Approved by TTF vote on August 24, 2015; Effective Immediately

Department of Communication
MA Comprehensive Exams

CU Denver Graduate School rules require MA students to pass a comprehensive exam before graduating. The purpose of the examination for the MA in Communication is to ensure deep content learning regarding communication research, theory, and practice. Our examinations are tailored to the needs and goals of the student but require demonstrated mastery of communication subject areas of the student’s choosing.

The Department of Communication at CU Denver offers four options for the comprehensive examination: the traditional oral and written examination, the portfolio, the thesis, and the original research paper.

Students are strongly encouraged to discuss the advantages and limitations of each option with various faculty members before electing one option. However, ultimately, students and their examination committee should jointly make a decision about the best option given the student’s learning goals. Each of these options is detailed below. Regardless of which option students and their advisors select, they must follow all general procedures and Graduate School requirements.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

Eligibility
To be eligible to take and defend the comprehensive examination, students must be in their final regular (spring or fall) semester of their graduate program. Students may be taking courses in the semester in which they take the examination.

Registration
In the semester in which they take the comprehensive examination, students must:

1. Register for a minimum of one of the following:
   - One or more credits of coursework
   - One credit hour of Thesis (COMM 6950)
   - Zero credit hours of CAND 5940, which is a special course registration number for students who are taking their comprehensive examinations and no coursework or thesis work. Students who choose this option will be charged tuition equal to one credit hour. Students must register by hand for CAND 5940 by completing the CU Denver Special Processing Form. “CAND 5940” should be written in the “Course Number” space on the form. The call number for the course, which changes every semester, will be distributed by the Graduate School after the form is turned in.

2. Students must file an Admission to Candidacy form and a Request for Graduate Examination/Thesis Defense form. These forms should be submitted to the Graduate School on the 12th floor of the Lawrence Street Center. There is a posted deadline for the submission of each form, and the latter must be turned in at least two weeks before the examination is taken.
In addition, students must complete any additional online forms related to graduation that will be required by the graduate school each term. Students should pay close attention to the deadline for submission for the semester in which they intend to graduate.

**Examination Committee**

At the time they enter the MA program, students are assigned a temporary advisor by the members of the graduate studies committee. During their first and second terms, students should be meeting with all faculty members to find a permanent advisor who matches their intellectual and interpersonal style. The goal is to find the best match in terms of topic and temperament, and students should not feel awkward about switching from a temporary to a permanent advisor. Advisors must be full-time, graduate faculty in the Communication Department; instructors, lecturers, and clinical track faculty are not eligible to serve as students' advisors.

The student's advisor helps the student construct a committee of three faculty members, one of whom is the advisor and who serves as the chair of the committee. The committee members are typically from the Communication Department, but students may select a faculty member from another department to serve on the committee if that person's area of expertise contributes in crucial ways to the area of study. All committee members must be full-time faculty at CU Denver unless the student has received permission for an outside member from the Director of Graduate Studies and that person has been approved as graduate faculty by the CU Denver Graduate School. The committee is responsible for evaluating students' comprehensive exam, thesis, or special writing project and for conducting the oral portion of the examination.

Recruitment of the members of the committee is the responsibility of students. Students are encouraged to select the members of their examination committee at the beginning of the academic year in which they take their comprehensive examination. Asking faculty members to serve on their committee is a relatively informal endeavor. Students simply should make an appointment with potential committee members to discuss their willingness to be on the committee.

Once their committee is formed, students should complete the Request for Examination, on which they indicate the committee's composition. This form is due at least two weeks before the examination date, which must be scheduled in accordance with CU Denver Graduate School rules regarding deadlines for scheduling comprehensive exams, theses, papers, or projects (and the defense thereof).

**Option A: The Written and Oral Comprehensive Exam**

**Examination Schedule**

The examination is offered twice a year—usually on the last Friday of October in the fall semester and on the Friday following the week of spring break in the spring semester. The exact dates will be announced by the Director of Graduate Studies at the beginning of each term. Students must take the examination on the scheduled day or wait until the next semester. The examination is not offered during the summer.
Traditional Examination Format

The comprehensive examination has two parts—a written and an oral component. These two parts are completed on separate days, usually with no more than two weeks between them. The written portion of the examination lasts four-and-a-half hours, and the oral examination lasts approximately three hours; one-and-a-half hours are devoted to the article critique, and one-and-a-half hours are devoted to the oral defense. The oral portion of the examination is not open to friends and family.

