I. Program Overview

- I.1 Program Overview

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I.1.1 Major Areas of Graduate Training

The following represent major areas of graduate study offered in our program. These scholarly foci originate in our department's founding and represent prominent sub-disciplines in the field of communication. One of the strengths of our graduate program is that faculty often conduct research in more than one of these three primary areas, and we encourage students to explore overlaps among areas. Students may also focus in sub-areas, but typically choose one of the following as a primary area for the purposes of coursework:

1. **Interpersonal & Intergroup Communication** (including intercultural communication)
2. **Media & Digital Communication** (including both traditional mass media and emerging communication technologies)
3. **Organizational & Group Communication** (in private, public, and non-profit settings)

I.1.2 Program Structure

Students engage in one of two program structures:

1. **MA/Phd Track** (5 years): Students with no previous MA degree complete the program within five years, earning both an MA (typically after two years) and a PhD
2. **Phd Only Track** (4 years): Students with an MA degree (with a research-based thesis) from another university complete the program within four years, earning a PhD degree

Note: The department does not admit students who, at the time of the application, are interested in the MA degree only.

I.1.4 Maintaining Full Time Status

Maintaining active status as a graduate student involves paying fees and officially registering in classes each quarter. Full time status on UCSB’s campus is **8 units**, but it is normative in the Department of Communication to enroll in **12 units** to meet coursework requirements. Students are advised to enroll in **12 units** most quarters. A typical course load is **13 units** per quarter, which includes three courses to fulfill requirements (**12 units**) and **COMM 505**: Colloquium (**1 unit**

). Students should not exceed **17 units** in any single quarter and must receive prior approval from the Graduate Director in order to exceed **16 units**.

I.1.5 Part-Time Status Exception

Part-time eligibility is available for doctoral students who have not yet advanced to candidacy. The Graduate Division may grant students part-time status on a quarterly basis. Please see full policy here and consult the Graduate Program Assistant on eligibility.