the minimum number of units required.

Theses are published electronically and available in perpetuity through an online database of theses and dissertation (ProQuest). This means that a thesis involves additional time, procedures (conforming to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies' (OGPS's) requirements for theses), and, in some cases, expenses (optional fees for the electronic publication process). Projects have more limited, informal distribution (the student sharing it with whomever and however they wish) and the steps involved in document preparation are generally a bit less than with a thesis. Final submission of theses are confirmed by the Thesis and Dissertation section of the OGPS (aka "the Graduate College") and only they can change a COM 699 grade to a "P" (pass), whereas your advisor submits your grades for any project units (COM 690) and the OGPS is not directly involved in projects in any way.

Finally, in deciding on the thesis versus project option, you should consider (and discuss with your advisor) your future educational and/or career plans. If you plan to pursue doctoral study in communication or another discipline (or want to keep that open as an option), it is often (but not always) advisable to complete a thesis. If you have no plans or desires to pursue doctoral-level education and/or if you see yourself as more of a practitioner than scholar/researcher, the project option may be more appropriate. However, someone who completes the project option is still qualified to apply for admission into a doctoral program and some professionals/practitioners may find the thesis option more consistent with their plans or interests.

All other things being equal, the project track is more flexible and involves fewer institutional requirements, restrictions, and hard deadlines. It can also require an additional three (3) unit elective course in comparison to the thesis track if you complete a three (3)

unit project rather than a six (6) unit project or thesis. Therefore, short of specific reasons or motivations to complete a thesis, the project option is recommended.

Project Option

The project option involves one three (3) unit project (COM 690) or one six (6) unit project (which can involve multiple components or “products”). Due to the nature of graduate projects, you may need to spend time working on the earlier steps in the process in the semester prior to enrolling for any project units.

You must complete a minimum of 18 graduate units before enrolling in project units (COM 690) and can enroll in one or more semesters. To enroll, you must have obtained a permanent advisor, and that advisor must agree that you are ready to enroll for project units. Work closely with your advisor to determine the appropriate number of project units to enroll for in any given semester. Your advisor can get you enrolled in their section of COM 690 (you cannot do it yourself through LOUIE).

If you continue to work on your project beyond the semester in which you enroll for any or all of your three (3) or six (6) units, those COM 690 units will carry a grade of “I” (incomplete), which must be completed within one year of the end of the semester for which you are enrolled or you will have to enroll for additional units (see [Incomplete section](#), above).

Projects must be grounded in scholarship and have a written component. Projects are research-based, but often focus on the application of existing knowledge (research, theories, techniques) to specific problems or situations more than contributing to the existing body of knowledge. Projects may include such types as the creation of a workshop, development of a campaign, design of a message source (website, app, et cetera), designing and implementing applied research for an organization, an extended scholarly paper that is appropriate for conference and/or journal submission, or a documentary project.

Process for Projects. Meet with your graduate advisor to discuss possible topics for your project. When you and your advisor agree on the project’s topic, focus, and purpose, work with your advisor to prepare a proposal that details the project’s topic, focus, purpose, goals, justification, use of existing theories or research, the product(s) to be produced, the process for doing so, and timelines. Prior to preparing your proposal, you and your advisor should determine an appropriate style guide to follow (e.g., MLA or APA) as well as the content, format, and length of your proposal, as these can vary widely across different types of projects.

See [Appendix A](#) for suggestions on preparing a project proposal. However, due the variety of types of projects appropriate for this degree, you must work closely with your advisor regarding the content, format, and length of your proposal.

At this point, if you do not already have a complete graduate committee, you and your advisor should work immediately to assemble a complete committee. While you are developing your proposal, you may also wish to consult with your other committee members or your advisor may direct you to do so. Always be sure to keep your advisor “in

the loop” as you seek advice or input from your other committee members or other individuals.

The use of human subjects in your project research (interviews, questionnaires, et cetera) may require approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB)—work closely with your advisor to determine if IRB approval is necessary, and if so prepare the necessary materials and adjust your timeline if necessary. In general, documentary projects, oral histories, and more journalistic projects do not require IRB approval, while traditional forms of academic research (e.g., qualitative and quantitative research projects that involve obtaining data from human subjects) do require IRB approval. Do not underestimate the amount of time that getting IRB approval can take. Further, your IRB application typically cannot be submitted to IRB until you have a successful proposal meeting with your entire committee; you may work on the IRB application ahead of time, but submission to IRB tends to come *after* a successful proposal meeting. For more information on whether IRB approval will be necessary, talk to your advisor and review [NAU's IRB website](#).

Once your advisor approves your proposal for your project, that draft will be distributed to the entire project committee for review and a project proposal meeting will be scheduled. Note that committee members should be given the proposal two calendar weeks in advance of the meeting; each committee member has the right to require this two-week review period, regardless of the implications for the student (e.g., delaying graduation, requiring registration for additional units).

Project proposal meetings are generally scheduled for 1-1.5 hours, though the full time may not be needed. Generally, you will be asked to give a short formal presentation of your proposal (5-10 minutes, but follow your advisor's guidelines), followed by questions from your committee members and a discussion between you and your committee members. Be sure to discuss the specific format of this meeting with your advisor well in advance of the meeting itself. As with final defenses, project proposal meetings can be in-person or virtual (e.g., via Zoom). All committee members must be present.

Your advisor will seek feedback at this meeting from your committee and formally endorse the project proposal if acceptable to the entire committee. It is common that the outcome of this meeting includes minor or major alterations to your proposed project. If the required changes are substantial, your proposal may need to be revised and another proposal meeting may be required.

After committee approval of the project proposal, continue to work closely with your advisor throughout the development and execution of the project, as well as the production of the written component for the project.

Once the project is completed and a final draft of the project has been judged by your advisor to be ready to defend, all committee members will be provided with this “defense” draft. A public presentation and defense for your M.A. project will then be scheduled (see below for details on what is required for a “public” presentation). Note that committee members should be given the approved defense draft of the project two calendar weeks in advance of the meeting; each committee member has the right to require this two-week

review period, regardless of the implications for the student (e.g., delaying graduation, requiring registration for additional units).

Project defenses are not to be held during final exam week. Required revisions are a common outcome of the defense process, and sufficient time must remain before the end of the semester to complete those revisions and get them approved by your advisor and/or committee or the student's graduation will likely be delayed to the next semester.

Approximately one week after the committee has been given a defense-ready draft of the project, and no later than four (4) business days before the scheduled defense, the chair of the project committee should email the other two committee members to check to see if they have concerns about the project that rise to the level of it not being ready to defend (i.e., not sufficient to receive a "pass" with major revisions). If any committee member expresses such a concern, the committee should discuss the concerns; if two or more members agree that the concerns are substantial and likely result in a failed defense, the scheduled presentation and defense should be canceled and an informal meeting should be held with the student and committee to discuss the concerns and what needs to be done to improve the project for a defense at a future date.

If the committee chair's email check-in with committee members (see above) did not occur, the chair should call a pre-defense meeting of all faculty on the committee to occur immediately prior to the scheduled presentation and defense to discuss any major concerns about the project prior to the presentation, defense, and vote.

Projects must be presented in a public forum. The public will be invited to attend via emails sent by your committee chair or the Graduate Coordinator to School of Communication faculty and students in the M.A. in Communication; the defending student may also invite anyone they would like. The student and their advisor will determine the appropriate venue and medium for the meeting (e.g., fully in-person, virtually via Zoom, or a mix of the two).

Project presentation and defense meetings are generally scheduled for two hours. You will be asked to prepare an approximately thirty-minute presentation (in the case of Documentary Studies projects, this usually involves screening the documentary project itself in addition to a brief presentation about it). Work closely with your advisor about the requirements for, length of, and other details regarding this presentation. In addition, be sure to discuss the specific format of this meeting with your advisor well in advance of the meeting itself, as what follows is a general description from which there may be variations.

The public presentation and defense typically begins with the chair (advisor) introducing the student and their project. The student then gives their formal presentation of the project. Time for questions and comments from any attendees follow. After the presentation (and any questions from the public), everyone except the student and their committee will be asked to leave.

The acceptability of a master's project will be determined by a project defense immediately following the public presentation. In the defense portion of the meeting, the committee will present questions, concerns, and suggestions for the student's response. This may include

discussions of possible revisions, additions, and/or edits needed for the final version of the project.

