



School of Journalism and Strategic Media  
205 Kimpel Hall  
Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701

## **School of Journalism and Strategic Media Master of Arts Graduate Student Handbook**

*The Master of Arts in Journalism program requires 30 hours of coursework: 18 hours of graduate credit in journalism including JOUR 5023, Journalism Theory and JOUR 5043, Research Methods; 6 hours in a second field approved by the student's Master's Advisory Committee; and 6 hours of thesis credit. Students write and have an oral defense of a thesis. All students are responsible for keeping current on all requirements and policies regarding the JOUR MA program.*

Admission to the Master of Arts in Journalism program requires approval by the Graduate School as well as the School of Journalism and Strategic Media. Graduate School and departmental admission requirements may change so review current requirements in the current catalog at <http://catalog.uark.edu/graduatecatalog/>. Prospective students should note that admission to the Graduate School is prior to and separate from admission to the MA program in Journalism. Acceptance by the Graduate School does not guarantee admission to the Journalism program.

### **APPLYING TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

#### **The Domestic Applicant**

Domestic applications are processed through the Graduate School and can be initiated online. Instructions and requirements regarding how to apply are found online at <http://graduate-recruitment.uark.edu/applying/index.php>. Additional information on preparing for graduate school can be found here: <http://graduate-recruitment.uark.edu/preparing.php>

The Graduate School catalog is available online at <http://catalog.uark.edu/graduatecatalog/> or you may request that an electronic copy be sent to you. Call the Graduate School at 479-575-4401 or toll-free 1-866-234-3957; send a written request to

the Graduate School, Gearhart Hall 213, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 72701; or submit an e-mail to [gradinfo@uark.edu](mailto:gradinfo@uark.edu).

The admission requirements of the Graduate School are available online at <http://graduate-recruitment.uark.edu/applying/degree-seeking.php>. Students must be officially accepted by the Graduate School AND must be officially accepted into the degree program of their area of interest. Acceptance by the Graduate School DOES NOT guarantee acceptance into the Journalism Master's Program.

The Graduate School has the following admission requirements. These requirements change so the student is responsible for checking with the Graduate School to confirm the current admission requirements.

- A conferred baccalaureate degree. Students who have not completed their baccalaureate degree at the time of application must have a 3.0 cumulative GPA on the last 60.0 credit hours of attempted coursework. Students who have a degree at the time of application must have a 3.0 cumulative GPA on the last 60.0 credit hours of attempted coursework from a regionally accredited institution of higher education.
- A conferred post-baccalaureate, master, or doctoral degree (excluding professional degrees) from a regionally accredited institution.

Requirements may change so students should check admissions requirements in the [Graduate Catalog](#) for the Graduate School and their specific area of study, or contact the Graduate Admissions office at 479-575-4401 or 1-866-234-3957 (toll free).

### **The International Applicant**

The Office of Graduate & International Admissions provides assistance to potential students in the application and admission process online at <http://international-admissions.uark.edu/index.php>. The International Admissions Office serves prospective students who are not U.S. citizens or U.S. permanent residents at the time of application. The mailing address is International Admissions Office, 340 N. Campus Drive/ GEAR 213 University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701 USA. The telephone number is 1-479-575-6246 and the e-mail address is [iao@uark.edu](mailto:iao@uark.edu).

Full information on graduate studies is provided at the site noted above, including application deadlines, degree equivalencies, academic records, English language proficiency, funding your studies, and pre-arrival and orientation.

## **FINANCIAL AID AND GRADUATE STUDENT BENEFITS**

### **Graduate Assistantships**

Graduate assistantships are stipends paid from a regular university account or from a grant/contract held by a faculty member or organizational unit on campus. The

majority of graduate assistant positions are awarded and managed by departments/units. These positions may involve teaching, research/creative activity, and/or administrative support. To qualify, the student must be regularly admitted into the Graduate School and accepted into a degree program without condition. More information is available on the Graduate School's Web site at <https://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/graduate/costs-and-funding/graduate-assistantships.php>.

