M.A. Degree in Communication Studies
Plan 2: Professional Option

This option for the M.A. program is designed for those students who enter the M.A. program primarily to pursue professional interests. It provides students who enter the program with specific career goals the opportunity to include in their plan of study some type of practical application of their academic work. There are three steps required to complete this plan of study successfully.

Step 1: **Proposal to Pursue this Option**

To secure permission to pursue **Plan 2: Professional Option**, you must submit a proposal, approved by your academic advisor, to the Graduate Program Coordinator or Department Chair. You should turn in your proposal **no later than the end of the second week of your second semester** (or earlier if you plan on finishing the program within one year)**.** An acceptable proposal should include, but is not limited to, the following:

- A statement of purpose that articulates how the professional option will serve to address your personal goals in ways that the thesis or comprehensive exam options would not.
- A discussion of your academic preparation, including undergraduate coursework as well as specific required and elective courses on your plan of study, for doing the professional option.
- A general description of the specific type of professional application, either an internship (COM 590) or a project (COM 598), you anticipate completing for 3 credit hours in your plan of study.

Step 2: **Professional Internship or Project**

A. **Professional Internship or Project Proposal:** Before registering for credit for the internship or project, you must submit for your advisor's approval a more complete description of the specific professional application experience:

1. For a **professional internship (COM 590)**, you, the student, have the responsibility:
   - To identify a site of the internship, the name of a supervisor, the duties or responsibilities to be fulfilled, hours committed each week, etc.
   - To express specifically how the internship will be supervised by the academic advisor (e.g. making weekly journal reports and/or holding weekly sessions)
   - To arrange for the academic advisor to make personal contact with the site supervisor, at least once, preferably on site, to clarify the criteria to be met by the internship

2. For a **professional project (COM 598),** you, the student, have the responsibility:
   - To identify the nature of the project in terms of both practical goals and academic coursework
   - To express specifically how the project will be supervised by the academic advisor
   - To plan how the project will be executed (e.g., addressing such issues as resources, scheduling, etc.)

B. After the proposal is approved, you may register (and pay) for the credit and conduct the internship or the project. At the end of the semester in which you have completed the professional experience, you must submit a final report of the experience, following the guidelines on *Blackboard Learn*. Only after the report is submitted will the instructor

of record submit your grade for the 3 hours of course credit.

Step 3: **Capstone Portfolio**

To complete *the Professional Option*, you will need to submit a Capstone Portfolio, which includes the work you have completed for this plan of study. The portfolio must be submitted to your advisor for approval, *two weeks prior to the Graduate School's deadline for submitting results of comprehensive exams for students not writing theses.* (The approximate due dates to the department are early April for May graduation, early July for August graduation, and early November for December graduation; however, **CHECK THE GRADUATE CALENDAR**.)

Your Capstone Portfolio should be well prepared and organized. Consult the Guidelines, at https://comstudies.ua.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Portfolio-Document-Guidelines-September18.docx. The Portfolio should contain the following sections:

1. **Introduction**--An overview of your professional background and career goals as it applies to your plan of study (3 - 5 pages). Your discussion should include the following:
   a) An overview of your academic and professional background
   b) Your intent for applying to the program
   c) What you hoped to gain upon entering this program
   d) New goals or insights since entering the program
2. **Program Assessment**--An assessment for each course taken in your program of study. Each assessment should describe what you learned in the course that was relevant to your education and professional goals (1 - 2 pages). Include specific theories, concepts, methods and sources to support your analysis. Identify program courses completed under the following sub-headings:
   a) Core Courses
   b) Elective Courses
   c) Professional Experience
   In the Appendix Section of the portfolio include: 1) one major course assignment or project which best supports your assessment and 2) your final report submitted for COM 590 or COM 598.
3. **Conclusion**--An overview of what you learned through assessing your course, professional goals and how this experience shapes your future professional development and goals. (3 - 5 pages).
4. **Bibliography**
5. **Appendix**--containing the following:
   a) Professional Resume
   b) Original Statement of Purpose for entrance into the MA program
   c) Professional Plan of Study.
   d) Course Assignments or Projects (which best illustrate course assessments)
   e) Final Report for COM 590 or COM 598.

Submit a completed Master's Exam form (http://www.comstudies.ua.edu/graduate/pdf/maexamfrm.pdf) with the portfolio. This form must be signed by the advisor, Graduate Program Coordinator, and Department Chair and submitted to the Graduate School, upon successful completion of the Capstone Portfolio.