



Master's Degree in Journalism and Media Studies

Program Handbook 2025- 2026

The Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies offers a Master of Arts degree focusing on research and creative projects. The program is committed to the proposition that enhancing society requires an innovative, interdisciplinary, and rigorous understanding of its media.

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Overview

The Journalism and Media Studies (JMS) program offers courses of study for students with a career orientation in diverse areas such as advertising, public relations, digital media, sports, broadcast and print journalism, media management, media research, and teaching; and for students who aspire to continue their education in doctoral programs. The MA program consists of 30 credits which can be taken over a period of three or four semesters and offers research or creative thesis, professional paper, and internship options. Our MA graduates have successfully pursued professional media, administration, research, and teaching careers and been successful in doctoral programs. Our program is made more affordable by access to graduate teaching assistantships, scholarships, financial aid, and awards.

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#), as well as the NSHE Code, UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: valarie.burke@unlv.edu or gradassociatedean@unlv.edu.

Department Graduate Faculty

A current listing of the graduate faculty can be found in the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Faculty must hold graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up to date information regarding graduate faculty status in your department, visit the [Graduate Faculty status web page](#).

Quick Contacts

Master of Arts — Journalism & Media Studies

Website: [Master of Arts - Journalism and Media Studies](#)

JMS Department

Website: [Journalism and Media Studies](#)

Location: 2147 Greenspun Hall, UNLV Campus

Telephone: 702-895-3325

JMS Grad Coordinator

Dr. Benjamin Burroughs

Website: [Benjamin Burroughs](#)

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UNLV Graduate Student Association

Website: [UNLV GPSA](#)

Location and Facilities

We are part of the culturally-diverse UNLV campus in vibrant Southern Nevada. Located in the booming American Southwest, the Southern Nevada region is a multinational hub for entertainment, sports, and new technologies. Las Vegas hosts two of the nation's largest media conventions each year. The region offers compelling research opportunities in social, environmental, and economic challenges, and in sports and emerging technologies.



The School of Journalism and Media Studies is located on the first two floors of Greenspun Hall, housing staff and faculty offices as well as graduate assistant offices. Located on the corner of Maryland Parkway and University Drive, Greenspun Hall is the home of the Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies and the College of Urban Affairs. The building features state-of-the-art classrooms, research, and production facilities. The 302,000- square-foot Lied Library offers comfortable seating, group study rooms, and graduate resources. It is one of the most modern university libraries in the United States, hosting hundreds of computer workstations, automated storage and retrieval systems, and a media distribution system. Its Special Collections lab is the only one of its kind in the state.

Assistantships

Our program is made more affordable by access to graduate teaching assistantships, scholarships, financial aid, and awards; applying early gives you a greater chance for these options. Please refer to the Graduate College financial resources site for options: [UNLV Financing](#). In addition to these university programs, there are opportunities within the school and department for which you may be eligible.

The School of Journalism and Media Studies offers several graduate assistantships based on your ability to assist with courses. The stipend is \$17,000 along with a tuition waiver and health insurance (the tuition waiver covers about 80% of student fees, and the Graduate College pays \$1,000 toward the overall cost of their annual student health insurance, \$500 per semester). Students teach, prep, and grade course material for about 20 hours of work per

week. Applications for assistantships are submitted through the Graduate College and are due March 15 each year.

Graduate Admissions Requirements

Graduate application requirements and procedures are available through the [Graduate Catalog](#) website [Future Students](#). Start your JMS graduate application at [UNLV JMS](#). This section includes details about JMS submissions not covered in the general catalog.

Your two-page letter of intent should: (1) Describe your goals for the JMS graduate program; (2) Outline your possible research or creative thesis interests; (3) Summarize how your application packet supports these goals and thesis interests; and (4) List the faculty you would like to work with and why you would like to work with them. Research and preparing this groundwork before you apply to our graduate program is important for a successful graduate experience.

Your primary writing sample should be academic and research-based. Additional secondary work samples in any media (for example, video, audio, or software) are recommended and can be either uploaded to the application system (if possible) or linked in your letter of intent. If you do not have a recent academic writing sample, a professional writing sample that demonstrates your analytical and persuasive abilities is acceptable. The primary sample must be your own work only; for secondary samples, you must clearly and accurately describe your role in their creation, as well as the roles of other people.

Letters of recommendation: Your letters of recommendation should be from people who can fairly assess your ability to be successful at the graduate level; that is, to explore new areas of knowledge, to conduct research, to explain complex topics clearly in writing and verbally, and to be a self-starter in an academic setting. Because of this, we generally require that two of the three letters be from recent academic recommenders who have experience with you in such settings. If you have been out of school for some time and have attempted to contact previous instructors but have not received a response, you should ask people familiar both with graduate-level expectations and with your recent achievements to write letters assessing your potential. Typical workplace recommendation letters are usually not sufficiently informative about applicants' ability to succeed in a graduate environment.

Note: *We evaluate applications on the strength of whether each person is likely to succeed in our graduate program. However, an applicant may be denied admission for reasons such as a low GPA, poor letters of recommendation, inadequate undergraduate preparation, and stated intentions or academic interests that do not coincide with the program. As part of an equity-oriented holistic review process, letters of recommendation, GPAs etc. are just some ways to provide additional information comprehensive view of an applicant's strengths and abilities.*

Program Requirements

Program requirements regarding [admission, coursework and culminating experience](#) are found in the [graduate catalog](#).

