

Handbook for Graduate Students  
Department of Communication  
Graduate Program in Communication

Western Illinois University  
2015-2016 Edition

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**PREFACE**

We are pleased with your decision to pursue a Master of Arts degree in Communication in our department and we welcome you to the exciting world of scholarship and inquiry.

Your desire and initiative to continue your education set you apart from many of your peers, hence we appreciate your presence and commitment to seek out higher goals in your professional, academic, and personal life. We have an excellent program, a friendly and dedicated Graduate Faculty, and we pledge to make your sojourn with us as productive and informative as we possibly can.

Having said this, we must also sound a note of caution concerning graduate work. Advanced learning in the discipline of Communication is an arduous journey. It requires dedication on your part and a willingness to work long and hard. Academic success is measured not only by the number of courses taken and passed, but also by the degree of curiosity exhibited by each student, his or her willingness to participate fully in the many discussions which go on inside and outside the classroom, and the development of the work habits of a professional person, including the ability to articulate ideas with clarity and precision. Your mission, after all, is to obtain the necessary professional tools, insights, theories, and pragmatic experiences which will enable you, upon your graduation, to continue your education or find your way in the world of business, the professions, or performance.

In the following pages you will find the “who’s”, “dos” and “don’ts” concerning your graduate work. Like all bureaucracies, Western Illinois University and this department have numerous rules and regulations which all graduate students are expected to follow. It is always safe to say that if you have questions or problems which are not covered in this handbook, please consult your faculty advisor, the chair of the Communication Graduate Committee, or the Department of Communication chair.

It is also important to realize that regardless of prior bias, experience, or professional attainment, no field of inquiry, no particular instructor, and no “School of Thought” can ever claim to possess the whole truth. Rather, each field of inquiry, each instructor, or each paradigm (Cross-Cultural, Interpersonal, Organizational, Rhetoric, Persuasion or Communication Theory) can add to the larger interpretation of our global village.

Please join us in the quest for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. We do not pretend to have all the answers, but we are willing, if you are, to learn with you and to seek out more satisfying, more interesting, and more challenging answers in this exciting field of Communication.

Sincerely,

The Graduate Faculty  
Department of Communication  
Western Illinois University

### **Graduate Student "Ideal" Timeline for Completion of Degree**

Semester 1: Meet with your temporary advisor for assistance in choosing classes and answering questions

regarding the graduate program in Communication or graduate school in general. If you are uncertain as to who has been assigned as your temporary advisor, contact the Graduate Committee Chairperson.

Your ideal course load for the first semester should be 9 SH of graduate-level seminars.

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Semester 2: Meet with your temporary advisor for assistance in choosing classes. Begin considering who you wish to select as your permanent advisor.

If admitted as a probationary student (and assuming a successful first semester), you should petition the Graduate Committee for a change in status from probationary graduate student to full standing.

Your ideal course load for the second semester should be 9 SH of graduate-level seminars.

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Semester 3: You should choose your permanent advisor prior to or at the beginning of your third semester as a graduate student. (This is especially important if choosing the Thesis or Creative Project exit options!) This individual will then advise you on appropriate course selection given your professional interests and career/personal goals.

The *Graduate Degree Plan* should be filled out in consultation with your advisor and submitted to the Graduate Committee Chair for approval. In consultation with your advisor and in consideration of your exit option choice, select the other members of your Exit Option Committee.

Select which exit option (Thesis, Creative Project or Research Paper) you wish to pursue. If choosing the Thesis or Creative Project options, generate possible topics or ideas. Ideally, you will begin working on your exit option during the third semester. Proposal meetings for theses and creative projects should occur at the middle or end of the third semester in order to allow for a reasonable chance of completing the degree by the end of the fourth semester.

Your ideal course load for the third semester should be 9 SH of graduate-level seminars.

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Semester 4: The *Application for Graduation* form should be filed at least three months prior to the expected graduation date.

Completion of the exit option should be the focus of the fourth semester. Exit option proposal meetings for Creative Projects should occur at the beginning of the fourth semester *at the latest*. Ideally, if the Thesis Option was selected, those should be the only units taken during the final semester (6 SH of COMM 601, or 3 SH from the third semester and 3 SH for the fourth semester). If the Creative Project Option was selected, the student should enroll in 3 hours of COMM 602 plus 3 SH of graduate coursework. If the student has elected to pursue the Research Paper option (COMM 603), the student should meet with the professor of the course for whom the paper was originally written and receive feedback concerning the amount and nature of the revisions required. A student pursuing the COMM 603 option should enroll in 6 SH hours of graduate work, as well as the additional 1 SH associated with the COMM 603 option.

## ADMISSION POLICY

### A. General Admission

At the present time, degree-seeking students *may be considered* for admission to the graduate program in Communication under the following criteria:

1. They must have earned at least an undergraduate GPA of at least 2.75 (4.0 scale) and have majored or minored in Communication, or related disciplines, or be prepared to devote at least one semester to deficiency courses,
2. Or have accumulated a GPA of at least 3.0 (4.0 scale) over the last two years at the undergraduate level.
3. During periods when the program is impacted and/or the program experiences a high volume of qualified applicants, ***a minimally acceptable GPA may not be sufficient to earn admittance into the program.***

#### B. Admission Based on Exception

1. Students falling slightly below the required GPA may still apply for regular admission provided they score well on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE).
2. Students having already earned a Master's degree in a different academic field will be admitted as degree-seeking students.
3. Students not having majored or minored in Communication may be admitted to full graduate standing after they have successfully completed any deficiency courses specified in their acceptance letters.

