



Graduate Student Handbook
2022-2023

About the Department of Communication

The Mississippi College Department of Communication prepares students to be excellent communicators with their words, skills, and lives. Students who pursue a degree in Communication are provided opportunities to develop a variety of academic, performance, and professional competencies. Areas of concentration are offered to help prepare students to excel in such fields as media, public relations, Christian ministry, business, law, government, education, industry, and elsewhere.

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Graduate Degrees and Certificates

The Department of Communication offers the following graduate degrees and certificates. All degrees and certificates can be completed online or through a combination of on-campus and online courses.

Master of Science (M.S.) in Healthcare Communication (32 hours)

Students in the M.S. in Healthcare Communication program learn to develop, deliver, and evaluate modern engagement programs related to healthcare. Students learn to manage health-related communication in both public and private sectors, to create and evaluate effective public information campaigns, to manage risks and avoid crises, and to create messaging to impact health-related behavior in their various stakeholder groups.

Upon completion of the M.S. in Healthcare Communication, students will be prepared to:

- apply public relations & marketing principles to practice
- employ strategies & methods to influence and affect organizational change
- evaluate the value & significance of media practices in health communication
- practice ethical & socially responsible communication
- articulate the role that communication plays in the health care industry
- interpret & apply research fundamentals in health communication
- analyze, synthesize, & interpret health & scientific information and research
- clearly present health-related information to the public

Students completing the M.S. in Healthcare Communication graduate to work in a variety of professional settings including hospitals, state and federal government health departments, non-profit organizations, and health technology companies.

Graduate Communication Core Courses (17 hours)

- COM 5443 Public Relations (3)
- COM 5449 Intercultural Communication (3)
- COM 6501 Graduate Writing & Research (3)
- COM 6502 Process & Effects of Communication (3)
- COM 6520 Communication Ethics & Persuasion (3)
- COM 6099 Graduate Portfolio (1)
- COM 6599 Convocation Paper (1)

Required Program Courses (15 hours)

- COM 5401 Team-Based Communication (3)
- HSA 6540 Organizational Behavior in Healthcare Administration (3)
- HSA 6550 Legal Aspects of Healthcare Administration (3)
- HSA 6551 Healthcare Management (3)
- HSA 6571 Healthcare Marketing (3)

Master of Science (M.S.) in Integrated Communication (32 hours)

Students in the M.S. in Integrated Communication program are provided a wide array of learning opportunities and experiences within a curriculum that focuses on both digital and traditional media. Emphasis is placed on the use of theoretically grounded, data-based decision-making to solve problems and innovate.

Upon completion of the M.S. in Integrated Communication, students will be prepared to:

- apply public relations & marketing principles to advance organizational goals
- employ strategies & methods to influence and affect organizational change
- evaluate the value & significance of media practices in various industries
- practice ethical & socially responsible communication
- articulate the role that communication plays in various industries & sectors
- interpret & apply communication research fundamentals
- analyze, synthesize, & interpret communication research
- clearly present relevant information to the public

Students completing the M.S. in Integrated Communication graduate to work in a variety of professional settings including: churches & ministries, colleges & universities, community & media relations offices, crisis & risk communication organizations, government offices & agencies, issue advocacy organizations, non-profit organizations, political campaigns, advertising & public relations agencies, research analysis firms, and social media management agencies.

Graduate Communication Core Courses (17 hours)

COM 5443 Public Relations (3)
COM 5449 Intercultural Communication (3)
COM 6501 Graduate Writing & Research (3)
COM 6502 Process & Effects of Communication (3)
COM 6520 Communication Ethics & Persuasion (3)
COM 6099 Graduate Portfolio (1)
COM 6599 Convocation Paper (1)

Required Program Courses (15 hours)

COM 5401 Team-Based Communication (3)
COM 5403 Negotiation (3)
COM 5442 Communication Law (3)
COM 5444 Practices in Public Relations (3)
COM 5457 Strategic Crisis Communication (3)

Master of Science (M.S.) in Strategic Communication (32 hours)

Students in the M.S. in Strategic Communication program engage in a variety of written, spoken, and visual communication with their professors and their peers. Students study theory and principles of strategic communication, risk communication, human psychology and behavior, public relations (in both corporate and non-profit settings), and interpersonal communication. The program equips students to use critical thinking and analysis to develop and implement communication strategies in order to advance organizational missions and goals and to address organizational problems. The program also provides students with theoretical and methodological foundations needed to continue their educational at the doctoral level.

