



The University of Texas at Austin  
Stan Richards School of  
Advertising & Public Relations  
*Moody College of Communication*

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# MA Student Handbook

Master of Arts in Advertising  
Stan Richards School of Advertising & Public Relations  
Moody College of Communication  
Academic Concentrations:  
Texas Creative  
Texas Immersive  
Texas Strategy

<http://advertising.utexas.edu>

(Effective Fall 2026-2027)

MASTER'S STUDENT HANDBOOK  
2026-2027

Table of Contents

I.	DIRECTORY	4
II.	INTRODUCTION	5
	Admissions	5
III.	PROGRAM PREREQUISITES	6
IV.	BASIC PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MA	6
	The MA Program of Study	6
	MA without Thesis	6
	MA with Thesis	7
	VA Benefits Eligibility	8
	Supporting Work	9
	Additional Rules Governing Master's Coursework	9
	Thesis and Professional Report Guidelines	10
	Supervising Committee	10
	Length of Project	10
	Certification of MA Degree Requirements and Graduation	10
V.	GENERAL INFORMATION	10-11
	Important Groups and Individuals	10
	Email List Serve	10
	Advising	10
	Role of the Graduate Adviser	10
	Role of the Graduate Coordinator	10
	Advertising Graduate Council (AGC)	11
	Registration	11
	Types of Registration	11
	Course Load	11
	Adds/Drops	11
	Withdrawal	12
	Re-entry after an Inactive Period	12
	Requirements for Graduate Degrees	12
	Transfer of Credit	12
	Remaining in Good Standing	12
	Scholastic Dishonesty	12
	Credit/No Credit	13
	Applying Undergraduate Courses Toward the Degree	13
	Grade Requirements	11
	Incompletes	13
	Time Limitations	14
	Graduation	13
VI.	ASSISTANTSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS AND FINANCIAL AID	14
VII.	DESCRIPTION OF BACKGROUND/GRADUATE COURSES	15
VIII.	ANNUAL STUDENT EVALUATIONS	15
IX.	APPENDIX (Degree Outlines)	16

## I. DIRECTORY

2026-2027

School Web Site: <http://advertising.utexas.edu/>

School E-mail: [Advertising@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:Advertising@austin.utexas.edu)

Stan Richards School of Advertising & Public Relations (DMC 4.338)

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Office of Graduate Studies (MAI 101)

Sarah Ades, PhD	Dean of the Graduate School and	512-232-3600
	Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs	

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## II. INTRODUCTION

Graduate work in advertising leads to the Master of Arts (MA) or in some cases the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The candidate for an advanced degree presents work done in a chosen major area but is also expected to do supporting work on an advanced level (upper-division undergraduate or graduate) in one or more relevant areas. In a typical year about 70 master's students and 30 doctoral students are enrolled.

The following pages survey the degree requirements and common procedures in the Stan Richards School of Advertising Master of Arts program. This publication represents the combined information available from various official documents and from the School and University graduate program practices. It is designed to help you understand the basic steps in obtaining your graduate degree.

Academic policies and procedures do change, and we will do our best to keep students informed of and involved in any School or Graduate School program alterations. You should also refer to The Graduate School Catalog for important information.

## II. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Once admitted into the program, it is the *responsibility of each graduate student to be informed about all requirements pertaining to his/her program of study*. Reasonable care is taken to inform individual students of requirements via the student email list serv. However, the student should stay informed about deadlines and enroll for appropriate courses. The University is a large institution with strict deadlines; failing to observe them usually means paying additional fees or delay in progress.

Working closely with the Advertising Graduate Office will help insure timely and successful completion of the program. Current academic calendar: <https://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/graduate>

## III. PROGRAM PREREQUISITES

An entering student must hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution. All students must complete the following courses (or equivalent) prior to beginning coursework at UT Austin:

Foundations of Marketing  
Statistics Course

**In no case will on-the-job experience substitute for these courses.** They provide the necessary background for graduate-level work in advertising. Any of the undergraduate courses may be taken either prior to applying for the program *or* enrollment at UT Austin.

## IV. BASIC PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MA

There are two master's degree options offered to prepare the student for successful careers – MA without Thesis and MA with Thesis. The degrees combine conceptual and theoretical underpinnings with knowledge about the practical aspects of advertising and the business environment within which it operates. All graduate students share the responsibility of maintaining at least a **“B” average (3.0 GPA)** throughout their tenure at the University. The University expects students to be continuously registered as a full-time student while in the graduate program.