The School of Journalism and Strategic Media offers a limited number of graduate assistantships. These normally involve responsibilities to assist with teaching, research/creative activity, and/or labs, working under the supervision of faculty members to whom they are assigned. Graduate assistantships are awarded to students with a strong academic record and professional qualifications to assist faculty in appropriate areas.

Deadline for departmental GA applications is April 1 for Fall admission and November 1 for Spring admission. Interested students should consult with the Journalism graduate coordinator and/or departmental chair.

### **Journalism Scholarships**

Journalism scholarships are only available to students who are already admitted to the program. Typically, students who have taken coursework in the JOUR MA program may apply for SJSM scholarships early in the spring semester. Information about Journalism scholarships is posted on the SJSM website.

### **Financial Aid**

For information about financial aid please go to:  
<http://finaid.uark.edu>

Additional information on funding can be found at:  
<https://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/graduate/costs-and-funding/index.php>

Also review the Prospective Graduate Student Scholarships Guide at  
<http://scholarships.uark.edu/index.php/gradguide/default>

## ADMISSION TO THE JOURNALISM GRADUATE PROGRAM

Applications for admission to the Journalism MA program are considered after they are approved by the Graduate School and are forwarded to the department.

### Journalism Master's Program Admission Requirements

A heavy emphasis is placed on writing so prospective students must have strong writing skills. Prospective students must meet the following minimum requirements. Requirements may change so students are required to review the current catalog at <http://catalog.uark.edu/graduatecatalog/> for current requirements. Meeting these requirements does not guarantee admission to the Journalism MA program.

Requirements for the Journalism MA program include:

- Students must have appropriate professional experience and/or an undergraduate degree in the journalism field that is approved by the graduate coordinator or the Journalism Graduate Faculty Committee as preparation for graduate study. A student must have a minimum undergraduate grade-point average of 3.00 on the last 60 credit hours of attempted coursework from a regionally accredited institution.
- A statement of purpose: An essay stating the prospective student's interest in the Journalism graduate program and detailing any professional journalism experience.
- A current resume.
- 3 letters of recommendation.
- Supplemental information relevant to the application may also be included.
- GRE is not required, but preferred for an assistantship consideration.
- A degree in journalism, and/or professional experience in the field. Applicants who lack either of these may be admitted with the requirement that they take 6 to 12 hours of specific undergraduate coursework and earn a grade of at least a B as background for entering the graduate program.

### Requirements for the Journalism Master of Arts Degree

In addition to the requirements of the Graduate School, the Master of Arts degree in Journalism requires a minimum of 30 semester hours with a cumulative grade point average of 3.00. Students must complete:

1. 18 hours of graduate credit in journalism; all students must take JOUR 5023, Journalism Theory and JOUR 5043, Journalism Research Methods.
2. Students have the **option** to take up to 6 hours from another area of study (second field of study) to satisfy the 24 hours of coursework requirement, and
3. 6 semester hours (JOUR 600V) of master's thesis (or thesis project, or documentary).

Students may also be required to meet certain prerequisites in order to take graduate courses in the second field of study. The Journalism Department cannot guarantee that another department or unit will allow a student to take courses in a desired second area of study. Typical second areas of study include Political Science, History, Communication and Sociology.

### **Conditional Admission.**

Students who are admitted to the Graduate School but do not meet the requirements for admission to the Journalism program may be considered for provisional admission subject to certain conditions. These students may be required to complete specified undergraduate Journalism courses and maintain a specified grade average in order to qualify for full admission. Contact the graduate coordinator for more information.

## **ADVISER AND PROGRAM OF STUDY**

Upon admission to the Graduate School and acceptance into the Journalism Master's program, each student is assigned an adviser. The graduate coordinator typically assigns an admitted JOUR MA student to an adviser with expertise in the student's area of interest (in news/editorial, broadcast/documentary, or advertising/public relations).

