Master's Program
Student Handbook

Media & Information

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 a warm welcome to our incoming students in the Media and Information master's program. Our 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 requires a deep commitment by students, to take responsibility and pursue excellence and integrity in their own work. It is the responsibility of each student to review 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.

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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 professional studies or 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. 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. Thus, we encourage thoughtful and responsible interactions. All students are responsible to do all their work thoughtfully, ethically, and with the highest standards. 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 a student's educational experience to meet their 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, research labs, 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.

2. Program Components/Plan Options

Areas of Focus

The growing areas of games research and design; human computer interaction/ usability (HCI/UX); and media policy are creating new and exciting jobs. The master's program in M&I prepares students to have the skills to lead research and design in these dynamic areas. A team of faculty have selected 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 within our department 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 in Degree Requirements.

- 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: RECR (responsible ethicial 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

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.

Shared Programs/Shared Programs-UG2G: Bachelor of Arts in Information Studies/ Games & Interactive Media with the Master's Degree in Media & Information

The shared program allows MSU undergraduate students to use up to 9 credits from MI 400 level classes to count towards both the master's and the bachelor's degree.

If a student is interested in sharing classes, they can fill out the Shared Program Form once the student has **completed 56 credits** and **before they begin the classes they wish to share**. To initiate interest in a Shared Program, students complete the Request for Shared Enrollment Status available on The Graduate School Web site (under Forms, Shared Programs). Shared classes must have a 3.0 or above to be shared.

Upon entering their final year of their bachelor's program, students will then apply for admission to graduate study. Completion of the form does not guarantee future admission into a graduate program. Student applications are reviewed by the Master's committee following the standards set for all applicants.

Students must complete their first bachelor's degree prior to beginning their graduate degree.

Admission to the program must be made prior to the completion of the semester where credits are shared. Successful applicants should review our department website for application details.

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 submission of the shared programs form cannot be applied toward a graduate degree program. 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 studen

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.

Required

1. The following core course (1 credit):

MI	810	Media and Information Seminar	1

2. At least one of the following theories courses (3 credits):

MI	820	Theories of Media and Information	3
MI	831	Theories of Games and Interaction Design	3

3. At least one of the following methods courses (3 credits):

MI	803	Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods	3
MI	841	Advanced Methods of Understanding Users	3

4. At least three of the following specialization classes (9 credits):

MI	839	Game and Project Design Studio I	3
MI	844	Interaction Design	3
MI	845	Interactive Usability and Accessibility: Design and Evaluation	3
MI	846	Game and Project Design Studio II	3
MI	847	Special Topics in Games	3
MI	850	Media and Information Policy	3
MI	851	Analytical Research Methods for User Generated Content	3
MI	861	Media and Information Technologies in Organizations	3
MI	862	Media and Information Project Management	3
MI	875	Information and Communication Technology and Development	3
MI	891	Special Topics in Media and Information (any section)	3

5. 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. Not more than 6 elective credits may be taken from outside the college may be counted toward the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Media and Information.

6. Enroll in 4-6 Plan A Thesis (MI 899) or Plan B Project (MI 898) credits
Enroll in either thesis or project credits depending on your program. Students who pursue a Plan B Poster do not take project (MI 898) credits.

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

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

9. 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 Student Information System (SIS). 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 may 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 the course plan section of the GradPlan tile. 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 their focus area, 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 checklist 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 acceptance

If international students are admitted on a provisional status, they are required to take the English Language Test (ELT) provided by Michigan State University prior to enrolling for courses, and placement into courses will be done according to the test results. Link to ELT information: [MSU English Language Test (MSUELT) – English Language Center](). The test is free to admitted students.

The department requires a minimum score of 85 in each of the sub- categories: reading, writing, and listening/speaking. If an international student recommended for provisional admission does not pass the categories with a score of 85, they will be required to take a semester or more of the applicable Advanced Academic English (AAE) courses, these are charged the applicable master's student rate. Students might not be able to enroll for any additional academic courses until they get a 3.5 or better in the AAE class or 85 or better on a subsequent EL test. Once the student has successfully completed the recommended English Language courses, their status will be switched from provisional to regular and students can enroll in their MI 800-level classes per their academic plan. We work closely with students on provisional status to try to help them make timely progress in their classes even when they are in provisional status, please talk to the director or Academic Program Coordinator for details.

Our program is academically rigorous and require high levels of academic reading and writing to succeed. These guidelines are to help students and ensure they are ready for classes before they enroll.

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. College of Arts and Sciences Acceptable Academic Standing policy.

