SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

The School of Communication
Graduate Handbook
2024-2025

WELCOME TO GRADUATE STUDIES IN COMMUNICATION

Welcome New Graduate Students!

We are delighted that you have selected San Diego State University for your master's degree in Communication. We look forward to working and learning with you. I know that you will have a challenging and enriching experience in our program.

Graduate school is an exciting adventure. I hope that you will find your time here both personally and professionally rewarding. Our faculty and staff work very hard to create a learning environment in which our students can thrive. As in life, you will ultimately take from our program what you put in. I encourage you to take advantage of the resources around you, including coursework, collaborative relationships with faculty and peers, colloquia presentations, campus events, professional conferences, and SoCaL (The Society for Communication and Leadership) social events. Your time here will inevitably seem to fly by, and I want for you all to leave with a wealth of memories and experiences.

This *Graduate Handbook* is designed as a reference guide for your two-year program. The purpose of the *Graduate Handbook* is to provide answers to many of the questions you may have about graduate studies in communication at SDSU. For all **official** statements of the University policies and practices, see University Catalog and College of Graduate Studies (hereafter referred to as the Graduate Studies) for information, announcements, and deadlines: https://grad.sdsu.edu/current-students. Although we make every effort to ensure you receive the most up-to-date information possible, please be sure to look at the University Catalog information for your year of admission, check emails from gra@sdsu.edu, and consult deadlines for master's students for the applicable term: https://grad.sdsu.edu/announcements-and-deadlines.

This handbook provides many of the answers that you will need, but you are in no way limited to what's contained in this document. Feel free to contact me if you have questions or need guidance. Similarly, you will find the faculty willing to talk or help in almost any regard, and the senior graduate students can be a good resource as well. It is important for you to have all of the information you need in order to map out your time here. If there is something that I can help with, please reach out to me. Email is the best way to reach me at yea-wen.chen@sdsu.edu.

Best wishes for an amazing new academic year of discovery, learning, and growth! I am so glad that you have joined us.

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Disclaimer**:** The *Graduate Handbook* represents the best available summary of policies and procedures for graduate studies in communication, as approved by the Graduate Committee. However, the *College of Graduate Studies* and *University Catalog* provides the University's official position on all issues related to graduate studies at SDSU. In any instance where this *Handbook* differs from the official policies of the University, the *Handbook* is in error, unless prior arrangements have been officially established. In regard to policies specific to the School of Communication, the School reserves the right to alter and/or interpret policy described in this *Handbook* as circumstances dictate, and through due process of decision-making by the Graduate Committee, the Director of Graduate Studies, and/or the Director and faculty of the School of Communication. In the event of substantive changes, reasonable efforts will be made to inform students affected by said policy changes in a timely manner.

School of Communication: http://communication.sdsu.edu
University Catalog: https://catalog.sdsu.edu
College of Graduate Studies: https://grad.sdsu.edu/

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with Dr. Brian H. Spitzberg, Dr. Patricia Geist-Martin, Dr. Valerie Renegar, and graduate assistants. It takes a village!

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San Diego State University: The School of Communication

ABOUT THE SDSU SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

College of Professional Studies and Fine Arts
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San Diego State University
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San Diego, CA 92182-4560
Telephone: (619) 594-8512; **Fax:** (619) 594-6246
http://communication.sdsu.edu/

About the School

The School of Communication is an academic unit within the College of Professional Studies and Fine Arts (PSFA). The School of Communication has approximately 800 undergraduate majors, and about 50 graduate students. The distinguished faculty includes approximately 10 professors. The university is the flagship of the 23 campuses in the California State University system, the largest higher education system in the country. In addition to undergraduate and ungraduated academic programs, the School of Communication houses the SDSU Forensics, the Center for Communication, Health, & the Public Good, and the Institute for Dialogue and Social Justice. Recently, US News and Word report named SDSU as the top small research program in the nation. Also, the SDSU School of Communication is consistently ranked as one of the top ten MA programs in North America by Eduniversal, an independent Masters ranking institution.

Core Values

Advance KNOWLEDGE: We value the discovery, diffusion, & advancement of communication scholarship. This value includes inspiration of faculty, students, and our broader communities through knowledge generation & innovation.
Promote FAIRNESS, RESPECT, & JUSTICE: We value respectful dialogue, sound argument & deliberation. This value includes promoting compassion, diversity, and social justice.
Foster RELATIONSHIPS: We value building and maintaining relationships. This value includes creating community & understanding through collaboration.
Enhance the PUBLIC GOOD: We value utilizing communication scholarship for the public good.

Vision Statement

The School of Communication envisions sustained excellence in advancing communication scholarship, promoting social justice, fostering relationships, and enhancing the public good. We enact this vision through inspired teaching, innovative collaborative research, and impactful community engagement.

Mission Statement

Grounded in our Core Values and guided by our Vision, the School of Communication Mission is to achieve scholarly, instructional, and community IMPACT through:

Innovating communication teaching and research;
Mentoring in the communication research process;
Partnering with others in educational, research, institutional, and community contexts;
Asking questions, Acknowledging issues, and Assessing answers that advance the discipline;
Communicating this mission across contexts;
Transforming teaching and research into communicative excellence and Translating our work for the public good.

Diversity and Inclusion Statement

The SDSU School of Communication is a community of communication scholars and teachers committed to respectful interaction and the essential equality of all humans irrespective of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, immigration status, and nationality. These values compel us to support our Black, Latinx, LGBTQ, BIPOC colleagues, students, and community members who have historically been disenfranchised by specific policies, discourses and laws. In these efforts, we directly denounce white supremacy, misogyny, heteronormativity, and systemic anti-Black racism in the plethora of ways it emerges. We are committed to working together to eliminate demeaning and dehumanizing treatments of all persons, while recognizing that racism affects people of color in different and intersectional ways.

In our efforts to make progress toward these goals, we have developed the Institute for Dialogue and Social Justice, which seeks to develop a culture defined by redressing direct and indirect forms of social and economic injustice and promoting alternative vocabularies, practices, and policies that enhance the potential for all people to live healthy, safe, full, viable, and meaningful lives. We are also diversifying the faculty and student population, we house the debate and forensics team, and the Center for Communication, Health, and the Public Good. Graduate and undergraduate students can also work one-on-one with faculty in mentoring roles, such as the Research Apprentice Program, that can improve retention and allow them to pursue their research objectives. While we recognize that we have a long road ahead of us in pursuing equity, we commit to developing opportunities for inclusion in consultation with students and faculty in order to close the equity gaps that exist.

We are committed to translating these values to behaviors promoting positive social change in our personal and professional lives. In classroom and educational environments, we will be proactive and transparent in our attempts to promote trusting relationships in the School of Communication and work towards building a network of anti-racist teacher-scholars, activists, and community members.

2024-2025 GRADUATE CALENDAR AND DEADLINES

See the Graduate Studies for important announcements and deadlines as dates and SDSU procedures may change: https://grad.sdsu.edu/announcements-and-deadlines. If you are a thesis student, please also check thesis submission and publication deadlines with Montezuma Publishing at http://www.montezumapublishing.com/sdsuthesisdissertation#thesis-deadline.

Fall Semester 2024

Mon, Aug 19	GTA Orientation starts in the School of Communication
Thurs or Fri, Aug 15 or 16	New Graduate Student Orientation: University-wide (Optional - $324 in fee)
Mon, Aug 26	First day of classes
Mon, Sept 2	Labor Day. Faculty/Staff holiday. Campus closed.
Mon, Sept 9	Last day to apply for Fall 2024 graduation Schedule adjustment deadline ("ADD/DROP Deadline": last day to add/drop classes, or withdraw from university)
Fri, Sept 6	**DUE:** Comprehensive Exam Request Form (via Canvas Quiz) OR Thesis Chair Designation Form (via Canvas Quiz) to the Director of Graduate Studies
Fri, Sept 27	1st Comps Anticipation & Prep (CAP) Class 12-2:00 @ COM 209
Fri, Oct 25, 3:45 p.m.	Thesis Submission Deadline (by 3:45 pm, strict): Final day for submitting thesis with processing fee to Montezuma Publishing for Fall 2023 graduation in December
Fri, Nov 1	2nd Comps Anticipation & Prep (CAP) Class 12-2:00 @ COM 209
Fri, Nov 11	Veterans Day. Faculty/Staff holiday. Campus closed.
Wed, Nov 27	No classes will be held, but campus will remain open.
Thurs-Fri, Nov 28-29	Thanksgiving recess. Faculty/Staff holiday. Campus closed.
Fri, Dec 6, 4:00 p.m.	**Due:** Chairs of Comprehensive Exam Committees submit comps questions to the Director of Graduate Studies
Fri, Dec 6, 4:00 p.m.	For Spring 2024 graduation. **DUE to School of Communication (via Director of Graduates Studies)**: (a) Thesis proposals (10 pages or more) and abstracts with cover sheet signed by all three members of the thesis committee. BEFORE this date, thesis students MUST submit their full proposal to all committee members, and arrange and hold a thesis proposal defense. (b) Fill out the Thesis Committee Approval Form from Graduate Studies, and email the PDF form to the Director of Graduate Studies.
Wed, Dec 11	Last day of classes before final examinations
Thurs-Wed, Dec 12-18	Final Examinations
Fri, Dec 13, 3:45 p.m.	Thesis Publication Deadline (by 3:45 pm, strict): Thesis review process, including publishing, must be completed on this date at Montezuma Publishing. Applicants for graduation missing the final deadline will be automatically evaluated for graduation in future terms.

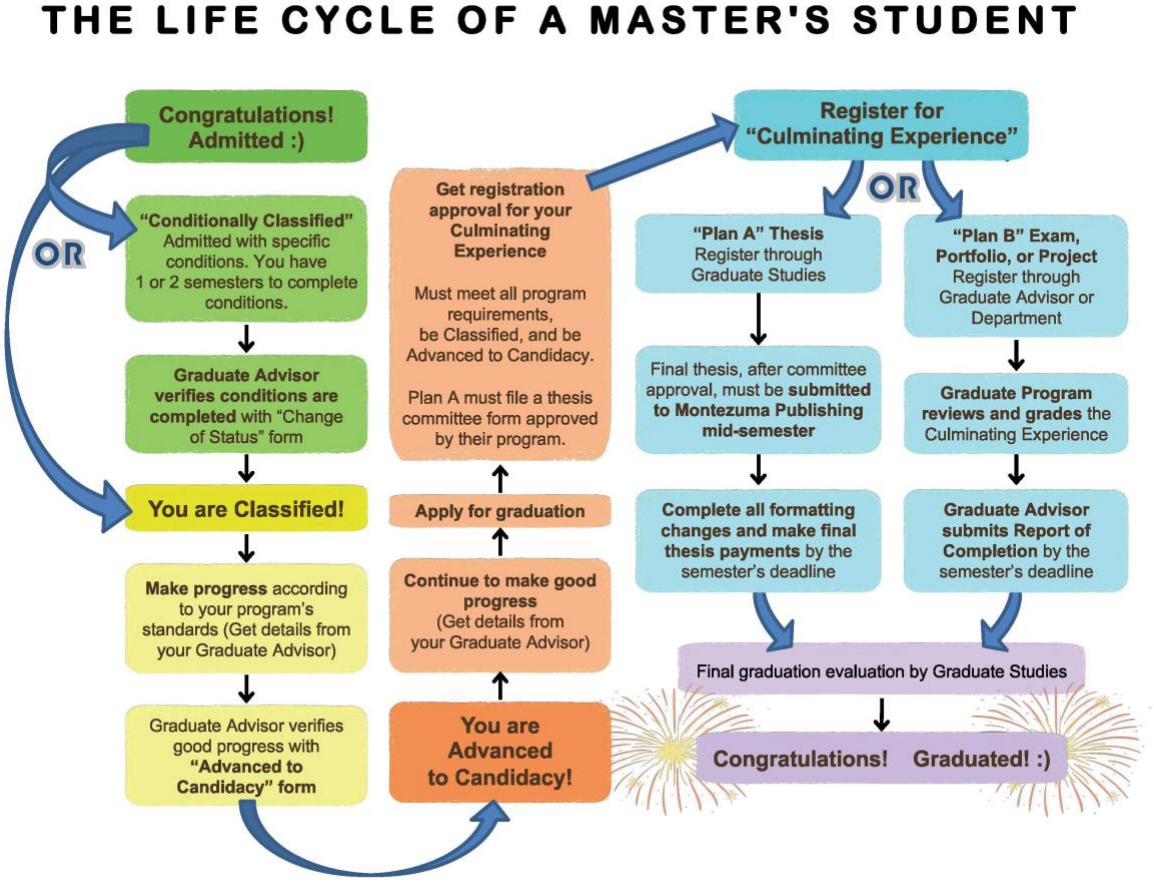
Dec 24-27	Winter recess. Faculty/Staff holiday. Campus closed.
Fri, Dec 20, 12 p.m.	Thesis Submission Deadline: Final day for submitting thesis for review without enrolling in 799B (by 3:45 pm, strict). If you submit your thesis with processing fee to Montezuma Publishing for thesis review on this deadline, you will not have to re-enroll in Thesis 799B for the following semester, but you must re-apply for graduation. Note that your thesis must meet the following minimum requirements: All mandatory preliminary pages must be filled out (Title page, Signature page, Copyright page, Abstract, Table of Contents, List of Figures/Tables if applicable); The approved style guide must be used for all citations and references; as a single Word Document or PDF.
Tues, Dec 31	Last day of Fall semester. Grades due from instructors, 11 p.m.
Wed, Jan 1	New Year's Day. Faculty/Staff holiday. Campus closed.