Sample Degree Options

JMS offers three Master's degree tracks:

The **thesis (research or creative) track** involves taking 24 credits of courses and an additional 6 thesis credits for preparing a research or creative thesis for a total of 30 credits. The thesis is an original piece of work that the student writes under the guidance of a thesis advisor and thesis committee.

The **non-thesis professional paper track** involves taking 30 credits of courses and culminates in an original professional paper completed with the guidance of a professional paper advisor.

The **strategic digital and social media track** involves taking 24 credits of courses and an additional 6 credit hours of internship credits. The professional internship

Thesis Track:

- A GPA of 3.0 must be maintained to graduate.
- 24 hours of course work
- +6 hours of thesis
- Completed thesis
- Oral defense of the thesis
- Passing grade on thesis

Non-thesis Professional Paper Track:

- A GPA of 3.0 must be maintained to graduate.
- 30 hours of course work
- Completed professional paper

Strategic Digital and Social Media Track:

- A GPA of 3.0 must be maintained to graduate.
- 24 hours of course work
- +6 hours of internship
- Completed internship
- Oral defense and written report of internship
- Passing grade on internship

These three tracks are described in detail below.

Thesis (Research or Creative) Track Details

The thesis track involves taking 24 credits of courses and an additional 6 thesis credits for preparing a research or creative thesis for a total of 30 credits. The thesis can be either research or creative:

a) Research ("traditional") Thesis.

The research thesis follows a social science model involving three components: A research topic that interests you (for example, social media use by parents), a research method (for example, a survey), and a theoretical framework (for example, uses and gratifications). You are introduced to methods and frameworks in your first-semester graduate classes; the topics come from your interests, experience and observations, and discussions with faculty. Typically, a research thesis proposes and explores one or more research questions and hypotheses, and consists of chapters comprising 60-100 pages: (1) Introduction; (2) Review of literature; (3) Methods used; (4) Results; (5) Discussion;

and (6) Conclusions (along with a bibliography and appendices). Please note that students are not permitted to enroll in thesis credits until they have met all other course requirements in the program, successfully defended an approved thesis proposal, and filed the required forms in Graduate Rebel Gateway with the Graduate College.

b) Creative (“non-traditional”) Thesis.

The creative thesis may be written or take the form of a documentary, drama, podcast, photo essay, script, website, or any combination approved by your thesis committee. The creative thesis—no matter the medium—includes a written paper of approximately 20-25 pages containing four sections covering: (1) Intro/topic context; (2) Review of media representations of the topic; (3) Explanation of the project’s design/form/structure; and (4) Lessons learned during the project.

The project’s media portions could follow the guidelines of and submit the project to a competition/event approved by your thesis committee—for example, the BEA documentary and audio competitions, AEJMC Viscom’s digital awards, NPPA photojournalism awards, the Dam Short Film Festival, and so on. The written portions should follow department and Graduate College formatting guidelines, but allowances may be made depending on the project. The Graduate College receives the written parts of the creative thesis upon completion of the project.

Typical Research and Creative Track Schedule (Sample)

The first step is for you to prepare a thesis prospectus (proposal) on a topic of your interest that meets the overall objectives of the program and is submitted for approval by your thesis committee. After completing their theses, students present and respond to an oral examination. Each thesis must follow department and Graduate College formatting guidelines ([Graduate College Thesis](#)) Graduate College Thesis and the entire thesis must be approved by the Graduate College for electronic and university library access purposes. You may explore theses research by our MA students on a wide range of topics here: [Digital Scholarship UNLV](#).

Students may take three or more semesters to complete their degree program. The following plan assumes that you have entered the MA program with a viable topic and have prepared your prospectus in your first three required courses.

| Semester | Course | Course Title | Credits |
|--------------------------|---------------|--|----------------|
| | Number | | |
| Fall (first semester) | JMS 710 | Preparing and communicating research | 3 |
| | JMS 712 | Quantitative Methods | 3 |
| | JMS 730 | Theories of Journalism and Media Studies | 3 |
| Spring (second semester) | JMS XXX | A Qualitative methods class approved by the JMS graduate coordinator | 3 |
| | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor) | 3 |
| | JMS 798 | Thesis (if prospectus is sufficiently prepared). | 3 |

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--|---|
| Summer | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (or graduate class of interest), approved by an advisor. | 3 |
|--------|---------|--|---|

TOTAL CREDITS AT THE END OF YOUR FIRST YEAR 21

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------|--|---|
| Fall (third semester) | JMS 798 | Thesis (second of two courses) | 3 |
| | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor) | 3 |
| | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor) | 3 |

TOTAL CREDITS AT THE END OF YOUR THIRD SEMESTER 30

The Prospectus

Before the student begins his or her research or creative thesis, he or she writes a prospectus, which is a plan for the project. The prospectus includes an introduction explaining your study's purpose, how you will do it, and a timeline for completing the thesis. Student should obtain committee chair approval for the prospectus before sitting for the defense. A prospectus meeting/defense is scheduled, ideally in the student's second semester, in which the student's committee makes suggestions for completing the study. Committee members will receive the prospectus no later than two weeks prior to the meeting. If the student fails the first attempt, they will be placed on academic probation via the Graduate College process. If the student fails the second attempt, they may be separated from the program.

Final Oral Defense

The oral defense must be scheduled at least three weeks before the end of the semester (check graduate college website for specific semester defense dates posted). No oral defenses will occur in the summer unless agreed upon by all committee members. After the thesis is completed, the student distributes it to committee members no less than two weeks before a desired defense date. At the defense, the student discusses the thesis with the committee in a spirit of cooperative good will, understanding that the faculty may question any aspect of the thesis and ask for further improvements. Make sure to follow deadlines from the Graduate College.

