



OHIO  
UNIVERSITY

## SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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Scripps College of Communication

# **inCOMS:**

A Description of the Graduate Program  
and Procedures

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

**inCOMS**

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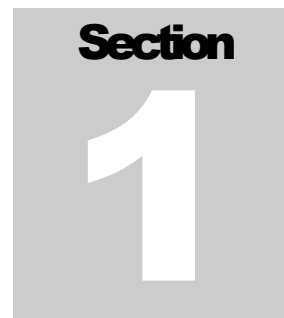
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## About the Program

*Members of the academic community within the School of Communication Studies strive for excellence in teaching, research, and service so that others also may excel.*

The School of Communication Studies (COMS) at Ohio University is a world-renowned program for advanced and specialized study within the discipline of communication. A diverse group of talented faculty, staff, and students forms the basis for a strong sense of community. Although we care deeply about the success of our community members, we also care about those who live and work in our university, city, state, nation, and world. The doctoral program in the School of Communication Studies provides scholarly experiences targeting those who wish to enter the professoriate or public, private, and non-profit sector jobs. This section is a brief introduction to COMS; however, you will soon learn that the culture of our school cannot be captured adequately by black and white text.


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**ICON KEY**

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 See Gayle or Ben

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 See university web

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 See COMS web

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**Other places to look.** This booklet provides a wealth of information; however, you should also familiarize yourself with other sources like the COMS Website, the Ohio University website, and the various people in the school that may have information you need. Various throughout this booklet you will see icons (pictured to the left) indicating people/places you should visit.

## About Ohio University

Ohio University was established in 1804 as the first planned public university in the Louisiana Purchase. As a “top 50” national public university, Ohio has grown to become an internationally known institution for higher learning comprised of eleven colleges: the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business, the College of Fine Arts, the College of Health Sciences and Professions, the College of Osteopathic Medicine, the Graduate College, the Honor Tutorial College Honors College, the Patton College of Education and Human Services, the Russ College of Engineering and Technology, the Scripps College of Communication, and University College. Additional degree-granting units include the Center for International Studies and the

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs. Master of Arts degrees are offered in nearly every academic program and Doctorate degrees are offered in many.

Ohio University has more than 900 full time faculty, 300 part-time faculty, and over 900 graduate teaching associates, graduate research associates, and graduate staff members. Approximately 16500 undergraduate students attend the Athens campus. The university is residential in orientation, which means that nearly all undergraduate students spend a least two years living on campus in quaint residence halls.

The history of communication studies at Ohio is as old as the university itself. In 1808, just four years after the University opened, the curriculum included courses in classical rhetoric and oratory. The history of speech and debate at the university dates back to 1812, making this one of the oldest ongoing speech and debate programs in the country. In 1968, five different academic units were combined to form the College of Communication: the School of Communication Studies, the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism, the J. Warren McClure School of Communication Systems Management, the School of Media Arts and Studies, and the School of Visual Communications. The College is also home to special programs and centers including the Gaming Research and Interactive Design lab (GRID), WOUB Center for Public Media and the Ohio University *Post*. In Fall of 2006, the College was became the Scripps College of Communication.

On May 13, 2008, Ohio University President McDavis announced a \$7.5 million lead gift from alumnus Steven L. Schoonover and his wife, Barbara, for the new integrated communication facility. The building is tentatively dubbed the Schoonover Center for Communication. The building will be located on the site of the former Baker Center and the current Radio-Television Building. It is slated for completion in 2012.

The Scripps College of Communication was one of the first Colleges of Communication in the world, and currently one of only a handful of “named” colleges of communication. Sometimes referred to as the “Crown Jewel” of Ohio University, the Scripps College of Communication is regarded as an area of excellence for the university. Nationally renowned programs within the college create and sustain a level of excitement and respect difficult to replicate elsewhere on campus or at other universities. Over 4500 students have majors within one or more of the college’s programs.



**[www.scrippscollege.ohio.edu](http://www.scrippscollege.ohio.edu)**

The School of Communication Studies is well positioned as a key academic unit within the Scripps College of Communication. The school teaches over 4500 students each academic year, has 24 fulltime, tenure-track faculty, and has over 50 “active” graduate students.

## About COMS

The study of communication finds its roots in antiquity with the teaching of rhetoric and oratory by classical scholars like Aristotle, Plato, and Cicero. Although rhetoric dominated the study of communication for centuries, the contemporary discipline of communication is quite multi-faceted in its approach. Today, the discipline of communication is guided by members of the International Communication Association, the National Communication Association, and several regional associations in the United States (most members of COMS belong to the Central States Communication Association or the Eastern Communication Association). These various associations study a wide range of phenomena related to human communication ranging from mediated mass communication to interpersonal communication.

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### COMS RANKINGS

#### AT A GLANCE

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Organizational Comm (9<sup>th</sup>)

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Health Comm (10<sup>th</sup>)

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Rhetoric (18<sup>th</sup>)

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Interpersonal (20<sup>th</sup>)

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The School of Communication Studies is committed to a diverse and pluralistic approach to the study of human communication. As a scholarly community we encourage “multi-perspectival thinking” in our approach to the discipline. In our respect and valuing of multiple theoretical perspectives and multiple methods for research, we discourage myopic allegiance to a single “correct” way of practicing communication.

The School of Communication Studies has grown to be a large, yet selective undergraduate program with emphases in Organizational Communication, Health Communication, and Communication and Public Advocacy. The school typically has between 500 and 600 undergraduate majors at any one time.

The school’s graduate program has developed into an internationally distinguished program for graduate study, research, and practice. Various “reputation studies” show that the school’s academic programs are well respected. The most recent reputation study by the National Communication Association placed our Organizational and Health Communication tracks in the top 10 nationally, and our interpersonal and rhetoric and public culture programs in the top 20 nationally. That same study showed that our school was in the top 5 for “recent improvement” in organizational and health communication. In short, we have very well respected programs and have been recognized for working hard to improve those programs. The doctoral program in the school is the second oldest PhD program at Ohio University.

Collectively we view scholarship as both a privilege and responsibility. The School of Communication Studies is committed to fostering high quality scholarship serving the needs of the university, community, and discipline. Although it is difficult to reduce the scholarly efforts of so many individuals to a few key terms, representative scholarship in the school has addressed issues including social justice and social change; improvements in public policy, education, and public health; the improvement of human relationships and community; the intersection of work and family; friendship; emotions in organizational, personal, and academic life; the creation of fan culture; the

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

use of humor; health communication campaigns; racial and gender dynamics of political communication; alternative ways of organizing; and, the communication needs of people without homes, academically at-risk, or other disadvantaged people. Our faculty and graduate students have a long and successful history of collaboration.

Like any large academic unit, several people serve in administrative and staff roles to ensure that school operations run smoothly. At a glance, here are the names of individuals serving in those capacities at the university, in the college, and in the school:

President of the University.....Dr. Roderick McDavis

Provost.....Dr. Pamela Benoit

Dean of the Scripps College of Communication.....Dr. Gregory Shepherd

Director of the School.....Dr. Scott Titsworth

Director of Graduate Studies.....Dr. Benjamin Bates

Director of Undergraduate Studies.....Dr. Jerry Miller

Director of the Basic Course.....Mr. Dan West

Director of Forensics.....Mr. Dan West

Administrative Coordinator.....Ms. Gayle McKerrow

Records Management Coordinator.....Ms. Vicki Dornbush

IT Coordinator.....Mr. Chris Weibel

For issues related to operations of the graduate program, the primary contact people are Dr. Bates and Ms. McKerrow. The Director of Graduate Studies is responsible for administrating, assessing, and implementing policy for the graduate program as well as addressing the unique needs and concerns of graduate students. The graduate director also oversees the yearly process of selecting and admitting new graduate students. The administrative coordinator (Ms. McKerrow) handles many of the issues involving paperwork and contracts for graduate associates in the school.

