

# **RADFORD** UNIVERSITY

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School of Communication

**MASTER OF SCIENCE  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION  
Graduate Student Handbook**

**School of Communication  
Radford University  
Radford, Virginia 24142  
540-831- 6553**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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The School of Communication offers a Master of Science in Strategic Communication designed to prepare students for a variety of careers in the public or private sector as well as for pursuing doctoral work. Strategic communication, the main focus of our graduate program, is defined as “any communication that helps an organization achieve its mission.”

The degree allows students to focus their studies in specific areas of interest and offers both theoretical and practical applications in professional and corporate communication careers. The program is designed to prepare students for a turbulent business, economic, and social climate where effective communication is central to the success of organizations of all sizes, goals, and types. The goal of the program is to create individuals who possess a solid understanding of communication theory and practice and who are capable of making important contributions to contemporary organizations. To that end, we have set specific objectives for our graduate program. At the conclusion of this degree program, students should be able to:

- describe and explain the application of communication theory to specific contexts and problems
- describe and explain communication concepts and practices related to organizations
- conduct both quantitative and qualitative research
- conduct various analytical analysis on new technologies
- design and evaluate strategic communication campaigns on behalf of organizations
- Use theories of persuasion to formulate strategic communication messages that target intended publics

Graduates of our program demonstrate the broad range of career possibilities. For example, our graduates currently hold positions in fields as diverse as health care, human services, training and development, corporate management, public relations, computer software, media, higher education, non-profit services, and government. Additionally, students are prepared to pursue doctoral degrees.

## **TITLE IX AND NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY**

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Radford University is committed to providing an environment that emphasizes the dignity and worth of every member of its community and is free from harassment and discrimination based on race, sex, color, national origin, religion, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, genetic information, against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities, or based on any other status protected by law. Per federal Title IX regulations, as well as other federal and state regulations, Radford University prohibits discrimination and harassment in its educational programs and activities, on the basis of sex or any other protected class, by individuals subject to its control or supervision. This requirement to not discriminate in the educational program or activity of Radford University extends to admission. Inquiries about the application of federal Title IX regulations may be referred to Radford University’s Title IX Coordinator, the U.S. Department of Education’s Assistant Secretary, or both.

Dr. Andrea Zuschin

Director of Institutional Equity and Title IX Coordinator  
azuschin@radford.edu  
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Main Campus  
244 Heth Hall  
540-831-5307

Radford University Carilion  
107 Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital  
540-224-4644

## **THE PROGRAM**

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1. A full-time student can complete the required course work in two years under normal circumstances.
2. Part-time students are encouraged to apply. To the extent possible, courses are scheduled to accommodate part-time students during regular semesters and during summer school. If resources are available, at least one class will be offered during the summer.
3. There are two options in our program: a non-thesis option and a thesis option. The non-thesis option includes thirty-six of course credit. The thesis option includes thirty hours of course credit and six hours of thesis credit. Students who wish to pursue the thesis option must consult with the Graduate Coordinator for the procedure to complete a thesis. This decision will be made based on the student's performance in his or her courses and whether they have demonstrated an ability to complete the work required for a thesis.
4. All students must earn a minimum of 36 credit hours. Eighteen hours are completed from a required set of core courses. In addition to the required courses, students who elect to take the thesis option need to take twelve hours of elective courses, complete a thesis worth six hours of credit (COMM 699), and an oral defense of the thesis is required. Students who take the non-thesis option need to complete eighteen hours of elective course credits; a written and oral comprehensive examination is required at the culmination of the student's course work. No more than 3 classes can be taken in the 500-level courses. Courses numbered 600 and above are for graduate students only, unless the student has been approved by the College of Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR) for "permission for seniors to enroll" in graduate courses or the student has been accepted into the accelerated master's program. With approval of the Graduate Coordinator, as many as two courses may be taken in a related graduate program on the campus.
5. **Conditional admission:** Some graduate students may be admitted to the program under "Conditional" or "Conditional-Temporary" status. This means that they must satisfy specific conditions by the end of their first semester of enrollment. Some conditions govern academic performance and may include earning a specific cumulative GPA as well as earning a minimum specific grade in all courses attempted. If admission conditions are not satisfied by the end of the first semester of enrollment, the graduate student will be dismissed from the program. Complete details about the "Conditional" and "Conditional-Temporary" policies can be found in the Graduate Catalog that corresponds with your matriculation year (i.e., the academic year in which you started your program). Not every first-semester graduate student is subject to admission conditions. If you are unsure of your admission status, or the academic performance conditions you may be held to, contact the Graduate Coordinator, or review your official acceptance letter from Radford University's Graduate College.

