The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication’s Master of Mass Communication handbook is designed to give students the information they need to comply with the degree’s requirements. It outlines the school’s academic standards, policies, and procedures. It should be used in conjunction with Arizona State University’s Graduate College Policies and Procedures (http://graduate.asu.edu/sites/default/files/Grad_Policies_11-17-2010.pdf). It is the student’s responsibility to become familiar with the Graduate College’s Policies and Procedures, this guide and to comply with all university and school requirements.

ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES

All applications must be submitted online through Arizona State University’s Graduate College. Application requirements and instructions on how to apply can be found at http://www.asu.edu/graduate/admissions/ The Cronkite School offers admission for the fall semester only. All application materials must arrive no later than February 1 for the following fall. Additionally, the Graduate College requires applicants to submit official transcripts in sealed
envelopes directly to its offices. It also requires official TOEFL scores for any student whose native language is not English.

The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication requires that applicants submit the following items:

1. Official GRE scores (the scores will be sent electronically to the Graduate College if the applicant requests they be sent to ASU and uses institution code 4007)
2. A current resume (submitted online with the Graduate College’s application).
3. A 350-500 word personal statement of goals, including how the Cronkite School’s program will help the applicant achieve his/her goals. This statement also serves as a writing sample (submitted online with the Graduate College application).
4. Three letters of recommendation, at least one of which reliably assesses the applicant’s ability to succeed in graduate school. These letters should be on letterhead and from professional rather than personal references.

All applications are evaluated by the Cronkite School’s graduate committee who makes admission recommendations to the school’s administration and to the Graduate College. The Graduate College makes the offer of admission to the student. The admissions process is highly competitive.

**PLAN OF STUDY**

After the completion of 50% of the credit hours required for the degree, students must file an official Plan of Study with the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. The Plan of Study is available online at [http://www.asu.edu/](http://www.asu.edu/).

The student is able to select the ASU courses that he or she has completed, those in progress and those the student expects to take in future semesters. Once the Plan of Study is completed it is electronically forwarded to the Cronkite School’s graduate office. It must be approved by the members of the Cronkite School’s graduate committee and dean. The completed Plan of Study is sent to the Graduate College and then to the Graduation Office. The approved Plan of Study is a contract between the student and the committee members verifying the classes the student intends to take during his/her course of study. Students who have not filed an approved Plan of Study are not eligible for graduation. Changes in the Plan of Study may be made by using the Course Changes to the Graduate Plan of Study available online at MyASU ([http://www.asu.edu/](http://www.asu.edu/)).

Students who need to file a Plan of Study will be notified by the Graduate College via e-mail. If the student fails to file the Plan of Study within the specified time period a hold will be placed on the student’s ASU record. The hold will prevent the student from registering for classes. Once the student has filed the Plan of Study and it has been approved, the hold will be removed. The Graduate College monitors students’ POS status and places or removes the holds.
TRANSFER CREDIT

Students admitted to the 30-hour mid-career MMC program may transfer up to 6 credit hours of approved coursework taken before beginning the program; the 6 credit hours may include non-degree coursework. Only courses with a grade of A or B and taken within 3 years of admission to an ASU graduate program may be accepted as transfer credit.

In order to have graduate coursework that was completed at other accredited institutions included on a Plan of Study, a student must petition the Cronkite School’s graduate committee. The student also must complete the petition section of the iPOS.

TIME LIMITATIONS

Per the Graduate College, all work included on a student’s Plan of Study must be completed within six consecutive years.

400-LEVEL COURSES TAKEN FOR GRADUATE CREDIT

The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication may allow graduate students to enroll in and use up to two 3-credit 400-level courses on their Plans of Study (a total of 6 credit hours). Students taking these courses are responsible for obtaining and completing the 400 Level Course Contract form. The 400 Level Course Contract form specifies what the student must do to receive graduate credit for the course. It must be signed by the professor.

In order for 400-level courses offered in academic units outside the Cronkite School to be included on a Plan of Study, a student must submit to the Cronkite School’s graduate office a written statement from the course instructor stating the course is acceptable in that unit for graduate credit and that the student successfully completed the necessary work.

RETENTION

The Graduate College and the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication require students to make satisfactory progress during the time they are enrolled in a graduate program. This includes maintaining a minimum 3.0 cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) overall and in courses included on the Plan of Study. (Courses taken as an undergraduate at ASU and reserved for use in a graduate degree program are included in the GPA.)

If a student’s GPA falls below 3.0, the student will be notified in writing and placed on probation. If the student’s cumulative GPA is not raised to at least a 3.0 by the end of the next semester (excluding summer), a recommendation will be made to the Graduate College to remove the student from the Master of Mass Communication program.

