

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

**Master of Arts in Communication
Department of Communication & Media**

**Graduate Student Handbook
Fall 2026-Spring 2027**

(Revised August 2026)

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Master of Arts in Communication Program Description & Outcomes

Program Description

The Master's degree in Communication at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is designed for individuals who seek career advancement in communication positions, or who aspire to enroll in a doctoral program. Offered entirely online, the program provides flexible learning opportunities for students regardless of location or professional commitments. Students in the Master's in Communication program can specialize in Organizational Leadership or Strategic Communication. Both tracks consist of courses designed to enhance students' knowledge of communication principles, theories, and research in the track topic area and develop proficiency as writers, researchers, and critical decision makers. The program is designed to provide students with a quality experience that will help them grow as individuals, scholars, professionals, and citizens.

Mission/Purpose

The Master's degree in Communication at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi offers a wide range of options for students who seek career advancement in communication and media positions in South Texas and beyond, or who aspire to enroll in a doctoral program. This program is designed to provide students with a quality experience that will help them grow as scholars, professionals, and citizens.

Student Learning Outcomes

Graduates of this program will be able to

- apply knowledge and understanding of the history, underlying concepts, principles, and theories in the field of communication;
- demonstrate proficiency in advanced writing, presentational speaking, and critical thinking at the Master's level;
- show proficiency in scholarly methods of inquiry; and
- demonstrate the ability to gather, interpret, evaluate, and present data for the purposes of addressing communication problems and/or advancing knowledge in the field of communication.

MA in Communication Faculty

<u>Graduate Faculty</u>	<u>Academic Expertise</u>	<u>Contact Information</u>
*Dr. Brooke Friley <i>Associate Professor</i> (PhD, Purdue University)	Persuasion	BH 326 361-825-2179 brooke.friley@tamucc.edu
*Dr. David Gurney <i>Professor</i> (PhD, Northwestern University)	New Media, Cultural Studies	BH 331 361-825-5991 david.gurney@tamucc.edu
*Dr. Diana Ivy <i>Professor</i> (PhD, University of Oklahoma)	Interpersonal Communication, Gender Communication, Nonverbal Communication	BH 325 361-825-5986 diana.ivy@tamucc.edu
*Dr. Sining Kong <i>Associate Professor</i> (PhD, University of Florida)	New Media, Public Relations Theory, Research Methods	BH 372 361-825-2729 sining.kong@tamucc.edu
*Dr. Michelle Maresh-Fuehrer Department Chair <i>Professor</i> (PhD, University of Nebraska)	Public Relations Theory, Advanced Crisis Communication, Research Methods	BH 329 361-825-2273 michelle.maresh- fuehrer@tamucc.edu
*Dr. Stephanie Rollie Rodriguez <i>Associate Professor</i> (PhD, University of Iowa)	Introduction to Communication Scholarship, Family Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Intercultural Communication, Communication Theory	BH 335 361-825-5753 stephanie.rodriguez@tamucc.edu
*Dr. Kellie Smith MA in Communication Program Coordinator <i>Associate Professor</i> (PhD, Texas A&M University)	Persuasion	CCH 115-B 361-825-6060 kellie.smith@tamucc.edu
*Dr. Michael Sollitto <i>Professor</i> (PhD, West Virginia University)	Communication and Organizations, Communicating Leadership, Instructing and Consulting, Small Group Decision Making, Research Methods, Communication Theory	BH 327 361-825-2443 michael.sollitto@tamucc.edu

Application and Admission Requirements

Admission Requirements

In addition to the university admission requirements outlined for all graduate programs, the MA in Communication program requires:

- A bachelor's degree in Communication or related field.
- A grade point average (GPA) of no less than 3.0 on a 4-point scale.
- Transcripts of all undergraduate and graduate work undertaken at any regionally accredited colleges or universities.
- Two letters of evaluation from individuals such as professors and employers who can attest to the applicant's potential for success in a graduate program of study. Letters of evaluation should specifically address the applicant's potential for successful career and motivation for graduate study.
- An essay. Applicants must submit a 1-2 page (double spaced) essay describing educational and professional goals and the reasons for applying to the program.
- A writing sample. Samples may include research papers, term papers, and class essays.
- A comprehensive resume with current email address, telephone numbers, and mailing address.
- International students must have their credentials evaluated by the Office of Recruitment and Admissions for their equivalent value according to standard university procedure and meet other admissions requirements specified in the graduate catalog.

Application Checklist

- Texas Common Application for Graduate Admission to the Office of Recruitment and Admissions with appropriate fee.
- Official transcripts documenting all undergraduate and graduate coursework taken at any regionally-accredited college or university attended.
- Bachelor's degree in Communication or related field.
- Two reference forms that address your potential for a successful career and your motivation for graduate study.
- A 1–2-page (double spaced) essay describing your educational and professional goals and the reasons you are applying to the program.
- Writing sample. Samples may include research papers, term papers, and class essays.
- Comprehensive resume with email address, telephone numbers, and mailing address.

Provide a complete set of all application materials to the University Office of Recruitment and Admissions.

Office of Recruitment and Admissions
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
6300 Ocean Drive, Unit 5774
Corpus Christi, TX 78412-5774

Department of Communication & Media
 Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
 6300 Ocean Drive, Unit 5722
 Corpus Christi, TX 78412
 Attn: COMM Graduate Program Coordinator

For more information call: (361) 825-2316.