After this discussion, the student is asked to leave the physical or virtual room while the committee discusses and evaluates the project, presentation, and defense. The student's graduate committee will assess the project and be asked to determine satisfactory completion or any changes required for satisfactory completion. A confidential vote is taken, with at least two of three "pass" votes needed for a successful defense. The chair of the committee will take careful notes on any revisions required by the committee.

Finally, the student is informed of the outcome: pass with no revisions, pass with minor or major revisions (the most common outcome), or fail. Either the entire committee or the chair will subsequently go over any required revisions in detail and determine deadlines for their completion. See [Levels of Evaluation](#) section below for more details.

After the defense, work with your advisor to make the necessary changes and submit a completed, final, polished copy of all components of your project to your advisor in an appropriate form (e.g., a PDF of a written project or of the written component of the project). Your other committee members and the Graduate Coordinator should be sent the final version as well. Your advisor will not give you a "P" (pass) on your project units (COM 690) until a final version with all required revisions are submitted in a format acceptable to your advisor, even if this delays your graduation until the subsequent semester.

The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGPS) does not provide guidelines for project papers, but in general you should follow the thesis guidelines where possible. See the [OGPS Thesis and Dissertation webpage](#) for guidelines related to proper thesis format. The written component of the project should include a title page (adapted from the thesis title page format—see [Appendix C](#) in this handbook) and references/works cited section. The written component of your project is to be prepared using 12-point font in a type style such as Arial, Calibri, Cambria, or Times New Roman. A script type style is unacceptable.

Margins, pagination, and other aspects of the document format and style should be in accordance with the style guide identified by your advisor (e.g., MLA or APA). The responsibility to produce a document that conforms to your chosen style guide and proper usage (grammar, spelling, punctuation, et cetera) is ultimately yours; depending on your capacities, hiring a copy editor may be necessary. The above guidelines can be adjusted by your advisor as necessary when your project takes the form of something other than written discourse—e.g., visual, audio, or audio-visual components—but the principle of providing a complete copy of your final, approved project to your advisor and committee remains.

Thesis Option

A master's thesis is an original research project that both builds on and adds to the existing body of knowledge in the discipline. A thesis usually involves the use of one or more specific research methods (qualitative, quantitative, or critical) involving the collection and analysis of a body of "data" of some kind. A thesis is grounded in existing literature, but by definition goes beyond that literature (existing research and/or theories) in some way.

The thesis option involves six (6) units. You must complete a minimum of 18 graduate units before enrolling for thesis units (COM 699) and can do so in one or more semesters. To enroll, you must have a permanent advisor, and that advisor must agree that you are ready to enroll for thesis units. Work closely with your advisor to determine the appropriate number of thesis units to enroll for in any given semester. Your advisor can get you enrolled in their section of COM 699 (you cannot do it yourself through LOUIE). Due to the nature of theses, you may need to spend time working on the earlier steps in the process in the semester prior to enrolling for any thesis units.

If you continue to work on your thesis beyond the semester in which you enroll for any of your six (6) units, those COM 699 credits carry a mark of “IP” (in progress). These units will continue to carry the “IP” designation until you have successfully defended your thesis and submitted the final approved version to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGPS) in the approved format. You are required to register for at least one (1) unit of COM 699 in each Fall and Spring semester until you are finished, and you must enroll for at least one (1) unit of COM 699 in the semester in which you will graduate (i.e., the semester in which you will submit all final copies of your thesis to the OGPS in the approved format), including Summer.

Review the [deadlines and guidelines for theses](#) from the OGPS website and use these resources throughout the process outlined below. In the semester in which you plan to graduate, carefully review all OGPS deadlines for submission of theses. Questions can be directed to ETD@nau.edu.

Process for Theses. Meet with your graduate advisor to discuss possible topics for your thesis. During these preliminary conferences with your graduate advisor, you should select a suitable area for research. Several factors help determine the appropriateness of a research topic, such as whether you can readily obtain essential data, whether critical library references and/or technical or specialized equipment are available, whether you can attain significant results within a reasonable time, and whether faculty members with appropriate specialties are available to provide you with proper guidance.

When you and your advisor agree on the topic, focus, and purpose for your thesis, work with your advisor to prepare a prospectus (a thesis proposal) that outlines the topic, focus, purpose, goals, justification, relevant literature (existing theories, research, methods or approaches), your proposed methodology, and timelines. Prior to preparing your prospectus, you and your advisor should determine an appropriate style guide to follow (e.g., MLA or APA).

See [Appendix B](#) for suggestions on preparing a prospectus. However, due to the variety of types of research projects appropriate in the discipline, you must work closely with your advisor regarding the content, format, and length of your prospectus. A prospectus constitutes what will often become the first, second, and third chapters of your thesis, and is therefore typically 20-30 pages in length.

At this point, if you do not already have a complete graduate committee, you and your advisor should work immediately to assemble a complete committee. While you are

developing your prospectus, you may also wish consult with your other committee members or your advisor may direct you to do so. Always be sure to keep you advisor “in the loop” as you seek advice or input from your other committee members or other individuals.

The use of human subjects in thesis research (interviews, questionnaires, et cetera) will most likely require approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB)—work closely with your advisor to determine if IRB approval is necessary, and if so prepare the necessary materials and adjust, if necessary, your timeline. Almost any thesis using qualitative or quantitative methods and data obtained from human beings (via observation, interviews, focus groups, and/or survey questionnaires) will likely require IRB approval. For more information on whether IRB approval will be necessary, talk to your advisor and review [NAU's IRB website](#). If IRB approval is necessary, you will need to complete your prospectus and hold a prospectus meeting with your committee prior to submitting the application, as the prospectus meeting may result in changes to your proposed research. You may work on the IRB application ahead of time, but submission to IRB comes *after* a successful prospectus meeting).

Be aware that the IRB approval can add a month or possibly more to your timeline, and you may not begin collecting data from human subjects until you receive approval. Therefore, you should submit your IRB application by the start of or *very early* in the semester before you plan to complete and defend your thesis.

Once a final draft of the prospectus is approved by your advisor, the draft will be distributed to the entire thesis committee for review and a prospectus meeting will be scheduled. Note that committee members should be given the prospectus two calendar weeks in advance of the meeting; each committee member has the right to require this two-week review period, regardless of the implications for the student (e.g., delaying graduation, requiring registration for additional units). This meeting should occur no later than the first third (5 weeks) of the penultimate semester of your intended graduation—preferably much earlier; depending on the nature of your thesis research, it may need to occur the as early as 4-8 weeks into the semester before the one in which you plan to graduate.

Prospectus meetings are generally scheduled for 1.5 hours, though the full time may not be needed. Generally, you will be asked to give a formal presentation of your proposed research (5-10 minutes, but follow your advisor's guidelines), followed by questions from your committee members and a discussion between you and your committee members. Be sure to discuss the specific format of this meeting with your advisor well in advance of the meeting itself. As with final defenses, prospectus meetings can be in-person or virtual (e.g., via Zoom). All committee members must be present.

Your advisor will seek feedback at this meeting from the committee and formally endorse the prospectus if acceptable to the entire committee. It is common that the outcome of this meeting includes minor or major alterations to your proposed research. In the required changes are substantial, your prospectus may need to be revised and another prospectus meeting may be required.

After committee approval of the prospectus, continue to work closely with your graduate advisor throughout the development and execution of your research and writing of the thesis.

Once a draft of your thesis is completed and has been judged by your advisor to be ready to defend, advisor, all committee members will be provided with the “defense” draft, which must be complete, in proper format, polished, and in accordance with [OGPS thesis format guidelines](#). Note that committee members should be given the defense-ready draft of the thesis two weeks in advance of the final defense; each committee member has the right to require this two-week review period, regardless of the implications for the student (e.g., delaying graduation, requiring registration for additional units).

A public presentation and defense of your thesis will then be scheduled (see below for details on what is required for a “public” presentation). Defenses may not be held during final exam week, following OGPS policy. Be aware that late defenses may not leave adequate time to make required revisions to your thesis in time to submit it by the OGPS’s deadline for final submission, typically the Friday of finals week, which is also the first day of university commencement ceremonies. Failure to meet this deadline will require you to register for an additional unit of thesis (COM 699) and delay your graduation term and posting of your degree.