If a student earns less than a C in MCO 502 Journalism Skills (Bootcamp), the Cronkite School will recommend to the Graduate College that the student be removed from the program immediately.

To receive their degrees, students also are required to earn at least a B in MCO 570 Capstone.
APPEALS

Students who want to appeal a course grade must first discuss the issue with the instructor. If the issue is not resolved, the student may appeal the decision to the school’s standards committee. The standards committee will review the issue and make a recommendation to the dean. The dean’s decision is final. Students should be aware the standards committee may recommend a grade lower than the one awarded by the course instructor.

If a student fails to make satisfactory academic progress and a recommendation is made to the Graduate College to remove the student from the Master of Mass Communication program, the student will have ten business days to file a written appeal with the dean. The dean’s decision regarding appeals is final.

PRE-ADMISSION CREDIT

Credit earned in graduate-level courses (per Graduate College policy) by undergraduate students may count toward their graduate degrees at ASU provided the credit hours have not been used toward a previously awarded degree. Before awarding a bachelor’s degree, ASU undergraduate students should contact their undergraduate adviser to set aside graduate courses for use toward a graduate degree.

Reserving a course does not guarantee the student will be admitted to a graduate degree program or that the course will be used to meet graduate degree requirements. A maximum of nine semester hours of credit may be reserved and only courses with a grade of “B” (3.00) or better are applicable. Reserved credit is classified as non-degree credit and must be taken within the six-year time limit to be included on a Plan of Study.

GRADES OF INCOMPLETE

The Graduate College requires students who receive an “Incomplete” in graduate coursework (500 level or above) to complete the necessary work within one calendar year. If the incomplete is not removed within one calendar year, it will become part of the student’s permanent transcript and cannot be used on a student’s Plan of Study. To receive credit for the course, the student must repeat the course by re-registering, paying fees and fulfilling all course requirements.

MMC students with more than one “Incomplete” at any time will be considered “failing to make adequate progress,” will be notified and placed on probation. If the student does not complete the work to remove the incomplete and earn a letter grade within the calendar year, a recommendation may be made to the Graduate College to remove the student from the Master of Mass Communication program.

With 400-level courses taken for graduate credit, students are required to complete the necessary work to remove an “Incomplete” grade within one calendar year. If the “Incomplete” grade is not removed within one calendar year, the “I” will become an “E.” An “E” cannot be used to meet the requirements for a graduate degree, but it is used to calculate the student’s GPA. Students may retake the class to earn a higher grade, however both the “E” and the new grade will be used
in calculating the student’s GPA. If this results in the GPA falling below 3.0, a recommendation to withdraw the student from the MMC program will be made to the Graduate College.

APPLIED PROJECT

A student whose MMC program requires him/her to complete an applied project is eligible to enroll in MCO 593, Applied Project, when s/he has no more than 6 credit hours of coursework remaining on her/his Plan of Study.

For more information on the applied project see the Applied Project Procedures handout available in the Cronkite School’s Graduate Office.

TEACHING/GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication offers a limited number of graduate assistantships each academic year. Students awarded these positions are assigned to specific classes or to work with selected professors performing various duties. To be eligible for an assistantship, students must be enrolled in at least 9 credit hours of academic coursework each semester. Students may apply for assistantships by submitting the application form found at the Graduate College website: http://www.asu.edu/graduate/forms/. Applications are reviewed each spring for assistantships that begin the following academic year. Assistantships are awarded on a semester-by-semester basis, but often bridge the academic year (both fall and spring semesters). The school occasionally offers a limited number of assistantships to second year students who have served as graduate assistants and who elect to split their capstones over two semesters. These assistantships are based on the student’s performance and the Cronkite School’s needs.

CRONKITE SCHOOL ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

The crux of our democracy is the ability of citizens to obtain honest, truthful and balanced information, and the credibility and integrity of the individual journalist and communications professional are crucial in that effort.

In light of the Cronkite School’s mission to prepare students to become journalists and communication professionals, it is critical that credibility and integrity are fostered within the educational environment of the school. To that end, a zero tolerance policy toward academic dishonesty will be enforced within every course and educational activity offered or sanctioned by the school.

Any allegations of academic dishonesty will automatically be referred to the Standards Committee of the school for review and recommendation to the dean of the school. If any student is found by the committee to have engaged in academic dishonesty in any form - including but not limited to cheating, plagiarizing and fabricating - that student shall receive a grade of XE for
the class and will be dismissed from the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Reinstatement will not be considered. There will be no exceptions.