#### C. Foreign Admissions

1. Degree-seeking students must meet all university and departmental requirements. (See sections A and B)
2. Additionally, the program requires proof of English language proficiency (both oral and written). Such evidence must come from at least two of the following:
  - (a) a TOEFL score of at least 580 (paper-based)/ 237 (computer-based)/ 92 (internet-based).
  - (b) successful completion of Western's English as a Second Language (WESL) program with an A- average.
  - (c) a written essay or interview.
  - (d) a personal interview with the Graduate Committee Chairperson or Division Faculty prior to enrolling.
  - (e) If the applicant resides overseas, he or she may submit an audio cassette, 15 minutes in length, in English, discussing his/her educational background, work experiences, career goals, and reasons why he or she wants to study at Western Illinois University.

3. Foreign admission inquiries, application forms, special requests, etc. must be addressed to the Center for International Studies Office at Western Illinois University.

#### *D. Procedure for Change in Status from Part to Full Time Student*

To change your status from part time to full time graduate student, file a petition form with the Graduate Office. Forms are available on the Graduate College website at <http://www.wiu.edu/grad/current/index.php#forms>.

You must be a full time graduate student in order to be eligible for a graduate assistantship. Also, you may not complete a Degree Plan until you are a full time graduate student in good standing.

#### *E. Procedure for Change in Status from Probationary Student to Student in Good Standing*

Probationary students (those admitted with slightly less than the required GPA of 2.75/3.00) are eligible for general financial aid but not for graduate assistantships. After completion of at least 6 SH of graduate coursework while earning grades of B or better, a probationary student may petition the Department of Communication Graduate Committee for full graduate standing, using the petition form as described above.

## **ASSISTANTSHIPS**

The Department of Communication has a number of assistantships (currently 4 two-thirds and 5 full-time appointments) in Communication. Both graduate and teaching assistantships are available, the type depending on the student's qualifications and departmental needs. There are also additional assistantship stipends available from related service and administrative offices on campus. Full tuition waivers accompany all graduate assistantships.

#### *A. Application for Assistantships*

Application forms for graduate assistantships are available directly on-line at <http://www.wiu.edu/grad/forms/assist.htm>. Alternatively, printed applications can be obtained from the Graduate Office.

Completed forms should be returned to the Graduate Office.

Applications are considered twice during the school year at the departmental level.

#### 1. Fall Semester

March 15<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for accepting and considering assistantship applications for the Fall semester. The first pool of recipients should be notified around April 1<sup>st</sup>.

2. Spring Semester

November 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for considering and accepting applications for assistantships for the following Spring Semester. The first pool of recipients should be notified around November 15<sup>th</sup> of that year.

*B. Duration of Assistantships*

Graduate assistantships are awarded either for one semester or one year, with the possibility of further renewal. Teaching assistantships have the possibility of being continued for a fourth semester. In most instances, however, departmental graduate assistantships (GAs) will be limited to a single year, with the understanding that graduate students who wish to pursue an assistantship for their second year will either opt for a teaching assistantship (TA) or find an assistantship elsewhere on campus. In either case, renewal depends on the following competitive factors:

1. Initial undergraduate GPA or graduate GPA
2. Departmental program needs
3. Letters of recommendation
4. Official transcripts
5. Satisfactory progress (for continuing graduate students)

*C. Contractual Obligations for Appointed Graduate Assistants*

A two-thirds assistantship obligates a holder to work 13 hours per week. A full-time assistantship obligates its holder to work 20 hours per week of duties specified by the program directors.

Graduate Assistants must be enrolled for 9-12 hours of graduate course work to remain eligible for the assistantship.

*D. Contractual Obligations for Appointed Teaching Assistants*

A teaching assistant may have a maximum assignment of 14 hours per semester of teaching and course work (8 hours of course work and 6 hours of teaching, or some other combination which does not exceed 14 hours). Teaching hours may not exceed 6 SH of introductory level courses.

As a general rule, a teaching assistant must complete COMM 538, Teaching Communication in College, and other course-specific orientation before beginning the assistantship. (There may be times when departmental need dictates the need for a TA who may not yet have completed these prerequisites.) Course specific orientation depends on the teaching assignment.

*E. Compensation*

Compensation varies, depending upon the type of assistantship awarded. A student with a two-

thirds assistantship receives two-thirds of the full stipend. However, *all* graduate and teaching assistants receive full tuition waivers. In addition, students who are awarded a one-year assistantship (or more) are eligible for an additional tuition waiver for one summer, usually for the summer following the contractual period.

#### F. *Continued Eligibility for Assistantships*

Holders of assistantships who wish to be considered for a one-year or a third semester (fourth for TAs) appointment must meet the following criteria:

1. Graduate Assistants must complete a minimum of 9 SH of graduate credit course work with a minimum GPA of 3.0 (4.0 scale) per semester.
2. Teaching Assistants must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (4.0) scale and meet the criteria under *Contractual Obligations for Teaching Assistants* listed above. Furthermore, TAs must receive B's or better in their graduate coursework. Earning a grade of "C" in a graduate course may result in the retraction of the teaching assistantship.
3. Graduate Assistants and Teaching Assistants may not accumulate more than one grade of "Incomplete" during any semester they hold assistantships.