Approximately one week after the committee has been given a defense-ready draft of the thesis, and no later than four (4) business days before the scheduled defense, the chair of the thesis committee should email the other two committee members to check to see if they have concerns about the thesis that rise to the level of it not being ready to defend (i.e., not sufficient to receive a “pass” with major revisions). If any committee member expresses such a concern, the committee should discuss the concerns; if two or more members agree that the concerns are substantial and will likely result in a failed defense, the scheduled presentation and defense should be canceled and an informal meeting should be held with the student and committee to discuss the concerns and what needs to be done to improve the thesis for a defense at a future date.

If the committee chair’s email check-in with committee members (see above) did not occur, the chair should call a pre-defense meeting of all faculty on the committee to occur immediately prior to the scheduled presentation and defense to discuss any major concerns about the project prior to the presentation, defense, and vote.

At this time, you should submit the draft of your thesis in approved format to the OGPS’s ETD Coordinator for format review. See the [OGPS’s thesis and dissertation page](#) for deadlines, requirements, and processes related to submission of your thesis for the format check. Note that while you should follow the academic style guide agreed to by you and your advisor (e.g., MLA or APA), you should follow any of OGPS’s guidelines that contradict that specific style guide.

The public presentation and defense constitutes the second required meeting concerning the thesis. The acceptability of the thesis shall be determined in a final oral defense administered by the student’s graduate committee.

Theses must be presented in a public forum during a regular academic term for successful completion. The public will be invited to attend via emails sent by your committee chair or the Graduate Coordinator to School of Communication faculty and students in the M.A. in Communication; the defending student may also invite anyone they would like. The student and their advisor will determine the appropriate venue and medium for the meeting (e.g., fully in-person, virtually via Zoom, or a mix of the two). All committee member must be present.

Thesis presentation and defense meetings are scheduled for two hours. You will be asked to prepare an approximately thirty-minute presentation. Work closely with your advisor about the requirements for, length of, and other details regarding this presentation. In addition, be sure to discuss the specific format of this meeting with your advisor well in advance of the meeting itself, as what follows is a general description from which there may be variations.

The public presentation and defense typically begins with the chair (advisor) introducing the student and their project. The student then provides their formal presentation of the thesis. Time for questions from any attendees follows. After the presentation (and any questions from the public), everyone except the student and their committee will be asked to leave (generally no later than one hour into the meeting).

The acceptability of your master's thesis will be determined by a thesis defense immediately following the public presentation. In the defense portion of the meeting (also referred to as an "oral examination"), the committee will present questions, concerns, and suggestions for the student's response. This may include discussions of possible revisions, additions, and/or edits needed for the final version of the thesis.

After this discussion, the student is asked to leave the physical or virtual room while the committee discusses and evaluates the thesis, presentation, and defense. The student's graduate committee will assess the thesis and be asked to determine satisfactory completion or any changes required for satisfactory completion. A vote is taken, with at least two of three "pass" votes needed for a successful defense. The chair of the committee will take careful notes on any revisions required by the committee.

Finally, the student is informed of the outcome: pass with no revisions, pass with minor or major revisions (the most common outcome), or fail. Either the entire committee or the chair will subsequently go over any required revisions in detail and determine deadlines for their completion. See [Levels of Evaluation](#) section below for more details.

At the end of the defense, your committee will sign the Oral Defense Part 1 form and your advisor will submit it to the OGPS within 48 hours of your defense. Both the Part 1 and Part 2 form are available from the [OGPS forms page](#) but are only accessible by faculty, not students. [Guidelines for the faculty advisor](#) regarding this process are also available. The form stipulates what revisions need to be completed and who will review the thesis revisions to ensure the revisions are made in a satisfactory manner (typically, this is your advisor, but in some cases other committee members may wish to review your revisions as well). Students may not submit this form to the OGPS.

After the defense, work with your advisor to make the necessary revisions and edits. The responsibility to produce a document that conforms to your chosen style guide and proper usage (grammar, spelling, punctuation, et cetera) is ultimately yours; depending on your capacities, hiring a copy editor may be necessary. In addition, you are to provide a single electronic file (in PDF format) of your thesis to your advisor, other committee members, and the Graduate Coordinator via email before receiving approval from your advisor to upload your final version to the OGPS through the ProQuest system (ProQuest is the online database where your thesis will be published). Be aware that this upload must occur by the final day of the semester (Friday of finals week) or your graduation will be delayed; be sure to submit revisions to your advisor (and other committee members, if so requested) in sufficient time for them to review and either approve or require additional revisions. If your revisions are not completed in time at a satisfactory level, this will delay your graduation and could require enrolling for an additional unit of COM 699.

After you make all revisions required by your committee in a satisfactory manner, your advisor will complete the Oral Defense Part 2 form verifying that all requirements specified during the oral examination have been met and that the thesis or dissertation is in its final form and ready for publishing. This verification form will be submitted to the OGPS by the committee chair (advisor) and will not be accepted if submitted by a student. Part of completing the verification form involves you and your advisor making choices regarding open access, copyright registration, embargo, and the purchase of bound copies. If you and your advisor have questions about these choices, consult the MACOM Graduate Coordinator and/or the [OGPS's thesis and dissertation web page](#). The Part 2 form is available from the [OGPS forms page](#) but is only accessible by faculty, not students. [Guidelines for the faculty advisor](#) regarding this process are also available.

When your advisor gives you final approval, submit the final electronic version of your thesis through the [OGPS's thesis and dissertation web page](#). Questions can be directed to ETD@nau.edu. The OGPS will not give you a "P" (pass) on your thesis units (COM 699) until the final approved version is submitted in proper format. Only the OGPS is authorized to assign a passing grade to your thesis units. If you are unable to complete your document during the semester in which you defend, you must register for at least one (1) unit of thesis (COM 699) each semester after your defense until you submit your final, approved thesis.

Levels of Evaluation

There are three levels of evaluation for the defense of a thesis or project. "Pass without revisions" means that there are no final revisions needed for the thesis or project. "Pass with revisions" means that the committee expects either a significant or small amount of revisions to be made to the project or thesis. The committee will determine whether these revisions can be overseen and approved by your advisor alone, or whether other committee members will also review and approve these changes. "Fail" means that the committee finds that substantial work needs to be completed in order for the thesis or project to be accepted or that the student did not follow the requirements for the assignment.

Failing a Defense. If the outcome of the defense is "fail," another defense will have to be held once the student has revised their project or thesis in a satisfactory manner. The chair

of the committee or the committee as a whole may also request changes to the proposed project or thesis or request a change to the composition of the committee. Students may also decide to try to secure a different chair and/or other committee members. If a second defense also results in a “fail,” the student’s committee will discuss and decide in a private meeting whether or not to allow the student a third opportunity.

ACCELERATED PROGRAMS

For students who attend NAU as undergraduates and have specific a major (and in some cases, a specific emphasis within that major), we offer accelerated bachelors-to-masters programs. Students must apply for a specific accelerated program (see below) while still an undergraduate at NAU, and must follow their undergraduate and graduate advisors’ guidance for their course schedules in the final 2-3 semesters of their undergraduate degree. Such programs can reduce the typical time to complete the M.A. in Communication on a full-time basis from four (4) semesters to three (3) by allowing nine (9) units of graduate and/or undergraduate courses taken while an undergraduate to count toward both their bachelor’s degree and the M.A. in Communication. This compressed time frame also means more and higher level work while an undergraduate student and navigating more time constraints while a graduate student; as a result, accelerated programs are intended for exceptional students with a high level of academic skills, commitment, discipline, and self-motivation.

The MACOM offers the following accelerated programs for students enrolled at NAU for both undergraduate and graduate programs:

- The Bachelor of Science in Creative Media & Film - Media Studies Emphasis and a Master of Arts in Communication - Communication Studies Emphasis
- The Bachelor of Science in Creative Media & Film - Documentary Storytelling Emphasis and a Master of Arts in Communication - Documentary Studies Emphasis
- The Bachelor of Science in Strategic Communication and a Master of Arts in Communication - Strategic Communication Emphasis

Students must apply for admission to the M.A. in Communication, meet all admissions requirements listed in the policy [Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's Programs](#), as well as the admissions requirements for the M.A. in Communication accelerated programs to be considered for admission. Note that the minimum requirements for application and final admission to the MACOM accelerated programs are higher than for regular admission to the M.A. in Communication:

- Completion of 60 units of undergraduate coursework with a minimum NAU cumulative grade point average of 3.5
- Completion of a minimum of 12 undergraduate units in their major at NAU with a minimum grade point average of 3.5 in those courses (receiving an Incomplete or completing a class graded as Pass/Fail or Audit will not count towards this 12-unit requirement)
- After condition admission to a MACOM accelerated program, maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 in all NAU courses and in courses within their major until

they complete their bachelor's degree and formally become a graduate student in the MA in Communication.