DIVERSITY PRINCIPLES

The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication practices inclusivity in student, staff and faculty populations in order to create an academic environment that embraces diversity of thought and acceptance of all people regardless of race, gender, age, sexual orientation or societal, political, cultural, economic, spiritual or physical differences.

To this end, the school directs efforts to the following four principles:

- Actively seek out and encourage diverse populations to become productive members of the faculty, staff and the student body.
- Create and maintain a work, learning and social environment that is cognizant and supportive of a diversity of human differences and beliefs.
- Incorporate within the formal content of the curriculum and in each course an affirmation of the core journalistic values of accuracy, fairness, ethical behavior and sensitivity when reflecting an increasingly multicultural world.
- Foster and support a climate in which events and activities of the school reflect diversity of awareness, sensitivity to and support for people of different origins, orientations and abilities.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT JOURNALISTS

The Cronkite School encourages participants in its professional programs to make use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, which are valuable reporting tools and promotional and distribution channels for our content. To ensure the highest journalistic standards in these programs, participants must abide by the following standards for social media use drawn from The Poynter Institute for Media Studies and the Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics.

Ethical Principle: Act Independently

As stated in the SPJ Code of Ethics, journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know. Actions that call into question a journalist’s ability to report fairly on an issue harm not only that journalist but his or her news organization and fellow journalists. Participants in the Cronkite School’s professional programs are bound by these standards in their use of social media regardless of whether they are at work:

- Recognize that your actions involving social networking sites, including those taken when you aren’t working, affect the credibility of yourself, the Cronkite School’s professional programs and other journalists participating in those programs.
- Avoid posting information to social networking sites or blogs that could embarrass you or your news organization or call into question your ability to act independently as a journalist. This includes expressing political views or opinions about newsmakers or
sharing internal communications, even if you are participating in what is supposed to be a private group.

- In profiles and in use of privacy settings, restrict access to your most private information, including removing any mention of political leanings and information that could be misinterpreted as conveying a bias.
- Aggressively manage “friends” and followers and their comments. Delete comments that call into question your ability to act independently as a journalist and, if necessary, remove “friends” or followers who make such comments.
- Recognize that actions taken for journalistic reasons can be misinterpreted, such as signing on as a “fan” of a political campaign or interest group in order to follow updates. When appropriate, tell that group that you have signed on to look for story ideas. If identifying yourself as a follower of a campaign, interest group or political party, seek to follow sites of the other candidate/s, the other political party or groups on the other side of the issue.

Ethical Principle: Seek and Report the Truth

As stated in the SPJ Code of Ethics, journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information. The Cronkite School’s professional programs recognize that using social networking sites helps journalists find sources and develop story ideas as well as making personal and professional connections. Participants in these programs are bound by these standards when using social networking sites as a reporting tool:

- Recognize that use of social networking sites is just one way of gathering information. It is no substitute for face-to-face interviews and digging for information.
- Work offline to confirm information gathered via social networking sites. Seek through every means possible to interview sources in person or by phone to verify identities, claims and statements.
- Be transparent with your instructors, supervisors, editors and audience when using information drawn exclusively from a social networking site or messaging through a social networking site. Let them know how and in what context you contacted sources and gathered information and how you verified that information or sought to verify it.
- Compensate for the younger, whiter and more affluent skew of users of social networking sites. Seeking diversity is an ethical principle as well as a journalistic goal, and social networking sites used exclusively or predominately as a way to report news can limit the inclusion of diverse views.

Ethical Principle: Minimize Harm

As stated in the SPJ Code of Ethics, journalists should treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect. Participants in the Cronkite School’s professional programs are bound by these standards intended to minimize harm from the use of social networking sites as a reporting tool:

- Obtain informed consent from sources, disclosing who you are, what you are seeking and where your story will and/or could run. The informality of social networking sites makes it easier for potential sources to misunderstand your intentions and the impact of cooperating.
• Take care when dealing with minors and other vulnerable people who might not fully understand the consequences of cooperating with a journalist. If contacting a child through a social networking site, make sure he or she connects you with a responsible adult.

Written by Steve Elliott, director of digital news for Cronkite News Service, with acknowledgment to "A newsroom guideline for using social networks" by Kelly McBride, The Poynter Institute for Media Studies

ACEJMC Values and Competencies: As a member of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the Cronkite School is committed to classroom learning that achieves ACEJMC professional values and competencies. These include the core areas of freedom of speech, ethics, diversity, critical thinking, research, writing and use of tools and technologies related to the field. For a full list of ACEJMC values and competencies, see http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps