



Fire Up
CHIPS!

**School of Communication,
Journalism, and Media**

Communication Program

Central Michigan University

Master of Arts in Communication

2023-2024

Graduate Student Handbook

*Updated August 2022
by Dr. Lesley A. Withers*

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I. Introduction

The aim of this handbook is to guide you smoothly through your career as a graduate student. Within the handbook you will find information about departmental, Office of Graduate Studies, and university policies and procedures, as well as departmental and university resources you may find useful. Our hope is that the information provided in the following pages will help you become more knowledgeable, prepared, informed, and confident in your role as a graduate student. Questions are always welcome.

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II. Program Overview

The Communication Program, housed in the College of the Arts and Media (CAM) falls under the direction of the Area Coordinator of the Communication Program, Dr. Edward Hinck.

The M.A. in Communication is the only graduate degree program currently offered by the program. Most, if not all, of the courses you will take to complete your degree will carry the COM designator.

III. Faculty Members

The Communication Program includes 10 tenured faculty members. The list below offers a very brief look at the areas of interest for these faculty. Take the time to introduce yourself to them and to talk with each of them about their current research interests and areas of specialization.



Edward A. Hinck, Professor; Area Coordinator
Political Debate, Argumentation, Forensics
hinck1e@cmich.edu
989-774-3763



Lesley Withers, Professor; Director of Graduate Studies
Nonverbal and Interpersonal Communication, Social Support, Virtual Teams
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Elizabeth Carlson, Associate Professor

Organizational Communication, Small Group Communication, Virtual Teams, Professional and Group Identification

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Alysa Lucas, Assistant Professor

Interpersonal and Relational Communication, Communication in Friendships

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989-774-3950



Joseph Packer, Associate Professor; Debate Coach

Debate, Argumentation, Social Movements, History of Cosmological Rhetoric

packe1j@cmich.edu

989-774-4460



Michael Papa, Professor; Internship Coordinator

Organizational Communication, Innovation Diffusion, Organizing for Social Change

papa1mj@cmich.edu

989-774-7896



Wendy Papa, Professor

Pedagogy, Public Speaking, Organizing for Social Change

papa1wh@cmich.edu



Kirsten Weber, Professor; Basic Course Director

Interpersonal Communication, Health Communication, Research Methods, Statistics

weber2km@cmich.edu

989-774-7890

Administrative Staff



Bernie Cesena, Executive Secretary

cesen1bj@cmich.edu

989-774-3178

IV. Course Requirements

To graduate with an M.A. degree in Communication, students must have:

- a. completed at least 33 credit hours of coursework commensurate with the requirements of the Program;
- b. achieved a cumulative GPA above 3.0;
- c. earned a “C” or better in all courses listed on the Authorization of Degree Program form;
- d. completed a thesis and oral defense of the thesis approved by the thesis committee or passed comprehensive exams; and
- e. submitted all required paperwork and documentation to the Office of Graduate Studies.
- f. **NOTE:** Teaching assistants must complete COM 795 during their first fall semester as a condition of their employment.

A. Registering for Classes and Transfer Credits

Each spring, students should plan to register for the coming year’s courses. Graduate students must choose electives in consultation with their academic advisors before registering. Due to some curricular changes, there are some classes that students will not be able to enroll in by themselves. If an error message appears when attempting to register for a class, contact the main office for assistance.

A maximum of 15 semester hours of approved course credit “appropriate to a student's degree program” from an accredited college or university may be transferred. Students must apply to the Office of Graduate Studies to transfer credit by submitting a completed *Transfer Credit Request* form. The student’s academic advisor must review and sign the form before it is submitted to the main office; from there, it will be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies.

B. Suggested Course Sequence for a Fall 2023 Start Date

Fall 2023	Spring 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ COM 600○ COM 602○ COM 795	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ COM 668○ COM 664○ COM elective
Fall 2024	Spring 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ COM 750○ COM elective○ COM elective or thesis credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ COM 601○ COM 661○ COM elective or thesis credits

C. Thesis Track: Course Requirements

Course #	# of Credits	Course Title	Required/Elective
1. COM 600	3	Introduction to Research and Graduate Study in Comm.	Required course
2. COM 601	3	(Quantitative) Research Design in Communication	Required course
3. COM 603	3	Professional Seminar in Communication	Required course
4. COM 661	3	Contemporary Communication Theory	Required course
5. COM 664	3	Seminar in Organizational Communication	Required course
6. COM 668	3	Seminar in Interpersonal Communication	Required course
7. COM 602 OR COM 750	3	Qualitative Research Methods OR Seminar in Rhetorical Criticism	Required course
8. COM 798	6	Thesis (6 credit hours)	Required course
9. COM ***	9	500, 600, or 700-level COM course	Elective course
Total credits	33		

*NOTE: When following the thesis track, students must complete a total of six thesis hours and **cannot register for their final three** thesis credit hours until after successfully completing a prospectus meeting.