## Community Expectations and Objectives

In any large community like COMS there should be some understanding that every person is unique and no single “path” will work for every individual. At the same time, for the community to achieve excellence there must be some common understanding regarding behavior and philosophy. Although we should continually be reflective about community expectations, please consider the following:



## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

- 1. Have respect for “otherness.”** Besides respecting others’ space, also respect their right to have theoretical, methodological, philosophical, political, and perhaps even existential difference. You are not required to adopt the philosophy of others, but you are expected to support and value their right to be unique.
- 2. Be caring.** In addition to caring about other members of COMS, we hope that you will think about the various ways in which your research and teaching can help others. The school has a long tradition of engaging in research that benefits others in some meaningful way. The civic minded reputation of the school has been built on the efforts of individuals like you who seek meaningful projects. Likewise, many of our teachers look for ways to connect their classroom to issues facing the larger community.
- 3. Avoid the temptation to criticize first and ask questions later.** Because of the intense drive to think critically, the temptation to critique others’ opinions and vehemently defend our own opinion oftentimes outstrips our desire to be inquisitive. Whether reacting to an article, taking part in a class discussion, or writing a reflective essay, avoid limiting your contribution to mere criticism.
- 4. Appropriately take part.** Whether you are in a graduate seminar, attending a colloquium, or standing in the hallway, practice good communication skills. Actively embracing a “loud silence” (noticeably avoiding discussion and interaction) or a “silent loudness” (speaking very often but not saying much) are both potentially problematic. In short, active participation is a required skill for success in graduate school; “active participation” involves an ideal combination of listening, thinking and talking (and, that order works well in many situations).
- 5. Be humble and thankful.** Many people work hard to ensure that your time in COMS is exciting, rigorous, and productive. Just as we are thrilled that you are here, please take time to thank others for their efforts on your behalf no matter how large or small. Gratitude is priceless and will bring you good Karma. Also, remember to take time to celebrate the success of others.
- 6. Take care of yourself.** As you will learn, academic work at this level is exhilarating. While such exuberance is fun, it can also cause all of us to get burned out at times. You should take care of your health and remember that life does exist outside of Lasher Hall. Every member of the school has the right to say “no” as necessary to promote more balanced living.
- 7. Attend when you should attend.** The school and college sponsor various academic programs, lectures, and other events. Although from time-to-time it may be necessary to miss such events, every member of the community is expected to attend when possible.

## GradCo: The Graduate Student Association

Graduate students in the school are members of GradCo, a form of “student governance” for graduate students. Students elect a president, vice president, treasurer, and committee chairs each year (elections for the executive committee are held in the Spring and other officers are elected in the Fall). GradCo sponsors research colloquia, helps host guests and visitors to the school, nominates graduate students to serve on various committees in the school, and performs other tasks to help ensure the successful accomplishment of the school’s mission.

The executive council and other officers in GradCo work closely with the Director of Graduate Studies to help ensure that the interests of graduate students are considered in important school decisions. Likewise, those officers can serve as a voice for graduate student interests not already being considered by the faculty. You are encouraged to support GradCo when meetings and events are scheduled.

## Understanding Solutions to Problems

As you participate in the COMS scholarly community, you will surely encounter problems, obstacles, and roadblocks. Often the answer to those “bumps in the road” is only a conversation away. Besides relying on other graduate students for advice, here are initial contact people for more complicated issues:

### **I have a question about my contract, salary, or benefits.**

Gayle McKerrow handles all issues related to contracts. She typically can answer your questions directly or can put you in contact with the appropriate office at the university.

### **I have a question about the course that I am assigned to teach.**

The school has various people assigned to coordinate multi-section courses that graduate students typically teach (i.e., COMS 103, 205, 206, 215, 235). For most questions you should contact the coordinator of that course. Although, the Director of the Basic Course specializes in 103, s/he also serves as a formal resource person for issues related to teaching in the school.

### **I have questions about my office including how to get supplies, how to use the phone, etc.**

Vicki Dornbush can help you with general office needs including supplies, photocopying, telephone calls, etc. Your office will come equipped with a phone; however, you must use a calling card to make personal long-distance calls. If you need to make long-distance calls for school related business, contact Vicki. The cell coverage in Lasher hall is excellent and many students use their cell phone as a primary contact number.

**I have a question about computers and/or software.**

The school provides office computers for use by graduate students. There is also a computer lab that is available to both graduate and undergraduate students for use during the day. Lab computers are equipped with most of the commonly used software packages used by members of the school (Microsoft products, inVivo, SPSS, etc.). The School does not provide software for personal computers, although you can buy discounted packages through the Tech Depot in Baker Center. If you have questions about computer-related issues, you should contact the IT person for the school.

**I have questions about special funding for research, travel to conferences, and other “one time” projects.**

Depending on yearly funding and budgeting, the college and school offers special research grants for graduate students. The Graduate Director will make announcements about such grant opportunities. These grant opportunities include the Graduate Student Senate’s quarterly competition. Such grant opportunities are competitive and require a well crafted proposal to be considered for funding. The School and the College also tries to provide graduate students with some funding to offset travel to conferences where they are presenting a paper or participating in some official way. The amount of such travel awards varies, although awards are typically in the neighborhood of \$500 per conference.

**I have questions about my program of study or other requirements of the program.**

You should always consult with your POS or dissertation advisor first about questions related to your academic progress. The graduate director also can answer questions about general requirements for the program. The faculty have established several guidelines which are identified in this booklet; however, much decision-making power is vested with you in consultation with your advisor and committee.

**I have a problem with another student, a student in my class, or someone else affiliated with the university.**

Of course, we hope that all members of the academic community will act as professionals. In very rare circumstances where you need to talk to someone else, either formally or informally, about a problem, you are encouraged to talk with your advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies, the Basic Course Director, or the Director of the School (selecting one based on the nature of the problem). You can also consult with the University Ombuds office (593-2627); the Ombuds office’s mission is to help resolve interpersonal disputes and other concerns raised by members of the Ohio University community.



[www.ohiou.edu/ombuds](http://www.ohiou.edu/ombuds)

**What are “Must Attend” events?**

Of course, you are encouraged to attend all functions sponsored by the school. Realism, however, suggests that you will need to make choices. Must attend events include research colloquia presented by members of our community, research presentations by visiting scholars, the graduate awards banquet, the NCA reception (if you attend) and any other high priority event announced by the school. You are “Strongly Encouraged” to participate in other activities like staffing the NCA Graduate Open House table, brown bag lunch sessions over topics of interests, breakfast or other meal opportunities with job candidates and other visitors, serving as a judge for the forensics program, and other special events hosted by the school. Generally speaking we think it is important to support each others’ endeavors whenever possible. And, when the school is doing special things like playing host to job candidates or visiting scholars it is important to give those individuals the attention they deserve. Everyone is busy and breaking from routine can be inconvenient. What makes a community special is when such inconveniences are kept in perspective alongside the deserved support of others.

## Information for First Year Students

*The first year of the graduate program provides a comprehensive introduction to communication theory, research methods, and research/literature related to our areas of specialization.*

The first year of your graduate program is critical for your development as a young scholar in the discipline. Our philosophy is that a doctoral education should equip students with a comprehensive understanding of theory, methods, and praxis relevant to the communication discipline. In fact, as a faculty we think that our first year curriculum is distinctive. This section introduces you to your first year experience as well as other important pieces of information to ease your transition to the School of Communication Studies

### What you Should do Before School Starts

Approximately two weeks before the Fall quarter opening date the school will hold orientation for new graduate students. During that orientation you will receive specific information about the class you will be teaching as well as other recommendations for navigating the first few weeks of classes. Prior to the beginning of classes you should also attend to the following:

- 1. Check on your contract.** You may wish to visit the Graduate College and/or talk with Gayle to make sure all of the necessary paperwork is completed for your contract. Although you may have an opportunity to meet with Graduate College staff during the university-wide orientation, you can avoid lines by taking care of this before-hand. The Graduate College office is located in the Research and Technology Center ([www.ohio.edu/graduate](http://www.ohio.edu/graduate)).
  - 2. Check on Financial Aid if applicable.** If you are planning on applying for a student loan or other type of financial aid, you may wish to make contact with the Office of Financial Aid, which is located in Chubb Hall. Note: You must be registered for classes in order to get financial aid. Disbursements are typically made the first week
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## INFORMATION FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

of class. In exceptional circumstances, the Financial Aid office can issue a “short term loan” to tide you over as you wait for your disbursement. If you are in dire need of funds, bring a copy of your FAFSA report or your Graduate Appointment letter to Chubb Hall to inquire if a loan is possible in your case.

**3. Obtain an ID and OHIO email account.** Visit the Tech Depot on the first floor of the Baker University Center to obtain your student ID. Once you obtain your ID, you can then also obtain a university e-mail account and username. You can activate your account and username by visiting [myid.admsrv.ohio.edu/myid/index.cfm](http://myid.admsrv.ohio.edu/myid/index.cfm). This account is your e-mail at Ohio University, and the same username accesses resources at the library, registrar, and many other places. Even if you use another e-mail address as your primary e-mail, you should activate your e-mail and set it to forward to your other e-mail account—all official communication from the school and university will go to your university address.