Deadlines for Applications

Applying for	U.S. Applicants	International Applicants
Fall Semester		
Final	August 13	May 1
Spring Semester		
Final	January 1	November 1
Summer Semester		
Final	May 15	February 1

Admission

Upon receipt of all admission materials, the Communication Graduate Admissions Committee will review the admissions materials. The committee may choose to admit, conditionally admit, or deny admission, based on evaluation of the admission materials (see description below). For full consideration of admission, assistantships, and scholarships, a completed admissions packet should be received by the priority deadline for the semester the student plans to enroll. The Communication Graduate Admissions Committee will continue to review applications until the final deadline or until all spaces are filled.

Applicants must have a Bachelor's degree in Communication or a related field (e.g. Psychology, Political Science, Sociology, Journalism, English, History, Public Relations) from a regionally accredited university or, if an international student, have the equivalent of a U.S. accredited degree as determined by the Dean of Graduate Studies. Applicants must possess an overall grade point average (GPA) of no less than 3.0 on a 4-point scale.

Conditional Admission

Applicants who have received a Bachelor's degree from a regionally-accredited university or, if an international student, the equivalent of a U.S. accredited degree, but who do not meet the admission requirements noted above may be conditionally admitted into the program. The MA in Communication Graduate Admissions Committee will make the decision as to a student's conditional status. Students admitted conditionally must have a 3.0 GPA in their first 9 hours of graduate coursework approved by the Communication Graduate Advisor in order to continue in the program. The Communication Graduate Admissions Committee may also require the student to take relevant undergraduate leveling courses, particularly if the applicant's degree is from an unrelated field.

MA in Communication Degree Requirements*

*This curriculum applies to students who begin the Communication MA program during the 2026-2027 academic year. Students who began the program during a different academic year should be sure to check the requirements described in the catalog for the associated academic year, as the requirements may be different than those described here.

The curriculum for the MA in communication is comprised of three parts: required core courses that all graduate students must take; track courses, which include both required and elective course tied to a selected content area; and an exit requirement, in which students complete either comprehensive exams or a thesis.

Admitted students have two track options from which they can select: Organizational Leadership or Strategic Communication. The tracks share core coursework designed to enhance student knowledge of communication principles and theories and develop their proficiency as writers and researchers. Each track is a minimum of 36 hours and includes both required and elective courses. With prior approval from the MA in Communication Program Coordinator, up to 6 hours of non-communication graduate level coursework can count as part of this 36-hour requirement.

Required Core Courses (Each course is three-credit hours):

Students in each track will complete the following four required core courses:

Offered in the Fall semester:

- COMM 5301: *Communication Foundations and Inquiry*
- COMM 5302: *Communication Theory in Practice*

Offered in the Spring semester:

- COMM 5303: *Strategic Analysis for Problem Solving*
- COMM 5311: *Persuasive Communication*

MA in Communication Tracks (choose one)

1. Organizational Leadership Track

The Organizational Leadership track focuses on principles, theories, and research of organizational communication and leadership. It is appropriate for individuals who are interested in working in leadership or management positions within a variety of organizations or who want to pursue a Ph.D. in organizational communication or a related area.

Students in the Organizational Leadership track must complete the four required core courses described above, two required Organizational Leadership track courses, four to six elective courses, and either the comprehensive exams or thesis exit requirement.

Required Courses (in addition to the 5301, 5302, 5303, and 5311)

Take at least two of following (6 credit hours):

COMM 5306: *Training and Development*
 COMM 5307: *Communication & Organizations*
 COMM 5308: *Communicating Leadership*
 COMM 5314: *Small Group Decision Making*

Electives

In addition to the 12 hours of core courses and 6 hours of required Organization Leadership Track courses, students must complete 18 hours of electives (Comprehensive Exam Option) or 12 hours of electives (Thesis Option). Any of the remaining required course options from above or the courses listed below may be taken for elective credit hours. We encourage our students to take as many track courses as possible. With prior approval from the MA in Communication Program Coordinator, up to 6 hours of non-communication graduate level coursework can count as part of this 36-hour requirement.

COMM 5304: *Media Critique & Creative Communication*
 COMM 5309: *Interpersonal Communication*
 COMM 5310: *Intercultural Communication Competence*
 COMM 5335: *Issues, Risk, & Crisis Communication*
 COMM 5340: *Public Relations Strategies*
 COMM 5346: *Emerging Trends in Media*
 COMM 5390: *Special Topics in Communication*
 COMM 5399: *Internship*

2. Strategic Communication Track

The Strategic Communication track focuses on principles, theories, and research of goal-oriented communication, particularly as it relates to communicating with the public. It is appropriate for individuals who are interested in working in public relations or marketing positions within a variety of organizations or who want to pursue a Ph.D. in public relations, persuasion, or a related area.

Students in the Strategic Communication track must complete the four required core courses described above, two required Strategic Communication track courses, four to six elective courses, and either the comprehensive exams or thesis exit requirement.

Required Courses

Take at least two of the following (6 hours):

COMM 5304: *Media Critique & Creative Communication*

COMM 5335: *Issues, Risk, & Crisis Communication*

COMM 5340: *Public Relations Strategies*

COMM 5346: *Emerging Trends in Media*

Electives

In addition to the 12 hours of core courses and 6 hours of required Strategic Communication Track courses, students must complete 18 hours of electives (Comprehensive Exam Option) or 12 hours of electives (Thesis Option). Any of the remaining required course options from above or the courses listed below may be taken for elective credit hours. We encourage our students to take as many track courses as possible. With prior approval from the MA in Communication Program Coordinator, up to 6 hours of non-communication graduate level coursework can count as part of this 36-hour requirement.