When a graduate student receives a grade, which falls below the acceptable standard (3.0), 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. When a student receives more than two grades 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 the 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 will result in permanent dismissal. Courses below the 400 level may also be included under this regulation at the discretion of the individual academic unit. While permission may be granted by the student's academic unit chairperson and the associate dean of the College to repeat a course in which a grade of less than 3.0 has been earned, subsequently earning a grade of 3.0 or higher does not eliminate the first earned grade in the course as one of the two allowed under this regulation.

While permission may be granted by the student's academic unit chairperson and the associate dean of the College to repeat a course in which a grade of less than 3.0 has been earned, subsequently earning a grade of 3.0 or higher does not eliminate the first earned grade in the course as one of the two allowed under this regulation.

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.

Incomplete or retaking classes

Occasionally, students may want to take an incomplete for a class. 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. Students have half way through the following semester to complete the incomplete work or they will receive a grade of 0.0, unless an extension is filed. This must follow MSU guidelines for an incomplete, but in case of illness or family emergency there may be more flexibility.

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

Grief Absences

Unfortunately, many students face loss of loved ones and need time to manage these important life situations. The student should a) 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.

If employed as an GA or TE, the graduate student must also notify their employer. Both employer and student will swiftly communicate to determine how the student's responsibilities will be covered during their absence. Graduate teaching assistants (TAs) should refer to the bereavement policy in GEU contract Article 18.

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 on our department website. The student should fill out the relevant sections and send to their faculty advisor and cc the master's program director and Academic Program Coordinator. 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, the student needs to submit the form into GradPlan in SIS 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.

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. An 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. 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

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 The independent study for is on our website.

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 between MI 893 and MI 890. 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. Students are welcome to have an internship while completing their program without enrolling into internship credits.

4.   Selection of Thesis/Project/Poster

The 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 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 detailed in the Graduate School Publication: MSU Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising.

As students refine their goals, they usually work with the MA director to find a primary advisor to help them complete their desired track and their desired area of expertise.

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. Students need to complete 4- 6 MI 899 thesis credits. Students enrolled in the Plan A thesis track are often going on to pursue a Ph.D. or work where a detailed example of their skills in research and communication are desirable. The thesis is a published document that demonstrates high standards of writing as it becomes a public document, available to other researchers and citable. You will work with the steps outlined by the Graduate school to properly format your thesis and submit it for publication through ProQuest.
Details on the steps for thesis approval are on the graduate school website – be aware there are strict thesis submission deadlines.

Plan B- Project

The project is a portfolio building plan that helps students to advance their future in the professional field. Once students are in the program, they often find an idea that they would like to pursue to develop for their project. We encourage students to talk to the faculty member that has expertise in that area to discuss their project idea.

Plan B - Poster

Often students will make posters to demonstrate the work they did in an internship. This is helpful for those who are already working full time and do not need to improve their portfolio or those who have done proprietary research work in their internship. The poster is similar to those presented at an academic conference. The poster does not need a committee. The student should talk to the MA director or their advisor about the suitability of the poster. The student will do supervised work to prepare for the oral examination before the department committee.

Responsibilities of the advisor

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 an 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 on our website and submit it to the Academic Program Coordinator.

5. Formation of The Thesis or Project Committee

Advisors and committee members

The student's advisor and 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. The primary advisor may be chair (head) of the committee, or the student may select different faculty members for their committee and the chair of the committee becomes the student's new primary advisor.

Our department's faculty has a unique blend of advanced skills in our specializations. 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. Students should 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.

With the approval of the chairperson, an exception may be granted to allow an Emeritus faculty member to serve as one of the three required faculty members on a Plan A master's student's committee; in addition, an Emeritus faculty member may continue to serve as the chairperson of an examination 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.

Committee

The student should plan ahead to be able to complete the thesis in their desired time frame. 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 two of the faculty members must be regular faculty. The third member can be regular faculty from another department or a non-regular faculty member from the Media and Information 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.

Proposal

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) 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 and Ethical Conduct of Research]() (RECR) training prior to conducting research.

Summary of thesis timeline-

1. The student talks to their primary advisor (or desired thesis chair) about their thesis idea and discuss the proposal and timeline. Once the proposal idea is approved by their advisor, they can reach out to get two more committee members following department guidelines. The project committee needs two members. Submit summary of the thesis proposal for review to both committee members and set up a proposal defense date.

2. In the thesis proposal defense meeting, the student clarifies deliverables, a timeline and any resources they may need to finish. If their research includes human participation in the research, this must be done following MSU IRB requirements.

3. Once student has completed their draft of their thesis they defend it to the committee and make any recommended revisions. Submit to grad school following their formatting guidelines on the graduate school website. Get signatures from committee and director on thesis defense form and upload to GradPlan.

Plan B Project

Proposal

The project can take many forms depending on the area of focus and research goals of the student. The project committee has two members. 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.