**4. Visit Parking Services to obtain a parking permit.** Permits must be purchased in person at the Department of Parking Services. They are located at 100 Factory Street. A driver's license and Student ID is required to purchase a permit. The cost of a commuter permit is approximately \$105 per year. Many students find Lasher to be conveniently located for parking. There is metered on-street parking on Union right by Lasher Hall and free parking within a short walk. To put this in some perspective, the closest commuter parking is about the same distance in the other direction. So, although you are not guaranteed a space without a permit, you will likely have about the same distance to walk whether you park for free on side streets or pay for a permit to park in a commuter lot. Of course, the commuter lot does allow you convenient parking near other places on campus.

**5. Fill out the required paperwork at the Graduate College.** If you go out the back door of Lasher, diagonally across the alley is a brick building. If you enter the building, go up two flights of stairs, and enter room 220, you will have arrived at the Graduate College's main office.

At the Graduate College you will need to fill out the following forms

- I-9 form. You will need to present GSS with:
  - Two forms of I.D. if you are an international student (unexpired passport & I-20 form)
  - American students: your unexpired passport, or 1) license + social security card or 2) license + certified birth certificate.
- W-4 form (This is a tax form required of all students both American and International).

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- Ohio PERS (Public Employees Retirement System) exemption form. You can (and probably should) complete this form to “opt out” of Ohio University’s Retirement plan (unless you plan on working at a University in Ohio when you finish your Ph.D.).
- Homeland Security form. This is not the exact name, but basically it is a form you must complete and sign to attest that you do not engage in terrorist activity.
- Direct deposit form. The University pays employees through direct deposit, not paper checks. To make sure the money gets to your account, they will ask for a voided check.
- Finally, there is an optional Personnel Data Profile form. This form collects demographic data and asks whether you want your contact information to be listed in the campus directory.

*Note: All of these forms will be available at the University-wide orientation scheduled for the week before classes begin. At this orientation you can also get your Ohio University I.D. If you are not pressed for time, it may make sense for you to “kill several birds with one orientation.”*

- 7. Register for classes using the online registration system.** Your Fall quarter schedule is pre-determined, so there is no need to meet with your advisor before enrolling. You will need to get a copy of your DARS (Degree Audit Report System) report need a “RAC” (Registration Access Code) to register—see Gayle McKerrow to ask when she will be able to provide that to you. (They first need to get processed and sent over from Graduate Studies.) Every quarter you will need a new RAC in order to register for classes.

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### FALL QUARTER

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COMS 700A ProSem

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COMS 705 Integrated Theory I

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COMS 711 Research Design I

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- 8. Move in.** See Vicki Dornbush for a key to the building and your office.

## The Graduate Program Philosophy

In the fall of 2004 the school launched the first cohort in a newly re-designed Doctoral program. The structure of the program was significantly changed by adding a first year “CORE” sequence of courses to equip students with the philosophical, theoretical, and practical skills expected of highly distinguished scholars. In short, we wanted Ohio COMS graduates to stand out as having stronger training in theory, method, and teaching than students from any other program. We think that two aspects of our program make it truly distinctive: (a) the cohort system, and (b) the CORE classes.

We have intentionally designed the graduate program around a cohort system. In essence, the cohort model means that each incoming class of graduate students will take the same classes during the first year. By using such a system, incoming classes can more easily develop scholarly relationships among peers going through some of the

## INFORMATION FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

same experiences. We find that the cohort system helps you develop a keen understanding of what it is like to work with a diverse group of scholars—such knowledge is invaluable for eventual job success. Moreover, the cohort model provides a natural ongoing support system since all members of the cohort are going through the same experiences at the same time.

Although our program is designed as a four year program, each student follows a unique trajectory as they matriculate through the doctorate. Depending on the topic(s) that you want to study and the method that you want to use, you may take longer or shorter amounts of time to finish. In what follows we describe an “ideal” timeline and method of focusing your efforts during each year of the program. This description is not intended to be a rule or even typical trajectory—it is an ideal that may not be suitable for all students (or advisors!). Ultimately, the timeline for your program is determined by you in consultation with your advisor (initially your POS advisor and eventually your dissertation advisor).

The entire first year is designed to help you develop knowledge and expertise that will allow you to excel and compete for the best jobs that meet your personal objectives for career development. The first year sequence of courses, called the “CORE” classes, is comprised of a two quarter long theory class, a two quarter long methods class, a three quarter proseminar, and three courses that introduce you to the concentrations in the graduate program. During the fall quarter you take the first iteration of the theory, methods, and prosem classes; during the second quarter you will take the second iteration of those classes; and, during the third quarter you will take the three intro courses and the third prosem class. Generally speaking, the first year is designed to accomplish two objectives: (a) to equip you with an excellent foundation for theoretical analysis, methodological rigor, and teaching excellence, and (b) to allow you to make a highly informed choice about possible areas for specialization.

The second year of your program is designed to help you develop specialization in content and methods. The exact composition of classes during the second year will be dictated by the school’s course rotation and your program of study. In addition, during the second year a greater emphasis will be placed on generating high quality scholarship suitable for conference presentation and/or submission to publication outlets. You may also have the opportunity to work with faculty and other graduate students on research projects during your second year.

The third year of your program is devoted to finishing coursework and further developing an independent research focus. The third year typically involves fewer actual classes and more independent research time. During the third year you should try to get additional manuscripts under review for presentation and publication. During the Fall and Winter of the third year you should begin work on your dissertation topic. Such work could involve “pilot studies” or other types of papers written for classes, an independent study with your probable dissertation advisor, or independent research time. Also during those quarters you will complete your scholarly portfolio and submit



it for evaluation by your committee. Depending on your timeline you will select and begin working with your dissertation advisor in late Fall quarter or early Winter quarter. You and your advisor will map out a timeline for preparing a dissertation proposal. Ideally, you should try to have a proposal meeting during Spring quarter of the third year.

During the summer and Fall of your fourth year you will work on collecting data for your dissertation. Ideally we would like for you to enter the fourth year ready to finish data collection and possibly to begin data analysis. Some students may extend data collection more into the fall quarter of the fourth year. The advantage of finishing data collection in the summer or early Fall quarter is that you will be further along in the dissertation process than students from shorter doctoral programs when applying for jobs. During the Fall and Winter quarters you should complete the analysis and discussion chapters of your dissertation and make final edits. Remember that part of the Fall quarter will likely be devoted to the job search process, which can be roughly equivalent to the time you would spend on a graduate class. Most students will defend their dissertation sometime during the Spring quarter of the fourth year.

## Your POS Advisor and Committee

Prior to entering the program you will be assigned to a Program of Study (POS) advisor. In most cases we attempt to pair you with someone who teaches and advises in the track you will likely select as your primary area. You should meet with your POS advisor regularly throughout the first year to talk about ideas that you have, problems that you confront, and plans that you want to enact as you look toward the future.

During late Winter or early Spring quarter you should begin the process of identifying two other COMS faculty to serve on your POS committee. The POS committee will be responsible for writing the third question for your qualifying exam and for evaluating each of your answers. Students often select POS committee members with an eye toward possible dissertation committee membership later in the program. During the Spring quarter you should schedule a meeting with your POS committee to gain approval of your Program of Study. You should provide your POS committee with copies of your POS, your vita, a teaching philosophy, and a research philosophy at least two weeks prior to that meeting. The committee will use those materials to guide development of your third qualifying exam question.



**GradForm POS  
Auth. Of Transfer**

## Planning your Program of Study

A program of study is a planning document telling you what courses you should take to complete your degree. No POS is ever “set in stone.” That is, POS documents represent an initial and often ideal plan—that plan may need substantial revision depending on course rotations, your interests, and other opportunities that arise. Your POS is initially agreed upon by your POS committee; changes to your POS after the

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qualifying exam will need to be approved by your committee (your POS advisor, dissertation advisor, or the Director of Graduate Studies can give preliminary approval if you have not yet formed a dissertation committee). It is quite common to make changes to the POS; however, such changes do need to be documented and justified.

Your initial program of study is divided into five general areas: CORE classes, the primary area, the related area, methods, and electives. The CORE classes are self explanatory—all students are required to take courses comprising the first year curriculum. Your primary area consists of 35 credit hours and should be related to the “track” that you have selected. The related area should be at least 25 credit hours and should be comprised of COMS classes NOT part of the track you selected for your primary area. You may count up to ONE CORE class in your related area. You must have at least 15 methods hours and 15 elective hours. The total number of combined method and elective credits must be at least 35 hours, which means that you will need one additional methods or elective course. If you have taken doctoral level courses **after** you received your MA degree, you may opt to count a small number of those courses as part of your doctoral program of study. To use such courses you will need to complete a transfer form and have the courses approved by your POS advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies. Both the POS form and the Credit Transfer form may be found on the COMS website.

