

# Department of Communication Studies

## Graduate Student Handbook

Sam Houston State University  
Box 2299  
Huntsville, TX 77341-2299

*Updated October 2022*



*All students are required to read and become familiar with the material in this handbook.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **PART I: DEPARTMENTAL POLICY**

Program Orientation	3
Admission Requirements	4
Performance Standards and Scholastic Expectations	5
Program Governance	7
Petition Policies	8
Students with Disabilities	9
Religious Freedom and Observance of Religious Holidays	

## **PART II: THE MASTER OF ARTS in Communication Studies**

General Curriculum Requirements	10
Curriculum Description	11
18 Hour Certificate Option	11
Course Descriptions	11
Comprehensive Examinations	13

## **PART III: GRADUATE STUDENT RESOURCES**

Graduate Assistantships	15
Scholarships	15
SHSU Academic Resources	15

## **PART IV: FORMS AND CHECKLISTS**

Graduate Program Application Check Sheet	17
Graduate Assistantship Application Form	17

## **PART I: DEPARTMENTAL POLICY**

### **Program Orientation**

The Master of Arts in Communication Studies at Sam Houston State University is an entirely online program designed to provide students with advanced instruction in research methods, statistics, and theory. Students will develop the professional skills necessary to analyze communication issues in interpersonal, family, and professional settings.

Our award-winning faculty is committed to providing high quality instruction and faculty research interests include:

- Intercultural Communication
- Message Effects
- Health Communication
- Message Interpretation
- Appreciation
- Interpersonal Communication
- Visual Persuasion
- Theory
- Family Communication
- Equivocation
- Sexual Communication
- Affectionate Communication
- Dark Side Communication
- Instructional Communication
- Risk Communication
- Social Support & Well-Being
- Persuasion and Social Influence
- Relational Communication
- Forgiveness Communication
- Computer Mediated Communication
- Conflict
- Environment Communication
- Sport Communication
- Instructional Communication

Target students for the Master's program include:

- Elementary and secondary school teachers
- Community and small college instructors
- Managers and Human Resources Professionals
- Mediators
- Lobbyists
- Community Affairs Professionals

- Nonprofit and Fund Raisers
- Jury Consultants
- Corporate Relations Professionals

Graduates from the Communication Studies Master's program have found careers in human resources, community colleges, non-profit organizations, and industry. Convenient online classes provide quality instruction that fits within your personal and professional schedule

**NOTE:** Requirements of the Office of Graduate Studies at Sam Houston State University as stated in the *Graduate Catalog* (<http://www.shsu.edu/graduate-catalog/>) apply to all operating procedures of the Department.

### **Admission Requirements**

Students are admitted to the graduate program biannually for the Fall and Spring semesters. There are no Summer admissions. The application deadline for Spring enrollment is October 1<sup>st</sup>; the application deadline for Fall enrollment is April 1<sup>st</sup>. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Admission into the program is based on the listed requirements and faculty/student ratios. Applications submitted after the deadline will be considered only if there is space available in the program. The following are required for admissions consideration:

1. *Graduate Studies Application:* The Graduate Studies Application is an institutional application required by SHSU. Students must provide biographical and educational information and information relevant to determining State of Texas residency. To apply, go to <http://www.shsu.edu/admissions/apply-texas.html>.
2. *Application fee:* An application fee is required for all applications to graduate programs at SHSU.
3. *Official transcript from the baccalaureate degree granting institution:* Official transcripts from the degree granting institution are required. Students must contact their previous institution and arrange to have that college or university send transcripts directly to graduate admissions at SHSU. Transcripts will be reviewed by the graduate committee and used as a factor in deciding whether the applicant gains entry into the program.
4. *Minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0:* The department requires students applying to the graduate program to have earned a minimum GPA of 3.0 from their degree granting institution. Each applicant's undergraduate GPA will be used as a factor in deciding whether the applicant gains entry into the program. Applicants seeking to enter the program who already have a graduate degree but do not have an undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher can submit a formal petition to the Director of Graduate Studies to request that this requirement be waived.
5. *Letters of Recommendation:* Two letters of recommendation are required for each applicant. Letters should be submitted by someone who is able to evaluate the applicant's academic and professional potential.