## THE MA PROGRAM OF STUDY

Both the non-thesis and thesis MA programs of study require 36 hours beyond the bachelor's degree. The degree requires at least 6 hours of supporting work. However, supporting coursework need not be in a single discipline. For example, one course might be taken in marketing and another in public relations,

psychology, or data science. Requirements for the degrees are as follows—note the flexibility on timing between supporting coursework:

### **Master’s Degree without Thesis**

#### **Fall Y1**

- \_\_Creative Strategies ADV 387\*
- \_\_Media Management ADV 385-3\*
- \_\_Quantitative & Qualitative Research ADV 382\*

#### **Spring Y1**

- \_\_Theories of Persuasive Communication ADV 382J\*
- \_\_ Elective
- \_\_Elective

#### **Fall Y2**

- \_\_Elective
- \_\_Elective
- \_\_Elective

#### **Spring Y2**

- \_\_Graduate Campaigns ADV 391K\*
- \_\_Elective
- \_\_Elective

\*Core Classes

### **Concentrations:**

In the M.A. Advertising program, students can create their own area of emphasis, or the program offers three concentrations to bridge the gap between academia and industry and allow for greater depths of study. Texas Creatives requires a separate application following admission to the MA program.

**Texas Creative** (the following courses are recommended electives/supporting coursework):

- Portfolio I – ADV 383-2
- Portfolio II – ADV 383-3
- Portfolio III – ADV 383-4
- Portfolio IV – ADV 383-5
- Copywriting - ADV 338L (upper division undergraduate course)
- Art Directors Seminar – ADV 447 (upper division undergraduate course)

TXC students must earn a **B or higher** in ADV 387 Creative Strategies and all portfolio courses (ADV 383 2-Portfolio I, ADV 383 3-Portfolio II, ADV 383 4-Portfolio III, ADV 383 5-Portfolio IV).

**Texas Immersive** (the following courses are recommended electives/supporting coursework):

- Take one or both: Audience Development & Engagement (ADV 391K) and/or Immersive Media Studio (ADV 391K) (B or higher required)
- Experimental Storytelling – ADV 391K

Creativity in AI (ADV 391K)  
Immersive Experience (ADV 391K)

**Texas Strategy** (the following courses are recommended electives/supporting coursework):

Social Media – ADV 391K (may be repeated for credit)  
Account Planning - ADV 391K  
Consumer Behavior – ADV 391K  
Digital Metrics – ADV 391K  
Digital/Social Media Analytics – ADV 391K

The program must include at least twenty-seven semester hours of graduate coursework. **No more than 9 semester hours of upper-division undergraduate courses are permitted in the thirty-six-hour program.** Six hours of coursework must be ADV elective/ supporting coursework and at least six hours must be courses in a supporting area to fulfill the degree requirement. Students must be registered the semester they file to graduate.

### **Master's Degree with Thesis**

This degree program will include thirty-six semester hours, at least twenty-seven of which must be at the graduate level. The twenty-seven hours will include the thesis courses -- ADV 698A followed by ADV 698B. Students must be registered for the thesis (ADV 698B) course the semester in which the thesis is submitted. **No more than 9 semester hours of upper-division undergraduate courses are permitted in the thirty-six-hour program.** The supporting coursework consists of a minimum of six hours in a related subject or subjects. Requirements for degree are as follows:

#### **Fall Y1**

\_\_ Creative Strategies ADV 387\*  
\_\_ Media Management ADV 385\*  
\_\_ Quantitative & Qualitative Research ADV 382\*

#### **Spring Y1**

\_\_ Theories of Persuasive Communication ADV 382J\*  
\_\_ Elective  
\_\_ Elective

#### **Fall Y2**

\_\_ Thesis A ADV 698A  
\_\_ Elective  
\_\_ Elective

#### **Spring Y2**

\_\_ Graduate Campaigns ADV 391K\*  
\_\_ Thesis B ADV 698B  
\_\_ Elective

\* Core Class

Students choosing the master's degree with thesis option must complete an extended research project developed in and completed in the ADV 698A and ADV 698B graduate thesis courses. ADV 698A is typically taken in the fall of the second year and ADV 698B in the spring of second year. The thesis topic as formally proposed may have evolved either directly or indirectly from work developed in previous graduate coursework. Research completed for the thesis should be original research, exhibiting a sound theoretical foundation, where data are gathered and analyzed, and results are reported and discussed. Thesis research topics should pose and attempt to answer a novel research question that will contribute to knowledge in the discipline.