COMM 5306: *Training and Development*

COMM 5307: *Communication & Organizations*

COMM 5308: *Communicating Leadership*

COMM 5309: *Interpersonal Communication*

COMM 5310: *Intercultural Communication Competence*

COMM 5314: *Small Group Decision Making*

COMM 5390: *Special Topics in Communication*

COMM 5399: *Internship*

Exit Requirement Options (choose one)

Students must complete 36 graduate hours in Communication with a cumulative 3.0 GPA or higher. All students admitted to the program will automatically be registered for the Comprehensive Exam exit requirement.

1. **Comprehensive Exam.** Students will take 12 hours of core coursework, 6 hours of required track coursework, and 18 hours of pre-approved electives. Students will also successfully complete an exam that cut across completed courses allowing students to demonstrate their abilities to analyze and synthesize material. The exams will be given during the semester of expected graduation and will be graded as “pass” (for credit), or “fail” (for no credit). If the student fails the exam, the student will need to attempt the exams in a subsequent semester. The student must achieve a passing grade on all exam questions to graduate.
2. **Thesis.** Students may apply to complete a thesis instead of comprehensive exams. This is an appropriate option for individuals who are interested in pursuing a Ph.D. or who want to work in an area that involves research. To apply to complete the thesis, students must develop a thesis pre-proposal that the faculty will evaluate. Students who are approved to complete the thesis will take 12 hours of core coursework, 6 hours of required track coursework, 12 hours of pre-approved electives, and at least 6 hours of thesis work culminating in the thesis document. Thesis students will also orally defend the thesis to the appropriate graduate faculty. A majority of the faculty on the thesis committee must grade the thesis and defense as “credit” for it to be accepted to meet graduation requirements. If the student does not receive a “credit” score, the student has one year from the time of the first defense to complete the thesis satisfactorily and fulfill this requirement. Students must use the required Graduate Education forms and meet the deadlines for thesis committee formation and scheduling of the thesis defense. The thesis must meet the Graduate Education thesis formatting requirements in addition to those of their discipline. For Graduate Education deadlines and forms, refer to the [Graduate Education website](#) and/or [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

MA in Communication Program Curriculum

Course Delivery

Classes are delivered 100% online.

Courses and Descriptions

COMM 5301: *Communication Foundations and Inquiry*

This course provides students with a foundational understanding of the communication discipline, focusing on scholarly insights and skills essential for academic and professional success. Through various assignments and discussions, students will explore key concepts, integrate into the MA in Communication program, and develop academic writing abilities.

COMM 5302: *Communication Theory in Practice*

This course reviews principal communication theories with an emphasis on the use of theories in achieving goals and improving outcomes.

COMM 5303: *Strategic Analysis for Problem Solving*

This course introduces students to the fundamental techniques scholars use to conduct communication research. It covers quantitative and qualitative methods, emphasizing the development, analysis, and reporting of academic research. Students will gain practical skills in crafting research questions, conducting ethical research, and analyzing data, preparing them for advanced academic and professional work in the field of communication.

COMM 5304: *Media Critique & Creative Communication*

This course provides a dynamic and integrative approach to understanding and creating media, equipping students with both critical perspectives of cultural theory and practical skills essential for today's media landscape.

COMM 5306: *Training and Development*

This course explores the strategies used to enhance employee skills and organizational effectiveness. It covers key topics such as needs assessment, instructional design, and evaluation of training programs, providing students with practical skills for designing and implementing effective training initiatives.

COMM 5307: *Communication & Organizations*

This course focuses on the complex and continuous process through which organizational members create, maintain, and change their organizations and it offers an overview of contemporary theory and research, focusing on employee behaviors, organizational processes, and practical applications. [Credit may not be given for both this course and PADM 5307.]

COMM 5308: *Communicating Leadership*

This course focuses on the process of influence that takes place through communication to achieve goals or to produce change from a collective of people. This course will include instruction on the various approaches to leadership, process of leadership, and the role that leadership plays in a variety of contexts.

COMM 5309: *Interpersonal Communication*

This course focuses on terminology, key theories, and functions of interpersonal communication as it pertains to the formation and maintenance of relationships.

COMM 5310: *Intercultural Communication Competence*

This course explores communication processes and skills associated with intercultural competence. It investigates the role of culture in shaping knowledge and value frameworks and the role of communication in effectively navigating and managing cultural differences.

COMM 5311: *Persuasive Communication*

This course investigates traditional and contemporary theories of persuasion and is an in-depth study of the major concepts of persuasive communication.

COMM 5314: *Small Group Decision Making*

This course provides an overview of contemporary theory and research on the role of communication in small group decision making. It focuses on factors that positively and negatively influence small group decision-making processes including group development, member characteristics, leadership processes, the use of power and influence, and conflict.

COMM 5335: *Issues, Risk, & Crisis Communication*

Examines crisis communication from the perspective of academic researchers and practitioners. Includes the analysis of crisis communication research, reviews the elements of an effective crisis communication plan and centers on case study analysis of best and worst practices in crisis planning, prevention and response.

COMM 5340: *Public Relations Strategies*

Using a case study approach, students explore strategic communication processes to inform the development of objectives, messaging and tactics to serve organizational goals.

COMM 5346: *Emerging Trends in Media*

Explores contemporary instances of new and emerging media platforms, especially as facilitated through digital media technologies, as they continue to disseminate more widely as portals of communication. Students will engage with specific issues in new media through the lenses of various cultural theories in order to gain a greater understanding of the scope of new media, its culture, and the relationships that exist between machines and humans, as well as those between society and technology.