6. *Letter of Interest:* Applicants should submit a letter stating why they are interested in attending the program. Letters should include information about the applicant, work and/or academic interests, future research interests.
7. *Resume:* Professional Resume or Academic Curriculum Vita.

All application materials are submitted to the Office of Graduate Admissions via Apply Texas.

### Performance Standards and Scholastic Expectations

The criteria for earning a M.A. degree include completion of the 36 credit hour requirement and successful completion of the Comprehensive Examination. In addition to these criteria, students are expected to maintain high performance standards throughout their residence in the program and remain in “academic good standing” at Sam Houston State University.

In order to achieve and remain in academic good standing at Sam Houston State University, a graduate student must maintain an overall grade point average of at least 3.0 on all graduate coursework attempted. All grades earned in courses taken for graduate credit will be utilized in computing the grade point average.

A grade earned at another institution may not be used to remove a grade deficiency earned in residence at Sam Houston State University. Semester hours of credit earned at another institution are not utilized in computing the student’s Sam Houston State University overall grade point average. A 3.0 overall grade point average is the absolute minimum required for graduation.

#### *Grading System:*

Four grades are given in graduate courses at the University:

#### Grade Denotation

A	Academic Excellence
B	Acceptable Performance
C	Passing, yet Insufficient Performance
F	Failure

The mark “IP” denotes “in progress” and is given in courses which cannot be completed within one semester. The mark “CR” denotes “credit.” The mark of “W” denotes “withdrew” and is given for resignations. The mark “X” denotes “incomplete.” If the student meets the prescribed requirements of the course before the end of the next academic semester after the “X” is given, the student will receive the grade earned; otherwise, the mark “X” will be automatically changed to an “F.” The mark of “Q” is assigned to courses dropped after the thirteenth class day, for a fall or spring semester, or from the fifth class day, for a summer session, but by the last date to drop courses or labs with a “Q” as indicated in the SHSU Academic Calendar. Courses with the mark of “Q” will not be counted as courses attempted and will not be included in determining grade

point averages. However, be aware that SHSU students are allowed no more than five “Q” drops during the course of their career at SHSU.

A graduate student who elects to drop all courses, i.e., to resign from the University, must notify the Registrar’s Office and process a Resignation Request (see [Resignations](#)).

#### *Academic Probation and Suspension:*

A graduate student who falls below a 3.0 SHSU grade point average at the close of any semester or summer semester during which one or more semester hours are attempted will be placed on probation. Two summer sessions are equivalent to one long semester. If an enrolled student on probation fails to achieve a minimum of a 3.0 SHSU grade point average at the close of the next semester following the start of the probation, the student will be terminated from graduate studies.

A graduate student who earns a grade of F in any graduate course at SHSU will be terminated from graduate studies.

A student who earns a grade of C in any course at SHSU (repeated or distinct course) within the academic program may have their graduate status reviewed by a committee of the department or college graduate faculty. The committee will recommend an appropriate remediation for the student.

Any appeal for a review of the termination of graduate status should be directed in writing through the graduate advisor of the program, then to the chair of the department, then to the academic dean of the college, and finally to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Refer to Academic Policy 910312 for further information ([https://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/curriculum/910312%20Academic%20Probation%20and%20Suspension\\_2021.pdf](https://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/curriculum/910312%20Academic%20Probation%20and%20Suspension_2021.pdf)).

#### *Academic Honesty:*

The Graduate Faculty of Sam Houston State University and the Communication Studies Department expect students to conduct academic work with integrity and honesty. Acts of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can result in the failure of a course and dismissal from the University. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing work offered for credit), the abuse of resource materials, and misrepresentation of credentials or accomplishments. The University’s policy on academic honesty and appeal procedures can be found in the *Student Guidelines*, distributed by the Division of Student Services <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/>. It is the student’s responsibility to read and understand all relevant policies related to academic honesty.

Additional academic policy and student guidelines provide specific information about the SHSU educational mission and student conduct which can be accessed in the Academic Policy Manual ([https://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/900823%20Academic%20Grievance%20Procedures%20for%20Students\\_2018.pdf](https://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/900823%20Academic%20Grievance%20Procedures%20for%20Students_2018.pdf)).