## **PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

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All students must earn a minimum of 18 semester hours by successfully completing the following:

COMM 600 – Communication Theory	(3 credits)
COMM 605 – Applied Communication Research	(3 credits)
COMM 610 – Seminar in Organizational Communication	(3 credits)
COMM 615 – Seminar in Public Relations	(3 credits)
COMS 626 – Interactive Media and Analytics	(3 credits)
COMS 633 – Persuasion Theory and Strategy	(3 credits)

### **Non-Thesis Option**

Electives, approved by the Graduate Coordinator	18
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### **Thesis Option**

COMM 699, Research and Thesis	6
Electives, approved by the Graduate Coordinator	12

Students are not allowed to complete any of the core courses through independent studies. However, students may complete an independent study that is approved by the Graduate Coordinator and the School of Communication Director that helps satisfy some of their elective requirements.

Because some students may not have completed an undergraduate degree in communication, other factors such as having sufficient experience in a communication-related profession may be taken into consideration when assessing a student's potential. Students lacking a sufficient background in communication (as judged by the graduate admissions committee) may be required, prior to enrollment in graduate courses, to take one or more undergraduate courses to provide the necessary foundation for graduate study in communication. These courses may not be counted as a portion of the thirty-six hours required to complete the degree.

## **ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM**

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The basic requirements and procedures for graduate study at Radford University are provided in the *Graduate Catalog*. Detailed requirements and procedures for the Master of Science in Strategic Communication are spelled out in this *Strategic Communication Graduate Student Handbook*. In those cases where program requirements and procedures are more stringent than those of the CGSR, the program requirements and procedures described in this document take precedence. It will be assumed that students are thoroughly familiar with the requirements and procedures stated in these important documents. The ultimate responsibility for meeting all stated degree requirements rests with the student. The Dean, Associate Dean, and staff of the CGSR, the Graduate Coordinator, and the graduate faculty are all available to guide, advise, help interpret policies, and otherwise assist the student in meeting degree requirements.

### **MEETING WITH THE GRADUATE COORDINATOR:**

Upon gaining entrance into the graduate program, the student should request a meeting with the program's Graduate Coordinator, who will serve as his or her advisor. At that meeting, the student may become more familiar with the program and its requirements. Additionally, the Graduate Coordinator will assist the student in determining the courses in which he or she should enroll for the first semester in the program. A tentative schedule of the student's remaining course work may also be planned.

Students are encouraged to meet periodically with the Graduate Coordinator to ensure that course requirements are being met and to secure any information the student or Graduate Coordinator deems necessary.

### **PLANNING THE PROGRAM OF STUDY:**

Upon gaining admission to the program, the student is encouraged to schedule a meeting with the Graduate Coordinator to plan his or her program of study. Either at the initial meeting with the Graduate Coordinator or at later meetings during the student's first semester in the program, the student and the Graduate Coordinator must confer to determine which courses will serve as the student's electives. Students should meet with the Graduate Coordinator at least once each semester to determine the courses they will take during the upcoming semester.

The program of study serves as the agreement between the student and the Graduate Coordinator regarding the requirements the student must meet to graduate. If the student and the Graduate Coordinator determine at a later date that changes need to be made to the program of study, a revised program of study form must be discussed by the Graduate Coordinator and the student. The Graduate Coordinator will keep a signed copy of the student's program of study on file.

### **ENROLLING FOR CLASSES:**

Each semester the University prepares and publishes the classes to be offered in the following semester. This "schedule" includes information regarding the University calendar (with registration times, holidays, and other important dates and deadlines), registration information, building codes, department locations, final examination schedules, and class schedules. Information is also provided regarding graduate student registration deadlines on the CGSR webpage.

600-level courses are most likely offered in the evening from 6pm to 9pm or 6:30pm to 9:30pm; 500-level courses are usually offered at varying times on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays or on Tuesdays and Thursdays. 600-level courses are always open to Strategic Communication graduate students. Students should recall that they may enroll in no more than three 500-level courses for graduate credit.

Full-time students must complete COMS 600 (Communication Theory) and COMS 605 (Applied Communication Research) during their first two semesters in the program since these courses serve as a foundation for the other courses in the program. Accelerated students must take at least one of these courses before matriculating into the program as a full-time, graduate-level student.

Students may enroll in up to 2 graduate-level courses in other programs at Radford; before enrolling in those courses, however, students must secure approval from the Graduate Coordinator. Approval will be dependent on the nature of the course and its relevance to the program's scope of Strategic Communication.