Written Examination

In the written part of the comprehensive examination, students are given five essay questions and must answer four of them in a four-and-one-half hour period. The questions cross content areas and deal with methodological, theoretical and application issues in communication. They encourage students to make connections among constructs, theories, topics and courses. Students are expected to cite relevant scholars and sources in the answers to the questions. Students may bring in a set of notes limited to both sides of an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper. Students may take restroom breaks as needed during the examination.

Students take the examination in the Communication Department office suite on a computer provided by the Department. Students are not allowed to use their own laptops for the examination. Paper for the examination is provided by the Department.

Oral Examination

The oral examination is generally held within two weeks of completion of the written examination. Students should set the date for the oral examination in consultation with their advisor and committee members and should schedule a room with Michelle Medal. Three hours should be allowed for the oral examination. The advisor will need to be in the Department when the student begins the process (when the student is completing the critique of the article), but the other committee members will need to be there only for the last one-and-one-half hours of the examination period. The oral portion of the examination involves four steps:

- **Critique of text**: When students arrive for the oral examination, they are given one-and-a-half hours to read an article from a communication journal selected for them by their committee members and to prepare an oral critique of that article. Students are asked to evaluate the research question, design of the study, the methods used, findings, and any other aspects of the article they see as noteworthy or inadequate. Following the completion of the plan for the oral critique, students are given a 15-minute break before the start of the oral portion of the examination. Students should bring paper with them on which to take notes and develop their critique.

- **Oral presentation of critique of text**: Students present a five-minute oral critique of the article they analyzed at the beginning of the oral examination period. Students should treat this as a formal presentation and demonstrate their competence in presentational speaking. Following the presentation, students are questioned for approximately 10 minutes about their critique.

- **Repair of written examination**: At the beginning of the portion of the examination when students are questioned on their written answers, students are asked to explain changes they would like to make to their written answers. Students should use the period between the written and oral portions of the examination to review material
related to the questions and to assess their own answers so that they can provide additions and corrections to them. Students should come prepared to suggest some changes they would make to their answers; not wanting to change anything will lower students’ credibility with faculty members. The kinds of changes suggested should not be typos or grammatical errors but substantive issues of addition or omission. Students should spend no more than five minutes on this portion of the examination.

- **Defense of written examination:** Students are questioned by their committee members about their answers on the written portion of the examination for approximately one hour. Students are allowed to bring blank paper on which to jot notes.

**Evaluation of the Examination**

For both the written and oral components of the exam, students will be evaluated based upon the competency and professional attainment demonstrated. Immediately following the completion of the oral portion of the examination, the student is asked to leave the room, and the committee members caucus privately and assign an evaluation of **satisfactory** or **unsatisfactory** on each of the four examination questions. **Satisfactory** means the student has attained a degree of professional competence in her/his command of the theoretical material as well as in presentational style, whereas **unsatisfactory** means that some area of the demonstrated knowledge or oral presentation was deemed below competency for an MA degree.

- **Oral Critique:** For the oral part of the exam, students are expected to be able to read, summarize, evaluate and criticize a scholarly article. Students are required to accurately state the thesis of the article and evaluate the article using conventional criteria for assessing research.

- **Written Exam:** The evaluation will be based both on the written answer and the student's defense of that answer. For the written component of the exam, students are expected to be able to cite major scholars relevant to a construct or theory, demonstrate solid understanding of the relevant constructs and theories, and express their work in a clearly organized and sophisticated manner.

A student must pass all four questions to pass the examination. The committee may ask for rewrites on one or more questions or present other options for retaking the oral examination. Rewrites involve answering a new question and a half-hour oral defense of the answer. Students who are given a non-passing evaluation on the oral and written exam as a whole must wait until a future semester to retake it. Students are informed immediately of the evaluation decision following the oral portion of the examination. The decisions of the committee are final.

Students may retake the examination in a future semester only once. If they fail the examination the second time, they will receive written feedback within two weeks that explains the rationale. Students who fail the examination a second time are dropped from the program and are not allowed to complete the master's degree.