#### *Resignations:*

To resign (officially withdraw) from the University, a student must notify the Registrar’s Office and process a Resignation Request. The Resignation Request must be in writing and

becomes effective on the date received by the Registrar's Office. The effective date of the Resignation Request, as received by the Registrar's Office, is the date used for determining any refund as authorized in the State Refund Policy (see [Tuition, Fees, Resignations, and Refund Policy](#)). The student is responsible for clearing all debts owed to the University. A student who wishes to drop all courses must officially resign.

A student who discontinues attending class and fails to officially resign from the University will receive the grade of "F" in each enrolled course. A student who resigns after the 12th class day of a regular semester or after the 4th class day of a summer session will receive a mark of "W" for each enrolled course. A student who resigns from the University while enrolled in a course whose duration is less than a normal term will receive a mark of "W" if the resignation occurs after one-half of that course time has been completed.

## **Program Governance**

### *Director of Graduate Studies:*

The Director of Graduate Studies is appointed by the Department Chair. His or her duties include:

- Supervision of the Graduate Program in Communication Studies
- Empaneling Graduate Student Admission Committee
- Graduate Student Advisement
- Coordination of recruitment of students and advertisement of the Graduate Program
- Coordinating Administration of Comprehensive Exams

### *Supervision of the Graduate Program in Communication Studies:*

The Director is in charge of implementing and enforcing the rules of the graduate program at SHSU. He or she must be familiar with the University and Departmental rules concerning enrollment in the program, academic requirements, academic specializations and other aspects of the SHSU graduate career.

### *Graduate Student Advisement:*

The Director of Graduate Studies is the advisor for all incoming graduate students. It is the duty of the Director to advise students of required coursework and curriculum objectives relevant to students' needs. Students are also free to talk with any of the graduate faculty about specific courses and interests.

### *Coordination of Recruitment and Advertisement:*

The Director supervises and promotes the production and distribution of material advertising the Graduate Program in Communication Studies at SHSU.

### *The Graduate Committee:*

The Graduate Committee is appointed by the Communication Studies Department Chair in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. The Graduate Committee is the main body of governance for the graduate program curriculum standards and policies regarding the operation of the graduate program. The graduate committee assists the Director of Graduate Studies in implementing graduate student admission, formulating the graduate program policy, and advising the Communication Studies Department on Graduate Program policy issues.

*Communication Studies Department Graduate Faculty:*

The Communication Studies Department Graduate Faculty consists of regular department faculty members who have maintained high academic standards in research, teaching, and service at SHSU. All Graduate Faculty possess a terminal Ph.D. degree in Communication Studies and are qualified to teach core and area-specific curriculum at the graduate level.

## **Petition Policies**

Students who are seeking admission to the Communication Studies Graduate Program, or those who have already been admitted, may find that their unique situations may preclude the application of certain departmental policies. In such cases, students may submit a formal request for exemption from the relevant policy.

Common petitions are listed below.

1. *Request for transfer credit:*

In accordance with SHSU Academic Policy Statement 801007, graduate courses completed at other accredited colleges or universities may be applied toward the graduate degree in Communication Studies at SHSU. Up to nine credit hours from outside the Communication Studies program may be used to complete the 36 credit hour requirement for the M.A. Only those transferred courses from accredited institutions in which a grade of “A” or “B” was earned and which are accepted toward an official degree program will be considered for transfer. Transfer credit is not guaranteed, it must be approved by the Department, CHSS Dean’s Office, and the Graduate School. Students must submit a formal written request to the Director of Graduate Studies in order to have their transfer credits considered viable for the degree program. The Director may request supporting documentation when considering transfer credits, including, but not limited to syllabi, course catalog descriptions, formal letters from previous professors, etc.

2. *Termination of Graduate Status:*

Any appeal for a review of the termination of graduate status should be directed in writing through the Director of Graduate Studies, to the Chair of the Department, to the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and finally to the Dean of Graduate Studies for final approval or denial.

3. *SHSU Student Grievance Procedures:*

The Department abides by the university policy with respect to student grievances.

For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

[http://www.shsu.edu/dept/dean-of-students/std\\_grievance\\_proc.html](http://www.shsu.edu/dept/dean-of-students/std_grievance_proc.html)

## **Students with Disabilities**

The University and students with disabilities have certain rights and responsibilities related to receiving, providing, and determining reasonable accommodations, the purpose of



which is to provide students with disabilities equal access to educational and student support services offered by the University. It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that no otherwise qualified disabled individual shall, solely by reason of their disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any academic program or activity. Additional information for students with disabilities can be found at <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/disability/>.