Defense Results

The defense of the thesis may result in any of three decisions: Pass; pass with revisions; or, no pass. The most common of these three results is to pass with revisions, with revisions ranging from simple editing of style, grammatical errors, and so forth, to substantial rewrites of entire sections of the thesis. The committee may decide to either "sign off" on the thesis or not at the time of this decision depending on the extent of the revisions. The committee may also want to see the final revisions or not. Signing off on the thesis means that the committee agrees to sign the appropriate forms for the completion of the thesis. Again, they may decide to do this either at the time of the defense or after revisions are completed. If the thesis passes outright, then the student will have no further revisions except those that the Graduate College may request. The committee signs off on the thesis at the time of the defense. In the rare event that the student's thesis is not passed in the first attempt, the student will be placed on academic probation via the Graduate College process. If the student fails the second attempt, they may be separated from the program.

Milestones & Required Forms

The Graduate College has required forms for the appointment of your advisory committee (and changes to your committee, if necessary), to outline your plan of study, to document your successful prospectus defense, and to document your final thesis defense (culminating experience form) and submission of your final document, as well as other forms to assist you as you progress through your program. All are available on the Graduate College Forms site: [Graduate College Forms](#). Please contact your rpc coordinator (grad.rpc@unlv.edu) if you have any questions about forms.

Upon admission, there are several forms that will need to be completed and submitted by the appropriate deadlines. The due dates below are approximations. For current deadlines, see the Graduate College Timeline site: [Study Timeline](#). It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and conform to all deadlines. The MA program consists of 30 credits which are typically taken over a period of three or four semesters.

Form:**Due Date**

| | |
|--|--|
| 1. Plan of Study | Before completing more than 16 credits of course work (early 2 nd semester) |
| 2. Appointment of Advisory Committee | Before your prospectus meeting (early 2 nd semester) |
| 3. Prospectus Approval | After your prospectus meeting (2 nd semester) |
| 4. Notification of Oral Examination | Two weeks before your defense date (3 rd or 4 th semester) |
| 5. Final Examination for Advanced Degree | After defense of the thesis (3 rd or 4 th semester) |
| 6. Culminating Experience Results | After thesis defense (3 rd or 4 th semester) |

Thesis Distribution

The completed thesis must be distributed to the committee members no less than two weeks before a desired defense date.

Oral defense

The oral defense must be scheduled at least three weeks before the end of the semester or by a deadline date set by the Graduate College. No oral defenses will occur in the summer.

Thesis (Research and Creative) Track Requirements Checklist

- _____ Plan of Study Form (I) (before completing 16 credit hours)
- _____ Create a committee (file appropriate form with Graduate College)
- _____ Discuss thesis topics with your thesis advisor
- _____ Write a prospectus and obtain chair approval to sit for defense
- _____ Prospectus defense meeting (Approval Form must be signed upon successful defense)
- _____ Write the Thesis
- _____ File Plan of Study Form (II) (before applying for graduation)
- _____ Apply online for graduation using MyUnlv (beginning of semester you defend)
- _____ Schedule a defense date
- _____ Distribute Thesis to committee at least two weeks before defense date.
- _____ Oral Defense
- _____ Defense Results (pass, rewrites, fail)
- _____ Submit Thesis to the Graduate College for format check
- _____ After Thesis is approved, upload to ProQuest

Professional Paper Track Details

The 30-semester hour professional paper track culminates in the satisfactory completion of written professional paper. The student works with his/her faculty advisor (whom the student selects) to serve as the faculty chair/advisor. The development and completion of the Graduate Education Portfolio is negotiated between the student and the faculty advisor.

Typical Professional Paper Track Schedule (Sample)

Students may take three or more semesters to complete their degree program.

| Semester | Course Number | Course Title | Credits |
|--------------------------|---------------|---|---------|
| Fall (first semester) | JMS 710 | Preparing and communicating research | 3 |
| | JMS 712 | Quantitative Methods | 3 |
| | JMS 730 | Theories of Journalism and Media Studies | 3 |
| Spring (second semester) | JMS XXX | A Qualitative methods class approved by the JMS graduate coordinator | 3 |
| | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor) | 3 |
| | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor) | 3 |
| Summer | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (or graduate class of interest), approved by an advisor | 3 |

TOTAL CREDITS AT THE END OF YOUR FIRST YEAR 21

| Semester | Course Number | Course Title | Credits |
|-----------------------|---------------|--|---------|
| Fall (third semester) | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor) | 3 |
| | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor) | 3 |
| | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor) | 3 |

TOTAL CREDITS AT THE END OF YOUR THIRD SEMESTER 30

The Prospectus

Before the student begins his or her professional paper, the student writes a prospectus, which is a plan for the project. The prospectus includes an introduction explaining your study's purpose, how you will do it, and a timeline for completing the professional paper. Students should work in consultation with their chair and should obtain advisor/chair approval for the prospectus, which should also be reviewed by the JMS department graduate coordinator. The student's advisor/chair and graduate coordinator then make suggestions for completing the study. Once approved, the student can move on to completing the professional paper.