Remember that you should distribute your POS materials to your committee at least two weeks prior to your POS meeting.

### The Preliminary Exam

As a community of scholar-teachers, we share a commitment to the professional development and success of those individuals who are associated with our program, whether those individuals hold the position of faculty member or have been admitted as students in our graduate or our undergraduate program. Through our courses, conversations, and work together, the opportunities for on- and off-campus engagement and program requirements, we seek to create an environment that is conducive to intellectual growth and informed decision-making.

The decision to admit an individual to our graduate program is based on multiple sources of information, including the individual’s academic record, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, writing sample, and statement of purpose. By the same token, the feedback that we provide to a graduate student as he/she moves through the program is based not only on the grades received in classes but a variety of indicators that we hope will provide us with a sense of the developing “fit” between the student and our program. We recognize that “success” can be defined in many ways. For a majority of our students, short-term success will be defined in the receipt of a doctoral degree, with long-term success defined by the development of a desired career path. For what we hope will be a small number of

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students, success will come in the realization that our doctoral program is not a good match for/with them or for/with their intellectual ambitions.

As part of the evaluation of graduate student progress and as an aid to conversations concerning graduate student development, all students are required to participate in a two-component second year assessment program. (For part-time students, “second year” is defined as that point in their studies when they have completed both the theory and the research portions of the first year program of studies, three quarters of the Pro-Seminar course, and the introductory course for each of the concentrations.) The assessment program involves the following aspects:

1. During the week prior to the beginning of the Fall quarter of the second year, students sit for a “Preliminary Examination.” Two of the questions for this examination will be prepared by the faculty members involved in teaching the first year sequence of courses. One question will concentrate on theory while the other will concentrate on research methods. Both questions will be designed to encourage synthesis on the part of the student and to allow the student to demonstrate extended mastery of the material covered during the first year of coursework. The third question will be designed by the student’s POS committee following a meeting with that student in which the student’s academic interests are discussed. This third question will be designed in a manner that privileges the theories and perspectives covered in the Spring term introductory courses. As with the other two questions, the third questions will be designed so as to encourage synthesis but also with an eye toward challenging the student to articulate a personal position toward the study of communication.

The examination will take place in the Lasher computer lab or other, appropriate, designated space. Students will be allowed 4 hours to respond to each question.

Assessment of student responses occurs during the first weeks of Fall quarter and is conducted by student’s POS committee. The members of the student’s POS will typically have two weeks following the beginning of the Fall quarter to read the student’s responses and provide their written assessment to the student’s primary advisor. Those written assessments will address, in brief, perceived strengths of the responses and areas meriting additional thought and/or needing clarification.

In general, a “provisionally acceptable” written response is one that (1) clearly addresses the questions posed, (2) provides evidence of a working understanding of the paradigms, theories, and concepts being addressed, and (3) provides evidence of an ability on the part of the student to apply those paradigms, theories, and concepts in addressing and/or framing

## INFORMATION FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

research questions relevant to the communication discipline. In all cases, detection of plagiarism will result in an assessment that a response is “unacceptable.” Possible courses of action in such a situation range from requiring that the student re-sit for the same or a revised examination to dismissal from the graduate program.

2. Three possible outcomes are envisioned at the conclusion of the written examination process: (1) the written examination is determined by the POS committee to be acceptable; (2) the written examination is determined by the POS committee to be provisionally acceptable, with final passage contingent upon what occurs during the oral examination; (3) the written examination, in whole or in part, is determined to not be acceptable in its current form.

If the written Preliminary Examination is determined by the POS committee to be acceptable and/or the POS committee believes that any problems that exist might be best addressed through a meeting with the student (outcomes 1 and 2 above), then the committee will meet with the student at a mutually convenient time to engage in an Oral Examination concerning (1) the student’s responses to his/her Preliminary Examination questions and (2) the student’s progress in the program.

In general, an “acceptable” oral defense is one in which the student is capable of assuming an active role in a conversation with a community of scholars. In assessing the performance in the oral examination, the POS committee will be concerned with:

- (1) the ability of the student to address questions emerging from his/her written responses to the Preliminary Examination questions;
- (2) the ability of the student to articulate a scholarly persona; and
- (3) the ability of the student, in general, to take part in a scholarly conversation.

An “unacceptable” oral defense is one in which the student displays inadequate understanding of basic concepts and/or foundational perspectives and is unable to move beyond his/her written responses in a collegial discussion of discipline-relevant issues.

If the written Preliminary Examination is determined by the POS committee to be unacceptable, in whole or in part, then the student will meet with his/her advisor to discuss the revisions that need to be made. At the discretion of the advisor, other members of the student’s POS

## INFORMATION FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

committee will be involved in this conversation. From the point in time of this conversation, the student will be allowed one week per question to be revised in order to complete the revision process. The maximum number of times that any one question may be revised is two.

Based on review of a student's grades, performance on the Preliminary Examination, and performance in the Oral Examination, the student's POS committee will make one of the following decisions:

- (1) The student will have completed the requirements for a master's degree and be approved to continue in the doctoral program.
- (2) The student will be provisionally approved to continue on in the doctoral program with the understanding that he/she will address problems that emerged in the Preliminary Examination and/or the Oral Examination through a series of actions or activities outlined in a "Learning Contract" developed by the student's examining committee. The actions/activities outlined on the Learning Contract are to be completed during the Winter intersession, with the student meeting with his/her POS committee within the first 2 weeks of Winter Quarter to discuss the product of this effort. Successful completion of the Learning Contract means the student will have completed the requirements for a master's degree and be approved to continue in the doctoral program.
- (3) The student will be allowed to pursue a master's degree within the program but will not be continued as a doctoral student. At his/her own discretion or at the discretion of the School, a student may pursue a master's degree as a terminal degree within the program. In order to receive a terminal master's degree, the student will need to (1) successfully complete the courses approved as constituting the student's revised (i.e., Master's) POS, and (2) successfully complete one of the master's projects outlined in the COMS graduate handbook (i.e., a thesis, a research paper, or a professional project).
- (4) The student will not be continued in the program, either as a master's student or as a doctoral student.

## Waypoints for First Year Students

The first year is admittedly intense. Luckily, your primary tasks are already laid out for you! During the first year you should try to stick to the following timeline:

**Fall Quarter:** Take classes and become acclimated to the time demands of classes and teaching responsibilities. The Fall quarter ends in early November (typically just before NCA). Before the end of the quarter you should try to meet and talk with faculty who are associated with your primary area of concentration. You should also begin looking at course offerings in the school and meet with your POS advisor to talk about a timeline for the remainder of the year.

- Meet with your POS Advisor to become acquainted and talk about your plans.
- Meet with other faculty in your area of specialization.
- Begin reviewing courses in the school for inclusion in your primary and related areas.

**Winter Quarter:** During winter quarter you will have the same course schedule as during the Fall quarter. You should meet with your POS advisor and begin discussions about your POS plan and possible members of the committee.

- Explore course offerings from other departments and schools that could prove useful for your primary or related area.
- Meet with your POS Advisor to have preliminary discussions about a possible POS committee.
- Meet with possible members of your POS committee to get their agreement to serve on your committee. For these meetings you need to be prepared to discuss your scholarly plans in both the short and long-term.

**Spring Quarter.** During the final quarter of the first year you will get ready for your first “official” committee meeting. During the Spring quarter you should develop a preliminary statement of research specialization, a teaching philosophy, and a program of study. The program of study is an agreement between you and your committee concerning what courses you should take for the remainder of your program.

- Meet with your POS Advisor to review a draft of your POS, your research statement, and your teaching philosophy.
- Distribute your POS and other material to your POS committee at least two weeks prior to having a meeting.
- Schedule a meeting that is mutually agreeable among your POS committee members. It is your responsibility to reserve the Boase Room, Lasher 104, or one of the other meeting spaces for the meeting.
- Toward the end of the quarter begin developing a study strategy for the preliminary exams. You should spend the bulk of your time during the summer preparing for the exam.

## INFORMATION FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

**Summer Session.** You may elect, on the advice of your POS committee, to take classes during the summer or to use that time to reflect on your first year and explore options for your area of specialization. Depending on funding and the number of slots available you may have the opportunity to teach during the summer to earn extra money. You also should use the summer to synthesize what you learned during the first year to prepare yourself for the qualifying examination.

