JOURNALISM, M.A.

The Department of Journalism and Creative Media offers the Master of Arts degree with a major in journalism. Students work closely with a faculty dedicated to the principles and practices of sound journalism and scholarly inquiry. The program offers three options for study:

- **Individuals who seek in-depth knowledge and mastery of one or more of the subfields and methodologies of journalism** — for example, communication history, communication law, communication theory and methods. These individuals typically follow Plan I (see below) and go on to pursue doctorates. Those with significant experience in the journalism field may teach without the Ph.D. degree.

- **Individuals who seek to work professionally in writing, editing, visual journalism and/or digital journalism, and who wish to develop conceptual knowledge of the field, as well as critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.** These students typically follow Plan II (see below).

- **Individuals who wish to earn graduate credit through distance education can enroll in our online journalism program.** This program is ideal for journalists eager to expand their knowledge base, individuals looking to start a career in journalism, and those interested in teaching in the field of journalism.

The program serves both recent BA recipients, whether in journalism/mass communication or other fields, and professionals seeking to deepen their knowledge.

**Admission Requirements**

Admission to graduate work in the Program of Journalism requires a 3.0 or higher undergraduate grade point average (on a 4.0 scale). Applicants not meeting this criterion may be admitted under conditional status if the program’s faculty agrees the student is likely to succeed in the program. However, conditionally admitted students are not eligible for University funding and are required to maintain at least a 3.0 GPA the first semester.

In addition to the online application, applicants must submit other documents to the UA graduate school, including undergraduate transcripts and a statement of purpose addressing how the degree will advance the applicant’s professional and educational goals. Applicants should also solicit three letters of recommendation, which may be submitted online to the UA graduate school or sent as hard copies to the Journalism program’s graduate coordinator. Applicants should send a resume to the program’s graduate coordinator, and they may also submit examples of journalistic work to the coordinator — e.g., stories, photos or multimedia, via hard copy, disk or website link.

The program faculty may require up to nine hours of additional coursework for applicants lacking undergraduate classes related to the professional values and competencies that are central to the master's program.

The application deadline is March 31, but applicants are encouraged to apply by the end of January in order to be considered fully for University funding (assistantships or fellowships).

See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

**Degree Requirements**

Each student entering the graduate program in journalism must complete 31 semester hours of credit, under either program of study. Requirements for each plan are as follows:

### Plan I, Master’s Thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JN 500</td>
<td>Orientation Grad Studies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC 551</td>
<td>Sem Communication Theory</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC 550</td>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN 562</td>
<td>Contemp Issues Journalism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN 563</td>
<td>History Of Journalism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN 599</td>
<td>Thesis Research</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electives</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hours</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Plan II, Master’s Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JN 500</td>
<td>Orientation Grad Studies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN 552 or</td>
<td>Journalism Theory &amp; Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC 550</td>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN 553 or</td>
<td>Assessing Community Journ</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC 551</td>
<td>Sem Communication Theory</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN 562</td>
<td>Contemp Issues Journalism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN 563</td>
<td>History Of Journalism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism Cognate</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General elective</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN 597</td>
<td>Non-Thesis Project</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hours</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All students must enroll in JN 500 Orientation Grad Studies their first semester.

Initially, the program’s graduate coordinator will serve as the student’s adviser. The coordinator will assess students’ undergraduate transcripts and will help the student establish a plan for cognate or elective courses that will provide students with core values and competencies for the program.

At the completion of 12 credit hours, the student should select a committee chair. The chair will serve as the student’s academic adviser and will help the student select members for the thesis or project committee. The thesis committee must comprise two faculty members from the Department of Journalism and Creative Media program and at least one member from outside the program. The project committee must comprise at least two faculty members from the program — no outside member is required. An Appointment or Change of Master’s Thesis Committee form must be submitted to the Graduate School for the dean's approval of the committee members.

The student is required to pass a comprehensive examination in conjunction with an oral defense of the thesis or master’s project. Students are questioned on their thesis or project topic, and on core areas of their course of study. For the student to pass the examination, committee members must be satisfied the student has gained sufficient knowledge in core areas of the curriculum and has mastered a specific area of knowledge.

The following applies to students pursuing a master’s degree under Plan II

Plan II students produce a project rather than a thesis. The successful master’s project demonstrates mastery of a knowledge area as well the ability to apply this knowledge through the practice of journalism. The typical project will include:

1. **Typical Project**

   - **History Of Journalism**
   - **Contemp Issues Journalism**
   - **Research Methods**
   - **Sem Communication Theory**
   - **Orientation Grad Studies**
   - **Assessing Community Journ**
   - **Journalism Theory & Research**
   - **Non-Thesis Project**
1. an academic component in which the student systematically analyzes some aspect of journalism or its consequences and
2. a rigorous, thorough journalistic work, such as an in-depth multimedia story

The academic analysis should shape the decisions the student makes about the journalistic work. For example, a student may analyze past news coverage of a particular topic, noting shortcomings in the reporting, and then use findings from this analysis to shape the reporting for the student’s own in-depth news story.