Students should apply for a specific accelerated program in the M.A. in Communication during their junior year, preferably well in advance of the second semester of their junior year (i.e., as soon as possible after completing a total of 60 units). Students who apply during the last semester of their junior year or first semester of their senior year may not be able to take full advantage of the nine (9) unit limit on "dual use" courses (those taken while an undergraduate that can count toward both degrees).

Admission to accelerated programs is competitive and qualified applicants may be denied admission because of limits on the number of students admitted to the M.A. in Communication each year.

Be sure to speak with MACOM Graduate Coordinator regarding your interest in the accelerated plan, preferably no later than the beginning of your junior year, for more information on the application process and, if admitted, the specific courses to be taken while still an undergraduate.

PROGRAM OF STUDY

The Program of Study offers a clear guide for what courses you must take and what other courses you may choose from, depending on your emphasis area, in order to complete the degree. Programs of Study are available through the [NAU catalog](#) or from the [OGPS's Program of Study web page](#). Update the form each semester and have it available when meeting with your advisor about course selection, degree requirements, and the like.

In the past, a student's final Program of Study form was signed by their advisor and the MACOM Graduate Coordinator and submitted as part of the process of applying for graduation. However, during the 2024-2025 academic year, the M.A. in Communication will begin transitioning from this long-standing process toward a fully electronic process through LOUIE. Beginning in AY 2025-2026, the Program of Study's role in applying for graduation will be replaced by the use of LOUIE's Graduate Academic Advisement Report (Graduate AAR), the same type of system long used to determine whether undergraduates have completed their degree requirements. Therefore, the Program of Study will retain its role as a guide through the degree program but will no longer have a formal role in applying for graduation. If you are graduating in Fall 2024, Spring 2025, Fall 2025, or Spring 2026, contact the MACOM Graduate Coordinator to confirm which process you will use.

APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION

Toward the end of the semester before the semester or summer session in which you expect to complete work for the degree, you must file an application for graduation (deadlines are typically May 1 for Fall graduation, December 1 for Spring graduation). If

you miss the deadline for submitting your graduation application, your name may not appear in the commencement program but you can still graduate as long as you submit the completed form by the last day of the term in which you intend to graduate.

The graduation application is facilitated through your LOUIE Student Center. Please view the OGPS's [Step-by-Step Guide](#) on how to submit your application.

A fee is required to apply for graduation. If you end up needing to withdraw your application due a change in your program of study or your term of graduation, you will have to pay the fee again, so be sure about your plans before you apply and pay the fee.

Questions about graduation can be directed to the OGPS at GradGraduation@nau.edu.

If you wish to attend commencement (the official graduation ceremony), be aware of the following:

- You may participate in commencement ceremonies for the fall or spring term if you anticipate that you will graduate in that term. If you anticipate graduating in the summer term, you are welcome to participate in the May commencement (before you will graduate) or the December commencement (after you have graduated). In addition, if you anticipate graduating in the fall or spring term and have made the necessary arrangements to participate in that commencement but then determine that you will not actually graduate until a subsequent term, you may still participate in the commencement ceremony as planned or you may delay your participation until the next commencement.
- You will need to obtain the appropriate gown, cap, tassel, and hood for the ceremony.
- As a master's graduate, you will be "hooded" in a separate ceremony held by the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences or the School of Communication. You will be notified of the time and place for this ceremony. You will generally be hooded by your advisor or, if your advisor is unavailable, but another member of the MACOM Graduate Faculty (preferably another member of your master's committee).
- Refer to the detailed information from the OGPS about [graduation and commencement](#).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

NAU's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) begins with the following overview of academic integrity and various violations thereof, all of which apply to students in the M.A. in Communication:

Academic integrity refers to honest and ethical conduct in all aspects of academic life. Integrity entails a firm adherence to a set of values, and the values most essential to an academic community are grounded in honesty with respect to all intellectual efforts of oneself and others. NAU expects every student to firmly adhere to a strong ethical code of academic integrity in all their scholarly pursuits. The primary attributes of academic integrity are honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and responsibility.

Integrity is expected of every student within the NAU community in all academic undertakings, regardless of venue (including but not limited to classroom (both in-person and virtual), laboratory, internships/externships, clinical practicum, clinics, paid positions, etc.) or medium (including but not limited to assignments, written work, data gathering, oral presentations, etc.). Academic integrity is expected not only in formal coursework settings but in all University relationships and interactions connected to the educational process, including the use of University resources.

All forms of academic deceit, such as plagiarism, cheating, collusion, falsification or fabrication of results or records; permitting work to be submitted by another; or inappropriately recycling work from one class to another constitutes academic misconduct that may result in serious disciplinary consequences. All students and faculty members are responsible for reporting suspected instances of academic misconduct.

Violations of academic integrity can result in, among other things, dismissal from the program. For more detailed information on types of violations, policies, processes, and consequences, see [NAU's Academic Integrity Policy](#).

DISMISSAL POLICIES

Criteria for Dismissal

A student may be recommended for dismissal by the MACOM program for any of the following reasons:

- A student has been placed on academic probation due to unsatisfactory grades and either (1) fails to develop an action plan, (2) fails to get an action plan approved by the MACOM program and the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, or (3) fails to fulfill the requirements of the action plan within the specified time frame. See the section on [academic probation](#), above.
- A student receives more than two grades of D or F.
- A student was admitted conditionally and has failed to meet the specified conditions (e.g., receive all As and Bs in their first two semesters).
- A student has violated [NAU's standards for academic integrity](#) on more than one occasion, even if the violations were relatively minor.
- A student has engaged in a single substantial violation of [NAU's standards for academic integrity](#) (e.g., plagiarized an entire major assignment in a class, falsification or fabrication of data for their thesis or project).
- any academic reason not addressed by other university policies or procedures.

Procedures for Dismissal

If a student meets one or more of the above criteria for potential dismissal, the MACOM Graduate Coordinator will convene a Dismissal Panel composed of three (3) members of

the MACOM Graduate Faculty. Typically, the Graduate Coordinator serves as one of those three members and chairs the panel, unless the Graduate Coordinator meets any criterion for exclusion from serving on the panel or has a perceived conflict of interest. Members of the panel should not be the instructor of a class or other activity in which any acts of academic integrity occurred if those acts are the reason (or partial reason) for the potential dismissal. The Graduate Coordinator will work with the Director of the School of Communication to assemble and charge the panel. The panel will review the relevant information (e.g., transcripts, probationary action plans, conditional admission requirements, reports of violations of academic integrity submitted by one or more faculty). The committee will convene, discuss the case, and decide whether a provisional decision to dismiss the student is warranted.

Once the MACOM program notifies a student of their recommendation for dismissal from a program, they will allow the student to present evidence that may influence or alter the dismissal recommendation. The student must supply this evidence within five (5) business days of the dismissal notification and this evidence must be reviewed by the dismissal panel before a final recommendation is forwarded to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGPS). The unit has up to five (5) business days after the student submits their evidence to make their final recommendation to the OGPS.

If the unit's decision is to uphold the dismissal recommendation, the unit must supply all review and/or informational materials submitted by the student with the final recommendation for dismissal. The recommendation for dismissal will come to the Associate Vice Provost of OGPS from the School of Communication's Director or the MACOM Graduate Coordinator.

The Associate Vice Provost of OGPS will review the materials and issue a final decision. If a student is dismissed from the program by the OGPS, a student may appeal this decision utilizing the process outlined in NAU's [Academic Appeal Policy and UGCHP - Graduate](#). Students will begin with "Step 3" in the process, submitting a written appeal to the OGPS Associate Vice Provost and supplying all information requested in Policy 100103. The student will also request a meeting with the OGPS Associate Vice Provost.

For more information on dismissal and appeals thereof, see [NAU's Dismissal – Graduate policy](#).

APPEALS AND GRIEVANCES

The following appeal and grievance procedures are available for you if the need arises.