- Take classes or engage in other activities agreed upon during your POS meeting.
- The summer is a good time to work on independent research. You should try to refine a paper for submission to a conference or for publication consideration.
- Prepare for preliminary examination. Although preparation techniques vary widely, a great way to start is to prepare a synthesized set of notes from your theory and methods classes and to also prepare an outline addressing the question written by your POS committee.

**INFORMATION FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS**



## Information for Second Year Students

*During the second year of the program you will begin developing advanced knowledge within one or more areas of specialization. Much of your coursework will be devoted to courses in your primary and related areas of study.*

**T**he second year of the doctoral program is perhaps one of the most exciting. After being led through a common set of courses during the first year, the second year offers you wide latitude to explore topics of interest. During the second year you will begin to develop one or more areas of specialization, you will participate in team-based and/or individual research projects, and you will begin moving into more advanced teaching assignments.

### What you Should do Before Your Second Year

The summer after your first year is a great time to catch your breath and take a break from school. But, if you want a “to do” list, here are some ideas. Much of your time before the second year is devoted to the CORE classes and preparing for the preliminary examination. To facilitate momentum during your second year you may wish to do the following:

**1. Prepare for a course beyond COMS 103 that you would like to teach.** During the second year we like to provide opportunities for some graduate students to teach courses other than COMS 103. Per school policy, to be eligible to teach 205, 206, 215, or 235, you must successfully complete a professional seminar in communication pedagogy for the relevant course. You may also choose to apprentice in 110 or 342 to a faculty instructor of record before teaching those courses. There may be opportunities to co-teach courses with faculty, and in some cases specialty courses within areas of emphasis (e.g., Intro to Org Comm).

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**2. Identify papers that could be revised and submitted for review by conferences and/or publication.** You are strongly encouraged to develop a track record for research while in graduate school. To do so you must carefully revise papers to make them competitive during the review process. A good goal is to submit at least three manuscripts for review by conferences and at least one manuscript for review by a publication outlet during your second year. Identifying papers completed during the first year (or perhaps your MA program) is the first step in meeting that goal.

**3. Explore your area of specialization.** Preparation for your “POS Question” for the qualifying exam will aid you in this process. Ideally, prior to your second year you should have some direction on a broad area of specialization. You may have accumulated articles and other resources for a class paper, you may have read articles for classes, and you may have developed a comprehensive outline while preparing for your exam question. Prior to your second year you should try to synthesize that information and develop a plan for how you can explore those topics in more depth during second year coursework.

## Scheduling a Preliminary Exam Defense

During the first week of the Fall quarter you should meet with your POS advisor to discuss scheduling a meeting for the oral portion of your preliminary exam. After distributing your answers, your advisor will poll members of your committee to determine if they want to move forward with the oral component. Meetings will typically take place during or after the third week of the Fall quarter.

To prepare for the oral component you should (a) talk with your POS advisor to see how she/he wishes to conduct the meeting, and (b) carefully review your answers so that you can have dialogue about them with your committee. Common questions to consider are:

- 1. What are you most happy with in your answers? You may elect to discuss one aspect of one question or a more general theme running through one or more answers.*
- 2. What did you learn from the process?*
- 3. How did the process help you refine your identity as a young scholar in the discipline?*
- 4. What, if anything, would you change? A wise student once said that “nothing” is typically a poor answer to this question.*

You will receive preliminary word about your written answers prior to the meeting (you cannot actually schedule the meeting unless the committee says the written answers are sufficient to move to that stage). At the conclusion of the oral component you will receive an evaluation of the oral component and a separate evaluation of the overall exam. Note that the oral and written components are evaluated separately and



**GradForm 6**  
**GradForm 7**

both must be passes before the qualifying exam is completed. Your committee will complete GradForms 6 and 7 after the meeting. It is your responsibility to bring those forms to the meeting.

## Selecting an Advisor and Moving Forward

The program of study committee essentially disbands once the qualifying exam process is finished. Once your preliminary exams are completed you have an entire year to think about how you want to approach your area of specialization. At some point during that process it is important to start thinking about faculty who could eventually direct your dissertation. Although there is no formal declaration of a dissertation advisor prior to the submission of your third-year portfolio, you should begin talking with your advisor about ideas for your specialization well before that stage.

Identifying and approaching faculty about being an advisor is an exciting moment for any graduate student. When starting the process of selecting an advisor you should identify one or more faculty members who have some expertise related to your probable area of specialization and/or your preferred methodological approach. After identifying those faculty members, you should schedule an appointment to talk with one or more of them about your plans. The decision to establish an advisor-advisee relationship is a mutual agreement between you and that particular faculty member. Depending on how many advisees someone currently has and the stages they are at in the program, it is possible that a faculty member may not be able to commit to being your advisor. When planning for your meeting with your potential advisor you should do the following:

1. Have a brief description of your area of specialization. Although you do not have to submit anything in writing prior to the meeting, doing so could promote valuable dialogue.
2. Be prepared to talk about ideas. The initial meeting between you and your potential advisor is a valuable opportunity to brainstorm. Having a “dissertation topic” during this meeting is much less important than having a robust list of exciting directions, approaches, and thoughts related to your intended specialization.
3. If your potential advisor was not on your POS committee, you should provide her/him with a copy of your vita prior to the meeting.

After you have found an advisor, you may wish to revisit your Program of Study to see if there are possible modifications to help you develop your area of specialization. Additionally, your advisor will likely provide advice on various topics ranging from research ideas to teaching.

**INFORMATION FOR THIRD YEAR STUDENTS**

## Information for Third Year Students

*During the third year of your program you will continue developing expertise in an area of specialization and will start the process of preparing your third year portfolio and dissertation proposal.*

The third year of your program is when you will make the transition away from courses and toward more independent research. In particular, your third year will help you prepare your dissertation proposal and get materials together for job searches the following year. By the conclusion of the third year you should be well on your way to working on your dissertation.

### Selecting a Dissertation Committee and Dean's Representative

Prior to submitting your third year portfolio you should establish a dissertation committee. The dissertation committee will evaluate your portfolio and work with you as you transition into the dissertation process. Dissertation committees typically include one advisor from COMS, two faculty from COMS, and one Dean's Representative. You may add additional members as you like. For instance, in rare circumstances an expert from another university might be asked to serve on a committee.

Your dissertation committee will need to include an outside member. The Dean requires that their representative be a faculty member with an earned terminal degree from **outside** the Scripps College of Communication. Typically, the "Dean's Rep" will be a faculty member from another school/department with whom you have taken a class or worked closely with in some other capacity. Prior to the dissertation proposal you should have the Dean's Rep identified and you should complete GradForm 8, the report on the dissertation committee and Dean's Representative.

## The Third Year Portfolio

In the old days, prior to the program revision, third year students completed a comprehensive examination. Because students now take qualifying exams, the COMS faculty decided that a portfolio option would be more productive and useful. The third year portfolio is designed to emulate the process faculty go through for promotion and tenure.

Ernest Boyer’s model of scholarship consists of the inter-related activities of the *scholarship of discovery*, the *scholarship of integration*, the *scholarship of teaching*, and the *scholarship of application*, and provides an appropriate organizing framework for use in the faculty’s comprehensive assessment of doctoral students’ scholarly development. As originally argued by Boyer, the boundaries between dimensions remain fluid rather than fixed with some activities demonstrating competence across dimensions. This model is intended to enhance and enrich students’ creativity in organizing arguments about and evidence of their scholarly development, and as such ought to be treated as a fluid and living framework. Some of these dimensions will be more relevant for particular students than other dimensions. For each dimension, we have identified items that students could include in their portfolio. Students can demonstrate their scholarly development across a number of dimensions and as negotiated by students, advisors, and committee members.



