

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN COMMUNICATION

10 Steps to a Master's Degree

1. Attend the Graduate Program in Communication's new student/instructor orientation.

This week of activities will acquaint you with expectations and teaching strategies, acclimate you to our academic program and allow you to meet your new colleagues—the first step in building relationships that often last a lifetime. You will also be given the opportunity to register for graduate classes and learn general information about the University of Kentucky culture.

2. Plan your schedule to include the core classes required of all master's students.

All master's students are required to take courses in statistics, research methods, communication theory and either interpersonal or mass communication.

- CJT 651 Communication Theory
- CJT 665 Quantitative Research Methods
- STA 570/EDP 557 Gathering and Analyzing Data (or a comparable statistics course approved by the DGS)
- CJT 631 Interpersonal Communication or CJT 608 Mass Communications and Society

3. Choose your advisor.

You are responsible for asking a faculty member to serve as your advisor and committee chair. A faculty member may or may not agree to serve. The Director of Graduate Programs can help you identify possible advisors if you have difficulty. The sooner you select an advisor, the better. Before the end of your second semester, you should have an advisor in place.

4. Form your committee.

Whether you are writing a thesis or completing final written exams, you will need a committee. Your advisor will help you form your committee. Do not form a committee without your advisor's consent. Master's committees consist of at least three qualified faculty members: your advisor, and at least two additional members who share your academic interests. At least two committee members (including the chair or co-chair) must be members of the Communication Graduate Faculty, and at least one of the two must be a Full Member. Your committee should be submitted to the DGS for approval before the end of your second semester.

5. Have a prospectus meeting with your committee.

This meeting serves as a time to discuss the topic of your thesis and the research it will entail, or should you choose the Plan B (non-thesis examination), it is a time to discuss the questions and material to be covered in your final written exams. This should be done before the beginning of your second year of master's work.

6. Write your thesis, or study for your final written exams.

During this time period you should have constant communication with all of your committee members to discuss expectations and receive feedback/guidance on your plan of study.

7. Apply for graduation.

The application for degree can be found on the UK Graduate School website. This should be done at the beginning of the semester in which you plan to graduate.

8. Schedule your thesis defense, or your final exams.

Ensure that all of your committee members can be present on the day you have selected before scheduling the date. You must submit the electronic form with the UK Graduate School and schedule the room with the Graduate Program's Office. Please note that if you choose to take exams instead of a thesis you must schedule the exam dates in addition to the oral defense date. This should be done at least two weeks in advance of the day you would like to defend your thesis or exams.

9. Submit copies of your final thesis to the UK Graduate School (THESIS OPTION ONLY).

After successfully defending your thesis, you have 60 days to submit the final copy of your thesis to the UK Graduate School. More information about this process can be found through their website.

10. Graduate! Then apply for Ph.D. programs and do it all over again 😊

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Helpful Hints

Connect with your “Buddy”—this person WANTS to help you. He or she is older (in the program) and seasoned. He or she isn't just “assigned” a buddy, he or she volunteers for the job because he or she wants to help newbies. So take advantage of their insight. And make a new friend!

Talk through your plan of study. Get input from older peers; they have insight into what classes are too heavy to take in the same semester.

Begin talking to faculty about their research interests and your ideas for a thesis topic or exam preparation. Do this by the end of your first semester, if not sooner. Set up a few meetings and feel out professors. Ask yourself, do their research areas match my interests? Are they already working on some research that I could get involved with and EXTEND into my thesis?

NOTE: your thesis chair must be a tenured faculty member. And you can only have ONE assistant professor on your committee (everyone else must be an associate or higher rank).

Talk with your chair about selecting committee members. Her/his input will enable you to select a committee that (a) helps you construct a successful thesis/prepare for exams, and (b) helps you establish a committee that meshes well together.

Don't freak-out if you get a B in a class. Letter grades don't define you—not your worth or your success.

UK is a climate of whales not sharks. In other words, you'll succeed in this program to the extent that you help (not compete) with your colleagues. Your peers are your allies (not your rivals). Don't compare grades, pace through program, or anything. “Comparison Ruins Contentment” are wise words to live by.

Accept instructor feedback with grace. If a professor turns a paper from white to red (marks it up with comments) consider it a loving act.... that professor is trying to make you a better writer, theorist, and scholar. Consider his or her input, weigh it, and make the changes he or she suggests — he or she has been doing this for a while.