### **Religious Freedom and Observance of Religious Holidays**

The Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. “Religious Holy Day” means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20 of the Tax Code. Students should contact the instructor as soon as possible regarding any missed classes due to “Religious Holy Days.”

## **PART II: THE MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

### **General Curriculum Requirements<sup>1</sup>**

The Communication Studies Master of Art requires a minimum of 36 credit hours beyond the Bachelor's degree be completed. The following requirements also apply:

- Thirty of these credit hours must be completed in the Communication Studies Department at Sam Houston State University.
- Currently the M.A. program is a non-thesis degree.

### **Curriculum Description**

Graduate students in Communication Studies are required to complete 36 hours. Students pursuing a Master's Degree in Communication Studies must take the following required courses:

#### **Required Courses for a Communication Studies Master's Degree**

COMS 5331 Communication Studies Methods and Research  
COMS 5332 Statistical Methods for Communication  
COMS 5335 Advanced Communication Theory  
COMS 5360 Advanced Interpersonal Communication

#### **Other Graduate Courses**

COMS 5333 Qualitative Research Methods  
COMS 5334 Pedagogy of Public Speaking for Novice Instructors  
COMS 5350 Computer Mediated Communication  
COMS 5361 Dark Side of Communication  
COMS 5362 Advanced Intercultural Communication  
COMS 5363 Interpersonal Conflict  
COMS 5365 Affectionate Communication in Close Relationships  
COMS 5364 Contemporary Family Communication  
COMS 5370 Health Communication  
COMS 5371 Sex & Gender in Communication  
COMS 5375 Grad Readings in Communication  
COMS 5380 Advanced Family Communication  
COMS 5381 Intergenerational Family Communication  
COMS 5382 Dark Side of Family Communication  
COMS 5390 Seminar in Interpersonal Communication  
COMS 5391 Seminar in Family Communication.  
COMS 5395 Social Support and Well-Being  
COMS 5396 Risk Communication  
COMS 5397 Persuasion & Social Influence  
COMS 5398 Sexual & Affection Communication

NOTE: A student may take COMS 5375 only with the approval of the Graduate Director.

## 18 Hour Certificate Requirements

The Communication Studies Certificate requires a minimum of 18 credit hours beyond the Bachelor's degree to be completed. Two concentrations are offered: Concentration in Communication Studies for Educators and Dual Credit Instructors and Concentration in Communication Studies for Leadership, Management, and Diversity Professionals. The following requirements also apply:

- The 18 credit hours must be completed in the Communication Studies Department at Sam Houston State University.
- Graduate students must *complete* and *file* the Certificate form with the Graduate School *prior* to the 12<sup>th</sup> class day in the semester in which they will complete the 18 hours of both required and elective courses.

## Curriculum Description

Graduate students in Communication Studies may request a Certificate in the semester in which they complete 18 hours. In order to qualify for the Certificate graduate students must complete 18 hours, 9 hours of required courses and 9 hours of elective courses. Students pursuing a Certificate in Communication Studies must take the following required courses:

### Required Courses for a Communication Studies Certificate

COMS 5331 Communication Studies Methods and Research

COMS 5335 Advanced Communication Theory

COMS 5360 Advanced Interpersonal Communication

The remaining 9 elective hours may consist of any other Communication Studies Courses.

## Graduate Course Descriptions

### *COMS 5331. Methods & Research*

An introduction to graduate level research methods, including quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Students will learn to develop individual research proposals.

### *COMS 5332. Statistical Methods for Communication*

This course focuses upon various statistical techniques used in communication research, including univariate and bivariate techniques, hypothesis testing for single and multiple samples, as well as methods used to investigate relationships between two or more variables such as ANOVA, ANCOVA, and multiple regression analysis. Lectures, assigned readings and projects are used to describe and illustrate advanced literature on the logic, interpretation, and assumptions of each statistical model. Emphasis is placed upon understanding of the techniques and their assumptions as well as applications. Research activities based on the use of statistical techniques are included in the course.