### Portfolio Evaluation

#### Portfolio Dimensions

- I. **The Scholarship of Discovery and Integration** – Traditionally conceived of as “research,” the scholarship of discovery involves rigorous, investigative efforts (both process and product) of individuals to advance knowledge and seek understanding. The scholarship of discovery across disciplines rests at the heart of academic life, and is absolutely crucial in assessing the development of our students and the success of our program. Students also must demonstrate how their own scholarship of discovery – and that of others – integrates into larger intellectual patterns within (and beyond) the communication discipline. The scholarship of integration can involve inter-disciplinary efforts involving research at the “boundaries” where fields of study converge.
  - a. **Statement about student’s program of research** (must be included in everyone’s portfolio)– no more than 3 pages; the student should describe his or her program of research including theoretical background, research practices, past work and future directions; importantly, the student must situate him/herself in the broader landscape of knowledge patterns and practices of the communication discipline (and beyond disciplinary “boundaries” as appropriate)

- b. **Dissertation pre-proposal** (must be included in everyone's portfolio)– concise argument (10-20 pages) that forecasts dissertation proposal to be defended at a later point in time; includes bibliography
- c. **Scholarly products under review, in press, or published** – journal articles; book chapters; can include co-authored product if accompanied by a statement from the student about his or her contributions to the work

II. **The Scholarship of Teaching** – Teaching, like other scholarly activities, relies on a base of scholarly knowledge that can and ought to be identified and evaluated. When teaching is defined as a scholarly enterprise, teachers emerge as co-learners who transform and enlarge knowledge even as they bring an intelligible account of reality/knowledge to students who want to learn.

- a. **Teaching philosophy** – no more than 2 pages; the student should articulate how he/she understands education and the learning process, the role of teachers and students in learning, the nexus between teaching and other scholarly activities, etc.
- b. **Evidence of teaching effectiveness** – summary of numerical and qualitative student feedback, letters from the basic course director about teaching performance, and peer feedback
- c. **Examples of innovative pedagogy** – an article published in *Communication Teacher*, an assignment or description of other course-related activities or practices created by the student, syllabi created by the student (other than syllabus from the basic course)

III. **The Scholarship of Service** – Some individuals are moved to engage in scholarly activity and define their research agenda because of pressing institutional needs or social issues. For said individuals, the responsible application of scholarly knowledge becomes consequential for diverse stakeholders within and beyond the boundaries of academia. Indeed, most universities aim to serve the interests of the larger communities of which they are a part. When service (in a department, university, learned society, community) involves intellectual work related to one's disciplinary knowledge, it represents scholarly activity. "To be considered scholarship," Boyer (1990) argued, "service activities must be tied directly to one's special field of knowledge and relate to, and flow directly out of, this professional activity" (p. 22).

- a. **Statement of service philosophy** – no more than 2 pages; the student should articulate his/her philosophy on service and outreach activities, how the scholarship of service relates to other scholarly activities, etc.

- b. **Statement of personal growth as communicator** – no more than 2 pages; the student should articulate how he/she has changed as a communicator as he/she matriculated through the program including philosophical understandings and daily practices and patterns of relating with others
- c. **Other evidence of service** – although somewhat less common, this part of the portfolio may also include:
  - i. **Evidence of committee work**
  - ii. **Evidence of participation and leadership in learned societies**
  - iii. **Grant applications**
  - iv. **Consulting work**
  - v. **Participation in community service**

Finally, all students must submit a curriculum vita as part of their scholarly portfolio.

## The Dissertation Proposal

After completing your portfolio, your next task is to work with your advisor to craft a dissertation proposal. Depending on your advisor, your personal writing preferences, and your topic, the proposal could vary greatly in form and content. Generally speaking, the proposal should clearly explain the topic you will study, provide a rationale for studying that topic, review relevant theory and literature on the topic, pose specific questions/hypotheses guiding the study, and discuss in detail how the study will be conducted. Strong proposals make for smooth dissertation experiences. Consequently, proposals typically happen in close consultation with your advisor.

Once your advisor has approved your proposal, you will then need to distribute copies to your committee. You should NOT rely on electronic dissemination unless a committee member has specifically requested it. Create hard copies of the proposal on standard paper. It is more convenient for your committee if you have a local copy center bind the proposal (an inexpensive plastic binding is fine). Of course, you should carefully review your proposal for style consistency and other mechanical issues. You should double check with your advisor about her/his binding/distribution preferences.

Your committee must be given at least two weeks to read the proposal. If the committee members feel that the proposal is ready for an oral defense, you should schedule the Boase Room or some other public meeting space.



## The Fourth Year and beyond

*The final year of your program is focused on your dissertation and the job application process. The balancing act between these two important tasks is very important!*

**I**n the fourth year you are typically finished with coursework and are ready to make significant headway on your dissertation. Under an ideal timeline, you may have collected much of your data and started the data analysis phase of your project soon after the year begins. Also during that time, you will prepare your job application materials and start preparing for your job search. Last, you will prepare for your dissertation defense.

### Thinking Ahead: What to do in the Summer

Much of your summer will be spent working on your dissertation. And, although your dissertation should be your top priority, there will likely be moments when you want (and need) something else to work on. The summer before your fourth year is an excellent time to finalize one or two more papers to submit for publication (however, you should only do this if the papers need only small changes to get ready). Also, you can begin preparing for your job search by getting materials organized.

Luckily, the yearly review process in COMS coupled with the Scholarly Portfolio will mean that much of your work is already done. Here is a list of materials that you will want ready to go as you begin the job search process:

- 1. Letter of Application Templates.** For each position you apply for you will want a customized letter of application highlighting your qualifications in relation to the unique position advertised. Although a well customized letter will appear to be made from “scratch,” you can actually prepare some parts of the letter before hand. For each job you apply for you will want to highlight your teaching and research

## THE FOURTH YEAR AND BEYOND

accomplishments and skills. When highlighting those characteristics of your professional record, you want to summarize specific accomplishments that reveal your identity as a teacher-scholar. Ideally, your letter should help search committees quickly identify (remember Burke?) with you as a person.

Different institutions will likely require slightly different focuses for your letter. For some institutions you will want to emphasize your research record whereas for others you may want to emphasize your teaching record. In reality, “emphasizing” really refers to placement and length. If you are highlighting your teaching record you will place that section first in your letter and perhaps devote more space to it. For that letter your “research” section will come second and will perhaps be slightly shorter. If you are applying to a more research-oriented school you might reverse that template. Regardless of what you emphasize you should also comment on what you are looking for in an ideal job, your desire and skills for departmental service, and other issues that may be unique to you when searching for jobs.

Generally speaking, if you create a “research-focused” template and a “teaching-focused” template you will have a solid foundation from which to customize specific letters. *It is important in job letters to demonstrate knowledge of the department to which you are applying, how you fit the job description, and generally how you meet the needs of the department (i.e., specific classes you can teach, etc.).*

**2. Up-to-date vita.** Your vita should be recently updated because of the yearly review process. Prior to the start of school you should take time to add in last-minute things like anticipated graduation date, papers from regional conferences from the previous Spring, courses that you taught in the Spring, etc.

**3. Teaching Portfolio.** Your teaching portfolio should include a teaching philosophy statement, a summary of numeric teaching evaluations for each quarter that you have taught, and a summary of qualitative comments from students. You should also include syllabi from courses that you have taught along with any novel or unique assignments that you have created.

**4. Research Sample.** You may be asked to provide a research sample with your application, and you may want to include one even if not asked explicitly. Your research sample should be representative of who you are as a scholar. If you are applying for a rhetoric job this is not the time to show your diversity by including a quantitative paper from your first year methods class. Although it is acceptable to include a co-authored paper, it is most beneficial to use a paper where you are the first or single author (search committees will want to see what YOU are capable of, even if collaborative work is valued by that institution). It is acceptable to use a chapter from your dissertation; however, those samples always come across as incomplete (which, by definition, they are) and may not be as “impressive” as a complete manuscript with all of the pieces tied together.

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**5. Transcripts.** For many applications you will be asked to provide at least a photocopy of your transcripts (some applications even require undergraduate). You are better off tracking all of that down during the summer rather than waiting for the last minute. You are wise to always keep an original transcript for your own files.

**6. Letters of Recommendation.** No need to contact potential letter writers yet, but the summer is a good time to make a list of who those letter writers should be. You will obviously use your advisor and likely members of your committee. The people writing letters for you should know you well and be able to comment on specific skills and behaviors.

## Writing Your Dissertation

Once the school year begins you should be focused on making headway on your dissertation. The more work that you can get done between August and mid-October the better, because after that time you will have many distractions including NCA, the holidays, and [hopefully] job interviews. Many students get stuck because they lose the focus and discipline developed over the summer. When the school year begins there are classes to teach, new grad students to meet, etc. Consequently, it is very important to develop a school routine so that you can minimize random distractions. Plan to spend a certain number of hours per day writing and stick to that. Note that you do not need to write all day long—a few high quality hours can be equally as productive as an entire day of “drudgery writing” that has to be significantly revised.