Assistantships are awarded on the basis of merit. Unsatisfactory performances in the classroom or in the sphere of assigned duties will result in the withdrawal and/or termination of an assistantship.

Probationary students, non-degree seeking students, and part-time students are not eligible for assistantships. They may become eligible once they are accepted as full-time degree-seeking students.

#### G. *Contracts*

A departmental assistantship is usually offered by letter from the department, followed by a letter from the Graduate Office. A student has 10 days in which to reply to the letter from the Graduate Office, accepting or rejecting the assistantship. If a student accepts an assistantship, she or he must sign a contract. This can be done either by mail or in person at the Graduate Office, currently located in Sherman Hall.

#### H. *Offices*

Graduate assistantship holders may have access to an office, depending on the nature of their assistantships. Keys to the offices must be picked up and signed for in Memorial Hall 302 (see Ms. Terri Coplan).

All assistants must fill out an *Employment Eligibility Verification* form (Form I-9) if they wish to

be paid (see Ms. Coplan).

All students completing their assistantships must file a *Graduate Assistant's Termination of Employment Clearance Certificate* if they wish to receive their final paycheck (to be filed with the Payroll Office).

### I. Resignations

#### 1. Graduate and Teaching Assistants:

When an assistant resigns his/her assistantship for any reason, he or she must do so in writing. The letter of resignation should be addressed to the Graduate Program Coordinator with a copy going to the Director of the Graduate School.

#### 2. Degree-Seeking Students:

When a graduate student drops out of school (other than as a result of academic dismissal), a letter of resignation should be addressed to the Graduate Program Coordinator apprising him or her of this fact. It is a matter of courtesy to let others know about your change in plans.

## GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISING

When you begin your graduate program, contact the Graduate Coordinator, who will make sure that you know who will function as your temporary advisor. Your temporary advisor will help you decide which courses to take and assist you in coping with initial questions and hurdles during your first year of graduate study.

### A. Permanent Advisors

1. After having successfully completed a minimum of 9 SH of graduate courses (and no more than 18 SH), you may choose a permanent advisor to help see you through your exit option project. The Permanent Advisor/Chair of your exit option *must* be a Full member of the Graduate Faculty (see the current Graduate Catalogue for an accurate listing of approved graduate faculty). This advisor should be selected prior to the start of your third semester in graduate school *at the latest*.
2. The choice of permanent advisor should be based on your area of interest, (Communication courses, other electives and exit option), the faculty member's willingness and expertise in supervising your thesis or creative project, and your comfort level with the faculty member.
3. Your assignment to an advisor, the advisor's acceptance of the responsibility, and any changes in your program are made with the knowledge and approval of the Graduate



Coordinator.

B. *The Master's Degree Plan (for Thesis or Creative Project Options)*

1. You and your permanent advisor must file an official Degree Plan, specifying which courses you will complete, and which exit option you wish to select (Thesis or Creative Project). The Degree Plan form is available on-line through the Graduate Office homepage at <http://www.wiu.edu/grad/forms/dp.pdf>.
2. You and your permanent advisor must also find at least one additional Communication Graduate Faculty member and one other graduate faculty member in your area of interest willing to serve on your exit option committee. The third member of the committee does not necessarily have to be from the Department of Communication, but they must be a member of the Graduate Faculty at WIU.
3. Once your permanent advisor has approved and signed your official Graduate Degree Plan, it should be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator to process further.
4. Any changes or deviations from your Graduate Degree Plan must be filed via an official petition form. Proper forms may be obtained from the Graduate Office or from the Graduate Committee Chairperson.
5. Keep in mind that your primary concern is to put together a series of courses beyond the common core that lead to a definitive objective consistent with your career plans and interests.
6. Any difficulties or questions arising over the choice of a permanent advisor, or anything doubtful about the process of filing a degree plan should be brought to the attention of the temporary advisor. Do not postpone this discussion, choice of advisor, or filing your degree plan. This should be accomplished during the first two weeks of the semester following your successful completion of 18 hours of graduate work *at the latest*.

C. *The Master's Degree Plan (for Research Paper Option)*

1. You must file an official Degree Plan, specifying which courses you will complete and indicating that you have selected the Research Paper option (COMM 603). The Degree Plan form is available on-line through the Graduate Office homepage at <http://www.wiu.edu/grad/forms/dp.pdf>.
2. You must decide which paper from which Communication graduate seminar (excluding 400-level "G" courses, independent studies, or internships) you wish to revise for this option. You must contact the professor you had for the class and ask them if the paper can be revised for the purposes of meeting the requirements of COMM 603, and if they will agree to oversee your revision of that paper. If the professor of record is no longer at this institution, then you must approach the professor who is most currently teaching or

assigned to teach that seminar, or ask the Graduate Coordinator for assistance.

3. Once your professor has agreed to supervise your revision process, the degree plan should be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator to process further.
4. Any changes or deviations from your Graduate Degree Plan must be filed via an official petition form. Proper forms may be obtained from the Graduate Office or from the Graduate Coordinator.
5. Keep in mind that your primary concern is to put together a series of courses beyond the common core that lead to a definitive objective consistent with your career plans and interests.
6. Any difficulties or questions arising over the choice of a permanent advisor, or anything doubtful about the process of filing a degree plan should be brought to the attention of the temporary advisor. Do not postpone this discussion, choice of advisor, or filing your degree plan. This should be accomplished during the first two weeks of the semester following your successful completion of 18 hours of graduate work *at the latest*.

