

Graduate Program Assessment Plan
SOAP
(09/15/2009)

Mission and Goals of the Program

Revised Mission

After a review of the outcome data and original assessment plan, a revision was made to the mission statement to better reflect the current program.

The mission of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at California State University, Fresno is to provide quality educational experiences to graduate students that promote critical thinking and scholarly skills based on the theory, methodology, principles and techniques of mass communication. The MCJ graduate program will prepare graduates to pursue doctoral education, advancement in professional fields and/or become educators in the field of mass communication.

Goals

The goals of the Mass Communication graduate program are to provide students with a broadly based understanding of mass communication in contemporary society and to encourage continuing intellectual growth. Students will explore, at deeper levels, the relationship of media to society and to individuals in society, the history of mass communication in conceptual and chronological terms, its institutions, professional roles and enterprises, the economics and politics, philosophy and ethics, legal and regulatory aspects, changing information technologies, advanced theories and scholarly traditions, a variety of methodologies used in the field, and international mass communication systems.

Summary of Learning Objectives: The original goals were maintained; however, upon further review, the graduate program elected to include several more specific learning goals and strive to implement plans that would better assess the original as well as new learning objectives.

At the successful completion of the requirements in the Master's Program students will demonstrate their knowledge and expertise in the following:

1. Demonstrate a broad knowledge of concepts, issues, facts, and theories derived from the natural and social sciences and from the arts and humanities.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of epistemological and ontological underpinnings of mass communication inquiry.
3. Be able to describe and explain the dominant paradigms in the mass communication discipline.
4. Demonstrate and understand the criteria used to judge and evaluate mass communication theory and research.
5. Demonstrate analytical skills for acquiring knowledge in and related to the specific disciplines in the field of mass communication.

Original Learning Goals and Objectives

The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism offers a flexible program of study leading to the Master of Arts. The graduate program offers students the opportunity to tailor their graduate education towards either a professionally or academically oriented program. To this end, the Department establishes the following learning goals and objectives:

Learning Goal 1. Graduate students will develop an expanded understanding of selected topics in the field of mass communication.

Objective 1.1: Select specific subject matter areas and demonstrate topical content knowledge in order to enhance their potential for professional development.

Objective 1.2: Describe broad knowledge in disciplines that are related to, or supportive of, thesis research or project requirement.

Learning Goal 2. Graduate students will cultivate analytical skills for acquiring knowledge in and related to the specific disciplines in the field of mass communication.

Objective 2.1: Identify and conduct research appropriate to their selected areas of emphasis.

Objective 2.2: Demonstrate an ability to critically discuss problems related to their selected areas of emphasis.

Learning Goal 3. Graduate students will acquire enhanced communication skills, both written and oral, for purposes of conveying information in their selected disciplines to professionals and scholars in the field as well as to the general public.

Objective 3.1: Display an ability to communicate the results of quantitative and qualitative research.

Objective 3.2: Show an ability to communicate to professionals in their selected areas of emphasis.

Objective 3.3: Exhibit skills to communicate knowledge of the field to the general public.

M.A. Program Emphasis: The graduate program in the department of Mass Communication & Journalism is an academic program emphasizing a blend between theory, research, and practice that enables the student to gain a unique mix of academic and practical experience.

Requirements:

Program Core (12 units total) REQUIRED COURSES

MCJ 204 - Intro to Grad Studies (3)

MCJ 205- Mass Media Theory (3)

MCJ 206 - Quantitative Research Methods (3)

MCJ 207- Qualitative Research Methods (3)

Electives (12 units total)

- May consists of classes within the department
 - MCJ 215: Media Ethics & Regulation (3)
 - MCJ 214: Media Technology & Systems (3)
 - MCJ 240T: Media Topics (max of 9 units)
 - MCJ 216: Global & International Media Relations (3)
 - MCJ 290: Independent Study (maximum of 6 units)
- May consists of undergraduate classes within the department
 - maximum of 6 units
 - not GE courses
 - no credit/no credit courses
 - 100 level or higher
- May consists of courses outside of the dept but only a max of 6 units
--i.e., courses from the Department of Communication or other departments on campus

Capstone Level (6 units total)

MCJ 299: Master's Thesis (6)

OR

MCJ 298: Professional Project (6)

Total Needed for Graduation: 30 units (*24 required graduate level; 6 accepted from undergraduate level*)