Academic Appeals

A final course grade assigned by an instructor may be appealed by a student following the procedures defined in [NAU's Grade Appeals Policy](#).

For appeals of academic matters other than grades, dismissal, violations of NAU's Student Code of Conduct, violations of NAU's Academic Integrity Policies, research misconduct,

and issues that fall under NAU's Office of Equity and Access, refer to the [Academic Appeal Policy and University Graduate Committee Hearing Panel - Graduate](#).

Other Petitions and Appeals

Graduate students may petition for an exception to any academic, non-grade-related, graduate regulation for which no specific appeal or petition process exists. Petitions should be submitted, in writing, to the Associate Vice Provost of the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. When applicable, the student's advisor and unit chair/director (or their designee, such as the Graduate Coordinator) may endorse the petition letter. In some specific instances, utilizing the [Academic Appeal and University Graduate Committee Hearing Panel](#) is more appropriate. Students should contact the Associate Vice Provost of OGPS for clarification on which process to initiate.

Discrimination and Harassment

For issues related to discrimination and/or harassment, see [NAU's Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy](#).

Grievances

For other disagreements, complaints, misunderstandings, and grievances at Northern Arizona University, contact the [NAU Ombuds Office](#).

For additional assistance with any appeals or grievance procedures, contact the MACOM Graduate Coordinator, the Director of the School of Communication, the Associate Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, the Associate Vice Provost of the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, or the [NAU Ombuds Office](#).

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND TRAVEL AWARDS

Several sources of funding are available to graduate students in Communication at NAU.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships. For the 2024-25 academic year, the School of Communication has six teaching assistantships (GTAs) it can award each year, with an average of three openings each year. Each carries with it a stipend of approximately \$15,000 for a nine-month period and a waiver of tuition for the academic year. GTA positions involve teaching two sections of CST 111 Fundamentals of Public Speaking each semester. Two others involve assisting with courses in CMF (Creative Media and Film). The school provides orientation, guidance, and supervision for all GTAs, and all must take CST 503 Communication in Instruction as an elective in the earliest semester it is offered during their time as a GTA. Additionally, GTAs are bound to the guidelines established by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGPS) and published in the [Graduate Assistantship Policy Handbook](#).

Graduate Teaching Assistants are required to be enrolled in no fewer than 9 and no more than 12 units per semester. Assistantships are generally awarded for a full academic year only. Continuation of an assistantship from one semester to the next is contingent on satisfactory progress toward the degree, satisfactory teaching performance, and

maintenance of a 3.0 GPA. Satisfactory progress toward the degree is defined as including grades of 'B' or higher in each class as well as no incompletes. Additional information is available from the [Office of Graduate and Professional Studies](#) as well as from the MACOM Graduate Coordinator.

Other Assistantships. Other Graduate Assistantships (GAs) may also be available elsewhere in the university. Check the [OGPS web site for available "at large" GA positions](#) and contact the MACOM Graduate Coordinator for further information regarding Graduate Assistantships.

Tuition Waivers. The M.A. in Communication program has a limited number of in-state (resident) and out-of-state (non-resident) tuition waivers to offer to graduate students. Contact the MACOM Graduate Coordinator for information on how to be considered for a tuition waiver.

University Scholarships. The university has some scholarships available for graduate students, often with specific eligibility criteria. Check the [OGPS scholarships web page](#) for more information.

College Scholarships. The College of Social & Behavioral Sciences (SBS) has some scholarships available for graduate students, often with specific eligibility criteria. Check the [SBS Scholarships web page](#) for more information.

School Scholarships. The School of Communication has a limited number of scholarships for MA students in the Communication Studies emphasis, in competition with undergraduate students). For more information on the Klonda Lynn scholarship, application deadlines, and a link to the application system, see the [School of Communication's scholarship web page](#). Note that this scholarship is typically only available to returning NAU students (i.e., it is generally not available to incoming graduate students for their first year).

Travel Awards. Some funding may be available to support your travel to professional conferences to present your research or creative productions or to engage in travel related to your thesis or project research. NAU's Graduate Student Government (GSG), supported by fees paid by graduate students, offers small travel awards each semester; see the [GSG Travel and Research Awards web page](#). You may also inquire about possible school funding with the MACOM Graduate Coordinator or the Director of the School of Communication.

APPENDIX A: PREPARING A PROJECT PROPOSAL

A project proposal is a detailed description of what you plan to do in your project. Because of the wide range of types of projects that are appropriate for this degree, the content and structure of your proposals will vary. Work with your advisor to develop specific parameters for your proposal, using the following as an initial guide. In some cases the information in Appendix B regarding preparation of a prospectus will be relevant as well. In some cases (such as projects that are similar in scope and nature to a thesis), proposals should be approximately 15-30 pages length; in other cases (e.g., 3 unit projects, some projects whose primary component is a product such as a film, curriculum, or educational website) proposals may be as short as five (5) pages but overall would more commonly be 12-20 pages. Follow your advisor's guidance. More important than the number of pages is accomplishing the necessary parts of the process well enough to ensure a valid outcome that is well conceived and grounded in the existing literature and practices of the discipline(s) involved.

In general, a project proposal should detail the project's topic, focus, purpose/goals, audience(s), justification, use of existing theories or research, the process for doing so, products, timelines, and (if applicable) necessary resources. Project proposals should undergo revision to clarify and sharpen the descriptions, explanations, and justifications for everything from your topic to your specific methodology, process, and/or style. They should also be highly polished, follow proper English usage and academic writing conventions, and follow a specific academic style. They should have a title page and a list of references. No project proposal should lack a list of references and corresponding source citations in the body of the proposal, as all projects must be grounded in existing literature and/or practices in the relevant discipline(s).

Below is a list of main topics to be covered in a typical project proposal.

Topic and Focus

- What is the project about? What are the issues or questions to be addressed?
- What is the overall topic, case, or situation will your project focus on?
- What larger issues, topics, areas of study, methods, et cetera will the project involve?

Purpose/Goals

- What is the purpose of the project? What motivates the project?
- What is the desired outcome of the project? What is the product intended to accomplish? How will you judge its success and limitations?

Audience(s)

- For what audience or audiences is the project being created for?
- Are different elements of the project (e.g., a documentary film versus the accompanying written explanation and rationale) created for different audiences?
- How will the project (or different elements of it) be designed for those audience(s)?

Justification/Significance/Value

- Why is this a valuable project to do? Who could benefit from it and how? Why bother? Who cares?
- Will the project demonstrate the applicability of existing practices, research, methods, and/or theories?
- Will the project add to the existing literature and/or disciplinary practices in some way? (Note that this is not required of projects, but is possible.)

Review of Existing Practices, Methods, Theories, or Research ("Literature")

- What specific concepts, theories, and/or research are relevant to your project?
- What existing practices (styles, techniques, processes, research methods) will you use in the project? In what way? How are these relevant to your topic, focus, and purpose? What are the strengths and limitations of each?
- Why are your chosen styles, techniques, processes, theories, and/or research methods appropriate to your topic, purpose, and/or audiences? What are the strengths and limitations of each?

Process/Methodology

- Demonstrate how the project will be developed through a systematic, analytic process. What processes and methods will you use to enact your project?
- What primary research methods will be used (e.g., surveys, interviews, textual analysis)?
- Will the project involved be an application of existing research or theory? If so, which ones, to what, and how?

Product(s)

- Is the written component of the project the product (e.g., a research paper), or is there a distinct product or products (e.g., a workshop, communication campaign, an audio-visual production, a curriculum) that will be accompanied by a written explanation grounded in the relevant literature and disciplinary practices?

Timeline

- What is your anticipated timeline for each of the major steps in the process?
- What factors could affect this timeline (e.g., the process of submitting IRB paperwork and possible IRB revisions)?

Resources

- What resources (money, equipment, expertise, people, texts) will be necessary to complete the project?
- Do you have access to necessary resources? If not, what is your plan to do so?

APPENDIX B: PREPARING A PROSPECTUS (THESIS)

A prospectus provides a detailed discussion of the topic, focus, purpose, justification, relevant literature (existing theories and research), proposed research method (involving data collection and analysis), timelines, and (if applicable) resources needed for your proposed thesis research. Although less varied than projects, theses still involve a selection from a wide variety of research methods (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, and critical), paradigms (e.g., functionalist, interpretivist, critical) and purposes (e.g., prediction, control, theory-building, intersubjective understanding, evaluation) in the discipline, there is no single model for all types of research. Consult with your advisor and refer to the following two sets of guidelines as starting places.