VA Benefits-Eligible Students – in order to meet funding guidelines from the Veteran's Administration students should notify their academic advisor to receive assistance in planning their 36 hours for their degree. Any hours beyond the required 36 will not be considered by the VA.

The thesis must meet all requirements set by the Graduate School. The thesis must, in the opinion of the Supervising Committee:

- a. exhibit a sound theoretical foundation
- b. display analytical and/or problem-solving competence
- c. be structurally and grammatically acceptable
- d. be of high overall quality

The Supervising Committee will neither read nor approve a thesis unless the candidate is *currently* enrolled in ADV 698A or ADV 698B.

### Supporting Work

Master's level students are required to complete 6-12 hours of supporting coursework depending on which degree program is selected. Courses fulfilling this requirement may be from different departments, but they must represent a coherent program of study. Courses chosen for the supporting area should relate to the student's area of study.

### Additional Rules Governing Master's Coursework

- **No more than 20 percent (i.e., 6 hours) of coursework may be taken as "CR/NC" (or Pass/Fail for upper-division undergraduate courses).** The option applies only to supporting courses. All advertising core courses and electives (as well as any background courses) must be taken for a letter grade.
- To have candidacy approved a student must have a "B" average (3.0 GPA) or above in the major and in the supporting work areas, as well as a "B" average overall (3.0 GPA).

### THESIS GUIDELINES

The thesis shall consist of evidence of research capability and design, and a presentation of that research exhibiting communicative skills expected of a master's candidate. Because it is the belief that both research and presentation of this research may vary widely in both type and scope, the following will satisfy this requirement.

□ Supervising Committee

The Supervising Committee normally consists of two persons, a Supervisor and a Reader. The supervisor must be a member of a Graduate Studies Committee. In some cases, a third person may be included. It is permissible to have the Reader be from outside the Advertising school.

The Supervisor should be a faculty member with an interest and/or expertise in the area selected for the Thesis research. Typically, the Reader should be selected in consultation with the supervising professor and should be a faculty member with an interest and/or expertise in some facet of the area of research.

□ Length of Project

The thesis should be of sufficient length to answer the question adequately and completely or address the problem posed for the research. Typically, students submit a short-written proposal (of no more than 2-3 pages) to the supervising professor. While discussing this proposal with the supervising professor, issues like the scope of the project, suggested research methods, and how these relate to the overall length of the finished project should be addressed. Each student should work closely with the supervising professor to reach agreement on what is expected of the final project.

Certification of master's degree Requirements and Graduation

Upon registering for the second half of Thesis course (ADV 698B) or in the last semester of coursework, in order to graduate, a student must file an electronic application to graduate. The Graduate Coordinator will notify students via email when to file this document. It is the responsibility of each graduate student to be informed about all requirements pertaining to this process.

## V. GENERAL INFORMATION

### IMPORTANT GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

Email

The Graduate Coordinator (DMC 4.362) can help with many routine questions and the Adviser can help with any academic planning. It is helpful to the Graduate Coordinator if any special requests (e.g., for letters, forms, etc.) are put in writing. There are certain times of the year when the Office is very busy, so having a written request ensures that no requests are misplaced. The Graduate Coordinator commonly communicates with students through correspondence by email. All graduate students must have an active email address registered with the University. It is the student's responsibility to be added to the UT list serve and set email filters that allows correspondence from the list serve to be received.

Advising

The Graduate Adviser is the overall director of Graduate Studies within the school. She/he approves the student's course selections each semester as well as all formal documents during the student's program of study. The Advertising Graduate Office maintains student records and helps to ensure that students are aware of program requirements. Each student is **required** to consult the Graduate Adviser prior to registration each semester so that advising bars may be cleared. An online advising site (<https://utdirect.utexas.edu/avgadv/>) is available to facilitate this process. Since registration is a busy time, students should feel free to see the Graduate Adviser throughout the semester to discuss more in-depth academic planning.