Committee

Once the student has developed an idea for their project, they should talk to their advisor or the faculty member they would like to have as chair of their committee. The project Chairperson must be regular faculty from the Department of Media and Information or have blanket approval for advising. Contact the Graduate Director or Academic Program Coordinator for the list of available faculty members

A student's initial 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 we encourage the student to select a committee that they feel will guide them to meet their particular goals.

After the student finalizes forming the full committee, they 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, found on our website, 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 in to the Academic Program Coordinator prior to being enrolled for the MI 898 credits. Once the project is completed there is a final project defense meeting where the student presents their final project to both committee members.

Summary of project timeline-

1. Once the student has a proposal idea they can reach out to their desired project chair and discuss second committee member. The project committee needs two members following the guidelines on our department website. The student sets up a project proposal defense date and presents the project proposal for approval.

2. In the thesis proposal defense, the student works with your committee to clarify deliverables, a timeline and any resources they may need to finish. If their research includes human participation in the research, this must be done following MSU IRB requirements.

3. Once the project is completed, present (defend) your project to your committee. Once any requested revisions are satisfactorily completed, then your committee will sign your project defense form on our website. The student submits their signed project defense form, and documentation from to the master's program director and the Academic Program Coordinator.

Plan B Poster

The student works under the supervision of their advisor on a poster that describes the critical portions of a research or practical experience completed concurrently with the student's enrollment in courses. 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, etc. The poster should include mention of specific classes where research skills utilized in the research or internship. The oral defense for the poster is to a faculty committee that is appointed by the department.

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.

Summary of the poster timeline-

1. Once the student has a proposal idea they can reach out to their desired poster advisor to clarify and get guidance on final elements for the poster. If the research uses individuals, either for surveys, interviews, or usability testing, the student will need to get IRB approval. If the research is performed as part of the normal internship activities, under the supervision and guidance of the internship organization, their ethical guidelines will be followed. Students can talk to the master's program director if they have questions as each situation is unique.

2. Once the research is approved, complete research or activity and finish making a poster summarizing the work. The student should work closely with their advisor to make sure it is satisfactory.

3. The last week of classes each semester the director sets up a time and day where students present their posters. The oral examination committee is appointed by the department. Each presentation is about 15 minutes to explain their research and an additional 10-15 minutes to answer questions from the poster judges. The student can present the poster via conference video, but the student must be live to answer questions. The students may need to make revisions to their poster before final approval. Submit the completed and signed poster defense form to the director and upload to GradPlan

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.

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 found on our website 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 found on our website 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 - in regards to 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 should submit an "Application for Graduation" by the first week of the semester the student expects to complete their degree requirements. The process is in campus solutions. 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 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 a list of all certified candidates who expect to graduate that semester from the Director of Graduate Studies. 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 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 project/poster oral examination. 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 be enrolled for credit in the semester subsequent to the defense.

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 a student does not pass the thesis and revisions continue into the next 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. Students do not submit their thesis to ProQuest until after it has been successfully passed by the thesis committee. Plan "B" students who are taking their oral examinations for a second time may meet the registration requirements by enrolling for one credit .

MSU only accepts electronic theses submitted via ProQuest. The instructions for electronic submissions are available from the Graduate School website. Be mindful of the strict submission deadlines found on their website. 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. Please monitor your email for any required revisions requested by ProQuest.

Exit Survey

After graduation, alumni will receive emails from MSU encouraging them to go to https://msu.12twenty.com to enter their experience and initial status after graduation. Direct questions to CareerServices@csp.msu.edu

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 their 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

"Integrity in Scientific Research: Creating an Environment that Promotes Responsible Conduct", National Academies Press, Washington, D.C., 2002, 216 pp ([website](#))

Notes

Michigan State University ["Mission Statement"](#) approved by the Board of Trustees on 2008.

MSU Faculty Handbook, Chapter VI, "Research and Creative Endeavor-Procedures Concerning Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities" ([website](#))

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.

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	Electronic Submission to ProQuest	The Graduate School (msu.edu)

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 B Poster 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

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

Academic integrity is a core value at Michigan State University. We seek practices and policies that hold to high levels of integrity in academic scholarship, research, and accurate records that maintain professional standards and codes of honor. Both instructors and students are to be held to these high standards. MSU has policies and procedures to follow to maintain these standards, as well as steps to follow if a party (e.g., student or instructor) feels these are not being followed. This all-university policy is found in the MSU Office of Spartan Experiences- Integrity of Scholarship and Grades. If the student feels an accusation of academic dishonesty is unfair, they can request an Academic Grievance Hearing and the Office of the University Ombudsperson is available to guide and assist in this process.

