

**MA in Communication
Program Policy Statement
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Master of Arts in Communication Program Policy Statement

The Department of Communication offers a Master of Arts degree in Communication. The basic goal of this program is to produce competent consumers of empirical communication research and theory. A graduate student may concentrate in any of the department's areas of emphasis or may select a more general program. In either case the coursework and related elements of the program will provide the student with the necessary background to undertake the research required to complete a M.A. thesis or to pass the comprehensive examination for successful completion of the degree. The program is designed to prepare a student for admission to a Ph.D. program in the Communication, as well as to aid a student in preparing for a career if the M.A. is considered a terminal degree.

ADMISSIONS POLICY

1. The Department of Communication normally admits applicants to the graduate program once a year for a fall semester start. Applicants applying for admission and a department **graduate teaching assistantship** are required to have their application file completed by *February 1* for admission in the fall semester. Applicants applying for admission only must have their application file completed by May 1. Students are not typically admitted to begin their studies during the spring semester.
2. All applicants must submit an official copy of his/her undergraduate transcript(s) from all schools attended (if applicant had undertaken prior graduate study, transcript from those programs also must be submitted). A Bachelors degree from an accredited program is required for admission. Both total GPA and major GPA are important. Students who have enrolled in our program have had above a 3.0 in both categories and candidates are expected to meet this level.
3. Three letters of recommendation, preferably from academic sources, must be received by the department before the applicant can be considered for acceptance to the program.
4. In addition to the statement which must accompany the graduate application the applicant must write a short essay addressing the following issues: (a) What specific area of Communication are you interested in exploring and which of our faculty member(s) do you consider most appropriate to mentor you in your academic work and why? (b) Are you interested in studying Communication from a quantitative, social-scientific perspective (as opposed to a more critical cultural or interpretive perspective)? (c) Is there any other information, not covered elsewhere in your application, which you would like to share with the department's Graduate Admissions Committee? This essay usually is **three to five pages** in length.
5. Applicants for admission whose native language is not English must take, in addition to the Graduate Record Examination, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (**TOEFL**) and receive a score of at least 650 for the paper based exam or 114 for the internet version (TOEFL iBT). If an applicant is unable to take the TOEFL, the department will also accept scores on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). A minimum IELTS score of 8.5 is expected. All scores must be received before an admissions and/or aid decision is rendered.
6. Applicants should submit a writing sample. This may be an essay, a research project or manuscript, or other piece the applicant believes is a good example of their writing. The sample should be no longer than 25 double spaced pages.

7. A video essay, not to extend beyond one minute, based on the topic, Where do you see yourself in 10 years and how do you see this program assisting you in achieving that goal?

Submission of the above material results in a diversity of information about a candidate's skills, talents, background, experience, career goals, motivation, commitment, and potential for scholarship. This information enables the department to select a class of entering graduate students who individually and collectively have the potential for making a substantial contribution to the intellectual environment of the department, university, and field.

Admission to graduate programs at the University of Delaware is selective and based on the number of well-qualified applicants and the limits of available faculty, infrastructure, and facilities. Those who meet stated minimum academic requirements are not guaranteed admission, nor are those who fail to meet some of those requirements necessarily precluded from admission if they offer other appropriate strengths.

THE APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The prospective graduate student must complete the University application online.

After February 1st, the Graduate Committee meets periodically and makes decisions regarding graduate admissions.

Applicants for assistantships are rated according to their scholastic ability and the needs of the department. The Department of Communication's Graduate Committee will review all applicants and decide on applicants to interview, conduct the interviews with other members of core faculty, and make final decisions about admissions. Assistantships are awarded around February 15th.

THE PROGRAM

1. The basic requirements for an M.A. degree are given in the university graduate catalogue, available from the Office of Graduate Studies. A minimum of thirty credits of graduate level courses (600 or above) are required for the Masters degree.
2. Prior to arrival to the program students will be assigned an initial academic adviser. The adviser chosen will be based upon the students responses to the essay questions in the application for the program so to best align the student with a faculty member who has similar curricular and/or research interests.
3. The Department of Communication offers two alternative tracks for obtaining the M.A. degree: the thesis and non-thesis (i.e., comprehensive examination) track. These differ primarily in terms of (1) the ultimate goals and career direction of the student, and (2) the exit project required of the student. The thesis option is a traditional M.A. degree. This option provides the student with a major research experience, generally in preparation for further graduate study at the doctoral level. The non-thesis or comprehensive examination track is considered a terminal or final degree and is designed for students who do not intend to pursue their education beyond the M.A. degree. Students will be required to declare their intention to pursue one of these tracks at the end of the first year of their program.