### **M.A. DEGREE PROGRAM**

We offer a common core of courses plus electives and a choice of exit option. We require a minimum of 33 or 34 SH for the M.A. degree, depending on your choice of exit option.

#### *A. Minimum Requirements for the M.A. Degree:*

##### 1. CORE COURSES (9 SH)

All candidates must successfully complete the following courses:

- COMM 500 Communication Theory (3)
- COMM 504 Empirical Research in Human Communication (3)
- COMM 506 Message Production (3)

##### 2. DIRECTED ELECTIVE COURSES (9 SH)

Additionally, each student must complete (9) SH of departmental course offerings at the 500 level, excluding COMM 520, COMM 596, COMM 601, COMM 602, COMM 603 and COMM 679.

##### 3. ELECTIVE COURSES (14-17 SH)

All candidates may complete any number of elective courses at the 500- or the 400G-level in the Communication Department, or 400G-500 level courses (up to 6 SH) in other departments of the

university. Courses selected must have the approval of the permanent advisor. The total number of semester hours at the 500-600 level (including core courses and exit option) must be at least 18. The choice of electives should be governed by:

- a. The availability of course offerings,
- b. the student's career plans and interests, and
- c. requisite departmental and Graduate Office approvals.

#### 4. EXIT OPTIONS (1-6 SH)

All candidates must choose one of the following exit options:

- a. Thesis (6 SH)
- b. Creative Project (3 SH)
- c. Research Paper (1 SH)

At the present time our department offers no regularly-scheduled graduate courses during the summer terms, hence the *absolute minimum* time for completion of coursework for a M.A. degree would be three consecutive semesters while pursuing the thesis option. In reality, however, students should expect that a minimum of four semesters will be required to successfully complete their degrees.

Graduate Assistants are advised to take no more than nine (9) semester hours each term, with 12 SH being the maximum allowed without special permission of the Director of the Graduate College. Hence, they may need four consecutive semesters for the completion of their degrees. Teaching Assistants almost always will need four semesters to complete the degree.

The Master of Arts degree is a professional degree that requires more than just taking courses. We require of all students competence in critical thinking, the ability to express themselves well orally and in writing, expertise in statistical research and design.

#### B. *Other Degree Requirements*

The work for the Master of Arts degree must be completed within six (6) consecutive calendar years.

#### C. *Graduation Clearance*

Students who are anticipating graduation should file their *Application for Graduation* in the Graduate Office at least three months prior to the commencement date.

The Alumni Register should be filed at the Alumni House. In addition to providing alumni news, the Alumni Office will periodically solicit donations to the Alumni Foundation. You can, if you wish, designate that your donation be added to the Department of Communication Account, or any other specific account that you may choose. Your donation will then be used only for special projects in that area.

All incompletes must be changed and cleared on or before the day that final grade reports are due.

If you choose the thesis exit option, three (3) copies of your thesis and three (3) copies of your thesis abstract, along with signed approval sheets, must be deposited with University Archives, located in the University Library. You may obtain a copy of university guidelines for the Preparation of the Thesis and Abstract from the Graduate Office. One bound copy will be returned to you, one bound copy will remain with the library, and one bound copy should be given to the department for the departmental library. Additionally, it is also considerate of you to have a copy of your thesis made for your thesis advisor and any committee members who may wish to have a copy.

#### *D. Transfer Credits*

Any transfer or extension credits must be approved by petition to the Director of Graduate Studies and the University Graduate Council after the student has filed a degree plan. Petition Forms may be obtained from the Graduate Office or the Chair of the Communication Graduate Committee. Two official transcripts must be sent directly to the Graduate Office from the college or university where the courses were taken.

A maximum of six (6) semester hours may be transferred from an accredited institution. No course credit may be given for grades below a B. These courses will count for elective credit only.

#### *E. Graduation Restrictions*

1. At least 18 SH of course work must be completed at the 500-level.
2. No more than 6 SH of credit may be earned in a combination of 475G and 675G numbered (experimental) courses.
3. No more than 6 SH of 'C' work may be earned toward the master's degree. A third grade of C will eliminate the student from the degree program.
4. No degree will be granted to a student who earns less than a 3.0 GPA upon completion of their degree.

#### *F. Incompletes*

The temporary grade of "Incomplete" is normally given only under unusual circumstances when a student is unable to complete course work due to circumstances beyond his or her control. Graduate students have one calendar year to complete the courses in which they received incompletes, or the incompletes will automatically revert to a grade of 'F' for that course. Extensions may be granted by the professor of record.

## CREATIVE PROJECT/THESIS AND THESIS PROPOSAL

Creative projects and theses require a proposal or prospectus. The following steps are suggested to help you along your way.

1. First, obtain a permanent advisor who, in conjunction with two additional committee members, will discuss your creative project or thesis.
2. Next, your initial idea concerning the feasibility of your particular project or thesis must then be written up in the form of a proposal or prospectus.

While there are no hard rules that cover every type of prospectus, there are a few minimal guidelines to consider.

***For a thesis***, the student should address:

- (a) Title of your Thesis
- (b) Type of project/study to be undertaken (historical/critical/descriptive/experimental/others)
- (c) General purpose or thesis statement, then narrowed down to specifics
- (d) Justification for undertaking this specific line of investigation or project [i.e., should be something new, addresses some aspect not covered in previous research, replication of a previous study with adequate justification, etc.]
- (e) Initial review of the pertinent literature that organizes what is known about the object of study and leads to your research questions
- (f) Specific research questions/hypotheses you will seek to answer
- (g) Proposed research method for conducting your investigation, including subjects to be sampled, data collection methods you intend to employ, and how this research or project is to proceed (time element)
- (h) Data analysis: which variables will be included, which excluded.