Professional Paper

The professional paper can take one of two forms—either an academic professional paper or a full professional paper. The length of the professional paper should generally be 6-8k words or 20-25 pages in length. An academic professional paper should be to the standard that a student could reasonably submit the paper to an academic journal for potential publication. Typically, an academic research paper includes: (1) Introduction; (2) Review of literature; (3) Methods used; (4) Results; (5) Discussion (along with a bibliography and appendices). A fully professional paper can take many forms including a white paper, public relations campaign, grant proposal, or any form of professional research. In the case of public relations or social media campaigns, students are encouraged to the extent possible to actually do the work of the campaign for a potential client (company, non-profit, etc.) rather than just theorizing about what the campaign might look like.

Passing the Professional Paper

Once the chair/advisor signs off that the professional paper is complete and ready for defense it goes to the chair and graduate coordinator for final review. The review of the professional paper by the chair and graduate coordinator may result in any of three decisions: Pass; pass with revisions; or, no pass. The most common of these three results is to pass with revisions, with revisions ranging from simple editing of style, grammatical errors, and so forth, to substantial rewrites of entire sections of the professional paper. If the professional paper passes outright, then the student will have no further revisions. In the rare event that the student's thesis is not passed in the first attempt, the student will be placed on academic probation via the Graduate College process. If the student fails the second attempt, they may be separated from the program.

Milestones & Required Forms

The Graduate College has required forms for the appointment of your advisory chair/committee (and changes to your chair/committee, if necessary), to outline your plan of study, and to finish with your culminating experience results form, as well as other forms to assist you as you progress through your program. All are available on the Graduate College Forms site: [Graduate College Forms](#).

Upon admission, there are several forms that will need to be completed and submitted by the appropriate deadlines. The due dates below are approximations. For current deadlines, see the Graduate College Timeline site: [Study Timeline](#). It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and conform to all deadlines. The MA program consists of 30 credits which are typically taken over a period of three or four semesters.

Strategic Digital and Social Media (Professional Internship) Track Details

Students in the Strategic Digital and Social Media Track (the professional internship and/or professional project track) are required to complete 30 hours of coursework.

This includes: 9 credit hours of required coursework (JMS 710, JMS 712, JMS 740), 15 credit hours of JMS coursework (with a recommended 6 credit hours outside the dept), and 6 credit hours of capstone coursework (JMS 699, JMS 795).

Capstone Coursework

Students can take 6 credit hours of JMS 699 (Internship), 6 credit hours of JMS 795 (Independent Study), or 3 credit hours of JMS 699 and 3 credit hours of JMS 795.

Before enrolling in these courses, students must get approval from the standing professional committee of JMS faculty. This is a permanent standing committee in the department. Students must prepare an 8-10 page proposal (either an internship proposal if taking 699 or a project proposal if taking 795). Once approved by the committee, students can enroll in capstone courses for credit. Students should attempt to get committee approval as soon as possible to avoid scheduling conflicts or delays. Again, the committee must approve the internship or professional project before enrolling in classes.

Standing Professional Committee

Unlike the thesis and professional paper tracks, students in the Strategic Digital and Social Media track do not need to form their own committees. This track has a standing professional committee comprised of professionally oriented faculty members in the department. Consult with the graduate coordinator or internship coordinator for the composition of the committee at any time.

Students will select one member of the standing professional committee to act as a point person for preliminary discussions about their internship or professional project. This committee member can help in the shaping of the proposal.

Project/Internship Proposal

The proposal should be 8-10 pages in length and contain the following sections (students aren't limited to these sections but provide a potential template):

- Description of proposed internship or professional project
- Who will the student work with (main point of contact for internship, professor or professional for independent study)
- Description of expected tasks and responsibilities (i.e. what are you actually doing)
- Skills you hope to acquire or develop through the internship or independent study
- What are your goals for the internship or independent study (what do you want to get out of the experience)
- Description of how the internship or independent study relates to your graduate studies
- How will this internship or independent study help you in your career or professional development

JMS 699 (Professional Internship) Information

Practical application of classroom experience is available to eligible graduate students through an internship. Graduate students can receive academic credit for internship experience if they work a minimum of 150 hours over an academic term in the fields of journalism, media management, broadcasting/podcasting, public relations, social media management or advertising/marketing. For reference, this works out to approximately 10 hours of work per week. Internships can be paid, non-paid, or stipend-based. Students are not eligible to receive academic credit if they are currently employed in a position (no double-dipping). Students cannot retroactively seek credit for internships completed in the past.

Students are responsible for securing their own internship. The JMS Internship Coordinator can assist in identifying available internship opportunities.

Suggested timeline: Approximately **three months** prior to the term you wish to begin your internship, complete the Professional Internship Application at www.unlv.edu/jms/internship

Approximately **two months** prior to the term begin reaching out to prospective internship sites. Submit resume and a cover letter expressing your interest and why you wish to complete an internship at that specific organization.

Once an internship has been offered, discuss with the internship supervisor duties, expectations and goals for the duration of the internship.

Complete the Internship Verification Form and the Internship Waiver Form (provided by the internship coordinator).

Culminating Experience Results

Before completing the program, students will present to the committee the results of their internship or independent study to the standing professional committee. Students must complete a 20-25 page paper delivered by email to the graduate coordinator before the graduate college deadline for completion. Students must complete a critical review and analysis of the results of the internship experience in reference to the knowledge discussed throughout the program and their independent study, delivered to the grad coordinator in the form of a 20-25 page academic paper. This paper is an extension of the 8-10 page proposal presented to the professional standing committee (rather than talking about skills or goals you hope to obtain, state the skills and goals you *did* obtain and achieve) and covers the same guidelines/template outlined above.