**Successful Examination Preparation for Option A**

The comprehensive exam is intended to be an educational and culminating experience of the master's program. It is designed to assess students’ ability to think critically about issues in the communication discipline; such critical thinking includes the ability to analyze, integrate
and apply concepts/theories to what they have learned in the program. To engage students in this process, the exam questions are broad based and cut across content areas, methods and issues to provide a thorough context for inquiry. We conceptualize the exam not only as a measure of students’ understanding of the communication field but also as an opportunity for students and faculty to dialogue about key issues and for faculty to welcome students into the community of communication scholars. To this end, students are encouraged to follow some basic procedures as they prepare for the examination:

- **Study group with peers:** Students are encouraged to form study groups with their peers. Students who form such groups and meet regularly with them in the weeks preceding the examination perform much better than students who prepare by studying alone. Such groups are supportive, helpful and fun.

- **Course materials and syllabi as a basis for review:** Students are encouraged to review the courses they have completed in the program as a primary means of preparation for the examination. They should look for linkages among the courses that were only partly visible when the individual courses were taken. A review of the discussion questions and other assignments for each course is also useful.

- **Preparation of summaries of articles and books read:** As students go through their coursework, they should write and keep summaries of the articles and books read. Such notes might include:
  - One-sentence summary of the reading
  - One-paragraph abstract of the reading, including context, purpose, key findings and conclusions
  - Notes about the unique contributions the reading makes to its field, such as the ways it contradicts received wisdom or previous theories, new insights or arguments, what it elucidates, what it confirms, what it rejects or what it puts in perspective
  - Brief discussion of how the student can best use the reading, such as to make a case, to build or support an argument, to link or to illustrate
  - Primary critique of the article
  - Best quote

- **Review of sample questions:** Students will be provided with sample questions prior to the examination by the Director of Graduate Studies. Although the examination students take will not have the exact questions as the samples, a review of these questions will help students anticipate the kinds of questions they are likely to be asked. In the study groups, students are encouraged to practice how they might answer the sample questions. Students will not be provided with sample answers from previous students’ examinations to use in their studying.

**Timely completion of the examination:** Students who delay taking the examination by a semester or more do not perform as well as those who take it immediately after completing their coursework. Students who delay taking the examination risk losing touch with their peer groups and the material they have studied. A longer delay does not enable students to study longer, better or more carefully. The intensity with which students review over a relatively short period and a supportive, convivial social environment are most helpful in students’ preparation for the examination.
Option A.1: The Written and Oral Comprehensive Exam (Take-Home Version)

In this option, students follow the procedures for Option A, except that they are allotted 10 consecutive days to write four-to-six-page answers to four of the five questions at home.

Students who select this option must complete the written portion in accordance with the deadlines outlined in Option A above, meaning that their 10-day period must occur at least three weeks before the CU Denver Graduate School’s last day to defend MA comprehensive exams.

The take-home option is open book, but answers must be polished with accurate citations and a bibliography. Because of the time allowed for preparation and composition, the expectations for Option A.1 in terms of sophistication, detail and polish are higher than for Option A.

Students will then complete the article critique and oral defense per the procedures outlined in Option A.

Option B: The Portfolio Model

Purpose: The purpose of the comprehensive-exam portfolio is to demonstrate mastery of communication theory and skills as they relate to the students’ goals and professional objectives. The goal is to showcase their best writing, analysis, thinking and communication production. Regardless of whether students intend to remain in the workforce or begin a PhD program, the portfolio will require synthesis and analysis across communication research, theory and practice.

Schedule
Portfolios will usually be due on the last Friday of October in the fall semester and on the Friday following the week of spring break in the spring semester. The exact dates will be announced by the Director of Graduate Studies at the beginning of each term. Students will schedule portfolio defenses two weeks following their portfolio submissions in order to give faculty time for review. All defenses must be completed in accordance with the posted deadlines schedule of the CU Denver Graduate School. However, students will be encouraged to work on their portfolios well in advance of the term in which they intend to graduate, and they can begin work on initial drafts in COMM 6013. No extensions are allowed unless students can provide documentation of a catastrophe that has happened to them to prevent the completion and delivery of the portfolio.