* The above curriculum is scheduled to be updated according to the new SOAP

Graduate Program 5-Year Assessment Plan & Outcomes 2007-2012

2007-2008

Plan: Exit/Alumni survey to assess program effectiveness and curriculum needs

Proposed Action: Survey current and past graduate students to assess if the curriculum and program are serving the needs of students and preparing them appropriately

Cost/Resource Implications: Substantial time commitment by Assessment Coordinator and Graduate committee

Source of Funds/Resources: N/A

Outcome:

Based on the responses from exit and alumni survey data from 2004-2005, the graduate program was revised in 2004-2005 to be more academically oriented. 4 core courses were added or changed: MCJ 204-Introduction to Graduate Studies in Mass Communication; MCJ 205- Mass Communication Theory; MCJ 206-Quantitative methods in mass communication; MCJ 207- Qualitative methods in mass communication.

Benchmarks and Timeline for Solution: Completed in 2005; however, assessment of students' attitudes and opinions about the program is ongoing. In the fall of 2008, assessment revealed the need to have both an academically and professionally oriented program (see 2010-2011 plan below).

2008-2009

Plan 1: Writing Competency Assessment—re-evaluating the current MCJ 205 course as the writing competency requirement

Proposed Action: Given that MCJ 204 (Introduction to Mass Communication) is one of the first courses that students take and requires students to complete several writing assignments, the proposed action is to change the “writing component requirement” to this course. To assess “writing competency”, the graduate coordinator and graduate committee will develop a writing competency rubric.

Cost/Resource Implications: Time commitment by Assessment Coordinator and Graduate committee

Timeline for Solution: Still in progress. The writing competency rubric (see Appendix A) was developed and implemented in 2008 and is currently conducted in MCJ 205; however, since course offerings have already been submitted and printed in the schedule, the estimated time of implementation of the switch of the writing competency course requirement from MCJ 205 to MCJ 204 is expected for the fall 2010 AY.

2009-2010

Plan 1 – Expand Graduates' Academic Research and Professional Communication

Proposed Action: Based on one of the initial learning objectives stated in the original SOAP (Objective 3.2: Show an ability to communicate to professionals in their selected areas of emphasis), we propose to increase graduate student conference (academic research or professional projects) submissions. The proposed action is to increase conference submissions. We believe that by submitting research to academic or professional competitions it not only gives students feedback from scholars/professionals in the field, but it also gives the students valuable experience in

presenting their work in a public forum. This not only increases their oral communication skills but it also strengthens their connections with professionals. To begin, we plan to propose that all students in MCJ 206 (Quantitative Research Methods) and 207 (Qualitative Research Methods) will be required to write a scholarly research paper and will submit at least one research project to local or regional conference/symposium. The research papers will be assessed for conference level quality by using the writing component rubric (See Appendix A). Next, we will propose that students who choose to follow the “professionally oriented” option of the graduate program will be required to submit at least one project to a professional competition or conference. To assess the “professional” project, rubrics used in the undergraduate MCJ Showcase will be utilized. The Showcase rubrics include a rubric for various options within MCJ (production, print design, etc) (See Appendix B) The purpose of both elements is to demonstrate the stated learning objectives.

- Demonstrate topical content knowledge in order to enhance their potential for professional development
- Cultivate analytical skills for acquiring knowledge in and related to the specific disciplines in the field
- Acquire enhanced communication skills, both written and oral, for purposes of conveying information in their selected disciplines to professionals and scholars in the field as well as to the general public
 - Display the ability to communication the results of quantitative or qualitative research
 - Show an ability to communicate to professional in their selected areas of emphasis
 - Exhibit skills to communicate knowledge of the field to the general public.
 - Show an ability to communicate to professionals in their selected areas of emphasis.

Cost/Resource Implications: N/A.

Timeline for Solution: still in progress, however, the estimated time of implementation is for fall 2010.

Plan 2: Master’s project Assessment

Program Action: The graduate committee will review and revise the current assessment that is used to guide master’s projects. This will allow for an increase in the quality of projects and will also make projects adhere to the strict guidelines that are currently used to assess master’s theses.

Cost/Resource Implications: Time commitment by Assessment Coordinator and Graduate committee

Timeline for Solution: Project guidelines were first developed and implemented in 2007 but each year since have been re-evaluated and a new revision is currently (2009) being developed (See Appendix C).