***For a creative project***, the student should address:

- (a) Title of your Project
- (b) General intent of the project; i.e., what should the project accomplish?
- (c) Justification for considering this project as a worthwhile and legitimate graduate endeavor in Communication
- (d) Any supporting literature justifying the intention of your project
- (e) Method for accomplishing your project, including any necessary background or equipment needed for your project, where this project is to be conducted, and proposed timeline to completion.

3. Once you have written your prospectus or proposal, your permanent advisor convenes a formal committee meeting at which time you must explain your proposal. Copies of the same should have been distributed by you to all of the members of your committee. You should give committee members a week to read your proposal/prospectus before the meeting. At the meeting you will be given suggestions, specific directions, or other

advice that the committee feels will aid you in bringing your project/thesis to a successful conclusion.

4. Once your committee has approved your project/thesis proposal, you may THEN AND ONLY THEN commence your project/thesis. You should keep your permanent advisor aware of your progress and submit portions/chapters of your work on a regular basis to him or her.
5. Writing means re-writing. It is best to keep in mind that a first draft or edit is only that. Content and format have to meet the specific requirements of the Graduate Office, the Department, and your committee. Be prepared to do a lot of writing and rewriting once you undertake your thesis/project. (It is not uncommon for projects to go through 10 or more rewrites prior to the oral defense.)
6. Your oral defense is the final formal step in completing your exit option. You will defend your thesis/project at a public meeting. You will be expected to give a summary of your thesis/project and present examples of creative work. Your thesis/project committee will question you about your work and then allow members of the public to comment on your work or ask you questions. This is an opportunity for you to take pride in your work and enjoy sharing it with others.

#### **SAMPLE THESIS PROPOSAL FORMAT**

1. USE THE APA STYLE MANUAL!
2. PARTS OF YOUR PROPOSAL:
  - A. Introduction (Why study this problem?)
  - B. Preliminary literature review
    - (1) Statement of the problem (This should be either a hypothesis statement or a research question.)
    - (2) Limitations (Will the results of your study apply to everyone in the world or is your research confined to a subset of the world population that limits the people to whom you can generalize the results? Are you studying all of a problem or just a manageable part? Is there something about the way you selected your survey or study population or your topic that isn't quite what you wanted and which will limit the outcome of your study? And so forth.)
  - C. Methodology
    - (1) How are you going to do your study? (Are you doing a survey? If so, how do your survey questions stem from your research questions or hypotheses? Who do you intend to sample/observe? How?)
    - (2) How will you analyze your data once you receive it? Are you doing library research? How will you do it? What are your search methods?

D. Reference List

Include everything that you have cited so far. Don't forget that interviews and television programs also are sources and need to be included if you have referred to them in the text of your project. Under APA style, you do not include anything in the references that you have not cited in text.

3. PARTS OF YOUR THESIS:

Most theses in Communication will consist of five chapters, a reference list and appendices. Chapters (in general) are as follows:

- A. Introduction (proposal with revisions, minus the methodology section)
- B. Survey of pertinent literature
- C. Methodology (expanded form the proposal)
- D. Results
- E. Discussion, conclusions, and recommendations

4. The Graduate Office can provide you with a copy of university requirements for your thesis addressing such things as margins, the need for an abstract and its length, and so on.

5. Normally, it takes quite a bit of time to get your research question/hypothesis focused so that you can proceed logically. Be ready to spend several months at this level, in addition to the time it takes to do your actual research.

ORAL DEFENSE PROTOCOL

- 1. Notice of an impending oral defense of an exit option should be posted by the permanent advisor/thesis committee chair so that interested faculty and students may attend. The announcement should contain the name of the student and the title of the creative project/thesis, the day and time of the oral defense, and the location.
- 2. Prior to the time and date of the oral defense, the exit option committee may wish to convene in private for 10-15 minutes, after which the candidate and the public may be summoned.
- 3. The candidate should prepare an oral presentation explaining the origin of her/his exit option project, developmental process, methodology, results/findings, and conclusions (25-30 minutes).
- 4. The candidate will answer questions (after the oral presentation) from members of the exit option committee.
- 5. After the members of the committee have satisfied their curiosity, given objections, or provided input, the candidate may entertain questions from the participating public (faculty members, fellow graduate students or friends).

6. The candidate will then be excused.
7. The exit option committee members will deliberate whether to pass or fail all or part of the exit option, which parts may need revision, and which grade to assign to the exit option.
8. The candidate is then summoned back and the chair of the committee will inform the student of the action taken (pass/fail) and the grade given for the thesis.
9. If the exit option is a thesis, all thesis committee members will sign the Thesis Approval Sheet of the thesis proper assuming, of course, that no further revisions are necessary.
10. If the degree candidate has chosen the thesis option, the candidate must place at least three copies of the thesis, along with three copies of a thesis abstract, with the Library Archives office at the University Library for processing and binding. The library will send the final copies of the abstract to the Graduate Office as proof of completion. If the degree candidate has chosen the creative project option, then the candidate must provide a clean copy of the project with all finalized supporting materials for the department library.
11. It is common courtesy to provide the chair of your exit option committee and any other interested committee members with a bound copy of your thesis/creative project. (This is in addition to the three (3) copies requested by the Graduate School.) It is not required, however.
12. In order to receive final department clearance, all revisions requested by the committee must be made and resubmitted to the exit option chair for verification of compliance. Only then will a student receive departmental clearance for graduation.