*COMS 5334. Pedagogy of Public Speaking for Novice Instructors*

Students examine and evaluate theories, techniques, and strategies for teaching public speaking and develop instructional resources for teaching public speaking. Further, students evaluate different course designs and strategies for public speaking classes, including active learning and flipped classroom practices. Topics include public speaking theories, public speaking assessment, and public speaking course design.

*COMS 5335. Advanced Communication Theory*

This course is designed to help students understand and evaluate communication theory from varied empirical and critical perspectives. Students will learn the process of theory building in order to evaluate existing theories.

*COMS 5350. Computer Mediated Communication*

In this course students examine how computers mediate such issues as interpersonal relationships, privacy, cyberbullying, social support, and family dynamics. Students study and conduct empirical research on the topic.

*COMS 5360. Advanced Interpersonal Communication*

A study of methodological and theoretical issues in relational communication with special attention to building ongoing research projects in support of theory.

*COMS 5361. Dark Side of Communication*

Students in this course explore some of the darker aspects of communication, such as how negative behaviors can impact both the perpetrator and the victim of such behaviors. Possible topics to be covered include, but are not limited to, bullying, criticism, complaints, verbal aggression, and revenge.

*COMS 5362. Advanced Intercultural Communication*

Students in this course explore current theories and research in the area of intercultural communication, mainly from an interpersonal perspective such as self-disclosure, interpersonal trust, mate selection, love, interracial relationships, and arranged marriage.

*COMS 5364. Contemporary Family Communication*

Students engage in historical, theoretical, and social research related to families. Students learn how families in the United States are adapting to the current social, economic, and political environments. Students use a comparative approach to family communication, emphasizing diversity, focusing on how social inequity shapes family experiences, and understanding how personal family experiences fit into the larger social, cultural, and historical context.

*COMS 5365. Affectionate Communication in Close Relationships*

Students examine popular theories and research on affectionate communication. Students also investigate the role of affectionate communication in a variety of relationships (e.g., marital and premarital; long-term and short-term; familial relationships; friendships). Students gain knowledge of important theories of affectionate communication and critique research that examines affectionate communication. Students compose a comprehensive literature review on affectionate communication.

*COMS 5370. Health Communication*

A study of a variety of health communication topics that relate to and influence the family and other relationships. Perspective and theories in public health, adolescent alcohol and drug abuse, parent-child-physician communication, telemedicine, and rural health concerns.

*COMS 5371. Sex & Gender in Communication*

A study of sex and gender differences and similarities in communication behavior. Students will examine the sex and gender scholarship and assess its implications for understanding communication in interpersonal and family relationships.

*COMS 5375. Grad Readings in Communication*

This course is an independent study of topics that are not covered elsewhere in the graduate curriculum. Special attention is given to students who need more in-depth study of a topic.

*COMS 5380. Advanced Family Communication*

Methodological and theoretical issues in family communication.

*COMS 5381. Intergenerational Family Communication*

Students in this course focus on theory and research dealing with family communication as it occurs between members of different generations. It also concerns how the communication between family members of the same generation differs from the communication between family members of another generation.

*COMS 5382. Dark Side of Family Communication*

Students in this course explore the role communication plays in a variety of family problems such as jealousy, domestic abuse, negligent parenting, and conflict escalation.

*COMS 5390. Seminar in Interpersonal Communication*

Advanced topics in interpersonal communication theory and research. Topics rotate from semester to semester. May be repeated for credit when topics change.

*COMS 5391. Seminar in Family Communication*

Advanced topics in family communication theory and research. Topics rotate from semester to semester. May be repeated for credit when topics change.

*COMS 5395. Social Support and Well-Being*

Students in this course explore theories and research related to the communication of social support and its role in physical, psychological, and social outcomes. Students conduct empirical research on social support and well-being.

*COMS 5396. Risk Communication*

Students in this course present theories and research related to the communication of health, environmental, and technological risks. The important issues that influence the relationships between risk communicators and the public are examined. Students conduct empirical research on risk communication.

*COMS 5397. Persuasion & Social Influence*

Students in this course analyze theories and research related to persuasion and social influence in various contexts, including attitudinal/behavioral change. Students conduct empirical research on persuasion/social influence.