2010-2011

Plan: Curriculum

Proposed Action: The graduate committee will explore options to strengthen the “professional” side of the program, in order to accommodate those students wishing to pursue professional advancement. This discussion is in direct response from a small percentage of participants’ responses on the exit surveys that are conducted at the end of each academic year. In addition to data obtained from exit surveys, data from previous alumni surveys reveal that half of the graduates were working in higher education while others were working in professional environment. Given this information, the graduate committee is considering ways to expand the program to be both

academically AND professionally oriented. Although 4 core courses were added in 2004 to strengthen the “academic” side of the graduate program, the entire program curriculum is still being evaluated. Since graduates are allowed the option to take up to 9 units of undergraduate work (unless they have previously taken these courses as credit toward their undergraduate degree), the proposed plan is to emphasize the “dual” focus of the MCJ graduate program in recruitment materials by outlining the various “professional” classes students may take to fulfill a professionally oriented program. This proposed plan will fulfill the following learning goal objectives.

- Objective 1.1: Select specific subject matter areas and demonstrate topical content knowledge in order to enhance their potential for professional development.
- Objective 2.2: Demonstrate an ability to critically discuss problems related to their selected areas of emphasis.
- Objective 3.2: Show an ability to communicate to professionals in their selected areas of emphasis.
- Objective 3.3: Exhibit skills to communicate knowledge of the field to the general public.

Cost/Resource Implications: Substantial time commitment by Assessment Coordinator to update recruitment material. \$1000-3000 to reprint updated graduate brochures.

Timeline for Solution: Work is in progress and completion and implementation of the outline of curriculum is scheduled to be in place by fall 2010; however, the update of this action in color brochures is dependent upon funding but our hope is to have the new brochures by spring or fall 2011.

2011-2012

Plan 1—Qualifying Exam

- In addition to the writing competency and thesis/project guidelines, the graduate committee is also discussing implementing a qualifying exam.

Proposed Action:

- This exam would be taken by all graduate students upon completion of the core courses, MCJ 204, MCJ 205, and either MCJ 206 or MCJ207 (typically at the end of their second semester) and prior to completing their advancement to candidacy. This exam would assess the following learning goals/outcomes and would thus reflect the students’ ability to continue on productively in their program:
 - Expanded understanding of selected topics in the field of mass communication.
 - Select specific subject matter areas and demonstrate topical content knowledge in order to enhance their potential for professional development
 - Describe broad knowledge in disciplines that are related to, or supportive of, thesis research or project requirement.
 - Cultivate analytical skills for acquiring knowledge in and related to the specific disciplines in the field of mass communication
 - Demonstrate topical content knowledge in order to enhance their potential for success in the program

Cost/Resource Implications: Substantial time commitment by Graduate Coordinator and graduate faculty to assess the students’ exams.

Timeline for Solution: In progress, however, the estimated time of implementation is for spring 2011.

Plan 2—Assess Quality & Effectiveness of Teaching Assistants

Since 2005, the MCJ department has hired 1-2 graduate students for the position of teaching assistant(s). The graduate faculty has discussed the necessity to work closely with the teaching assistant(s) in mentoring them and teaching them valuable teaching skills

Proposed Action: The graduate committee will develop a rubric for assessing the quality of teaching by teaching assistants. In addition, the teaching assistants will be required to attend a teaching workshop and complete an assessment tool at the conclusion of the workshop. This plan may be pushed back to after 2012 or until budgetary issues allow for financing teaching assistants.

Cost/Resource Implications: N/A. Action dependent on the availability of monies to fund teaching assistantships.

Timeline for Solution: The rubrics and assessment tools will be developed by spring 2011 and implementation will begin in fall 2012, depending on the availability of teaching assistants.