Spring Semester 2025

For graduation information, see the Graduate Studies or Registrar website. For thesis submission deadlines, see the Montezuma Publishing website.

Tues, Jan 14	**Comprehensive Exams**, 9 a.m.-12 p.m. @ COM 209
Thurs, Jan 16	First day of Spring semester
Mon, Jan 20	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Campus closed.
Tues, Jan 21	First day of classes
Mon, Feb 3	Spring 2025 Schedule adjustment ("add/drop") deadline **Last day to apply for May and August 2025 graduation**
Feb 4-Mar 14	Oral Defenses for Comprehensive Exams
Fri, Mar 14	Re-Take Comprehensive Exams, 9 a.m.-12 p.m. @ COM 209
Fri, Mar 28, 3:45 p.m.	**Thesis Submission Deadline**: Submitting your thesis to Montezuma Publishing (MP) by this deadline guarantees that MP will review your thesis and return it to you for corrections, if necessary, at least one week prior to the Publication deadline. Theses that are resubmitted for review will be given priority status but still require a full review. Meeting this deadline for thesis review allows you to have the best possibility for graduation during the current semester.
Mon, Mar 31	Cesar Chavez Day. Campus closed.
Mar 31 - April 4	Spring Break
Thurs, May 1	**Last day** for Oral Defenses of Comprehensive Exams in School of Communication
Thurs, May 8	Comprehensive Exam Decisions DUE to Graduate Studies
Thurs, May 8	Last day of classes
Fri-Thurs, May 9-15	Final Examinations
Fri, May 16, 3:45 p.m.	**Thesis Publication Deadline:** Your thesis must be reviewed and approved, by the 3:45 pm deadline, with all fees paid for publishing the library requirements and any required department

	copies in order to graduate during the current semester. Students missing this final deadline will be required to reapply for graduation for the term in which they expect to graduate. Be advised the initial review can take up to 3-4 weeks.
Fri-Sun, May 16-18	SDSU Commencement
May 22, 3:45 p.m.	**Thesis Submission Deadline:** If you submit your thesis by 3:45pm on this deadline, you will not have to re-enroll in Thesis 799B for the following semester, but you must re-apply for graduation. Note that your thesis must meet the following minimum requirements: All mandatory preliminary pages must be filled out (Title page, Signature page, Copyright page, Abstract, Table of Contents, List of Figures/Tables if applicable); The department approved style guide must be used for all citations and references; Your thesis must be in a single Word Document or PDF.
Thurs, May 22	Last day of Spring semester. Grades due from instructors, 11 p.m.



Credit: SDSU Graduate Studies

Chapter

1

Getting Started

GETTING STARTED

Success as a graduate student is a result of dedicated work, good research, and organization. It is important to utilize the resources available to you in order to progress through the program at the rate you choose. Most students complete the program in 4 or 5 semesters (usually two academic years and the summer between them). If this is your aim, it is important to begin planning with that goal in mind.

Meet with your Temporary Advisor

At the beginning of the semester, each new student was assigned a Temporary Advisor. Please take the time to meet with this faculty member in the first few weeks of the semester to get acquainted and discuss your plans. Your temporary advisor can answer questions, suggest avenues of research, recommend courses, or help steer students to an appropriate advisor for the comprehensive exam or thesis. See Graduate Faculty in the appendix for a list of communication faculty members who you can consider, approach, and ask to serve as your advisor (usually in the second semester of your graduate program).

Meet with the Director of Graduate Studies

While the Director of Graduate Studies is always available to answer questions, all students should schedule a meeting in the second semester to review their progress toward graduation. Graduate students are responsible for conducting a Degree Evaluation. This is an online tool available via my.SDSU to make sure your coursework and culminating activity (comps or thesis) are on file with Graduate Studies. Degree Evaluation maintains a list of all the classes completed and intends to complete and organizes them based on the MA Degree requirements. See Degree Evaluation Student User Guide. This system replaced the former Program of Study (POS) system.

An important form to be aware of as students move from Year 1 to 2 is the Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirements (PAAR). PAAR is one of the graduate student e-forms that students can initiative and submit. ALL thesis students will have to complete a PAAR to change from Plan B (comps) to Plan A (thesis). Also, any student who requests a deviation from requirements in the University Catalog will also submit a PAAR. A student user guide is available here for how to access and file e-forms. Because the POS system is gone, you are no longer required to maintain a predetermined schedule. Thus, students should have to submit PAARs every time they change a course in year 2.

When you run your Degree Evaluation, any course requirement that is either not listed in the current University Catalog, requires advisor approval, or has been approved to take a different course in lieu of the required one, must be handled by submitting a PAAR to Graduate Studies. Courses taken prior to a PAAR being submitted, will fall into "Courses Taken Not Applied to Program of Study" at the bottom of the audit, until a PAAR has been approved. Any questions should be directed to: gra@sdsu.edu.

Establishing Residency

For out-of-state students, it is possible to establish residency your second year. Doing this would allow you to pay in-state tuition and fees. There are several steps for you to establish residency. The steps, required documents, and deadlines are located here: https://registrar.sdsu.edu/students/additional_resources_students/residency_information'

Selecting Courses

The best advice for choosing courses (see appendix and University Catalog for extensive list) is to select courses:

(a) in subject matters that interest you or that you are curious about;
(b) that expand your expertise; and
(c) that give you exposure to a variety of professors.

COMM 601 is one of the first and foundational courses that students will take. It is designed to introduce you to professors, theories, topic areas, and methodologies. While some students come into the program with focused interests, it is worthwhile to push beyond a comfort zone, to explore theories and methods that are different from your expertise.

Contrary to popular belief, there is no one course or set of courses that prepare you best for teaching, business, or a Ph.D. program. The best preparation for your career after graduate school is to utilize your two years in the MA program to get as much as you can out of coursework, research projects, teaching, colloquia, conference presentations, socialization through the Graduate Student Communication Organization (SoCaL = The Society for Communication and Leadership, see appendix), and getting to know other graduate students and faculty.

Full-Time Status

In the School of Communication, we consider our graduate students full time at six (6) units of coursework numbered 600 and above. As one of the top-ranked M.A. communication programs in the United States, the full-time status at six units reflects the rigor of our graduate program. You are encouraged to take two graduate seminars each semester, including the summer. Officially, the University Catalog considers full-time enrollment for a graduate student at nine (9) units of coursework numbered 500 through 999. Please reach out to the Director of Graduate Studies if you need a six-unit-full-time letter.

Communication 601 Course Policies

- Students must enroll in Communication 601 during their first semester.
- Students admitted to the program need a grade of "B" or higher in COMM 601 to continue in the program.
- Students who obtain less than a "B" average in COMM 601 may only continue their studies in the School of Communication upon approval of a petition. Contact the

Graduate Director to file a petition to continue on the program. Students will be allowed to retake Comm 601 one time, although the Graduate Committee may choose to consider a petition to re-take 601 for a third time.

Canvas

All pertinent graduate program information is posted to School of Communication Graduate Homeroom (COMM-GRAD-HR) Canvas site, and this is also the means by which information is emailed to the graduate students. As such, it is important to have Canvas notification alerts in place to receive important notifications. Canvas also provides the contact information for other graduate students and faculty members and is a useful tool for communicating within the department.

Minimum Grade Point Average

Students must maintain a grade point average of 3.0 in order to be considered in good standing in the graduate program. A GPA of 2.85 or below will put the student on academic probation with the university. After that point, the student must earn a 3.0 in the subsequent semester. If this requirement is met, the student will have an additional semester to raise their overall GPA to a 3.0.

Transfer Coursework

The Graduate Director and Graduate Committee will consider a student's request to transfer up to 6 units of transfer work. For the graduate coursework to transfer, this work must unambiguously constitute "graduate level" work at accredited institutions, it must be relevant to the degree the student is seeking through the School of Communication, and the student must have achieved at least a B or higher in this coursework. The Graduate Director will make recommendations and may recommend acceptance of between 0-9 units of graduate credit to the Graduate Division, which is the final arbiter of such transfer.

Retaking Courses

In the event that a student fails a graduate course, especially in regard to Comm 601 or a tool course, a student may consider re-taking the course. Courses can be "retaken" only with consent of the Director of Graduate Studies. A form, called Petition to Retake COMM 601, authorizing this is available in the appendix.

Maintaining Professional Relationships

Unlike most students' undergraduate experiences, many graduate students will have plentiful opportunities to socialize with professors. These opportunities—not compulsory or mandatory—may happen at School of Communication gatherings, off-campus seminar meetings, and at professional conferences. While these situations may seem more informal and friendly, it is important to maintain professional boundaries. This does not mean conversations must be

centered around communication theories, concepts, and classwork, but it does mean that students should maintain the same demeanor they would at any off-hours work gathering.

This holds true for faculty, too. Faculty members, especially when engaging in more informal conversations, should maintain the same demeanor. If you experience or witness something you believe constitutes bullying, harassment, or behavior or language otherwise inappropriate in an off-site work gathering, you do not need to remain silent. While there are formal procedures and channels for reporting sexual harassment (see below), you are always free to speak confidentially with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Please remember that SDSU is a mandated reporter, which means that—in certain situations—the DGS is obligated to contact authorities. See https://titleix.sdsu.edu/general-info/get-help-now for more information.

Graduate Conference Travel Reimbursement

The School of Communication will reimburse COMM Graduate Students up to $350 in travel-related expenses, plus the cost of the Early Bird Conference Registration and a Student Membership to attend a professional conference such as NCA or WSCA. An additional $350 reimbursement, plus the cost of Early Bird Registration and a Student Membership is granted to a Graduate Student who presents a scholarly paper at a secondary conference. (Must be a new paper not previously presented.)

Master's Thesis or Comprehensive Examination

Completing your program of study requires making the decision about completing a comprehensive exam or a thesis. While this decision can be changed, you must make a tentative decision about writing a master's thesis or taking the comprehensive exam at the time that you file the Program of Study. If you elect to write a master's thesis, the thesis (COMM 799A) is specified as one of the 10 courses in your Program of Study; otherwise, students choosing to complete the comprehensive exam will choose to do 10 graduate-level courses. Both options are discussed in the pages to follow in the "Master's Thesis" and "Comprehensive Exam" sections.

Leaves of Absence

If you are not taking classes during the fall semester or spring semester, you must file a Leave of Absence (LOA) request with Graduate and Research affairs for each semester you plan on not taking classes. If you do not file the LOA request, you will lose matriculation. You do not need to request a LOA if: 1) If you only need to take the comprehensive exam (or file the exam completion form with Graduate Affairs) AND you will not be taking any more main campus classes before completing your degree; 2) If you are registered for 799B or 799C through the College of Extended Studies, and will not be taking any more main campus classes before completing your degree. Check with Graduate Affairs Handbook if you have questions about these situations. Don't hesitate to visit Graduate Studies and email GRA@SDSU.EDU

If LOA is approved, reapplication to the university is not necessary. Students are not eligible for LOA if they are not in good standing with the university (for example: academic disqualification,

unpaid debts). LOA applications are due by the last day of the add/drop period each fall and spring semester.

All requirements for advanced certificates and master's degree coursework must be completed within six consecutive calendar years after initial registration. Time spent on leave of absence is counted toward the degree time limit. Students who do not graduate by this deadline will be subject to administrative disqualification by the graduate dean. Leave of absences must be applied for each semester and cannot entail more than 4 consecutive or non-consecutive semesters without a plan of completion approved by the School of Communication Graduate Director and approval from the graduate dean.