Regardless of this choice, the basic core requirements of the program remain the same. Of the **30 hours required for graduation**, 12 hours (4 courses) are required of every student. These courses are:

COMM 601 – *Theory and Epistemology in Communication*
 COMM 603 – *Communication Research Methods – Procedures*
 COMM 604 – *Communication Research Methods – Analysis*
 COMM 606 – *Foundations of Contemporary Communication Theory*

Students who select the thesis option must complete 6 hours of COMM 869, Master's Thesis. Students in the thesis-track will have 12 hours in electives and 6 credits of COMM 869, Master's Thesis; students in the non-thesis track will have 18 hours of electives.

Each candidate for the M.A. degree may take a portion of their graduate work, normally not more than six credits, outside the Communication Department in a related area and may have one member of their committee from this related area. However, a minimum of 24 credits, which include the COMM 601, 603, 604, 606, and COMM 869 credits, must be taken from the Communication Department.

All candidates for the M.A. degree must also enroll in COMM890: Communication Colloquium (0 credits) in each semester that they are enrolled in coursework for a total of up to 4 semesters.

4. The M.A. degree may be general degree or the student may specialize in one of several areas. At present these areas of interest include interpersonal/organizational, media, political, and health communication.
5. As soon as possible after being accepted to the graduate program and arriving at the university the graduate student should contact the department Graduate Director for a general discussion of their proposed program. A graduate faculty member will be assigned upon arrival to the program as their academic advisor.
6. Many of our applicants for graduate study have undergraduate degrees in other disciplines. While this is encouraged, there is a body of concepts and terms with which beginning graduate students should be familiar to allow them to progress through the program. Thus, incoming students who do not have adequate background, as determined from their transcripts, may be required to obtain these concepts. This may be done by taking specific course(s), an independent study course, or by reading on one's own. In no case will credit toward the M.A. degree be granted for this work.

Applicants whose undergraduate programs are in fields other than Communication should contact the Graduate Director for further information prior to the start of their first semester. In conjunction with the Graduate Director a plan will be put in place to complete such work.

7. Each graduate program may include an area of specialization from some other department(s) at the university which may relate to your studies within the Department of Communication. It may be highly specialized and from one department or general and from several different departments. In either case the students must be able to justify its inclusion in their overall program. Up to two courses (6 credits) may be taken outside the Communication department.
8. Independent study (COMM 666) opportunities are also available. Students may take 3 credits of independent study. The independent study hours must be limited because of faculty time. However, they are sometimes necessary to assure the breadth and/or depth a student needs to pursue their research. These should be worked out very carefully with the faculty member and cannot take the place of thesis credit.

