

Graduate Program Handbook

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Admission to the Graduate Programs

- A. Undergraduate Degree**-Students holding a bachelor's degree or an equivalent degree from a foreign country can be admitted to the graduate program.
- B. GPA**-Applicants must have a GPA of 3.0 or better in overall undergraduate studies.
- C. Application Process**-The application process is detailed at <http://www.mnsu.edu/cmst/programs/gradapplication.html>
- D. Application Deadlines**-New students must apply for admission to a program three to four weeks prior to the beginning of a new semester (August 1st for fall, December 1st for spring, and April 30th for summer). The deadline for applicants seeking graduate assistantships is usually around mid-February. International students should follow the deadlines set by the Kearney Center for International Student Services.

Retention requirements

Applicants admitted to the Communication Studies graduate programs must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0. Detailed information about the scholastic standards set by the College of Graduate Studies and Research is available at <https://grad.mnsu.edu/programs/bulletin/info-courses.html>

Funding Graduate Education

Our department offers a number of assistantships. Students could serve as teaching assistants for the recitation sections of CMST 100 as well as for Forensics coaching. In addition, students are encouraged to apply for university-wide assistantships and federal and state financial aid, if they are eligible. Detailed information about financial assistance and policies regarding the same are available at <https://grad.mnsu.edu/programs/bulletin/info-financialassistance.html>

A. Criteria for Funding of Graduate Assistants

The following criteria establish a hierarchy for the funding of graduate assistants in the Department of Communication Studies:

1. Graduate students applying for a third year of funding to earn an MFA in Communication Studies
2. Graduate students applying for a second year of funding to earn a master's degree in Communication Studies
3. Graduate students applying for a first year of funding to earn a master's degree in Communication Studies.
First-year funding has the following additional hierarchical criteria:
 - a. Full admission to Communication Studies graduate program
 - b. Undergraduate major/minor in Communication Studies
 - c. Undergraduate major/minor in a related/supporting field to Communication Studies
 - d. Background in teaching and/or forensics
 - e. Probationary admission to Communication Studies graduate program
4. Graduate students applying for a third year of funding to earn a master's degree in Communication Studies (MA/MS only)
5. Graduate students in multi-disciplinary programs with Communication Studies as one of their emphases (1st or 2nd year of funding)
6. Students with a background in Communication Studies enrolled in other graduate programs (1st or 2nd year of funding)
7. Graduate students in multi-disciplinary programs with Communication Studies as one of their emphases (3rd year of funding)
8. Students with a background in Communication Studies enrolled in other graduate programs at the university (3rd year of funding)

B. Scholastic Requirements – Graduate assistants should demonstrate satisfactory academic progress toward their degree (a cumulative GPA of 3.0).

Program Process

A. Advisor: When a student is admitted into a Communication Studies graduate program, the department's Graduate Studies Coordinator will automatically be assigned as the advisor. An appointment should be scheduled with the advisor to discuss the student's program, interests and course options. After completing 50% of the coursework, the student needs to select a capstone advisor and a committee.

Capstone Project Descriptions

1. **Thesis:** A thesis is an independent work of a creative and/or investigative type related to a student's major field of study. It should demonstrate independent thought in the recognition, investigation and analysis/interpretation of a communication problem or phenomena and be oriented towards original research that contributes to new knowledge.
2. **Alternate Plan Paper (APP):** An APP is a less extensive research endeavor than the thesis. It can be an expanded work of a term paper or papers prepared for a course that involves an extensive review, analysis and/or synthesis of secondary sources. However, the research quality and quantity should be greater than that of a course paper.
3. **Internship Paper:** The Internship paper is based on an applied communication project which combines scholarship with extensive experiences in a non-academic setting. The internship option is designed for those students who wish to apply communication theory and skills in the workplace. The written component of the project should involve a combination of review, analysis and/or synthesis of secondary sources, and an application of that material to a workplace situation.
4. **Detailed information about the various capstone projects is available at <https://grad.mnsu.edu/programs/bulletin/info-requirements.html>**

B. Selecting a Capstone Advisor and Committee

1. Committee Requirements:

- a. **MA & MFA Thesis:** Two graduate faculty members from within the department and one graduate faculty member from outside the department
- b. **Alternate Plan Paper:** *MS in Communication Studies*- Two graduate faculty members from within the department; *MS in Communication and Composition*- One graduate faculty member from the Department of Communication Studies and one graduate faculty member from the Department of English

Planning and Completing the Masters Capstone Project and Degree (Thesis, Alternate Plan Paper, Internship Paper)

A. Planning and Completing the Thesis Option

1. The student will prepare a thesis proposal and submit it to the capstone advisor, who will then send it to the other committee members. A thesis proposal review meeting involving all the committee members should take place with the student before significant research begins. All the committee members need to be fully informed and in agreement regarding the candidate's planned study, (e.g., topic selection, data collection and analysis procedures, etc.).
2. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) form must be completed and attached to the thesis proposal for any research involving human participants.
3. Like in the case of the proposal, the final paper should be first submitted to the advisor who will then forward it to the other committee members. The final copy of the paper should be sent to the committee at least two weeks before the scheduled date of defense.
4. An oral defense of the thesis is required. It should be scheduled at least 3-4 weeks before the College of Graduate Studies and Research deadline for thesis submissions to allow sufficient time for revisions and/or rewrites. The student is responsible for coordinating the defense day and time with the committee members.

