

## **Technical Standards for Mass Communications Programs**

### **School of Mass Communications Virginia Commonwealth University**

**Purpose:** This document defines the nonacademic criteria for advancement through and graduation from the School of Mass Communications at Virginia Commonwealth University.

#### **Background**

The School of Mass Communications provides this description of technical standards to inform prospective and enrolled students of the skills required for the various professions within communications, including but not limited to print journalism, broadcast journalism, on-line journalism, advertising, public relations and photography. These technical standards reflect the performance abilities and characteristics that are necessary to successfully complete the requirements of the programs at the School. These standards are not requirements of admission into the program. People interested in applying for admission to the program should review these standards to develop a better understanding of the physical abilities and behavioral characteristics necessary to successfully complete the program. The School of Mass Communications complies with the requirements and spirit of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Therefore, the School will endeavor to make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities who are otherwise qualified.

The School recognizes that the B.S. degree in Mass Communications carries with it the full authority of the institution and communicates to those who might seek the services of the bearer of the degree that he or she is competent in the practice of communications. Therefore, the student must demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that the faculty has determined are essential for the practice of communications and their specialties. The student must acquire both cognitive and technical skills to negotiate the curriculum.

The following technical standards describe the essential functions that students must demonstrate in order to fulfill the requirements of a communications program. Thus, these standards are required for advancement through and graduation from the program. Students must possess the skills and abilities that will allow them to successfully complete the course of study and receive the full benefit of their education.

The technical skill areas include motor, sensory/observation, communication, cognitive and behavioral. Continued enrollment and graduation will depend on the successful demonstration of both the knowledge and the skills listed below.

## **Standards**

### **1. Motor Skills**

General: Students should have sufficient motor function to operate the equipment needed to meet curriculum requirements in all communications fields.

Specific: A student must possess the motor skills to operate personal computers; use word processing software; manipulate graphic software; access the Internet and other online information; use spreadsheets, databases and other analytic software; operate audio editing and field gathering equipment; and operate video editing and field gathering equipment. In addition, students must have the speed and dexterity to use this equipment and software in such a manner as to be able to meet strict deadlines, similar to those imposed in the communications profession.

### **2. Sensory/Observation**

General: Students should be able to acquire a predetermined level of required information through observation and personal experiences in basic and advanced courses. Students should be able to acquire information visually and orally.

Specific: A student must possess the visual acuity to see fine detail; discern differentiations in color, shape and texture; read and manipulate a digital sound wave on a computer screen; and see and manipulate a video image frame-by-frame. A student must also possess the visual acuity to read charts, records and small print and handwritten notations, and be able to focus on details for such activities as framing and capturing video and computer images.

### **3. Communication**

General: A student must be able to communicate effectively and accurately both orally and through the written word. Students must be able to use these skills to gather and convey information.

Specific: A student must have sufficient facility with English to retrieve information from texts, lectures and personal interviews and to communicate concepts and ideas on written exams and written and oral assignments. Electronic Media students must have an effective broadcast voice, which includes industry standards such as clear articulation, enunciation and authoritativeness.

#### **4. Cognitive**

General: A student must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate, and synthesize.

Specific: A student must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand spatial and mathematical relationships. Problem solving requires all of the intellectual abilities listed above. A student must be able to perform these problem-solving skills in a timely manner and under strict deadlines, similar to those found in the communications profession.

#### **5. Behavioral**

General: A student must possess the emotional health required for full use of his or her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities and assignments.

Specific: A student must be able to endure physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. He or she must be able to adapt to changing environments, display flexibility, and function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the communications field. Integrity, interpersonal skills and motivation are all personal qualities that will be assessed during the admissions and education processes. A student must be able to accept criticism and respond by appropriate modification of behavior. A student must be able to interrelate among fellow students, team members, internship providers, human news sources, community members and faculty with honesty, integrity, respect and nondiscrimination.

*Approved by the faculty of the School of Mass Communications: May 04, 2001*