Typical Strategic Digital and Social Media Track Schedule (Sample)

Students may take three or more semesters to complete their degree program.

| Semester | Course Number | Course Title | Credits |
|--------------------------|---------------|---|---------|
| Fall (first semester) | JMS 710 | Preparing and communicating research | 3 |
| | JMS 712 | Quantitative Methods | 3 |
| | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor) | 3 |
| Spring (second semester) | JMS XXX | A Qualitative methods class approved by the JMS graduate coordinator | 3 |
| | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor) | 3 |
| | JMS 740 | Strategic Storytelling | 3 |
| Summer | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (or graduate class of interest), approved by an advisor | 3 |

TOTAL CREDITS AT THE END OF YOUR FIRST YEAR 21

| Semester | Course Number | Course Title | Credits |
|-----------------------|---------------|--|---------|
| Fall (third semester) | JMS XXX | A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor) | 3 |
| | JMS 699 | Internship Credits | 3 |
| | JMS 699 | Internship Credits | 3 |

TOTAL CREDITS AT THE END OF YOUR THIRD SEMESTER 30

Graduate Grades and Courses

A listing of courses offered in the master's program is listed in the current version of the [Graduate Catalog](#) ([Master of Arts - Journalism & Media Studies](#)) under Journalism and Media Studies. Recent courses offered (beyond the required introductory courses) include: History of Journalism, Social influence and the media, First Amendment theory, Science Communication, and Special Readings and Independent Study courses on students' topics of interest.

Grades

The Graduate College determines a student's grade point average (GPA), computed for all course work included on a student's Proposed Degree Program form. Graduate courses taken at institutions other than UNLV prior to admission to Graduate College are not

included in the graduate GPA computation. Graduate students only get credit for classes in which they receive a “B-” grade or higher. A “C” grade in a course means that that course does not count in the program of course work. Receiving two “C” grades is grounds for termination from the program.

Pass/Fail: Graduate courses are not normally offered on a pass/fail basis except for thesis, professional papers, or for non-credit courses.

“X” Grade: An X grade is used to identify unfinished thesis credits.

“I” Grade: If a student receives an Incomplete grade in a graduate-level course, the instructor may determine a period, not to exceed one year, for removal of the “I” from the student’s record. If after a year the student fails to complete the work, the Registrar automatically changes the grade to an “F.” The “I” grade is used when a student has not completed course requirements and the instructor judges the reason to be satisfactory.

UNLV Policies require graduate students to have a minimum 3.0 program GPA to graduate.

Summer Courses

UNLV offers graduate courses in journalism and media studies during two of its three summer sessions (Sessions II and III). Summer sessions are five weeks long. Graduate students may take classes during these sessions, but only up to 12 semester hours of credit (four classes). No more than 6 credit hours may be earned in any one summer session. Summer is also a good time to seek classes outside the major and to prepare your research or creative thesis.

Transfer Credits

Students transferring from other graduate programs may transfer up to one-third of the total credits of the degree program excluding thesis credits. This translates to 10 credits that may be transferred from another program. All transfer credits must be approved by the graduate committee, graduate coordinator (or department chair), and the Graduate Dean.

Students should be prepared to submit syllabi and major papers or other assignments from the courses they wish to transfer for credit. Please review the Transfer Credit Policy under the “Credit Requirements” section of the [Graduate Catalog](#) for further policy information.

UNLV Courses outside of Journalism and Media Studies

Graduate students may take up to 6 graduate-level, approved credits from a department or school outside the JMS curriculum and have them count toward your degree. The student must discuss their program and courses with an advisor and receive approval on their Degree Program or Degree Audit companion form.

Forms & Due Dates

Once you have been admitted to the graduate program, you will need to fill out and have signed several forms at various times throughout your career as a master's student. The due dates are approximations. These are required forms. You will need several others, filed on an as-needed basis. Most forms are available as from the Graduate College form site (Graduate College Forms). For more information, view the Graduate Study Timeline on the Graduate College website.

| Form | Due Date |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1) Plan of Study Forms (Two Parts) | Before completing more than 15 credits of course work (during 2nd semester) |
| 2) Prospectus Approval | After your prospectus meeting |
| 3) Culminating Experience Results | After thesis defense (3 rd or 4th semester) Check |
| 4) Application for Graduation | Graduate College Website |
| 5) Program Evaluation Form | At the time you file for graduation |

Advising and Your Advisor

From the moment you are admitted to the master's program you have an advisor — the Graduate Coordinator. You may always contact or meet with the Graduate Coordinator for advisor, ideas, or other forms of academic counseling. Eventually you will want to work with a faculty member on your thesis. That person may or may not be the Graduate Coordinator. You may select from current graduate JMS faculty, as listed on the [Graduate Faculty status web page](#) listing Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies faculty with appropriate privileges. He or she becomes your thesis advisor. You as the graduate student always have the option to change advisors at any time with no penalty or repercussions whatsoever.

Annual Review Procedures

Each winter break and early spring term, graduate students are **required** to complete the Graduate Student Individual Development Plan (IDP) form. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress, and it establishes reasonable goals for the year ahead. Reported student data is shared with students' graduate coordinators and advisors to foster opportunities for discussion about students' strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and next requirements, and mentoring plans so that students know what they need to do in order to progress successfully through their programs in a timely manner. Students who are graduating are also required to complete the form in order to record their achievements since the data is also used to track metrics related to the annual productivity of all students. This survey will be sent by the Graduate College to the student's Rebelmail account. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress while setting goals for the year ahead.