### Web

#### College Requirements:

[www.scrippscollege.ohio.edu](http://www.scrippscollege.ohio.edu)

#### Grad Student Studies:

<http://www.ohio.edu/graduate/etd.cfm>

You are wise to make the dissertation writing process “physical.” This does not mean taking a laptop to Ping. Rather, you should set measurable objectives for yourself. Dissertation writing can be slow because you are likely challenging yourself to do the best work possible. It is not unheard of to spend hours on one important paragraph. However, you also need to keep momentum going. Establishing a goal of “five a day” for written pages is just as sound as the same approach to eating your fruits and vegetables. Graduate students

tend to forget about basic math during the fourth year of their program. Remember that, if you write five pages per day, in a typical September you will be able to write 150 pages, which is about half of the length of a moderately sized dissertation and the full length of many.

Of course, each person and each advisor works differently. In some circumstances you may need to turn in small, 10 page “chunks” whereas in others you may write an entire chapter before turning it in for review. And, what worked during the proposal stage may not work as well during the write-up.

There are specific formatting requirements for the dissertation. You should review the “Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines” found on the college website. The office of Graduate Student Services also offers workshops on preparing electronic theses and dissertations. Those workshops may be valuable to take very early in the process because they teach you how to use Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat to format the file correctly.

## The Job Search

Searching for jobs is not as daunting as it sounds if you are well organized at the beginning of the process. If you have your materials together and have lined up letter writers the job search will go very smoothly. If you wait until the last minute to begin you will miss deadlines and do sloppy work.

Starting in August or September you should begin paying attention to the Career Center and the NCA listserv (CRTNET). You should also contact letter writers to see if they are willing to serve as a writer for you [this will give them lead time to create a letter template for you]. After you locate job advertisements that fit the type of job you are interested in, you should take time to find out more about that university, department, and faculty. The web is invaluable for this. Finding out such information will enable you to customize your materials even more.



### Web

**NCA Career Center:**

**<http://www.natcom.org/index.asp?sid=14>**

**CRTNET:**

**[www.natcom.org/index.asp?bid=207](http://www.natcom.org/index.asp?bid=207)**

After you have learned about the job, your first step is to prepare your application packet. Job advertisements are very specific about what they WANT. Of course, you are free to include additional information. For example, if the ad does not ask for a teaching portfolio it is still perfectly acceptable to include one. You should avoid making your application look “flashy.” Your materials will likely be photocopied; color images, bound materials, and CD-ROMS are the types of things that may pose more of a problem than anything. Remember that your application will be part of a pool that could number in the hundreds. You want to stand out because of your professionalism and credentials, not because of the color of paper that you used for your vita.

You should contact your letter writers as early in the process as possible. Just because of how job advertisements publish with the academic cycle, you should be able to give your letter requests to letter writers in “clumps.” Typically you will have a wave of due dates before NCA, a wave just after NCA, and a wave sometime in January. If possible you should give letter requests to letter writers in such clumps.

You should use common sense during the job application process. Make sure that your answering machine message is professional and that your contact e-mail is not

something like “canadianstalkfunny@freemail.com.” It is quite possible that schools will make initial contact with you before the job closing date. Be prepared for such impromptu contacts. Having a copy your applications materials at your home, in your office, and maybe even in your car is not a bad idea. You may even want to develop a list of talking points and questions to keep handy if you get a call out of the blue.

## Requesting Letters of Recommendation

Here are tips for handling the letter requests:

1. Your application packet should beat your letters to the department. Be on the ball and have your materials ready to send when you contact letter writers.
2. Make sure that your letter writers have a full set of your application materials. Although they will likely focus on unique things defined by your past relationship (e.g., a class that you co-taught or a project that you collaborated on), it is nice for your writers to have a complete picture of your qualifications. If you did a project or paper for your letter writers, it is nice to make a copy of that paper with their comments—they can use that as a basis for specific examples to include in the letter.
3. Give at least 3 weeks warning before a letter is due. Most job ads publish a couple months in advance of the deadline, so this should not be much of a problem.
4. Avoid single letter requests. Having one request come in from the same person every other day can get tiresome.
5. Provide the letter writer with relevant information about the job. At a minimum, provide a copy of the job; you may also want to provide other things that you discovered during your research.
6. Provide an electronic file with the mailing addresses **AS THEY WILL BE PLACED IN THE LETTER**. Letter writers find it very valuable to just have to copy and paste the mailing address for your application. And, you should do the address in **WORD** because pasting something from e-mail can cause formatting problems.
7. It is appropriate to send e-mail reminders to letter writers. Do not overdo the reminders, but if you have 5 letters due in the next week, sending a reminder for all five is fine.
8. Give a genuine “thank you” to letter writers. Writing letters of recommendation is sometimes a thankless job—literally. Your faculty colleagues will be touched by even a simple thank you card.

## Preparing for the Job Interview

Job interviews are fun! You have the opportunity to travel to interesting parts of the country and meet new people, all for free. What could be more fun! Recognize that once you make it to the job interview you have accomplished quite a bit. And, your training at Ohio University will help you make a very good showing of yourself during the interview. You should approach your interview with an equal combination of humility and confidence: Be humble and grateful that you were selected but confident that you would be an asset to the department bringing you in.

Job interviews vary greatly from one institution to another. Most job interviews last for about a day and a half. Typically you will fly in and perhaps have a dinner with one or more faculty. The next day you will have meetings with individuals or small groups of faculty. Those meetings are more about getting to know each other. You should be prepared to ask and answer questions during those meetings, but you also should be prepared to have meaningful “small talk.” Meetings with faculty will often culminate in some sort of presentation. Take care to follow directions on what type of presentation you should give. Often called the “job talk,” such presentations can range from a formal presentation of a research article/study to a more global discussion of who you are as a teacher-scholar. At Ohio we have grown to appreciate the latter type of presentation. Failure to follow directions is a significant turnoff to faculty. The remainder of the interview typically involves meetings with administrators. During those meetings you should be prepared to talk about what it would take to hire you; you also should be prepared to ask smart questions. You may be provided various tours by graduate students, faculty, and even realtors. Use those times to ask informal questions about the community.

Here is a list of common questions that you will be asked:

1. Can you describe two strengths and weaknesses that you have as a teacher? As a researcher?
2. Why did you apply to \_\_\_\_\_? How do you see yourself fitting into the department?
3. Talk about specific “success stories” from your experiences as a teacher and researcher.
4. If you were asked to teach \_fill in course\_\_ what textbook and assignments would you use?
5. How do you distinguish your research from what people in psychology/sociology/the humanities would do? What about your agenda is actually focused on communication and not one of those other disciplines?
6. How do you react to diversity in your classroom? Can you provide examples?
7. Tell me about your dissertation (have a 2 minute answer and a 7-10 minute answer).
8. What would you like to be doing in 7-10 years? What trajectory do you see for yourself and how do you see getting there?
9. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses in our curriculum?

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10. Of the courses (grad and undergrad) in our curriculum, which ones are you most qualified and/or interested to teach?
11. Can you give specific examples illustrating how you practice the “life of the mind?”

Here is a list of good questions to ask chairs and deans (some are appropriate for faculty as well):

1. Can you describe how this department is positioned within the college and university? For instance, is this department most noted for its contribution with service courses, for the publication record of faculty, etc?
2. Over the past several years has this unit been forced to absorb budget cuts? If so, how would you describe those cuts in relation to those faced by other units in the college and across campus?
3. How did the unit absorb the budget cuts?
4. What is the standard teaching load? Does the unit have a differential load policy? What “release/reassigned times” exist for faculty and how are those determined?
5. What has the enrollment been in the department over the past several years (both grad and undergrad)?
6. What objectives would you like to see the unit achieve over the next five years? What steps are being taken to try and achieve those objectives?
7. What research facilities and support exists within the unit, college, and university?
8. What kind of students and/or staff support is available for faculty?
9. What support (or restrictions) exists for travel funding, office supplies, computer upgrades, etc.?
10. What are the most significant challenges facing the unit? What is being done to confront those challenges?

Once you are done with the interviews you should ask for a copy of the Promotion and Tenure Document. Also, you should ask about the timeframe for making the decision. If you are offered the job, you will want to then negotiate about salary, startup expenses, moving expenses, etc. Your advisor and other faculty can help you with ideas. In COMS we want you to act ethically with other institutions and not unnecessarily string out job offers.

Salary is something that will come up during the interview. Talk with faculty here about possible ranges. Also, if the institution is public it is highly probable that faculty salaries are available. Do basic web searches using the university website to learn about faculty salary information; you might also try calling the school’s library’s reference department.

