

# Master's Program Student Handbook



## Media & Information Studies

College of Communication Arts & Sciences

Michigan State University

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# M&I Master's Program GRADUATE HANDBOOK

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## Introduction

We want to give you a warm welcome to the media and information studies master's program. Our department is ranked among the top in our field. The faculty and staff are dedicated to a standard of excellence, and demonstrate this through their cutting-edge research, dedicated teaching, and service to their areas of expertise. Media and Information studies encompasses a wide variety of applications that impact systems that are foundational to today's world.

This handbook is to guide media & information master's students to understand our policies and procedures so they can make successful progress towards satisfying the requirements of the degree. Any rules and requirements set by Michigan State University, or The Graduate School take precedence if there is any conflict in what is in this handbook.

Our master's program is an exciting and dynamic field to study, but will require a deep commitment by you, as a learner, to take responsibility and pursue excellence and integrity in your own work. It is the responsibility of each student to be responsible for reviewing the contents of the handbook and keeping a copy for their records. If there are changes to the degree requirements, the student has the option of following the rules and guidelines that were active when they entered the program, or to comply with the new changes to the program. Degree requirements are detailed in the [MSU Academic Programs documentation](#). If there are any conflicts with information in this handbook and information from [the Graduate School](#) and [Michigan State University](#), the information and policies at the higher organizational standing will prevail.



## Department Contact Information

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## Links to Select University Resources

[Academic Programs Catalog](#)

[Anti-Discrimination Policy \(ADP\)](#)

[Code of Teaching Responsibility](#)

[Disability and Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#)

[General Student Regulations](#)

[Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities \(GSRR\)](#)

[Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities](#)

[Integrity of Scholarship & Grades](#)

[Law Student Rights and Responsibilities \(LSRR\)](#)

[Medical Student Rights and Responsibilities \(MSRR\)](#)

[MSU Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising](#)

[MSU-GEU Contract](#)

[Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct](#)

## 1. Program Overview

The aim of the Media and Information master's program is to prepare individuals as professionals in a broad range of positions in information and media industries or to prepare them to continue their studies in a Ph.D. program. Graduates of the program are expected to master the professional competencies required for success in these areas. Students have several options to customize their program of learning, ranging from developing career-based skills, more in-depth programs, or preparing for Ph.D. studies.

The Department is a community of scholars that attracts students from around the world who, together with our faculty, celebrate ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity for the benefit of all. Students are expected to be an active part of the intellectual life of the Department and to maintain professional and supportive relations with faculty, staff, and with other students. There are many opportunities in our department, in our

college, and across campus to become engaged and contribute overall to the MSU experience.

Our program is designed to provide the expertise needed in the fields we represent, and at the same time to allow flexibility to tailor your educational experience to meet your specific goals. Students should take the initiative to talk about their career goals with their academic advisors and work with them to choose classes and experiences that allow the student to learn the skills needed to meet their goals.

There are opportunities for students to participate in committees and activities that help shape the future of our program. These will be discussed at orientation and there will be notifications of these opportunities as they arise. These include university wide affiliations such as the [Council of Graduate Students](#).

We seek to attract and retain a diverse group of graduate students that brings their various experiences and viewpoints. Thus, we encourage thoughtful and responsible interactions. All students are responsible to do all their work thoughtfully, ethically, and with the highest standards.

## 2. Program Components/Plan Options

### Areas of Focus

The growing areas of **games design & study**; **human computer interaction/ UX design**; **media policy**; and **media management** are creating exciting new careers in the information age. The master's. programs in M&I prepares you to have the skills to lead research and design in these dynamic areas. Faculty have set up a sequence of classes in these areas that include necessary skills and knowledge needed to excel in these fields. Students are not limited to these areas of study and can tailor an individual plan to pursue their own focus under the guidance of their advisor.

### Basic elements to complete the master's degree

A minimum of 30 credits is required for the master's degree in Media and Information under either Plan A or Plan B. For classes to count towards a degree they must be at least a 3.0 or above.

- All students must complete at least **five of the MI 800 core courses** as shown below.
- Following the student's plan of study, they should successfully complete additional credits for a total of at least 30 credits.

- All students must choose a **plan A**, with a thesis, or **plan B**, with a project or poster as their completion requirement.
- Students must complete MSU required trainings such as: [RCR](#) (responsible conduct of research), [RVSM](#) (relationship violence & sexual misconduct), [SARV](#) (sexual assault and relationship violence) and [Bystander training](#), as well as [DEI](#) (diversity, equity and inclusion) initiatives. These are administered through the Ability system and tied to student records.
- International students are all accepted on a provisional status. They must complete language requirements set forth by MSU, the Graduate School and the Media & Information Department before this status is lifted and they are able to enroll without restriction.

## Special options

### Graduate Certificate in Serious Game Design & Research

This three course certificate is intended for game industry professionals, educators, and media specialists, who want to better understand serious game design, theory, and player research. This certificate is open to both degree granting and non- degree granting students and is transcriptable. The certificate can be completed entirely online and does not require being admitted to the overall MI master's program. Students desiring this certificate need to apply to the specialization. [More information is here.](#)

### Linked Bachelor of Arts in Information Studies/ Games & Interactive Media with the master's degree in Media & Information

The linked program allows students to use up to 9 credits from MI 400 level classes to count towards both the master's and the bachelor's degree. Admission to the program must be made prior to the completion of the semester where credits are shared. Successful applicants to the program have a minimum undergraduate grade-point average of 3.50, a statement of goals for the master's degree, at least two letters of recommendation from faculty in the Department of M & I and the other items required for master's applicants. More details are on our [department website](#) and applications are started in the normal application portal. Within the first semester of dual enrollment, the student's graduate degree program advisor must be identified. When the student has completed their bachelor's degree, the appropriate graduate degree guidance committee is established. The advisor and committee assist the student in developing a program of study for the graduate degree. Credits completed prior to admission to the linked program cannot be applied toward a graduate degree program.

### 3. Degree Requirements

#### General Requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Media and Information

A minimum of 30 credits is required for the master's degree in Media and Information under either Plan A or Plan B.

1. Select a Minimum of 5 Courses from Below (15 credits):

MI	803	Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods	3
MI	820	Theories of Media & Information	3
MI	830	Foundations of Serious Games	3
MI	831	Theories of Games & Interaction Design	3
MI	839	Game & Project Design Studio I	3
MI	841	Understanding Users	3
MI	844	Interaction Design	3
MI	845	Interactive Usability & Accessibility: Design & Evaluation	3
MI	846	Game & Project Design Studio II	3
MI	850	Media & Information Policy	3
MI	851	Understanding & Managing Social Media	3
MI	852	Media & Information Economics	3
MI	861	Media & Information Technologies in Organizations	3
MI	862	Managing Digital Enterprises	3
MI	875	Information & Communication Technology for Development	3
MI	877	Global Media & Communication	3

Contact the Academic Program Coordinator if you need clarification.

2. Enroll in 4-6 Plan A Thesis (MI 899) or Plan B Project (MI 898) credits respective to your graduation plan. Students who pursue a Plan B Poster do not take project (MI 898) credits.

3. At least 16 credits in the degree must be at the 800-level or above. Only 1 credit from Thesis or Project may count towards the 16-credit minimum.



4. Additional elective course work to meet the 30 credits required for the degree can consist of with courses at the 400-level or above (not 300 level courses or below), independent study credits (MI 890), internships credits (MI 893), or 800 level credits from other departments. All electives must be approved by the student's Academic Advisor and the MI master's director.

5. There is a six-credit maximum for independent studies and internships combined towards the degree.

6. There is a maximum of 36 credits a student can enroll for towards the degree. Requests for overrides need to go to the registrar's office. Should the number of credits go above 45 the RO will confer with the Graduate School before considering the request for an exception.