COMM 5390: *Special Topics in Communication*

This course is an intensive exploration of selected topics in communication study. Topics may include, but are not limited to, the following: ethnography, language and social interaction, critical and rhetorical methods, and interviewing. May be repeated when topics vary.

COMM 5395: *Thesis*

The thesis is independent research under the direction of a student's graduate committee, and to result in a completed thesis project, it should be taken in two separate semesters for a total of 6 credit hours dependent upon thesis proposal. Prerequisite: Approval of a student's Faculty Mentor. Grade assigned will be "credit" (CR) or "no credit" (NC).

COMM 5396: *Individual Study*

This Individual Study course is designed to provide inquiry and research opportunities in an area of special interest otherwise not available in course offerings. Two individual study courses may be applied toward the degree with the approval of the student's Faculty Mentor.

COMM 5396: *Internship*

Practical experience in the communication field through placement in an organization. By application only and approval of the internship coordinator. Prerequisites: Completion of at least 18 graduate hours in communication. Only 3 hours of internship may apply for the major and with internship credit, the hours outside the program that can be counted toward the major decreases to 3 hours.

Communication Graduate Course Rotation

Course Rotation by Course Number

*We offer courses based on student interest. We might need to cancel any course without sufficient enrollment.

Course Number	Course Title	Rotation
5301	Communication Foundations and Inquiry	Fall
5302	Communication Theory in Practice	Fall
5303	Strategic Analysis for Problem Solving	Spring
5304	Media Critique & Creative Communication	Fall even years
5306	Training and Development	Spring even years
5307	Communication & Organizations	Fall even years
5308	Communicating Leadership	Fall odd years
5309	Interpersonal Communication	As needed
5310	Intercultural Communication Competence	As needed
5311	Persuasive Communication	Spring
5314	Small Group Decision Making	Spring odd years
5335	Issues, Risk, & Crisis Communication	Spring even years
5340	Public Relations Strategies	Spring odd years
5346	Emerging Trends in Media	Fall odd years
5390	Special Topics in Communication	Summer
5395	Thesis	As needed, requires approval
5396	Individual Study	As needed, requires approval
5399	Internship	Fall, Spring, Summer, requires approval

Course Rotation by Semester**Fall Odd Years**

5301 Communication Foundations and Inquiry
 5302 Communication Theory in Practice
 5308 Communicating Leadership (O)
 5346 Emerging Trends in Media (S)

Spring Even Years

5303 Strategic Analysis for Problem Solving
 5311 Persuasive Communication
 5306 Training and Development (O)
 5335 Issues, Risk, & Crisis Communication (S)

Summer Even Years

5390 Special Topics

Track Courses Rotation**Organizational Leadership**

5308 Communicating Leadership
 5306 Training and Development
 5307 Communication and Organizations
 5314 Small Group Decision Making

Strategic Communication

5346 Emerging Trends in Media
 5335 Issues, Risk, & Crisis Communication
 5304 Media Critique & Creative Communication
 5340 Public Relations Strategies

Fall Even Years

5301 Communication Foundations and Inquiry
 5302 Communication Theory in Practice
 5307 Communication & Organizations (O)
 5311 Media Critique & Creative
 Communication (S)

Spring Odd Years

5303 Strategic Analysis for Problem Solving
 5311 Persuasive Communication
 5314 Small Group Decision Making (O)
 5340 Public Relations Strategies (S)

Summer Odd Years

5390 Special Topics

Fall odd years
 Spring even years
 Fall even years
 Spring odd years

Fall odd years
 Spring even years
 Fall even years
 Spring odd years

Matriculation Guide

Listed below is a sample of sequences of courses for full-time students pursuing an MA in Communication based on the 2026-2027 catalog. The process will look different for students attending part time, who choose to take summer classes (we typically offer two graduate courses each summer), who choose to complete a thesis, or who choose to take comprehensive exams in a subsequent semester. Be sure to work with the MA in Communication Program Coordinator to determine your specific plan.

<u>Fall 2026</u>		Credits
COMM 5301: <i>Communication Foundations and Inquiry</i>		3
COMM 5302: <i>Communication Theory in Practice</i>		3
Track course: COMM 5308: <i>Communication & Organizations</i> (O)		3
COMM 5304: <i>Media Critique & Creative Communication</i> (S)	3	
<u>Spring 2027</u>		
COMM 5303: <i>Strategic Analysis for Problem Solving</i>		3
COMM 5311: <i>Persuasive Communication</i>		3
Track course: COMM 5314: <i>Small Group Decision Making</i> (O)		3
COMM 5340: <i>Public Relations Strategies</i> (S)		3
<u>Fall 2027</u>		
Track course: COMM 5308: <i>Communicating Leadership</i> (O)		3
COMM 5346: <i>Emerging Trends in Media</i> (S)		3
<u>Spring 2028</u>		
Track course: COMM 5306: <i>Training and Development</i> (O)		3
COMM 5335: <i>Issues, Risk, & Crisis Communication</i>		3
Comprehensive exam		
		36 credits

Processes and Policies

Advising

Students will receive advising from the academic graduate advisor and the MA in Communication Program Coordinator. Students should consult with her about questions about the mechanics of registration, credit transfers, applying for graduation, etc. The advisor is the one who will make sure that you have taken all the courses necessary to earn the degree.

Selecting a Track

During the student's first full-term semester (fall/spring), students will select their track. To do so, students will work with the MA in Communication Program Coordinator and the academic graduate advisor to complete the Track Selection Form. We encourage students to complete a draft of their degree plan. This will help students identify which courses they will need to take each semester. This is particularly important since most courses are offered once every two years.