A prospectus should have a title page and a list of references, and be prepared according to an academic style guide (e.g., APA or MLA). A prospectus should undergo revision to clarify and sharpen the descriptions, explanations, and justifications for everything from your topic to your specific focus, purpose, methodology, paradigm, et cetera. They should also be highly polished, follow proper English usage and academic writing conventions, and follow a specific academic style. Best practice is to access the [OGPS's Format Guidelines for Theses](#) and follow those from the beginning of your thesis, including the formatting of your prospectus.

Theses vary in length. Due to the nature of research method and presentation of data, some (not all!) quantitative theses could be as short as 45 pages while some qualitative and critical theses could reach 125 pages. More important than the number of pages is accomplishing the required parts of the research processes being employed to ensure a valid outcome and be grounded in existing literature and/or practices in the relevant discipline(s), method(s), and research area(s).

Below are two different guides for the development and content of a prospectus to use as starting points; discuss the content and presentation of your prospectus with your advisor.

Prospectus Guide #1

Topic/Focus/Scope

- What are the general topics and specific concepts, behaviors, texts, issues, et cetera to be covered by your research?

Literature Review

- Begin your literature review with a clear preview of the bodies of literature you will review or the main topics that will structure your review.
- Include theories and concepts of relevance to your study.
- Include specific studies of relevance to your own.
- Work to identify the scope, strengths, and weaknesses of existing research in order to identify gaps or limitations that your research will somehow fill in or improve upon.

Research Questions and/or Purpose Statement

- Develop specific, answerable questions to be addressed by your research (for quantitative or qualitative research) or a clear purpose statement (for qualitative or critical research). Be as specific as possible in developing your questions or purpose statement, both for the purposes of clarity and in order to develop a manageable focus for your proposed research.
- Use existing research and theories to help guide and justify the development of your questions/purpose.
- Be sure to clearly define the key terms in your research questions (rely on existing definitions whenever possible, or explain why you are redefining key terms).
- Critical/textual studies most often utilize a purpose statement as opposed to research questions per se, as do some qualitative studies.
- Some quantitative studies include hypotheses if there is sufficient existing research.

Research Methods

- What type(s) of method(s) will you use (quantitative, qualitative, critical)? Why?
- What specific methodology will you use to collect your data? Will you use survey questionnaires, interviews, naturalistic observation, participant-observation, experiments, et cetera? How? Why? Give specific examples related to your chosen method: for example, what existing measures will you use, what kinds of questions will you use on a questionnaire or in interviews, what kind of role will you adopt as a participant-observer, what procedures will you follow, in what settings will you observe, how will you design your experiment, how will you recruit/select your sample, how will you choose the text(s) you will analyze?
- What specific methodology will you use to analyze your data? For qualitative studies, will you use an etic or emic framework for coding qualitative data? For critical studies, what specific critical methodology (method of textual analysis) will you use for analyzing your text(s)?
- Are there good models for what you want to accomplish (purpose) and how (methods) in the existing literature?
- How will these methods help answer your research questions or address your purpose statement? Justify your choice of method.
- What limitations to your proposed study do you anticipate given your methods?
- If your proposed research involves human subjects, will you need to obtain explicit informed consent? Why or why not? What risks, if any, might be present for subjects as a result of their participation in your study? Will [IRB approval be required](#)? If you are using human subjects to collect data, why would IRB approval *not* be required?

Justification

- Why is the proposed research important and/or valuable? Why bother? Who cares?
- How will your research add to the existing body of knowledge on this topic?
- How is this research different (in focus, methodology, assumptions, et cetera) than previous research? If not, why not?

Timeline

- What is your anticipated timeline for each of the major steps in the process?
- What factors could affect this timeline (e.g., the process of submitting IRB paperwork and possible IRB revisions)?

Resources

- What resources (money, equipment, expertise, people, texts) will be necessary to complete the project?
- Do you have access to all necessary resources? If not, what is your plan to obtain such access?

Prospectus Guide #2

The prospectus is meant to serve as a “road map” for you and your committee. The following outline is meant to serve as a guide for developing your “road map.”

1. Research questions:

- Clearly identify the core questions that you are trying to answer in the study.
- What do you want to know and what do you want to teach the reader?
- Start by brainstorming: write down everything you are asking about the topic.
- Then, see if your questions fall into clusters of issues.
- Put these clusters into a priority listing, from most important to least important.
- Ask yourself, which questions must be answered to achieve my goal?
- Keep in mind that you are writing a thesis of *approximately* 75-125 pages and cannot answer all the questions that might arise around your topic.

2. Description, purpose, & significance of your project:

- Describe your project, including information on “who, what, where, when, and how.”
- State your purpose and your objectives.
- Explain how your project is related to *communication*.
- Address the “so-what” question: Why is this project important? Who is it important to? Why did you choose to work on it? You may want to consider how your project remedies the weaknesses in existing structures. And how is your project relevant to an existing community?

3. Review of the literature:

- Give an overview of the literature that you will draw on in your work.
- What has been written on your topic that is of relevance to your project?
- How have people/scholars/practitioners treated the problem you are now addressing?
- What have been the major shifts in thought or the trends in approaching the problem?
- How does your research contribute to the scholarly discussion? (e.g., does it extend or apply the discussion?)
- What have you already read and what do you still need to read to write your thesis?

4. Theoretical assumptions:

- What are the assumptions that underlie your work?
- For example, if you are writing about health care, you'll want to make it clear how you understand the idea of health and health care. Are you an advocate of holistic health? That's an assumption that guides your project; another way to talk about it is as a "frame."
- This section is about acknowledging the assumptions behind your project. You'll want to name the thinkers and approaches that have influenced your approach, both to the question at hand and to the overarching topic. An approach to health care issues might, for example, assume both metaphysical holism and a feminist critique of power and hierarchy.

5. Method:

- How will you go about finding the answers to your research questions?
- Will you interview people? (e.g., if so, how? In-person, on Zoom, etc.? How will you create the questions? Will you record the interviews? Make verbatim transcripts, or use a paid-for service?)
- Survey people? (e.g., what are the survey items/questions? Did you create them; if so, why are they appropriate? Are they from extant survey instruments?)
- Analyze written documents? If so, how (e.g., conversation analysis, thematic analysis). Then, describe those steps for that method.
- Develop a creative project? Develop a curriculum? What is your outcome and how will you achieve it?

Important Note: If you are planning to do any work with human or animal subjects, you must receive approval for your project from the [Institutional Review Board](#). This approval must be secured well in advance of your actual research—before ANY data can be collected. [Information and applications are on the web.](#)

6. Bibliography/important references:

7. Thesis committee/status/timeline:

- Who are you considering for your thesis committee? (Or who has already agreed to be on your committee?)
- Develop a detailed timeline to degree completion.
- Indicate when you expect to finish major portions of the thesis and when you expect to defend your thesis to your committee.

APPENDIX C: FORMAT FOR PROJECT TITLE PAGE

TITLE OF PROJECT IN ALL CAPS:

SUBTITLE OF PROJECT IF ANY

By Chris O. Student

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
in Communication

Northern Arizona University

May 2024

Project Supervisory Committee:

Richard A. Rogers, Ph.D., Chair

Nora Stefani, Ph.D.

Janna Jones, Ph.D.

APPENDIX D: COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

600-level courses are for graduate students only. Some 500-level courses are sometimes co-convened with 400-level undergraduate courses. Graduate students in co-convened courses are expected to complete work beyond what undergraduates complete, as detailed in the 500-level syllabus. Graduate students typically may not use the 400-level version of a co-convened course towards their program of study; they must take the 500-level version if it is available.

The courses listed below are divided into three types: regular courses, independent/directed studies, and thesis/project units. Note that our courses are under two prefixes: COM (Communication) and CST (Communication Studies).