D. Comprehensive Exam Track: Course Requirements

Course #	# of Credits	Course Title	Required/Elective
1. COM 600	3	Introduction to Research and Graduate Study in Comm.	Required course
2. COM 601	3	(Quantitative) Research Design in Communication	Required course
3. COM 603	3	Professional Seminar in Communication	Required course
4. COM 661	3	Contemporary Communication Theory	Required course
5. COM 664	3	Seminar in Organizational Communication	Required course
6. COM 668	3	Seminar in Interpersonal Communication	Required course
7. COM 602 OR COM 750	3	Qualitative Research Methods OR Seminar in Rhetorical Criticism	Required course
8. COM ***	15	500, 600, or 700-level COM course	Elective course
TOTAL	33		

E. COM Course Elective Options and Electives Outside of the Program

- COM 511: Crisis Communication
- COM 523: Dark Side of Communication
- COM 527: Political Communication
- COM 555: Special Topics in Communication (3-6 credit hours)
- COM 560: Communication and Social/Organizational Change
- COM 561: Communication in Conflict Management

COM 665:	Seminar in Communication and Negotiation in Employee Relations
COM 667:	Seminar in Intercultural Communication
COM 764:	Communication Internship (1-6 credit hours)
COM 790:	Advanced Independent Study (1-4 credit hours)
COM 795:	Seminar: Teaching College Communication

Students can take graduate level courses (500, 600, and 700 level) offered by other academic departments on campus if the courses are relevant to the field of communication and to a student's future academic or professional career. **However, students must consult with and receive permission from their academic advisors about possible course options before registering for courses.** Students who wish to take electives outside of the program must provide their advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies with a written rationale explaining why the course is relevant 1) to the field of communication *AND* 2) to their future academic or professional goals.

V. Helpful Academic Procedures and Policies

A. Graduate Assistant Tuition Waiver

If you are a graduate assistant registered for classes that should be paid for by an assistantship, you will need to electronically submit a Graduate Assistant Tuition Waiver. You may access the waiver system through CentralLink by visiting *My Account*, then *Benefits*, then *Graduate Assistant Tuition Waiver Request*. If you experience problems with the tuition waiver system, contact Faculty Personnel Services immediately at (989) 774-3368.

B. Class Attendance

Attendance is expected of all graduate students for all graduate classes. It is expected that graduate students will not miss class time, except for reasons of serious illness of the student (for example, illness requiring hospitalization), or a death in the immediate family of the student. Due to the nature of the class structure, missing one class is the equivalent of a whole week and can set a student back, making it very difficult to catch up on missed materials and important discussions. Excessive absences (as determined by the instructor) may result in failure of the course.

C. Academic Advisor vs. Thesis Advisor

An academic advisor can help students plan their program of graduate study, choose classes, and troubleshoot graduate school related issues more general.

A thesis advisor oversees the writing and defense of a graduate student's thesis. Typically, this person is selected toward the end of the first year or at the beginning of the second year. Often, this person takes over academic advisor duties.

D. Academic and Retention Standards

To obtain a graduate degree, students must have at least a 3.0 (B) cumulative GPA. Additionally, students must earn at least a “C” in every course. If a student’s cumulative GPA falls below a 3.0, he/she will be placed on academic probation.

If, in the first semester after being placed on probation, the probationary student obtains a semester GPA above 3.0, but his/her cumulative GPA stays below 3.0, the student will be allowed a second semester to raise his/her cumulative GPA to above 3.0. However, the student will remain on probation and will be so notified by the Office of Graduate Studies.

If, in the first semester after being placed on probation, the student does not obtain a semester GPA above 3.0, then the Dean of the Office of Graduate Studies will ask the program to make a recommendation as to whether the student should be allowed a second semester to raise his/her cumulative GPA to at least a 3.0 or whether the student will be dematriculated. The program will only recommend a student be awarded a second semester to raise his/her GPA under exceptional circumstances. If a student is on probation and his/her cumulative GPA rises above 3.0, the student will be removed from probationary status. Full details of academic and retention standards can be found in the Graduate *Bulletin*.

E. Assignment of Incomplete Grade

According to the Graduate *Bulletin*, “[a]n incomplete (I) is a temporary grade used by the instructor in cases when a student is unable to complete course requirements because of illness or other justifiable circumstances. It is assigned only in cases in which the student has completed satisfactorily the major portion of the course requirements and has convinced the instructor of his or her ability to complete the remaining work without re-registering for the course. It is not to be given to a student who is already doing failing work. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor to complete the remaining work. The required work should be completed, and a grade reported by the end of the student's next semester in residence, but in no case later than one calendar year following the receipt of the grade of I.”

An incomplete is designed to allow students the opportunity to finish assignments, tests, or papers that could not be completed on time due to extreme illness of the student or a death in the immediate family of the student, not simply because a student has fallen behind due to poor time management.

When an incomplete is assigned, the instructor and student must agree on the terms for completing the outstanding work for the class. The student is then responsible for completing the outstanding work in the agreed-upon time period, and upon doing so, a *Report of Incomplete or Deferred Grade* form must be completed by the instructor and forwarded to the Area Coordinator for approval.

F. 24 [credit] Hour Review

Graduate students are encouraged to schedule a check in, called the 24 [credit] hour review, with their academic advisor or the director of graduate studies during the semester in which they complete their core coursework (not including thesis/comprehensive exam requirements) (i.e., when they have

completed 24-hours of course credit). This informal check in will include a discussion of the student's program of study and his/her progress toward completing the degree requirements. It is the student's responsibility to schedule an appointment for this review.