B. Planning and Completing the Alternate Plan Paper (APP) Option

1. Prior to writing the paper, the student will prepare an APP Proposal and submit it to the capstone advisor, who will then forward it to the other committee member. The committee members need to be fully informed and in agreement regarding the student's planned study (e.g. topic selection and project goals.).
2. If human participants are included in the APP research, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) form must be completed and attached to the proposal.
3. Like in the case of the proposal, the final paper should be first submitted to the advisor who will then forward it to the other committee member.
4. The final copy of the paper should be sent to the committee at least two weeks before the scheduled date of defense, which should be at least three to four weeks before the anticipated graduation date to allow time for revisions and/or rewrites. The student is responsible for coordinating the defense day and time with the committee members.

C. Planning and Completing the Internship Paper Option

1. An internship may be a new position or a current position with new responsibilities/duties/tasks. The new responsibilities/duties/tasks form the internship project.
 2. A student may have multiple internships, as long as each internship is linked to the student's educational goals in Communication Studies.
 3. For registering for the internship, the student should submit an internship contract form. See the section 'Graduate Student Forms.'
 4. The student will prepare an internship proposal (see point 7 for specific guidelines) and submit it to the capstone advisor, who will then forward it to the other committee member. Both the committee members need to be fully informed and in agreement regarding the student's planned study and project goals. Like in the case of the proposal, the final paper should be first submitted to the advisor who will then forward it to the other committee member. The final copy of the paper should be sent to the committee at least two weeks before the scheduled date of defense.
 5. An oral defense is usually required. It should be scheduled at least 3-4 weeks before the anticipated graduation date to allow sufficient time for revisions and/or rewrites. The student is responsible for coordinating the defense day and time with the committee members.
 6. One internship credit is equivalent to 30 hours of work; the time spent writing the paper does not count toward the internship credits.
 7. In addition to the committee members from the university, an onsite supervisor is required. An evaluation form will be sent to the onsite supervisor at the end of the internship project.
7. Internship Proposal Format:
- I. First section:
 - a. Identify the organization(s) where the internship will occur.
 - b. Explain why the organization(s) interests you.
 - c. Explain your (new) responsibilities in the internship.
 - d. Explain what interests you regarding the responsibilities.
 - II. Second section:
 - a. Identify specific communication element(s) in the internship responsibilities which interest you.
 - b. Explain how the internship will contribute new knowledge and advance your future career goals.
 - III. Third section:
 - a. List 3-4 goals (as related to communication studies) for undertaking the internship. Make the goals measurable, active, and specific (e.g, "At the end of the internship, I will know ... "; "at the end of the internship, I will be able to ... ")
 - b. List the anticipated number of hours involved in the internship and the major sections of the final paper(organization of the paper).

8. While doing the internship, the student is advised to keep a journal for recording significant communication issues/experiences and noting related theories for addressing the issues/experiences. This journal will be helpful when writing the final paper.

D. Summer Defenses

Summer defenses should be planned ahead of time (usually by mid or end of spring semester) as the availability of faculty members may be limited during summer terms.

E. Planning for Graduation

1. The Application for Graduation form must be completed, signed by all committee members, and submitted to the Graduate Studies Coordinator before the College of Graduate Studies and Research deadline for the acceptance of the application, which is usually 10-12 weeks before the end of the intended semester of graduation.
2. Following the successful defense of the capstone project a Recommendation for Awarding the Degree form should be submitted to the Graduate Studies Coordinator, who will then submit it to the College of Graduate Studies and Research.
3. At least 50 % of the credits that have been earned should be at the 600- level. Credits earned for APP or thesis does not count toward this requirement. Additional information about graduation requirements are available at <https://grad.mnsu.edu/programs/bulletin/info-requirements.html>

MFA Comprehensive Exam Policy

A. Enrollment Requirements

A student should complete 36 graduate credits before enrolling in CMST 651-Comprehensive Exams and should successfully pass the exams to be eligible to enroll in CMST 699-Thesis.

B. Procedure

1. At least eight weeks prior to the anticipated exam date, the student should notify the advisor and department capstone committee members of the intent to take the comprehensive exam.
2. The committee will prepare three questions for the exam. At their discretion, the committee may consult with the student or other faculty members when developing the questions. The questions will relate to the student's program of study and capstone project and will address the following areas:
Q1: Communication theory relating to the program of study.

Q2: Research methods relating to the anticipated thesis project.

Q3: Specialized content area relating to the thesis project.

3. The student is responsible for contacting the advisor and committee members to determine how to best prepare for the exam. The student should make sure he/she has a clear understanding of what is expected on the exam.
4. The student will have 168 hours (7 days) to answer all the three questions. The committee may impose specific restrictions in regards to page length, number of words, sources, etc.