Regular Courses

- COM 525 *Mass Communication and Human Behavior.* 3 units. Studies mass communication theories and effects, messages, audience behavior, and the behavioral concomitants of mass communication. Emphasizes the key research and methodologies for studying mass communication and human behavior as well as theoretical perspectives. Sometimes co-convened with COM 425. Letter grade only.
- COM 535 *Documentary Skills and Storytelling Practicum.* 3 units. In this documentary production crash course students will learn to tell stories in three different mediums: audio, photography, and digital filmmaking. They will produce three professional level documentary stories over the course of the semester, one in each format. Letter grade only.
- COM 540 *Introduction to Science Communication.* 1 unit. Scientists in many disciplines are increasingly called upon to explain and interpret their work to nonspecialists ranging from journalists and policymakers to the general public. This 1-unit seminar will allow students in a variety of disciplines to experience an intensive, hands-on introduction to effective strategies for communicating science. Letter grade only.
- COM 541 *Data Metaphors and Visualization.* 1 unit. Graphical displays of quantitative information take on many forms to help us understand and communicate both data and models. This course will serve to introduce students to the most common forms of scientific graphical displays (data metaphors), uses, and misuses. The class will also introduce principles of visual perception, color and design theory, and best practices for data metaphor development and visualization. Letter grade only.
- COM 542 *Ethics and Strategies in Science Communication.* 1 unit. Examination of statistical significance, the use of math skills to "translate" numbers into forms that contribute to understanding, and how quantitative reasoning tools can facilitate ethical and accurate science communication. Students learn the challenges of communicating about controversial topics in science

and the role cultural considerations play in determining how stories are researched and told. Letter grade only.

- COM 545 *Writing Science*. 3 units. Intensive writing practice aimed at improving writing skills in professional and lay settings. The class focuses on writing techniques, story structure, and effective revision. Written products will range from short news articles to longer features, press releases, social media outreach efforts, scripts for radio and/or video, and informal science communication products such as museum or virtual displays. Letter grade only.
- COM 546 *Social Media Analytics*. 3 units. This course deepens students' understanding of online communication processes and innovative applications of social media engagement across major industries and establishes shared foundational concepts for advertising and public relations: branding (and rebranding), innovation, and the critical need to develop a customer-centric model. It strengthens social media analytical skills needed for creating data-driven campaigns and integrates the growing research of social listening, measurements and evaluations, and audience engagement. The class offers hands-on experience with rigorous theoretical underpinning in a computer lab environment. Sometimes co-convened with STR 446. Letter grade only.
- COM 550 *Documentary Research Practicum*. 3 units. Graduate students work with the course professor in researching, proposing, and creating a professional documentary project. Letter grade only. May be repeated for up to 9 units.
- COM 560 *Crisis Communication*. 3 units. Provides a comprehensive understanding of the nature of crises. The course examines the role public relations professionals play in helping corporate, nonprofit, government organizations and individuals to manage and find success. It covers distinctive areas of crisis research and practice -- prevention, preparation, recognition, response and post-crisis concerns. Sometimes co-convened with PR 460. Letter grade only.
- COM 599 *Contemporary Developments*. 3 units. Examines recent trends and investigations in a selected area of a particular field of study. Letter grade only. Variable/special topics course. May be repeated under different topics. Example topics: Documentary Film and Social Change, Cult Films.
- COM 600 *Communication Theory and Application*. 3 units. Reviews the nature, history and types of communication theory with emphasis upon the use of theory in analysis and problem-solving. Letter grade only.
- COM 601 *Graduate Study in Communication*. 3 units. Focuses on role and development of research in communication studies, including history and status of contemporary scholarship. Letter grade only.

- COM 602 *Critical Methods in Communication*. 3 units. Survey of methods of textual analysis, including rhetorical, media, and cultural criticism; focused on developing skills in the application of critical methods to verbal and visual artifacts and effective written expression of communication criticism. Letter grade only.
- COM 603 *Qualitative Research Methods in Communication*. 3 units. Graduate level class in qualitative research methods, focusing on contemporary problems and practices of participant observation, interviewing and ethnographic inquiry, and developing background and skills to conduct qualitative research. Letter grade only.
- COM 604 *Quantitative Research Methods in Communication*. 3 units. Students will learn the purpose, application, and process of quantitative research methods in the field of Communication. Letter grade only.
- COM 605 *Introduction to Documentary Issues, Theories, and Methods*. 3 units. Graduate level class in learning how to see the world from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives. Includes a range of documentary work by photographers, filmmakers, oral historians, folklorists, radio documentarians, and writers stressing aesthetic, scholarly, and ethical considerations involved in representing other people and cultures. Letter grade only.
- COM 698 *Seminar in Communication Theory*. 3 units. Reading and discussion on selected advanced topics in communication theory. Topics vary each semester. May be repeated for up to 9 units with different topics. Letter grade only. Example topics: Communication and Law, Environmental Risk Communication, Ethnographic Film, Public Culture, Representations and Appropriations of Native American Cultures, Travel and Tourism, Public Art.
- CST 503 *Communication in Instruction*. 3 units. Cognitive and experiential understanding of practices, issues, and trends related to the communication process in instructional settings. Includes strategies for managing instructional communication more effectively. Letter grade only.
- CST 524 *Gender and Communication*. 3 units. Surveys communication theories related to the construction of gender, the relationship between gender and contemporary social issues, and research on gender differences in various communication contexts. Usually co-convenes with CST 424. Letter grade only.
- CST 560 *Rhetorical Theory*. 3 units. Traditional and contemporary theories about public communication. Emphasizes evolution and critical analysis of theories. Usually co-convenes with CST 460. Letter grade only.

- CST 565 *American Political Communication*. 3 units. Historical and critical study of the role communication has played in American history. Usually co-convenes with CST 465. Letter grade only.
- CST 568 *Communication, Technology, and Society*. 3 units. Examination of the social implications of communication technologies historically and in the context of contemporary social issues. Letter grade only.
- CST 571 *Topics in Environmental Communication*. 3 units. Each section of this course will offer an in-depth exploration of a specialized topic within the field of Environmental Communication. The course will explore theory, research, and real-world exemplars within the specialized topic that is covered during the semester. Often co-convenes with CST 471. Letter grade only.
- CST 572 *Organizational Communication*. 3 units. Explores theoretical and practical foundations of organizational communication including culture, networks, ethics, and crisis communication. Usually co-convenes with CST 472. Letter grade only.
- CST 575 *Health Communication*. 3 units. Theoretical and practical study of communication strategies used to influence individuals and communities. Focuses on physician-patient communication, health campaigns, risk communication, health in media, and telemedicine. Sometimes co-convenes with CST 475. Letter grade only.
- CST 577 *Mediation and Conflict Management*. 3 units. Communication strategies in the theory and practice of alternative dispute resolution, including interpersonal conflict, mediation, and negotiation. Usually co-convenes with CST 477. Letter grade only.
- CST 599 *Contemporary Developments*. 3 units. Variable/special topics course. Example topics: Social Media and Relationships, Communication Ethics
- CST 623 *Intercultural Communication Theory*. 3 units. Provides an overview of research in intercultural communication, including quantitative and qualitative research, theories and concepts, and critical approaches. Emphasis is given to both early development of the field as well as the latest trends. Letter grade only.

Individualized/Directed Studies

Individual/directed studies require the prior consent of a faculty member. No more than 6 units of these courses can be applied toward the 36 unit requirement for the degree.

- COM 685 *Graduate Research*. 1-6 units. Design and completion of original research under the direction of a graduate advisor. Department consent required. Letter grade only. May be repeated for up to 6 units.

- COM 697 *Independent Study.* 1-3 units. Individualized directed study on selected topics. Department consent required. Letter grade only. No repeat limit. Work with the faculty member who has agreed to direct your independent study to complete the [Independent Study Proposal form](#), then email the completed form to the MACOM Graduate Coordinator, who will sign as the unit director's designee and submit the form to get you registered.
- CST 685 *Graduate Research.* 1-6 units. Design and completion of original research under the direction of a graduate advisor. Department consent required. May be repeated for up to 6 units.
- CST 697 *Independent Study.* 1-3 units. Individualized directed study on selected topics. Department consent required. Letter grade only. No repeat limit. Work with the faculty member who has agreed to direct your independent study to complete the [Independent Study Proposal form](#), then email the completed form to the MACOM Graduate Coordinator, who will sign as the unit director's designee and submit the form to get you registered.

Thesis and Project Units

These units are for completion of either the thesis or project. Enrollment requires permission of your permanent advisor (your master's committee chair). Consult with your advisor about how many units to register for in any term. Your advisor can initiate the process of getting you enrolled in these courses.