G. Graduation Procedures and Graduation Audit

In the semester before the student intends to graduate, they must submit a completed *Graduate Application* form, along with the appropriate fee, to the Office of Graduate Studies. Deadline dates are published inside the front cover of the *Graduate Bulletin* and on the Office of Graduate Studies website at <http://grad.cmich.edu> (follow the link for Current Students, then the link for Deadlines). After a student submits the form, the Office of Graduate Studies audits the student's academic record to verify completion of program requirements. Upon completion of the audit, the Office of Graduate Studies will send the student and his/her advisor an audit form indicating the results of the audit. If there are any graduate requirements left to complete, the audit form will indicate what the student must do before they can graduate. If the student fails to meet the necessary requirements for graduation by the deadline, the Office of Graduate Studies will send the student a *Failure to Complete Requirements for Graduation* form. It will then be necessary to reapply to graduate in a subsequent semester. To help students monitor their own progress towards graduation, the Office of Graduate Studies has developed a Self-Audit form. Students are encouraged to obtain a copy of this form.

H. The Office of Graduate Studies and DocuSign

A complete listing of graduate policies and procedures can be found in the current *Graduate Bulletin* (<https://bulletins.cmich.edu/>). All forms and paperwork referred to in the following sections can be obtained from the Office of Graduate Studies website at: <http://grad.cmich.edu> (follow the link to "Current Students," then the "Forms" link).

NOTE: *The Office of Graduate Studies is now using DocuSign for most of the forms available on the Graduate Studies website. This change requires all student forms be initiated by the student and provides the following advantages:*

- DocuSign routes the form to the required signers identified by the student
- Students will be able to track the status of each signature
- DocuSign ensures that all required attachments are included
- Automatic email reminders for unsigned forms

VI. Comprehensive Exams

A. Requirements and Dates

Before sitting for the comprehensive exam, the student must have completed all required courses for the M.A. degree in Communication. Students must contact the main office to request the date of the comprehensive exam for a given semester.

To register to take the comprehensive exam, students must notify the main office *in writing* by completing and returning the [Comprehensive Exam Request](#) form at least 6 weeks in advance of the

comprehensive exam date. The completed form will serve as notice of the intent to take comprehensive examinations. Exams are typically offered for fall in October, and for spring in February.

One month before the examination, a study guide is distributed to students who have completed and submitted the *Comprehensive Exam Request* form.

Upon passing the comprehensive exam, students must submit (first to the main office, and then to the Office of Graduate Studies) a completed *Plan B Completion Sign-off* form. If a student does not pass the comprehensive exam, he/she has one final opportunity to re-take the comprehensive exam in its entirety in a subsequent semester. If, upon taking the comprehensive exam a second time, the student does not pass the exam, he/she must successfully defend a thesis project or be dematriculated from the program.

Please direct any questions regarding the Comprehensive Exam process to the Graduate Director.

B. Sitting for Comprehensive Exams

The comprehensive exam will be administered one Saturday per semester—usually in the middle of the semester. The exam will include four questions that must be answered in six hours (1 hour and 30 minutes per question). A question will come from each of these four areas:

- a. communication theory,
- b. communication methods,
- c. interpersonal communication, and
- d. organizational communication.

Please note, students identify themselves on the examination using their CMU student identification number, not by name. Faculty members reading the exam will not know which student produced a given response.

C. The Evaluation of Comprehensive Exams

Three tenured/tenure-track professors will read each student's exam answers and apply a 0 or 1 rating to each of the four comprehensive exam questions (0=unsatisfactory/fail; 1=satisfactory/pass). To pass the comprehensive exam, a student must earn a minimum total of 2 points on each of the four questions. Students will be notified of their exam results within one month of the examination.

The following criteria are used when evaluating comprehensive exam answers:

- Accuracy of information provided
- Completeness of response (including use of citations when appropriate)
- Quality of argument(s)
- Clarity of writing
- Organizational structure

VII. Thesis

A. Thesis Advisors and Thesis Committees

After deciding on a general thesis topic, students should approach a faculty member about serving as their thesis advisor/chair of their thesis committee. Students should choose a thesis advisor whose scholarly interests are similar to their own and with whom they can develop a positive working relationship. Some possible criteria to consider when selecting a thesis advisor are:

- 1) a common research interest;
- 2) methodological orientation;
- 3) working relationship; and
- 4) the faculty member's number of current advisees.

Thesis students should take the time to get to know all faculty members before asking a faculty member if he/she would be willing to serve as their thesis advisor.

Once a thesis advisor has agreed to serve, students should consult with them about the selection of two additional faculty members to serve on the thesis committee. These committee members function as thesis consultants and participate in approving the thesis prospectus and the thesis. Each committee member should be contacted and asked if they are willing to serve on the thesis committee. Once the thesis advisor and committee members have been selected, the thesis student must complete a *Thesis Committee Selection* form by obtaining committee member signatures and return the completed form to the main office. If, for some reason, a student needs to change one or more members of their thesis committee, the student must complete and return a *Change of Thesis Committee* form to the main office.

B. Types of Theses

Those students electing to complete a thesis should, in consultation with their thesis advisor, select either a *Traditional Research Thesis* or an *Applied Research Thesis*. A *Traditional Research Thesis* consists of an original piece of research that makes a contribution to the discipline's theoretical or conceptual knowledge of communication. An *Applied Research Thesis* consists of an original piece of research that makes a contribution to our knowledge of communication practices, either in a general sense or within a particular client organization. Typically, the applied thesis is the application of communication theory to a particular communication issue within a specific organization. It still involves a literature review; then it includes the method, which often involves the development of a specific communication plan or campaign, followed by evaluation of the campaign (by the thesis author, as well as by the organization in question AND some outside evaluator familiar with the topic or organization being studied), followed by a discussion. However, this framework may differ from one applied thesis to another, depending on the context.