With the approval of the program or department graduate adviser, a student in the sixth academic year of graduate study may appeal to the graduate dean for a one-year time limit extension. Students validating by examination will be required to specify a date-certain by which all requirements for the degree will be completed. Only in exceptional circumstances will this time limit exceed one calendar year from the date of validation. A course or program may be validated by examination only once.

Students who exceed the time limit and wish to continue their studies must formally apply for new admission. Programs readmitting students who have been disqualified for exceeding the time limit should consult with the student at the time of readmission to determine whether credits previously earned will meet current degree requirements. Disqualified and readmitted students will be held to current University Catalog requirements and will need approval from their program adviser to use expired courses. Expired courses from an outside university cannot be used toward the fulfillment of degree requirement.

The Office for Graduate Life and Diversity

The mission of the Office for Graduate Life and Diversity is to support all graduate students' success and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in graduate programs at SDSU. They offer personal, professional, financial, and social resources to enrich graduate experience and promote success in graduate training such as Graduate Writing Center, Printing Center, and Mental Health Support. See their webpage for further information: https://sacd.sdsu.edu/gradlife.

Student Disability Services

Student Disability Services (SDS) is the university office responsible for providing appropriate academic accommodations for students with disabilities: https://newscenter.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/sds/. The goal of SDS is to minimize barriers and ensure equal access for eligible students with disabilities to higher education through academic support services, technology and advocacy in order to promote their retention and graduation. Services and accommodations are available to students with documented disabilities, including but not limited to students who have visual limitations, communication limitations, learning disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, attentional disabilities, mobility and other functional limitations, as well as those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Counseling and Psychological Services

Counseling and Psychological Services (C&PS) offers a wide range of services to help students obtain support for a variety of presenting concerns: https://sacd.sdsu.edu/cps#. These include individual counseling, couples counseling, group therapy, workshops, specialized programs, and appointments with Baxter, C&PS' therapy dog.

Bullying and Sexual Harassment

For information about Title IX reporting and sexual harassment, please visit this site.

For more definitions about sexual violence, rape, and consent, please see the SDSU Title IX Notice of Non-Discrimination Booklet (PDF).

SDSU Employment Opportunity for Graduate Students

To enhance graduate education, training, and experience, graduate students might be interested in employment opportunities within SDSU such as: graduate teaching associates (GTAs), graduate assistants (GAs), and research assistants (RAs). GTA appointments provide students the opportunity to participate in the teaching activities of the university such as COMM 103 Public Speaking and Forensics coaching in the School of Communication. For questions regarding COMM 103 GTAs, contact Michael Rapp, Basic Course Director (mrapp@sdsu.edu). For questions regarding SDSU Forensics, contact Ashley Nuckels Cuevas, Director of Forensics (anuckelscuevas@sdsu.edu). GA appointments provide instructionally related services to undergraduate students, or may be assigned duties to support faculty teaching, research, or service activities. RA appointments engage students in working directly with faculty in their specific research programs. For further information, see SDSU Orientation and Handbook: Graduate Teaching Associates and Graduate Assistants. These employment opportunities are contract-based and renewed based on performance review.

If you are already an academic student employee at SDSU, the Union of Academic Student Workers (UAW) at the California State University might be relevant: https://www.uaw4123.org/about-the-union. UAW Local 4123 is a union that represents all academic student employees of California State University, including SDSU. The general email to UAW Local 4123 is union@uaw4123.org, and the email for SDSU specifically is sdsu@uaw4123.org.

Chapter

2

Comprehensive Exam

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM
Revised and Approved May 2024

Choosing the Comprehensive Exam

The comprehensive exam is designed as an opportunity for students to review the knowledge they have gained throughout their MA coursework, make connections between theories and concepts, illustrate comprehension of this material, and demonstrate effective written and oral communication skills. The Comprehensive Exam (or Plan B) is a written and oral examination covering material common to all Master's degree candidates and material specific to the courses the candidate personally took in their Program of Study. Choosing the comprehensive exam means that you can choose a faculty member as your chair, but not your committee members. The two committee members will be assigned based on several factors such as faculty workload and your coursework.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Choosing the Comprehensive Exam Option

Students may choose this option for a variety of reasons. First, the comprehensive exam process has clear beginning and ending dates (see the Graduate Calendar). This is unlike the thesis process, in which your ending date is ultimately decided by your chair. So, students taking comps can expect to know the results of their culminating experience (positive or otherwise) by a certain date. Second, students may be unable or unwilling to settle on one topic about which to write for a year or more (as with a thesis). For students with broad areas of interest, the comps option may be a more beneficial choice.

Of course, there are what some might call disadvantages to the comps option as well. Some may conclude that a timed essay exam (outside of a seminar exam, which students will have to take in most of their seminars) may simply be too much pressure and intensity. Additionally, students taking comprehensive examinations do not register for 3 units of thesis hours and must instead take an additional seminar.

Policy and Procedures

Students may opt to take a comprehensive exam, along with 30 units of coursework on their Program of Study, in order to fulfill the requirements of graduation. The initial in-house exam is offered every spring.

Students who elect to take comprehensive exams must file the Comprehensive Exam Request Form (via Canvas Quiz or Google Form as instructed) with the Director of Graduate Studies in the fall semester (no later than the **third Friday in the semester**) in order to take the exam in the spring (see the Graduate Calendar located at the top of this document). Before this form can be filed, students shall have secured the agreement of a faculty member to serve as the Chair of the student's Comprehensive Exam Committee. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), in consultation with the Director of the School of Communication, and in light of the student's interest area, will select two other faculty members to round out the Comprehensive Exam committee for each student. Students will be informed about the constitution of their committee by mid fall semester. These dates may vary slightly. Please see the DGS announcements.

There will be Comps Anticipation and Preparation (CAP) Classes in the fall semester. These are required for students taking comps in the spring semester. Any potential conflicts should be brought to the attention of the DGS.

The comprehensive exam will occur in two parts as described in the next section. In order to pass the comprehensive exam, a student will be expected to pass each of these two parts to the satisfaction of their Committee. The graduate program plagiarism policy is in effect for this exam.

PART ONE: IN-HOUSE QUESTIONS

Preparation: Students will ask a faculty member to serve as the chair of their Comprehensive Examination Committee. Sample questions are available as an Appendix in this document, but these questions are broad and applicable to all students of communication regardless of interest. Students will collaborate with their chair, who will prepare the final questions administered in the exam. From September until January, students will work with their chair for their preparation for the three hour in-house comprehensive exam to be given in January at 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (such as the third Friday in January or one week prior to the first day of classes) in COMM 209 or a designated classroom. In cases of university-declared emergencies, this might take place on Zoom.

Before the day of the exam, students will load Respondus Lock Down Browser on their computers: http://www.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=469641291 (this is for Windows 10—see link for directions for downloading on a Mac).

The Day of the Exam: On the day of the exam, students will report to the designated classroom (or Zoom in cases of university-declared emergencies) 10-15 minutes early to set up for the exam. Students will be asked to write answers to three of the comprehensive exam questions selected by their chair. These will be written by each students Comps Committee Chair; students will not know the three questions their Chair has prepared until the time of the exam. The written exam does NOT allow for the use of notes or any other supplementary material. If students need accommodations for a disability, you must inform the DGS at least 30 days prior to the exam. Students may be asked to register with the Student Disability Services (SDS).

Wait Two Weeks for the Committee's Decision: The Committee will read and review the in-house exam and determine if the answers demonstrate sufficient competency to warrant an oral examination. The Comps Committee Chair will notify the student of the committee's decision after roughly two weeks from receiving the in-house answers. There are three (3) possible decisions that the Comprehensive Exam Committee may make at this stage:

> **1. Moving Forward to Oral Defense:** The Committee determines that the written answers are satisfactory and defensible, and the student may move forward as described below to set up the oral defense.

2. Partial Rewrite: The Committee determines portions of the answers are not defensible and requests that the student complete one or more rewrites before moving forward to an oral defense. Rewrite portions of the answers and the format of the rewrite (in-house or take-home) are determined by the Committee on a case-by-case basis. Typically, this is a one-time opportunity.

3. Full Retake: The Committee determines that none of the answers are defensible and they fail to demonstrate mastery of program material. The Committee may request that the student get a second chance of retaking the in-house exam with the DGS in March. The student will answer DIFFERENT questions in the full retake. After evaluating the new responses, the committee may elect to move forward to an oral defense, a partial rewrite, or a full-rewrite (which would occur in the next academic year).

PART TWO: ORAL DEFENSE

Once students gain approval from the Comps Committee Chair to move forward with the oral defense, proceed to schedule a recommended **90-minute** block of time for the oral defense at a time that is convenient for the Comprehensive Exam Committee. Students are encouraged to use Doodle, an on-line scheduling tool, to determine the best meeting time: http://doodle.com/. The defense should take place at approximately 2-3 weeks after the submission of the essay portion, and this time will differ among students. Students should be as flexible as possible when scheduling this meeting. Once a time has been decided upon, students must schedule a location for the defense. Rooms can be scheduled with the Administrative Coordinator in The School of Communication.

Students should review their answers and consider the questions that their committee could ask. Students may consult with their committee chair for feedback and guidance in preparing for the oral defense. During the oral defense, members of the committee may ask questions about the students' answers or other questions of general knowledge and mastery of the material presented in the student's Program of Study. Students may discuss what to expect generally during this meeting with the chair of their committee, but students should not contact committee members to determine what they will specifically be asked in the defense. For students who completed a partial rewrite, they are only expected to defend the final version of the three essays. In other words, for sections that were rewritten, only the rewrite needs to be defended.

Demeanor and Conduct: The oral exam is an examination, and competency must be demonstrated in all of its facets to the exacting standards of intellect, knowledge, and expression expected of the written exam. As such, it should not be treated as a social affair. Students are not to bring food or drink to the oral defense, and students should take care to remind and confirm with their committee the time and place of the defense. The oral exam will focus on defending the written exams, but in the process, any or all of the student's MA education will be eligible for examination in the context of defending the written exams. So, if questions about the written work extend to intellectual content from aspects of the student's coursework, readings,

assignments, or core disciplinary knowledge, the student will be held accountable for demonstrating competency in all areas during the oral defense.

Passing or Failing the Oral Exam: On behalf of the Committee, the Comps Chair will email (a) their decision, (b) the candidate's SDSU ID, and (c) the date of the oral defense to the DGS. Then, the DGS will fill a *Report of Final Exam Defense* with Graduate Studies. A sample defense evaluation form is available in the appendix, not required. There are three (3) possible decisions that the Comprehensive Exam Committee may make, based on combined written responses and the oral defense:

1. **Unconditional pass**—The candidate passed the exam without further need to edit the written essays.

2. **Conditional pass**—The candidate demonstrates passing performance on portions of the in-house exam while failing other portions. In this case, the Committee has the option to direct the student to rewrite answers to one or more questions. The Committee will clearly lay out the procedure for the student in this case. The Committee will review the revisions to determine the next steps, which will follow the three options outlined in this section.

3. **Fail**—The candidate did not demonstrate mastery of program material and the Committee does not see sufficient basis for another attempt. In consultation with the Comps Committee Chair and the DGS, the candidate may opt to try the comps process again in the following academic year.

Candidates who fail the written or oral Comprehensive Exam may not reconstitute a new committee for the purpose of retaking the Exam. A member or members of the original Comprehensive Exam Committee may be excused from the Committee and a new member or members added only with the advanced written permission of the DGS and the School of Communication Director.

If the candidate fails the oral defense on the first attempt, the candidate may be asked to rewrite portions of the in-house exam, according to the dates of the re-take examination schedule.

Upon successful passage of all areas of the Comprehensive Exam, the recommendation of the Committee is forwarded to the DGS, who files a *Report of Final Exam Defense* form with Graduate Studies. As a candidate, you should check with your committee Chair and the DGS confirm that this "Report" has been signed and submitted in a timely manner.

Chapter

3

Thesis

THE MASTER'S THESIS

The thesis (or Plan A) is another option for completing the requirements necessary for graduation. The master's thesis is a multi-semester project of original research conducted by the master's candidate, under the supervision of a faculty thesis chair. The project is initiated by the student who collaborates with the thesis chair and then submits a thesis proposal to the faculty committee. After the thesis proposal is accepted and signed by three faculty members, the proposal is routed to the School of Communication office and to the DGS for review.

While each student's progress will vary, the following is a general timeline of tasks and benchmarks related to the thesis.