### **FINDING YOUR TEXTBOOKS:**

The University Bookstore makes available all textbooks and other materials relevant for each course. Prior to the first class meeting, students should visit the Bookstore and purchase those items. All materials required for individual classes are listed by class designation (COMS) and class number. Professors may occasionally recommend specific texts or materials for students during a semester. For example, faculty members often suggest writing guides or reference texts. If the Bookstore does not have these materials readily available, they may be ordered upon the student's request or the student can order the materials from an outside vendor.

Often graduate students who have already taken a specific course are kind enough to share texts and materials with students just enrolling in the course. Students should ensure, though, that the texts and materials required for a specific course in the past will be the same texts and materials required for the semester in which students plan to take the course. New editions of texts and changes in course materials are a common occurrence.

### **FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND CAMPUS:**

Prior to your first class meeting, you should locate the classrooms in which your classes will meet. Additionally, you should visit the campus library to begin to acquaint yourself with its layout and facilities. Students can obtain a PDF of a campus map from Appendix A and a listing the campus's building codes from <https://www.radford.edu/content/registrar/home/registration-information/building-codes.html>.

### **MEETING THE GRADUATE FACULTY:**

When students begin their graduate study, they often become so engrossed in the classes they are taking that they only know the faculty with whom they currently have as instructors. Students are encouraged to take time to introduce themselves to other graduate faculty members (see Appendix B) and learn what courses those faculty members teach and what research and consulting interests they have. Getting to know all of the faculty and their interests will help students determine which elective courses they might be interested in taking. Also, students may determine that completing a research project or consulting project with a specific faculty member might be of interest. Every graduate faculty member will have their office hours posted on their office doors. It is also recommended that students email the faculty member in advance to schedule an appointment.

### **SPECIALIZED COURSES—ENROLLING IN “DIRECTED STUDY”:**

The Directed Study course provides the opportunity for students to work in a one-on-one relationship with a faculty member. The exact nature of the course may take one of several forms. For example, a student interested in a particular subject or research question may contract with a faculty member to complete

specified research in that area. Or a student may wish, under the direction of a faculty member, to develop a consulting project. The Directed Study, however, cannot be used simply as a route to completing one's program of study.

A student wishing to enroll in Directed Study must first submit a written proposal of the directed study to the faculty member with whom the work will be completed to gain tentative approval for enrolling and to determine the exact nature of the work to be completed. Then, the student must work with the supervising faculty member to submit a formal three-to-five-page proposal for the Directed Study and a "Directed Study" form (available on the CGSR website) to the Graduate Coordinator, to gain approval for the course. Grades for Directed Study are recorded using the regular grading option (A/F), not pass/fail (P/F). The assignments required for the successful completion of the directed study and the grading scale must be determined by the supervising faculty member and included in the Proposal for a Directed Study. Similar to a syllabus, the proposal must clearly indicate the supervising faculty member's expectations and requirements for earning a passing grade in the course. The Directed Study Proposal will be reviewed by a committee formed with three graduate faculty in the School of Communication. The committee will make recommendations to the Graduate Coordinator and the final decision will be made by the Graduate Coordinator.

These two steps must be accomplished by the middle of the semester prior to enrolling in the Directed Study course. If the Directed Study is approved, the student must file both the form and the three-to-five-page proposal with the CGSR at least two weeks prior to registration.

A student who uses the Directed Study to prepare for his or her thesis must obtain a written approval from the supervising faculty member after completing the Directed Study class. The student can be enrolled in the Research and Thesis class when the supervising faculty is satisfied with his or her performance in the Directed Study.

It is recommended that no graduate faculty member should supervise more than one Directed Study course in a given semester and no graduate faculty member should chair two theses per academic year.

### **SPECIALIZED COURSES—ENROLLING IN "INTERNSHIP IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION":**

Occasionally, a student will develop, in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator, an opportunity to engage in the practical application of the theories, methods, and principles he or she has studied. For example, a student may discover an opportunity to complete an internship with a human resources office or a public relations firm in the student's area of interest. A student wishing to enroll for an internship experience must first consult with the Graduate Coordinator or another designated graduate faculty member who will serve as a supervisor of the internship experience. Then, the student must submit a written proposal to the Graduate Coordinator. The written proposal must include a deliverable outcome for the Internship Class. The student also needs to complete the internship form (available from the Graduate Coordinator). Approval of a proposed internship opportunity will be dependent on the nature of the internship and its relevance to the program's scope of Strategic Communication.