*COMS 5398 Sexual and Affectionate Communication*

Students learn theories and scholarship on sexual and affectionate communication. The role of sexual interaction, sexual communication, and affectionate communication in a variety of relationships (e.g., marital and premarital; long-term and short-term; familial relationships) are investigated. Possible topics to be covered include hookups, "friends with benefits" relationships, courtship evolution, affection in romantic/family relationships, and the physical benefits of affection.

### ***Comprehensive Exam Details***

Graduate students are required to pass a comprehensive exam prior to graduation. This requirement is in addition to the 36 credit hours coursework requirements. The comprehensive exam for the Master's Degree in Communication Studies will cover program coursework including, but not limited to: Theory; Methods and Statistics; and course-specific content.

#### *Comprehensive Exam Scheduling*

After completing a minimum of 27 credit hours, including the required courses (see required course list above) and elective courses, students are allowed to take the Comprehensive Examination. Exams are offered twice each academic year, once during the Fall semester and once during the Spring semester. The Comprehensive Exam is NOT offered during the summer semesters. Students must declare their intent to take the Comprehensive Exam to the Director of Graduate Studies within the first 3 weeks of the semester and to contact the departmental administrative assistant to schedule their exam. Students must be enrolled in the University the semester in which the comprehensive exams are administered.

#### *Exam Administration*

Students may take the exam in one 8 hour period or it may be broken into two 4 hour periods. Comprehensive Exams must be proctored. Students are welcome to come to campus to take the exam or they may use a Graduate Director-approved proctoring center or method. Students taking the exam at a testing center must submit the name and contact information for the testing center in order to get approval.

All written work will be evaluated using anti-plagiarism software. It is the student's responsibility to understand what constitutes plagiarism, and the penalty for violating the SHSU policy.

The comprehensive exam will be governed by the Comprehensive Examination Committee, which is composed of the Graduate Committee and Exam Ad Hoc Committee. Students will be informed of their results approximately two weeks after the completion of the exam.

#### *Exam Scoring/Grading*

Each written exam is given one of the following grades: (a) High Pass; (b) Pass; or, (c) Fail. If a student fails any part of the written examination, then he/she may retake the deficient part(s) of the exam one additional time the next semester comprehensive exams are offered after completing a remediation course. If the student fails to pass the written exam(s) a second time, then he/she will be dropped from the Graduate Program in Communication Studies.

#### *Preparation Guidelines and Performance Expectations for the Comprehensive Exam*

The Comprehensive Exam will require substantial preparation for students prior to the exam. Students should re-familiarize themselves with their course content. In addition, students are encouraged to reach out their instructors for guidance in preparation for the Comprehensive Exam.

#### *Theory*

Students should be able to demonstrate competency of both classic and contemporary theories. For preparation of the theory part of the exam, students are strongly encouraged to review the textbooks and course materials.

#### *Research Methods and Statistics*

Students should be able to demonstrate their knowledge of key concepts, methodologies, and statistical procedures in social science research and their application to practical research situations. For preparation of the methods and statistics part of the exam, students are strongly encouraged to review the textbooks and course materials.

#### *Elective Courses*

Students should be able to demonstrate their knowledge of key concepts from elective courses they have taken in the program. Students should expect to be able to discuss the courses in terms of their general relevance and also to identify specific issues of importance for those courses.

#### *Graduation*

Students who receive a passing grade on the Comprehensive Exam will have their results submitted to the CHSS Dean's office by the Director of Graduate Studies.

Those students who have successfully completed the exam become eligible to graduate once they have completed the required coursework and must formally apply for graduation (<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/registrar/graduation/apply-to-graduate/>).

### **PART III: GRADUATE STUDENT RESOURCES**

#### **Graduate Assistantships**

The Department of Communication Studies offers a limited number of graduate assistantships to students who have been admitted to the Graduate Program. Assistantships pay a 9-month stipend for in-state students and are awarded based on qualifications. Out-of-state assistantships are available in some cases. Graduate assistants work closely with professors in teaching and/or research activity and are appointed on a semester-by-semester basis. Students may receive department assistantships for a maximum of 2 years.

Students seeking assistantships should contact the Graduate Director and/or the Departmental Administrative Assistant to express interest in the position. Graduate Assistant positions are awarded based on GRE, GPA, and academic performance.