Students are encouraged to stay with their selected track for the duration of the degree. Students are expected to complete the requirements of the newly selected track, which may mean adding additional time to the program. Students should consult with the academic graduate advisor and the MA in Communication Program Coordinator before switching tracks.

Selecting and Registering for Courses

Each required core course is offered once a year. Track courses and elective courses are offered every other year. Review the course rotation to determine when the courses you need will be offered. It is important to plan ahead. Be sure to take the required track courses during the semester they are offered, even if it means delaying a required core course or changing an elective.

Students are encouraged to consult the MA in Communication Program Coordinator if they have questions or concerns about selecting a course. None of the courses have prerequisites; however, students should take Introduction to Communication Scholarship during their first fall semester. COMM 5396: *Individual Course Study*, COMM 5395: *Thesis*, and COMM 5399: *Internship* all require permission to register for them. Talk to the MA in Communication Program Coordinator to if you need to register for one of these courses.

Exceptions for Track Requirements

Students must demonstrate that they have made every effort to register for and complete all required core and track courses. If a required track course is not offered during the time frame that the students is completing his or her degree, the student will need to work with the MA in Communication Program Coordinator to complete an exceptions form. This may allow a substitution of an elective course for the required track course. Exceptions cannot be made for required core courses.

Completing a Degree Plan

Students complete a formal degree plan during the semester in which they complete their 18th credit hour. For full-time students, this occurs during the second semester. It may be in the third to fifth semester for part-time students. The degree plan requires students to indicate the courses they have taken, courses they plan to take, and the exit requirement they intend to complete. Students are automatically assigned to complete comprehensive exams. (See the section on comprehensive exams for more information about this process). Students who plan to pursue a Ph.D., who plan to work in professions that involve research, or who want to complete a research project for personal development may apply to complete a thesis. This involves submitting a pre-proposal for graduate faculty review. (See the section on theses for more information about this process). Students should work with their advisors to complete the degree plan form and to select an exit requirement.

Degree Planner

Students can monitor their progress in the program by accessing their degree plan through Degree Planner available here: <http://degreeplanner.tamucc.edu>.

Course Materials

Faculty select course materials that focus and enhance student learning. Graduate students are expected to purchase or acquire access to all required materials that have been assigned by the instructor for a particular course. Students should plan to keep their course materials, particularly for their core and track courses, until they have completed the program as the materials will be needed to complete comprehensive exams. Students are encouraged to purchase (as opposed to renting) core and track materials.

Enrollment Status

Graduate students should be aware of their enrollment status, as it may impact financial aid, veteran's benefits, or other important aspects of graduate life. In addition, international students have specific requirements about enrollment status. Enrollment status for graduate students is as follows:

Full-time graduate student	Fall or spring term = 9 hours Combined summer terms = 6 hours
Three-quarter-time graduate student	Fall or spring term = 7 hours Combined summer terms = 5 hours
Half-time graduate student:	Fall or spring term = 5 hours Combined summer terms = 3 hours

Continuous Enrollment

The University does not have a continuous enrollment policy for master's students. However, students should be aware of their own program's requirements, which may differ from general University requirements. Master's students should also know that if they do not attend for two years, they will be required to reapply to the University. Students should consider applying for a leave of absence (see below), especially if the time-to-degree and recency of credits requirements will be impacted by a needed absence.

Leave of Absence

Students experiencing life changing or catastrophic events should consult with their program coordinator and/or department chair and request a [Leave of Absence](#) in writing from the Registrar's Office using the [Request for Leave of Absence form](#). A student who is in good standing may petition for a leave of absence of no more than two full academic terms. The maximum number of leave of absence requests permitted in a program is two. A request for a leave of absence requires approval in advance by the faculty advisor, Program Coordinator, and College Dean. If the College Dean approves the petition, the registration requirement is set aside during the period of time of the leave. Students should be aware that leaves of absence require suspension of all activities associated with pursuit of the degree. See the catalog for more information.

Maximum Course Load

Graduate students may not register for more than 12 hours in a regular semester, 6 hours in a single session of summer school, or 12 hours in the combined summer session (not including Maymester) without the approval of the appropriate college dean. See the [Maximum Course Load](#) section in the catalog.

Repetition of a Course

There are specific policies about repeating courses for higher grades, including the provision that graduate students may retake a maximum of two courses during graduate study at the University. Each course may be repeated only once. Some courses may be repeated for multiple credit if those courses are so designated in the course description and approved by the faculty or program advisor as designated by their college. Complete catalog information may be found in the [Graduate Academic and Degree Requirements](#) section of the catalog.

Time Limit to Degree

The requirements for a master's degree at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi must be completed within seven years subsequent to admission to the program. The seven-year period begins the first semester of enrollment and is calculated from the date of degree conferral. Credit that is more than seven years old will not be counted toward a master's degree. Exceptions will require **strong** justification in writing from the student requesting the exception as well as submission of a revalidation plan. Credits earned at another university are not eligible for an exception. Written approval from the major department chairperson, the dean of the college offering the degree, the Graduate Dean, and the Provost are required. See the revalidation process below.

Revalidation of Courses Beyond Degree Time Limit

In order to revalidate dated courses, students should carefully attend information in the catalog (see [Graduate Academic and Degree Requirements](#) section of the catalog). Revalidation requests should be made using the [Revalidation Request Form](#).