APPENDIX A

Writing Rubric					
	FOCUS	CONTENT	ORGANIZATION	STYLE	MECHANICS
	<i>The paper presents a clear focus that is not too broad and has been narrowed appropriately.</i>	<i>The ideas have been effectively developed through evidence and facts and/or explanations that show a clear ability to critically analyze scholarly and/or professional research.</i>	<i>The paper shows clear structure by utilizing headings and subheadings and the content within is properly organized within the appropriate sections. Sections are clearly linked using transitional sentences.</i>	<i>APA style is utilized correctly.</i>	<i>Appropriate and effective grammar, syntax, spelling, and overall writing mechanics.</i>
SCORE	3 – 2 – 1 – 0	3 – 2 – 1 – 0	3 – 2 – 1 – 0	3 – 2 – 1 – 0	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
EXCELLENT 3	Strong focus and effective narrowing of a single topic	Substantial and specific evidence and illustrative content demonstrating strong development of the ideas and the ability to critically analyze and synthesize scholarly/professional research.	Excellent structure that utilizes clear organizational elements and shows a smooth logical order of content.	Distinct comprehension and use of proper APA style	Strong evidence of proper grammar, spelling, and writing mechanics
ACCEPTABLE 2	Sufficient focus and limited narrowing of a single topic	Sufficient evidence and illustrative content demonstrating a proficient development of the idea and the ability to critically analyze and synthesize scholarly/professional research.	Acceptable structure that utilizes some organizational elements and shows some reflection of logical order of content.	Proficient evidence of proper use of APA style	Sufficient evidence of proper grammar, spelling, and writing mechanics
* BELOW AVERAGE 1	Limited apparent narrowing of topic and specific evidence of a specific topic	Limited evidence demonstrating a development of the ideas and the ability to critically analyze and synthesize scholarly/professional research.	Confusing and/or inconsistent arrangement of content and does not reflect a clear organizational structure nor reflects a logical order of content.	Limited proper use of APA style	Limited evidence of proper grammar, spelling, and writing mechanics
* NOT ACCEPTABLE 0	No focus of the topic	Provided little to no evidence and illustrative content that would demonstrate a development of the ideas and the ability to critically analyze and synthesize scholarly/professional research.	Completely unorganized and no consistent arrangement of ideas	Minimal or lack of proper use of APA style	Minimal evidence of proper grammar, spelling, and writing mechanics

APPENDIX B
Scoring Rubric for Undergraduate Option Areas Used for
Assessing Professional Graduate Projects

1. PRINT DESIGN & LAYOUT

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Inefficient
Ideas & Concept				
Appropriate audience				
Appropriate purpose & theme				
Reflects graduate level of expertise				
Innovation and uniqueness				
Effectiveness of presentation				
Elements of Design				
 TYPOGRAPHY				
Limited/appropriate typeface				
Good font choice				
Good contrast				
Appropriate size/weight				
 COMPOSITION				
Effective use of white space				
Effective use of color/b & w				
Effective balance				
Good mix of text/visuals				
Good use of dominant art				
 CONTENT				
Match of visual to headline/content				
Effective headline writing				
Display copywriting/editing				
Delivers a clear message				

APPENDIX B (Continued)

2. ADVERTISING

Excellent Good Fair Inefficient

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Inefficient
Advertising Copywriting				
Overall				
Reflects graduate level expertise				
Product Naming				
strong rationale				
complement parent brand				
elicit interest				
well-written name				
instructions respected				
Consumer Ad				
strong rationale				
complement parent brand				
strong "big idea"				
well-written ad				
primary target audience				
copy platform well-written				
instructions respected				
Trade Ad Ave.				
strong rationale				
complement parent brand				
strong "big idea"				
well-written ad				
convincing ad				
copy platform well-written				
instructions respected				

APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

3. ONLINE MEDIA DESIGN

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Inefficient
<i>Photography Portfolio</i>				
Newsworthiness and Story				
Impact and Creativity				
Composition				
Technical Quality				
Reflects graduate level expertise				
<i>Sports Photography</i>				
Storytelling				
Impact and Originality				
Composition				
Technical Quality				
<i>Sound Slide Show</i>				
Storytelling				
Images				
Audio				
Pace				
Technical				

4. VIDEO PRODUCTION

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Inefficient
Newsworthiness and Story				
Impact and Creativity				
Composition				
Technical Quality				
Reflects graduate level expertise				

Revised 5/28/2009

APPENDIX C

MCJ 298 Project Procedural and Content Guidelines

This document provides details about the procedures and content that a graduate student must write if he or she chooses to do a project instead of a thesis.

In the project, a student can apply models, concepts and principles of mass communication to problem solving in the professional world. A graduate project should reflect the culmination of all that the student has learned in their graduate program, while also applying a “professional” component.

Students are encouraged to look for potential project ideas early in their graduate program. These ideas might come from coursework, from the student’s professional background and experience, and/or from the research and interests of MCJ faculty members.

The student must write a formal proposal for the project. It should contain enough detail for the advisor to judge the student’s understanding of the problem and how it applies to his or her graduate study.

