

RTF Graduate Admissions Guidelines

Objectives:

- Ensure a consistent means of assessing applicants that remains the same over time;
- Enable transparency in the process and ability for all faculty to weigh in at key stages;
- Effectively match/distribute students with faculty areas and interests.

The Process:

1. The MA & PhD **committee composition** should include the same five people on each committee. Membership will be rotated across faculty over the years, but the Graduate Advisor will always serve as one of the five members. Committee members should represent a cross section of Media Studies areas and interests.
 - The Graduate Advisor chairs the committee, and in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator, oversees the process and makes sure it moves along according to the schedule outlined below.
 - In the interest of efficiency and streamlining the process, the Graduate Advisor runs both committees.

2. Adhere to a **regularized schedule** (with specific dates for each year noted in advance) for review of candidates at various phases. This schedule will conform roughly to the schedule noted below. See page 4 for cheat sheet of key dates/meetings.
 - **December 15th, 2016** – Spreadsheet of all applicants from Graduate Coordinator sent to the Admissions committee (see notes below regarding assessment criteria).
 - Assessment scores (ranking from **1 to 5**, with 1 as the low score and 5 the high score) can be tallied via email and a cutoff point of competitive candidates can be considered.

 - **Third Week of January (January 20th, 2017)** – **First round** of PhD rankings by committee members due by noon; committee may then meets to compile short list of approximately 20 names.
 - Committee then circulates the streamlined list of PhD applicants to Studies GSC members for review; 1-2 week turnaround time
 - In years when Harrington nomination is available, committee selects that candidate (no Harrington this year)

 - **Last Week of January/First week of February (February 3rd, 2017)** – **Second round** of PhD rankings: all Studies area recommendations **due to committee by Thursday, February 2nd at noon.** [*this may be consolidated with the MA review meeting, noted below*]
 - In advance of meeting, Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Advisor organize rankings as needed; Committee then identifies candidates with whom they wish to Skype.
 - Committee divides up list to schedule one-on-one Skype interviews. Adheres to consistent set of questions for Skype conversations (to be developed by Committee).

- Based on Skype interviews, ensuring distribution across key areas and faculty, etc., committee constructs a rank order list (1st tier, 2nd tier). This list will be completed no later than second week of February.
 - Committee will rank people for possible recruitment fellowships & supplementary funding.
 - **First Friday in February (February 2nd) – First round** of MA rankings from committee due by noon; again ranked from 1 (low) to 5 (high).
 - Committee then circulates the streamlined list of candidates immediately to Studies GSC for review.
 - Long short list should be approximately 30-35 applicants. Recommend Committee creates two tiers of rankings for MA students.
 - **Second or third week in February (February 17th) – Second round** of MA rankings due by noon; all Studies area recommendations due by noon on **Thursday, February 16th, 2017**.
 - Once again, Studies faculty should be aware that they will have one to two weeks of turnaround time for review and feedback.
 - **Second Friday in February (February 17th, 2017) – Final review phase**. Committee meets to do final ranking of MA and PhD candidates in preparation for making admissions offers.
 - Tiers of both PhD and MA students should be created so that Graduate Coordinator/Advisor can easily move down wait list in making offers.
 - Determine how to allocate recruitment fellowships to admits.
 - **Third Monday in February (February 20th, 2017)** – Send out MA and PhD admissions decisions upon gaining approvals from Dean’s Office for fellowship allocations; begin recruiting. For PhDs, divide up responsibilities regarding contacting accepted students based on who they have expressed interest in working with in their application. (Contact by faculty & grad students should be made no later than the first week of March.)
 - **During the month of March (March 30th & 31st, 2017)– Recruiting Days** (scheduled based on where spring break, SCMS etc. falls)
 - Consider a grad student “pecha kucha” session where several current students briefly present their work; this can provide a sense of the scope of interests and research in our program. (The GSO can organize this – they did so in spring 2016 very successfully)
 - Send two-year course rotation (grad courses) to accepted students prior to the recruitment period so they can see the types of courses available to them.
3. **Consistent assessment criteria** should be employed by each committee member to assist in ranking and evaluating candidates. It should account for:
- Quality of the applicant’s statement and writing sample;
 - Value of input on recommendation letters;

- Undergraduate GPA (for MA applicants); MA-level GPA for (for doctoral applicants – though these should be 4.0 or close to it at MA level);
- GRE scores/TOEFL scores (Graduate Coordinator will provide information regarding desired minimums/recommended cutoffs for all categories);
- Their interests being well suited and appropriately distributed to main research clusters; also that there are sufficient faculty wishing/able to work with them;
- That there is not an uneven distribution in terms of potential advisors or areas of interest of admits.

Calendar:
MA & PhD Admissions, 2016-2017

- December 12 (M) Graduate Admissions Committee meeting immediately to follow Continuing Fellowship meeting (1-2 p.m., RTF Conference Room)
- December 15 (Th) Grad student applications available for viewing on EASI; distribute to committees for review
- January 19 (Th) Graduate Admissions Committee: first-round PhD rankings due to Graduate Coordinator by noon
- January 20 (F) Graduate Admissions Committee: first-round PhD ranking discussion (12-1:30 p.m., RTF Conference Room); top-tier PhD rankings to circulate to Studies faculty for review & feedback after meeting – **faculty: *please note two week turnaround time***
- February 2 (Th) Graduate Admissions Committee: first-round MA rankings due to Graduate Coordinator by noon
- Studies Faculty: Feedback forms for PhD applicants due to Graduate Coordinator by noon via email
- February 3 (F) Graduate Admissions Committee: Generate PhD long short list & list of Skype interviewees; first-round MA rankings – top tier MA rankings to circulate to Studies faculty after meeting (12-2 p.m., RTF Conference Room) – **faculty: *please note two week turnaround time***
- February 16 (Th) Studies Faculty: Feedback form from Studies faculty regarding MA applicants due to Graduate Coordinator by noon via email
- February 17 (F) Final rankings for PhD and MA admits (12-2 p.m., RTF Conference Room)
- February 20 (M) Studies: Send out MA & PhD admissions decisions following approval from Dean's Office; begin recruitment
- March 30-31 (Th/F) MA & PhD Recruiting Days
- April 15 (S) All admitted MA & PhD students must accept or decline admissions offers by this date