#### *Assistantship Obligations*

Graduate assistantships provide the opportunity for students to work with faculty members. Graduate students receiving departmental support are expected to actively engage in departmental research and/or perform services assisting professors' instruction.

Assistantships require that the student be enrolled in 6-9 credit hours per semester. Audited courses do not count toward assistantship credit hour levels.

Assistants are expected to be available and perform services related to teaching and/or research for an average of 20 hours per week. A graduate assistant may accept concurrent employment outside the University only with permission from the Director of Graduate Studies.

#### *Termination of Assistantships*

A student's assistantship may be terminated for a variety of reasons, some of which are beyond the control of the student. Teaching and research assistants are expected to maintain academic standing of GPA of 3.5 or above, obtain grades of A or B in each class they take, possess high levels of academic integrity, and perform their assistantship duties responsibly. Failure to meet these criteria may be considered grounds for assistantship termination. Assistantships may also be terminated due to financial and/or bureaucratic exigencies of the Department and/or the University.

### **Scholarships**

A number of scholarships are available for graduate students. University and Graduate School scholarships are also available. Students should explore these options by contacting the Office of Financial Aid. Application deadlines for University and Graduate School scholarships vary.

### **SHSU Academic Resources**

#### *The Academic Success Center*

The Sam Houston Academic Success Center for Reading and Writing serves all members of the SHSU academic community. The center provides one-on-one instruction for reading and writing and assists students of all level in composition of their written work. The center assists students in: constructing arguments, organizing papers, identifying and correcting grammatical errors, teaching proofreading techniques, and generally improving their writing style. The writing center also provides APA style guides and online tutoring.

Graduate students at SHSU are encouraged to utilize the Academic Success Center to enhance their writing capacities. The Academic Success Center can be contacted at <http://www.shsu.edu/centers/academic-success-center/>.

#### *Newton Gresham Library*

Newton Gresham Library faculty and staff envision a library that supports and enhances the development of critically thinking, educated and informed lifelong learners. The Library is integral to the University's learning and research mission and endeavors to create physical and virtual environments that promote discovery of new knowledge and the transfer of existing knowledge. The Library fulfills this mission by providing organized access to a diverse array of quality print, electronic, and other resources and by continuously improving the effectiveness of its bibliographic, instructional, and reference services.

The library offers a comprehensive inventory of physical and electronic media that graduate students are required to access during the course of their academic studies. The



library offers a number of resources for distance learning students. These include the Interlibrary Loan services, electronic journal access, TexShare, and access to electronic databases. A full inventory of library resources for distance is available at <http://library.shsu.edu/services/distance/>.

#### *SHSU Online*

SHSU online offers a variety of resources for student enrolled in online classes. These include technical support for problems with online videos, course tools or features, issues with Internet browsers and other problems associated with an online learning environment. The SHSU Online support desk is available via email at [blackboard@shsu.edu](mailto:blackboard@shsu.edu) or via phone at (877)759-2232. For more information regarding resources available to online students visit SHSU Student Resources at <http://library.shsu.edu/services/distance/>.

#### *Students with Disabilities*

The University and Students with Disabilities have certain rights and responsibilities related to receiving, providing, and determining reasonable accommodations, the purpose of which is to provide students with disabilities equal access to educational and student support services offered by the University. Students with disabilities should contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/disability/>.

#### *Communication Studies Graduate Student Resources BlackBoard Organization*

This is a BlackBoard shell that has been created exclusively Communication Studies students. It contains a wide variety of information about University and Department policies and resources. Students should double check to be sure they have access to the BlackBoard Org. If you do not have access to the Org, please contact the Graduate Director to request access.

## **PART IV: FORMS AND CHECKLIST**

### **Communication Studies Graduate Application Checklist**

Graduate Studies Application  
Graduate Studies Application Fee  
Official Baccalaureate Transcripts  
Letters of Recommendation  
Letter of Interest  
Resume

### **Graduate Assistant Application**

Graduate Assistant application materials should be submitted to the Departmental Administrative Assistant prior to the start of the semester.

1. Summarize your qualifications to work as a Graduate Assistant. Briefly describe your teaching and research experience. Additionally, please discuss your experience (if any) with distance learning.

2. Indicate what, if any Communication courses you have taken.
3. Please provide two references.

Signature