C. Thesis Prospectus

The thesis advisor will actively direct the thesis and will consult with other members of the committee about matters pertinent to its development. The first step in the thesis process is to write a thesis prospectus. A prospectus usually consists of the first two chapters of the thesis. Chapter 1 is usually a review of relevant literature relating to the research topic and chapter 2 is usually a discussion of the research methodology to be used in collecting data – although this format may differ for Applied Research Thesis projects.

Once a prospectus has been completed to the satisfaction of the thesis advisor, a prospectus meeting is held with the thesis committee. Thesis committee members should receive the completed thesis prospectus at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled prospectus meeting date. This meeting involves a brief presentation of the prospectus followed by a question-and-answer session, after which the committee decides whether the student can proceed with the thesis topic. A prospectus meeting to approve the thesis project must occur before data collection and analysis for the thesis can begin.

D. IRB Approval

If the thesis project involves conducting research upon human subjects, the student must receive permission from Central Michigan University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) after the thesis prospectus has been approved and before the collection of thesis data can begin. In addition, the prospectus must be approved before the student is eligible to enroll in the last 3 hours of thesis credit. Upon completion of the prospectus defense, the student must submit a completed Prospectus for Theses, Doctoral Research Project or Doctoral Dissertation form to the main office. After the Area Coordinator has approved the form, the office will forward the form to the Office of Graduate Studies.

While writing the thesis, the student should obtain a copy of the Preparation Guide for Dissertations and Theses document and a copy of the Thesis/Doctoral Research Project/Dissertation Checklist from the Office of Graduate Studies website at: <http://grad.cmich.edu> (follow the link for New and Current Students, then Thesis, Doctoral Projects and Dissertations). In addition to the above materials, the student should make additional judgments on form and style in accordance with the current APA manual.

D. Thesis Defense (i.e., oral examination)

When the content and form of the thesis has been completed to the satisfaction of the thesis advisor, the thesis committee shall conduct a thesis defense. A thesis defense is an oral examination over the thesis. The Communication Program requires that an interval of not less than six weeks must separate the approval of the thesis prospectus and the thesis defense. The student will be required to orally defend the thesis (and will also be orally examined on subject matter within the core of degree program content beyond the scope of the thesis). The thesis defense will last approximately two hours. Thesis committee members should receive the completed thesis at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled thesis defense date. Students, faculty, and other interested persons are invited to attend the thesis defense. After agreeing on a date and time with all thesis committee members, the student must obtain a *Thesis Defense Scheduling* Form from the main office. The form must be completed and

returned to main office staff before a defense will be scheduled. This process must be completed at least two weeks before the desired defense date. The Communication Program will notify COM faculty and graduate students of the defense.

The thesis defense should be scheduled sufficiently in advance of the graduation deadline to permit completion of all degree requirements in accordance with the University's deadlines for graduation. Deadlines for graduation can be obtained from the Office of Graduate Studies at <http://grad.cmich.edu> (follow the link for New and Current Students, then Dates & Deadlines). It is typical for a thesis committee to request changes—of varying degrees—in a thesis. The thesis committee is responsible for approving necessary changes in the thesis, approving its completion in its final typed form, and verifying that the student has met all requirements for graduation. The committee as a whole will judge the quality of the work and determine whether the completed thesis is acceptable.

E. Submitting your Thesis to the Office of Graduate Studies

Upon successful defense of the thesis, the student will complete any recommended changes and have them approved by the thesis advisor. The student will then electronically submit the final version of the thesis to the Office of Graduate Studies according to the directions given in the Guidelines for the Preparation of Theses, Doctoral Projects, and Dissertations found at <http://grad.cmich.edu> (follow the link for New and Current Students, then the link for Applications and Forms, then Theses, Doctoral Projects and Dissertations). In addition, the student must submit an electronic version of the *Plan A Completion Approval Form* along with the final version of their thesis. The student should also make arrangements with the thesis advisor to change the student's thesis credit hours (COM 798) grades from Z to Credit. This change is achieved through web grades or degree progress.

At their expense, students may order hard-bound copies of their thesis from Printing Services. Ordering bound copies of the thesis is not required.

F. Thesis Grants

The Office of Graduate Studies offers Graduate Student Research Grants and Graduate Student Publication and Presentation Grants. The Graduate Student Research Grant provides funds to offset the costs of research for theses, such as mileage to conduct personal interviews or fees for using proprietary survey measures. In addition, the grant provides support for student travel to present research at international and national conferences. There are deadlines associated with these grants; for more information, visit the Office of Graduate Studies website and click on the link for New and Current Students, then the link for Applications and Forms, then Graduate Student Presentations & Research Grants.

Please note: The student's advisor must support the request for one of the above grants. Also, graduate students who wish to use a CMU affiliation for submitting papers, panels, or posters for presentation at local, regional, national, or international conference may do so only under the supervision of a COM faculty member. Students giving such presentations may be asked to present their research at a COM Research Colloquy (further details can be obtained from one's advisor/research supervisor).

VIII. Program Resources

A. The Main Office

The program office for COM is located in Moore 333. Bernie Cesena, Executive Secretary, is the department's permanent office staff. In addition, student assistants work in the office (usually at the front desk). Office staff members are there to assist you and answer any questions you may have but are not responsible to do any graduate student work (typing papers, making copies, etc.). The Area Coordinator has an office adjacent to the main office (Moore 334). You must enter the main office to reach the Area Coordinator's office. The main office is open 8:00 am until noon and 1:00 pm until 5:00 pm Monday-Friday. Graduate students are not allowed to remain in Moore 333 when the office staff is not there unless a faculty member acknowledges direct responsibility for your presence. (No exceptions will be made).