The adviser often serves as the chair or as a member of the student's Master's Advisory Committee. The adviser, Advisory Committee and/or graduate coordinator help the student select courses in journalism and the second area, and complete the Journalism Master's Program Advisory Committee Course Approval Form. A copy of this form is to be retained in the student's folder in the Journalism office.

The Master's Advisory Committee is typically composed of three Journalism Graduate Faculty members. The student must obtain the Master's Advisory Committee form from the Graduate College website ([https://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/\\_resources/forms/masters-adv-comm.pdf](https://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/_resources/forms/masters-adv-comm.pdf)), complete it and have the committee adviser and members sign it. The Advisory Committee approves the student's Journalism and non-Journalism coursework before courses are taken by signing two copies of the completed Journalism Master's Course Approval Form. The Journalism Master's Course Approval Form is available online from the Journalism graduate coordinator. The student indicates on this form the coursework to be taken in Journalism and the second area, which must then be approved by the student's Master's Advisory Committee. Changes can be made to the approved Journalism and non-Journalism coursework at a later time, if necessary, but must be agreed to and initialed by members of the advisory committee.

In the early stages of the graduate program, normally no later than the conclusion of the first semester of course work, students must designate their second field of study. No second field is considered as officially accepted until it has been approved. Students who take coursework without completing a Course Approval Form do so at their own risk; an Advisory Committee may not approve coursework taken by a student without

prior approval. Normally, the second field of study is in the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences; however, certain other fields may be considered.

Students are encouraged to develop advising and mentoring relationships with other departmental faculty to facilitate the development of a Thesis Committee and employment. By the end of a student's first year in the program, s/he should select a Master's Thesis Adviser. The thesis adviser can be any Journalism faculty member who is on the UA graduate faculty; a list of UA graduate faculty is included in the Graduate Catalog. The student chooses a thesis topic in consultation with, and with the approval of, the thesis adviser. The student is also responsible for constituting the thesis committee in consultation with the thesis adviser. The thesis committee should consist of at least three graduate faculty members, two from the School of Journalism and Strategic Media and one from another discipline, usually the student's second field of graduate study. In constituting a thesis committee, attention should be given to the knowledge or expertise of the faculty members in the area of the thesis topic. All thesis topics must have direct relevance to journalism.

In compliance with Graduate School regulations, all students must pass a Master's Comprehensive Examination as part of the requirements for completing the degree. The School of Journalism and Strategic Media uses an oral examination to satisfy this requirement. Normally this is done in conjunction with the thesis defense and the examination is conducted by the student's thesis committee. Students should consult with their advisers about procedures related to the comprehensive examination. The Graduate School Guide for Preparing Theses is available online at [http://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/\\_resources/forms/thesis-dissertation-guide.pdf](http://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/_resources/forms/thesis-dissertation-guide.pdf)

## **COMMITTEES**

Faculty who have personal relationships with graduate students can not serve on any committees for that student that might be expected to create a conflict of interest or give that appearance. These relationships may include legal, family, and business relationships, living arrangements, and personal partnerships of other kinds. If there is uncertainty that any conditions constitute a conflict of interest between a student and members of the committee, the dean of the Graduate School will determine the issue. The dean of the Graduate School shall also adjudicate any complaint made by another party about a conflict of interest in committee membership.

### **Master's Program Advisory Committee**

The Master's Advisory Committee form is available online at [http://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/\\_resources/forms/masters-committee.pdf](http://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/_resources/forms/masters-committee.pdf). The Advisory Committee consists of a major adviser and at least two other members of the graduate faculty. Submit the form (in duplicate) to the Graduate School when the student begins the JOUR MA program.