Upon completion of the M.S. in Strategic Communication, students will be prepared to:
articulate communication concepts & theories

- demonstrate critical thinking ability
- apply basic quantitative & qualitative research concepts
- employ research methods in the diagnosis of organizational problems
- deploy tools to craft, track, & measure communication effectiveness
- deploy paid, earned, shared, & owned media to reach organizational goals
- drive tactical initiatives to shape relationships with a variety of audiences
- advance organizational goals through internal & external strategies

Students completing the M.S. in Strategic Communication graduate to work in a variety of professional settings including: advertising & public relations agencies: churches & ministries, colleges & universities, community & media relations offices, crisis and risk communication organizations, government offices & agencies, issue advocacy organizations, non-profit organizations, political campaigns, research analysis firms, social media management agencies

Graduate Communication Core Courses (17 hours)

COM 5443 Public Relations (3)
COM 5449 Intercultural Communication (3)
COM 6501 Graduate Writing & Research (3)
COM 6502 Process & Effects of Communication (3)
COM 6520 Communication Ethics & Persuasion (3)
COM 6099 Graduate Portfolio (1)
COM 6599 Convocation Paper (1)

Required Program Courses (15 hours)

COM 5442 Communication Law (3)
COM 5444 Practices in Public Relations (3)
COM 5457 Strategic Crisis Communication (3)
COM 5474 Organizational Communication & Analytics (3)
MKT 6581 Marketing Management (3)

Graduate Certificate in Public Relations (18 hours)

Students in the Graduate Certificate in Public Relations program gain classroom based experience designed to assist students in professional advancement and future graduate degree academic work.

Students choose six of the following courses:

- COM 5401 Team-Based Communication (3)
- COM 5443 Public Relations (3)
- COM 5444 Practices in Public Relations (3)
- COM 5449 Intercultural Communication (3)
- COM 5457 Strategic Crisis Communication (3)
- COM 5474 Organizational Communication & Analytics (3)
- COM 6520 Communication Ethics & Persuasion (3)

Admission

Deadlines

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. However, the following deadlines have been set to give department faculty sufficient time to review applications prior to the start of each academic term:

- Fall semester start: August 1
- Spring semester start: January 1
- Summer term start: May 1

Students may begin a Communication graduate program in the fall, spring, or summer terms. Applicants should allow for 10 business days between submission of all required items (see below) and a decision regarding their admission. Incomplete applications will not be evaluated.

Application Process

Applicants must submit the following items to the Mississippi College Graduate School. Applicants may begin the admissions process at go.mc.edu/apply.

- A \$35.00 non-refundable application fee. This fee must accompany the application.
- An official application for admission to the Mississippi College Graduate School.
- One copy of official transcripts of all prior college-level academic work, including associate's, bachelor's, master's and doctorate. Applicants must also submit any course syllabi for any graduate-level work for which they wish to be considered for transfer credit. Official transcripts are those mailed from the college or university directly to the Dean of the Graduate School. Transcripts submitted by the applicant or other individuals or that are marked "issued to student" are not considered official and will not be accepted.
- A personal essay and two letters of recommendation as noted below.

Regular Admission

Grade Point Average

Applicants seeking regular admission to a Communication graduate program must show a grade point average (GPA) of at least a cumulative 2.50 of a possible 4.00 scale on all prior college-level academic work. Applicants with a GPA of 2.25 to 2.50 may be considered for provisional admission (see below).