B. The Lounge

The lounge next to the main office, Moore 332, can be used as a place to do casual reading, hold small group meetings, or simply relax. Feel free to use the refrigerator and microwave located in the lounge. Coffee is available on the honor system. Please supply coffee, as needed, or contribute to the coffee fund (suggested donation of .50 per cup); Keurig K-cups are compatible with the coffee maker. Additionally, if you prepare food in the lounge, please clean up after yourself. In addition, the lounge houses a number of theses written by previous graduate students. These theses can be checked out through the main office.

C. Photocopying and Mail

There is a photocopier in the main office that can be used for emergency copying. The photocopier is not to be used to copy materials for graduate student classwork (e.g., graduate students cannot use the copier to make personal copies of articles assigned in classes, thesis questionnaires, or other research material). The copier is not for public use; undergraduate students are not permitted to use it. There are copiers in some campus computer labs, the University Center, and the library for public use. Campus mail goes through the main office. The mail is picked up around 11:00 am daily, Monday-Friday. It is best to drop off outgoing mail by 10:30 am. Usually, the incoming mail is sorted by 11:30 am. To send personal items, the envelopes must have postage. The program will not pay for individual postage. Personal packages must be mailed at the post office or other local shipping centers.

D. Computers

Graduate students do not have access to the computers in the main office except by special permission. There are computers available to all graduate students in Moore 202, the Graduate Student Lounge and Office (aka "The Bullpen"). When in Moore 202, be aware that this area is, first and foremost, a professional office for graduate teaching assistants. COM 101 students may enter to discuss with their instructor sensitive issues such as personal illnesses, deaths in their families, or learning

disabilities. Be aware of graduate teaching assistants' needs to be professional and students' needs for privacy in these situations. In addition, the printer in Moore 202 is to be used sparingly; do not use this printer for printing out graduate student course work or personal items. The primary purpose of having a printer in Moore 202 is for those who are teaching or assisting with courses in our program.

IX. University Resources

A. Campus ID Card

Students must obtain an ID card from the Campus ID office on the first floor of the Bovee University Center. The Campus ID is used to gain access to the Student Activity Center (SAC), check out books from the library, and gain free access to CMU sporting events. Obtaining a Campus ID should be a new student's top priority.

B. Centrallink

Students can access their email via Central Link at centrallink.cmich.edu. In addition to checking email, Central Link is used to register for courses and access student account information.

C. Parking

Permits to park in the lot adjacent to Moore Hall (Lot 33) can be purchased at CMU's Department of Public Safety (DPS). A parking permit for students currently costs \$175.00 per academic year. To buy a parking permit, students may go online to <http://www.police.cmich.edu>. Parking is free on campus after 4:00 pm daily in most lots. Ticketing begins before the semester begins, and CMU Police will ticket anyone who is illegally parked or does not have a permit displayed.

D. Financial Aid

Financial aid is available for graduate students. Students may contact the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid through their website: <http://financialaid.cmich.edu/>.

For financial aid purposes, graduate students must carry at least 5 credit hours per semester to be considered a half-time student and 9 credit hours per semester to be considered a full-time student. Graduate Assistants with a full assistantship must carry at least 6 credit hours per semester to maintain their assistantships.

E. Library Resources

Park Library is located between Moore Hall and the Bovee University Center. Library hours vary throughout the week, weekends, and on holidays. The Park Library phone number is 989-774-3500 and library resources can also be accessed online at <http://www.lib.cmich.edu>. The library has assigned Katie Edmiston, as the COM reference librarian. Katie can assist students with learning how to use the library and its resources. Katie can be reached at 989-774-3835 or via email at edmis2k@cmich.edu.

F. Academic Assistance Program & the Writing Center

The Academic Assistance Program offers programs to help students with academic workload issues and concerns. The office is located in the Bovee University Center, Room 215 (phone: 989-774-3465). The Writing Center provides walk-in writing assistance. The Writing Center has locations in Park Library (Room 400; 989-774-2986), Anspach Hall (Room 003; 989-774-1228), and The Towers (Wheeler Hall next to the computer lab; 989-774-1002).

G. Career Services

Career Services can provide students with information about choosing a career or looking for a job. Mock interviews, credential files, on-campus recruiting, vacancy bulletins, and a career library are some of the services available. Career Services is located in Ronan Hall, Room 240 (Phone: 989-774-3068).

H. Division of Student Affairs

The Division of Student Affairs is located in Ronan 220 (phone: 989-774-3346) and serves students in areas including health and well-being, identity and inclusion, leadership and engagement, community and student advocacy. Students with disabilities and international students can receive support through this office, as well. Students who call the Division of Student Affairs will be referred to the specific department or program that can be of assistance. They can also be reached online at <https://www.cmich.edu/offices-departments/division-of-student-affairs>.

I. CMU Health: Student Health Services

CMU Health's Student Health Services is located in Foust Hall, Room 220 (phone: 989-774-6599). The clinic is a primary health care facility, with the same sort of services as a family doctor. Students can receive allergy injections, pharmacy prescriptions, medical testing, and lab work at the clinic. Walk-in appointments are available, but appointments are encouraged. Students will be billed for their appointments through their monthly university accounts. Health insurance is accepted, and a special student health insurance package is available. Students will need to take their Campus ID. Check out the Health Services' website at <https://www.cmuhealth.org/services/mount-pleasant-clinics/student-health-services>.