Upon approval from the Graduate Coordinator, the student must file both the form and the written proposal with the CGSR at least two weeks prior to registration.

## **SPECIALIZED COURSES—ENROLLING IN “RESEARCH AND THESIS”:**

Most students in the Strategic Communication graduate program elect to complete their degrees by enrolling in thirty-six of traditional classroom course work and completing comprehensive examinations. Some students, however, may wish to enroll in thirty hours of traditional classroom work and then culminate their degree with the research and writing of a thesis.

Often, the question arises: What is expected when one completes a thesis? A thesis is an original piece of extended research that addresses a communication question, makes the case for study of that question by investigating past research in that area, argues for and carries out a mechanism for addressing that question, records and discusses the results of that research, and ultimately makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of communication processes and properties. Thus, a thesis requires that the student possess an understanding of theory and research methods, the ability to assess critically research questions and methods for addressing those questions, and the writing skills to complete the text of the thesis. That the course, Research and Thesis, is set at six hours of credit should be taken as an indication of the expectations of the course—it is equivalent in value to two three-hour classroom courses. Another question that often arises is: Should I complete a thesis if I might consider completing a doctoral degree in the future? Most doctoral programs do not require the completion of a Master’s thesis; they only require the completion of a Master’s degree. *The completion of the thesis should only be undertaken after careful consideration of one’s abilities and after consultation with a potential supervising professor and with the Graduate Coordinator.*

Before enrolling in Research and Thesis, a student must complete several tasks:

1. First, the student must discuss his or her potential to complete the work and his or her ideas for a thesis project with the faculty member whom the student would wish to supervise or direct the thesis and with the Graduate Coordinator. This discussion should take place when the student is close to the end of his or her first year in the program.
2. If both the faculty member and the Graduate Coordinator agree that the student may proceed, the student must then draft a thesis proposal. The thesis proposal should be written in coordination with the thesis chair. The thesis chair and the student must also discuss the composition of a thesis committee (two graduate faculty members in addition to the thesis chair). This may involve the student discussing his or her thesis ideas with a variety of faculty to determine which faculty members would provide the most effective feedback for the thesis project.
3. When the thesis chair has approved the thesis proposal, the student must arrange for a meeting of the thesis committee. The student should provide each member of the thesis committee with a copy of the thesis proposal at least one week prior to the meeting. The purpose of the thesis proposal meeting is to acquaint all committee members with the student’s proposed thesis topic and plan to proceed. Also, the committee members may make suggestions for altering the approach to the thesis topic, ask questions regarding the approach to the topic, and offer ideas for research and reading to prepare for the thesis. Committee members may request a revised draft of the thesis proposal before agreeing to continue the process. *The most important*

*aspect of this meeting in the student makes a contractual agreement to complete the work that is proposed during the proposal meeting.*

4. Once the thesis committee has approved the thesis proposal, the student must complete the “Thesis/Dissertation Proposal Defense Form” and submit it to the CGSR by no later than the last day of class in the semester prior to when the student plans to graduate. This form is available from CGSR website and requires signatures from the student’s committee members. All of the above steps will clearly require time and preparation. Thus, the student has to monitor the time and make sure all necessary paperwork are submitted to stay on track for graduation. To be registered for COMS 699 (Research and Thesis), students must submit the Request for Convening of Thesis/Dissertation Advisory Committee Form, available on CGSR website, before the census date of the semester in which they wish to enroll for the credits.

Students who are approved to enroll in Research and Thesis (see “Enrolling in ‘Research and Thesis’” above) should discuss the process of completing the thesis with the thesis chair. Typically, in the semester in which the student is enrolled in Research and Thesis, he or she works almost solely with the thesis chair to complete the project. Other committee members should be consulted about their roles in the research and writing process. Do they wish to meet periodically with the student and thesis chair to assess the progress of the thesis? Do they wish to read each chapter of the thesis as it is completed and provide feedback, or would they rather see the entire thesis in a completed form? Students are advised to work with the thesis chair to develop a set of deadlines and meeting times to ensure that orderly and consistent progress is being made on the thesis work.

Masters theses in the field of Communication must conform to the style requirements of the American Psychological Association (APA). Thesis students should also note that the thesis must conform to requirements published by the CGSR and are advised to secure a copy of those requirements early in their graduate careers. Inquiries about these requirements should be addressed to Emily Close, the Graduate Student Support and Non-Degree Enrollment Coordinator in the CGSR. Students can also refer to the “Thesis Preparation Manual” on the CGSR website.