Prior to the final semester, the student should propose the project in writing to the committee chair, describing how the project will be accomplished and laying out a specific time table. The approved plan will be shared with the other committee member(s).

Students present the project to fellow students, committee faculty and news professionals as part of a comprehensive oral examination. In conjunction with this exam, each student under Plans II will present a portfolio of the student’s best work while enrolled in the program. The final project report should be the first item in the portfolio.

At the time of the student’s comprehensive exam, each student under Plan II will present a portfolio of the student’s best work while enrolled in the program. The master’s project, which includes the academic study and the journalistic work, should be the first item in the portfolio.

Plan II also includes a one-year option involving a professional immersion experience in a newsroom. In recent years this option has been administered in conjunction with the Anniston (Ala.) Star newspaper. Admission criteria and core curriculum requirements are identical to the traditional Plan II option.

Master’s Degrees

The primary purpose of master’s degree programs is to provide students with subject matter at an advanced level in their fields of study. Master’s degrees are designed to assist students either to continue their graduate studies or to meet the goals of their professions. In most cases, master’s programs also help students become familiar with methods of independent investigation.

Program Requirements

Two plans are offered for the master’s degree:

**Plan I.** Candidates for the master’s degree under Plan I must earn a minimum of 24 semester hours of credit in coursework plus earn a minimum of 6 additional hours of thesis research hours, for a total of 30 hours.

**Plan II.** Candidates for the master’s degree under Plan II must earn a minimum of 30 semester hours of coursework credit and pass the comprehensive examination or complete a culminating or “capstone experience” as described under the Comprehensive Examinations section below.

Both plans require a minimum of 18 semester hours in the major subject. With the approval of the major department, the remainder of the coursework may be completed in either the major or a related field.

In some divisions and in many departments of the University, candidates are required to do their work under Plan I. Candidates working under Plan II may be required to participate successfully in seminar or problem courses that will give them an acquaintance with the methods of research and an appreciation of the place and function of original investigation in the field.

Residency Requirements

A student’s program at the master’s level must provide sufficient association with the resident faculty to permit individual evaluation of the student’s capabilities and achievements.

Graduate Credit

A student must be admitted to the Graduate School and must register as a graduate student in order to receive graduate credit. Approval for graduate registration must be obtained from program advisors prior to registration.

Graduate Credit for Noncredit Experiences

All course credit used toward a UA graduate degree must be taught at the graduate level. No graduate credit may be earned by correspondence study or for experiential learning not conducted under the direct supervision of graduate faculty of The University of Alabama. The UA does not offer graduate credit for noncredit workshops, seminars, continuing education experiences, professional development, internships, work/life experience, and so forth.

Transfer of Credit

Courses of full graduate-level credit earned in a regionally accredited institution where a student was enrolled in the graduate school may be submitted for review for inclusion in a master’s degree program. Evaluation of credit for transfer will not be made until after the student has enrolled in the Graduate School of The University of Alabama. Acceptance of credit requires the approval of the student’s advisory committee and the dean of the Graduate School. Credit will not be accepted for transfer from any institution at which the student failed to achieve a “B” average on all graduate work attempted. Only courses in which a student earned a “B” grade or better may be transferred.

In some cases, foreign educational credentials may not meet the Graduate School’s criteria for transfer of credit. It may be necessary for students in this situation to secure an evaluation of their credentials from World Education Services Inc. (WES), an external foreign credential evaluation service. Additional information on their services can be found at their website.

A student initiates at the Graduate School’s website a Request for Transfer of Graduate Credit earned at another institution. It is also the student’s responsibility to assure that the Graduate School receives an official transcript of the credit requested for transfer, well in advance of the final semester.

With the approval of the student’s department and the dean of the Graduate School, the greater of 12 hours or 25 percent of the required coursework for a master’s degree may be transferred from another institution. All credit toward the master’s degree, including transfer credit, must have been earned during the six years (18 fall, spring, and summer semesters) immediately preceding the date on which the master’s degree is to be awarded. Revalidation (recertification) of graduate credits that will be more than 18 semesters old at the time of UA master’s program completion is not an option.

Please note that some departments allow fewer than 12 hours of graduate transfer credit. Be sure to check with your department’s graduate coordinator regarding your department’s transfer policy.

400-Level Courses

A maximum of 6 semester hours of 400-level course credit may be accepted for a master’s degree program, but only if a form for Approval of 400-Level Course Work for Master’s Credit is approved by the Graduate
School prior to the semester in which the 400-level coursework will be taken.

**Time Limit**

All requirements for the master’s degree must be completed during the six years (18 fall, spring, and summer semesters) immediately preceding the date on which the degree is to be awarded. There is no provision for an extension of the time limit beyond 6 years for master's students.

**Admission to Candidacy**

During the 2013-2014 academic year, the Graduate Council eliminated the master’s candidacy requirement. Departments may monitor master’s candidacy if they wish, but the Graduate School does not monitor it and will not accept master's candidacy forms. Doctoral candidacy is not affected and remains an important doctoral program requirement.

**Thesis**

A thesis evidencing research capacity, independent thought, and the ability to interpret materials is required of all master’s degree candidates who pursue Plan I. The subject chosen must be in the major field and must be approved by the graduate committee of the major department or school and by the head of the student’s major department or division.