Probation

If a student fails to successfully progress in their degree program, their department/school will recommend that the student be placed on probation by the Graduate College. Students on probation may be dismissed/separated from their program for failing to successfully meet the conditions of their probation by the deadline provided. Please see the [Probation and Separation](#) section of the [Graduate Catalog](#) for more information.

Frequently Asked Questions

Here are answers to some of the questions we often hear from graduate students and those interested in our graduate program.

Who is Hank Greenspun?

The School of Journalism and Media Studies is named after public advocate and Las Vegas Sun publisher/founder Hank Greenspun (1909-1989). Greenspun confronted major public issues, using the power of the press to fight corruption and demagoguery, and championing the welfare of the poor and disenfranchised in society. Greenspun's legacy lives on at the Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies, where we actively emphasize the powerful functions of communication in addressing challenging social issues and promoting public good. We use communication knowledge strategically to enhance the quality of life with our educational curriculum, applied research efforts, media production projects, and community outreach programs.

Do I have to be an undergraduate journalism or broadcasting major to be admitted to your graduate program?

No. It's not required that you have an undergraduate degree in journalism, broadcasting, or media studies to apply to the graduate program. However, it is helpful if you have had at least a few courses in journalism, broadcasting, or related fields at the undergraduate level. You may be advised to take one or two undergraduate classes before full admission to the program is granted.

What can students do with a master's degree?

Our professional tracks have placed students in jobs and internships with the Las Vegas Raiders, Aces, Golden Knights, National Public Radio (NPR), branding and strategy companies as well as producing and broadcasting for the top news outlets in Las Vegas. Master's students have gone into all sorts of careers: Teaching (elementary, secondary, and college); consulting; advertising; social media, sports media, broadcasting; management; corporate communication; fundraising; sales; writing; public relations; event planning; human resources; lobbying; politics; advocacy; public affairs; training; and various careers in the non-profit sector. JMS grads have also continued their education to earn Ph.Ds. at respected institutions across the United States, or pursue law degrees.

What's the emphasis of the program?

Our courses focus on three areas: professional skills and production techniques, concepts related to journalism and media studies, and specific topics such as technology, strategic digital and social media, and sports. Students who write traditional theses proceed with in-depth study of an issue that applies or explores theory. Students doing creative theses produce a media work, such as a documentary or podcast, and situate it in terms of theory. Students taking the professional tracks enhance and develop skills towards workforce development. Each of these options have been useful for our graduates in their careers.

How long does it take to complete the degree?

Usually three to four semesters, which includes some work during the summer, for a total of 30 course credits. Some working students choose a lighter course load and take more time. You'll learn the basics during the first year, and spend most of your second year working on a major project, mentored by a group of professors. Our graduate program is very flexible and encourages personalization: During the second and third semesters you select courses from across the UNLV campus and bring your new-found expertise back into your research.

What do students typically learn in the M.A. program? Is this program appropriate for someone who's interested in practical or creative options?

Part of going to graduate school is learning more about your own strengths and honing your analytical skills, even if you don't fit into the traditional image of a scholar. Many graduates write a research thesis, and we also offer creative project and exam alternatives. We encourage a balanced approach to practical and academic work: You will have access to professional production facilities, and we offer independent study courses in which practical, internship-like work is combined with graduate-level readings.

How can I afford graduate school?

We have a few Graduate Teaching Assistantships available for students. In addition, we can help connect students with

job and grant possibilities, especially after we become familiar with your work and interests. Our graduate students' skills in writing, research, and presentation make them quite competitive for campus jobs.

Can I start the program in the Spring semester instead of the normal Fall semester? Can I defer an acceptance?

Our graduate students go through the courses as a group, taking the same introductory courses in the Fall. If you would like to start at a different time, defer, or sample some of our graduate courses, we encourage you to apply as a "Non-Degree Seeking" student. Many of our graduate courses are offered in the evening to work around typical work schedules. After a few courses, you can apply and, if accepted, have the relevant courses count towards your degree program.

Who should I seek out for advice; who is my advisor?

From the moment you are admitted to the master's program, you have an advisor. That person is the Graduate Coordinator. You can always visit, call, or e-mail that person for advice about the graduate program. After you've been in the program for a semester or two, you may select a thesis advisor or chair who will direct your thesis, but the graduate coordinator is still always available for consultation.

Who should be on my thesis committee? Who should direct it?

If you are doing the thesis track, you should select a committee based on what your thesis topic is. Ideally, you should choose a graduate faculty member to advise the thesis who has knowledge of the topic and the method you are going to use. Sometimes, however, you

might have one member of your committee who is knowledgeable on the topic and another who will help you on the methods. Many students find their thesis advisor and committee members by taking the courses with a professor and finding out that they have similar interests. Of course, it's also important to pick a committee who you can work with and who will challenge you to produce the best piece of research you possibly can. You can find a detailed description of the composition of a graduate committee in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

Who should I choose for the outside member of my committee?

An outside member, also called the Graduate College Representative (see Thesis Track section above under committee composition for a description) is often chosen based on a course you might take outside the School of Journalism and Media Studies (you can take up to 6 credits of course work outside The School). If you don't take any classes from outside the School of Journalism and Media Studies, then your advisor might suggest someone. The best way to get that person on your committee is to ask them personally, providing them with background on your project, courses you've taken, and other pertinent information. Or you can list up to three potential outside members on the Appointment of Examination Committee form and the Graduate College will ask them if they will serve on your committee.