When a final draft of the thesis has been completed with the approval of the thesis chair, the student must arrange for a meeting of the thesis committee for the purpose of conducting an oral defense of the work. The student must provide each member of the committee with a complete draft (including all preface material, references, appendices, etc.) at least one week in advance of the oral defense meeting.

The oral defense of a thesis is a public meeting; other members of the graduate program and University community may attend if they so desire. The defense consists of the student presenting a summary of the thesis work and his or her findings, questions or comments from the thesis committee, and general discussion of the thesis.

Often there are corrections, changes, or clarifications to be made in the thesis after the oral defense has concluded. In some cases, individual committee members may request to approve the revised thesis prior to the granting of final approval. In most cases, however, the changes can be made and then approved by the thesis chair. Final approval of the thesis by the thesis chair signals successful completion of the Research and Thesis course.

The student must notify the Graduate Coordinator the date on which the student and the Thesis committee wish to hold the thesis defense. The Graduate Coordinator, after sending this information to the CGSR, will receive a “Report of Final Comprehensive Examination” form. This form, which must be signed by the student’s committee members, is submitted to the CGSR to indicate that the student has successfully completed the oral defense and that the requirements of the thesis have been completed.

Students should take careful note of all deadlines appropriate for completing the thesis. This information is available at <http://www.radford.edu/content/grad/home.html/>.

### **THE NON-THESIS OPTION:**

Students choosing the non-thesis option will complete thirty-six hours of course work. In the semester in which the student anticipates the completion of his or her course work, the student will complete a comprehensive examination. The process begins when the Graduate Coordinator assembles an examination committee made up of three graduate faculty members. One of those faculty members is chosen by the student to serve as committee chair. Given their other duties and responsibilities, faculty members are able to serve on a limited number of examination committees each semester. Within the first two weeks of classes in that final semester, the student must meet with the Graduate Coordinator to determine a date for the student’s written and oral defenses. The Graduate Coordinator will send this information to the CGSR staff with a request for a “Request for Comprehensive Examination” form. This form must be signed by the committee on the day of the oral defense and returned to the CGSR staff. This form must be delivered by the CGSR by the thesis chair or a committee member.

The comprehensive examination occurs in two stages: 1) the written examination and 2) the oral examination. Each stage of the comprehensive examination process is described below. Students will also be provided with detailed guidelines for the comprehensive exam procedures at the beginning of the semester in which they are taking the exam.

### **THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION STAGE**

The material covered in the examination will be based upon 1) the core required classes and 2) the elective courses the student has taken (and is currently taking). In general, the purposes of the examination are to assess the knowledge the student has gained and how well the student can make application of that knowledge. The faculty members of the committee will determine the specific nature of the examination and will provide instructions regarding the examination to the student.

Once the examinations have been completed, the faculty committee will assess the results. For the student to move on to the second phase of the examination process, the oral defense, requires that two of the three faculty members vote in the affirmative.

### **THE ORAL EXAMINATION STAGE**

Following successful completion of the written examination stage, the student (in consultation with the committee members) will set a date for the oral examination. The oral exam consists of the faculty committee discussing with the student his or her written work and posing to the student follow-up questions related to the examination. At the conclusion of the oral examination stage, the faculty committee will assess the student's written and oral responses and will determine whether or not the student has passed the comprehensive examination. A passing status requires the affirmative votes of two of the three faculty members.

Prior to completing the oral examination stage of the comprehensive examination, the Graduate Coordinator will request the "Comprehensive Examination" form from CGSR. This form must be delivered to the chair of the examination committee before the oral examination portion of the comprehensive examination begins. Following the oral examination, the members of the examination committee will indicate a passing or failing status on the form, and the Chair of the examination committee will return the form to the CGSR immediately following the conclusion of the comprehensive examination.

A student who has failed the comprehensive examination may repeat the comprehensive examination process one time, but must wait until the following semester (spring, if the original examination was taken in the fall; fall, if the original examination was taken in the spring) to repeat the examination process. A student may not repeat the examination process more than one time.

Responsibility for arranging for the comprehensive examination rests with the student. More detailed information about the comprehensive exam procedures will be provided to the student by the Graduate Coordinator.

### **APPLYING FOR GRADUATION:**

To apply for graduation, students should complete the "Graduation and Participation Application" form online through their RU portal, which is due by the census day of the semester in which they are applying.

