Guidelines for Applied Communication Plans

1. The final project for the Strategic Communication master's degree consists of an Applied Communication Plan, in which the student will develop a complete communication plan to address a problem or issue in the field of strategic communication that is directly applicable to improving the marketing of a process, service, procedure, idea, or product.
2. The candidate will clearly define the problem or issue he or she wishes to address or solve through the applied project.
3. He or she will investigate and report past and current methods or practices used to solve the problem.
4. Since the Applied Communication Plan involves a systematic study, candidates will need to access and report adequate review of literature related to their inquiry.
5. If adequate research does not exist, the student will need to collect pertinent data that will lead to the plan development. Activities of the research performed by focus groups, long interviews, and/or other qualitative techniques involving human subjects will require the candidate to develop the question guides, collect the data, analyze the data, report the findings, and offer conclusions, limitations and recommendations.
6. The plan will include the actual materials to be used in either concept or final form, as well as a plan for tracking the results of the plan.

Steps to Completing the Applied Communication Plan

Step 1: Eligibility
Before beginning the Applied Communication Plan, the candidate must have:
- A 3.0 GPA or better
- Completed or be in the process of completing all required coursework.

Step 2: Establish a Committee and Select a Topic
A topic should be determined at the beginning of fall term of the second year. The candidate's advisor must approve the topic. The candidate should also invite a second instructor or another qualified individual (selected in consultation with the advisor) to serve as a consultant for the project. These two members make up the Applied Communication Plan committee.

Upon choosing a topic, a realistic scope of the project must be established in consultation with the advisor. The student should submit a proposal of no less than three and no more than ten pages of the applied communication plans to the advisor by the end of fall term (or two terms before the term the student plans to graduate).

The proposal will have the following identifying information:
- An introduction to the project, and a brief literature review on the topic.
- Main points that will be researched in the project
- Scope of work to be developed (including a list of the possible communication elements that will be created)
- Expected outcomes of the work (i.e. the potential for implementation)

Past topics have included:
- Developing a social media policy for first-person shooter incidents for the FBI
- Developing a rebranding schema for a healthcare company
- Developing a brand and communication plan for a non-profit organization

Candidates may chose to create the Applied Communication Plan as part of their responsibilities in their current place of employment. In this case, it is possible that some elements of the plan will be developed in collaboration with the candidate's coworkers. If this is the case, the candidate should identify which elements will be under his or her supervision and which elements he or she will be directly responsible for on the Topic Approval Form. The candidate's advisor will review the work allocation and advise on any additions to the project that might be made because of the collaborative nature of the project. The work on the communications plan may begin before approval, but should not begin more than three months before the approval of the topic.

Step 3: Project Development

The student will develop a timetable of planned completion dates for all activities related to completing the Applied Communication Plans (see Prepare the Draft below for required elements).

Step 4: Prepare the Draft

An initial draft of the work should be developed as the candidate is pursuing work toward completing their project. Beyond the initial draft, the candidate's committee may require several more drafts of the paper. This step serves to ensure both a high quality paper and appropriate consultation with the members of the committee throughout the Applied Communication Plan process. Organization and content of the paper should be as follows:
- Title Page (required)
- Copyright page (optional)
- Acceptance/Approval page (originals required)
- Acknowledgements (optional)
- Table of Contents (required)
- List of Tables with page references (required if present)
- List of Figures with page references (required if present)
- Body of Report:
  - Section 1 Introduction
  - Section 2 Situation analysis and Review of Relevant Literature
  - Section 3 Target Audience Analysis
  - Section 4 Goals and Objectives
  - Section 4 Strategy Recommendation
  - Section 5 Tactical Recommendations (including sample tactics such as press releases, storyboards, etc.)
  - Section 6 Recommended timeline for implementation
  - Section 7 Evaluation plan
  - Section 8 Summary and Conclusions
- References
- Appendices

Step 5: Process

A candidate should expect multiple drafts or revisions of their work submitted to the committee. Careful time management should be exercised to prepare the revised drafts and allow for the committee to review and respond with comments. The editing process should be included in the timetable and approved by the candidate's advisor. It is the candidates' responsibility to ensure that the applied communication plan conforms to the style and format established.

Step 6: Presentation and Defense

The committee should, at a minimum, receive a near final draft of the Applied Communication Plan no later than two weeks prior to the project defense date. The student should plan to defend the plan at least two weeks before the end of finals week for that term; the date should be agreed upon by both committee members. Keep in mind faculty commitments during the last two weeks of the term. Once you and your committee have agreed on a date, complete the online scheduling form at: http://journalism.uoregon.edu/students/grad/graduate-student-forms/

The candidate will present his or her work in a short (15- 20 minute) presentation to the committee, followed by a question and answer session. The committee will then deliberate and provide feedback to the candidate regarding the project. At this time, the project may be approved in its entirety, or the committee will request specific revisions to the project.

Step 7: Completion

Upon receiving the final draft, the committee will evaluate the paper and, if approved, the committee chair will email the Graduate Programs Assistant to signal that the final version has been approved by the committee. The candidate should submit an electronic version of the completed Applied Communication Plan to the Graduate Programs Assistant no later than the last day of finals week of the term in which they intend to graduate.

Students who intend to complete the Applied Communication Plan in the summer should contact the committee members to discuss their summer schedules. It should not be assumed that faculty members are available during the summer.