

11/9/2015

To: ASC Curriculum Committee, Graduate School, Deborah Haddad

From: Mike Slater, Graduate Studies Committee Chair, School of Communication

Re: Revised Proposed Program Change and Rationale, School of Communication PhD program

Overview

The GSC, with the unanimous approval of the School of Communication graduate faculty, is proposing a variety of changes to our program requirements. One change is dropping Qualitative Research (Comm 6763) as a core requirement for all PhD students. The three credits for Comm 6763 move to our elective requirement, so there is no impact of this change on total credits toward the degree. A second change is to revise Comm 6500, Introduction to Graduate Studies, to focus systematically on socialization to doctoral work, academic research and careers, and reduce it to a one-credit course from the two credits originally approved. This would result in students in their first semester in the program taking 12 instead of 13 credits; therefore, this would also result in a one-credit reduction in the total credits needed to graduate (85 to 84). Third, we would like to reduce our total credits to graduate still further, to 81 credits, so that external MA admits without transfer credit will be able to complete the degree within four years without taking additional semester or summer coursework beyond that required of other students; this is the correction of an issue that developed in the original transition plan from quarters to semesters, when it still appeared that Maymester would function as part of the academic year.

Our proposed PhD program of study incorporating these revisions is attached. The revised Comm 6500 syllabus is on-line. Our intention is to implement as of August 2016.

Dropping Qualitative Methods (Comm 6763) as a core requirement for the PhD

The GSC recommended and the graduate faculty unanimously voted to drop Qualitative Methods as a core requirement for the PhD. These three credits will move to our elective requirement, so there will be no impact on total courses for the degree.

Rationale: Our program is primarily a quantitative one. All of our core courses are taught by people we consider to have world-class training and expertise. We no longer have any faculty members whose primary research expertise is qualitative research. Last year, we had to waive this requirement when the person who was teaching this course took a position at another university. When we surveyed alumni of our PhD program, the Qualitative Research course was ranked the least useful/necessary of the core courses they had taken. Students interested in qualitative research can take excellent courses from expert faculty in departments such as Sociology. We are including discussion of qualitative research and mixed methods research in our core Methods class, and are strongly recommending that students include at least one advanced statistics/methodology elective (which can include qualitative research for interested students) in their program of study.

Implications: Removing one core class provides advisors and committees more flexibility in customizing student programs by moving three credits from the required core to electives,

notably in taking more courses around the college and university. This change will not impact our program in other ways.

Change to first-semester program for students new to OSU SOC graduate program

We propose requiring a one-credit Comm 6500 course (see description in Rationale below; the syllabus has been submitted on-line), a one-credit directed research, and one-credit colloquium, with the three three-credit core courses, for 12 credits, for MA and PhD students new to OSU's School of Communication graduate program.

Rationale: The GSC over the past few years has identified several issues we needed to address. First, students would clearly benefit from systematic exposure to guidance in how to succeed as a graduate student; this was affirmed by a survey of students. Such guidance has been provided in an *ad hoc* way during the required weekly graduate research colloquium. However, what was offered was a function of available time, as this colloquium is also the venue for job candidate presentations, visiting scholar presentations, and faculty/student research presentations. Moreover, the colloquium is required for two years for PhD students, so that key topics were sometimes presented two years in a row at risk of redundancy for many students.

The SOC several years ago had received approval for a 2 credit 6500 Introduction to Graduate Studies course combining some such material, with in-depth discussion of some colloquium presentations. However, in trying to plan/staff the proposed course, several problems became evident, and it was offered only once, taught on a volunteer basis as overload by two GSC members. The syllabus did not systematically cover the introductory topics needed as identified by faculty and a recent survey of graduate students, and did not permit moving those topics out of colloquium into this class. Moving these topics to Comm 6500 was desired so that we could focus the colloquium on research presentations, and have a planned, systematic, and predictable series of presentations and discussions introducing students to graduate studies and a career as a scholar and researcher, in 6500. Based on the student survey and faculty discussion, we have identified topics and created a syllabus for this one-credit course, submitted on-line.

For several years, the GSC has been seeking to revise the first semester for new students to exclude classroom electives (for which they are often unprepared, prior to taking Methods, Statistics I, and a first Theory course), and which is often overwhelming on top of getting oriented to graduate school, a heavy core course load, and usually GTA responsibilities. The three core courses plus Comm 6500 adds up to 10 credits. We also will require one credit of directed research with the temporary advisor, to encourage setting aside structured time for discussion of emerging research interests and guidance regarding exposure to the research experience at the SOC (identifying lab meetings to attend, projects to assist with, etc.). Combined with the one credit of required colloquium, this makes for a total of 12 credits. Since, in our original semester conversion plan, students were taking 13 credits in their first semester, this would reduce our total credits toward the degree by one (85 to 84).

As noted below, we want to change our credits to degree further, to 81 credits, to reflect the realities of the semester schedule as it has evolved.

Further proposed change in minimum required credit hours

The School of Communication (SOC) Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) and graduate faculty have unanimously recommended changing our minimum credits to the degree from 85 to 81.