All graduate students are required to be registered during the semester they receive their degree from Radford University. Registration and tuition payment are required of all graduate students when using University facilities and/or faculty time. The minimum number of hours for registration is one. Registration allows use of services such as library checkout, laboratories and recreation facilities not open to the public. Students who are not currently registered for any course work and who have completed all course work but have other outstanding degree requirements (e.g., comprehensive examination, thesis, removal of an I or IP grade), are required to register for a continuous enrollment course each semester until they have met the outstanding requirement(s). This course carries no credit hour production and does not count toward degree requirements. This course option is also available to those admitted students who are not enrolled in a given semester but who wish to use University facilities and services during that time. This form is available online. Approval of the Graduate Coordinator and the Dean of the CGSR is required prior to registration.

It is the policy of the Strategic Communication program that a student who takes the Comprehensive Examination Option be permitted to participate in commencement ceremonies only if he or she has successfully completed both the written and oral components of that examination. Additionally, it is the policy of the Strategic Communication program that a student who takes the Thesis Option be permitted to participate in the commencement ceremonies only if the student has either passed the oral defense of a completed thesis or if the student has submitted to the thesis committee chair an acceptable final draft of the

thesis (i.e., one that needs only minor revisions prior to oral defense) and has secured the permission of the thesis committee chair to participate in the ceremonies.

### **REMAINING IN GOOD STANDING:**

Graduate students are expected to demonstrate adequate progress towards completing degree requirements. Adequate progress is defined as (1) completing all requirements for the degree within six academic years and (2) earning no more than one grade of “C” or below in graduate course work. Students who do not demonstrate adequate progress will not be permitted to remain enrolled in the graduate program.

### **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS**

Graduate assistantships are awarded competitively on the basis of three criteria: 1) academic qualifications and references, including undergraduate GPA, GRE test scores, TOEFL scores (when appropriate), letters of recommendation, a required essay; 2) an assessment of the compatibility of the applicant’s background and preparation with the goals and needs of the School of Communication.

Graduate students who receive a teaching assistantship commit to a two-year program of study. During the first year, students are assigned a teaching mentor and work with that mentor in designated COMM 114, Public Speaking sections. Additionally, students complete a three-hour instructional communication course that becomes part of the thirty-six hours of their programs of study.

During the second year, students are generally assigned to teach two individual sections of COMM 114, Public Speaking, as the official “instructor of record” of the course. A mentor is assigned to all second-year teaching assistants. The mentor’s primary duties are to approve course syllabi, be available throughout the semester to provide guidance, give advice, and answer questions from teaching assistants, and to evaluate teaching assistants.

Graduate assistants will be assessed by their mentor. In the case of assistants who teach individual sections of courses, assessment will also take into consideration teaching evaluations conducted each semester in which the student teaches. A satisfactory assessment by the mentor will be communicated to the assistant. Should the assessment indicate less than satisfactory performance on the part of the assistant, the graduate assistant, the School Director, and the faculty mentor will meet to discuss the evaluation and specific methods for improvement to be employed during the next semester. Two consecutive semesters of below satisfactory evaluations may result in the termination of a student’s assistantship. All records of the evaluation (including summaries of evaluation meetings) will become a part of the graduate assistant’s files kept in the office of the School of Communication.

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### **ADVICE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**

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The graduate faculty want your experience in our program to be as rewarding and beneficial as possible. To that end, we have compiled a list of suggestions, reminders, and advice that we hope will help you have a successful tenure as a graduate student. In all probability, we will not answer all of your questions or remind

you of all you will need to know by creating this list. Please know, though, that our office doors are always open to help you with any questions or concerns you may have.