J. Counseling Center (Free Services)

The Counseling Center is located in Foust Hall in Room 102 (phone: 989-774-3381). The center provides free, confidential assistance. The Counseling Center's hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; counselors are on-call at other hours. Appointments can be made in advance and emergency (walk-in) counseling appointments are available. The Counseling Center is available to students, faculty, and staff, and there is no charge for these services. Other services at the Counseling Center include growth groups and workshops, in-service training and consultation services, outreach programs, referral to appropriate agencies (such as McLaren Central Michigan hospital), and testing. In case of an emergency, call the CMU Police at 989-774-3081.

K. Sexual Harassment Policy and Information

Central Michigan University expressly prohibits faculty, staff, or students from engaging in sexual harassment. This section will help students identify sexual harassment, assist with what to do if they are sexually harassed, and understand how to empower victims who may be too afraid, confused, or vulnerable to take action. Central Michigan University is committed to maintaining an environment free of all forms of discrimination and respectful of the dignity of all its members. The University provides the following assistance:

- Services, information, announcements, and literature through posters, brochures, and the media as well as educational programs to help identify and prevent sexual harassment.
- New student orientation and other programs that address sexual harassment, date rape, stalking and dating violence are provided by the Affirmative Action Office, Residence Life, University Police and other offices.
- Counseling for victims of sexual harassment
- Formal grievance procedures and sanctions to punish sexual harassment violators.
- Comprehensive law enforcement services, including on-campus emergency telephones.

Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual attention or unwanted communication of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment violates federal and state law and Central Michigan University policy.

The 1972 amendment to the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Title VII) and Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 prohibit sexual discrimination, including sexual harassment of students and all employees in academic institutions. Students may not be denied participation in or benefits of any publicly funded educational program or activity based on their sex.

Sexual harassment is defined as follows by the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act 453 of 1976 as Amended by Public Act 202 of 1980 Sec 103(h): "...unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature when:

- a. Submission to such conduct or communication is made a term or condition either explicitly or implicitly to obtain employment, public accommodation or public services, education, or housing.
- b. Submission to or rejection of such conduct or communication by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting such individual's employment, public accommodation or public services, education or housing.
- c. Such conduct or communication has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's employment, public accommodation or public services, education, or housing, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive employment, public accommodation, public services, educational, or housing environment."

CMU Office of Civil Rights and Institutional Equity. This office supervises the maintenance of related reports and records, provides and develops related educational programs and materials, offers guidance and advice to all community members on the University's nondiscrimination and affirmative action policies and procedures, assists departments with recruitment and retention activities, and receives and resolves complaints of discrimination from students, employees and others. Office: Bovee University Center, Room 306; (989) 774-3253.

Sexual Assault Peer Advocates (SAPA; 989-774-2255): provides peer-to-peer service; college students provide advocacy and support to victims of sexual assault, stalking, and related crimes. Office: Foust Hall, Room 150; sapa@cmich.edu; 24-Hour Crisis Line: 989-774-CALL (2255); text: 989-621-3359

L. Student Disability Services

Student Disabilities Services is located in Park Library 120 (phone: 989-774-3018). Students with disabilities are asked to register with Student Disability Services. However, students are not required to notify the university of their disability. Confidentiality of all disability information is assured. All CMU course syllabi include the university's disability statement: *CMU provides students with disabilities reasonable accommodation to participate in educational programs, activities, or services. Students with disabilities requiring accommodation to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should contact their instructor as early as possible.*

M. Institutional Diversity

CMU has many diversity-related programs that may be of interest and benefit to students. These programs can be reached through the following contacts:

- Women and Gender Studies: Anspach Hall 115; (989) 774-3601
- Office of Global Engagement: Ronan 330; (989) 774-4308
- Office for Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Warriner 319; (989) 774-3700
- Multicultural Academic Student Services: Bovee University Center 112; (989) 774-3945
- Native American Programs: Bovee University Center 110; (989) 774-2508
- LGBTQ Services & Gender Equity Programs: Bovee University Center 125; (989) 774-3637

X. Recreational Resources

A. Student Activity Center

The Student Activity Center/Rose Center complex (known as the SAC) is operated by Campus Recreational Services. The facility includes a bowling center, racquetball courts, a weight fitness center, basketball courts, volleyball courts, tennis courts, a 3-lane 1/9-mile track, a lounging area, meeting rooms, study area, aquatic center, multi-activity center, fitness assessment center, and a power lifting center. The SAC also offers various programs such as fitness walking and aerobics. Membership in the SAC is included in student tuition fees if you are enrolled in and have paid for at least one credit hour in a semester. Information on hours of operation and current activities can be found on the University Recreation website (<http://www.sac.cmich.edu>) or by calling (989) 774-3686.

B. University Events

All speakers' series and artist course events are available to students and community members. Information and tickets for upcoming events can be obtained from the Central Box Office located in the Events Center. The Central Box Office can be contacted at 774-3045 or on the Internet at <https://www.cmich.edu/student-life/ticket-central>.

C. The Bovee University Center (UC)

The Bovee University Center (UC) is home to a variety of student services and resources. In addition to the services previously listed in this handbook, the UC also houses Central Eats (located on the lower level). There, students can purchase a snack or a meal, or simply sit at one of the many tables to study or socialize. Starbucks on the main level before heading to class or the office. The UC Bookstore is also located on the main level, where students can buy textbooks, gifts, CMU apparel, and many other materials needed for classes. A branch of Independent Bank is also located in the UC.