Rationale: When the program was revised for the semester change-over, we had developed an 85 credit minimum, based on the program indicated in the table below. At the time, we had anticipated using Maymester for the candidacy exam, which would require registration for directed readings credits and accounted for three of the credits. That became non-viable as Maymester policies evolved. Candidacy exams were instead normally taken during the spring semester of third year instead of during Maymester as originally envisioned. However, the 85 credit minimum requirement remained, which presumed three credits during Maymester in the third year. For most students, this was not a problem: internal MAs had elective credits they could transfer, as did many students admitted from other MA programs. However, some students from other MA programs (e.g., from other disciplines) did not have credits to transfer, and that did force taking extra credits in some semester or summer to stay on track to graduate.

At the same time, as noted above, we've been doing some tweaking with our first year requirements which reduces the credit load to 12 from 13 for students in their first semester of graduate school at OSU. That credit reduction takes the minimum, to keep an external MA with no transfer credit on track, to 81 credits.

Table 1: Original plan with 85 credits

	Autumn	Spring	May	Total
Year 1	13	13		26
Year 2	13	13		26
Year 3	12	12	3	27
Year 4	3	3		6
Total	41	41		85

--	--	--	--	--

Table 2. Revised plan with 81 credits (see proposed PhD Program plan attached).

	Autumn	Spring	May	Total
Year 1	12	13		25
Year 2	13	13		26
Year 3	12	12		24
Year 4	3	3		6
Total	41	41		81

Implications. This will permit external MAs with no transfer credit to take the recommended load each semester without having to take three extra credits at some point during their program, and still graduate on time. There will be no substantive impact on programs for other students, given the 12 credit minimum per semester and classroom elective credit rules (15 credits of SOC classroom electives are required) that we have in place. In other words, this will just mean 3 credits less of directed readings or directed research being needed for external MA admits graduating in four years. For other students, there will be no change at all.



SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

PHD DEGREE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS (CURRENT)

Complete a minimum of 85 graduate credits, including 6 credits for the dissertation

1. 21 credit hours required core

9 credits in Communication Theory:

COMM 6806 Contemporary Theories in Communication (3)

COMM 6807 Foundations of Communication Theory (3)

COMM 7927 Theory Construction (3)

12 credits in Research Methods for Communication:

COMM 6661 Statistical Applications in Communication (3)

COMM 6760 Communication Research Methods (3)

COMM 6763 Qualitative Research Methods (3)

COMM 7790 Statistical Applications in Communication II (3)

2. At least 54 credit hours of graduate level electives (minimum 50% from within the School of Communication including at least 15 credits of formal communication elective classes)

3. 4 semesters of Communication Colloquium

4. 6 credits of Dissertation (maximum of 3 credits per semester)

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION
PHD DEGREE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS (REVISED)

Complete a minimum of 81 graduate credits, including 6 credits for the dissertation

1. 20 credit hours required core

1 credit hour in Intro to Graduate Studies

COMM 6500 Introduction to Graduate Studies (1)

1 credit hour in Directed Research

COMM 7998 Directed Research (1)

9 credits in Communication Theory:

COMM 6806 Contemporary Theories in Communication (3)

COMM 6807 Foundations of Communication Theory (3)

COMM 7927 Theory Construction (3)

9 credits in Research Methods for Communication:

COMM 6661 Statistical Applications in Communication (3)

COMM 6760 Communication Research Methods (3)

COMM 7790 Statistical Applications in Communication II (3)

2. At least 51 credit hours of graduate level electives (minimum 50% from within the School of Communication including at least 15 credits of formal communication elective classes)

3. 4 semesters of Communication Colloquium

4. 6 credits of Dissertation (maximum of 3 credits per semester)



Department of Economics

410 Arps Hall
1945 North High Street
Columbus, OH 43210-1172

Phone (614) 292-6701
Fax (614) 292-3906

December 7, 2015

Professor Meg Daly
Chair, Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee

Re: Approval of Revision to the Communication PhD Program

Dear Meg:

The SBS Panel on November 16, 2015 approved a proposal by Communication to revise its PhD program.

The proposal makes three changes to the program. First, students are required to take two one-credit courses, Introduction to Graduate Studies (COMM 6500) and Directed Research (COMM 7998), in the first semester. Second, the number of required credits of graduate level electives is reduced from 54 to 51. Third, Qualitative Research Methods (COMM 6763), a three-unit course, will be an elective instead of a core required course. Overall, the minimum number of graduate credits to complete the program is reduced from 85 to 81.

The proposal is motivated by two program needs: to provide initial guidance to new students effectively and efficiently, and to make it feasible for all students to complete the program requirements in four years. The panel agrees that those are important needs and the proposed changes are appropriate. The panel voted unanimously to approve the proposal.

The proposal was initially submitted on October 14, 2015. The panel first discussed the proposal on October 19, 2015. The proposal has been revised to account for the comments from that meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Lam'.

Pok-sang Lam
Chair, ASCC SBS Panel