Approximate Thesis Timeline

By end of Semester Two

- ❑ Develop abstract of your thesis topic
- ❑ Confirm Thesis Chair
- ❑ Submit Thesis Chair Designation Form to the DGS via Canvas Quiz (due in early semester three)
- ❑ Develop timeline for chapters and revisions with your Thesis Chair
- ❑ Finalize Thesis Committee

Summer

- ❑ Work on drafts of the prospectus (Literature Review and proposed Methods)
- ❑ Submit first draft of prospectus to your Chair
- ❑ Prepare protocol for the Institutional Review Board (if applicable)

Semester Three

- ❑ Finalize Thesis Proposal
- ❑ Arrange and Hold a Thesis Proposal Meeting
- ❑ Submit Approved Thesis Proposal to the School of Communication via the DGS
- ❑ Email Thesis Committee Approval Form to the DGS for submission to Graduate Studies
- ❑ Submit a protocol to the Institutional Review Board (if applicable)
- ❑ Register for COMM 799A Thesis for following semester (add code is provided by Graduate Studies by emailing gra@sdsu.edu)

Semester Four: Completing the Thesis

- ❑ Defending the Thesis (See a sample invitation to thesis defense in the appendix)
- ❑ Forward the committee decision to the DGS, who files a *Report of Thesis Defense* form with Graduate Studies
- ❑ Formatting the Thesis (refer to Montezuma Publishing website)
- ❑ Submit thesis to Montezuma Publishing

Forming a Thesis Committee

Your committee must consist of three SDSU Professors: two from the School of Communication (a Chair and second) and one outside of the department.

- Set up an appointment with the person you would like to be the chair of your committee. Prior to the appointment, it's a good idea to provide the faculty member with a copy of an abstract. A conversation should follow, and it is not usual for the direction of your thesis to change. At the meeting, ask the person if he or she would be willing to chair your committee. This meeting gives the faculty members an opportunity to tell you if they are available to serve on your committee.

- Next, set up appointments with the professors whom you would like to serve as second and third members of your thesis. At the appointment, tell them who is serving as your chair and ask the following questions:

  (a) Would you be willing to serve as a second/third member of my thesis committee?
  (b) What suggestions do you have for readings and/or methods?
  (c) What type of role do you like to play in the thesis process (e.g., only see it when it is close to completion, one chapter at a time, etc.)?

  Sometimes committee members will ask for a TENTATIVE timeline of your thesis research process, from the date you plan to complete your thesis proposal to the date you plan to defend your thesis. Alternatively, you may wish to provide them with one.

Finalizing Thesis Proposal

Generally, the thesis proposal provides a description of the focus and rationale for your research/project, a review of related literature, procedures for conducting your research/project, and the format of the final thesis. Thesis proposals vary somewhat across graduate specializations and degree programs in the School of Communication, but generally they consist of two chapters: Chapter One is usually the introduction, rationale, and literature review' Chapter Two is usually the Methods chapter (for the prospectus, you will obviously describe what you plan to do, not what you have already done).

Regardless, each thesis proposal is a plan for the conduct of a specific research or creative project. The proposal serves as a "blueprint" or "understanding" between thesis committees and the graduate student regarding the scope of the proposed project. A detailed proposal reduces the chance of misunderstandings between chairs, committees, and graduate students. The proposal typically translates to a head start on chapters one and two.

The deadline for completing your proposal is the Friday two weeks prior to the end of the semester (see the Graduate Calendar for dates). However, it is recommended that the proposal be completed early in the semester before midterm, for a number of compelling reasons. Completing it around this date avoids most National Communication Association convention-related scheduling conflicts (the convention is usually the second or third week in November), as well as the impeding holiday travel and finals-related work.

As you work on drafts of your proposal and thesis, it is important for you and your committee to keep track of each version of your work. We recommend that you develop a system for labeling each version on the cover page and for labeling the document electronically.

Arranging Thesis Proposal Meeting and Submitting Thesis Committee Approval Form

After selecting a thesis chair and committee, developing the thesis proposal, gaining a Thesis Committee Approval Form from Graduate Studies, circulating the completed thesis proposal and thesis abstract to the thesis committee, the student is to set up a thesis proposal meeting. For coordinating the date, time, and location, the use of Doodle's scheduling tool is recommended: http://doodle.com. While not mandatory, it is advisable for the candidate in consultation with thesis chair to provide a light snack for the committee members if meeting in person.

There are a number of important objectives for this meeting:

1. Committee members might meet each other for the first time.

2. Committee members have an opportunity to dialogue with you and one another about your proposal and ideas for refining the thesis project.

3. The committee establishes a timeline for completing the thesis.

4. The committee articulates the roles each member of the thesis prefers to play (ranging from being involved at each step or only when the project is complete).

5. The student asks any questions they may have about the thesis process.

6. Members agree to serve until the degree is completed by signing the Thesis Committee Approval Form.

7. Committee members may sign the Thesis Proposal Cover sheet (see a sample in the appendix).

Submitting Thesis Proposal to the School of Communication and Registering for COMM 799A (Thesis)

Your complete thesis proposal, approved by your chair and members of your thesis committee, is then routed to each member of your committee and the School of Communication office usually by **4:00 p.m. FRIDAY, TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE END OF FINAL EXAMINATIONS**. The cover sheet for the proposal should include the title, your name, and the names and signatures of your committee members.

Once your thesis proposal is approved and your Thesis Committee Approval Form is filed with Graduate Studies via the DGS, you are eligible to enroll in thesis hours (COMM 799A). IF YOU FAIL TO MEET THE THESIS PROPOSAL DEADLINE YOU CANNOT ENROLL IN 799A IN THE FOLLOWING SEMESTER. See the Graduate Schedule and Deadlines section of this Handbook for the exact date.

Submitting Proposal to The Institutional Review Board (If applicable)

If you are going to study people (as opposed to content analysis, legal research, rhetorical research, or historical research), you need prior approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). No study of human subjects on this campus may proceed without approval from this committee.

You must first request an InfoEd account here:
https://research.sdsu.edu/research_affairs/human_subjects/guidance

Then, you must complete the required human subjects training here:
http://research.sdsu.edu/research_affairs/human_subjects/training

Ask your thesis committee chair to assist you in considering the necessity and/or procedures for human subjects approval.

Writing Thesis and Working with Committee

1. Visit the members of your committee periodically and report on your progress. This suggestion serves several functions. Frequent consultation serves to recharge your creative batteries and helps you finish your thesis more quickly.

2. Provide each member of the committee with his or her own copy of the next-to-last draft of your thesis TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE DEFENSE DATE. Most faculty members resent being asked to a thesis defense when they have not seen it until a few days before the defense or if it is presented to them as a "finished product."

3. Find resolutions to differences of opinions. You do not have to accept all suggestions about minor changes; but you should listen carefully to major objections. Your Chair will help you decide which revisions to incorporate, to what degree, and which ones are for future iterations of the thesis (i.e., conference and publication submissions).

Formatting the Thesis

The master's thesis is a formal document that is catalogued and saved in the University library for study by other scholars of communication for years to come. Therefore, the form and style of the thesis is quite exacting. To aid you in writing your thesis, Montezuma Publishing provides guidelines for thesis formatting.

Thesis Oral Defense, Announcement, and Filing a Report of Thesis Defense

- Once you have set up your thesis oral defense, please work with the Administrative Coordinator to make a public announcement to all communication faculty, staff, and graduate students at least one week in advance. You will receive a Google form (such as COMM Thesis Defense Announcement) to complete, providing the necessary information, including the thesis title, chairperson, committee members, defense

date/time, and a concise abstract." See a sample invitation to thesis defense in the appendix.

- It is a good idea to contact the committee members the day before to remind them of the time and place of the meeting, and perhaps to re-confirm with that the room is properly reserved if meeting in person.
- It is a good idea to ask if your committee members prefer a hard copy or an e-copy of your thesis. Some folks might prefer both a hard copy and an e-copy.
- If meeting in person, we recommend that you bring a perfectly printed and proportioned, mistake-free, title/signature page to the defense for signatures. If meeting on Zoom, signatures can be acquired electronically via Adobe Acrobat Sign or DocuSign.
- You may invite friends or family, but if they attend, they will be asked to leave with you both times you are asked out of the room.
- You may bring whatever materials you might need as support.
- The Chair may ask that you provide a 5 to 10-minute formal presentation. This should be a planned and practiced presentation. Remember, the committee has just read your thesis—the purpose of this presentation is to coherently summarize the project, from its inception to its findings and implications—succinct, persuasive, and polished. Many students even prepare a Powerpoint for the presentation. If you do, make sure you get to the room ahead of time to make sure the projector is working.
- Some questions are fairly common, including: (a) What would you do differently, in retrospect? (b) What do you intend to do next (in regard to this topic, and/or in regard to your career)? (c) What did you learn (about yourself, about science, etc.) from doing this study?
- You or your Chair may take notes of what specifically will need to be addressed.
- You will be invited back into the room and given the decision of the committee, which typically takes one of the following forms:
  (a) Passed/Approved as is
  (b) Passed by the outside/second members, conditional upon the Chair's approval of recommended revisions, which may be (i) major, or (ii) minor
  (c) Conditional pass/approval, in which revisions must be reviewed by one or more committee members prior to signature, or
  (d) Fail
- The Chair will typically spend some time after the rest of the committee departs to review the changes needed, and to schedule appointments should new analyses need to be run. The Chair will typically only sign after reviewing the subsequent revisions to assure they have been carried out satisfactorily.
- Upon successful thesis defense, the decision of the Committee is forwarded to the DGS, who files a *Report of Thesis Defense* form with Graduate Studies. As a candidate, you should check with your committee Chair and the DGS confirm that this "Report" has been signed and submitted in a timely manner.
- The week following defense should be devoted to finishing up the thesis.

Submitting Thesis to Montezuma Publishing and Requesting Copies

- Once your thesis has been revised and all committee members have signed the signature page, submit your thesis to Montezuma Publishing. You can choose to pay for them to format it, or you can format it yourself. The latter way can be time consuming, as you may have to submit and re-submit based on suggestions you receive.

- Once your thesis format is approved, you can request copies be made. You are required to pay for any copies. You can choose from perfect bound or "spiral" or punch bound (less expensive). A perfect bound, hardcover copy of your thesis should be requested for the Communication 209 School of Communication library. Usually, students request a bound copy for themselves. It's customary for the Chair to receive a copy, but ask them in advance. Additionally, you should ask other committee members their preference (they may not want one). You can expect duplicating and binding to take a minimum of several months.

Potential Intellectual Property Rights Criteria

There are many functions served by a thesis, including instruction of a student and his/her mentors, enhancement of one's expertise in a given area of knowledge, creating a research agenda, laying the groundwork for conference and journal submissions (though graduate course papers can do this as well). We encourage students to share their work with larger audiences, which usually involves presentation and publication. Students who subsequently present, publish or distribute their works bring prestige to their university, their instructors, and themselves. All students are urged to consider submitting their work to conference and publication. In anticipation of this possibility:

1. We recommend a practice of establishing a thesis contract between thesis chair and thesis candidate. See a sample contract in the appendix. The former Graduate Division used to require such a form be signed and completed prior to conducting a thesis. The intent of such a contract is for you and your Chair to discuss all of the reasonable plans, responsibilities, and attribution issues that may arise concerning your thesis. This might include copyrights, publication, and distribution plans, and even profit ventures developing out of your thesis work. Understandings arising from such discussions should be noted explicitly in writing on the form, which can subsequently be interpreted as a contract.
2. There are many levels of attributions for intellectual credit. A faculty member can be listed as lead author, co-author, noted or acknowledged as an important contributor, consultant, or instructor. The level at which an author or co-author is credited may have consequences for that person's prestige, promotion, tenure, and share in profits, awards, rewards, and/or recognition. However, no person should receive credit for work she or he did not earn.
3. In general, all things being equal, committee members and at least the thesis Chair should expect involvement in and attribution as co-author of subsequent versions of the thesis under any of the following conditions. Issues such as the order of authorship can be determined by the following conditions. These issues are illustrative rather than definitive or comprehensive. The basic rationale is that the more criteria a professor meets, the more likely it is she or he should be attributed with co-authorship, co-ownership, and/or co-credit for the products of the thesis.
    a. When the faculty member is involved in at least major rewrites or reorganizations of the project ("major" suggests substantive and substantial amounts of re-writing, redirection of the basic arguments, rationale, or structure of the project);

b. When the faculty member actively negotiates and/or provides the sample, location, and/or agreements permitting the project to proceed;
c. When the faculty member conducts (or re-conducts) the data analyses;
d. When the faculty member develops the measures, methods, or techniques uniquely for this project;
e. When the faculty member is requested by the student to take primary responsibility for editing the project for purposes of conference, publication, or show submission.