## **GRADUATE COLLEGE POLICIES**

### ***A. Academic Dishonesty Policy for Graduate Students***

Western Illinois University is dedicated to the discovery and communication of knowledge. The University can best function and accomplish its objectives in an atmosphere where high ethical standards prevail. For this reason, and to insure that the academic work of all students will be fairly evaluated, the University strongly condemns academic dishonesty.

The most prevalent forms of academic dishonesty are cheating, plagiarism, and the submission of false information regarding admission, readmission, or academic appeals.

Dishonesty of any kind with respect to examinations, course assignments, alteration of records or illegal possession of examinations shall be considered cheating. It is the responsibility of the student not only to abstain from cheating, but also avoid making it possible for others to cheat.



Any student who knowingly helps another student to cheat is as guilty of cheating as the student he/she assists.

The submission of the work of someone else as one's own constitutes plagiarism. Academic honesty requires that ideas taken from another source for use in a course paper or project be fully acknowledged.

Students are expected to submit work in each course based upon original thinking for that course. Work submitted in one course which is submitted in another course may constitute academic dishonesty in one, both, or neither courses. Faculty members must inform the students during the first two weeks of the term or at the time an assignment is made that work submitted in another course may or may not be submitted in their course.

It is the responsibility of the student to provide full and accurate information regarding admission applications, readmission applications, and academic appeals. The submission of false or incomplete information shall be considered an act of academic dishonesty. If disciplinary action is warranted (i.e., suspension or expulsion), the case shall be referred to the Director of Student Judicial Programs.

The use of computers to falsify records, the theft of examinations and other infractions of the Code of Student Conduct shall be reported to the Director of Student Judicial Programs.

### ***Faculty Responsibility***

Just as the student has a major responsibility for the maintenance of a climate of academic honesty in the University, the faculty also has an equally serious responsibility in this area. Individual faculty members should take appropriate steps to discourage academic dishonesty and to define their policies in this area as they apply to specific courses. A suggested but not exhaustive list of methods for faculty members to reduce academic dishonesty includes:

1. The periodic review of course requirements to insure they are reasonable.
2. The periodic change of examination questions.
3. The adequate proctoring of examinations.
4. The provision by the faculty of adequate guidance and assistance in fulfilling course requirements.

### ***Procedures***

A faculty member who has reason to believe that a student may have committed an act of academic dishonesty should, as soon as possible, discuss this matter with the student in question. No penalty should be imposed until the student has been informed of the charge against him/her in writing and of the evidence on which it is based and has been given an opportunity to present a defense.

### **If Student and Faculty Agree:**

If both the student and the faculty member agree on the facts of the case, the faculty member shall determine what penalty, if any is to be given within the course. The faculty member will report the decision, including penalty given, as soon as possible in writing to the Graduate Council.

#### If Student and Faculty Do Not Agree:

If the faculty member and the student cannot agree on the facts pertaining to the charge, either party may submit the case for adjudication to the Graduate Council. The Graduate Council shall inform the student and the professor in writing at least one week in advance of when the case will be considered and both parties will be given an opportunity to appear before the Council's Academic Dishonesty Subcommittee. If the student is ultimately found in violation, the penalty within the course shall be determined by the instructor. If the student is found not in violation, the Academic Dishonesty Subcommittee shall instruct the faculty member to assign the appropriate permanent grade. The decision of the Academic Dishonesty Subcommittee may be appealed to the Graduate Council.

#### *Further Actions*

If the faculty member or the Graduate Council feels that disciplinary action against the student is appropriate, the offense shall be reported to the Director of Student Judicial Programs. The Director shall convene a University Judicial Board to hear the case. The final determination shall be reported to the student, the faculty member and to the Graduate Council.

A student may be accused of academic dishonesty after receiving a final grade in a course. In such a case, the established procedures for academic dishonesty shall be implemented.

If the faculty member who is bringing the charge or the student who is being charged is a member of the Graduate Council he/she may not participate in the Council's deliberations.

If, in conjunction with an action of alleged or intended other academic dishonesty the student is also alleged to have violated the code of Student Conduct, the student will be subject to the procedures and penalties set forth in the Code.

When a student becomes subject to suspension or expulsion for alleged violations of the Code of Student Conduct, the Director of Student Judicial Programs may inquire if the student also has a record of academic dishonesty. If such is the case, the Director of Student Judicial Programs may have access to the student's academic dishonesty record. If this record is considered by the University Judicial Board in its deliberations, the use of this record will be reported to the Graduate Council by the Assistant Students Services Vice President for Student Multicultural and Special Services prior to a decision being made.

#### *Records*

Individual records of academic dishonesty shall be kept completely separate from the individual student's transcript and any other records. The only persons having immediate access to these records shall be the President, the Academic Vice President, and the Graduate Council.

Any other person(s) wishing to view these files must have the permission of the Graduate Council.

Five years after graduation, the academic dishonesty record of the student shall be destroyed.

### *Penalties*

A penalty affecting a student's grade within a course may be imposed only by the faculty member responsible for that course.

An incomplete should be given to the student by the instructor in the event the case cannot be resolved before the submission of the final course grade(s).