What have previous graduate students done for their theses?

Recent research projects have explored data journalism and criminal justice reform, health and media consumption patterns, and marketing implications of fandom using social network analysis. Examples include:

One student researched media coverage of the Iraq War in The New York Times

and The Guardian. Interested in communications, policy and research, and a member of Young Professionals in Foreign Policy, she was hired by a Government Affairs department of an energy company in Washington, DC.

Another student focused his research on risk, science and environmental communication in his thesis examining climate change messages in the desert Southwest. Now a doctoral student at Cornell University, he is studying how messages in areas vulnerable to climate change influence attitudes about climate change, intentions to alter behaviors, and support for new policies.

A former journalist enrolled in our program studied audience engagement and the development of the modern newspaper while at UNLV. His thesis explored how Nevada lawmakers and journalists worked together to write one of the nation's strongest shield statutes during the political and social tumult of the 1960s and early 1970s. He now teaches undergraduate journalism courses at Texas A&M University-Kingsville and advising the student newspaper and television operations.

A first-generation college student explored photography's influence on the framing of visual messages, and whether photographs and visual rhetoric were effective as tools for social change. She was awarded a fellowship from the University of Maryland, College Park, where she received a doctoral degree in Journalism Studies.

What Is a Prospectus?

A prospectus is a detailed plan—a proposal—for conducting either a graduate-level research paper or (more commonly) a master's thesis. Drafting a prospectus gives both you and your instructor/advisor a blueprint for developing findings and sound conclusions. With revision, a prospectus

can also serve as the first chapter of your thesis. If you chose to do a non-traditional thesis, you will also be required to develop a prospectus (depending on your project, you might or might not use prospectus content directly in your final non-traditional thesis). It is important to consult with your individual instructor or thesis adviser on your prospectus, as each graduate faculty member approaches it in slightly different ways.

How Long is It? Prospectuses may be anywhere between 15 and 40 or more pages, depending on your topic and whether you are proposing a research or creative thesis. (A prospectus for a thesis rooted in quantitative or social sciences, for example, may require as much as three chapters of development). The length may also depend on

the amount of background the reader requires, literature on the topic, and the method you will use.

Prospectus Format: With some variation, include these sections in the following order.

Title. Pick a working title for your paper that uses key words and themes featured in your study. The title will, most likely, change several times before your final draft is due, so use a simple one to help frame your entire paper.

Introduction. The introduction should provide an overview of the study you propose. Explain what the general area of study and its purpose. Provide a justification for the study explaining why it is important, what it potentially adds to our understanding of the phenomenon you're examining. In other words, why are you doing this project? If your study replicates another one, explain why this reexamination is necessary.

Background. A background section may be optional, and you may have more than one of these woven throughout the prospectus. Here, includes a narrative of

the key concepts you'll feature, supplying an overview of the history of your topic or specific ideas that have evolved over time—you're supplying context for your study here without going into exact detail about other research on the subject.

Thematic Statement. The thematic statement introduces what you will address in your paper or thesis. Use the information you've gathered to describe the general scope of the paper, including the "who," "what," "where," "when," "why," and "how?" You should refer directly to facts, people, places, and events, but at this point, you should not have developed any conclusions.

Significance of the Study. Use this section to explain to the reader how your paper will be different from other papers or research on the subject. This section features a "so what?" It also explains the relevance of your paper relative to a larger body of scholarship. Answer the following questions, both implicitly and explicitly: Why should the reader care? Why is your research important? How does it contribute to a pool of knowledge on the subject? Be precise, and be sure to use appropriate scholarly style.

Literature Review. This section provides a description of your secondary sources. You may include references to the primary sources of your study, but the purpose here is to explain to the reader what has already been written about your subject. You should NOT include every book, journal article, or manuscript associated with your paper—only the ones that have the most relevant, direct tie to the study you are preparing. You are including this section so the reader will know both that you've done your homework and so they'll understand the significance of your study. There are no "magic numbers" (or a

minimum number of sources) for a Lit. Review; however, do feature your best sources. In the Lit. Review, you may also provide definitions of key terms, or outline hypotheses you'd like to test (if you're using statistical methods for an empirical study), or, you might outline several research questions you'd like to answer if your study is more exploratory.

Methods. Depending on your study, the methods section could be the most important part of the prospectus. It should be clear how you will go about conducting the research to develop your findings—the sampling procedures, methods used for analysis, and so forth. Clearly outline all the steps you will take whether your study is qualitative (interviews, focus groups, critical/cultural, ethnographic, visual, historiographic, etc.) or quantitative (content analysis, survey, quasi-experimental, etc.). Note: While qualitatively based studies may simply require an explanation of how you locate primary sources, quantitatively-based studies or those that rely on a scientific approach require a more developed and explanatory methods section.

Preliminary Outline. Use this section to begin organizing the direction of your research. Your outline will change over time, and it is not meant to be part of your final paper, but you should use an outline to make sure you address the items appropriate for your study. The three major subcategories include: A. Introduction; B. Body; and C. Conclusion.

Sources to be Consulted. Organize by categories, including "Primary Sources," "Secondary Sources," "Books," "Journal Articles," etc. You do NOT need annotations here, but organizing by categories helps to understand the scope your sources.

The Prospectus Process for a Thesis: Generally, the prospectus is something that you want to complete in your second semester of graduate study. After working on the prospectus with your thesis advisor, and going through several drafts, you will distribute the thesis to your entire thesis committee. Do not give your prospectus to your committee without your advisor's approval. Try to give your committee members at least a week, or two to read your prospectus before the prospectus meeting.

