

# Assessment of Graduate Program in Journalism and Mass Communication

## Mission of the Graduate Program

The core mission of the graduate program in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication is to prepare graduate students for work in university and professional settings. We train Ph.D. students for careers in teaching and conducting advanced and original research in law, history, cultural studies, sociology, and process and effects of mass communication. We strive to prepare doctoral students to be “stewards of the field” who understand their area’s history and its place within the broader intellectual landscape so they can effectively share research-based insights to constituents within and outside academics. We train Research M.A. students for high-level competence in mass communication theory and research methods. Research M.A. students typically move forward to pursue doctorates. We also train Professional M.A. students, who usually go into mass communication professions as practicing journalists or strategic communicators. See Appendix A for information on Ph.D. and M.A. program enrollments, degrees conferred and time to degree.

## Learning Goals and Assessment

### Ph.D.

Goal 1: Students who earn a doctorate mass communication will be able to demonstrate comprehensive and intensive knowledge of the theories, concepts, frameworks, empirical findings, and controversies in the field.

Goal 2: Students who earn a doctorate in mass communication will be able to demonstrate a comprehensive and intensive knowledge of appropriate and relevant research methods and analytical techniques.

Assessment (Learning goals 1 and 2):

- a. Satisfactory progress. Each semester the graduate committee reviews student progress, paying specific attention to completion of courses, time to degree and maintaining a minimum overall GPA of 3.5.
- b. Passing preliminary exams. Students take preliminary exams in five areas, covering theory and methods. After a student completes coursework, he or she must take preliminary exams. A student’s preliminary exams committee has five members. To ensure intellectual breath, two members of the committee are typically from outside the student’s department. Each

committee member writes a question for the student about on an agreed upon topic. Students must complete the exams within two weeks. Committee members evaluate the answer for the question they wrote and awards “pass” or “not pass.” Each of the five exams must be passed before the student attains dissertator status. Passing preliminary exams is a major milestone in demonstrating expertise in the field of study.

c. Approved dissertation proposal. Students write a detailed plan for dissertation research that includes the rationale and purpose of the research, the proposed methodology, and the contributions the research will make to the field. Students work closely with their adviser and perhaps other members of the their dissertation committee to write the proposal. The document is then shared with members of the dissertation committee, who provide feedback. Once the proposal is approved, the student may begin their research.

d. Successful dissertation defense. Student’s work is orally defended in a meeting with the dissertation committee.

Goal 3: Students who earn a doctorate in mass communication will be able to demonstrate the ability to design and carry out research that contributes in significant ways to knowledge in the field.

Assessment:

a. Faculty evaluation of papers students write for various courses. Writing research papers written in graduate seminars require students to demonstrate several important research skills including articulation of clear research questions, synthesizing literature, using appropriate research methods and applying analytical techniques.

b. Participation and leadership in departmental research groups. At any given time during the academic year, several extracurricular research groups are operating. Working collaboratively with faculty members, doctoral students further hone their research skills. These groups also are important venues for students to present their work and receive feedback from faculty members.

c. Successful defense of doctoral dissertation. Student’s work is orally defended to a committee of faculty with expertise in student’s area of work.

Goal 4: Students who earn a doctorate in mass communication will be able to communicate – in both written and oral formats –research findings in impactful venues.

Assessment:

a. Student success in having papers accepted to conferences. Graduate students are encouraged (though not required) to revise their best seminar papers for submission to conferences.

b. Student success in having their research published. Graduate students are encouraged (though not required) to submit their best work for publication in the field's academic journals. These submissions are often the product of graduate seminars or research groups in which the students have participated. Historically, SJMC graduate students are among the most prolific in the journalism and mass communication field. (See Serena Carpenter, "A Study of Graduate Student Authorship in Journalism and Mass Communication Journals: 1997-2006," *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* 63(3), 2008, p. 232; and Hai Tran, "The Pipeline to Publication: Student Research Productivity in Mass Communication Journals [1999-2006]." Unpublished manuscript. Paper submitted to the Graduate Student Interest Group, AEJMC, Chicago, IL, August 6-9, 2008.)

Goal 5: Students who earn a doctorate in mass communication will be able to teach effectively at the university level.