- COM 690 Communication Project. 1-6 units (a minimum of 3 units must be completed for the project option). Application of research design and critical inquiry in order to solve a communication problem. Department consent required. Pass-fail only. May not exceed 6 units.
- COM 699 Thesis. Department consent required. Pass-fail only. May not exceed 6 units toward degree requirements. No repeat limit. 1-6 units (a minimum of 6 units must be completed for the thesis option).

APPENDIX E: GRADUATE FACULTY IN COMMUNICATION

Marie Baker-Ohler
(Com Studies)

Teaching Professor
B.A., Business & Organizational Communication, The University of Akron
M.A., Communication, The University of Akron
Ph.D., Communication and Rhetorical Studies, Duquesne University
Research interests include ethics, interpersonal communication, organizational communication

Laura Camden
(Doc Studies)

Professor
B.S., Journalism/Photojournalism, University of Texas at Austin
M.A., Photojournalism, University of Texas at Austin
Creative and research interests include international photojournalism, American studies ethnography, editorial photography

Bill Carter
(Doc Studies)

Associate Professor of Practice
B.A., Political Science, University of California, Santa Cruz
B.A., Economics, University of California
Creative interests include documentary and fiction filmmaking and screenwriting, photography, journalism

Ashleigh Day
(Com Studies)

Assistant Professor
B.A., Communication, University of Arizona
M.A., Applied Communication, Northern Arizona University
Ph.D., Communication, Wayne State University
Research interests center around applied communication regarding (environmental) crisis, risk, and associated health implications; interpretivist perspectives; qualitative and mixed-method designs

Peter Friederici
(Science Com)

Professor
B.A., Comparative Literature, Northwestern University
M.A., Environmental Education, Lesley University
Research and teaching interests include food systems, science writing, environmental reporting, climate change communication, nature writing

Amy Hitt
(Strat Com)

Associate Professor of Practice
B.S., Radio & Television, Arkansas State University
M.S., Mass Communication, Arkansas State University
M.S., Psychology, Divine Mercy University
Research and teaching interests include strategic communication, mass communication, human behavior, polarization, relationships, positive psychology, archetypes

Janna Jones
(Com Studies &
Doc Studies)

Professor
B.A., English, Iowa State University
M.Ed, English Education, University of South Florida
Ph.D., Communication, University of South Florida
Research interests include cultural and media studies, cultural and critical theory, cultural preservation and the archive, qualitative research methods

Seonwoo (Sun) Kim
(Strat Com)

Assistant Professor
B.A., PR and Advertising, Soongsil University
M.A., School of Media & Communication, Korea University
M.S., Analytics, Louisiana State University
Ph.D., Mass Communication, Louisiana State University
Research interests include advertising, public relations, emerging media, business analytics, natural language processing, computer vision, network analysis

Kurt Lancaster
(Com Studies &
Doc Studies)

Professor
B.A., Principia College
M.A., University of Maine, Orono
Ph.D., Performance Studies, New York University
Research and creative interests include documentary and fiction film (production and theoretical elements), cinematography, visual storytelling, performance studies, fan cultures

Jerome Mahaffey
(Com Studies)

Associate Teaching Professor
B.S., Communication Studies, Arizona State University
M.A., Speech Communication, Syracuse University
Ph.D., Communication Arts, University of Memphis
Research and teaching interests include rhetorical theory and practice, political and religious rhetoric, organizational communication, nonverbal communication, conflict and mediation

Jermaine Martinez
(Com Studies)

Associate Teaching Professor
B.A., Liberal Studies, Grand Valley State University
M.A., Communication, Illinois State University
Ph.D., Speech Communication, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Research and teaching interests include rhetorical criticism and theory; communication theory and philosophy; media ecology; interpersonal communication; rhetoric of moods, emotions, and mental illness; autobiographical accounts of depression and suicide; social media and mood

Mark Neumann
(Com Studies
& Doc Studies)

Professor
B.A., Central Connecticut State University
M.A., Ph.D., Communication, University of Utah
Research interests include cultural and media studies,
documentary studies, qualitative research methods, amateur
film, tourism

Brian Rackham
(Com Studies)

Associate Professor of Practice
B.I.S., Organizational Studies, Arizona State University
Ph.D., Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State
University
Creative and research interests include future of journalism,
user generated content, mass communication, multimedia and
broadcast journalism, social media

Richard Rogers
(Com Studies)

Professor
B.A., Humboldt State University
M.S., Ph.D., Communication, University of Utah
Research interests include critical/cultural studies, critical
rhetorical studies, critical methods (textual analysis),
environmental communication, ecocriticism, gender and
feminist studies, intercultural communication, media criticism,
representations of indigenous cultures, cultural appropriation

Madrone Schutten
(Com Studies)

Professor
B.A., Northern Arizona University
M.A., University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Ph.D., Communication, University of Utah
Research interests include new social movements,
environmental communication, gender studies/feminist theory,
critical/qualitative methods

Nora Stefani
(Com Studies)

Assistant Teaching Professor
B.A., Psychology, Western Washington University
M.S., Experimental Psychology, Central Washington University
Ph.D., Communication, Washington State University
Research interests include beautyism, body image, feminist
theory, media effects, interpersonal communication, fandom

Janice M. Sweeter
(Strategic Com)

Associate Professor of Practice
B.A., Organizational Communication, Arizona State University
M.S., Public Relations, Boston University
Ph.D., Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State
University
Research and teaching Interests include advertising, public
relations, new media, social media, transformational leadership,
strategic alliances

Jon Leon Torn
(Com Studies)

Professor
B.S., Radio-Television-Film, University of Texas at Austin
M.A., Communication Studies, California State University,
Northridge
Ph.D., Communication Studies (Rhetoric and Public Culture),
Northwestern University
Research interests include media theory and practice, rhetoric
and public culture

Jiun-Yi (Jenny) Tsai
(Strategic Com)

Associate Professor
B.A., Radio and Television, National Chengdu University
M.A., Mass Communication, University of Florida
Ph.D., Mass Communication, University of Wisconsin—
Madison
Research interests include risk and health communication,
media processes and effects, local news innovation, digital
media analytics and user engagement, quantitative research
methods

Sarah Walker
(Com Studies)

Assistant Teaching Professor
B.A., Communication Studies, Minnesota State University
M.S., Communication Studies, South Dakota State University
Ph.D., Communication Studies, Wayne State University
Research and teaching interests include religious rhetoric,
LGBTQ+ rhetoric, political discourse, argumentation,
persuasion, constitutive and public rhetorical theory,
organizational persuasion, critical/cultural studies

Zhan (Jen) Xu
(Strategic Com)

Associate Professor
M.A., Communication, University of Southern California
Ph.D., Communication, University of Connecticut
Research Interests include campaigns and interventions using
new media technologies, community-engaged interventions,
social media analytics, and quantitative research methods

APPENDIX F: HELPFUL ONLINE RESOURCES AND EMAIL ADDRESSES

Useful NAU Websites:

[M.A. in Communication Program](#)

[NAU Academic Catalog](#)

[Office of Graduate & Professional Studies](#) (aka the “Graduate College”)

[OGPS Forms Index](#)

[OGPS Graduate Assistantships and Tuition Waivers](#)

[OGPS Graduation Information](#)

OGPS Graduation [Step-by-Step Guide](#)

[OGPS Program of Study Repository](#)

[OGPS Scholarships Information](#)

[OGPS Thesis & Dissertation Information](#)

[Graduate Student Government \(GSG\)](#)

[GSG Travel & Research Awards](#)

[NAU's Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#)

[NAU Ombuds Office](#)

Cline Library, [Communication & Mass Media Complete database](#)

Cline Library subject-specific assistance: [Contact your subject specialist](#)

NOTE: For most classes and theses/projects, select Communication Studies. For classes and theses/projects specifically in Strategic Communication, select Communication Studies or Strategic Communication.

Useful NAU Email Addresses:

MACOM Graduate Coordinator: comgrad@nau.edu

Office of Graduate and Professional Studies: GradCollegeOffice@nau.edu

Graduate Assistantships & Tuition Waivers: GATW@nau.edu

Graduation: GradGraduation@nau.edu

Petitions, Transfer Credit, and Academic Probation: GradSuccess@nau.edu

Theses and Dissertations: ETD@nau.edu

Graduate Student Government: GSG@nau.edu

NAU Ombuds Office: ombuds.office@nau.edu

Online Style Guides:

[APA Style Guide](#)

[MLA Style Guide](#)

[Chicago Manual of Style](#)