Academic Requirements for Graduate Work

Good Standing. Graduate Students, including degree-seeking, certificate-seeking, and non-degree-seeking students are considered in “good academic standing” if they maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average (GPA) on all graduate course work and earn a grade of S (Satisfactory), IP (In Progress, or CR (Credit) on all course work that does not affect GPA. A higher GPA may be required by some programs. In such cases, the higher standard will be substituted for 3.0 in all other matters related to good academic standing. A complete discussion of academic requirements including but not limited to scholastic probation and enforced withdrawal may be found in the [Graduate Academic and Degree Requirements](#) section of the catalog. For information regarding the effect of scholastic probation and enforced withdrawal, see the [Financial Assistance Suspension Policy](#) in the Tuition, Fees, & Financial Assistance section of the catalog.

Applying for Graduation

Students intending to have a degree conferred must notify the appropriate dean's office and their academic advisor. All transferred work needed for undergraduate degree conferment must be received by the Office of the University Registrar within the graduating term. Students who plan to participate in a graduation exercise and/or receive a diploma must complete an application for graduation by the deadline indicated in the Academic Calendar. An application for graduation must be obtained and processed through the student's academic advisor. Students participating in the graduation exercise will also be required to obtain an appropriate cap and gown. The application for graduation is not transferable to a subsequent semester. If a student does not graduate, the application will be canceled. A new application must be obtained and processed through the student's academic advisor.

Students who apply for graduation, but do not graduate, must reapply in the semester that they plan to graduate. Students who plan to participate in a graduation ceremony during a semester that is different from the semester in which they complete the degree should not apply for graduation. Please contact the academic advisor for instruction on how to proceed.

Statement on Academic Integrity

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, which include but are not limited to illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, plagiarism or collusion in any of these behaviors.

Responsibility of the Student: It is the responsibility of the student to become educated regarding University Rules, Regulations and Policies regarding academic misconduct. This includes, but is not limited to, seeking clarification from each instructor regarding acceptable behaviors and guidelines for completing individual assignments. A failure to become educated with the University Rules, Regulations and Policies or the instructors individuals guidelines will not excuse the student from accountability for violations of such policies.

Responsibility of the Instructor: The instructor should maintain a policy regarding academic misconduct within their syllabus and provide clear expectations regarding behaviors that will and will not be permitted regarding the completion of in and out of class assignments. The instructor shall address all matters of suspected academic misconduct with the student in question and may choose to document and refer the matter to the Office of Judicial Affairs. The burden of proof shall lie on the instructor when presenting cases of academic misconduct to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

Disciplinary action for academic misconduct is first the responsibility of the faculty member assigned to the course. The faculty member is charged with assessing the gravity of any case of academic misconduct and with giving appropriate sanction to any student involved.

Sanctions that may be recommended by the faculty member for individual cases of academic misconduct include one or more of the following:

- Written reprimand (an official letter of reprimand will be issued by the Office of the Associate Dean of Students);
- Requirement to re-do work in question;
- Requirement to submit additional work;
- Lowering of grade on work in question;
- Assigning grade of “F” to work in question;
- Assigning grade of “F” for course;
- Recommendation for more severe punishment, such as suspension, dismissal from program, or expulsion from the University

If the faculty member recommends more severe sanction, such as dismissal from program or expulsion from the program or from the University, the matter will automatically be reviewed by the office of the Associate Dean of Students and may be referred to an Academic Integrity Hearing Panel. Additionally, if the student has a history of academic misconduct, the matter will be reviewed by the Academic Integrity Hearing Panel.

The faculty member must file a record for each case of academic misconduct, including a description of the incident, the disciplinary action taken, the assignment, the instructions for the assignment, and evidence indicating misconduct, and a current syllabus for the course to the Office of the Associate Dean of Student. The faculty member should also provide a copy to the chair of their department. The Office of the Associate Dean of Students will maintain records of such cases for a period of five years after the student's last enrollment date.

For additional information regarding this process students should refer to University Rules and Procedures 13.02.99.C3.01: Academic Misconduct Cases, which can be found online at judicialaffairs.tamucc.edu.

Additional General Academic Policies and Regulations

Please consult the **Graduate Catalog** located on the Graduate Education website for additional information about policies and regulations affecting all graduate students including information about transferring credit, adding or dropping a course, grades, scholastic probation, and others.

Comprehensive Exam Process*

Comprehensive exams are designed for students to demonstrate that they have mastery in communication principles, concepts, theories, and research. Comprehensive exams should be taken during the student's last semester of coursework or in the semester following the last semester of coursework. Comprehensive exams are offered during fall and spring semesters. Students must be registered for a course credit during the semester they intend to graduate. If students have completed all their required coursework, they will need to register for a one-credit DIS during the semester that they complete their comprehensive exams.

Content. Exam content is based on both core and track courses. All students will answer questions tied to the four required core classes which include: COMM 5301: *Communication Foundations and Inquiry*, COMM 5302: *Communication Theory in Practice*, COMM 5303: *Strategic Analysis for Problem Solving*, and COMM 5311: *Persuasive Communication*. Additionally, students will answer questions over four courses associated with their chosen track (Organizational Leadership or Strategic Communication). If students have not completed four track courses, they will need to work with their advisor and the MA in Communication Program Coordinator to select electives that best fit with their track to reach a total of four courses. The exam will cover eight courses in total. Students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the central theories, concepts, research methods, and outcomes covered in these classes.