Personal Essay

Applicants must also submit an essay of 600-750 words expressing the applicant's purpose in seeking a graduate degree and explaining how their chosen graduate degree program will help the applicant further personal and/or professional goals. This essay will be evaluated by department faculty based on its content to ensure that an applicant is a good match for the desired program. Because command of the written English language is essential to success in graduate school, this essay will also serve as a sample of the applicant's writing ability. This essay must be submitted as a Microsoft Word document (no .pdf

files will be accepted) to the department chair at vance@mc.edu.

Letters of Recommendation

Applicants must also submit two letters of recommendation on organizational letterhead. The first letter must be from a faculty member from the applicant's undergraduate (or prior graduate) education who can attest to the applicant's readiness for graduate school. (In the case that significant time has passed between the completion of the applicant's undergraduate degree and the applicant's application to a Communication graduate program, a letter from a working professional who can attest to the applicant's suitability for graduate-level work may be substituted. However, the department reserves the right to refuse such a substitute as insufficient evidence.) The second letter must be from a professional supervisor or colleague. Letters from family members, immediate or otherwise, or personal friends who do not fit one of the two descriptions above will not be accepted.

International Students

International students are expected to fulfill all regular admissions criteria. In some cases, personal interviews, pre-admissions workshops, or additional undergraduate prerequisites may be required for provisional admission. In such cases, international students will be allowed to fulfill this requirement at Mississippi College. International students accepted provisionally must make progress toward regular admission as outlined below.

Provisional Admission

Provisional admission, though not guaranteed, may be granted if applicants meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. The applicant's grade point average (GPA) on all work completed at the undergraduate level is below 2.50 but above 2.25. In such cases, the department reserves the right to require applicants to submit an explanatory essay (in addition to the required essay of all applicants) of no fewer than 300 words describing the steps the applicant will take to ensure their academic success at the graduate level.
2. The applicant's undergraduate GPA is below 2.25 but the applicant has demonstrated success in an appropriate career for at least ten years since completing the undergraduate degree. In such cases, the department reserves the right to require applicants to submit a professional resume and an additional letters of references (from a professional supervisor or colleague) to document career success.
3. The applicant lacks grades of C or higher in relevant undergraduate prerequisites. In such cases, the department reserves the right to require applicants, prior to beginning graduate-level work, to pass with a grade of A or B any relevant undergraduate courses deemed necessary by the faculty. Applicants must take these prerequisite courses at Mississippi College.
4. The applicant received an undergraduate degree from a non-regionally accredited institution. In such cases, applicants must submit acceptable GRE test scores and achieve good academic standing (a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher) after completing 12 hours of graduate work.

All students provisionally admitted must take and make a grade of A or B in the following undergraduate

courses during the academic term prior to the start of graduate-level coursework:

- COM 102 Communication Writing & Research (3)
- COM 202 Interpersonal Communication (3)
- JOU 338 Media in Society (3)

Each of these three courses are offered online and in the fall and spring semesters only. Students who are provisionally admitted must take these three courses in the fall in order to begin graduate courses in the subsequent spring term, or take these three courses in the spring in order to begin graduate courses in the subsequent fall term. Hours earned by taking these courses do not apply to the total number of hours required by the graduate program.

Students who do not make a grade of A or B in each of the three courses will not be allowed to register for graduate courses. Each of these three courses may be repeated once in an effort to achieve a grade of A or B. Students who are unable to make a grade of A or B in these courses will not be admitted to the graduate program. Grades earned in these courses do not factor in the student's graduate program GPA.

Provisional admission status must be removed before students will be allowed to register for graduate courses beyond 12 graduate hours. For advancement from provisional to regular admission, the student must have obtained a grade average of 3.00 or higher on the first 12 or more hours of graduate-level courses, and must clear any other deficiencies. Students who are provisionally admitted but do not achieve regular admission status after completing 12 hours will be placed on academic suspension with the right of appeal.