Role of the Graduate Adviser

The Graduate Adviser is a Stan Richards School faculty member who is a member of the Graduate Studies Committee and appointed by the Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies to represent the Graduate School in all matters pertaining to the graduate program in the school. The Graduate Adviser advises students and monitors the progress of all graduate students, seeing that the requirements of the University

and School are carried out and that high standards are maintained. The Graduate Adviser is the first step in the process of approval for administrative matters and advises students on all scholastic matters.

#### Role of the Graduate Coordinator.

The Graduate Coordinator plays a vital role in day-to-day operations of the school's graduate program. Responsibilities include the initiation, coordination, and facilitation of services, programs and procedures in such a way that the graduate student receives individual attention and the opportunity to become familiar with and functional within the University. The Graduate Coordinator is familiar with the University and School policy concerning application, admission, registration, candidacy, and graduation and informs and assists students in dealing with these policies. This involves close coordination with the Graduate School, the Office of the Dean of the Moody College of Communication, the Stan Richards School administration, the International Office, the Graduate Opportunity Program, and any other offices on campus with which a student might need assistance. The Graduate Coordinator's offices disseminate information about the program, handles petitions and special requests, assists with registration, maintains student files, compiles statistics and maintains a library of Professional Reports submitted by former students. The Graduate Coordinator often serves both in administrative and counseling capacities.

#### Advertising Graduate Council (AGC)

This motivated and enthusiastic student-run organization serves the needs of master's students in Advertising. Its purpose is to maximize the Graduate School experience and to increase the employment prospects of Advertising MA students. AGC's primary strategy is to gain positive exposure for Advertising MA students and the Stan Richards School, both within the University community as well as with prospective and former students, advertising agencies, and advertisers.

## REGISTRATION

### Types of Registration

#### *Conventional Registration*

All Advertising MA students are expected to be continuously registered. The Advertising graduate registration procedure involves visiting the online advising site (<https://utdirect.utexas.edu/avgadv/>) and consulting with the Graduate Adviser about the student's plans and overall program progress. Once the Adviser and student are satisfied with the student's plans for the term, an electronic form is returned to the Graduate Coordinator and any routine advising bars are cleared. Bars pertaining to library and other fines cannot be cleared by the Advertising Graduate Office. At this point, the student can use the University's online system to complete registration.

### Course Load

The maximum course load for a graduate student is 15 semester hours in a long-session semester or 6 semester hours in each 6-week Summer session. The Graduate School recognizes *nine* semester hours during a long-session semester and *three* hours during a summer term as a minimum full-time course load. The three-semester credit hour minimum course load for the summer session may be satisfied in one six-week term, or in the nine-week or twelve-week terms.

Under the following circumstances, graduate students must be enrolled for a full-time load (nine semester hours) -- holders of Graduate School-administered fellowships and scholarships; assistant instructors, teaching assistants, assistants (graduate), and graduate research assistants; and students living in university housing or receiving certain student loans.

The Graduate School Catalog specifies that a student "must spend at least two semesters, or the equivalent, in residence as a full-time student and must complete the major portion of the degree program at the University of Texas at Austin.

### Adds/Drops

With the required approvals, a graduate student may drop a class through the last class day of the semester or summer term; after the twelfth-class day of the semester or the fourth-class day of the summer term, the graduate dean's approval is also required. If the student drops the class by the twelfth-class day of the semester or the fourth-class day of the summer term, the class is deleted from the student's academic record. After this time, delete drops (which remove all indications of the course registration from a student's academic record) may be requested only in the cases of university error or in response to rare and extenuating circumstances. The form is filled out with assistance of the Graduate Coordinator and must be approved by the Graduate Advisor. After which, final approval requesting the delete drop must be approved by the graduate dean.

If the student drops the class from the thirteenth through the twentieth-class day of the long-session semester or from the fifth through the tenth-class day of the summer term, the symbol *Q* appears on his or her academic record to indicate a drop without academic penalty. After these dates, if the student is registered on the letter-grade basis, the class instructor assigns the symbol *Q* or a grade of *F*; if the student is registered on the credit/no credit basis, the symbol *NC* is recorded.

The deadline for changing the Credit/No Credit status of a course is later in the semester and approval of the Graduate Adviser is required. Consult the University of Texas Course Schedule for the exact dates. Add/Drop forms can be obtained from the Advertising Graduate Office or the University Office of Graduate Studies (MAI 101).