Preparing for the exam. The MA in Communication Program Coordinator will schedule a meeting at the beginning of the semester to discuss the comprehensive exam process and how to prepare for the exam. However, students are strongly encouraged to prepare for the exam throughout their time in the program. This means purchasing course materials, keeping up with course readings, taking good notes, organizing notes and readings, and reflecting on content central to the course. Students should pay attention to course objectives, how the syllabus is organized, and how the course overlaps and intersects with other courses in the program.

Process. The comprehensive exam consists of three steps: answering core questions, track questions, and participating in an oral defense. First, students receive and answer questions related to their core courses. Second, they receive and respond to questions about their track courses. Students have four weeks to complete the core exam and an additional four weeks for the track exam. After submitting their answers, students will receive written feedback regarding the quality of their answers.

The third part of the comprehensive exam process is an oral defense of the written exam. Oral defenses are scheduled for 60 minutes. Students should use feedback to prepare for the oral defense. During the defense, faculty will ask follow-up questions to provide students with the opportunity to expand and elaborate on their written answers.

In the written and oral portions, students may access their course notes and readings. However, students under no circumstances should use any portion of work previously written for a course as part of their exam answers. Answers must be constructed during the exam period. Furthermore, all exam questions and answers are confidential. Students are expected to do their

work on their own. They may not ask other students about the exam questions during the exam or ask about exams that have been previously completed. Students who have completed comprehensive exams are expected to not share their questions or answers with current students. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) or other automated writing tools to complete assignments is strictly prohibited on the exam. Any evidence of the use of AI will be considered a violation of academic integrity and will be met with failure on the exam and may result in further disciplinary action. It is the responsibility of all students to ensure that all work submitted for the exam is their own original work, written and completed without the use of AI or other automated writing tools. Doing any of the above is considered a violation of academic integrity.

Evaluation. Once the oral defense is complete, faculty will discuss both parts of the exam and determine whether the student has passed or failed the exam. Faculty will share the result with students immediately after the oral defense. If faculty determine that a student has failed the exam, the student must take the exam again the following semester. Evaluation of comprehensive exams is tied to the student learning outcomes for the program. Students will receive a copy of the evaluation criteria during the exam preparation process.

Thesis Process

All students are automatically assigned to complete comprehensive exams as the exit requirement for the program. Students who are interested in pursuing a Ph.D., who plan to work in jobs in which they work with research, or who are interested in completing a thesis for personal development may apply to conduct a thesis. Like comprehensive exams, the thesis process is designed for students to demonstrate that they have mastery in communication principles, concepts, theories, and research in line with the student learning outcomes for the program.

Applying to complete a thesis. Students indicate their interest in conducting a thesis when they complete their degree plan during the semester of their 18th credit hour. Not all students who apply to complete a thesis are accepted to do so. If faculty determine that it is not a good fit for a student or that there is insufficient faculty availability to advise the thesis, the student will continue with comprehensive exams. Students who are considering completing a thesis are encouraged to start thinking about a potential thesis topic early and discuss with graduate faculty about potential topic.

Completing the thesis. Students need to complete at least six credit hours of COMM 5395. To do so students will need to work with their advisor to complete the School of Arts, Media, & Communication Graduate Thesis Request form, which will ask students to describe study objectives, student learning outcomes, and specific tasks to be accomplished that semester. Students need to complete the form for each semester they register for COMM 5395. It is important that students complete this form prior to the first week of the semester as it requires several signatures and takes time to process.

During the first semester, students are typically expected to read about and finalize the thesis topic, construct the committee, write the thesis proposal and have it approved by the committee, apply for IRB approval (for those conducting human subjects research), and complete drafts of the introduction and literature review chapters of the thesis. During the second semester, students need to collect and/or analyze data, write the remaining chapters of the thesis, defend the thesis, and submit a copy of the thesis to the dean. Advisors may differ in what they want students to include, how they want the thesis organized, and their expectations about what should be completed each semester. It is important that students talk with their thesis advisor frequently to make sure they are on the same page.

Although it is not uncommon for students to take three semesters to complete the thesis, it is important that students work to stay on track in terms of meeting goals and expectations for each semester to continue work on the thesis. If students are not making adequate progress on the thesis given the outcomes set out for the semester, graduate faculty can choose to remove a student from the thesis and have them complete comprehensive exams instead. This may require the student to take additional courses to meet the 36-hour requirement.

Student Development Opportunities

I. Graduate Teaching Assistantships

Assistantship Description. The Department of Communication and Media offers competitive teaching assistantships. The number and availability of assistantships available each semester is dependent on funding and course demand.

Unless otherwise noted, all Graduate Teaching Assistants will assist with COMM 1311: *Foundations of Communication*. GTAs will discuss course content with students using mini-lecture and quiz strategies, as well as in-class activities. Additionally, GTAs facilitate writing and speaking assignments, grade student work, and maintain all student records for the assigned sections. Each GTA is responsible for two sections that include approximately 20 students each. This enrollment may fluctuate.

Outside of the classroom Graduate Teaching Assistants maintain contact with students through Canvas and/or face-to-face meetings, which usually occur in the GTA's cubicle on the third floor of Bay Hall. They assist students with all course components, to include content mastery and assignment completion.

Finally, GTAs are required to attend training workshops that are held prior to the beginning of the semester and then regular, weekly meetings (1 hour, 3 times per week) with the Basic Course Director. Occasionally, additional, supplemental training meetings will be scheduled during the required on-campus hours of 10am to 3pm, or outside of this time frame with advance notice and consideration of GTA schedules. The workload for a GTA is 20 hours per week.