### **Master's Thesis Committee**

The Master's Thesis Committee form is available online at [http://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/\\_resources/forms/masters-committee.pdf](http://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/_resources/forms/masters-committee.pdf). At least two members of the thesis committee, including the thesis adviser, must be from the Journalism Graduate Faculty. One member usually is from the student's second area of study. The thesis committee must consist of a minimum of three (including the thesis adviser, and usually no more than four) faculty members who have been approved by the Graduate School.

It is the student's responsibility to secure faculty members' agreement to serve on the committee and to report the members of the committee to the Graduate School.

The student submits the form (in duplicate) to the Graduate School as soon as the committee has been selected but no later than three months prior to the date of the comprehensive examination. (This is the same form as the Master's Advisory Committee but it has a check box for the Thesis Committee.)

The thesis committee is normally made up of faculty members with whom the student has done graduate work. These faculty members serve as resources, guiding the student through the thesis planning, research, and writing. The thesis adviser chairs the thesis committee and is the main guide for the student. The student should consult frequently with the thesis chair while researching and writing the thesis.

The student must have the thesis committee's approval before proceeding with the thesis. All thesis topics must have direct relevance to journalism. To obtain the thesis committee's approval, the student writes a Thesis Proposal and presents it to the committee. The proposal should be approved at least six months before the intended graduation date.

Committees may not be approved for the following reasons: If all members of the committee do not have the appropriate graduate faculty status; if faculty spouses are serving on the same committee and one is in a supervisory capacity over the other; if a member of the student's immediate family is proposed on the committee; or if there is an approved committee already on file. Such policies change so the student is responsible for being in compliance with current guidelines before finalizing the committee.

## **THE THESIS PROCESS**

Students in the School of Journalism and Strategic Media Master's program are required to prepare a traditional thesis, a special project thesis, or a documentary, which is then the subject of the student's comprehensive oral examination. A traditional research thesis represents an original contribution to research and analysis and is a detailed written report of an analytical research project. All thesis topics must have direct relevance to journalism. The special project thesis is a professional project which involves extensive investigation and research. Students may take a research proposal or a project prepared for a graduate course and use it as the basis for developing a thesis. The documentary project is a documentary film written, shot and edited by the student. It must include a written component. Specifics of each of these three are available from the Journalism graduate coordinator.

As part of meeting the requirement for the master's program, a student must register for a minimum total of six hours of credit for Master's Thesis (JOUR 600V). While a graduate student may elect to take more than six hours of thesis credit, no more than six hours of thesis credit for thesis enrollment may be applied toward the degree. The scheduling of thesis enrollment is done in consultation with the student's adviser. (While a thesis is in progress the student's record shows a grade or mark of 'R,' which is the only acceptable mark when a thesis is in progress. A final grade may be assigned to the thesis after it is accepted and approved by the thesis committee.)

The title of the thesis must be approved by the thesis director and the thesis committee by submitting the Master's Thesis Title form available at [https://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/\\_resources/forms/td-title.pdf](https://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/_resources/forms/td-title.pdf). The thesis title form must be submitted and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School at least three months before the date of the comprehensive oral examination.

All students must ensure that they have complied with Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements regarding interviews or other types of data collection involving human subjects well before such data are collected. The student is responsible for reviewing, understanding and complying with IRB requirements before collecting data. More information is available at <http://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/responsible-conduct-of-research.php>

The following dates provide an example of what would be an appropriate schedule:

- For a May graduation, the Thesis Proposal should be approved by the committee no later than October 1 of the preceding year.
- For an August graduation, the Thesis Proposal should be approved no later than February 1 of that year.
- For a December graduation, the Thesis Proposal should be approved no later than June 1 of that year.

In researching and writing the thesis, the student consults regularly with his/her thesis adviser. Most advisers ask the student to submit a planned schedule for completion of various elements of the thesis. The student should consult the graduate coordinator for thesis guidelines, as well as the Guide for Preparing Theses at [http://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/\\_resources/forms/thesis-dissertation-guide.pdf](http://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/_resources/forms/thesis-dissertation-guide.pdf).