4. Of course, exceptions and extensions can be negotiated with the Committee members. However, resulting understandings or conditions should be noted in the space provided on the form. Remember that authorship order should also be negotiated, or at least the criteria for determining authorship order.
5. When the committee member(s), and/or Chair, involve themselves in less than the ways above, or when their role is primarily advisory and consultative (e.g., providing marginalia, oral discussions in office, suggestions for re-thinking the thesis, etc.), then co-authorship is not recommended. However, it is considered good form to note on any subsequent versions of the thesis that a previous version of it was completed as a thesis in the School of Communication at San Diego State University, and to express appreciation to the Chair and thesis committee members for their efforts in facilitating the completion of the project.

Chapter

4

File an Application for Graduation

Applying for Graduation

Students must declare their intentions to graduate by filing an application for graduation with an advanced degree. The university begins accepting applications for graduation in the term prior to anticipated graduation. Application deadlines are early in the semester and require a fee. The application for graduation is a two-step process obtained and submitted through my.SDSU. For the application to be approved, the student's Degree Evaluation must be complete and **match exactly** the coursework that the student has completed or is in the process of completing. Students can find helpful information about applying, commencement, and diplomas at the Graduate Studies' Graduation Information webpage.

See the Graduate Calendar at the top of this document and Graduate Studies for dates on application for graduation deadlines.

Appendices

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION COMPREHENSIVE EXAM PROCEDURES

Student Learning Objectives

1. Broad based ability to describe, compare, contrast, and critique prominent theories from AT LEAST two seminars taken in the School of Communication.

2. Ability to identify and/or formulate significant theories/theoretical questions and linkage of methodological procedures to such theories.

3. Develop a scholarly argument about communication research, theory, and practice.

4. Ability to develop and critique major methodological paradigms substantiated in the School of Communication.

5. Incorporate your own voice, positionality, and perspective.

6. Demonstrate all requisites of being able to write in a scholarly and professional voice, including (but not limited to):
    a. Ethics of research/writing
    b. Mastering APA style
    c. Writing at a sufficient level for conference and/or journal-level submissions

Preparations for the In-House Exam

You should meet with your Chair in your second or third semester to discuss your areas of interest, your knowledge of theory and methods, and the types and kinds of questions your Chair and you think will adequately assess your knowledge, argumentation and writing skills, and oral defense abilities.

Comprehensive exam questions will, collectively, engage your knowledge regarding communication theory, methods, and practice. The following is meant as a study guide to assist you with your preparations.

Topic Areas

1. Communication Theory
    a. Describe the parameters, scope, and evaluative criteria of a theory
    b. Compare and contrast theories of the same communication phenomena
    c. Trace the development and history of a theoretical approach in communication
2. Paradigms and Methodologies for Researching Communication
    a. Articulate guiding and underlying assumptions of a research paradigm/method
    b. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of ethical challenges with regard to research

    c. Describe and evaluate the value of validity and reliability in different approaches to researching communication
3. Area of Communication Study
    a. Within ONE of your areas of interest, explore the theoretical explanations regarding phenomena
    b. Within your area of interest, describe methods-based approaches to investigations

SAMPLE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM QUESTIONS

Please use the following as examples of the kinds and types of questions you might be asked. In each answer you are expected to draw on the theories, ideas, concepts, and/or methods from at least two different seminars in answering each question. All answers should make an explicit connection to communication research.

1. What is a paradigm? Formally identify and define three distinct paradigms within the field of communication. As part of your answer, be sure to review and elaborate the key aspects of each paradigm, including their similarities and differences, as well as their strengths and limitations. In addition, illustrate how a research question might be investigated differently by scholars who approach it from the paradigms you've identified and defined.

2. Choose one communication theory and discuss its scope (i.e., what it explains and its potential limitations). In your answer, remember to articulate the theory in full, and describe its strengths and current applications within the field of communication. Next, refine and extend the parameters of this theory in some way to broaden its scope. What does this new extension explain that the original theory does not? Please elaborate on the implications of this extension for communication research.

3. Identify and briefly describe two theories from different seminars that attempt to explain the same communication issue. Compare and contrast the two theories in terms of at least four relevant evaluative criteria (which may include: explanatory power, specificity, generality, parsimony, scope, control, testability, productiveness, heurism, aesthetics, counter-suggestiveness, multi-vocality, critical perspective, catalytic potential, reflexivity, embodiment, temporality, and/or other criteria of your choosing). Clearly define your evaluative criteria and completely articulate each theory. As part of your answer, remember to define the communication issue of interest and justify why it warrants attention.

4. Identify a problem in contemporary society. Describe what the communication discipline offers that enhances our understanding of the issue. Next, identify three research questions or hypotheses to investigate this problem. Last, propose a methodology that would allow you to address these research questions or test these hypotheses.

5. Identify three ethical challenges in communication research. These can range from project, hypotheses, and research question generation, to data collection and analysis, to writing. While these challenges can be hypothetical, they should be grounded in the ways you have learned to conduct original research. Once you have identified three ethical challenges, detail how a researcher can account for and address these challenges, drawing on any relevant research.

6. Compare and contrast the definitions of validity and reliability in two different methodological approaches of inquiry that you have studied in two different seminars. (a) How is validity assessed or enhanced? (Identify, define and discuss the means of verification used by each approach and explain how each enhances validity.) Provide examples. (b) How is reliability assessed or enhanced? (Identify, define and discuss the means of verification used by each approach and explain how each enhances reliability.) Provide examples.

7. Propose a methodology to investigate an original scholarly project. Start by providing 1 paragraph overviewing the rationale for the project that ends with 1-2 research questions or hypotheses that will be examined. Then, follow journalistic/APA standards to write a methods section that mimics what one would read in a traditional research study. Detail the sampling, procedures, measures, and analyses by which your investigation would proceed. End with a limitations section that shows your awareness of the scope of the method you've proposed.

Graduate Faculty

The communication faculty members at San Diego State University are award-winning teacher-scholars. They are engaged in the community, collaborating with local non-profit and for-profit organizations in ways that help students learn to be effective professionals in different settings.

Dean's Office

Lindemann, Kurt Ph.D. Arizona State University

Professional expertise: Performance Studies, Organizational Communication, Ethnography, Gender and Masculinity, Disability. klindema@sdsu.edu

Director

Canary, Heather (Sabbatical - Fall) Ph.D. Arizona State University

Professional Expertise: Family Communication, Disability and Communication, Health Communication, Organizational Communication. hcanary@sdsu.edu

Graduate Faculty

Asante, Godfried Ph.D. University of New Mexico

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Professional Expertise: Language & Social Interaction, Law Interaction, Interaction and Gender, Conversation Analysis. wbeach@sdsu.edu

Chen, Yea-Wen Ph.D. University of New Mexico

Professional Expertise: Intercultural Communication, Instructional Communication, Identity-Based Organizing, Qualitative Research Methods. yea-wen.chen@sdsu.edu

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Professional expertise: Political and Health Communication, Food Systems and Social Wellbeing. rtdesouza@sdsu.edu

Dykstra-DeVette, Tiffany (Sabbatical) Ph.D. University of Utah

Professional Expertise: Organizational Communication, Qualitative Research Methods, Critical Rhetorical Methods. tdykstradevette@sdsu.edu

Goehring, Charles (Lecturer) Ph.D. University of Iowa

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Gonzalez, Eduardo Ph.D. University of Southern California

Professional Expertise: Border Studies, Digital Equity and Literacy, Migration and Displacement, Communication Technologies. egonzalez21@sdsu.edu

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Professional Expertise: Health and Culture in Communication, Qualitative Research Methods. rkumar@sdsu.edu

Martinez, Lourdes Ph.D. University of Pennsylvania

Professional expertise: Health Communication, Big Data Research.

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Record, Rachael Ph.D. University of Kentucky

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Savage, Matthew Ph.D. Arizona State University

Professional expertise: Health Communication, Campaigns, Interpersonal Violence and Bullying. Matthew.Savage@sdsu.edu

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Professional Expertise: Rhetoric, Contemporary Black/African American Rhetoric and Media Studies. Dlsmith@sdsu.edu

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION M.A. DEGREE PROGRAM (30 units)
Information in the 2024/2025 University Catalog

Part I:	**Core Theory & Methods**	**Three (3) Units**
COMM 601	Seminar: Theory and Research Methods in Communication	
Part II:	**Tools**	**Six (6) Units**
COMM 610	Seminar: Advanced Communication Theory	
COMM 620	Seminar: Quantitative Methods in Communication Research	
COMM 640	Seminar: Critical and Rhetorical Methods in Communication	
COMM 660	Seminar: Ethnographic Methods in Communication Research	
COMM 665	Seminar: Conversation Analysis in Communication Research	
Part III:	**Specialization Courses**	**Twelve (12) Units**
COMM 610	Seminar: Advanced Communication Theory	
COMM 620	Seminar: Quantitative Methods in Communication Research	
COMM 640	Seminar: Critical and Rhetorical Methods in Communication	
COMM 660	Seminar: Ethnographic Methods in Communication Research	
COMM 665	Seminar: Conversation Analysis in Communication Research	
COMM 696	Special Topics (may be repeated with new content)	
COMM 706	Seminar: Organizational Communication	
COMM 707	Seminar: Instructional Communication	
COMM 715	Seminar: Nonverbal Communication	
COMM 721	Seminar: Health Communication	
COMM 735	Seminar: Relational Communication	
COMM 740	Seminar: Rhetorical Theory	
COMM 750	Seminar: Selected Topics: Communication Contexts (may be repeated if new content)	
COMM 751	Seminar: Gender, Sexuality, & Communication	
COMM 752	Seminar: Dark Side of Relational Communication	
COMM 771	Seminar: Intercultural Communication	
COMM 786	Seminar: Communication and Leadership	
COMM 792	Seminar: Persuasion	
COMM 798	Special Study (1-3 Units)	

Part IV: Electives (600 level or above) Six (6) Units
Inside or outside the School of Communication, with graduate adviser's approval, including COMM 798. Electives that require graduate advisor's approval must be handled by submitting a PAAR (Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirements) form to Graduate Studies. No more than 3 units can be taken outside the School of Communication OR as a special study (COMM798).

Part V: Program Completion Three (3) Units
COMM 799A Thesis OR 3 units of COM 600-700

NOTE:

- Specialization courses beyond 12 units can be counted as electives.
- Students may petition to take a second elective outside the department or a second special study.
- No more than 9 units on the Program of Study can be COMM 750.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is one of the highest forms of academic offense. It represents several ethics violations. It is **theft** of intellectual property. In academe, a scholar's words, ideas, and creative products represent essential intellectual property, which are the primary measures of scholarly identity, status and achievement. It is **fraud**. Students should be assessed on their own ideas and abilities; not the ideas and abilities of others. It is **unfair**. It introduces bias and inequity in the assessment process, producing grades for fellow students based on disadvantaged standards and expectations. It is **corruption**. It undermines the credibility of higher education by misrepresenting the meaning of university grades and degrees to the rest of the public. Whether by ignorance, accident, or intent, theft is still theft, fraud is still fraud, inequity is still inequity, and corruption is still corruption. Therefore, the offense, no matter how minor in quantity, is still serious, and is treated as such.

The current SDSU University General Catalog states the following policy on Plagiarism:

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is defined as the act of incorporating ideas, words, or specific substance of another, whether purchased, borrowed, or otherwise obtained, and submitting same to the university as one's own work to fulfill academic requirements without giving credit to the appropriate source. Plagiarism shall include but not be limited to:

(a) submitting work, either in part or in whole, completed by another;
(b) omitting footnotes for ideas, statements, facts, or conclusions that belong to another;
(c) omitting quotation marks when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, sentence, or part thereof;
(d) close and lengthy paraphrasing of the writings of another;
(e) submitting another person's artistic works, such as musical compositions, photographs, paintings, drawings, or sculptures; and
(f) submitting as one's own work papers purchased from research companies.

Disciplinary Action
Cheating and plagiarism in connection with an academic program at the university may warrant two separate and distinct courses of disciplinary action that may be applied concurrently in response to a violation of this policy: (a) academic sanctions, such as grade modifications; and (b) punitive sanctions, such as probation, suspension, or expulsion. Academic sanctions are concerned with the student's grades and are the responsibility of the instructor involved. Punitive sanctions are concerned with the student's records and status on campus and shall be the responsibility of the university president or designated representative. The Coordinator of Judiciary Procedures shall be the president's representative in matters of student discipline.