Discipline Resources

Areas of Specialization

Bates: First Amendment law; political communication; privacy
Borchard: Journalism history; reporting; research methods
Burroughs: Digital, social, and streaming media; media industries; sports media
Dam: Advertising, public relations, research methods
Eichner: Sports, broadcasting, production
Kilker: Media technologies; visual media; research methods
Nourse: Audio broadcasting; media workflow; production pedagogy
Park: Sports, public relations, quantitative methods
Shata: Advertising, digital media, transmedia
Soto-Vásquez: Politics, health, Latina/o/x identity
Stoker: Advertising; public relations; media history

Library Resources

Susie Skarl, Urban Affairs Librarian
UNLV Libraries
4505 Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89154
Email: susie.skarl@unlv.edu
Phone: 702-895-2141
Web: [Urban Affairs Librarian](#)
JMS Guides: [Library Guides](#)

Journals

Faculty publications appear in the following journals, among others:

Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies
Communication Law and Policy
Communication and Sport
IEEE Technology and Society
Information Technology and Libraries
International Journal of Communication
Journal of Advertising
Journal of Advertising Education
Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media
Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising
Journal of Marketing Education
Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly
Journal of Media and Religion
Journalism & Communication Monographs
Journalism History
Management Communication Quarterly
Popular Culture Review
Science Communication
The Journal of Popular Culture
Social Media + Society
Television and New Media
Visual Communication Quarterly

Other Publications: American Heritage; Slate; The New York Times; The Wall Street Journal; The Washington Post; The Spectator of London; Times Literary Supplement

Professional Organizations

American Academy of Advertising
American Journalism Historians Association (AJHA)
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)
Association for Internet Researchers (AoIR)
Broadcast Education Association (BEA)
European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA)
Marketing Public Policy Conference
Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ)

University Resources

The Graduate Academy: Innovative Leadership, Professional, and Career Development

The goal of the Graduate Academy is to serve as a virtual resource providing support and many professional opportunities to UNLV graduate students. The Academy offers information about events and services such as graduate certificate programs, workshops, training sessions and career services. You can follow Academy activities via social media or look for regular updates on the website.

Alumni Engagement

With an alumni base 150,000+ strong, the UNLV Alumni Engagement offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

Commencement Office

Located in the UNLV Office of the Registrar, the [commencement office](#) is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College. It is the students' responsibility to ensure they apply for [graduation on time](#) and submit all required forms to the Graduate College. Questions regarding thesis/dissertation should be directed to the Graduate College [Student Services Team](#) and questions regarding required forms should be directed to the Graduate College [RPC Team](#).

Office of Diversity Initiatives

The vision of the [Office of Diversity Initiatives](#) is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to provide leadership and support for UNLV's diversity mission: *to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment*. This Office also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The [DRC](#) is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

Office of International Student and Scholars Services

[International Students and Scholars \(ISSS\)](#) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

The Care Center

The [Care Center](#) is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders

through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

The Intersection

[The Intersection](#) is a one-stop resource for UNLV's highly diverse student body — a comprehensive multicultural center grounded in the academic life of our students. As an intersecting campus resource, the Intersection helps ensure students, particularly first-generation and students of color, successfully navigate their academic careers. Here, all members of campus can discuss their differences, discover their similarities, and build a shared sense of belonging.

UNLV Libraries

[UNLV Libraries](#) has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)

The [Graduate & Professional Student Association](#) serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141 and Gateway Building PDAC Room. The facility a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities

The [Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the *UNLV Student Code of Conduct* by:

Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;

Establishing accountability for student choices;

Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and

Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

Military and Veteran Services Center

The [Military and Veteran Service Center](#) is staffed with veterans and veteran education benefits-experienced staff to assist more than 1,800 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists attending UNLV. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office

The [Financial Aid & Scholarships Office](#) supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

Writing Center

This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) page.

University Policies and Procedures

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the [Graduate Student Handbook](#), and following websites:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Activation for Military Service](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [FERPA/Privacy Rights](#)
- [Health Insurance - Mandatory](#)
- [Jean Clery Campus Safety and Security Report](#)
- [Proof of Immunization](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects](#)
- [Rebelmail Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Student Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Title IX](#)

UNLV does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its educational programs or activities, including admissions, on the basis of sex/gender pursuant to Title IX, or on the basis of any other legally protected category as is set forth in NSHE Handbook Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13. Reports of discriminatory misconduct, questions regarding Title IX, and/or concerns about noncompliance with Title IX or any other anti-discrimination laws or policies should be directed to UNLV's Title IX Coordinator Michelle Sposito.

The Title IX Coordinator can be reached through the online reporting form at [Title IX Reporting Form](#), by email at titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu, by phone at (702) 895-4055, by mail at 4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Box 451062, Las Vegas, NV, 89154-1062, or in person at Frank and Estella Beam Hall (BEH), Room 555.

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the [Graduate Catalog](#):

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Academic Policies](#)
- [Admission and Registration Information](#)
- [Degree Progression Policies & Procedures](#)

In addition, the [Graduate College website](#) contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.

Handbook Information

| Last revised | Revised by | Changes summary |
|--------------|--------------|--|
| 2018-02-26 | J. Kilker | Updated application details, corrected typos, added template |
| 2025-04-04 | B. Burroughs | Updated application details, added track changes, updated faculty, changes to frequently asked questions |