End-of-Term Standings

The following are descriptions of end-of-term-standings:

- Academic Good Standing: The requirement for remaining in academic good standing as a graduate student at Mississippi College is the same as the requirement for graduation—a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher (a B average) on all grade point hours applied to the graduate major at Mississippi College. A student whose GPA is less than a 3.00 will be notified.
- Academic Warning: 2.50-2.99 cumulative GPA on up to 6 hours of graduate level courses. This status warns students that substantial academic progress must be made toward achieving good standing or they will not be allowed to complete their degree program.
- Academic Suspension with Right of Appeal: a 0.00-2.49 cumulative GPA on *up to* 6 hours of graduate level courses, or a 0.00-2.99 cumulative GPA on *more than* 6 hours of graduate level courses. This status suspends enrollment and student must submit a written appeal to the Graduate Appeals Committee before reinstatement is considered.

Students who pre-register for classes and then are suspended academically at the end of a given semester or summer term are expected to withdraw from pre-registered classes pending outcome of academic appeal. Students who do not appeal for reinstatement after being suspended will be withdrawn from classes for the semester or term for which they have preregistered.

A grade of D will not count on a graduate degree. The course, if a required one, must be repeated;

however, the D is still calculated in determining the overall GPA. A student who accumulates a total of nine semester hours of C's or lower, but has a B average, may continue in a degree program only as long as the B average is maintained. *Earning a grade of F in any graduate course will result in automatic graduate program suspension.*

Any student who is suspended for academic reasons has the right of appeal to the Graduate Appeals Committee. This committee will consider each case on its merits, taking into account the full academic record, the student's rate of progress in making up deficiencies, and any special circumstances that might reflect on the student's ability and readiness to do acceptable graduate work. If a student wishes to register a written appeal, contact the Graduate Office for a specific form to be used for that purpose.

Student Appeals for Reinstatement

Student appeals for reinstatement from academic suspension will be fairly considered. Students should understand that the potential for future success in graduate school will be a primary consideration by department faculty in evaluating all appeals. Because sub-standard grades in past courses remain on suspended students' records for purposes of calculating grade point average, department faculty will consider in the reinstatement evaluation process each student's likelihood of elevating the grade point average to the required 3.00 for graduation within the time frame needed to complete coursework.

All department graduate faculty will have input regarding the appeals to readmission for academically suspended students. Therefore, students should expect that the observations by faculty of student participation and performance in courses previously taken will be heavily considered in the reinstatement process.

Academic Standards

The following information on academic honesty is taken from the Mississippi College policies & procedures Policy 2.19:

The mission statement of Mississippi College makes it clear that the university exists to contribute to the growth and development of human beings who understand their lives in terms of Christian responsibility and service. The university expects its students to be scrupulously honest. The university's emphatic commitment to honesty and fairness in academics is given expression in the following policies that relate to academic integrity. Faculty members will make every effort to assure conditions of honesty for all course requirements, including examinations and outside assignments. However, this does not diminish in any way students' ultimate responsibility for observing the principles of academic integrity in all aspects of their conduct.

Cheating

Cheating on examinations, shall include, but not be limited to: taking answers from another student's paper or allowing answers to be taken from one's own paper during an examination or quiz; the use of notes or any other aid not specifically allowed or approved by the instructor; unauthorized access to an un-administered examination or quiz and dissemination of same; collaboration on take-home examinations unless specifically approved by the instructor.

Cheating on course assignments, shall include, but not be limited to: receiving editorial assistance beyond that expressly allowed by the instructor; collaborating with another person in the preparation of any assignment offered for credit when such collaboration is prohibited by the instructor; submitting the same work for credit in more than one course, regardless of whether or not such submission occurs within the same term.

Plagiarism

No student shall submit as his or her own work any term paper, research paper, thesis or other academic assignment of original work that in any part is not in fact his or her own work. Knowingly using the ideas of another person and offering them as one's own original ideas is prohibited by this policy to the same extent as knowingly using the words of another writer and offering them as one's own original writing.