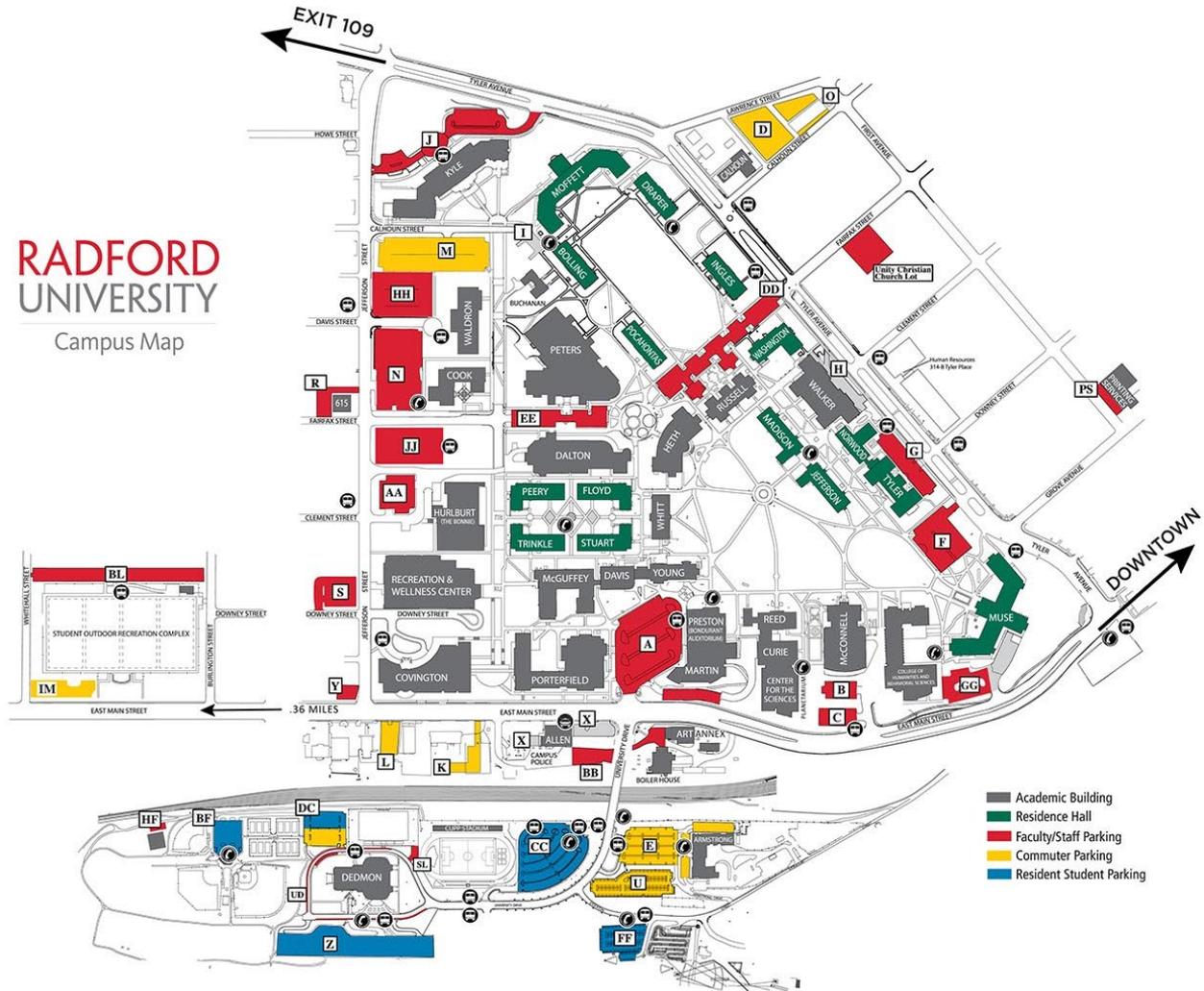
- Students generally enter our program on one of two types of status: regular or conditional. Keep in mind that if you were admitted as a conditional student, you must meet the condition by the end of the first semester. Once the condition is met, CGSR will change your conditional admission status to regular admission status. Failure to meet the condition will result in removing the student from the program.
- Often graduate students find that additional assistance in advancing their writing skills proves quite beneficial in terms of their course work. That assistance is available in the University's Harvey Knowledge Center. Also, you might find the web sites listed later in this handbook may be useful. Because the faculty are most interested in your success, we will help you identify writing concerns as early as possible in your course work.
- Students are expected to take note of the University's honor code, read it, and abide by it. Students who violate that code will be subject to the University's judicial board proceedings.
- Often when a graduate student contemplating the completion of a thesis begins his or her graduate work, the thesis understandably seems too far in the future to even contemplate. We recommend, however, that you begin to think about what interests you and what might conceivably be a topic for your thesis as early as your first semester. No one will hold you to your early ideas for a topic; however, the earlier you can focus your general interest, the easier it becomes to center your attention on that topic in each of your classes. It is conceivable, for example, that a student interested in conflict resolution in the corporate setting could use that interest as the basis for exercises and papers in several courses. The result is that, by the time the student is ready to begin the thesis process, he or she has thought a great deal about the topic, has researched the academic literature on the subject quite extensively, and is ready to begin his or her work.
- Our students tell us that one of the most rewarding experiences in their graduate study is attending professional academic conferences. Among the many advantages they cite are contact with other graduate students, meeting other in the field, hearing and collecting papers on subjects of interest to them, and talking with recruiters from doctoral institutions. The graduate faculty encourage all graduate students to consider attending one or more conferences. We regret that the graduate program cannot always financially support students wishing to attend those conferences. There is often financial assistance available through the CGSR, however, this funding is only available for students presenting papers at conferences. Do not hesitate to ask your professors how the papers you are writing for their classes might be restructured for submission to an academic conference. We have had a number of graduate student papers accepted at regional and national conferences. Give it a try. If nothing else, though, inquire about these conferences and how you might attend. The faculty will make every effort to help you get there.