### Plan of Study

Each M.A. student in the Department of Media and Information must submit a Plan of Study. The form may be obtained online at our [department website](#). The plan of study is intended as a guide for new students to create a plan to successfully complete the degree requirements and to ensure that the academic program is appropriate for the student's needs. Incoming M.A. students must meet with their advisor during their first week in the program and develop a Plan of Study prior to filling out the GradPlan in the Campus Solution (CS) system. Review the GradPlan training materials on the Graduate School's website: [GradPlan | Student Information System | Michigan State University \(msu.edu\)](#)

M.A. students should complete and submit their plan of study to the Academic Program Coordinator by the end of the 2nd week of their first semester of enrollment, where it will be filed with the student's other academic records. Failure to submit a completed and properly signed form by this deadline will result in an academic hold being placed on the student's record. This hold will prevent a student from enrolling in future classes until the Plan of Study form has been received by the Academic Program Coordinator.

Modifications to the plan of study, are common as a student refines their goals and research focus. If there are changes, these must be changed in GradPlan. Once changes are submitted, the student's advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies will review and approve or deny the changes. Modifications are treated as submitting an entirely new plan of study. If a student changes concentrations, then their core requirements, required electives, and prerequisites may also change. The student is responsible for prerequisites on record, which are appropriate to the new course of study chosen.



Please note: It is the student's responsibility to fulfill all the requirements for the degree in accordance with this manual and any changes that are announced. If a prerequisite waiver is requested, it is the student's responsibility to be sure that the waiver is properly signed and in the student's file. Students are strongly advised to keep copies of all documents related to the requirement categories and to monitor their own progress. Faculty advisors should be used to help in academic and career planning and to clarify requirements, if necessary, but not to count credits in the various requirement categories, nor monitor progress. If the student wants to review their progress, they can review their milestones in GradPlan. Students can also contact the Academic Program Coordinator as they can give a full account of degree requirements and current progress.

### **International Student Requirements/ Provisional Status**

MSU has TOEFL/ IELTS minimum scores of 80, our department has a minimum TOEFL of 85. No subscore below 19 for reading, listening, and speaking and no subscore below 22 for writing. The minimum average score for IELTS is 6.5 with no subscore below 6.0. Duolingo scores must be 105 or higher. [See MSU Graduate Studies website for more information.](#) Our International students who have a bachelor's degree from a U.S. institution do not need a TOEFL/IELTS score.

Those who have TOEFL scores sufficient for MSU admission, but lower than our department standards will be required to take the MSU English Language test at the [MSU ELT center](#). The MSU ELT test is free to admitted students. The master's committee may offer conditional acceptance to international students at their discretion. These students would also need to take the MSU ELT before their status is changed to unrestricted. Those who are accepted into the program conditionally will be advised to set up a test with the center before the start of classes. Students need a score of 85 overall in the MSU ELT, and not below 80 in each subsection (writing; reading; speaking & listening) to enroll unrestricted in MI 800 level classes. Students who get lower scores will be enrolled in the appropriate Advanced Academic English (AAE) classes.

### **Linked Students/ Dual Enrollment**

If a student is accepted to the linked/dual enrolled program, a maximum of 9 credits, for classes at the 400-level or higher, and with a grade of 3.0 or higher, from the undergraduate degree program can be shared between the bachelor and master's degrees. These 9 credits will be charged at the undergraduate tuition rate.

If a student wants to count a course solely towards their graduate degree, before they have finished their bachelor's degree, they must notify their advisor, Graduate Director, and Academic Program Coordinator before the end of that semester. The student will be charged for that identified course at the graduate tuition rate. If the student fails to notify the appropriate parties prior to completing their bachelor's degree, the course will not be transferred to the graduate program.

A student pays undergraduate tuition up to the total number of credits required for a first bachelor's degree(s) in their major, at which point graduate tuition is applicable. A student will be classified as an undergraduate until the minimum number of credits required for a first bachelor's degree is completed. When the student is classified as a graduate student, eligibility begins for graduate assistantships, other forms of graduate student financial aid, or those services and prerogatives normally reserved for graduate students.

Some colleges with programs that require more than 30 credits for the master's degree may apply more than 9 credits toward the master's degree but not more than 30% of the total number of credits required for the master's degree. Credits applied to a master's degree are not eligible to be applied to any other degree program.

In semesters when the student is dually enrolled, federal financial aid designated for the first bachelor's degree (Federal Pell Grant and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)) will be determined based upon the number of undergraduate credits only. Awards will be manually adjusted as necessary once the student is registered. Students are not eligible for financial aid as a graduate student until the semester after the minimum number of credits required for the first bachelor's degree has been earned.

## Residence Requirements

A minimum of 6 credits in the degree program must be earned in person on the East Lansing campus or at approved Michigan State University instructional sites. Requests for waivers of this requirement must be submitted by the department, which will in turn be submitted to the college and then to the Dean of the Graduate School.

## Requirements for Acceptable Academic Standing

The MSU grading scale is 4.0, 3.5, 3.0, 2.5, 2.0, 1.5, 1.0 and 0.0. Expectations for excellence in academics are high for our students. Credit is awarded at a minimum of 2.0 for graduate students, so it will impact the cumulative GPA but will not count towards the 30 credit requirement to graduate. **When a student receives a grade below 3.0 in more than two 400-level or higher courses taken for graduate credit**



at Michigan State University, or does not have a 3.00 average when 15 credits have been earned, the student is automatically withdrawn from the program

A graduate student who has been withdrawn under this regulation is required to wait a minimum of one calendar year from date of the withdrawal before being eligible to apply for readmission to a graduate program in the College of Communication Arts and Sciences. The student may be readmitted contingent upon repeating one of the three courses in which a grade below a 3.0 was earned, and earning a 3.0 or better grade in the course. The course to be repeated may be specified by the department. Following readmission, any additional grade below 3.0 in any course numbered 400 or higher may result in permanent dismissal.

All courses taken at the 400 level or higher are to be considered as graduate courses and will be subject to the "Grades Below 3.0 Rule". There is a special situation in the case of the graduate student who has been given graduate credit for a course at the 300 level. When this situation arises, we treat such a course as a graduate course, and any grade received below 3.0 will be held against the student and counted as part of the "Grades Below 3.0 Rule". More information regarding Grades Below 3.0 Rule: [MSU RO: Academic Programs](#) .

Classes below a 400 level **do not count towards graduation**. Graduate students taking courses below the 400 level are doing so because these courses are prerequisites to other courses in the program, or for the specific skill or expertise derived from the course. Even though below 400 classes are not counting towards graduation the grade does impact the overall GPA. However, since a grade of 2.0 is considered "satisfactory" in the undergraduate grading system, the graduate student should not have a grade of 2.0 or 2.5 used against their academic standing. Grades below 2.0 are "unsatisfactory" and will be considered as falling within the "Grades Below 3.0 Rule". This means that the students can accumulate grades of 2.0 or 2.5 in any courses taken below the 400 level without risking dismissal.

When a graduate student receives a grade, which falls below the acceptable standard, they are issued a warning letter from the **College of Arts and Sciences' Dean's Office**. Upon receipt of this letter the student should consult with their Academic Advisor with respect to the progress the student is making.

### **Incomplete or retaking classes**

Students make retake classes with permission from the instructor and program director to regain academic standing according to the previous guidelines.

Occasionally students may want to take an incomplete for a class. This must follow [MSU guidelines](#) for an incomplete, but in case of illness or family emergency there

may be more flexibility. The student should contact the instructor as soon as possible and communicate the situation. The student will sign an incomplete agreement with the professor that details what they will do to complete the work in the class. Once the work is completed the “I” for the incomplete is removed from the student records and it does not impact their GPA.

## Grief Absences

Unfortunately, many students face loss of loved ones and need time to manage these important life situations. The student should notify their advisor/major professor and faculty of the courses in which they are enrolled of the need for a grief absence in a timely manner, but no later than one week from the student’s initial knowledge of the situation, b) provide appropriate verification of the grief absence as specified by the advisor/major professor and faculty, and c) complete all missed work as determined in consultation with the advisor/major professor and faculty. It is the responsibility of the advisor/major professor to: a) determine with the student the expected period of absence – it is expected that some bereavement processes may be more extensive than others depending on individual circumstances, b) receive verification of the authenticity of a grief absence request upon the student’s return, and c) make reasonable accommodations so that the student is not penalized due to a verified grief absence

## Annual Review of Progress

All students should complete an annual evaluation form, the approved form from the Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR) is found at the graduate school website for [master’s plan A](#) and [master’s plan B](#) students. The student should fill out the relevant sections and send to their faculty advisor and cc the master’s program director. The faculty advisor will complete their section of the form and send it to the director of the master’s program. After the annual review form is approved, it needs to be sent to the Academic Program Coordinator so they can enter the form into GradPlan for the students.

At least once a year the director meets with the Academic Program Coordinator and the Chair of the Department to review progress of all master’s students. If there are concerns about a student’s progress the director will notify the student and allow them to appeal a faculty advisor’s evaluation. Recommendations based on this review will be communicated in writing to the faculty advisor and the graduate student within two weeks of the meeting, and that report will be placed in the graduate student’s file.

## Independent study

Students desiring MI 890 (Independent Study) and MI 893 (Internship) credit must fill out a special Department form **during the term preceding** the intended registration for this course. Once the form(s) are completed and signed, they must be turned in to the Academic Program Coordinator.

Independent Study (MI 890) is an arranged study under a faculty member that permits the student to follow an individualized investigation into some specific topic or subject area selected by the student. Students are limited to no more than a total of 6 credits in Media and Information independent study (MI 890) and internship (MI 893) courses, combined.

MI 890 credits are not intended to be substitutes for regular course content and cannot be used to substitute for undergraduate courses included in provisional requirements, which themselves do not carry graduate credit. M.A. students may not enroll for MI 490 (undergraduate Independent Study). Independent Study forms are available in the M.A. Office or on [our website](#). Do not fill out the CAS override form, only use the MA override form available on our website.

If human subjects are involved in research associated with the independent study, students must follow IRB guidelines and get prior approval for human subject research. (<http://hrpp.msu.edu/>).

## Master's Internship

We encourage our students to pursue internships during their master's program. This can often be one semester long and offer valuable experience and improve a student's future employment options. We do not provide internships but encourage students to work with their advisors and seek out internships. To get credit for the internship to count towards the master's degree, the project must be approved by the Graduate Director of Media and Information. M.A. Internships count as MI 893 credits under the departmental limit of 6 credits of such coursework. The course work is graded on a Pass/No Pass basis. M.A. Internship forms are available on [our website](#). Many students use their internship experience as the basis for a Plan B poster.

## Degree completion Plan A- Thesis

Students completing Plan A will complete original research and summarize it following the standards set forth by the Graduate School and detailed in the subsequent sections. The student will work closely with their advisor to determine the scope and method of research. If human subjects or animals are used, then proper IRB authorization will be sought. The following sections discuss the selection of a committee and setting a timeline for writing the thesis.

## Degree completion Plan B- Project/ Poster

Students completing Plan B project will work with their advisor and committee to plan the project scope and timeline. The project usually has a deliverable report that demonstrates the student's expertise in doing original research and they will do an oral defense of the project before their committee as detailed in subsequent sections in this handbook. Students who choose the project must take at least 4 project credits up to a maximum of 6 project credits.

Students completing Plan B poster will also work with their advisor to summarize their research experience following the guidelines detailed later in this document. Students doing a poster will defend it to the poster committee at the end of each semester. They do not have to form a committee and they do not take project credits.

## Duration of the program

The maximum time for completing the program is five calendar years from the date of first enrollment. There is no minimum time for completing the degree. A student may petition the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies of the College for an extension if it appears likely that the degree can be completed within a short period of time after the five years have elapsed.

## Timeline and Checklist

The program typically takes one and half to two years. A longer time frame is common if students use their first-year summer semester for an internship. In year one, students complete a plan of study and take all of their basic courses and prerequisite courses. In year two, they complete advanced courses and complete Plan A or Plan B exit requirements. The following is a suggested time frame. All required forms are available on the department website.

For Plan A Thesis Students		
Semester	Action	Form
1	Attend Orientation/ Select Concentration/ Meet with advisor	Plan of Study (pre-semester)
1	Submit Plan of Study and enroll in classes. Add Plan of Study to GradPlan	Indicate interest in any specializations, certificates, and cognate options (pre-semester)
2	Complete Core Courses	Finish core course by end of the first year
2	Select Thesis Chair	Change Advisor form if needed
3	Complete thesis proposal	Assemble thesis committee and do proposal defense. Submit Thesis defense form.
3	Start doing research	
3	Apply to graduate	Apply to graduate in the semester or two before anticipated graduation.
4	Finish course work	
4	Complete gathering data and work on thesis	
5	Defend Thesis and make any required revisions	Final Thesis Defense, submit form to Academic Program Coordinator
5	Submit thesis to graduate school	<a href="#">Electronic Submission to ProQuest   The Graduate School (msu.edu)</a>

For Plan B Project Students		
1	Attend Orientation/ Select Concentration/ Meet with advisor	Plan of Study (pre-semester)
1	Submit Plan of Study and enroll in classes submit Plan of Study to GradPlan	Indicate interest in any specializations, certificates, and cognate options (pre-semester)
2	Complete Core Courses	Finish core course by end of the first year
2	Select Project Chair	Change advisor form if needed
3	Complete Project Proposal	Students must present (defend) their proposed project to their committee. After the defense they submit project proposal form to the Academic Program Coordinator.



3	Summer internship	Students w/o relevant work experience should seek an internship. Can do for credit if desired.
3	Apply to graduate	Apply to graduate in the semester before anticipated graduation.
4	Finish course work	
4	Oral Defense of Project to Committee	Present the completed project to the committee. Submit Project Defense form to the Academic Program Coordinator

For Plan BnPoster Students		
1	Attend Orientation/ Select Concentration/ Meet with advisor	Plan of Study (pre-semester)
1	Submit Plan of Study and enroll in classes submit Plan of Study to GradPlan	Indicate interest in any specializations, certificates, and cognate options (pre-semester)
2	Complete Core Courses	Finish core course by end of the first year
2	Select Poster Advisor	Change advisor form if needed
3	Complete Poster Proposal	Poster students meet with advisor to discuss poster idea. Submit poster proposal form to the Academic Program Coordinator.
3	Summer internship	Students w/o relevant work experience should seek an internship. Can do for credit if desired.
3	Apply to graduate	Apply to graduate in the semester before anticipated graduation.
4	Finish course work	
4	Oral Defense of Poster Defense Session	The poster committee usually meets on the last Friday of classes of each semester. The students present their work and defend their poster. Submit Project Defense/Poster Defense to Academic Program Coordinator

As students are planning their schedule, please be aware that faculty have limited (if any) availability in the summer semester. They should contact their intended committee ahead of time to check their academic plan and to plan any needed meetings during the summer.

### Application to graduate

All students [must apply to graduate](#) before the end of **the first week of the semester in which they want to graduate**. It is fine to apply early. If something happens and you are unable to graduate in the expected semester, that is totally fine. However, you **must apply again** for the semester you want to graduate. For international students changing semester of graduation is much more difficult as the application to graduate could start the paperwork for a change in VISA status. Please consult your

advisor and the Academic Program Coordinator as you get close to graduating to make sure you have all necessary classes and trainings completed to graduate.

### Time limit

Unless otherwise specified, the time limit for the completion of the requirements for the master's degree is five calendar years from the date of enrollment in the first course included for degree certification. The colleges of Arts and Letters, Human Medicine, Natural Science, Nursing, Osteopathic Medicine, Social Science, and Veterinary Medicine permit six years with the following exception: the time limit for the completion of the Master of Fine Arts degree in the College of Arts and Letters is nine years.

Michigan State University must reserve the right to modify or eliminate programs that are described in this publication. In the event such an action is taken, students affected will be advised by their units of the options available to them to complete their degrees. Every reasonable effort will be made to permit students to complete these programs or similar programs.

## 4. Selection of Thesis/Project/Poster Advisor

### Your initial advisor

Initiation and successful completion of independent research or creative activity requires early and continued advice and oversight by a faculty advisor on behalf of the academic unit. Students are assigned advisors at the beginning of their master's program. These are assigned based on the research statements of a student's application packet and the availability of advisors that are closely aligned with the student goals. Students must meet with their advisor before enrolling in their initial classes. Students should take the initiative to meet with their advisor at least once a year to go over their academic progress. [Guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of the student and their advisor](#) are clearly defined by the Graduate School. The advisor is committed to:

#### Commitment to respect and care

- Establishing a relationship based on trust and open communication
- Engaging in ways that are respectful and culturally responsive
- Actively promoting an environment of civility
- Using inclusive and non-discriminatory language

## **Commitment to professionalism, ethics, and integrity**

- Communicating regularly about expectations in the graduate degree program in the disciplinary field
- Promoting the highest standards of integrity in research, scholarship, and creative activities
- Engaging in continuing professional development in mentoring skills

## **Commitment to the professional and personal growth and independence of the student**

- Talking with students about their interests in a range of career paths
- Encouraging and supporting career exploration and professional development
- Supporting mental and physical health

## **Responsibilities of the student**

Students need to take the initiative in meeting with their advisor and maintaining communications. If there are major communication issues the student should contact the director of the master's program to let them know of the issue. Students also are expected to be committed to:

- Meeting University and academic unit requirements for degree completion
- Exploring career options and pursuing professional development opportunities in support of them
- Forming a graduate committee that supports the thesis or project research as well as career and professional development needs
- Practicing uncompromising honesty and integrity according to University and federal guidelines in collecting and maintaining data
- Seeking regulatory approval for research in the early stages of thesis or project work where applicable
- Keeping the faculty advisor apprised on a regular basis of the progress toward completion of the thesis or project

## **Changing your advisor**

Often as a student starts taking classes and exploring their research topic they may find that their research focus has changed, or they may work on a project in a class with a professor and they want to expand that project for a master's Plan B project. In that case, they may want to change advisors. If the student wants to change advisor they should first contact the master's program director. As discussed in the next section, university rules require a specific mixture of committee members, so the director can assist the student in selecting and contacting the new advisor.

After the new advisor approves of working with the student, the student should thank their previous advisor and inform them of the change. The student should also fill out a [change of advisor form](#) and submit it to the Academic Program Coordinator and enter the change in GradPlan.

## 5. Formation of The Thesis or Project Committee

### Committee members

The graduate committee is extremely important in helping guide students to complete graduation artifacts (thesis, project, poster) that are of high quality and helps the student get to their next desired step, whether that is a job in industry or further graduate education.

Our department's faculty has a unique blend of advanced skills in our specializations and students should build a committee that will help them bring rigor to their research and challenge them to high levels of professionalism. All of our faculty have gone through a very competitive process to be hired in our program, thus they are all well qualified in their area of expertise. However, students should be aware that there are several tracks for employment as faculty and some are considered "regular faculty". The Graduate School requirements are that at least one member of each committee be "regular faculty". Also, when faculty are on sabbatical or working on special research projects they may not have time to serve on a committee certain semesters. Students planning their program should also be aware that summer semesters most faculty have very limited availability. Thus, it is important to plan substantially ahead of the semester desired for graduation. Please ask the director of the master's department for a listing of regular and non-regular faculty and faculty availability to know who is eligible to serve on a committee. For more details see [university rules](#) about the formation of a graduate committee.

### Plan A Thesis

The master's thesis is an academic paper recounting original research performed by the student under the guidance of their committee. The development of a proposal, presenting it to the committee, performing the research and writing up the results usually takes two to three semesters or more depending on the complexity of the research. Thus, a student should start assembling a committee as early as possible.

The student should plan ahead to be able to complete the thesis in their desired timeframe. Keep in mind that the student must follow the [guidelines for submitting](#) a thesis at the Graduate School website. After a thesis is defended to the committee and any requested revisions addressed, the thesis must be submitted to the graduate

school and checked for formatting and reviewed. Students submit their manuscript through ProQuest by the deadline date for the given semester. [deadline date](#) for the semester. Please check these dates carefully and allow time for the formatting errors and overall review when setting the defense date. The student needs to have their committee approved to enroll in thesis credits **the student should assemble their committee at least two or three semesters before they plan** to defend their project and graduate. For example, if a student wants to graduate at the end of the spring semester, they should assemble their committee and defend their proposal 9-12 months before they plan to graduate.

The thesis committee consists of **three** faculty members. At least two of the members must be from the media & information department. At least one of the faculty members must be regular faculty. The third member can be regular faculty from another department. The student can have additional members to their committee from outside of MSU as long as there is no conflict of interest and approved by the Graduate School. The student should contact the director of the master's program if they want to have committee members outside the department before forming the committee. There is a limit of one non-departmental committee member. Of particular concern are situations in which a voting member of the committee is from outside MSU and is, in some fashion, connected with the sources of funding for the student's project.

### Thesis proposal Defense

An M.A. thesis is original research that makes a significant contribution to knowledge and is prepared according to the Graduate School guidelines and published. This is a challenging undertaking, hence the need for the student to first develop a proposal. The proposal typically consists of a research statement that includes both the research question(s) and the motivation guiding the thesis, a review of relevant literature and a deduced theoretical foundation, a proposed theoretical model, the envisioned research and data analysis methods, and the implications of the thesis for both theory and practice. It is important to have a detailed proposal, so as to avoid any potential subsequent disagreement among members of the group (i.e. the student and the three advisors). Once the proposal is deemed by the chairperson of the committee to be "ready," it is sent to the other members of the committee and an oral examination date in defense of the proposal is scheduled, with at least 2 weeks' lead time for the committee to review the work. At the examination, the student is expected to give a brief presentation about the thesis. The committee members will ask questions, and either approve the proposal, approve with required revisions, or reject the proposal; in the latter case, the process is initiated again from the start.

If the research uses human subjects it must go through MSU Human Research Protection Program Internal Review Board (IRB) <https://hrpp.msu.edu/click/index.html> approval. The primary advisor will file the application and the student will do the research under their guidance. The student must also have completed required Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training prior to conducting research <https://grad.msu.edu/rcr>

## Plan B Project

Once you have developed a general topic you need to choose a chairperson to serve on your examination committee. The student chooses the Chairperson of the Project and one other faculty member to form the Project Committee. The project Chairperson must be regular faculty or an approved faculty member from the Department of Media and Information. Once you have selected your chairperson, work with them on refining your concept, developing a draft, and ultimately refining a proposal.

The second committee member may be regular faculty from anywhere in the university. With a general topic in mind, the student asks the faculty members if they are willing to serve on this committee. Media and Information faculty interests and research are listed online at the departmental website at <http://mi.msu.edu>. The Academic Advisor is not necessarily a member of the Project Committee if other members of the faculty are more appropriate for the student's selected topic and method. The Project Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies must sign-off on a Project proposal form to which the Project proposal is attached for their review.

The project can take many forms depending on the area of focus and research goals of the student. The project committee consists of two faculty members, one of which must be a regular faculty member (contact the director of the master's program or the academic program coordinator of a listing of faculty member availability for the semester(s) of the project development and defense. To enroll in project credits a student needs to have their committee approved, so **the student should assemble their committee at least the semester before they plan** to defend their project and graduate. For example, if a student wants to graduate at the end of the spring semester, they should assemble their committee and defend their proposal in the fall semester.

## Project Proposal Defense

The student will then need to finalize forming the full committee and then present their project idea to their committee. The committee can ask questions and help the student revise the project during the proposal presentation. Once the project is accepted by the committee, the student will submit the [Plan B Project Approval Form](#)

to the director. This must be submitted and approved by the committee and Director of Graduate Studies **prior to enrolling for any MI 898 credits**. The form must be signed by the committee and Director of Graduate Studies and turned into the Academic Program Coordinator prior to being enrolled for the MI 898 credits.