THE ACADEMIC DISHONESTY POLICY OF THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

In any case in which an instructor identifies evidence for charging a student with violation of academic conduct standards or plagiarism, the presumption will be with that instructor's determination. The instructor(s) will confer with the School Director to confirm the evidence. Once confirmed, the student will be informed and presented with the evidence. Some conditions and terms below clarify the School policy and procedure.

Proper source attribution: Proper attribution occurs by specifying the source of content or ideas. This is done by (a) providing quotation marks around text, when directly quoted, and (b) clearly designating the source of the text or information relied upon in an assignment.

Intellectual contents: Intellectual contents include all forms of 'text' produced by another person or persons. It includes: writings, course syllabi, course lectures and recordings of lectures, visual information such as models, videos, lyrics, software, etc.

Secondary citations: Secondary citation is not strictly a form of plagiarism, but in blatant forms, it can present similar ethical challenges. A secondary citation is citing source A, which in turn cites source B, but it is source B's ideas or content that provide the basis for the claims the student intends to make in the assignment. For example, assume that there is an article by Jones (2006) in the student's hands, in which there is a discussion or quotation of an article by Smith (1998). Assume further that what Smith seems to be saying is very important to the student's analysis. In such a situation, the student should always try to locate the original Smith source. *In general, if an idea is important enough to discuss in an assignment, it is important enough to locate and cite the original source for that idea.* There are several reasons for these policies: (a) Authors sometimes commit citation errors, which might be replicated without knowing it; (b) Authors sometimes make interpretation errors, which might be ignorantly reinforced (c) Therefore, reliability of scholarly activity is made more difficult to assure and enforce; (d) By relying on only a few sources of review, the learning process is short-circuited, and the student's own research competencies are diminished, which are integral to any liberal education; (e) By masking the actual sources of ideas, readers must second guess which sources come from which citations, making the readers' own research more difficult; (f) By masking the origin of the information, the actual source of ideas is misrepresented. Some suggestions that assist with this principle:

- When the ideas Jones discusses are clearly attributed to, or unique to, Smith, then find the Smith source and citation.
- When the ideas Jones is discussing are historically associated more with Smith than with Jones, then find the Smith source and citation.
- In contrast, Jones is sometimes merely using Smith to back up what Jones is saying and believes, and is independently qualified to claim, whether or not Smith would have also said it; in such a case, citing Jones is sufficient.
- Never simply copy a series of citations at the end of a statement by Jones, and reproduce the reference list without actually going to look up what those references report—the only guarantee that claims are valid is for a student to read the original sources of those claims.

Self-plagiarism: Students often practice some form of 'double-dipping,' in which they write on a given topic across more than one course assignment. In general, there is nothing wrong with double-dipping *topics or sources*, but there is a problem with double-dipping *exact and redundant*

text. It is common for scholars to write on the same topic across many publication outlets; this is part of developing expertise and the reputation of being a scholar on a topic. Scholars, however, are not permitted to *repeat exact text* across papers or publications except when noted and attributed, as this wastes precious intellectual space with repetition and does a disservice to the particular source of original presentation by 'diluting' the value of the original presentation. Any time that a writer simply 'cuts-and-pastes' exact text from former papers into a new paper without proper attribution, it is a form of *self-plagiarism*. Consequently, a given paper should never be turned in to multiple classes. Entire paragraphs, or even sentences, should not be repeated word-for-word across course assignments. Each new writing assignment is precisely that, a new writing assignment, requiring new composition on the student's part.

Specific exemplary infractions and consequences:

- **Course failure:** Reproducing a whole paper, paragraph, or large portions of unattributed materials without proper attribution, whether represented by: (a) multiple sentences, images, or portions of images; or (b) by percentage of assignment length, will result in assignment of an "F" in the course in which the infraction occurred, and a report to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities (CSRR[2]).
- **Assignment failure:** Reproducing a sentence or sentence fragment with no quotation marks, but with source citation, or subsets of visual images without source attribution, will *minimally* result in an "F" on the assignment, and may result in greater penalty, including a report to the CSRR, depending factors noted below.
- **Exacerbating conditions--Amount:** Evidence of infraction, even if fragmentary, is increased with a greater: (a) number of infractions; (b) distribution of infractions across an assignment; or (c) proportion of the assignment consisting of infractions.
- **Exacerbating conditions--Intent:** Evidence of foreknowledge and intent to deceive magnifies the seriousness of the offense and the grounds for official response. Plagiarism, whether 'by accident' or 'by ignorance,' still qualifies as plagiarism—it is all students' responsibility to make sure their assignments are not committing the offense.
- **Solicitation of materials to help you gain an unfair advantage**: Asking someone to do part or all of your fieldwork, to write parts of any assignment (unless you are writing with an assigned partner), to provide you with quiz or exam answers. These all qualify as academic dishonesty and may result in a student receiving a zero for the assignment, an F in the class, and/or the case forwarded to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities.
- **Falsifying Data**: Falsifying (i.e., "making up") in part or whole fieldwork or interview notes and transcriptions. These all qualify as academic dishonesty and may result in a student receiving a zero for the assignment, an F in the class, and/or the case forwarded to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities.
- **Exceptions:** Any exceptions to these policies will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and only under exceptional circumstances.

Additional Stipulations for Graduate Students & GTAs: If, following a review with a Communication graduate student, a faculty member and School Director determine academic dishonesty has occurred, the evidence will be submitted to the Center of Student Rights and Responsibilities (CSRR). The report "identifies the student who was found responsible, the general nature of the offense, the action taken, and a recommendation as to whether or not

additional action should be considered by the campus judicial affairs office" (CSRR Website). The student will be permitted to continue as a student in the Communication graduate program and as a Teaching Associate (if so assigned), until such time as CSRR due process has taken its course. If CSRR rules in favor of the student, the student's status in the program will continue. If due process rules against the student, then the student will immediately be dropped from all classes in the Communication graduate program and any Teaching Associate position in the School will be terminated. Graduate students may voluntarily withdraw from classes and Teaching Associate duties when charges are brought forward. The School's Director must be notified in writing. Students who voluntarily withdraw, notify the director in a timely manner, and who are subsequently found not guilty of plagiarism may be reinstated without prejudice at the start of the next semester.

Turnitin.com: In most classes, major writing assignments will be turned in to *Turnitin.com* via Canvas. Faculty may use additional methods to detect plagiarism.

GPA Standards

You are required to maintain an overall 3.0 grade point average (GPA) in

(a) all courses listed on the official degree program required to complete undergraduate deficiencies;
(b) all courses listed on the official degree program (see appendix);
(c) all courses taken at SDSU concurrently with or subsequently to the earliest course listed on the official degree program, including courses accepted for transfer credit.

If your GPA falls below 3.0, you cannot be advanced to candidacy, complete a Master's Thesis, take the Comprehensive Exam, or graduate. Further, you may become ineligible from graduate teaching and research assistantships.

If your cumulative GPA falls below 2.85, the University will place you on scholastic probation. While on scholastic probation, a student is expected to improve his or her GPA to 3.0. Failure to do so may result in scholastic disqualification (the student is removed from classified status and designated as post-baccalaureate unclassified, or disqualified from the university). Unclassified status permits the student to take undergraduate and 500-level graduate coursework. However, such coursework does not count toward the MA. To pursue the master's degree, such a student would have to reapply to the graduate program. See the *University Catalog* for more details on grade point averages, scholastic probation, and scholastic disqualification.

Grading and Advanced Scholarship

Students in courses in the School of Communication have a right to an objective description of how grades are assigned in a course. This information should be provided to students in the course syllabus or as a supplement to the syllabus. All faculty in the School of Communication have the right and obligation to make a determination of the quality of the student's scholarship and assign appropriate grades. Grades of "C," "D," and "F" are appropriate grades for faculty to assign to student work that does not meet the criterion of advanced scholarship or creative works in communication. If you are assigned grades that you do not understand or that you think do not reflect the true quality of your work, you may appeal to the faculty member who assigned the

grade to you. Further appeal may be made according to the *University Catalog* ("Assignment of Grades and Grade Appeals").

General Policy Appeals

Students may appeal virtually any decision, date, or policy elaborated herein or in the SDSU Bulletin of the Graduate Division. In most instances, appeals must be initiated by the student by first seeking a faculty advocate. This advocate should, in writing, bring the appeal to the Director of Graduate Studies. If the case warrants, it will be circulated among and/or brought before the Graduate Committee for consultation. The Director of Graduate Studies will make decisions based on

(a) the merits of the case;
(b) precedent and/or existing policy statements;
(c) advice of the Graduate Committee and, in matters of University Policy, with approval of the Graduate Division.

It is important to understand that appeals are considered for extreme and unusual cases, and that given the issues of fairness and the amount of administrative effort involved, appeals should be pursued only in cases of extraordinary circumstance or merit.

The Society of Communication and Leadership (SoCaL)

The Society of Communication and Leadership (SoCaL) is a student-led academic organization whose members include first and second-year SDSU Communication graduate students. SoCaL fosters an inclusive and supportive community for inter-student and faculty mentorship in addition to an active platform for graduate student advocacy. SoCaL is also dedicated to professional development, which is cultivated through numerous networking events that bridge the gap between students and faculty members. At your service during the 2024-2025 academic year is the following SoCaL leadership team:

SoCaL Officer Position	**Name**	**Contact Information**
President	Danielle Gonzales	dgonzales5372@sdsu.edu
Vice President	Jules Bruetsch	jbruetsch6893@sdsu.edu
Treasurer	Mariah Naea	mnaea1402@sdsu.edu
Secretary	Kyle Pryor-Landman	kpryorlandman8091@sdsu.edu
Faculty Liaison	Athena Cole	acole1668@sdsu.edu
Public Relations & Social Media	Maya Cancio Vendel	mcanciovendel7963@sdsu.edu

Additional graduate student representation is also demonstrated below.

Graduate Committee Position	Name	Contact Information
Graduate Committee Representative	Eda Ozbek	eozbek4101@sdsu.edu

Petition For Adjustment of Academic Requirements (PAAR)

This petition is used to request an exception of specific requirements stated in the University Catalog. These may include substitution of core (required) courses, extension of incompletes, excess units taken through Extended Studies' Open University, using prior year's University Catalog requirements and transfer courses from another university replacing core (required) courses. The petition must be signed and supported by the graduate adviser. See the PAAR form on the Graduate Studies website: https://grad.sdsu.edu/current_grad_students/forms

Instructions to Petitioners to Retake COMM 601

Students who obtain less than a B in COMM 601 may only continue their studies in the Communication graduate program upon approval of a petition. The petition will be evaluated by the graduate faculty and will be approved only under exceptional circumstances and for compelling reasons.

Students submitting the petition should inform the Director of Graduate Studies of their intent to submit a petition as soon as they learn of their grade (which often happens before the end of the semester). Petitions should be sent in electronic form to the Director of Graduate Studies no later than one week after the end of the semester. Petitioners will be notified of the faculty's response to the petition within two weeks of the end of the semester.

PETITION TO RETAKE COMM 601

1. Student Name: _____
2. Red ID: _____
3. Phone _____ e-mail _____
4. Provide a description of what you see as the deficiencies in your work in COM 601.
5. Provide a detailed explanation of the extraordinary, special, and compelling circumstances that prevented you from successfully completing the course you seek to retake (500-word limit; APA style).
6. Provide a cogent, realistic, and detailed plan of action to convince the Graduate Committee that you will be able to earn a "B" or higher, should you be granted the opportunity to retake the course(s) (500-word limit; APA style).

7. Provide a description of why you would like to continue in the program, if provided the opportunity.

8. Attach any documentation you deem relevant to substantiate the claims you make in 5 and 6 above.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM REQUEST FORM
(via Canvas Quiz or Google Form as Instructed)

Revised 7/20/23

Name: _____ **RED ID#: _____**

Email: _____

Comprehensive Exam Chair

The undersigned faculty has agreed to serve as my comprehensive exam chair.

_____ _____

Faculty Member Name Signature

List all courses completed, or in progress, in the MA program at San Diego State University, and the professor with whom the course was completed.

Course Abbreviation/Number/Name	Name of Faculty Instructor
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Preparation for the In-class Portion of the Comprehensive Exam
In preparing your answers for the in-class portion of the comprehensive exams, you are free to talk with other students.