### Withdrawal

Dropping an entire course load constitutes withdrawal from the University. A student must contact the Graduate Adviser before contacting the Graduate Dean about withdrawing.

### Re-entry after an Inactive Period

If a continuing student is not enrolled for one long semester (i.e., Fall or Spring), she or he must apply to the University for permission to re-enter at this link: <https://gradschool.utexas.edu/admissions/how-to-apply/graduate-readmission>. The application must be submitted by the following dates: July 1 for Fall, December 1 for Spring, and May 1 for Summer. Although a student may be given permission to re-enter by the Graduate School, this decision is not official or complete without the approval of the Graduate Adviser.

If a new student registers and withdraws before the 12th class day of the first semester, he or she must reapply for admission to the Graduate School or have his or her original admission extended by petition from the Graduate Adviser to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE DEGREES

Transfer of Credit It is University policy that no course counted toward another degree may apply toward a master's degree. The University prohibits credit transfers from foreign universities. In certain situations, a maximum of **six** hours of graduate work receiving a grade of "A" or "B" may be petitioned for transfer from another university to apply to the MA degree.

### Remaining in Good Standing

Students not meeting the minimum requirements of the Graduate School (i.e., falling below a 3.0 average) will receive a "warning" letter and be on probation for one semester during which time they must bring their grade point up to a 3.0. If a student fails to obtain a 3.0 average after this semester, the University will dismiss the student from the Graduate School.

### Scholastic Dishonesty

The professional lives of graduates of any academic department are related to the reputation of the institution from which they graduate. Scholastic honesty and integrity are an integral part of that reputation. In the Stan Richards School students are expected to uphold the highest levels of scholastic integrity. The University of Texas at Austin's "Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities," Appendix C, Section 11-801 (in the General Information Bulletin) states:

The University expects all students to ... maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work, and to observe standards of conduct appropriate for a community of scholars.

A student accused of scholastic dishonesty may be subject to disciplinary proceedings initiated by a faculty member or dean and may be subject to severe penalties. Scholastic dishonesty can result in a failing grade, or even suspension from the University.

Scholastic Dishonesty is defined in the *Bulletin* to include, but not limited to, (1) cheating, (2) plagiarism, (3) collusion, or (4) falsifying records. In addition to the definitions provided in the *Bulletin*, students should be aware that the school has defined plagiarism to include:

- (a) Submitting a paper, creative work, or other class assignment as your own when, in fact, it (or any part of it) was done by someone else.
- (b) Copying material authored by another person, word-for-word, without putting that material in quotations and citing the source.
- (c) Copying the general idea or thesis of another person, even if you paraphrase, without citing the source.

As a general rule of thumb, if you take more than three (3) words in a row from material authored by another person, you must put it in quotation marks and provide a proper citation. Copying the words of another person in order to assure that your grammar or writing style is appropriate is not an acceptable excuse for plagiarism. You may *discuss* the ideas of others, but you must arrive at theses, hypotheses, or conclusions on your own, i.e., you must express *original* ideas that are yours and yours alone.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, or any other form of Scholastic Dishonesty, ask your instructor or faculty adviser. Students are responsible for their own conduct and for reporting any violations to their instructor or other member of the Stan Richards School faculty.

### Credit/No Credit

Students may take only 20 percent of the hours required for their degree on a Credit/No Credit basis. This means that a master's student is allowed to take six hours of coursework on a Credit/No Credit basis. For master's students only courses in the supporting area may be taken Credit/No Credit. All required and elective ADV courses must be taken for a letter grade.

### Applying Undergraduate Courses Toward the Degree

A graduate student is allowed to take up to nine hours of undergraduate upper-division course work and apply it toward the graduate degree of which no more than six hours may be in either the major area or the supporting work. Neither the hours nor the grade points of undergraduate courses count towards the Graduate GPA.

### Grade Requirements

Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 average for all upper-division and graduate courses in their major area and supporting coursework.

### Incompletes

The Stan Richards School and the University Office of Graduate Studies strongly discourage students from delaying completion of work required by specific courses. When students take “Incompletes” (“X” on transcripts) for courses, they jeopardize their ability to obtain fellowships and University appointments. In the Stan Richards School, having more than one “X” from the previous long-term session renders the student ineligible for a teaching assistantship, for example.