At a minimum, the proposal should contain:

- Outline of the problem to be solved
- Significance and justification of the problem
- Specification of problem --- how much of the problem the project is intended to solve, and what are the expected results of the project.
- Method of solution --- description of the approach to be used to solve the problem, including major algorithms and data structures to be employed.
- Computer hardware, software or other technology to be used.
- Plans for program --- testing procedures and data.
- Possible extensions suggested for follow-up projects.
- Budget estimate, if required resources are not available or their use will incur a cost. Include a description of how these costs will be paid.
- Semester to be registered for Master's Project.
- Expected completion date for the project

The written portion of the project usually includes an introductory chapter based on the student researcher's prospectus, outlining the subject, its significance and the methodology employed. The second chapter is often the literature review, which relates other research in the area to the student's research in some kind of context and at the same time shows why the study is valuable. The third chapter could explain the methodology, discussing and defending the design of the project. Or it may include the components of the professional portion of the project. Such as timeline, budget, etc. A fourth chapter might include results. If this were a documentary, you would discuss style of filming and its implications, an analysis of the work, etc. The last chapter usually contains

conclusions, which, among other things, could include a complete analysis of the findings and how they relate not only to the background research.

Your project will build on your own work experience, education, attitudes, interests, and abilities.

Each Master's Project should meet the following objectives. Proposals for projects will be judged using these objectives. The project should follow good methodology. The student should be aware of the state of the art in the proposed area. The proposal should identify a particular problem area and list the specific tasks to be addressed in the project. While some of these tasks may not be accomplished in the project, the student should be able to defend the reasons why some of the tasks were not accomplished. It is also likely that new tasks will come to light as the project progresses. The student should keep track of these new tasks and if unable to complete them, should list all unaccomplished tasks in the final report as areas for further work. A project should demonstrate both the professional and writing communication skills of the student. The project should be of some value to the student, the department and/or community. At the minimum this value will be the learning experience resulting from the project. The project should be carried out in a professional manner.

The Master's Project will be evaluated on the objectives listed above by the committee chair and the two committee members.

Although the project will be guided by the student's advisor, the student is also responsible for their progress and certain deadlines.

1. The student is responsible for keeping up with deadlines and doing work on his/her project that shows sufficient progress toward their degree. The following outlines some of the items that are expected of the student.

a. Select a general area for study and try to focus on a particular topic. Ideas can come from a number of sources: Your own prior experience, current events, your class assignments, and discussion with others (professionals, students, faculty) are the most common ways to establish possible issues and questions for investigation. Faculty may also have a research agenda that you may be able to "plug into." However, the responsibility for formulating the project proposal rests with the student. Faculty members will normally serve in an advisory capacity only and not "assign" a topic to you.

b. Write a proposal and put together your Graduate Committee. All students should select a person to chair their graduate project and 2 faculty to serve on their committee. The Graduate Committee is structured to meet the needs and interests of each graduate student and to ensure that the student's program of study will provide the highest level of preparation.

c. The *proposal* should be short and to the point (no more than three pages long). For most students, the choice of the proposed subject matter of the project is based on their own

interests and inclinations. The candidate should approach potential Committee members, discuss the topic, and ask if those faculty members are willing to serve on the Committee.

Remember: The Chairperson/Committee Head is the individual you will have the most contact with and who will have first approval over your thesis.

MCJ MASTER'S PROJECT GUIDELINES

Overview

Both projects and theses now require a 3 member (total) committee: chair and 2 members. Both projects and theses also require a written manuscript. The following provides a layout for both.

PROJECT

The project should be a “professional” piece of work that **goes beyond what a student might do in a normal graduate class** and should reflect the culmination of experience and knowledge the student has learned throughout their program. Examples of projects include: instructional or documentary video, investigative or journalistic writing worthy of publication, web design and implementation, public relations campaign and/or advertising campaign, etc.

Sample Project Layout

The following is a guideline for the layout of the “written” portion of the project. Aside from the “professional” project, each student is also required to write a manuscript that will accompany the project. This written component is similar to the thesis; however, it may not be as lengthy (although it will be a quality length to show significant writing contribution. Estimated at least 50 pages) nor include quantitative or qualitative research.

Abstract: includes project title, as it appears on the title page, followed by a short statement (fewer than 150 words) concerning the purpose, methodology, and findings of the research.

Introduction: purpose of the project; scope (description) of the project in terms of content and format; significance of the project; limitations of the project; definition of terms; and organization of the remainder of the project.

Review of the Literature: source materials for the project; other studies related to the project; and synthesis of the literature that identifies the various approaches and themes.

Methodology: description of how the project was conducted (e.g., questionnaires), compiled, or created (e.g., visual aids).

Summary, Conclusion: summarize the entire study effort.

Bibliography/References: includes all sources used in the project.

Appendices: material too detailed or lengthy for inclusion in the body of the study (e.g., questionnaires, maps, photos, letters of permission, or, when appropriate, the actual project documents, e.g., a business plan, a curriculum, a programming manual, a report to a public/private agency).