Preparing the Take-Home Portion of the Comprehensive Exam
The comprehensive exam is a measure of your academic progress. You are to write the take-home essay portion of the comprehensive exam WITHOUT assistance from anyone in developing content, editing, or feedback from anyone else, including peers and faculty.
I have read and understand the Comprehensive Exam Policy and Procedures and agree to abide by them:

_____ _____

Signature Printed Name

_____

Date

This form is due to the Director of Graduate Studies via Canvas Quiz or Google Form. See the Graduate Handbook calendar above for dates.

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION M.A. DEFENSE EVALUATION FORM			
Student Name:			Vetted by TurnItIn.com? No: ❍ Yes: ❍
WRITTENS:	**UNACCEPTABLE**	**ACCEPTABLE**	**SUPERIOR**
Theory:	**Theoretical claims omit important principles, evidence ignorance of core information, or commit errors**	**Theoretical claims evidence sound basic knowledge and understanding of theories and their principles and terms**	**Theoretical claims evidence sophisticated, multi-layered comprehension of theory(ies) and their implications**
Method:	**Methodological claims omit important principles, evidence ignorance of core information, or commit errors**	**Methodological claims evidence sound basic knowledge and understanding of methods and their principles and terms**	**Methodological claims evidence sophisticated, multi-layered comprehension of methods and their implications**
Relations & Implications for Theory, Method & Applications	**Claims are largely rote, and lack originality in applying relevant research, identifying heuristic implications, applications &/or conclusions**	**Claims extend beyond rote, integrating relevant research, providing several original implications, applications, &/or conclusions**	**Claims extend consistently beyond rote, providing numerous original uses of relevant research, implications, applications, &/or conclusions**
ORALS COMPETENCE	**UNACCEPTABLE**	**ACCEPTABLE**	**SUPERIOR**
Cogent & Effective Arguments:	**Assertions unclear, lack coherence or interconnection, & reflect sparse or disconnected warrants and citation(s)**	**Claims are fundamentally and soundly connected to warrants and citation(s) (i.e., evidence)**	**Claims are sophisticated, carefully qualified, and soundly connected to warrants and citation(s) in multi-level ways**
Synthesizing/Analyzing Research:	**Claims lack breadth of familiarity with diverse but relevant topical terms, concepts, and relevant research**	**Claims reveal fundamentally and soundly developed connections across diverse arenas of relevant research**	**Claims reveal breadth & depth of claims that identify relevant connections and deeper structures & implications**
Generating Independent Ideas:	**Claims are largely rote, and lack originality in identifying heuristic implications, applications &/or conclusions**	**Claims extend beyond rote, providing several original implications, applications, &/or conclusions**	**Claims extend consistently beyond rote, providing numerous original implications, applications, &/or conclusions**

Thesis Defense Outcome:[1]	Fail	**Comprehensive Exam Defense Outcome:[1]**	
Major revisions necessary	Pass	Unconditional (no retake allowed)	Fail
Moderate revisions necessary	Pass	Conditional (retake with conditions)[2]	Fail
Minor revisions necessary	Pass	Conditional (additional requirements)[3]	Pass
No revisions necessary	Pass	Unconditional	Pass

Committee Comments or Instructions:

Chair Signature: **Date**: / /

[1] Evidence of plagiarism, unethical conduct, and/or reliance on the material assistance of other(s) disqualifies the candidate on all other competency standards, and moves proceedings to a decision regarding standing in the program and qualification for the degree.

[2] Indicates serious deficiency in competencies and/or standards, requiring substantial redress, typically in the form of successful re-take of course and/or exam and defense

[3] Indicates one or more significant issues or topic areas is seriously deficient in competencies or standards, requiring redress, typically in the form of rewrite(s), research paper(s), and/or additional oral defense

COMPREHENSIVE/THESIS EVALUATION FORM					
STUDENT NAME:			FACULTY:		DATE: / /
WRITTENS	**UNACCEPTABLE**	**REVIS-ABLE**	**ACCEPTABLE**	**GOOD**	**SUPERIOR**
Theory	**Theoretical claims omit important principles, evidence ignorance of core information, or commit errors**		**Theoretical claims evidence sound basic knowledge and understanding of theories and their principles and terms**		**Theoretical claims evidence sophisticated, multi-layered comprehension of theory(ies) and their implications**
Question 1	1	2	3	4	5
Question 2	1	2	3	4	5
Question 3	1	2	3	4	5
Methods	**Methodological claims omit important principles, evidence ignorance of core information, or commit errors**		**Methodological claims evidence sound basic knowledge and understanding of methods and their principles and terms**		**Methodological claims evidence sophisticated, multi-layered comprehension of methods and their implications**
Question 1	1	2	3	4	5
Question 2	1	2	3	4	5
Question 3	1	2	3	4	5
Relations, Implications, Applications	**Claims are largely rote, and lack originality in applying relevant research, identifying heuristic implications, applications &/or conclusions**		**Claims extend beyond rote, integrating relevant research, providing several original implications, applications, &/or conclusions**		**Claims extend consistently beyond rote, providing numerous original uses of relevant research, implications, applications, &/or conclusions**
Question 1	1	2	3	4	5
Question 2	1	2	3	4	5
Question 3	1	2	3	4	5
ORALS	**UNACCEPTABLE**		**ACCEPTABLE**		**SUPERIOR**
Arguments	**Assertions unclear, lack coherence or interconnection, & reflect sparse or disconnected warrants and citation(s)**		**Claims are fundamentally and soundly connected to warrants and citation(s) (i.e., evidence)**		**Claims are sophisticated, carefully qualified, and soundly connected to warrants and citation(s) in multi-level ways**
EVALUATION	1	2	3	4	5
Synthesis	**Claims lack breadth of familiarity with diverse but relevant topical terms, concepts, and relevant research**		**Claims reveal fundamentally and soundly developed connections across diverse arenas of relevant research**		**Claims reveal breadth & depth of claims that identify relevant connections and deeper structures & implications**
EVALUATION	1	2	3	4	5
Ideation	**Claims are largely rote, and lack originality in identifying heuristic implications, applications &/or conclusions**		**Claims extend beyond rote, providing several original implications, applications, &/or conclusions**		**Claims extend consistently beyond rote, providing numerous original implications, applications, &/or conclusions**
EVALUATION	1	2	3	4	5
Committee Comments or Instructions:					

RE-TAKE OR REVISION	UNACCEPTABLE (1)	REVIS-ABLE (2)	ACCEPTABLE (3)	GOOD (4)	SUPERIOR (5)
	Claims are largely rote, and lack originality in identifying heuristic implications, applications &/or conclusions		**Claims extend beyond rote, providing several original implications, applications, &/or conclusions**		**Claims extend consistently beyond rote, providing numerous original implications, applications, &/or conclusions**
EVALUATION	1	2	3	4	5

Thesis Defense Outcome:[1]		**Comprehensive Exam Defense Outcome:**[1]	
Major revisions necessary	Pass	Unconditional (no retake allowed)	Fail
Moderate revisions necessary	Pass	Conditional (retake with conditions)[2]	Fail
Minor revisions necessary	Pass	Conditional (additional requirements)[3]	Pass
No revisions necessary	Pass	Unconditional	Pass

Committee Comments or Instructions:

Chair Signature: **Date**: / /

[1] Evidence of plagiarism, unethical conduct, and/or reliance on the material assistance of other(s) disqualifies the candidate on all other competency standards, and moves proceedings to a decision regarding standing in the program and qualification for the degree.

[2] Indicates serious deficiency in competencies and/or standards, requiring substantial redress, typically in the form of successful re-take of course and/or exam and defense

[3] Indicates one or more significant issues or topic areas is seriously deficient in competencies or standards, requiring redress, typically in the form of rewrite(s), research paper(s), and/or additional oral defense

Comprehensive Exam Study Tips

Standard Terms

Preparation for the examination should include review of standard terms that we expect MA candidates to know after completing their degree. While it is important for candidates to review and be prepared to define the terms and concepts in this list, by no means is it a complete list of what a candidate should study and be prepared to write or speak about.

Terms:

Epistemology
Axiology
Ontology
Paradigm
Social science
Humanities
Post-modernism
Rhetoric
Theory
Theory falsification
Hypothesis
Grounded theory
Criteria for evaluating theory
Empiricism
Validity (and types)
Reliability (and types)
Statistical power
Random assignment vs. random selection
Levels of measurement
Types of variables (independent, dependent, moderating, mediating)
Types of scales (Likert, semantic differential, etc.)
Measures of central tendency and dispersion
Error types and hypothesis testing
Meaning
Symbol
Experiment (and types)
Ethnography
Conversation Analysis
Content Analysis
Rhetorical criticism

Continua

The process of conducting research is a cycle where the research moves back and forth between two positions on a set of Continua. In the process of narrowing the research focus, reviewing relevant literature, collecting data, analyzing data, writing up research, the researcher works at both ends of the Continua, often simultaneously. BOTH ends can be a benefit or a liability.

1. induction - deduction
2. authoritative - interpretive
3. objectivity - subjectivity
4. reflexive - unquestioning
5. atemporal - temporal
6. omniscient narrator - situated narrator
7. intimacy - distance
8. self - other
9. monologic - dialogic
10. creative - analytic
11. observer - participant
12. historical - ahistorical

13. crystallize	-	triangulate
14. theory	-	data
15. disembodied	-	embodied
16. disengaged	-	engaged
17. nonfiction	-	fiction
18. postmodern	-	modern
19. process	-	product
20. universal discourse	-	competing discourse
21. stable	-	shifting
22. risky	-	safe
23. generalizable knowledge	-	contextual knowledge
24. author validates	-	participants validate
25. questioning self	-	questioning others

Some comparisons between traditional ideal(ized) science and textual-rhetorical approaches:

1. Science makes arguments of probability; rhetoric makes arguments of plausibility
2. Science looks to "control" context and history (i.e., hold them "constant"); rhetoric looks to make these central to understanding
3. Science tends to view language as "mere" medium; rhetoric makes language the *sine qua non* of explanation
4. Science views argument as secondary, and in the service of, method; rhetoric views argument as method
5. Science tends to examine multiple cases; rhetoric tends to focus on specific cases
6. Science attempts to factor the observer out of the method; rhetoric views the observer as method
7. Science is relatively codified and regimented; rhetoric is eclectic and open to *bricolage*
8. Science tests theory; rhetoric illustrates theory
9. Science seeks to describe, explain, predict and control; rhetoric seeks to understand, illumine, and evaluate
10. Scientific theory is representative; rhetorical theory is heuristic

SAMPLE THESIS CONTRACT BETWEEN THESIS CHAIR AND THESIS CANDIDATE

Thesis Chairs and candidates share a common goal of conducting a research project and writing a Master's Thesis that represents a contribution to the body of knowledge in the discipline. However, chairs and candidates often encounter differences with regard to issues of quality and timing of completion. In order to clarify those differences, the chair and candidate should agree to the following regarding protocol.

1. Candidates can only register for thesis units in the semester after the candidate has submitted a full thesis proposal to the School of Communication in the previous semester by the appropriate deadline. This deadline is typically the Friday, two weeks prior to the end of the semester. This requirement assures (a) that the proposed thesis project is ready for thesis work, (b) that it meets the intellectual standards of the entire School of Communication, and (c) that all faculty and candidates are apprised of the status of graduate work in the program.
2. The thesis is a collaboration between the candidate and the Committee members, but the ultimate authority for the progress of your thesis project lies with the Committee, which represents the "instructor of record" for the academic course of your thesis. They are expected to enact this role with fair consideration of candidate interests and incorporation of candidate input, but are not obligated to approve candidate actions taken in the pursuit of the thesis.
3. The exclusive role of the Thesis Chair is to guide the thesis project—in consultation with the thesis candidate and committee—to ensure that the completed thesis meets the standards of academic excellence. The timing of the thesis completion is based on the thesis quality as determined by the Thesis Chair and committee members.
4. A proposal meeting is required. At this meeting, the entire Thesis Committee is convened at the **outset** of the process to plan and approve the proposal prior to its submission to the faculty.
5. The Master's Thesis is generally a multi-semester project. The Thesis Chair assumes no obligation to accelerate this process with regard to completion date, especially when such acceleration impairs the quality of the Thesis.
6. The Thesis Committee has the option to meet over the summer months, but is not obligated to do so. Any expectation you may have for a summer defense is at the discretion of your Committee members, and should be explicitly pre-negotiated.
7. Candidates may obligate themselves to other, post-graduation activities (e.g., further graduate study, employment, etc.) assuming that the thesis will be completed by a certain deadline. The candidate does so at his or her own risk. SDSU, the School of Communication, and the Thesis Chair are under no obligation to meet such deadlines imposed by the candidate.
8. Thesis Committee members can remove themselves from the Thesis Committee for cause at any point of the thesis process, and candidates may request the change of Committee composition at any point in the process for cause. Cause must be demonstrated as a reason related to the academic merits of the project and the member's role in facilitating these merits. In any case that a Committee member believes him/herself to be a hindrance to the candidate's academic progress, or a

candidate believes a change in membership will facilitate the academic merits of the project, a change in membership may be requested of the Director of Graduate Studies and Graduate Division. Such requests must be made in writing, and the revision in Thesis Committee form must be submitted.