Other Academic Misconduct

Other academic misconduct shall include, but not be limited to: unauthorized access to and/or the alteration of school records, including but not limited to, transcripts, grade books, class rolls, and grade reports. This prohibition extends to all such records of the university, including those which are stored and maintained electronically; submitting any assignment for credit which is based in part or in total on data which is either fabricated or manufactured; misrepresenting one's self for the purpose of taking an examination for another student or allowing such misrepresentation to occur; the forgery, alteration, and/or misuse of university documents, including student identification cards with intent to defraud, deceive, or mislead; providing false or misleading information to avoid penalties for unexcused or excessive absences in any class or to obtain permission to drop a course without penalty after the established drop date.

Penalties for Dishonesty

Graduate students who are found to have committed any of the acts described above or have aided or abetted others in the commission of the same will receive a grade of “0” if a grade is involved. If the offense is related to acceptance of a graduate research paper or graduate original research, including thesis, then the project will not be accepted and the student will receive a “0” on the project. The matter is to be reported by the instructor to the department chair, appropriate dean, graduate dean, provost, and the Academic Honor Board. Additional penalties may be imposed by the Academic Honor Board. Additional penalties which may be imposed for the first offense may include, but not be limited to forfeiture of reimbursement of any tuition refund if the course in which the offense occurred is dropped prior to the drop date; loss of eligibility to receive any academic recognition and institutional scholarship. Graduate students who are found guilty of a second offense will be dismissed from the graduate program. Schools and departments may adopt additional guidelines and penalties provided they are not inconsistent with any provisions contained herein and are interpreted and imposed in a manner which observes the procedural safeguards contained in this policy.

Research Tracks

Convocation Track

The default research track for all graduate students is the convocation track. Students on this track shall enroll in COM 6599 Convocation Paper during their final term in their graduate program. The requirement for this course is the completion of a work of significant original research of no fewer than 9,000 words of text (exclusive of title page, abstract, and reference list) and no more than 12,000 words of text written in APA 7th Edition style.

The graduate advisory committee, led by the graduate advisor, will work closely to oversee the student's topic selection, research, writing, and evolution of the convocation paper. For students on the convocation track, a completed, approved convocation paper with accompanying presentation (in the form required by the department) is required for graduation. No exceptions will be made to this standard.

In the convocation track, the graduate advisory committee will help the student plan a convocation paper and presentation.

The following types of research are acceptable for the Convocation Paper:

- *Historical-critical research* consists of a synthesis of the knowledge of the past so as to provide insights for making decisions about current problems. Historical-critical research can tell us what has been tried before and what has been successful (or unsuccessful), and thereby present criteria for future researchers to better appraise alternative courses of action. Types of historical-critical research include biographical studies, movement or idea studies, and rhetorical criticism.
- *Descriptive research*, whether quantitative or qualitative, seeks to describe some phenomenon or phenomena, e.g., events, beliefs, attitudes, values, or behaviors. Descriptive research is used to collect information that describes conditions about the selected topic of study through various techniques such as surveys, interviews, and observations.
- *Experimental research* involves the design of execution of an experiment in order to provide answers to specific research questions. Experimental research should be characterized by precision, control, and use of the scientific method. Research requiring the use of test subjects or research involving individuals from outside of Mississippi College requires prior approval from the University Research Committee.

Thesis Track

Students may select to write a thesis in lieu of a convocation paper. Students who choose this track shall enroll in COM 6563 Thesis I and COM 6564 Thesis II as substitutes for two non-core courses. (The student shall also enroll in COM 6599 Convocation Paper during their final term in their graduate program and the thesis shall serve as a substitute for the writing requirement for that course.) The thesis shall be a work of significant original research of no fewer than 15,000 words of text and no more than 24,000 words of text written in APA 7th Edition style.