C. Evaluation:

1. The advisor and the capstone committee member(s) will evaluate the answers.
2. Each question will be evaluated as Pass/No-Pass.
3. A Pass means the student has successfully met the expectations for the question.
4. A No-Pass means the answer did not meet expectations and must be rewritten or supplemented to correct deficiencies. The conditions associated with a rewrite are as follows:
 - I. It should be done with guidance from the committee.
 - II. The committee will determine the nature and scope of the rewrite.
 - III. It must be completed the semester the student is enrolled for CMST 651.
 - IV. Receiving a No-Pass on any rewritten question may require retaking CMST 651.
 - V. CMST 651 may be retaken only once. , When retaking CMST 651, a No-Pass for any of the questions will result in the student failing the course and not being eligible to earn the MFA degree.

Completion Time Limits

All work for a graduate degree must be completed within six years from the start of the program. Approval for completion beyond the six-year period is at the discretion of the College of Graduate Studies and Research.

Graduate Student Forms

The following forms---Application for Graduation, Change of Advisor/Committee, Recommendation for Awarding the Degree, Request for Extension of Time to Complete Program Requirements, and Request for Registration Overload---are available at <https://grad.mnsu.edu/forms/>

Internship Contract form ----

<http://www.mnsu.edu/cmst/programs/internshipcontract2011.pdf>

Graduate Program Bulletin

For information about the policies of the College of Graduate Studies and Research, refer to the graduate program bulletin: <https://grad.mnsu.edu/programs/bulletin/>

General FAQs

1. Do I have to take the GRE to be accepted into the program?

No, we do not require the GRE for admission to our programs. However, if you are seeking to further your education beyond the master's level, admission to Ph.D. programs may require you to take the GRE.

2. What classes do I have to take for my program?

Program requirements and course listings are available at <https://mankato.mnsu.edu/academics/academic-catalog/?catalogTypeName=Graduate>

3. What courses should I take first?

We recommend starting with the core courses as soon as possible.

4. What should my course load be?

To be considered fulltime, a graduate student should be enrolled for at least six credit hours. Enrollments are limited to 12 credit hours during fall and spring semesters and 8 credit hours during summer, unless exceptions to this policy are approved by the student's advisor and the College of Graduate Studies and Research (<https://grad.mnsu.edu/programs/bulletin/info-courses.html>).

5. If I earn a certificate in the department, can I use those credits toward completing a master's degree in the department?

Yes. The credits used to earn a graduate certificate in our program can (within a six-year timeframe) be applied toward the completion of a master's degree in our program.

6. Can I transfer graduate credits into one of the programs?

Yes. The number of credits that may transfer is subject to department approval based on the transfer policies of the College of Graduate Studies and Research. (<https://mankato.mnsu.edu/future-students/admissions/graduate-admissions/transfer-credits/>). The department does not allow the transfer of

core/required courses listed for each program, but will consider and review previous graduate level coursework to fulfill elective requirements.

7. How do I find an internship?

You can set up your internship experience at an organization of your choosing. If you are looking for some help in this regard, there are a number of resources on campus. Some faculty in the department have connections to community organizations (the Chamber of Commerce, YWCA, etc.) and businesses in the Mankato and the Twin Cities areas. You can also find internship listings on mavjobs.com. The [Career Development Center](#) can also help you identify internship opportunities.

8. Can I do an internship if I am pursuing the MA?

Yes. In fact, an internship can be quite valuable to pursue --- "smaller" 1-3 credit internships can be useful in gaining experience and putting the theoretical knowledge you get in classes into practice. If you are an MA student, you can list your internship credits for elective credits.

9. How much are tuition and fees?

For domestic students details about tuition and fees are available at https://www.mnsu.edu/campushub/tuition_fees/rates/current/grad/index.html
For international students, information about the costs of attending Minnesota State University is available at <http://www.mnsu.edu/international/prospectivestudent/costandscholarship.html>

10. Does the university provide healthcare?

Not currently

11. If I am awarded an assistantship position, when do I have to show up on campus?

Classes begin at the end of August each year. All graduate teaching assistants have to attend a teaching workshop that starts two weeks before the start of classes.

12. How many credits of Speech-Debate courses (NFL courses) will count toward a master's degree program?

Six credits—Information about the NFL programs are available at <http://www.mnsu.edu/nfl/program/>

13. Who do I contact if I have questions about the graduate program, the courses I need to take, etc.?

You can contact the Graduate Studies Coordinator of the department.

MFA FAQs

1. Is the MFA a terminal degree?

The department has designed the program as a terminal degree. However, the acceptance of the MFA as a terminal degree is dependent on the policies of the institution where one is hired/employed. Many colleges/universities already accept MFAs in Art, Theater, and English as terminal degrees.

2. How many graduate-level credits can I transfer to the MFA program?

The number of credits that may transfer is subject to department approval based on the transfer policies of the College of Graduate Studies and Research (<https://grad.mnsu.edu/applying/transfercredits.html>).

3. Do I have to travel to speech and debate tournaments?

Yes; a requirement of the program is a minimum of two years of coaching, which will involve travel. Students pursuing the degree on campus will work with Maverick Forensics. The director of the program establishes the travel schedule for the team and graduate assistants.