XI. Professional Communication Associations and Conferences

There are multiple opportunities for graduate students to join professional communication associations and attend their annual conferences. Conferences offer an excellent opportunity to learn what is new in the communication discipline, network with others in the field, and build one's curriculum vita through participating in the conference (through paper, panel, or poster presentations).

There are several professional communication associations that hold an annual conference. Each organization will have a call for papers; the deadline for submitting a paper proposal will vary. It is best to plan ahead since the call for papers can be up to 10 months before the conference. Most of the associations offer a reduced-cost student membership.

A. Communication Associations and Conferences

Below is a listing of some of the professional communication associations. As a reminder, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs does offer funding opportunities for graduate students presenting at conferences. Students may obtain further information directly from their website at <http://www.orsp.cmich.edu/>.

National Communication Association (NCA), <http://www.natcom.org>

Central States Communication Association (CSCA), <http://www.csc-net.org/>

International Communication Association (ICA), <https://www.icahdq.org/>

NCA offers volunteer opportunities for which you can receive a complimentary registration (a savings of \$75-145!) in exchange for three to six hours of work. Volunteer opportunities include working in the convention registration area, the graduate school open house, the job fair, short courses, and other areas. More detailed description of volunteer opportunities is online at <https://www.natcom.org/convention-events/convention-resources/volunteer-information>

B. Using CMU as an affiliation

Graduate students who wish to use a CMU affiliation for submitting papers, panels, or posters for presentation at conferences may do so only under the supervision of a COM faculty member. Students giving such presentations may be asked to present their research at a COM Research Colloquy (further details can be obtained from your advisor/research supervisor).

XII. Modest Advice for New Graduate Students

The following includes anecdotal advice, accumulated over the years, that helped COM faculty during our graduate school experiences. Hopefully, they will prove useful to others!

A. The phenomenology of graduate school

Impostor Syndrome is 100% real and will affect you (yes, even you). But you can learn how to better manage it over time. The best cure is building up enough knowledge and experience that you start thinking, “Hey, maybe I do know what I’m talking about.” But please note that it takes time, and in the meanwhile, be kind and patient with yourself.

Related to the point above, regardless of how much you know about your topic, there is **much more** that you do **not** know. Cultivate humility, learn from others, and don’t be afraid to admit you don’t know something. Real learning will not happen unless you commit to these goals.

There is often excitement and a set of expectations when you first come in, but that might wear off as you come to learn more about the new circumstances you find yourself in — it’s harder/less challenging than you expected, your first few experiments don’t work, your peers seem to be ahead of you, you didn’t realize just how many drafts a paper has to go through before it’s published (take whatever number you’re thinking of and multiply it by 10), etc. These thoughts are hard to avoid, and it’s possible you’ll experience a bit of a slump in your early years, as many of us did.

It really is very difficult to figure out whether the dissatisfaction you may feel in graduate school is a temporary state of being, or indicative of a larger problem. This is something you have to figure out for yourself. But it’s not unusual to feel like this early on; there is usually a calibration process that takes place (as such, this curve can probably be applied to most new changes, like learning a new skill or moving to a new city). Over time, as you begin to hone your skills, build your body of knowledge, explore new ideas, and make it through the publication process a few times, you may find that you enjoy it more.

As you move up in academia, you will have more and more responsibility. This can seem daunting, at first, but it’s important to remember that *you* are leveling up, as well. You probably can’t accurately forecast how well you will do in the face of increasing pressure, because we are notoriously bad at predicting how much we will change in the future (known as the [end-of-history illusion](#)).

B. The critical importance of mental health care

The mental life of most graduate students is challenging; they are, on average, [more than six times more likely](#) to experience depression and anxiety as compared to the general population. Luckily, many programs offer resources for mental health care. Do not let this go to waste; seek it out, **early and often!** Even if you think you “don’t need it”, or that it will be difficult to set up. This investment is absolutely critical; your mental health should be a top priority.

Get 8 hours of sleep a night. Non-negotiable. There is no need for all-nighters, now or ever. Your sleeping habits directly influence your mental health. Do not sacrifice your mental health!

C. Advisory relationship

You should have a discussion with your advisor very early on about your career goals. By this, I mean, you should talk openly about whether you plan to pursue a tenure-track research position, a teaching position at a small liberal arts college, a career in the industry, or any other goal. This will significantly change the types of priorities you should have through graduate school. No one will know for sure what they want at first, but this dialogue should be ongoing. Keep your options open.

Show up to your advisory meetings with a clear agenda, starting with things that are most time-sensitive. Your advisors are busy and may not have the time to be as involved as they want to be in your life. Make it easy for them. The same advice applies to emails to your advisor or professors: if it’s [longer than two paragraphs](#): stop, delete the whole thing, and set up a meeting instead.

Relatedly, as Steve Stearns urges: “You had better decide early on that you are in charge of your program. The degree you get is yours to create. Your adviser can advise you and protect you to a certain extent from bureaucratic and financial demons, but she should not tell you what to do. That is up to you. If you need advice, ask for it: that’s her job.”

D. Work-life balance

This might surprise you, but few people are working as hard as they claim they are. There is this weird culture in academia centered around how many hours a week people work. Of course, you will work hard and of course others work hard, but take what you hear from other people with a grain of salt. Relatedly, given that there's so much flexibility in how to get work done, there are many ways to successfully pull it off. Someone else's method may not work for you. Don't let it get to you, and try to avoid these types of comparisons, in general.