Students who choose the thesis track are usually those who have aspirations for teaching at the university level. Students' desire to write a thesis, their scholarly writing skills, and their methodological competence are the major factors influencing this decision. This decision must be made during the same time frame allotted for choosing the graduate advisory committee: after the completion of 15 hours and

prior to the completion 21 hours.

The decision regarding whether a student is permitted to write a thesis ultimately rests with the student's graduate advisory committee. The approval of two of the student's three graduate advisory committee members to write a thesis must be indicated on the Graduate Advisory Committee form which must be completed and submitted via email to the department chair.

Although the student's graduate advisor must be one of the members of the graduate advisory committee, the student may select another member of the committee to serve as the primary thesis advisor. The graduate advisory committee, as led by the thesis advisor, is responsible for conducting the thesis prospectus defense, making recommendations regarding direction of the thesis, and overseeing the oral defense of the thesis.

Selecting a thesis advisor is an important decision for both the student and the department. The thesis advisor's direction will likely contribute significantly to the quality of the study. The thesis advisor should be a faculty member with whom the student can work effectively and efficiently. The department has a significant interest in distributing the workload associated with directing a thesis across all members of the graduate faculty. Therefore, a student should consult with several faculty members to gain input on the selection of the thesis advisor.

For students on the thesis track, a completed, approved thesis with accompanying defense and presentation (in the form required by the department) is required for graduation. No exceptions will be made to this standard.

Advising & the Path to Graduation

Students are responsible for checking DegreeWorks to ensure that they are registering for and completing classes that will count toward their degree. The department will provide a current rotation of graduate course offerings on the department web site to assist students in planning their academic progress. Students should consult their graduate advisors with course planning questions. However, the ultimate responsibility for enrolling in and completing courses in a student's degree program rests with the student.

Graduate Orientations

The department will offer a select number of graduate orientations at the beginning of each fall and spring semester. The purpose of orientations is to help students stay on track to graduate by reviewing the graduate handbook, to serve as a forum for department changes and initiatives, and to make faculty available to answer questions pertinent to students.

Orientations will be held on campus and made available online, in real time, to students unable to attend in person. All graduate students are required to attend, in real time, one orientation each semester. Points for attendance will be included in each graduate course each term. Failure to attend will result in points deducted from students' final grades in each course.

Graduate Advisors

Upon admission, students will be assigned a graduate advisor by the department chair. The graduate advisor is responsible for advising students toward the completion of their student's degree plan, overseeing the convocation paper preparation and presentation, and/or acceptance and completion of their thesis. The graduate advisor must be a member of the Department of Communication graduate faculty. Students who wish to change their graduate advisor must receive prior permission from the department chair to do so.

Graduate advisors will conduct mid-term check-ups with all advisees during each term of enrollment. These check-ups may take any number of forms, including, but not limited to phone calls, email exchanges, and streaming video sessions. Students should use these times to talk with their graduate advisor about progress toward degree completion, performance in current courses, and ongoing work on the convocation paper or thesis. Students who fail to complete these check-up sessions will be reported to the department chair for follow-up.

Graduate Advisory Committee

Each student is responsible for selecting a graduate advisory committee. This committee shall be responsible for reading and approving the final draft of the student's convocation paper (or thesis) and for reviewing and approving the student's final draft of the graduate portfolio.

This committee shall be chaired by the student's graduate advisor and shall include two other graduate faculty members. The student is required to select the two additional members after the completion of 15 hours and prior to the completion 21 hours.

Students must choose graduate faculty with whom they have had or will have a course. Students in programs that include courses outside the Department of Communication may choose a faculty member who has taught or will teach their course outside the department.

Students should contact each prospective graduate advisory committee member in person to request their service. The Graduate Advisory Committee form should then be completed and submitted via email to the department chair. Students who have not secured all three members of their graduate advisory committee will not be allowed to register for courses beyond 21 hours.