### **Thesis Defense/Comprehensive Examination**

For the Thesis Defense, the student meets with his/her thesis committee to present formally and discuss a final written draft of the thesis. The student is responsible for

scheduling the defense session (including scheduling a room and audio/visual equipment) in consultation with the committee members. They should allow at least one hour for the defense. The student is also responsible for obtaining and completing all appropriate forms and approvals prior to the defense, found online at <http://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/graduate/current-students/forms.php>.

In preparing for the defense, the student must deliver a copy of the final written draft of the thesis to each committee member no later than two weeks before the scheduled defense. The defense itself must be completed no later than two weeks before the Graduate School's deadline for submitting final thesis copy for the semester.

The thesis adviser chairs the Thesis Defense. The student is responsible for bringing to the session all paperwork from the Graduate School which requires action by the committee. Students should understand that it is not unusual for a thesis committee to recommend changes or additions to the thesis before giving final approval.

The Graduate School has strict format requirements for the thesis. Students must obtain and follow the *Guide for Preparing Theses* available online at [http://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/\\_resources/forms/thesis-dissertation-guide.pdf](http://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/_resources/forms/thesis-dissertation-guide.pdf). Students must carefully adhere to the standards and requirements listed in the *Guide*, which essentially spells out a desktop publishing format for the thesis.

Upon acceptance of the thesis by the thesis committee, and by the deadline specified by the Graduate School, two typewritten copies of the unbound thesis in prescribed form must be delivered to the Graduate Dean for approval before being deposited in the Mullins Library. It is the student's responsibility to confirm all requirements and procedures for completing the thesis with the Graduate School. In addition, the Journalism Department requires that students turn in to the Journalism Office one bound copy of the approved thesis for Department files. All final copies of the thesis must include the original signatures of the student's thesis committee of record as approved and filed in the Graduate Dean's Office. Signatures of persons other than those of the official thesis director and members of the thesis committee are unacceptable.

## **REVIEW PROCESS FOR JOURNALISM GRADUATE STUDENTS**

An annual review is conducted for each currently enrolled student in the Journalism Master of Arts Program. The annual review focuses on the student's progress toward completion of degree requirements. The review covers major areas of progress including:

- Record in graduate Journalism courses
- Record in courses in the second field of study required for Journalism M.A.

- Progress and completion of the various requirements and forms in a timely manner.
- Progress on required Master's thesis (including approval of committee and topic).
- Overall evaluation of academic performance and progress toward the degree and timetable for completion of degree requirements.

Such reviews typically occur annually in the spring or summer. The review is conducted by the department's graduate coordinator, in consultation with the department chair and the graduate faculty. Students are informed of the outcome of the review in a personal interview with the graduate coordinator, via e-mail, or by another appropriate method of communication.

If the student is not making satisfactory progress toward completion of degree requirements, a remedy plan must be agreed upon by the graduate coordinator and the student's major adviser. The department chair may be involved in the process as well. The remedy plan must be submitted in writing and approved by the graduate coordinator and the student's major adviser. The plan is placed in the student's file. It must include a timetable, which includes specific tasks and deadlines for completing each task.

A student who refuses to participate in the review process is automatically considered inactive by the Department and cannot be considered for reinstatement to active status without participating in such a review. For the student to continue in the program a determination must be made that the student is making adequate progress toward completion of the degree and a written remedy plan must be agreed upon.

## **JOURNALISM GRADUATE FACULTY**

General questions about the Journalism Graduate Program should be directed to Dr. Jee Young Chung, Graduate Director, or to the chair of the School of Journalism and Strategic Media.

Advisers and members of advisory and thesis committees for graduate students must be members of the Graduate Faculty. Journalism graduate faculty members are listed in the current catalog in the School of Journalism and Strategic Media section.

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