Plagiarism

A frequent violation of academic integrity is plagiarism. This can stem from purposeful choices, but it often stems from misunderstanding what it is, and how to ethically cite sources in all creative and/or research work. **Plagiarism means presenting, as one's own, the words, creative work, or opinions of someone else- this can include work by AI software that is not acknowledged.** 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. It 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.**

A student commits plagiarism if they submit as their 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 acknowledgment.
- A paper written for them 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.

A student is an accomplice in plagiarism and equally guilty if they:

- Allow their 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.

A student 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 (ex: A.I./ChatGPT)
- Fully acknowledge any work that is assisted by AI. If the professor asks for no AI, do not use at all.
- 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 and Ethical 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 and Ethical Conduct of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities (RCRSA, RECR for short). There are required hours of participation in the RECR- see the website for details. These must be completed or MSU will not allow completion of a graduate degree.

The Graduate School's RECR program requires (a) initial, basic education, and (b) discussion-based workshops (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. See the graduate website for the schedule and details. The university's tracking system Ability and SIS will automatically keep track of all completed units.

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 Office.

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 cunos1ty, 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. Unacceptable behavior includes verbal abuse, name calling, threats, and swearing.

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 ombudsperson, 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

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.

Academic Misconduct

If a student engages in academic misconduct, the faculty member may assign a penalty grade or report that student. If a faculty member reports a student for academic misconduct, the student will need to complete an educational program on academic integrity and academic misconduct provided by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Should the student wish to appeal, they may do so through a hearing board (see [Article 5: Adjudication of Cases Involving Graduate Student Rights and](#) [Responsibilities](#) for more information)

See the following website: [Integrity of Scholarship and Grades](#)

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 hires graduate students on an hourly basis occasionally. 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.

Graduate Assistantships

As our Department does not typically hire master's students for Graduate Assistantships, they may be available in other departments on campus. 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.

Graduate Assistant Levels & Stipends

MSU annually sets stipend ranges based on level and appointment type.
An assistantship includes tuition waiver and health insurance. Academic Programs gives additional information. More information is available here: Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistants are eligible to purchase a parking permit. For information about Graduate Assistant parking permits go to Parking Services.

Desire 2 Learn (D2L) Online Training

Self-directed training can be accessed through the [D2L Training Program](). The site contains video tutorials covering the most commonly used aspects of the Learning Environment. Each module is broken into a series of short video tutorials and other helpful resources by topic.

MSU Information Technology (I.T.) often has workshops and speaker series to help with best practices using D2L, Zoom and more. [Visit their website for events]().

[iTeach@MSU]() is an excellent multi-resource for Teaching Assistants/Instructors.

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. 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

We are committed to holistic support of all of our graduate students and their wellbeing and success. The following are just some of the many resources that MSU has available. The following are ones that are recommended by the Graduate School to support students.

Graduate Career Development & Funding

The [Office of Graduate Career Development](#) provides multiple online resources, as well as workshops and advising, to support the many paths graduate students choose to pursue.

The [Overview of Funding for Graduate Education](#) includes assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, loans, and employment.

University Committee on Graduate Studies information is [available at their website](#).

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging

Diversity, equity, and inclusive 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 situations 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](#) 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, [Gen Iverson](#). 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](#).

Graduate School 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 Cent 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 explore these resources.

Travel and Study Abroad

We often have study abroad opportunities, usually from groups within the College of Communication Arts & Sciences. International students should follow the latest directives from the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS). Any students traveling should review the policies at the Office for Global Health Safety and Security before making any travel arrangements.

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. Depending on funding available, the department may 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 areas that may require specific vaccinations or health checks please check the resources at the MSU travel clinic.

There are many other resources to explore!

Links to helpful resources

The Writing Center

Student Affairs & Services (Fitness and Recreation)
Dining on Campus
The Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship & Innovation
(If you have an idea for a business, they can turn it into a reality
University Committee on Graduate Studies
University Outreach and Engagement
WKAR radio and television
College of Communications Arts and Sciences- Centers and Research Lab

Resources provided through the Graduate School

[Graduate Career Development](#)

[Diversity, equity, & inclusion programs](#)

[Events](#)

[Graduate School Forms](#)

[Funding](#)

[Graduate Educator Advancement and Teaching (GREAT)](#)

[Graduate School Office of Well-Being (GROW)](#)

[Mentoring](#)

[Out-of-State tuition waivers](#)

[Policy information](#)

[Professional development](#)

[Research integrity](#)

[Traveling scholar opportunities](#)

[University Committee on Graduate Studies](#)

Resources provided by the Student Life & Engagement Division

[COGS](#)

[Gender and Sexuality Campus Center](#)

[Student Parent Resource Center](#)

[Center for Veterans and Military-Affiliated Students](#)

[Women's Student Services.](#)