Conference Presentations

All graduate students must, at some point in their time in the graduate program, submit a research paper for possible presentation at a state, regional, or national academic conference. Relevant organizations that routinely call for papers include, but are not limited to, the Mississippi Communication Association (annual conference in mid-February), the Southern States Communication Association (April), the National Communication Association (November), the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (August).

Students whose papers are accepted will be required to present their paper at the accepting conference event and shall incur all registration and other costs associated with the event. Students whose papers are not accepted will be allowed to present their papers at the department research forum held each fall and spring semester.

All students who submit a paper to a conference for presentation must complete a conference submission form to the department chair at the same time the paper is submitted to the sponsoring organization. It is the student's responsibility to submit the paper and organizational paperwork to the sponsoring organization in time for consideration. Only the Conference Submission Form should be submitted to the department chair.

Research Convocations

Research convocations will be held on the third Monday of April and the third Monday of November of each year. (For cases in which the third Monday of November falls during Thanksgiving Break, that semester's research convocation will be held on the second Monday in November.) For cases in which the third Monday of April immediately follows Easter Sunday, that semester's research convocation will be held on the second Monday in April.)

Dates for 2022-2023:

Monday, November 15, 2022, 6:00 p.m.

Monday, April 17, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

The purpose of research convocations is to provide graduating students with a forum to present their convocation papers and theses, and to provide all students with a forum to hear timely and relevant research presentations by their peers.

Research convocations will be held on campus and made available online, in real time, to students unable to attend in person. All graduate students are required to attend, in real time, each convocation. Points

for attendance will be included in each graduate course each term. Failure to attend will result in points deducted from students' final grades in each course.

Graduate Research Award

The graduate faculty will select one student at the conclusion of the spring semester as the Graduate Research Award winner. The winner shall be the students who has the best overall written, verbal, and visual presentation as identified by a pre-determined rubric. Students who present in that spring's or in the past fall's convocation will be eligible for this award. This honor includes a plaque and recognition through department promotion and on a public display in Aven Hall.

Graduate Student Resources

Monthly Newsletter

The department will email all graduate students a monthly email containing announcements and other information important to student success. All students are encouraged to read each email carefully and inquire of their professors with any questions.

Peer Groups

In an effort to assist students in establishing relationships with peers in the graduate program, all newly accepted students will have the opportunity to be assigned to small groups designed to foster mutual encouragement, support, and accountability. Students may opt in to peer group participation at the start of each semester and may opt out at any time. These assignments will be communicated shortly after the graduate student orientation at the start of each academic term.

Groups will be encouraged to self-select modes of communication. Faculty will assist only in the establishing of each group; after each group is established, the group will be able to operate independently of faculty involvement.

Students will be able to choose their own level of involvement with their group during their time in the program. Students may also request that new students be added to their groups to achieve a healthy number. All questions regarding peer groups should be directed to the department chair.

Writing Style Workshops

From time to time, the department may offer on-campus, online, or live video workshops designed to strengthen students' writing and presentation skills and their focus on APA style. Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of these workshops when they are offered.

Graduate Assistantships

The department may offer one or more graduate assistantships each year. Three types of graduate assistantships are made available based on departmental needs:

- Graduate Teaching Assistants (Level 1) help faculty prepare lectures and exams, grade papers, maintain records, assist in labs, and conduct classroom instruction (but not as the teacher of record).
- Graduate Teaching Assistants (Level 2) may have the same duties as Level 1 assistants but will also be assigned to teach undergraduate courses for credit as the instructor of record. Level 2 assistants are required to have completed 18 hours of graduate credit in the teaching discipline prior to beginning the teaching assignment and be in good academic standing.
- Graduate Service Assistants assist department faculty in various tasks.

Assistantships carry a cash stipend, may be offered on a semester or annual basis, and are not automatically renewable. Students should direct all assistantship questions to the department chair (vance@mc.edu).

Forms Online

All forms referenced in this document (and this document itself) can be found on the department web site at communication.mc.edu. Click **Student Groups & Resources**, then **Forms & Handbooks**.