Try as much as possible to maintain a work-life balance. Some limit their work to business hours (M-F, 9–5) and try to avoid working too much on weekends and nights. That flexible time can be useful when big deadlines are coming up, but leave that time for non-academic things: intramural sports, art, movies, spending time with loved ones, etc. If you do not work hard to maintain this balance, burn out is likely to occur. It doesn't have to be business hours, per se, but you should be mindful of not only how many hours you actually work, but how many hours a week **you expect yourself to work**. It might help to think of night-time and weekend work as a bonus; if it happens, great, but it shouldn't be expected. This is also true of your professors.

E. Rejection and competition

Academic life is absolutely full of rejection. If you stay in academe, you will have papers, grants, and abstracts rejected (or, put in a nicer way, “not accepted”). At first, it might be hard to dissociate this feeling of academic rejection from a feeling of **personal** rejection, especially since, as a hard worker and successful student, a big part of your identity has come from academic success. This is a hard process, emotionally, but the sooner you realize **it's not personal**, the better you can handle these rejections. Most successful academics, upon having an article rejected, for example, will say something like “Bummer. Okay, where should we submit next?” or “Well, that sucks. I wonder how I can update this paper to make it stronger?” They do not dwell on the rejection; they shrug it off and try to learn from it. This should be your goal, and it will be hard to attain it, but each new rejection will eventually sting a little less than the last one, and over time, you will build up something like immunity.

Other people's successes are not your failures. Try as much as possible not to compete with your peers. Don't undermine them, don't put them down, don't be upset when they succeed. Foster a support network based on care and trust. Help them and they will help you. Share materials with each other, read each other's papers, study together. They will be your colleagues, now and forever. Success in academia hinges upon long-term collaborative interactions. Be kind, be cooperative, be thoughtful.

F. Attending conferences and presenting your research

Conferences are great for meeting awesome people. Start horizontally, meeting other graduate students and post-docs; they are your “extended cohort.” When it comes to faculty, you should prioritize meeting people whose work you study or for whom you have questions, and talk to them like they are **real people** and not just a means to an end for your academic ambitions.

At conferences, you should attend talks that seem relevant to you and even some that don't seem relevant! You'd be surprised how much you can learn from topics outside of your range of interest. Conferences are fantastic places for catching up on new work and potentially forming new research questions. Some conferences may also offer financial aid or support for graduate students; look into these and apply if you're eligible!

You should begin submitting abstracts for posters as early as you have results worthy of sharing. **Remember that posters are visual abstracts!** You can decide at what point you want to switch to giving conference talks. Your advisor can help you gauge this. One thing to keep in mind, however, is the old saying "every talk is a job talk". Present research you want to be known for, and practice your talk many, many times beforehand.

When it comes to presentations, there are a couple things to keep in mind. First, your slides should have **very little text**. The slides themselves should be clean and feature relevant graphics, like graphs, tables, photos, or videos (videos highly recommended). Do not excessively use transitions. And second, present your slides as if you are having a conversation with the audience. Most academics are against scripts, either read-out-loud or memorized, although this is discipline-specific as we appreciate excellence in presentations and public speaking. For each slide, you should know the main points you want to make and add them to your presenter notes. You should practice as many times as you can prior to presenting your slides, but again, don't memorize what you're going to say. Try to speak as naturally and organically as possible. Talk to specific people in the audience. Use a slide advancer so your hands are freed up for non-verbal communication. If you can, avoid standing behind the lectern.

G. Software, organization, and statistics

Start learning SPSS (statistical analysis program), right now. Download SPSS, sign up for a Coursera course, or even better, enroll in a statistics course in your university that teaches using SPSS. The sooner you get comfortable using SPSS, the better.

Back up your files! You might consider working **entirely** out of Google Drive or Dropbox (Google Drive is particularly useful since they have partnered with many universities to provide unlimited storage). Once every few months, you should also back up to an external hard drive.

Keep your files organized. Each project should have its own folder, as should every class. Manuscripts should be named in ways that immediately let you know which project and version that specific file refers to. Name manuscripts something specific, such as "COM523-10-31" and update the date in the file name. Whatever you use, use it consistently. Importantly, please remember that whoever you are sending that document to is going to download it and have that file on their computer. Do not name things "Manuscript" or "Final Draft"; that means nothing to the person receiving it. If you are offering edits or updating a document someone else has written, it is customary to rename the file with your initials at the end like "COM523-10-31-LW". The same suggestion applies to papers you download. It's easier to find and send articles you download if you name them something like "Author Last Name — Year — Title of Paper."

If working on a literature review or reading through papers relevant to your thesis, use a system that helps you keep track of what you're reading. For example, for Dr. Weber's thesis, she had a literature review document that kept track of the author, title, brief summary of the paper, and related tags. The tags were very useful because I could then use the "Sort" function in Excel to isolate what I wanted to cite.

H. Digital networking

Start a CV (curriculum vitae; the academic version of a résumé) and update it regularly. You may not want to post it until you have some publications (this is up to you), but it should be available as you enter your last three years of education. Use other academics' CVs as a model of what to include and look up resources for how to best structure it. Your advisor should be able to help with this, too.

Consider joining academic Twitter; it's a great way to keep up with the literature and emerging trends in scientific discourse.



Fire Up
CHIPS!

For additional information, please contact us at:

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