Format
Completed portfolios will be submitted in either hard or digital copy to their committee members and to the Department’s program assistant, based on the preference of the individual faculty members. All or part of the portfolio may also be placed online by candidates for professional purposes.
Students who elect to submit hard copies of their portfolios should bear in mind principles of professional communication. Whatever format they use, the binder must be big enough to contain all of the required work in one portfolio (with the exception of online work). Individual sheets of work should not be placed in plastic covers.

Contents
All portfolio contents produced as part of coursework should show evidence of substantial revision and growth since the original submission as part of MA coursework. Students are encouraged to rework their written and digital communication products in conversation with faculty members and their peers, especially the professor to whom the work was originally submitted and the advisor. The process includes receiving oral and written feedback from all committee members and composing a letter outlining the revisions made. This process mimics the journal submission process with the three faculty members serving as reviewers. In addition to the letter detailing changes, students should submit the original and the revised content for each item. The revision work may begin in advance of the final semester of coursework, although the final semester should be reserved for final revisions and polishing of the entire document.

Great care should be taken to ensure that the portfolio is polished, attractively arranged and error free. Editing errors, proofreading errors, spelling errors and grammatical errors will detract from the overall evaluation.

The portfolio must contain in this order:
1. Title page or landing screen
2. Table of contents or menu
3. Resume or CV (include a new version and the resume or CV draft from 6013 that was originally submitted; the old version may be submitted in hard copy if new one is online)
4. Sample of students’ strongest revised course paper with a written response to committee members detailing how they have incorporated their feedback in the revision of the essay
5. A two-to-three-page critique of a journal article selected by their advisor in the term they are taking the comprehensive exam
6. One each of: theory, method and practice essays—three essays of four-to-six pages each for no more than 20 pages total
7. Optional: any additional digital or visual or written products of students’ choosing.

Revision means that a new version contains evidence of both substantive content changes and stylistic ones.

Students must choose to address one of each of the following theory, method and practice essays.

Theory Questions (choose one to answer in four-to-six pages):

1. Write an essay in which you track the relevance of a single communication concept or theorist across three different contexts of communication (e.g., health communication, interpersonal communication, organizational communication, etc.).
Make an argument for how this concept or theorist matters to each context. Be sure to cite theorists, communication journals and other relevant material.

2. Compare and contrast any two philosophical traditions in the field of communication. Explain how each of the two traditions views communication, discuss its assumptions about the nature of communication and identify its key vocabulary. Close by putting the two traditions in conversation with one another. How do they relate to, differ from or critique one another? What does each illuminate about human communication? You may choose to refer to intellectual traditions, to broad methodological traditions or to other philosophical perspectives on communication that you have encountered in your studies.

3. Compare and contrast two different definitions of communication and assess what each offers the study of communication. Which definition resonates most strongly with you and why? How do you see that definition playing out in your work and life?

**Method Question (four-to-six pages):**

1. Design a research project on a communication topic of your choosing. Your task is to develop a research question for the study, identify the categories of literature and/or theory you would review for the study, select data to collect to answer the question, choose your method of analysis and briefly explain the significance of the project. Be sure to justify your choices. You are free to use any method you would like in designing the project.

**Practice (choose one to answer in four-to-six pages):**

1. Imagine that you are asked to give a workshop on a communication concept, theory, or theorist used by communication scholars at your workplace. Outline the key ideas you would address and explain the significance of that concept or theorist to what happens at your workplace.

2. Write an essay in which you explain how communication research can help our understanding of the challenges facing the world in the 21st century. Discuss at least one specific communication research article that can illuminate a problem in the world and another that can help remedy the problem. The more specificity in terms of the research discussed the better.

3. Submit a sample of communication in action that you have created using knowledge and skills learned in the program. This sample could be from work, school or personal or community life. Make sure your sample is accompanied by an explanation of the theories and principles you used in creating the sample.

**Evaluation:** The exam will be graded as follows: *satisfactory* (pass) or *unsatisfactory* (fail) using the rubric that appears in Appendix A. Faculty are looking for integrative learning that demonstrates mastery of communication research, theory and practice. That means that not only should the content be substantive but also that the design should embody best practices in communication.

If you do not follow all of the above procedures in preparing or submitting the portfolio, the exam evaluators will not read your portfolio.