9. The candidate will make **1 hardbound copy** of the completed thesis (one for the School of Communication). Alternative bindings for the committee members may be negotiated individually). The thesis is intended to be a lasting legacy of learning for the School of Communication, its candidates, and faculty, and is therefore expected to be produced with due regard for its merit and status.
10. By signing this contract, the candidate claims to have explicitly discussed and negotiated any relevant potential intellectual property and publication issues regarding the thesis project.
11. By signing this contract, the candidate claims to have (1) read and understood the *Graduate Handbook* policies and procedures regarding the Thesis process, the *University Catalog* regarding candidate conduct, ethics, and grievances. Having done so, the candidate promises not to plagiarize or engage in any other ethically proscribed practices identified therein.

We, the undersigned have read the three points above and agree to those points as a protocol for completion of the master's Thesis.

Thesis Chair Signature	Thesis Chair Name (print)	Date
Thesis Candidate Signature	Thesis Candidate Name (print)	Date

Sample Thesis Proposal Cover Page Format

Lookout Point:

Parent and Teen Perceptions of Sexual Communication in the Family

_____

A Thesis Proposal

Presented to the Faculty of

San Diego State University

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Communication

_____

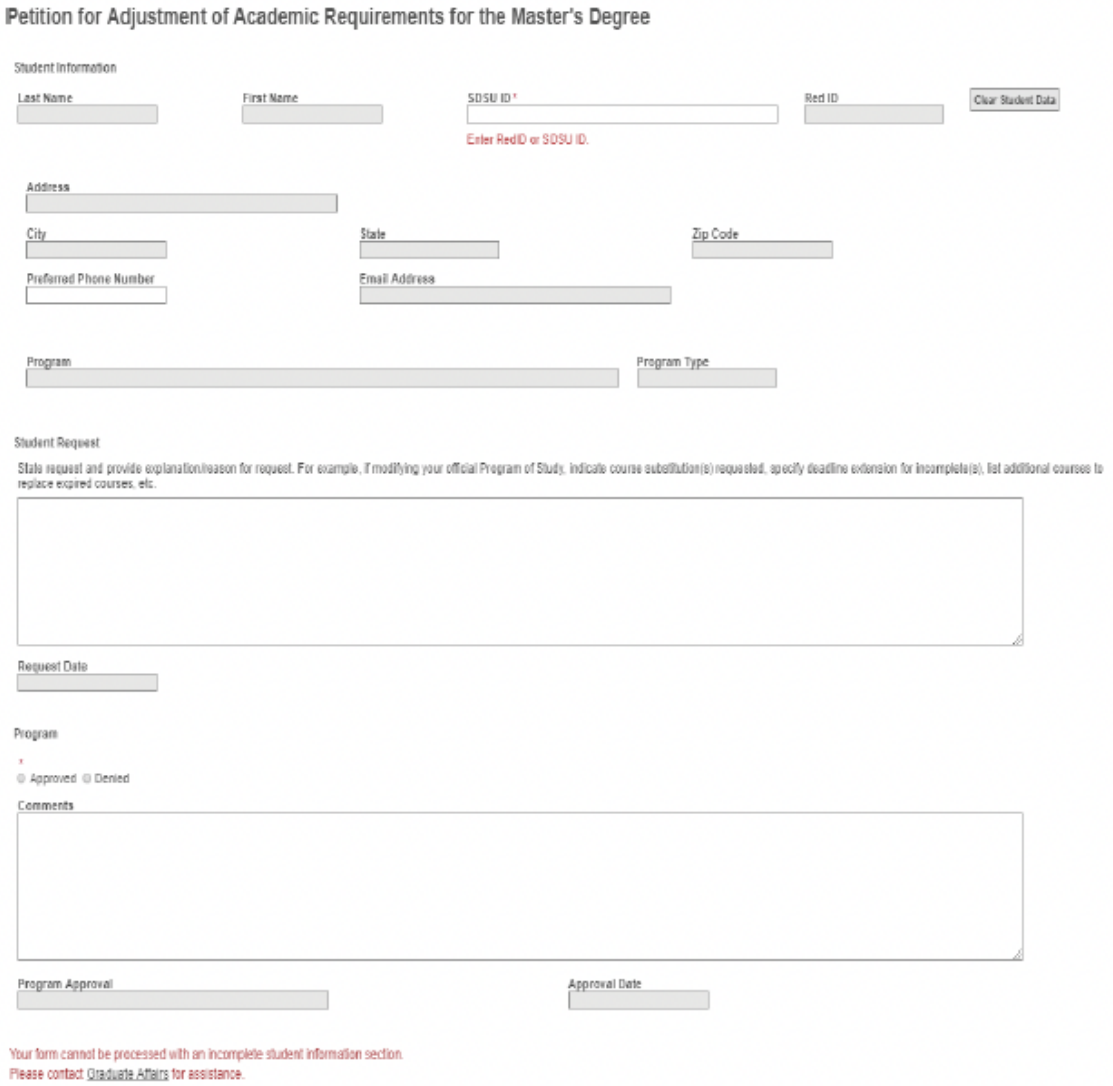
Laura Blank

September 18, 20--

These faculty members hereby approve this proposal:

_____	_____
Dr. Patricia Geist-Martin, Thesis Chair School of Communication	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Brian H. Spitzberg School of Communication	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Shulamit Ritblatt Department of Child and Family Studies	Date

Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirements (PAAR) Form



Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirements for the Master's Degree

Student Information

Last Name | First Name | SDSU ID * | RedID | Clear Student Data

Enter RedID or SDSU ID.

Address

City | State | Zip Code

Preferred Phone Number | Email Address

Program | Program Type

Student Request

State request and provide explanation/reason for request. For example, if modifying your official Program of Study, indicate course substitution(s) requested, specify deadline extension for incomplete(s), list additional courses to replace expired courses, etc.

Request Date

Program

*

Approved | Denied

Comments

Program Approval | Approval Date

Your form cannot be processed with an incomplete student information section.
Please contact Graduate Affairs for assistance.

Note: PAAR is one of the graduate student e-forms that students can initiative and submit.

Thesis Committee Approval Form

SDSU | College of Graduate Studies

College of Graduate Studies
San Diego State University
5500 Campanile Drive
San Diego CA 92182 .8220
Phone: 619 .594 .5213

Appointment of Thesis/Project Committee Packet

Students who wish to enroll in Thesis 799A must first have an approved Thesis Committee Form on file with Graduate Studies. Once this form is processed and approved, students may request a schedule number and an add code from Graduate Studies in order to enroll in Thesis 799A.

Graduate Advisor: Please email this completed form to gra@sdsu.edu, and cc: the student on the email.

Graduate Advisor: Date:

Student Name: Red ID: EMPL ID:

Degree Type and Major: Student Email:

Working Thesis Title:

The Graduate Advisor should check off all of the following items that are relevant and that they have personally confirmed:

□ All committee members agree to serve until the degree is complete.

□ For theses in foreign languages, all faculty members are fluent in the language. I have verified student competency in standard written English.

□ For human subjects research, the protocol has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), or IRB has verified that no approval is necessary. (Please attach the IRB verification)

□ For research that involves handling or observing vertebrate animals (or tissues), protocol has been approved by IACUC. (Please attach the IACUC verification)

The thesis Chair and Student have reached an acceptable agreement for "Rights to Thesis Data and Publication Authorship". Please check one:

□ All rights to data and publication authorship belong exclusively to the student.

□ Student and Thesis Committee chair have reached an alternate agreement, which is attached to this email.

I have approved the following committee members:

	Name	Email	EMPL ID	Department
Chair				
Co-Chair (optional)				
Second				
Third (outside member)				
Additional Member (if applicable)				

*** The Petition for Lecturers, Adjuncts, and Outside Experts Without SDSU Affiliation to Serve on Thesis Committees is required for committee member(s) who are not Tenured / Tenure-Track faculty, and who have not received prior authorization for committee service.

Updated 01/05/2023

Sample Invitation to Thesis Defense

You are cordially invited to the Master's Thesis defense of

Laura Blank
School of Communication

"Lookout Point: Parent and Teen Perceptions of Sexual Communication in the Family "

Friday, April 6, 2020
8:30 -10:30 AM
Communication 209

Committee:

Dr. Patricia Geist-Martin, Thesis Chair
School of Communication

Dr. Brian H. Spitzberg
School of Communication

Dr. Shulamit Ritblatt
Department of Child and Family Studies

Get Involved with Professional Communication Organizations

Getting involved with professional organizations while you are still a graduate student is an excellent way to both gain valuable experience in your chosen field and to prepare yourself for your future as a communication scholar. Many of these organizations hold annual conferences that offer great networking and learning opportunities. Additionally, SDSU's SoCaL offers the opportunity to connect with your peers at SDSU and to offer support and comradery right here at home.

Professional Organizations and Conferences

Central States Communication Association (CSCA)

Congress of Qualitative Inquiry

Eastern Communication Association (ECA)

International Association for Relationship Research (IARR)

International Communication Association (ICA)

National Communication Association (NCA)

Organization for the Study of Communication Language and Gender (OSCLG)

Rhetoric Society of America

Southern States Communication Association (SSCA)

Western States Communication Association (WSCA)

Resources for Career Search

For more information about careers in general, consult the SDSU Career Services office (Student Services East 1200), which offers excellent services (e.g., job listings, a resource library, resume examples, resume-building software, instruction on how to research prospective companies, etc.). There are professional organizations that can assist your career development, including: the International Communication Association (www.icahdq.org), the National Communication Association (www.natcom.org), and the Western States Communication Association (http://www.westcomm.org). Attending association meetings and conferences, volunteering to serve select administrative roles, or merely obtaining Association literature (e.g., newsletters, job listings) can all facilitate job search.

Some of you may begin to consider academe as a possible profession. If so, or if you are considering a field for which a Ph.D. is important (e.g., research consultant for a think tank, organizational change consultant, etc.), then you may want to research graduate programs in communication.

Finally, don't forget to do the obvious—talk to professors, students, friends, and family about jobs or contacts they may know of, go on some informational interviews, intern if you possibly can, and adapt your resume and letters to the jobs to which you are applying. And when you ask a professor to write letters of recommendation for you, it is tactful to offer to provide a brief 'bio' or resume, including a listing of courses you have taken from that professor, what grades you earned, a description of the positions you are applying for and the due-dates for letters, and peel-and-stick labels with the addresses already printed on them. Such courtesies greatly increase the likelihood that your letters get in on time.

Process for Requesting Letters of Recommendation

In the final year of your M.A. program you will need letters of recommendation, either for Ph.D. applications or for positions for which you are applying. The steps below will help your professors create a strong letter of recommendation. Ask if your letter writer would prefer electronic documents or hard copies.

1. Contact your professors and ask if they would be willing to write you a letter of recommendation. If they say "yes" then indicate that:
   - you will provide them with a file folder of materials to assist them in the process
   - this could be either online, in a Google doc, or hard copy—check with the letter writer

2. Create a file folder for each professor with your name written clearly on the tab. Inside the file folder include the following:
   - A cover letter indicating what courses you took from the professor, when you took the courses, the grade you earned, and the name of the project you wrote for the class, Also indicate in this cover letter anything else about your time at SDSU that might be worth mentioning in the letter of recommendation.
   - A page listing the program(s) you are applying to (description), the deadline for applying (and sending letters), and the name of the person and address to whom the letter should be directed. It is best to sequence this list based on the first deadline a letter is due. It is important also to track down the name of the graduate director because often faculty know these individuals and can write a personal note with the letter.
   - A copy of your transcripts
   - A copy of the personal statement you will submit with your application.
   - A vita
   - Anything else you can include that might assist the professor in writing the letter (e.g., sample of your writing).
   - Provide the addresses for the letters on self-adhesive labels, so the writers can peel and stick onto their own letterhead envelope (unless letters are submitted electronically)