Duties include:

- Following the rules in the *Graduate Teaching Manual* and other university rules that apply to teaching.
- Completing all training required by the A&M System prior to beginning the semester.
- Demonstrating thorough knowledge about the material in the text for COMM 1311 and other related material necessary to create effective learning in the classroom.
- Managing course assignments and requirements in Canvas. (Training is provided.)
- Checking and responding to all email and bulletin board posts in Canvas – from students and the Basic Course Director – within 24 hours (except on holidays and weekends).
- Monitoring and utilizing all educational technology, as needed, while in the classroom with students.
- Ensuring any department equipment issued for instructional use is kept in good working order and in a secure location and returned as instructed at the end of each semester.
- Grading student assignments and conducting discussions and activities while in the classroom with students.
- Assisting with the creation of activities and assignments for the course when requested.
- Holding 3 office hours each week from 10am to 11am on MWF and communicating with students enrolled in their assigned sections (including via Canvas) as needed.
- Attending all classes and regular meetings and completing tasks by deadlines as assigned by the Basic Course Director.

- Keeping and maintaining records for students enrolled in the assigned sections and providing records to the Basic Course Director upon request.
- Issuing and submitting grades at mid-term and end of semester as instructed by the Basic Course Director.
- Mentoring new GTAs.
- Working cooperatively with all faculty, staff, and students at TAMU-CC.
- Representing the Communication program and university through professional attitudes and behaviors.

Application Requirements & Process. All application materials are submitted electronically to the Basic Course Director and will include an essay component, a resume/CV, and contact information for three eligible references. When GTA positions become available, a call for applications will be sent out to all current and admitted students informing them of these openings and application deadlines.

Persons considered for a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) position must meet the following requirements:

- 1) Have completed a bachelor's in communication or related field;
- 2) Be admitted on regular status to a graduate program at TAMU-CC, communication program preferred;
- 3) Enroll for 9 graduate hours at TAMU-CC for the semester in which a GTA application is being submitted, by the deadline set by the Basic Course Director and as approved by a graduate advisor;
- 4) Be available every MWF from 10:00am until 3:00pm to meet with students, attend class, and attend training. Class times are MWF 11:00-11:50am and 1:00-1:50pm.
- 5) Have no other obligations or interests that may conflict with the teaching responsibilities and/or university policy.

Conditions of employment. A selection committee, chaired by the Basic Course Director, will review applications, interview selected candidates and make final hiring decisions, based on funding and university needs. Initial employment is contingent upon accuracy of information provided in the application, regular admission to a graduate program at TAMU-CC, and enrollment in 9 hours of graduate work. Per university policy, a background check must be run on all applicants and the results could impact final selections.

Continued employment. In addition to the authorization from the graduate school to fund GTAs, continued employment will depend on the following: satisfactory fulfillment of program duties and activities, including attendance at all meetings and classes; a GPA of 3.0 or above; satisfactory progress toward completing your degree; satisfactory class observations by faculty; satisfactory student evaluations at the end of the semester; evidence of professional presentation of self in and outside the classroom. Excessive absences at meetings and/or classes may mean loss of the assistantship. Please note that the graduate school permits a student to work as a GTA for a maximum of 4 semesters. Summer employment is never guaranteed and is not part of the regular GTA funding program. Students who wish to continue employment as an assistant must send an email of intent to the Basic Course Director by the designated deadline for the following semester, unless otherwise instructed.

II. Internships

Students may earn up to 3 hours of course credit toward their graduate degree in Communication Studies through placement in a communication or media internship position. To apply for this opportunity, students must have completed at least 6 hours of graduate coursework in communication and have a minimum GPA of 3.5. Only 3 hours of internship may be counted toward the graduate program and, with internship credit, the hours outside of the program that can be counted toward the degree decreases to 3 hours.

To apply to complete an internship:

1. Contact the MA in Communication Program Coordinator for the Department of Communication and Media to seek approval for applying to the internship course.
2. Contact the Internship Coordinator for the Department of Communication and Media to inquire about internship opportunities and/or apply for the internship course. The Internship Coordinator is Dr. Kellie Smith.
3. Meet with your internship supervisor to complete and sign the required forms, and to provide your supervisor with a Fact Sheet (all documents provided by the Internship Coordinator).
4. Submit the completed forms to the Internship Coordinator, who will then permit you to register for the course.

III. Conference Participation and Attendance

We encourage students to submit their graduate work to local, state, regional, or national communication conferences. Submission deadlines for the regional conferences tend to occur in the fall and their conferences occur in the spring. The National Communication Association submission deadline is in the spring and the conference is held in November. Conferences are a great place to build presentation skills, network with graduate students and faculty from around the country and learn about the wide array of topics being discussed and researched in the discipline. It is a great learning opportunity for all types of graduate students, regardless of their career goals. Ask the MA in Communication Program Coordinator about funding opportunities for conference travel.

Additional Resources

Students should be sure to consult the graduate catalogue for information about college-level and university-level rules and policies for graduate students. Students can access this information on the Graduate Education website. Here students can access the following:

- Admissions
- General Academic Policies and Regulations
- Graduate Academic Requirements
- Tuition, Fees, & Financial Assistance
- Academic and Student Services
- Research Resources
- Master's Student Handbook
- Master's Forms
- Thesis Checklist, Guidelines, & Templates

Information, policies, and procedures about tuition, fees, financial assistance, scholarships, and other topics important to graduate students can be found in the catalog. In addition to the catalog, web pages for offices and services on campus provide expanded information, forms, and contact names/phone numbers. Some of those webpages include the following:

[Office of Student Financial Assistance](#)

[Office of International Education](#)

[Scholarships](#)

[Assistantships](#)