9. There is another opportunity for graduate students that can be very important learning experience: the graduate internship. In this program eligible students may take the course, COMM 664, for 3 credits and complete a semester-long internship, typically with a business (such as a public relations firm) within commuting distance. Students have also completed internships with state government officials and/or offices and non-profit organizations. A letter grade is given for this course. Graduate internships normally should be taken late in the student's program. Graduate internships will count as one of the student's elective courses.
10. The Department of Communication offers a small number of teaching assistantships to graduate students. Anyone admitted as a regular graduate student may apply for these assistantships. An assistantship is granted for a 9-month period and is renewable only once. Faculty members occasionally receive grants or other outside funding for research. Additional assistantships may be available through such funding as well as from other departments/units around the University. Students must apply to those units directly to be considered for those awards.
11. Graduate students are expected to maintain a 3.0 G.P.A. or better. No student will be allowed to continue on an assistantship or a fellowship if their cumulative G.P.A. falls below 3.0. Further, the student's assistantship or fellowship will be discontinued if the student's semester G.P.A falls below 3.0 for two consecutive semesters. The first semester it falls below a 3.0 the student will be given written notice of this fact and may be called before the Graduate Committee to explain the circumstances surrounding this situation and to outline what is being done to raise their grade point average. A student whose GPA after one semester is 2.0 or lower will be strongly advised to withdraw from the program and their financial aid will be discontinued.
12. *The meeting with their academic adviser* is designed to review the student's program (present and future) and to ensure that the student has selected an advisor appropriate for their thesis or their comprehensive exam (this adviser may be the same graduate faculty member as their academic adviser). For full-time students and those on fellowships and assistantships, this meeting should be held at the end of the first semester or beginning of the second semester. For part-time students, it should be held sometime between the sixth and twelfth credit hour of graduate work. In addition, full time students must select their permanent advisor by March 15th of their first year of study.
13. Students who select the thesis option must complete 6 hours of COMM 869, Master's Thesis. The thesis may take a number of forms. It may be an actual on-the-job solution to a communication problem in industry, government, or other organization (written in such a form as to serve as a model for further investigation); or a research project employing such methods as historical, descriptive, analytical, field studies, or experimental procedures. In any case there will be an oral examination of the M.A. thesis by the candidate's thesis committee after each member of this committee has had time to review the project thoroughly.
14. Students who select the non-thesis option must complete 6 hours of additional substantive course work within or outside of the Communication Department (approved by the department's graduate committee) on a focused topic or area. They must also successfully complete a written and oral comprehensive examination over the entirety of their course work. The written portion of this examination will be 6 hours in length: 2 hours over research methods; 2 hours over general communication theory; and 2 hours over a specialty topic selected by the student in consultation with their examination committee. There will be an oral defense of the answers written on the comprehensive exam.

15. If some unusual circumstance precipitates a change from the traditional structure of coursework, students must submit a letter outlining their proposed changes for consideration by the department's Graduate committee; this may also need the approval of the Graduate College.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAM—THESIS TRACK

1. In the course of his/her graduate program, the student who selects to complete a thesis will meet with their academic adviser and have two formal committee meetings: the thesis proposal and the oral defense of the thesis. Each of these meetings is designed as a key step to ensure that the graduate student is proceeding satisfactorily toward the degree.
2. Once an advisor is selected and agrees to serve, the advisor and graduate student will meet to discuss thesis topics. The student should present to their advisor a brief outline for a thesis topic. The advisor and graduate student will then ask two other faculty members in the department to join the advisor to sit as a student's thesis committee. If appropriate, one of the three members of the thesis committee may be a member of the graduate faculty from another department. The appropriate form, listing the members of the thesis committee, with their signatures, must be completed. The composition of the thesis committee must be confirmed by the Director of Graduate Studies. The graduate student should then prepare a formal thesis proposal.
3. After consultation with their thesis advisor, students should write a *full thesis proposal* encompassing the first several chapters of their thesis (conceptualization of the problem(s), literature search, and research procedures/method). Students should work closely with the advisor on the development of the proposal. The thesis proposal should be completed in the summer between the first and second year of study; a part-time student should complete the thesis proposal immediately after completing all required coursework.
4. Upon completion and approval of the thesis proposal by the advisor, the advisor and graduate student will arrange for a thesis proposal committee meeting. This meeting will not be convened until the advisor judges the proposal to be of satisfactory quality. Students must provide each member of the thesis committee with a copy of the proposal at least two weeks prior to the meeting. For full-time students this meeting should be held early in the fall semester of the second year of study. Part-time students should schedule this meeting as soon as possible after the completion of the full proposal.
5. The purpose of the *thesis proposal committee meeting* is to provide the graduate student with specific suggestions regarding the conceptualization of the problem/topic, the literature searched, and the specific conduct of the research inquiry. The proposal must be approved by the thesis committee before major thesis research is undertaken. In some cases, the committee may require a student to submit a revised proposal if major changes are mandated. In most cases, however, any changes in the thesis proposal recommended by the committee will be incorporated into the thesis research and overseen by the advisor. If appropriate and in consultation with the advisor, the graduate student may wish to meet formally with their thesis committee after the proposal meeting and before the actual completion of the thesis.
6. Upon completion of the thesis, the student will meet with their thesis committee for an *oral defense of the thesis*. All members of the committee must be present at this meeting. The defense is a public meeting and as such other members of the department and university community may attend if they so desire. At this meeting the student defends the thesis and answers any questions about the thesis and field of communication the committee deems relevant.