## **Finishing: Preparing for the Dissertation Defense**

Once you have secured your job, the last step is to finish your dissertation and have the defense. Your dissertation defense is open to the public, so you can invite friends. Once you and your advisor deem your dissertation ready for the committee, you



should distribute copies. As with the proposal, you will need a cheaply bound hard copy for each member of the committee. Advisors will typically ask committee members to give an initial read of the dissertation to make a decision about moving forward with the defense. Committee members will have the option to initially approve the dissertation for oral defense or require additional work on your part before the defense takes place. Approving the dissertation for defense just means that moving forward is justified and that any concerns do not warrant significant revision prior to an oral defense. Once that decision is made, you committee will need time to read and make comments on the dissertation. Typically, a minimum of two weeks is needed for this process, although three to four weeks is ideal. You must complete GradForm 11, “Arrangements for the Oral Examination of the Dissertation,” and submit it to the Dean’s office at least TWO WEEKS prior to the defense.

During the defense you will probably be asked to comment on the major findings and to discuss the process—what you learned, what you would do differently, etc. Most advisors like for this portion of the defense to be short (say 10 minutes) and you should use a stopwatch to keep track of time. Plan this part before hand and do not “wing it.” Remember that you have successfully taught a class on public speaking that emphasizes preparation—now is the time to use some of those skills.

After your short presentation, committee members will have the opportunity to ask questions and engage in dialogue with you. Each meeting is somewhat different at this stage, however, here are some issues to think about as you prepare for questions:

1. What are the assumptions of the theoretical perspective that you used and how did you enact those assumptions in the process? Were there aspects of the theory that you emphasized or e-emphasized? Why?
2. What were the major gaps in previous research and how did you fill those gaps?
3. If you take issue with major theoretical points or previous research, be prepared to talk in depth about your position.
4. Why did you do what you did? Committee members love to ask questions about method because the method typically involves the most obvious instances of decision-making on your part. What were the key decisions that you made and why did you make them?
5. Be prepared to connect your major conclusions explicitly to the data. Committee members may try to determine the fine line between what you can safely conclude from the data at hand and what you can extrapolate from those findings. Make sure that you have thought about that line.
6. How do your findings advance theory and practice? Be able to discuss both issues at length, including hypothetical ways that you could take your findings back to the “field” and implement intervention/change.



7. Understand your limitations. Be able to answer the question, “Why did you not plan for this and prevent it from happening?”

8. What next? Committee members often love to talk about the next step. Be prepared to talk about (a) how you intend to break your dissertation into publishable manuscripts, (b) what you would do differently if re-planning your project, and (c) what immediate plans you have for continuing this program of research (i.e., designing the “next” study).

**9. Talk with committee members before hand. It is appropriate to ask them if there** are things they are particularly interested in discussing in the defense. Of course, you should have dialogue with your advisor about the defense.

Once the defense is completed you are asked to leave the room (as are guests). The committee will make one of the following decisions: (a) that you need to do some re-writing and come back for another oral defense; (b) that you need to do some revision and committee members need to review those changes before finally signing off; (c) that you have passed the defense but should consider any changes recommended by the committee (you and your advisor are left to determine the extent of those changes); or (d) that no changes are needed and that you have passes. By far, the most common outcome is (c) from above. The committee will sign off using GradForm 12, the report on the Dissertation and its Oral Defense. In addition, you should send your Dean’s Rep a copy of GradForm 14, the Evaluation by the Dean’s Representative, prior to the meeting (and bring a copy to the meeting just in case it is forgotten). You should provide the Dean’s rep with an addressed return envelope to send the form to the dean’s office.

Most committees will provide you with numerous recommendations (some large and some small) but sign off indicating that you are done. You and your advisor are then left to go through those recommendations and determine which you want to incorporate, which you might save and incorporate into smaller manuscripts, and which you appreciate but will probably not do anything with. The revision process can take a few days or an entire week or so depending on the types of changes requested by the committee.

Congratulations, you have reached the end! You are now “Dr. \_\_\_\_\_” and can enjoy the rights and privileges of the degree! Before you are through, though, there are a few last-minute details. You should provide your advisor with a bound final copy of the dissertation. Your committee members may also want copies, but may be fine with less expensive paper and binding. You should talk with your advisor about “cuttings” from the dissertation.



**GradForm 12**

**GradForm 14**

**THE FOURTH YEAR AND BEYOND**

**THE FOURTH YEAR AND BEYOND**

## A Summary of Policies and Forms

- ✓ Grad Form 2: Authorization for Transfer of Credit. Use this form if there are courses from your MA that you would like to count on your doctoral program of study.
- ✓ GradForm POS. The program of study template should be completed in consultation with your advisor and distributed to your committee.
- ✓ Grad Form 6: Report on the Preliminary Exam for the Ph.D. Degree. This form will be distributed to your POS committee as part of the Qualifying Exam process.
- ✓ GradForm 6B: Report on the Oral Exam for the Doctorate. This form will be distributed as part of the qualifying exam process.
- ✓ GradForm 7: Report on the Comprehensive Exam for the Ph.D. This form will be distributed as part of the qualifying exam process.
- ✓ GradForm 8: Report on the Dissertation Committee and Dean's Representative. This form may be completed at any point after the qualifying exams and before your third year portfolio is turned in.
- ✓ Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines. This document contains formatting requirements and is available on the college website.
- ✓ Guidelines for Electronic Theses and Dissertations. This document can be found on the Graduate Studies Website. There are also seminars available that we recommend.
- ✓ GradForm 9: Approval of the Dissertation Proposal. This form will be completed when you defend your proposal.
- ✓ GradForm 11: Arrangements for the Oral Examination of the Dissertation. You should complete this form at least two weeks prior to your dissertation defense date.
- ✓ GradForm 12: report on the Dissertation and its Oral Defense. This form will be completed at the conclusion of the dissertation defense.
- ✓ GradForm 14: Evaluation by the Dean's Representative. The Dean's outside representative will complete this form and return it to the Dean's office after the defense is over.



# Scripps College of Communication

## Graduate Student Support Funds

### Research/Creative Activity Travel Fund

This fund supports the travel expenses of graduate students presenting competitively selected research papers or juried creative works at conferences, symposia or festivals. Grants of up to \$200 are available. Graduate students may request funding for more than one conference, symposium or festival, subject to availability of funds, but it is expected that the second request will be for a different research paper or creative work. Every effort will be made to dispense these funds as widely as possible. To be eligible for funding, the student must:

- ✓ Present a paper or creative work at a national or international conference, symposium or festival; regional events will not qualify for funding.
- ✓ Be either the single author (in the case of research) of the paper or (if the paper is co-authored with other graduate students or faculty members) the designated presenter. Funding will be provided for only one presenter for each presentation.
- ✓ Present a scholarly work that was peer reviewed and competitively chosen or a juried creative work. In the case of scholarly work, this means that either the complete paper or an abstract has been submitted for review; papers, panel presentations or creative works accepted by a program committee are not eligible for funding.
- ✓ Submit request at least two weeks in advance to Associate Dean, College of Communication, RTVC 483A.
- ✓ Include a copy of the paper or creative work and one or more of the following: a copy of the letter of acceptance, a copy of the peer review comments, or a copy of the program page indicating scheduled presentation.
- ✓ Include a letter or email from the School director or graduate director stating that the School will match the request (at least \$200). The Associate Dean may waive this requirement in exceptional cases.

### Research/Creative Activity Start-Up Fund

This fund is to support research for theses, dissertations or creative work for a master's final project. Funds may be used for travel, transcription or other paid assistance, materials and supplies, but not for equipment or software. Generally, a student may receive only one grant from this fund. The funding limit is \$250, with the expectation that the School will match this amount (at least \$250).

If a proposal is turned down due to insufficient funds, the student may re-apply once for consideration in the next budget cycle. If turned down for other reasons (insufficient rationale, inappropriate purpose) the student may re-submit a revised proposal for one-time reconsideration. To be eligible for funding, the student must:

Submit a request at least two weeks in advance to the Associate Dean, College of Communication, RTVC 483A.

- ✓ Include a written rationale and a budget that indicates how/when the money will be spent.
- ✓ Include a letter or email from the School director or graduate director stating the amount of matching funds the School will commit. This may be in the form of a signature on the budget request indicating approval.

### Special Conditions

- A graduate student may receive support from both funds in any given year.
- All funding is on a reimbursement basis. The graduate student should submit a travel expense report or receipts to the school, which will charge the amount awarded to the College, and process a requisition for reimbursement.
- Listed amounts are for the current fiscal year only; fund size may vary according to funding availability.