The student has one semester in which to remove an “X”, and students are urged to be very clear with instructors on what must be done, and by when, to complete course requirements. Any “X” that remains on a transcript for more than one semester will not be changed to a letter grade; in other words, the “X” stays on the student's record.

If a student takes a course, and later decides not to complete it, the student is urged to consider withdrawing from that course in order to clear his or her academic record (the “Q” grade for quit is reported by the instructor).

### Time Limitations

All requirements for a master's degree must be completed within a six-year period. Work older than six years can be reinstated only with special permission of the Dean of Graduate Studies upon recommendation of the Graduate Adviser. A special petition must originate from the Graduate Adviser. Approval of these petitions is rare.

### Graduation

In the final semester of course work, the student will be contacted by the Graduate Coordinator to approve the student's Program of Work. After approval, the student will apply for graduation on the appropriate website by the announced deadline. Whether a student reads the notification from the Graduate Coordinator, it is the student's responsibility to fill out all forms before university deadlines.

## VI. ASSISTANTSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS AND FINANCIAL AID

### Teaching Assistants and Assistant Instructors

Financial assistance through the Stan Richards School is available in several different forms. The Stan Richards School awards a limited number of graduate teaching assistantships on a semester-by- semester basis contingent on academic merit; skills, teaching ability; needs of the school; and the availability of funding. Both PhD and Master's students may be supported by these awards for not more than three years and two years, respectively. To apply for a teaching assistantship, students must apply through the email announcement that will be sent out via email both fall and spring semester.

Graduate students in good standing with the program (admitted without conditions, currently enrolled for at least 9 hours, maintaining a suitable GPA and with an academic record free of incompletes) are eligible for appointments as teaching assistants and assistant instructors.

Teaching assistants (TAs) within the Stan Richards School are typically employed 10 hours per week (.25 time) or 20 hours per week (.50 time) to serve with a professor in various capacities related to teaching/conducting Advertising courses. Teaching assistants and assistant instructors are provided with office/desk space for conducting their course-related work.

For the MA degree, financial assistance may be given for a maximum of two academic years (or 4 semesters).

The following explanation, excerpted from a Graduate School memorandum, describes regulations and procedures for TA and AI appointments:

Both teaching assistants and assistant instructors “must be certified by the Graduate School to be in good academic standing and making satisfactory progress toward an advanced degree.”

Satisfactory progress is interpreted by the Graduate School to mean having a grade point average of “B” or better and having a record of completed course work. For appointments beginning in the Fall, students with acceptable averages will be considered to be making satisfactory progress if they have no Incompletes for the semesters of the prior long session (i.e., previous Fall and Spring semesters). At the start of the Spring semester, TAs and AIs with suitable averages will be considered to be making satisfactory progress if they do not have more than one Incomplete for the Fall term. TAs and AIs shall, at the start of the summer session, not have more than one Incomplete for the preceding Spring term.

Because of limited funds and the large number of students who apply for assistantships, competition for positions is great. For information concerning University financial aid, contact the Office of Student Financial Aid at <https://finaid.utexas.edu>.

Waiving Out-of-State Tuition. Half-time appointment as a TA, GRA, or AI qualifies nonresident students to have the out-of-state portion of tuition waived as long as their appointment is current. Under this provision, the tuition is the same as for a Texas resident.

## VII. DESCRIPTION OF BACKGROUND COURSES

Unless otherwise indicated, each course meets for three lecture hours a week for one semester.

Foundations of Marketing - An introduction to the principles of marketing in the U.S. market. Upper-division undergraduate. Background Course.

Basic Statistics - An introduction to basic statistical methods. This course can be taken in many disciplines such as Educational Psychology, Sociology, or Business. Upper-division undergraduate or graduate. Background Course.

## VIII. ANNUAL STUDENT EVALUATIONS

At least once per academic year, the Graduate Advisor will conduct a review of each MA student to provide feedback concerning the student's progress. This review is intended to provide students with an assessment of their academic progress toward their degree. The review will take place during the formal advising sessions between the Graduate Advisor and students. The results of this evaluation will be communicated to the students electronically shortly after the advising sessions.

**Degree Plans:** Official degree plans for the M.A. with Thesis and M.A. no Thesis can be found on the ADV MA landing page: <https://advertising.utexas.edu/graduate/masters-advertising>.