### Plan B Poster

The student works under the supervision of their Academic Advisor on a Poster that describes the critical portions of a research or practical experience completed concurrently with the student's enrollment in courses. During the semester of graduation, the student must prepare a poster that describes the critical portions of a research or practical experience completed concurrently with the student's enrollment in courses. Examples of experiences suitable for poster presentations include, but are not limited to, independent study, research experiences or design projects outside of coursework, internships, course projects that have been expanded and taken further than the course allowed for, etc. Similar to the Thesis and Project, the Poster is a Completion Requirement through which a student's mastery of the subject matter can be demonstrated. Students who intend to create and present a poster for this Plan B option must also be registered for at least one credit during the semester in which they intend to complete the culmination experience unless they defend their poster in the summer. If the poster is defended in the summer the student needs to be enrolled in at least one credit in the semester immediately prior to the defense. **Students making a poster do not take MI 898 credits**. Students taking Plan B Poster do not need to have a proposal defense but should work closely with their advisor as they are starting to work on their poster to make sure their poster topic and content is appropriate.

## 6. Thesis/Project Defense and Poster Oral Examination

### Enrollment requirement

For both Plan A and Plan B, the student must be registered during the semester in which the examination or evaluation is administered. This requirement may be waived if the examination is administered during the summer session immediately following a spring semester during which the student was registered and/or prior to a fall semester in which the student will be registered.

### Plan A Thesis Defense

Students must submit their thesis to all committee members minimally two weeks prior to the scheduled defense. There should be a mutually agreed upon time to allow

the committee members to read the thesis and offer comments and suggest revisions. Then the student should have time to respond to those comments in preparation for their oral defense. The thesis defense consists of two parts. In the first part the student will summarize their thesis research and explain what they have found and the significance of their research to a public presentation. Students can invite friends or family members if they wish to the public presentation. After the presentation, the committee will meet privately to discuss the oral defense and jointly decide if the student successfully completed their thesis defense and if the thesis needs further revision. Then the committee will notify the student of their decision. The student will then get signatures from all the committee members on the [Plan A Oral Defense form](#) and submit it along with a copy of the thesis to the director of the master's program. The student then needs to submit their thesis to the Graduate School following the [guidelines for electronic thesis](#) and assure the correctly formatted an approved copy is submitted to ProQuest. A copy of the defense form should be given to the Academic Program Coordinator

### **Plan B Project Defense**

The student will set up a time with their committee (two members) to give an oral defense of their research. The defense has two parts. In the first part the student will explain their research and/or do a demonstration of their project. The first part is open to the public and the student can invite family and/or friends if they chose. The second part of the project defense the committee will meet privately and decide if the student has demonstrated they have successfully completed the project. The committee will notify the student of their decision and the student should get their signatures on the [Plan B project defense form](#) and send that along with a copy of any presentation materials to the director of the master's program. The primary advisor on the committee will give the student the grade for all of their project credits at that time. A copy of the defense form should be given to the Academic Program Coordinator

### **Plan B Poster Defense**

The student should work with their primary advisor to go over the material for their poster, to make sure it is meeting academic standards and it conveys the knowledge and skills gained through the master's program. The student should also notify the director of the program that they intend to present a poster. At the end of the fall and spring semester (and if requested, the summer semester) there will be a poster presentation session.

Posters will be presented at a poster session that will take place no later than the Friday before commencement (fall or spring). Poster presentations are expected to last 10-15 minutes, with 5-10 minutes for a question and answer period. As mentioned



above, posters will be evaluated by an evaluation committee consisting of three members: two regular faculty members from the Department of Media and Information, and the Director of Graduate Studies for said Department. The responsibility for serving on the evaluation committee will rotate among the faculty members of the department, so the student needs to ensure the work - vis-a-vis the poster - is communicated effectively among a committee that may not be experts in the student's specific area of work being presented.

Students must attend the poster session in real-time (i.e., not pre-recorded), either in person or via live video conference, to interact with the evaluation committee and present the poster. Students will dress professionally and appear with their poster to answer questions from the evaluation committee and invited guests (faculty, internship company representatives, family members). Non-attendance is grounds for automatic failure.

Posters will be evaluated on a pass-fail basis. Criteria for evaluation will include dimensions related to the content (i.e., originality; relevance; grounding; comprehensiveness; appropriateness of methods/approach and analysis/implementation; interpretation/significance), its organization (i.e., visual design and layout for both aesthetic appeal and informativeness), and its delivery (i.e., professional language; ability to articulate both what they did and why they did it in a clear and effective spoken presentation; ability to respond to questions effectively). While not recommended, students choosing to present work that was done as part of a team must take extra care to ensure that their poster adequately communicates the student's individual efforts and contributions.

The evaluation committee will provide written feedback to students completing the Plan B Poster Presentation. If a student fails the poster evaluation, they will be provided comments that include a rationale and explanation for why the student failed. The student may present a revised version of the poster that corrects areas of the poster or presentation that were deemed insufficient by the committee in the first attempt, in the following Fall or Spring semester. Students may ONLY attempt the poster presentation twice. In cases where the more modest revisions or extensions of the work are required by the Committee, a conditional pass ('satisfactory pending revisions') may be assigned; in these cases, the Chair of the evaluation committee will communicate the required revisions to the student via email along with a deadline. Once the revisions have been completed, the student will communicate said revisions along with a cover letter that outlines how the required revisions were implemented, via email to the Chair of the evaluation committee. Assuming the revised work was deemed satisfactory by the evaluation committee, a 'pass' grade will be awarded.

The student should then get signatures of the committee members on the [Plan B poster defense form](#) and submit it along with a digital file of the poster to the director of the master's program. A copy of the defense form should be given to the Academic Program Coordinator

## 7. Final Certification for the Degree

Students need to apply for graduation by the [end of the first week of the semester where they wish to graduate](#). By a date announced in the Registrar's Office calendar each semester, the Registrar needs--from the Director of Graduate Studies--a list of all certified candidates who expect to graduate that semester. By this date, Plan "B" students should have passed their oral examinations, and Plan "A" students should have submitted approved copies of their theses to their thesis advisors. To graduate a student must have a 3.0 grade point average in courses taken for graduate credit.

Students should submit an "Application for Graduation" by the first week of the semester the student expects to complete his/her degree requirements. This form can be found online at the [Office of the Registrar's website](#). A student who does not complete the requirements for graduation during the semester in which they applied for must reapply for graduation for the appropriate semester that they will complete the degree requirements.

Students must be registered for at least one credit during the semester in which they complete their degree requirements, e.g., complete their required courses and either secure approval for their thesis or pass their heir project/poster oral examination. Even if they have previously registered for all of their 30 credits, they must register for one more credit in their final semester. The exception to this rule is summer semesters, where the student does not need to be enrolled for credit during that semester if they were enrolled in the previous semester, or enrolled for credit in the semester subsequent to the defense. Consequently, it is prudent for Plan "B" students to save at least one of their courses for the semester in which they take their oral exam, and for Plan "A" students who expect to complete their theses after their last semester of classes to reserve at least one credit of MI 899 for the semester in which they expect to defend the thesis.

Assuming that all other requirements are met, compliance with the deadline will enable the Plan "A" degree to be granted at the end of the semester when the official copies are submitted to the Graduate School. Should these copies be submitted after the deadline but before the end of the semester, the degree can be granted at the close of the following semester without the

student needing to enroll for that following semester. (The student will, however, need to apply for a diploma at the beginning of that following semester.) If approval of the thesis should be withheld that semester, they will need to enroll for an additional credit of MI 899 during a subsequent semester when it is likely that the approval will be granted. Plan "B" students who are taking their oral examinations for a second time may meet the registration requirements by enrolling for one credit of MI 890 (Independent Study).

MSU only accepts electronic theses submitted via ProQuest. The [instructions for electronic submissions](#) are available from the Graduate School website.

The target date for the **final approval** of an electronic thesis to the Graduate School for graduating the semester of that submission is **five working days** prior to the first day of classes for the next semester (see future target dates here: [ETD Deadline Dates | The Graduate School \(msu.edu\)](#) ). Be aware that a submission via ProQuest does not mean that the document has been accepted. The review process is interactive and final approval can take anywhere from a few hours to weeks, depending upon the extent of the necessary revisions and how diligent the author is when making the necessary revisions.

Graduation on the semester of the electronic submission is only guaranteed if the document is approved on or before the target date for that semester. Deadline dates for final approval of an electronic thesis to the Graduate School are around the middle of the final month of an academic semester, [precise dates](#) are on the Graduate School website.

## 8. Departmental Policies: Academic and Professional Performance

### Guidelines for Research and Creative Activity

The conduct of research and creative activities by faculty, staff, and students is central to the mission of Michigan State University (see Note 1, below) and is an institutional priority. Faculty, staff, and students work in a rich and competitive environment for the common purpose of learning, creating new knowledge, and disseminating information and ideas for the benefit of their peers and the general public. The stature and reputation of MSU as a research university are based on the commitment of its faculty, staff, and students to excellence in scholarly and creative activities and to the highest standards of professional integrity. As a partner in scholarly endeavors, MSU is committed to creating an environment that promotes ethical conduct and integrity in research and creative activities.

Innovative ideas and advances in research and creative activities have the potential to generate professional and public recognition and, in some instances, commercial interest, and financial gain. In rare cases, such benefits may become motivating factors to violate professional ethics. Pressures to publish, to obtain research grants, or to complete academic requirements may also lead to an erosion of professional integrity.

Breaches in professional ethics range from questionable research practices to misconduct. (see Note 2) The primary responsibility for adhering to professional standards lies with the individual scholar. It is, however, also the responsibility of advisors and of the disciplinary community at large. Passive acceptance of improper practices lowers inhibitions to violate professional ethics.

Integrity in research and creative activities is based not only on sound disciplinary practice but also on a commitment to basic personal values such as fairness, equity, honesty, and respect. These guidelines are intended to promote high professional standards by everyone- faculty, staff, and students alike.

## **Key Principles**

Integrity in research and creative activities embodies a range of practices that includes:

- Honesty in proposing, performing, and reporting research
- Recognition of prior work
- Confidentiality in peer review
- Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest
- Compliance with institutional and sponsor requirements
- Protection of human subjects and humane care of animals in the conduct of research
- Collegiality in scholarly interactions and sharing of resources
- Adherence to fair and open relationships between senior scholars and their coworkers
- Honesty in proposing, performing, and reporting research.

The foundation underlying all research is uncompromising honesty in presenting one's own ideas in research proposals, in performing one's research, and in reporting one's data. Detailed and accurate records of primary data must be kept as unalterable documentation of one's research and must be available for scrutiny and critique. It is expected that researchers will always be truthful and explicit in disclosing what was done, how it was done, and what results were obtained. To this end, research aims,

methods, and outcomes must be described in sufficient detail such that others can judge the quality of what is reported and can reproduce the data. Results from valid observations and tests that run counter to expectations must be reported along with supportive data.

### **Protection of human subjects and humane care of animals in the conduct of research.**

Research techniques should not violate established professional ethics or federal and state requirements pertaining to the health, safety, privacy, and protection of human beings, or to the welfare of animal subjects. Whereas it is the responsibility of faculty to assist students and staff in complying with such requirements, it is the responsibility of all researchers to be aware of and to comply with such requirements.

Recognition of prior work.

Research proposals, original research, and creative endeavors often build on one's own work and also on the work of others. Both published and unpublished work must always be properly credited. Reporting the work of others as if it were one's own is plagiarism. Graduate advisors and members of guidance committees have a unique role in guiding the independent research and creative activities of students. Information learned through private discussions or committee meetings should be respected as proprietary and accorded the same protection granted to information obtained in any peer-review process.

### **Compliance with institutional and sponsor requirements.**

Investigators are granted broad freedoms in making decisions concerning their research. These decisions are, however, still guided, and in some cases limited, by the laws, regulations, and procedures that have been established by the University and sponsors of research to protect the integrity of the research process and the uses of the information developed for the common good. Although the legal agreement underlying the funding of a sponsored project is a matter between the sponsor and the University, the primary responsibility for management of a sponsored project rests with the principal investigator and his or her academic unit.

### **Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities**

Federal (see Note 4) and University (see Note 2) policies define misconduct to include fabrication (making up data and recording or reporting them), falsification (manipulating research materials, equipment or processes, or changing or omitting data such that the research is not accurately represented in the record), and plagiarism (appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit). Serious or continuing non-compliance with

government regulations pertaining to research may constitute misconduct as well. University policy also defines retaliation against whistle blowers as misconduct. Misconduct does not include honest errors or honest differences of opinion in the interpretation or judgment of data.

### **Collegiality in scholarly interactions and sharing of resources.**

Collegiality in scholarly interactions, including open communications and sharing of resources, facilitates progress in research and creative activities for the good of the community. At the same time, it has to be understood that scholars who first report important findings are both recognized for their discovery and afforded intellectual property rights that permit discretion in the use and sharing of their discoveries and inventions. Balancing openness and protecting the intellectual property rights of individuals and the institution will always be a challenge for the community. Once the results of research or creative activities have been published or otherwise communicated to the public, scholars are expected to share materials and information on methodologies with their colleagues according to the tradition of their discipline.

Faculty advisors have a particular responsibility to respect and protect the intellectual property rights of their advisees. A clear understanding must be reached during the course of the project on who will be entitled to continue what part of the overall research program after the advisee leaves for an independent position. Faculty advisors should also strive to protect junior scholars from abuses by others who have gained knowledge of the junior scholar's results during the mentoring process, for example, as members of guidance committees.

### **Confidentiality in peer review.**

Critical and impartial review by respected disciplinary peers is the foundation for important decisions in the evaluation of internal and external funding requests, allocation of resources, publication of research results, granting of awards, and in other scholarly decisions. The peer-review process involves the sharing of information for scholarly assessment on behalf of the larger disciplinary community. The integrity of this process depends on confidentiality until the information is released to the public. Therefore, the contents of research proposals, of manuscripts submitted for publication, and of other scholarly documents under review should be considered privileged information not to be shared with others, including students and staff, without explicit permission by the authority requesting the review. Ideas and results learned through the peer-review process should not be made use of prior to their presentation in a public forum or their release through publication.

### **Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest.**

There is real or perceived conflict of interest when a researcher has material or personal interest that could compromise the integrity of the scholarship. It is, therefore, imperative that potential conflicts of interest be considered and acted upon appropriately by the researcher. Some federal sponsors require the University to implement formal conflict of interest policies. It is the responsibility of all researchers to be aware of and comply with such requirements.

### **Adherence to fair and open relationships between senior scholars and their co-workers.**

The relationship between senior scholars and their coworkers should be based on mutual respect, trust, honesty, fairness in the assignment of effort and credit, open communications, and accountability. The principles that will be used to establish authorship and ordering of authors on presentations of results must be communicated early and clearly to all coworkers. These principles should be determined objectively according to the standards of the discipline, with the understanding that such standards may not be the same as those used to assign credit for contributions to intellectual property. It is the responsibility of the faculty to protect the freedom to publish results of research and creative activities. The University has affirmed the right of its scholars for first publication except for "exigencies of national defense". (see Note 3) It is also the responsibility of the faculty to recognize and balance their dual roles as investigators and advisors in interacting with graduate students of their group, especially when a student's efforts do not contribute directly to the completion of his or her degree requirements.

The University views misconduct to be the most egregious violation of standards of integrity and as grounds for disciplinary action, including the termination of employment of faculty and staff, dismissal of students, and revocation of degrees. It is the responsibility of faculty, staff, and students alike to understand the University's policy on misconduct in research and creative activities (see Note 2), to report perceived acts of misconduct of which they have direct knowledge to the University Intellectual Integrity Officer, and to protect the rights and privacy of individuals making such reports in good faith.

### ***Resources***

"Guidelines on Authorship", Endorsed by the University Research Council, January 15, 1998 (<http://www.msu.edu/unit/vprgs/authorshipguidelines.htm>)

"Integrity in Scientific Research: Creating an Environment that Promotes Responsible Conduct", National Academies Press, Washington, D.C., 2002, 216 pp (<http://www.nap.edu/books/0309084792/html>)

"Research Data: Management, Control, and Access Guidelines", Endorsed by the University Research Council, February 7, 2001 ([http://www.msu.edu/unit/vprgs/research\\_data.htm](http://www.msu.edu/unit/vprgs/research_data.htm))

### ***Notes***

Michigan State University "Mission Statement" approved by the Board of Trustees on , 2008, (<https://president.msu.edu/initiatives/index.html>)

MSU Faculty Handbook, Chapter VI, "Research and Creative Endeavor-Procedures Concerning Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities"  
<https://hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/faculty-handbook/>

Office of Science and Technology Policy, "Notice of Final Policy", 65 CFR 76260.



## Rights to student records

Students have the [right to have a copy of their records](#). They can receive these simply contact the academic program coordinator or the director of the master's program to get a copy of their records.

### 9. Departmental Policies: Integrity and Safety in Research and Creative Activities

As written in the [Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities](#)- "Our collective goal is that MSU graduate students and postdoctoral trainees become globally-engaged citizen-leaders. To help achieve this goal, central to their education and intellectual growth is the ability to conduct quality research/scholarship."

## Academic Integrity

[Plagiarism](#) means presenting, as one's own, the words, creative work or opinions of someone else. It is **imperative** to correctly cite and correctly quote the works of others when writing papers. Students who are caught plagiarizing will receive a "0: for the class per the instructor's syllabus. If a student is accused of plagiarism the first time an [academic dishonesty report](#) will be sent from the instructor to the director of the program, the chair of the department, the dean of research for the college, and the Graduate School. The student will have a meeting with some of these individuals to go over what happened and make sure it doesn't happen again. The could be that the student was unaware of citation protocol or it was accidental. If there are no further incidents of plagiarism when the student graduates, the report will be deleted from the student records. If the student is found committing plagiarism again they will be dismissed from the university. If the student feels the accusation of academic dishonesty is unfair, they can contest the filing through a [process with the university ombudsperson](#).

You commit plagiarism if you submit as your own work:

- Part or all of an assignment copied from another person's manuscript or notes, spoken words, sounds, or images.
- Part or all of an assignment copied or paraphrased from a source, such as a book, magazine, journal, Web page, or creative product.
- The sequence of ideas, arrangement of ideas or images, or pattern of thought of someone else, even though you express them in your own words, sounds or images. Plagiarism occurs when such a sequence of ideas is transferred from a source

without the process of digestion, integration and reorganization in the writer's mind, and without acknowledgement.

- A paper written for you by someone else.
- An entire work or substantive part of a work that you submitted for another course to a second course without the permission of BOTH of the instructors involved.

You are an accomplice in plagiarism and equally guilty if you:

- Allow your paper or creative project, in outline or finished form, to be copied and submitted as the work of another.
- Prepare an assignment for another student and allow it to be submitted as his or her work.
- Keep or contribute materials to a group project with the clear intent that these be copied and submitted as the work of anyone other than the author. (The student who knows that his or her work is being copied is presumed to consent to its being copied.)
- The penalties described in the [Academic Rights and Responsibilities](#) shall apply.

You can avoid plagiarism by:

- Clearly identifying anything you copy directly from another source (e.g., by using quotation marks).
- Citing or otherwise acknowledging all ideas that are not your own, including anything that you copy directly or that you paraphrase, modify or "sample."
- Including appropriate acknowledgments or citations throughout the body of your work, as opposed to merely listing general sources at the end.
- Never "download" anything from the Internet into your work product without acknowledging the source.
- Never use purchased papers or work composed by a service or writing bot
- Consult the helpful [guidance at the library](#)
- Get free help from the [writing center](#) on learning how to paraphrase and cite material
- Get a free [iThenticate account](#) through MSU IT to check your papers before turning them in
- Asking your instructor before a paper is due to verify that you are citing material according to their guidelines for the class

## Ethical Treatment of Human Subjects

Students are **required** to obtain a faculty sponsor and seek the approval of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) prior to

beginning any research or creative projects involving human beings (this includes any internships that are done for credit or independent studies). They must also register as investigators with IRB and take an on-line certification course.

Additionally, students should consult their advisors before undertaking any creative or research project to determine if IRB clearance is required. Such clearances may take 1-7 weeks, or more, to obtain and are specifically required for theses and projects.

Directions and application forms are available at <http://hrpp.msu.edu/>.

## Responsible Conduct of Research

Research integrity is foundational to our scholarship, creative work and core identity as MSU Spartans. It is not only required by rules (including federal, state, research sponsors, and MSU's research and training policies), integrity is essential for our research to have legitimacy and impact. Research integrity is so important to our development as scholars and creators that the Graduate School has developed minimum education requirements for all graduate students regarding the Responsible Conduct of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities (RCRSA, RCR for short).

The Graduate School's RCR program requires (a) initial, basic education, and (b) supplemental, refresher training (see diagram).

Both Plan A and Plan B Master's students must complete CITI modules in their first year. The CITI modules are online. Plan A students will usually need to complete the CITI modules for year two. Students also must complete six hours of discussion based training before graduation. These are traditionally done in face-to-face sessions but currently are done online. [See the graduate website for the schedule and details](#). The university's tracking system [Ability](#) will automatically keep track of all completed units.

## Travel for conferences and research

Students may travel for conferences or to do research to a location away from campus. **Before** students travel they need to [access the latest guidelines](#). Frequently the department has funds to help support travel to present your research at conferences. The director will send out periodic communications to let the students know of available funding. The funding process is detailed on [the department website](#). For travel to areas that may require specific vaccinations or health checks please check the resources at the [MSU travel clinic](#).

## Safety for research and classroom safety

Most media and information labs do not have any dangerous substances, but all students should follow [environmental health & safety guidelines](#). If there ever should

be an emergency on campus or in a specific building there are alerts sent out to all registered students' cell phones and email accounts. Guidelines are also posted about specific safety protocols for [active shooters](#), [fire](#), or tornado warnings inside the door of each classroom in all buildings.

### Authorship, data management, and misconduct in research

We encourage students to participate in academic research and assist faculty members in preparing research for dissemination and publication. MSU has [guidelines for authorship](#) so that students get full credit for the work they do. Be aware that some publications may have guidelines that are different than MSU guidelines. For example, generally speaking the list of authors represents the order of effort and contribution to a paper or research. However, some publications want author names in alphabetical order regardless of contribution to the paper. Authorship should be discussed among the research team before starting a manuscript.

[Data from research projects](#) also must be handled following the guidelines of the funding grant, IRB guidelines, or other legal authorities. Data from research projects must be handled in accordance with the agreed upon protocol and taking extra care to protect from non-authorized users using encryption and password protection as appropriate. Institutional Data must be used, stored, transferred, disseminated, and disposed of in ways that minimize the potential for their improper disclosure or misuse.

If a student observes or suspects misconduct in the research process by fellow students or by faculty, they should first alert the director of the program or the chair of the department, after discussing it with the director or chair. If it is deemed it is misconduct in research, they should follow the procedures set forth by the [research integrity officer](#).

## 10. Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

### Student Conduct

The university strives to offer a safe and supportive learning and working environment to all individuals. Students, faculty and staff are expected to exhibit intellectual curiosity, good cheer, cooperation, and professional demeanor toward each other at all times. They should treat each other with mutual consideration while recognizing the differences between individuals and cultures that we in Media and Information all celebrate. There is no tolerance for students who threaten or harass other students, professors, or faculty. This includes relational violence, stalking and acts of retaliation.

All students are required to complete [relationship violence and sexual misconduct](#) (RVSM) training and follow university policy in these areas.

All faculty, staff and students are obligated to [mandatory reporting](#) of sexual assault or relationship violence. If you hear of an assault there are [protocols to follow to protect both you](#) and the victim.