The following penalties are suggested as guidelines for academic dishonesty:

1. Within the course, the penalty for academic dishonesty should be commensurate with the degree of seriousness of the offense ranging from a lowered grade on a given assignment, examination, paper, or project to an "F" for the course.
2. A student who is found in violation of stealing examinations, altering grades or class records, or any comparable act shall be subject to reprimand, probation, suspension, or expulsion under the provisions of the Code of Student Conduct.
3. Any students who are involved in a group action which results in cheating or plagiarism may be subject to the same penalties as if they themselves had cheated or plagiarized.
4. A student found in violation of providing false or incomplete information may be subject to suspension or expulsion under the provisions of the Code of Student Conduct.

### *Academic Dishonesty Process*

The student shall be sent a written notice that contains the specific charge(s) made and the place, date and time of a hearing on the matter at least seven days prior to the date of the hearing to be held by the Graduate Council. The accuser shall also be sent a written notice as to the place, date and time of the hearing.

The student and his or her accuser will be given an opportunity to present their case before the Graduate Council hearing board. Either party may have oral testimony or written statements made by witnesses on their behalf. The student may have an advisor present but not legal counsel.

The student and his or her advisor may ask questions of the accuser. The accuser may ask questions of the student. Members of the hearing board may ask questions of the accuser, the accused, his or her advisor, and any witnesses present at the hearing.

After all parties in the case have been heard and they retire, the hearing body will make a decision. Written notice of this decision will be sent to the student and his or her accuser. A

written record of the proceedings, along with all submitted statements and/or documents, shall be placed in the Graduate Council files.

Either party may appeal the Academic Dishonesty Subcommittee's decision to the Council. If such an appeal is filed both parties shall be notified in writing of the place, date, and time of a hearing on the matter at least seven days prior to the date that the hearing is to be held. The other procedures indicated above shall be applicable in the hearing. The decision of the Graduate Council shall be final.

*Note:* Members of the Academic Dishonesty Subcommittee or the joint committee who are also members of the Graduate Council may not vote on an appeal to either one of those councils.

### *Future Modifications*

Any changes in the Academic Dishonesty Policy shall be subject to approval, after consultation with CAGAS, by the Graduate Council, the Faculty Senate and the President.

### *Interpretations and Exceptions*

Any questions concerning the interpretation of the Academic Dishonesty Policy will be resolved by the Graduate Council. The Council shall be informed of all decisions regarding academic dishonesty.

## ***B. Grade Appeal Policy for Graduate Students***

### *Preamble*

The purpose of the Grade Appeal Policy is to assure that grades represent a fair and consistent evaluation of student performance. At each level of the process it is the responsibility of the adjudicating body to determine whether the grade assigned was determined in a fair and appropriate manner; it is not in its province to grade or re-grade individual assignments. A faculty member should determine appropriate evaluation criteria in each course, should inform students of those criteria in writing at the beginning of the course, and should determine the extent to which each student has met those criteria.

Arbitrarily assigning a grade or determining a priori that a percentage of a class shall receive a specific grade are two examples of grading procedures which are inimical to academic responsibility and to the rights of the individual. Because students may seek redress against arbitrary or capricious evaluations through the procedures indicated in the following paragraphs, the faculty member should keep adequate records (for example, final examinations should be kept at least until the end of the grade appeal procedures period).

Each academic department in the University shall establish a standing Grade Appeal Committee in accordance with departmental policies and procedures and within the following

limitations: neither the department chairperson nor the instructor involved may sit on the committee, and at least two students must be included as voting members. The Departmental Grade Appeal Committee shall be the agency to which a student who feels he or she has been unjustly evaluated in a course may appeal the grade received in that course. In cases involving appeals in graduate courses, the committee must be composed of faculty persons who are members of the graduate faculty and at least two students, both of whom must be graduate students.

#### *Appeal Procedure - Department Level*

The student shall initiate the grade appeal procedure by consulting the instructor involved (where feasible). If after this consultation the student still believes he or she has been judged unfairly, the student shall contact the Department chairperson who shall provide the student with a grade appeal form. This form, which constitutes a written request for a formal hearing, shall be submitted to the Department chairperson no later than the end of the third week of the semester following the term in which the student received the grade in question; the Department Chairperson shall then transmit this form to the Grade Appeal Committee.

In cases where the grade appeal is based on a complaint involving sexual harassment and/or sex, race, or discrimination based on disability, the above third-week deadline for filing the appeal and other subsequent deadlines will not apply. In such cases, the Grade Appeal Committee will refer the student to the Affirmative Action Officer before proceeding further. Once this officer has acted on the validity of the complaint, the matter shall be referred back to the Departmental Grade Appeal Committee for adjudication.

The department committee shall consider the facts of the case at a meeting which should be attended by the student (with an advisor of the student's choice, if he or she so desires) and, where feasible, the instructor assigning the grade. Either party may submit written materials to support his or her position, and either party may have witnesses testify in writing or before the committee. A decision in a case shall be done by secret ballot, and by a majority vote of the committee a judgment shall be rendered so as to show that the appeal is approved or not approved, including what specific action is recommended. The decision is advisory to the faculty member. A written report of the proceedings shall be prepared by the chairperson of the committee and shall be submitted to the members for their approval. This report should include the basis for appeal, conclusions reached by the committee, and a report of the voting.