7. Often there are corrections, changes, or clarifications to be made in the thesis after the oral defense. Individual committee members must approve the revised thesis prior to the granting of final approval of the thesis. The final approved thesis should then be prepared according to the requirements of the Graduate College and submitted to them. Final approval of the thesis by the advisor and committee members signals successful completion of the M.A. degree.
8. Students should note that the thesis must conform to the style requirements as published by the Graduate College. Students are encouraged to obtain a copy of the Graduate College thesis manual early in their graduate program.
9. In addition to those copies required by the university, students are required to provide their advisor and the department with a PDF of the finished thesis.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAM–NON-THESIS TRACK

1. In the course of their graduate program the student in the non-thesis track will meet with their academic advisor. Each meeting is designed as a key step to ensure that the graduate student is proceeding satisfactorily toward the degree.
2. *The meeting with their advisor* is designed to review the student's program (present and future) and to ensure that the student has selected an appropriate exam advisor for their comprehensive exams if that is not the same individual as their academic advisor. For full-time students and those on fellowships and assistantships, this meeting should be held at the beginning of the third semester. For part-time students, it should be held sometime between the sixth and twelfth credit hour of graduate work.
3. During the semester prior to the semester in which the student expects to take the comprehensive exam, the student should meet with their exam advisor to set up the examination committee. This committee should be made up of the advisor and two other faculty members. Decisions of who will make up this committee will be made through discussion between the student and their exam advisor, and then the student will ask those faculty members that they would like to be on their committee if they are willing to participate. One member of the three-member committee may be a faculty member from a department other than the Department of Communication.
4. The *comprehensive exam meeting with the exam advisor* will serve to coordinate areas of knowledge for the exam and specify the student's areas of examination. This meeting should be held about six weeks prior to the comprehensive exam.
5. The *comprehensive exam* is a six-hour exam. Two hours focus on communication theory, two hours on communication research methodology, and two hours in the selected area of the student based upon their elective coursework. The exam is taken in the department and administered typically on a department computer. Exams are typically scheduled for the two weeks immediately after spring break, with exams occurring on Tuesday and Thursday during the first week and on Tuesday during the second week.
6. The *oral component of the comprehensive exam* will be held as soon as possible after the student has completed the written portion of the exam. The student will meet with members of the written examination committee and will answer any additional questions of the committee members.
7. If the student does not pass one or more sections of the comprehensive exam, these sections may be rewritten prior to the oral exam. Only one repeat written examination will be permitted. Failure to pass the written examination after the repeat will result in the student to be recommended for dismissal from the program.

8. Upon successful completion of the Comprehensive Exam (written and oral) the Graduate College will be informed that the student has been cleared for graduation, pending the passing of any remaining courses with the minimum required grade.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

The Graduate Committee will be responsible for the quality of the MA in Communication program. Both formative and summative methods will be used to assess achievement of the program's learning outcomes. The successful completion and oral defense of a thesis or comprehensive exam is the culmination of all learning outcomes. Each course in the curriculum contributes to this outcome. Each course will be evaluated by students after completion of the course. Course evaluation summaries identifying strengths, weaknesses, and suggested revisions will be completed annually by the faculty members who have taught them. These summaries will be reviewed by the Graduate Committee so that an overall evaluation of the curriculum will take place annually. The Director of Graduate Studies will communicate with faculty in those departments outside of the Department of Communication in which students are taking courses to assure that their content remains germane to the program.