**Option C: The Thesis**
A thesis is intended for students who wish to develop original knowledge in a particular subject area. It is a substantial undertaking and one that should not be taken lightly. Not all faculty believe that a thesis is the best model for a culminating experience. To undertake a thesis, students first must find a faculty member willing to serve as their advisor.

**Eligibility**

Students who wish to complete a thesis must meet the following requirements:

1. Students must have completed nine courses and at least one methods class. Generally, students begin their thesis work at or before the beginning of their last academic year in the program.
2. Students may be asked to complete certain courses to prepare them for their thesis research.
3. Students must have demonstrated superior writing and research ability in their coursework.

**Thesis Committee**

The thesis committee serves as the de facto comprehensive exam committee, and the faculty member who serves as the chair of the committee is the advisor for the thesis. The advisor and committee members work with students on developing the topic for their thesis, designing the research for the thesis, reading rough drafts and conducting an oral examination on the basis of the thesis.

**Registration**

During the process of completing the thesis, students must register for at least three but no more than six hours of Master’s thesis (COMM 6950), either in one term or divided across two semesters. Students should work with their committee chair to set the number of thesis credits that will be completed each semester. Students may not use any additional thesis credits to substitute for other credits needed to complete their degree; thesis credits may not be substituted for elective credits, for example.

To register for thesis credit, students must complete the CU Denver Special Processing Form.

**Nature of the Thesis**

Students should consult the latest *Guidelines for Preparing Master’s and Doctoral Theses*, available from the Graduate School, for instructions on completing the thesis. They also are encouraged to obtain copies of successful theses from the Director of Graduate Studies and/or their advisor.

A master’s thesis should be between 40 and 80 pages in length. Whether the thesis is rhetorical or empirical, it involves original research to investigate a question about communication grounded in theory and established research. It generally takes about six months to complete and is the equivalent in workload of two or three difficult courses. During the process of writing the thesis, students are expected to meet or check in with their chair at least weekly.

Students who wish to propose an alternate type of format (e.g., documentary film, digital
(project, etc.) may make a written proposal request of the Graduate Committee, which will meet to determine in advance whether the project meets the requirements for the Comprehensive Exam. The committee’s decision is final.

**Thesis Planning Meeting**
In the semester before a student begins writing the thesis in earnest, students and their advisor should hold a meeting to discuss the parameters of the project, the research question and topic under investigation and the timeline. When the advisor and student concur about the contours, the student will craft a draft proposal of approximately 10 pages.

Students and their advisor will hold a meeting with other committee members after the circulation of a draft proposal. Students must give committee members at least two weeks to read all drafts, including the proposal. After the meeting, students, working with their advisor, will send an email to committee summarizing what has been agreed upon and indicating any changes to the proposal.

**Oral Defense of Thesis**
The oral defense of the thesis constitutes the thesis writer’s comprehensive examination. Thus, students may defend their thesis only in March or October, the times at which the comprehensive examination is offered. Thesis defenses are usually friendly, open discussions in which committee members seek to understand the nature of students' work more fully. Students are allowed to bring blank paper, notes, and their thesis to the oral defense.

Following the oral defense of the thesis, the committee members assign an evaluation of *satisfactory* or *unsatisfactory* on students’ performance on the written thesis and the oral defense of the thesis.

**Timely Completion**
Students are encouraged to finish their thesis promptly. Unless students are registered for at least one credit of thesis, the faculty of the Communication Department are under no obligation to advise or consult with them about progress toward completion of the degree.

**Option D: The Original Research Paper**

Students who intend to apply to PhD programs are encouraged to use this option to prepare an original research paper that is suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed journal, academic convention or PhD program as a writing sample for the admissions process. PhD programs look favorably on candidates who have published articles in peer-reviewed journals.

**Eligibility**

Students who wish to complete a paper must meet the following requirements:

1. Students must have completed nine courses and at least one methods class. Generally, students begin their work on a paper at or before the beginning of their last academic year in the program.
2. Students may be asked to complete certain courses to prepare them for their research.
3. Students must have demonstrated superior writing and research ability in their coursework.