If there is a minority report, it should be appended to the formal report prepared by the Chairperson, and both should become a part of the permanent record. All appeals at the department level shall be completed within four weeks after the submission of the grade appeal form. The chairperson of the committee must inform the faculty member, student, chair of the department and the Council on Admission, Graduation and Academic Standards when the case involves an undergraduate student, or the Graduate Council if the case involves a graduate student (for record keeping purposes) in writing of the decision within a week. If the student's appeal is upheld, the faculty member must inform the chairperson of the committee in writing as to whether or not he or she will change the grade within a week. The chairperson of the

committee must then inform the student and the chair of the department in writing of the faculty member's decision within a week.

In cases where the faculty member is unwilling or unable to become a party in the proceedings and the Departmental Grade Appeal Committee makes a decision in favor of the student, the grade will be changed. The chairperson of the committee shall submit a change of grade form and indicate that the change is due to a successful grade appeal.

#### *Appeal Procedure - College Level*

If the result of the decision of the Departmental Grade Appeal Committee is unsatisfactory to either party, that person shall have the right to appeal to the Dean of the College in which the Department involved is located. The appeal must be filed in writing in the Dean's Office within two weeks after the chairperson of the departmental committee has notified the student of the faculty member's decision of whether or not the grade will be changed. The chairperson of the department committee shall forward the committee's report, and other written material considered by the committee, and any minority report to the Dean's office upon being notified by the Dean that there will be an appeal at the College level. Grade appeals at the College level shall be heard by a three-person committee appointed by the Dean and drawn from a list of department representatives (one faculty member and one major per department). The committee shall consist of one faculty member, one student, and a representative of the Dean. In cases involving appeals in graduate courses, the faculty person(s) must be members of the graduate faculty and the student must be a graduate student. The faculty member(s) on the committee shall not be a member of the department in which the grade appeal originated, nor shall the student be a major or minor in that department. The Dean's representative shall chair the committee and shall notify the other members of the grade appeal. A meeting shall be held within two weeks after receiving the appeal using the same procedures provided for at the department level. The college committee will also include in its deliberations the written report of the Departmental Grade Appeal Committee and any other written materials forwarded to the Dean from the chairperson of the departmental committee. After considering the case, the college committee shall decide by secret ballot and a majority vote report whether or not to approve the student's appeal. The decision is advisory to the faculty member. A written report of the proceedings, to include those things as specified at the department level, shall be prepared by the chairperson of the college committee and shall be submitted to the members for their approval. A minority report may be appended. The chairperson of the college committee must inform the student, faculty member, chair of the department and the Council on Admission, Graduation and Academic Standards if the case involves an undergraduate student or the Graduate Council if the case involves a graduate student (for record keeping purposes) in writing of the decision in the case within a week. If the student's appeal is upheld, the faculty member must inform the chairperson of the college committee in writing as to whether or not he or she will change the grade within a week. Within a week, the chairperson of the committee shall then inform the student and the Council on Admission, Graduation and Academic Standards or the Graduate Council (for a graduate student appeal) in writing of the faculty member's decision.

#### *Appeal Procedure - University Level - Graduate Student*

If the decision of the College Grade Appeal Committee is unsatisfactory to either the student or the faculty member, that person shall have the right to appeal to the Graduate Council. The appeal must be filed with the Graduate Council within two weeks after the chairperson of the College Grade Appeal Committee has notified the student of the faculty member's decision of whether the grade will be changed. The chairperson of the College Grade Appeal Committee shall forward all reports and written materials in the case to the Graduate Council upon being notified that there will be an appeal. A committee shall be appointed by the Graduate Council to consider the appeal. The committee shall be composed of five members of the graduate faculty who serve on the Graduate Council. No member of the committee from the department in which the appeal originated may participate in the deliberations or vote on the case. The committee shall consider the facts of the case at a meeting using the same procedures provided for at the department and college levels. The committee shall decide whether to approve the student's appeal. A written report of the proceedings and decision shall be submitted to the Graduate Council. The Graduate Council shall then inform the student, faculty member, chair of the department, and dean of the college in writing of the decision in the case. If the student's appeal has been upheld in at least one of the previous levels, and if the committee approves the appeal, the grade will be changed.

#### *General Guidelines*

Before a decision is made at the college or University level, those persons considering the case may request that a committee at a lower level review the case a second time prior to a committee at the higher level making a decision. If the decision is the same at the department and college level, either party may appeal to CAGAS (undergrad student appeal) or the Graduate Council (graduate student appeal) for a rehearing at a lower level. If a lower committee reverses its decision, CAGAS or the Graduate Council shall consider the case in accordance with the above grade appeal procedures. The chair of the appropriate grade appeal committee shall then forward all reports and written material to CAGAS or the Graduate Council. If there is no appeal, the appeal is turned down, or neither of the decisions are reversed, the decisions of the two concurring committees shall stand. If the student's appeal has been approved at the department and college levels, CAGAS will initiate the change of grade in cases involving an undergrad student appeal and the Graduate Council will initiate the change of grade in cases involving a graduate student appeal.

A student who has been restored to good academic standing as a consequence of a successful grade appeal shall be eligible to re-enroll in the University for the semester immediately following the resolution of the case.

In situations where the student's grade appeal is upheld at the departmental or college level and an instructor fails to reply within the specified time limit, it shall be assumed that the professor has decided not to change the grade. In such a case, the student should be advised concerning procedures for appealing to the next level.

#### *Interpretations and Exceptions*

Any questions concerning the interpretation of the Grade Appeal Policy will be resolved by the Graduate Council. The Graduate Council shall be informed of all decisions regarding graduate student grade appeals.