- With each successive stage of your graduate career, there are forms to be filled out and filed with the CGSR. Always check with the Graduate Coordinator to ensure that you have completed the appropriate forms. See: <https://www.radford.edu/content/grad/home/forms-policies.html>. You can also reach out to Teri Hills, the Graduate Student Support Specialist in the CGSR, for additional assistance.
- Spend time with your professors and with the Graduate Coordinator talking about your interests and the interests of the faculty. Often a topic for a course paper, potential conference paper, directed study, or thesis comes as a result of casual conversation. Often, too, you will find that a subject of interest to you is also of interest to a faculty member. The result could very well be that you find a most compatible thesis chair or directed study supervisor, or you may find a faculty member who can save you research time by directing you to the most helpful sources.
- Spend some time on the web page for our library. You will discover that almost anything you need is either in our library or can be ordered for you in a reasonable amount of time. “Super Search” is a wonderful feature that is currently offered on the library’s website.
- There are multiple campus computer labs that are available for student use. You might want to check with other graduate students to learn the “tricks of the trade” regarding use of the computer lab.
- The use of computers for word processing, information management and data analysis are essential for communication professionals. Students entering the program who do not have basic computer knowledge and application skills may be required to take an introductory course and any additional computing courses which are deemed necessary to their programs of study. No graduate credit will be granted for any undergraduate course work required to develop appropriate background for graduate work in the program. A 3.0 (B) average is required in any undergraduate course work required for background.
- In all of your graduate course work, recall that only 30% (approximately 10 credit hours) can be taken at the 500 level.
- We encourage the students in the program to think of their graduate experience as one of cooperation as opposed to competition. Work in groups, find a buddy, ask questions of second-year students, share your findings. A good graduate education is the result of the discussion and sharing of ideas. If you know, for example, that another student is interested in the communication skills involved in labor mediation, and in your research, you happen to discover a journal article on the subject, jot down the citation and share it with you fellow grad student. He or she is likely to return the favor.

- We encourage you to keep textbooks from every class you take. They may come in handy when preparing for another course, researching and writing the thesis, or preparing for the comprehensive examination.
- Entering a graduate program means making a major commitment. Being a graduate student requires time and students must be willing to commit time to prepare for classes, to research and write papers, to read and read and read and read and read, and to think and ponder and think and question and think and critique and (oh, did we mention this?) think. The graduate faculty will assume that you want to know about a subject and that you are committed to learning. They will assume that you are prepared for every class; they will assume that you have developed questions to ask during and outside of class; they will assume that you are reading about communication topics and reading above and beyond the assignments they make in class; they will assume that you are as interested in communication as they are.
- Perhaps the “cardinal rule” to remember is this: when in doubt—ask. Ask your fellow students, ask the faculty, ask the Graduate Coordinator, ask the CGSR. We may not always know the answer, but we’ll do our best to find it for you. It is not a sin if you don’t know the answer; it is a sin if you don’t ask the question.

# APPENDIX A – Campus Map

**RADFORD UNIVERSITY**  
Campus Map



**APPENDIX B – List of Graduate Faculty in the Strategic Communication Master’s Program**

<b>Faculty Member</b>	<b>Teaching Areas</b>	<b>Office Information</b>
Dr. Courtney Bosworth	IMC, PR	HH 2124
Dr. West Bowers	Video Production, Media	HH 2113
Dr. John Brummette	PR, Crisis communication, Research, social media data analysis, persuasion	HH 2106
Dr. Zehui Dai	Research, health communication, social media data analysis	HH 2117
Dr. Scott Dunn	Theory, research, political communication	HH 2115
Professor Kimberly Herbert	Public relations, GTA/GTF faculty mentor	HH 2128
Dr. Sam Jennings	Media, technology	HH 2130
Dr. William Kovarik	Journalism, media law and ethics	HH 2129
Professor Michael Meindl	Video production	HH 2116
Professor Susan Sheridan-Smith	Pedagogy, Public Speaking	HH 2109
Dr. Matthew Smith	College Dean, comic studies	HH 3401
Dr. Lisa Baker-Webster	PR, IMC, diversity	HH 2125
Dr. Jenny Walton	Public speaking, pop culture, School Director	HH 2104
Dr. Shuo Yao	Persuasion, conflict management intercultural communication, Graduate Coordinator	HH 2105