Assessment:

a. Review of TA teaching evaluations (though not all grad students teach). Teaching evaluations are regularly reviewed to ensure that TAs are performing well in their classes. TAs are required to attend TA training sessions and meet regularly with faculty supervisors to discuss pedagogy.

b. Review of placement record – where our graduates end up working. Many SJMC graduate students become university instructors. Between Fall 2001 and Summer 2011, 74 students graduated with a Ph.D. Of these 63 (85%) entered the professoriate.

### Research MA

Goal 1: Attain mastery in an area of the mass communication field.

Assessment:

- a. Satisfactory progress. Each semester the graduate committee reviews student progress, paying specific attention to completion of courses and maintaining a minimum overall GPA of 3.25.
- b. M.A. thesis proposal. Most students write a detailed plan for their thesis that includes the rationale and purpose of the research, the proposed methodology, and the contributions the research will make to the field. Students work closely with their adviser to write the proposal. The document is then shared with members of the dissertation committee, who provide feedback. Once the proposal is approved, the student may begin their research.

Goal 2: Design and conduct research that demonstrates mastery.

Assessment:

- a. Successful defense of MA thesis. The thesis is defended in a meeting with the thesis committee.
- b. MA thesis committee's recommendation to matriculate to doctoral program. If the committee is satisfied with the thesis and the student's potential to succeed at the doctoral level, the committee will recommend matriculation to the doctoral program (provided the student wants to continue in the department).

### Professional MA

Goal 1: Develop professional communication skills related to gathering, assessing, compiling and disseminating information.

Assessment:

- a. Satisfactory progress. Each semester the graduate committee reviews student progress, paying specific attention to completion of courses and maintaining a minimum overall GPA of 3.25.
- b. Evaluation of class projects.

Goal 2: Develop in-depth and specialized expertise in a topic of interest.

Assessment:

- a. Evaluation of coursework in specialization area. Professional MA students take courses outside the department in a chosen area of specialization.
- b. Evaluation of final portfolio containing work on specialization area. The portfolio is evaluated by the graduate committee and presented publicly to faculty and students. The portfolio is an important credential for students as they job market.

Goal 3: Prepare to enter a wide variety of jobs in the journalism industry.

Assessment:

- a. Success in getting internships. Students are encouraged to find internships and other opportunities for professional work.
- b. Awards or recognitions for outstanding work.

### **Discussion of Assessment Activities**

Each semester, the Graduate Committee meets to discuss satisfactory progress of all graduate students. Students not making satisfactory progress are informed of the assessment. The advisers are also informed and asked to stay in touch with the graduate committee about their student's subsequent progress. The graduate committee meets once each semester to review Ph.D. program proposals. Feedback is sent to students and their advisers. The graduate committee also meets once each semester to review and approve Professional M.A. students' final portfolios.

### **Assessment Activities Being Considered for the Future**

- Review sample of student work (dissertation, theses, portfolios) at each level to determine the extent to which student are accomplishing relevant learning goals. The graduate committee will develop a rubric to be applied for evaluating the work.
- Exit survey of graduates that will ask them to evaluate how well they achieved learning goals; strengths and weaknesses of courses, advising, research group participation, climate, etc.; what might department do differently to enhance graduate training.

Submitted by

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On behalf of the Graduate Committee,  
School of Journalism and Mass Communication

## Appendix A

## Number of New Ph.D. Applicants by Year

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Applicants	57	41	74	73	55	62	68	64	78	64
Admits	22	27	46	30	32	38	37	37	37	37
Enrolled	8	11	12	16	14	9	11	10	12	13

## Number of New MA Applicants by Year (Research MA and Professional MA combined)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Applicants	108	95	107	94	127	86	133	163	156	159
Admits	56	54	51	53	53	32	69	65	44	35
Enrolled	16	20	21	24	17	5	26	13	13	6

## Number of Students enrolled in Degree Plan by Year

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Ph.D.	49	47	45	55	65	62	58	57	59	62
M.A.	33	42	50	43	41	24	36	33	32	22

## Degrees Awarded by Year

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Ph.D.	8	8	12	7	4	2	10	9	7	11
M.A.	25	12	16	27	10	26	12	12	12	17

## Average Number of Semesters to Degree (2003-2012)

<u>Degree</u>	<u>Semesters</u>
Ph.D.	10.1
MA	4.0