**REVIEW AND SUGGESTED TIMETABLE FULL
TIME GRADUATE STUDENTS**

1. Admitted after February 15.
2. Enter the program the following fall semester.
3. *The First Year: Fall Semester*
 - a. Meet with the Graduate Director and Academic Adviser prior to the start of Fall Classes.
 - b. Enroll for nine credits of graduate course work typically including COMM 601 (Epistemology and Theory in Communication), COMM603 (Communication Research Methods - Procedures), COMM 606 (Foundations of Contemporary Communication Theory), and COMM890 (Communication Colloquium)
 - c. Discuss interests with faculty members.
 - d. In consultation with their academic adviser, select a thesis or comprehensive exam advisor (if not the same individual).
4. *The First Year: Spring Semester*
 - a. Enroll for nine credits of coursework, typically including COMM 604 (Research Methods – Analysis), COMM 890 (Communication Colloquium), and two 3-credit electives
 - b. Finalize permanent advisor and committee members.
 - c. For students in thesis track, continue work on thesis proposal.
5. *Summer between First and Second Year of Study*
 - a. Finish preparing the full thesis proposal.
6. *The Second Year: Fall Semester*
 - a. Enroll for six credits of coursework, including three thesis credits for students in the thesis track and COMM890 (Communication Colloquium).
 - b. For students in the thesis track, hold thesis proposal meeting early in semester.
 - c. Begin thesis research after successful thesis proposal meeting.
 - d. For those in non-thesis track meet with advisor to set up comprehensive examination committee.

7. *The Second Year: Winter Term*

- a. Continue to work on thesis during Winter Term or begin to prepare for comprehensive exams.

8. *The Second Year: Spring Semester*

- a. Enroll for six credits of coursework, including three thesis credits for students in the thesis track and COMM890 (Communication Colloquium)
- b. For students in the thesis track hold thesis defense by mid-March
- c. For those in non-thesis track schedule the comprehensive exam the week immediately following spring break.
- d. Submit the thesis to the graduate school by published deadline.
- e. Take comprehensive exam by university deadlines for graduation.
- f. Graduate in the Spring Commencement.

(NOTE: Part-time graduate students should meet with the Graduate Director after acceptance to the program to establish a schedule for the completion of the degree. They should meet at least once a semester thereafter with the Graduate Director to review their progress.)

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

REQUIRED COURSES:

COMM 601 EPISTEMOLOGY AND THEORY IN COMMUNICATION (3)

General issues in the philosophy of knowledge and science critical for the understanding of theoretical conceptions and a comprehensive survey of theories in communication. **(REQUIRED)**

COMM 603 COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS – PROCEDURES (3)

Introduction to the communication research methods including general research procedures, sampling, laboratory research and experimental design, survey research, field research, content analysis, and longitudinal research. **(REQUIRED)**

COMM 604 COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS – ANALYSIS (3)

Introduction to the tools and techniques of data analysis in communication research including descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing, inferential statistics, as well as advanced statistical procedures. **(REQUIRED, COMM; 603 pre- or co-requisite)**

COMM606 FOUNDATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY COMMUNICATION THEORY (3)

This course reviews foundations of Communication theory and connects them with contemporary theorizing. Formative scholarship inclusive of diverse perspectives, multiple schools of thought, and meta-challenges of the discipline will be discussed within a social science orientation. **(REQUIRED)**

COMM 890 COMMUNICATION COLLOQUIUM (0)
 Feature faculty, student, and guest presentation of recent research. **(REQUIRED)**

ELECTIVE COURSES

COMM 609 PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN PLANNING (3)

Comprehensive recap of the Integrated Marketing Communication function, with an emphasis on public relations research, objectives, strategies, integrated tactics, and campaign evaluation. Utilizes a small team "service learning" setup, wherein the teams adopt a community non-profit organization and work closely with Board and staff members to produce and present a comprehensive public relations campaign plan.

COMM 610 ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION THEORY (3)

An examination of major theories of organizations including functionalist paradigm; interpretive paradigm; neoclassical paradigms (classical, social exchange systems theory, structural systems theory); and modern paradigms (technological systems theory adaptive systems theory, integrative organizational theory).

COMM 613 ADVANCED PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT (3)

Course focuses on case studies and tactics that public relations practitioners need to know in corporate, non-profit, government, education, agency, entertainment, or media settings. Includes a strong emphasis on social media and e-portfolio development.

COMM 617 COMMUNICATION AND THE MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT (3)

An overview of communication and the conflict process in face-to-face interaction. Emphasis on theories concerning the structure, analysis, and management of conflict situations.