Paper Committee
The committee for the original research paper is the de facto comprehensive exams committee, and the faculty member who serves as the chair of the committee is the primary advisor for the project. The other faculty members on the committee, then, work with students and their advisor on developing the topic for their paper, designing the research, and providing peer reviews.

In cases where students begin or complete a paper in the Writing Practicum (COMM 5700), students, their advisor and the instructor of COMM 5700 need to meet and communicate frequently to ensure agreement about the requirements for and contours of the project.

Registration
During the process of completing the paper, students may elect to take the Writing Practicum (COMM 5700), Independent Study (COMM 5980), or Special Project (COMM 6960). The paper will take more than one semester to complete and reflects at least one course worth’s of labor.

Specifications
Students write a research paper under the direction of their advisor and committee. The paper must follow the conventions and formatting requirements of the target journal or conference.

The paper must be the student’s composition entirely and not co-authored. Faculty advisors, committee members and other substantive reviewers should be acknowledged in the author notes but not listed as co-authors.

Process

1. Paper Planning Meeting
Before a student begins writing the paper in earnest, students and their advisor should hold a meeting to discuss the parameters of the project, the research question, topic under investigation and the timeline. When the advisor and student concur about the contours, the student will complete the “Research-Alignment” worksheet, which is available from the Director of Graduate Studies and includes the following:
   - The problem your research is attempting to address
   - Your research question
   - The categories of your literature review
   - Your data and the collection and analysis plan
   - The significance of your study.

Students and their advisor will hold a meeting with other committee members after the circulation of the worksheet. Students must give committee members at least one week to read the worksheet. After the meeting, students, working with their advisor, will send an
email to committee members summarizing what has been agreed upon and indicating any changes to the worksheet.

2. Evaluation and Oral Defense of Paper
Students must conform to Graduate School deadlines for scheduling comprehensive exam defenses. Students who enroll in Writing Practicum (COMM 5700) in their final semester must arrange to defend their draft early to ensure that the defense of the writing project is completed in accordance with the deadlines of the CU Denver Graduate School.

The oral defense of the paper constitutes the writer's comprehensive examination. Thus, students may defend their thesis only in March or October, the times at which the comprehensive examination is offered. Paper defenses are usually friendly, open discussions in which committee members seek to understand the nature of students' work more fully. Students are allowed to bring blank paper, notes and their paper to the oral defense.

After a successful defense, students will revise their essay until their advisor believes it is ready to submit to the target journal or conference. The submission need not be accepted for publication; the committee only needs to sign off at the defense that, with minor revisions, the essay is ready for submission.

Following the oral defense of the paper, the committee members assign an evaluation of satisfactory or unsatisfactory using the rubric that appears at the end of this document. Faculty are looking for integrative learning that demonstrates a strong command of written English and that makes a substantial contribution to an understanding of communication.

3. Reviews
Each committee member will have one week to submit a (non-blind) peer review of the paper before the defense. Faculty members should assess the paper and write a peer review report as though it has been submitted to the target venue. These reviews will be given to the student after the defense. Faculty members’ peer reviews should answer these questions:

1. What contribution does this paper make to the field in which it is situated? If it is unclear, can you suggest how the paper might develop a contribution?
2. Is this manuscript appropriate for the target venue? If not, can you suggest another outlet that might be more appropriate?
3. Is the treatment of the subject matter intellectually interesting? Are there citations or bodies of literature you think are essential to which the author has not referred?
4. Are there any noticeable problems with the author’s means of validating assumptions or making judgments?
5. How well did the paper execute the research method?
6. Is the paper well written?
7. Are there portions of the paper that you recommend be shortened, excised or expanded?

In consultation with the advisor, students will then re-write and revise the paper in response to these suggestions.
Appendix A: Faculty Evaluation of Written and Oral, Take Home and Portfolio Comprehensive Exams

Master’s Degree Comprehensive Exam Rubric

5 = exceptionally well
4 = very well, better than average
3 = acceptably
2 = marginally, below average
1 = poorly

Knowledge of Perspectives in Communication Theory and Research

(1) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate comprehension of theoretical perspectives in the communication discipline?

5  4  3  2  1

Comments:

(2) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate the ability to apply theoretical constructs to contemporary communication problems?

5  4  3  2  1

Comments:

(3) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate the ability to construct and defend complex arguments?