The final oral thesis defense is the culminating experience in the master’s program. As such, all members of the thesis committee are expected to attend and participate in real time. Virtual attendance via interactive video or teleconference is permitted for off-campus external committee members, but Tuscaloosa campus faculty should attend in person unless extraordinary circumstances dictate the need for virtual attendance.

**Article Style vs. Journal Format**

**Article Style.**

At the doctoral level, "article-style dissertations" are unified works that include several distinct but related studies of research or creative activity, each of which is of publishable quality. The University does not permit an "article-style thesis" to be presented for a master's degree.

**Journal Format.**

A "journal-format thesis" is acceptable. Such a thesis follows the format of a particular journal in which the student and advisor want the thesis to be published. To prepare a journal-format thesis, the student uses the journal's "information for authors" or similarly titled guidelines in conjunction with the Graduate School's Student Guide to Preparing Electronic Theses and Dissertations.

A thesis committee must consist of at least three members appointed by the dean of the Graduate School. A form for Appointment or Change of Master’s Thesis Committee is used to request that the graduate dean appoint a thesis committee. The request normally is made as soon as the successful defense of the thesis proposal has been completed. All members of a thesis committee must be members of the Graduate Faculty. The Committee Chair must be a full or associate member of the Graduate Faculty. One member must be from outside the student’s major department. If the outside member is not a full or associate member of the UA Graduate Faculty (e.g., a highly qualified person from another university, a business or industry), the graduate dean needs to appoint that member by approving Temporary Graduate Faculty status for the specific purpose of serving on the student’s thesis committee. Unless there are extraordinary circumstances meriting approval by the graduate dean before the final oral defense of the thesis, all members of the thesis committee must attend the defense.

The candidate must give members of the examining committee a minimum of two weeks to read the thesis before the date of the final oral examination. A final oral examination is required of all students completing a thesis. All members of the thesis committee must be members of the UA graduate faculty and must attend the final oral examination unless there are extraordinary circumstances warranting the graduate dean’s approval of the absence prior to the defense meeting.

As of August 15, 2009, all theses are submitted electronically rather than on paper. See the graduate school's homepage for a link to information on Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) for details.

Theses must comply with the regulations set out in A Student Guide to Preparing Electronic Theses and Dissertations, available on the Graduate School's website. Approval of the thesis by the graduate dean is necessary before graduation.

The thesis should be completed, if possible, while the student is in residence at the University. To request permission to complete a thesis in absentia, the student must, before leaving the University, submit a satisfactory outline of the thesis, as well as evidence that adequate facilities are available where the work will be done, to the head of the student's major department.

**Protection of Human Subjects for Research**

Scientific research involving human subjects has produced substantial benefits for society, but it also can pose troubling ethical questions. The mission of the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Protection of Human Subjects is to ensure that research involving human subjects is conducted ethically. University and federal policies require that review and approval to use human subjects in research precede the research. In the case of thesis research that involves the use of human subjects in any way, the principal investigator is responsible for contacting the college Human Research Review Committee to obtain approval for the planned research.

**Comprehensive Examinations**

In addition to the regular course examinations, a final comprehensive examination representing a "culminating" or "capstone" experience for a degree is required of all candidates for the master's degree (except for those candidates pursuing the master of accounting, the master of business administration, the master of library and information studies, the master of social work, and the master of tax accounting). The comprehensive examination is a culminating experience in which the student is expected to integrate prior learning. Each department, with approval of the Graduate Council, determines the most appropriate format. The various exams may consist of one or more of the following:

- a written and/or oral examination based on the content of the degree program;
- a thesis and final oral defense;
- a course requiring interpretation and integration of information from previous courses;
- a research paper, a "policy and practice" paper, or equivalent experience;
- a public performance or exhibition along with a contextualizing paper; and/or
- a practicum or internship.

If the comprehensive exam requirement is met with option 1 and/or 2 above, then the examining committee for comprehensive examinations must consist of at least three members of the graduate faculty from that department and appointed by the dean of the Graduate School. The examination must be given at least six weeks before the date of
graduation (two weeks before for Plan II) and reported promptly to the dean of the Graduate School on appropriate forms. A final report, on the Master’s/EdS Examination Form is on the Graduate School website. The form should be submitted when all examinations are completed. A student may take the final oral or written examination only twice. Failing the examination twice results in dismissal from the degree program and the Graduate School.

**Application for Graduation**

Each candidate for a master’s degree must apply for graduation through myBama no later than the registration period for the semester or the first session of the summer term in which requirements for the degree are to be completed.

**Second Master’s Degree**

Six (6) semester hours of eligible credit from one master’s degree at The University of Alabama may be applied to the requirements for a second master’s degree, but only if the department of the second master’s agrees to the courses in the plan of study. Any hours from the previous master’s degree must have been earned during the six years (18 fall, spring, and summer semesters) immediately preceding the date on which the second degree is to be awarded. ***Please note that if a student double counts six hours between two master’s degrees, no hours may double count toward any additional master’s degrees.