COMM 618 TOPICS IN MEDIA COMMUNICATION (3)

Current directions in mass communication theory and research, cable television, radio and TV regulations, public policy. May be repeated up to three times with different topics.

COMM 621 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION (3)

Enhances students' understanding of cultures, communication and inter-cultural communication processes. In addition, communicative strategies for improving inter-cultural communication discussed

COMM 623 COMMUNICATION, ADVERTISING AND THE CONSUMER (3)

Introduction to the content of advertising, including portrayals of gender, race and sexuality. Investigates the relationship between advertising and the individual consumer, particularly what advertising's cognitive effects can be and how they may result in behavioral effects.

COMM 624 MEDIA MESSAGE ANALYSIS (3)

Examination of methodology used to study media content and effects. Focus on past and ongoing research in broadcast, nonbroadcast, and print media. Students will gain an understanding of how to conduct and assess research relating to the mass media.

- COMM625 ADVANCED TOPICS IN POLITICS AND BROADCAST JOURNALISM (3)**
Topics vary and focus on significant areas in politics and broadcast journalism. Topics may include crises news, political documentaries, broadcast presentations and credibility.
- COMM 630 INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION THEORY (3)**
An examination of the theoretical orientations taken by scholars who study interpersonal relationships as well as a number of focused research areas. Of particular importance is the development of an understanding of the role of communication in creating and maintaining relationships.
- COMM 640 TOPICS IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION (3)**
Significant research, theories, and literature in communication, research design and theory building. May be taken 3 times with different topics.
- COMM 642 TOPICS IN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION (3)**
Significant research, theories, and literature in communication, research design and theory building. May be taken 3 times with different topics.
- COMM 643 COMMUNICATION AND EMOTION (3)**
Introduces students to the role emotion plays in interpersonal communication and how communication influences our feelings. The course presents students with skill building exercises and writing assignments that are designed to put what they learn in the classroom into action in the real world.
- COMM 650 MEDIA EFFECTS**
Examines history and nature of research on effects of mass media, particularly television, in such areas as attitude change, socialization, role modeling, and sex and violence.
- COMM 652 COMMUNICATION AND PERSUASION**
An examination of how influence is created and resisted through communication in various settings, including personal relationships, public relations, advertising and political campaigns. Emphasis on contemporary theories of persuasion and attitude change, with applications to the various content areas studied.
- COMM 653 HEALTH COMMUNICATION (3)**
Examines theories and methods for studying relationships between media and health such as media portrayals of health issues; public engagements with health info and technologies; and the role of media in health promotion.
- COMM 654 CHILDREN AND THE MEDIA (3)**
Media research and theory as they relate to children. Substantive areas include children's use and comprehension of media, content of children's television programming, television and the family, children and advertising, and the media's contribution to social values and roles.
- COMM 656 COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS (3)**
An introduction to the concepts and research related to communication processes in organizational settings with emphasis on both traditional and interpretive approaches.

- COMM 658 SCIENCE COMMUNICATION (3)**
This course examines how scientists communicate with journalists and citizens; how news and entertainment media present science and scientists; how messages about science shape public perceptions; and how citizens engage with scientific issues.
- COMM 664 INTERNSHIP (3)**
Practical on-the-job training in the student's field of interest, i.e., mass media/public relations or interpersonal communication. (Meet with the Internship Director to schedule)
- COMM 666 SPECIAL PROBLEM; Independent Study (3)**
Limited to graduate students. Permission of instructor required. (Application forms available in the departmental office.)
- COMM 670 MEDIA THEORY (3)**
Examination of theories of mass communication focusing upon media; society and the individual; sociocultural influences; the social context of the broadcast media; theories relating to the effects of media violence; personal influence; social learning theory; diffusion theory; and media effects.
- COMM 676 SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION (3)**
Focus on how and why people use social media. Various social media platforms will be explored and their effect on communication processes will be examined.
- COMM 685 ANALYSIS OF FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION (3)**
An examination of methods for analyzing face-to-face interaction, message construction, and message interpretation.
- COMM 869 MASTER'S THESIS**