5  4  3  2  1

Comments:

(4) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate fluency engaging in multiple perspectives?

5  4  3  2  1

Comments:
Competence in the Interpretation and Evaluation of Published Research (Oral Critique)

(5) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate comprehension of published communication research?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

(6) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate the formulation of constructive, relevant questions around communication research?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

(7) Does the student’s comprehensive exam demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate communication research (presented carefully grounded conclusions about its strengths and weaknesses)?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

Competence in Oral Interpretation and Interaction

(8) For the critique of the research article during the comprehensive exam, if applicable, did the student

a. provide a clear purpose statement and preview statement in the presentation?

5 4 3 2 1

b. provide relevant, carefully focused content and supporting details that were consistent with their purpose and preview statements?

5 4 3 2 1

c. display personal communicative dynamism in ethos/persona and in non-verbal paralinguistic language?

5 4 3 2 1
Comments:

(9) During the oral defense, did the student demonstrate the ability to engage in dialogue with the committee about ideas?

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Comments:

(10) During the oral defense, did the student demonstrate respect, receptivity, sensitivity and authentic engagement when hearing and responding to different or contrary viewpoints?

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Comments:

Possible High Score: 50; To pass, the student must receive a 38 or above.
Appendix B: Original Research Paper or Thesis Evaluation Form

5 = exceptionally well  
4 = very well, better than average  
3 = acceptably  
2 = marginally, below average  
1 = poorly

Research Question

_____ Does your research question meet the criteria for good research questions?

Research Alignment

_____ Do all pieces of the study align with the research question?

Introduction

_____ Do you avoid beginning your paper with a discussion of your data?

_____ Does your introduction explicitly present the research question as a research question, a thesis statement, or a purpose statement?

_____ Does your introduction explain a problem that your study is beginning to address? In other words, does the paper address the “so what?” and “who cares?” questions?

Literature Review

_____ Are the categories of your literature review appropriate for and aligned with your research question?

_____ Have you surveyed and analyzed sufficient literature?

_____ Have you presented the literature using an insightful and effective conceptual schema?

_____ Have you summarized the literature and incorporated actual quotations from some of it to make an engaging narrative?

Identification and Description of Data or Artifact

_____ Do you provide a justification of why your data are appropriate for answering the research question?
Do you provide sufficient information about the data so that readers can understand the nature of the data and your analysis?

**Description of Research Design**

If necessary, do you explain how you collected your data or artifact(s)?

Do you adequately describe the method you will be using to analyze your data?

**Overview of and Transition into Analysis**

Do you provide a brief preview of your analysis or the categories of your explanatory schema in a transition paragraph?

**Presentation and Interpretation of Findings or Analysis**

Are your findings presented using an explanatory schema that shows an organic and coherent relationship among the labels?

Are the findings presented using an explanatory schema that is not obvious and is insightful and sophisticated?

Are the explanatory terms or labels for the various concepts and relationships of the schema original and parallel in form?

Do all components of your explanatory schema receive the same amount of attention, and are they explained at the same level of depth?

Do you provide sufficient justification of the claims you make using the data or artifact as support?

**Conclusion**

Do you provide an effective and insightful interpretation of your findings?

Do you provide a theoretical answer to your research question that transcends the data?

Do you conclude your paper with a discussion of theory and not your specific artifact?

**Reference List or Endnotes**
_____ Do your references follow the format of whatever style sheet you are using with minimal errors?

Mechanics

_____ Is your paper appropriate for submission to the venue of your choosing?
_____ Is your paper formatted correctly?
_____ Have you sufficiently proofread your paper so that typos and spelling errors are minimal?
_____ Have you consistently constructed grammatical and properly punctuated sentences?

Overall

_____ Did you make the requested revisions from the earlier drafts of your paper concerning writing style, mechanics, and punctuation?
_____ Did you make the requested revisions from the earlier drafts of your paper concerning content?
_____ During the defense, did you defend your ideas orally with poise and reflection?

150 points possible; Scores of 100 or higher pass.
Appendix C: Research-Alignment Worksheet

What is the problem you are trying to address with your study?

What is your research question?

What are the categories of your literature review?

What are your data?

How will you collect your data?

How will you analyze your data?

Why is your study significant? (Who cares? So what?)