The Non-Thesis Track

In the non-thesis track, the major professor helps the student plan a program of courses in consultation with the graduate advisory committee, supervises the student’s efforts in Problem in Lieu of Thesis (COMM 5930) or in the Graduate Internship in Communication (COMM 5481), and helps schedule and proctor written and oral comprehensive examinations.

Problem in Lieu of Thesis

A student enrolling in COMM 5930 should do so under the section number of her or his major professor. To successfully complete the course, the student must present, in writing, a formal report or essay based upon the work completed in the course. The student’s graduate advisory committee must approve the completed project.

Generally, a student will complete COMM 5930 during a single semester. If the problem is completed to the satisfaction of the student’s graduate advisory committee during the semester, the major professor assigns a grade (“A,” “B,” “C,” etc.). If the student makes satisfactory progress, but does not complete the research problem during the semester, the student is assigned a grade of “I.” If the student does not make satisfactory progress, the student is assigned a grade of “W,” and the student must enroll in COMM 5930 in a subsequent semester. Unlike a thesis, continuous enrollment is not required.

Graduate Internship in Communication Studies

After meeting with her or his major professor to determine expectations regarding the completion of an internship, the student assumes responsibility for finding an internship position. When the student has secured a position, she or he prepares an internship proposal and submits it to the major professor along with contact information for the organizational supervisor of the internship. Once the major professor approves the internship, the student enrolls in COMM 5481 under the section number of her or his major professor. The internship should be completed during the semester in which the student is enrolled. When the internship is completed, the major professor assigns a grade (“A,” “B,” “C,” etc.).

Comprehensive Examinations

The comprehensive examination is a test of the student’s understanding of the central tenets of the field of communication studies. Examinations are designed to determine the extent to which the student has mastered the theories and skills necessary for the degree and is a test of the student’s ability to describe, explain, analyze, and evaluate concepts in communication. Students are expected to demonstrate a broad knowledge of the communication discipline. The examination includes both a written and an oral component.
While the comprehensive examination certainly will address concepts covered in courses taken over the course of graduate study, the examination is by no means limited to course content. Graduate students should begin preparation for the written portion of the examination six months prior to the scheduled date. The student should consult the members of her/his graduate advisory committee for suggestions on how to prepare for the examination.

The student should plan to take comprehensive examinations during her or his last long semester of coursework. Students planning to graduate in the summer should take the comprehensive examination during the spring semester. Each long semester, the Director of Graduate Studies will announce the week when comprehensive examinations are scheduled. This date, which falls early in the semester, is selected to allow individuals adequate time to complete the comprehensive examination process (including any rewrites) in time for graduation. While students may take comprehensive examinations at any time agreed upon with her or his graduate advisory committee, the student is responsible for scheduling them with adequate time to complete the entire comprehensive examination process, including oral examinations, before graduation deadlines. The student should not expect her or his graduate advisory committee to rush the comprehensive examination process because of poor planning.

In preparation for taking the comprehensive examination, the student should apply for graduation with the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies. The Graduate School will evaluate the student’s degree plan and transcript prior to transmitting a form for reporting the results of comprehensive examinations.

The student assumes responsibility for scheduling the oral examination prior to the Graduate School deadline. The candidate should schedule the oral comprehensive examination at least one week prior to that deadline to allow for an additional oral examination should that prove necessary.

**Procedure for the Written Comprehensive Examinations**

1. The written portion of the comprehensive examination will last for eight (8) hours. Generally, the student writes four (4) hours for the major professor and two (2) hours for each of the other members of the graduate advisory committee. Specific days and times for writing are scheduled in consultation with the major professor. The written portion of the exam should be completed within one calendar week.

2. The major professor assumes responsibility for requesting comprehensive examination questions from the graduate advisory committee, proctoring the examination, and distributing the student’s answers.
3. Graduate students taking the comprehensive examination are required to present a typed copy of their answers. Students are encouraged to use word processors to take the examination. Those who prefer to handwrite the comprehensive examination shall photocopy their handwritten answers and present a copy to the major professor. The student has 72 hours to present a typed copy of those answers for evaluation. Under no circumstances should students embellish, edit, or otherwise revise handwritten answers.

4. Upon completion of the written examination, all questions and responses are submitted to all members of the graduate advisory committee for evaluation. All members of the graduate advisory committee must be given at least one week to evaluate the student’s responses. The grade (pass or no-pass) on the written portion will be based on the student’s ability to describe, explain, analyze and evaluate communication concepts, as well as her/his written communication skills.

5. If a student successfully completes all portions of the written examination, s/he may schedule the oral portion of the examination. If, however, a student is deficient in any part(s) of the written examination, s/he will have as many as two opportunities to rewrite the deficient part(s). If rewriting is necessary, the student’s graduate advisory committee will decide when the student will rewrite. Should the student fail to complete successfully the written portion after two rewrites, the student will not be permitted further opportunities to rewrite until he or she takes additional coursework (to be determined by the student’s graduate advisory committee). If, after taking additional coursework and retaking the deficient part(s) of the written examination, the student’s answers remain deficient, no subsequent rewrites will be permitted. No student will be permitted to participate in the oral component of the comprehensive examination until all parts of the written examination have been completed successfully.

Procedure for the Oral Comprehensive Examinations

1. Upon successful completion of the written component of the comprehensive examination, the student must consult with the major professor, the other graduate advisory committee members, and the department chair to select a date and time for the oral examination. The student is required to consult each committee member and the department chair regarding the date and time for the meeting. When the date and time have been established (the meeting will require one to two hours), the student is responsible for contacting the department administrative assistant to reserve a conference room for the meeting.

2. On the day of the oral examination, the student should bring a copy of her/his answers to the written comprehensive examination for reference purposes.

3. The major professor will chair the oral examination. The student will be
asked to leave at the beginning of the oral comprehensive examination in order for the graduate advisory committee to discuss procedures and potential concerns. The oral examination begins with a brief presentation by the student (the content to be determined by the major professor) and is followed by questions from the graduate advisory committee and from any other faculty members in attendance. When the questioning ceases, the student and all other persons not on the student’s graduate advisory committee will be excused from the room, whereupon the committee members decide whether the student’s performance is satisfactory, taking into consideration the combined written and oral components of the comprehensive examination. Upon reaching a decision, the committee calls the student back into the conference to report the committee’s decision.

4. After the student completes the oral portion of the comprehensive examination successfully, the major professor assumes responsibility for transmitting the results of the comprehensive examination to the Graduate School.