## Grievances

If you feel behavior has not been appropriate, from another student, faculty or staff member, there are processes to get appropriate help and protection. Grievances, and conflicts of interest between students and their advisors, students and other faculty, students and staff, or between students will be referred first to the Director of Graduate Studies for resolution.

Requests for conflict resolution may be made via email, or a request for meeting during the Director's office hours. All such requests will be handled in confidence. Appeals of the Director's decisions may be made to the Chair of Media and Information and from there to the Dean of the College of Communication Arts and Sciences and/or to the university ombudsman, as appropriate, for referral to the appropriate grievance committees.

At the departmental level, the procedures are described in Article 9 of the departmental bylaws (as adopted by department faculty on December 13, 2013). The Department follows University guidelines and procedures for addressing grievances as described in the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibility Conflicts and by the Office of the MSU Ombudsman Welcome | Office of the University Ombudsperson (msu.edu).

## Office of the University Ombudsperson

Conflicts, disagreements, and issues sometimes arise during the course of a graduate program. If you find yourself in this situation and have exhausted the internal resources for resolving the issue, you may contact the Office of the University Ombudsperson.

The Office of the University Ombudsperson provides assistance to students, faculty, and staff in resolving University-related concerns. Such concerns include: student-faculty conflicts; communication problems; concerns about the university climate; and questions about what options are available for handling a problem according to Michigan State University policy. The University Ombudsperson also provides information about available resources and student/faculty rights and responsibilities. The office operates as a confidential, independent, and neutral resource. It does not provide notice to the University - that is, it does not speak or hear for the University.

Contact the Ombudsperson at any point during an issue when a confidential conversation or source of information may be needed. The Ombudsperson will listen to your concerns, give you information about university policies, help you evaluate the situation, and assist you in making plans to resolve the conflict.

#### **Contact information:**

Office of the University Ombudsperson  
129 N. Kedzie Hall  
(517) 353-8830  
[ombud@msu.edu](mailto:ombud@msu.edu)

Violation of the rules and procedures regarding the M.A. program may result in the student being dis-enrolled; such action would require a majority vote of the M.A. Committee and constitute a recommendation to the department chair.

### **11. Graduate Student Participation in Academic Government**

In addition to participating in intellectual life of the Department, students are urged to take an active role in academic governance through participation in the Department's M.A. Studies Committee, faculty meetings, and the Council of Graduate students.

#### **Student representatives on the master's committee**

The M.A. Committee is composed of faculty members and up to two graduate students. Its functions are:

To assure the highest level and quality of instruction.

- Regular review and evaluation of the graduate curriculum, seeking information and advice from students, faculty, authorities outside the University, including the professional community.
- Regular review and evaluation of the procedures for administering the graduate program, seeking advice and information from students, faculty, administrators, and authorities outside the University.
- Presentation at Department meetings of recommendations for revision of the curriculum, administrative procedures, and admission standards in the graduate program.
- Development and implementation of procedures for communicating administrative and curricular information to graduate students.

The Chair of the M.A. Committee will call for student nominations to the master's committee early in the fall semester. All enrolled M.A. students may vote by e-mail or other means. The two obtaining the highest number of votes will serve for the concurrent fall semester and following spring semester. The person with the highest number of votes will represent students at faculty meetings. The other is the alternate.

Students are also encouraged to become involved in the university-wide [Council of Graduate Students \(COGS\)](#). COGS is important in student life as the advocate for student rights and have numerous enriching activities.

## 12. Work and Resource Use Related Policies

### Hourly positions in the department

The department routinely hires graduate students on an hourly basis. These can include working in labs, research projects, or assisting in classes. The specific details of each position vary widely. The department should inform the student at the time of the job offer as to the hourly rate, the weekly hours expected, the work expectations, and their immediate supervisor. Details of [overall work guidelines are at the MSU Human Resources website](#).

### Research and Graduate Assistantships

Research or teaching assistantships with benefits are usually offered for positions that need a high degree of expertise and/or dedication. Recommendation for the position is by the director of the program. Students who accept an assistantship have enrollment requirements as well as a minimum GPA of 3.0 for each semester they are employed. Assistantships usually include a tuition waiver based on their level of employment, a bi-weekly stipend, and health insurance. [Details are at the Graduate School website](#). Students who have an assistantship have limitations on other work for pay, please discuss any potential conflicts with the master's program director before accepting a position.

Students are encouraged to seek assistantships in other departments or through the Graduate School if available.

Teaching assistantships are covered under the [Graduate Employees Union/American Federation of Teachers](#). See the Graduate School website for details about the [appointment process and responsibilities](#).

### Use of department resources

There are numerous **computer labs** in the communication arts & sciences building. Students are free to use these, following college guidelines and only during times posted when the rooms are available. Labs that are dedicated to specific research teams may only be used with permission of the lab managers. There are also rooms available for small groups and study groups. Please contact the department secretary or the academic program coordinator to reserve the room(s) for use.

Department **printers** are available for use for those employed by the department for use in their official duties. Printing for personal study needs are done through the [MSU print services](#) and printing locations all across campus.

Wifi is available in our building and across campus. There is a guest network that has limited functionality so students are encouraged to [register their devices through MSU IT](#) for fast and easy connection.

### Outside work for pay

Many of our students are employed full time. Students who work full time should take their work demands into account as they make their plan of study with their advisor. Usually, these students do fewer classes per semester to ensure they have adequate time to complete required readings, papers and other assignments. A general guideline is a maximum of 20 hours a week of work for pay if a student is taking full time classes (e.g., 9 credits a semester). If a student works full time they may want to do 3-6 credits a semester. Students are responsible to communicate with their professors and/or advisors of work responsibilities and anything that may conflict with academic deadlines.

## 13. University Resources

### University Resources

There are many resources at MSU, please take advantage of orientations, and check both the department, college and the Graduate school for updated information.

### Diversity, equity, & Inclusion

Diversity, equity, and inclusivity underpin our values and actions. we nurture and promote individuals' varied experiences and ideas, assuring that structures and processes permit full participation by all members of our communities. The Graduate School has [frequent programs, scholarships and assistantships available](#).



## Events

The Graduate School often sponsors [enrichment events](#) as well as trainings.

## Forms

Many special situation such as funds for emergencies are available. The required forms are on the [Graduate School website](#).

## Graduate Life and Wellness

There are many organizations that are available to [enrich student life](#) and offer support and help.

## Health Center

MSU has resources for students at [Olin Health Center](#), the Clinical Center, and in the neighborhoods. Each student gets three free visits per academic year. Check out the website and call for an appointment.

## Libraries

[MSU has several libraries](#) and our department has our own [subject librarian](#). They have resources for printing posters, a print center, even 3D printing. They also have multi-media study rooms for group or individual study. They have a branch of the writing center most evenings and refreshments for help you stay fresh. MSU also has a business library at the Law building to help with business specific resources.

## Mentoring

There are resources on [mentoring and workshops](#) and training.

## Office for International Students and Scholars

Resources for [international students](#).

## Policies and Procedures

Basic [policies and guidelines](#) for teaching assistantships and research assistantships.

## Professional Development

[Resources](#) to learn about teaching development, career development and research

## Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities

MSU has a tremendous center to help with maximizing ability and opportunity. If students have special needs, such as they might require extra time for exams, or any accommodations they should [contact RCPD and get the required paperwork](#).

## Traveling Scholar Opportunities/ Study Abroad

We often have study abroad opportunities, usually from groups within the College of Communication Arts & Sciences. Many of these are temporarily suspended, but hopefully they will start again soon. Any students traveling should review the policies at the [Office for Global Health Safety and Security](#) before making any travel arrangements.

*There are many other resources to explore!*

Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives

[Student Affairs & Services](#) (Fitness and Recreation)

[The Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship & Innovation](#) (If you have an idea for a business, they can help turn it into a reality)

[The Writing Center](#)

[University Committee on Graduate Studies](#)

[University Outreach and Engagement](#)

[WKAR radio](#)

[WKAR television](#)