Caribbean School of Media and Communication (CARIMAC)

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES, MONA

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MPhil and PhD in Communication Studies

A Guide for Prospective Applicants

Thank you for your interest in the MPhil or PhD in Communication Studies at the Caribbean School of Media and Communication (CARIMAC), University of the West Indies, Mona. This guide is designed to help you prepare a strong application by clarifying what we mean by communication research, explaining how to identify a suitable research supervisor, and outlining the expectations for the research proposal you will submit as part of your application.

A research degree at CARIMAC is an opportunity to contribute original knowledge to the understanding of communication in the Caribbean and beyond. Whether your interest lies in media and popular culture, organisational communication, health communication, digital governance, or consumer behaviour, your work will join a tradition of scholarship that centres Caribbean experience while engaging with global conversations in the discipline.

What Is Communication Research?

Communication research is the systematic, scholarly investigation of how messages are created, transmitted, received, and interpreted across a range of contexts. It is an interdisciplinary field that draws on theories and methods from the social sciences, humanities, and, increasingly, the computational and design disciplines. At its core, communication research asks how human interaction—whether mediated by technology, institutions, or culture—shapes meaning, behaviour, relationships, and social structures.

Communication researchers use diverse methodologies, including quantitative approaches (surveys, experiments, content analysis), qualitative approaches (interviews, ethnography, discourse analysis, focus groups), mixed methods designs, and critical/cultural analysis. The choice of method depends on the research question, the theoretical framework, and the researcher's epistemological orientation.

Areas of Active Research at CARIMAC

At CARIMAC, research is grounded in Caribbean realities, though it speaks to and draws from global scholarship. Areas of active research and supervision include, but are not limited to:

- Media and popular culture in the Caribbean (music, film, television, digital media).
- Health, risk, and environmental communication.
- Development communication and community media.
- Communication and media governance, policy, and regulation.
- Consumer behaviour, branding, and integrated marketing communication.
- Crisis and organisational communication.
- Gender, identity, and media representation.
- Caribbean communication theory and epistemology.
- Creative and cultural industries in the Caribbean.
- Digital culture, social media, and information and communication technologies.
- Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research methodologies.

If your research interest falls outside these areas but can be situated within the broader field of communication studies and supervised by CARIMAC faculty, we encourage you to enquire.

Identifying a Potential Supervisor

Your application should demonstrate that your proposed research aligns with the expertise of at least one CARIMAC faculty member who is eligible to supervise. Eligibility to supervise MPhil and PhD students at UWI requires that the faculty member holds a doctoral degree.

Your **chief (main) supervisor** must be a member of CARIMAC, as this is the School in which your degree will be registered and which is responsible for the academic and administrative oversight of your candidature. Where the subject-matter expertise your project requires lies elsewhere, a co-supervisor may be drawn from another faculty or institution. You are therefore encouraged to look broadly when identifying potential supervisors and committee members.

Where to Look

- The CARIMAC Website: Review staff profiles and research publications at www.mona.uwi.edu/carimac.
- The UWI Scholar Expert Directory: Search the research interests and publications of academic staff across The UWI at https://uwischolar.sta.uwi.edu/experts.
- UWI Departmental Websites: Explore individual faculty and departmental websites across UWI to find potential co-supervisors with subject-matter expertise.

Making the Case for Your Choice

Supervisor alignment is one of the most important factors in a successful research degree. In your proposal, you must name a first-preferred and a second-preferred supervisor, and briefly explain the rationale for each choice. Strong applications identify specific overlap between the proposed research and the supervisor's published work.

We strongly encourage you to contact a potential supervisor before applying. An initial conversation can help you refine your research idea, confirm alignment with the supervisor's expertise, and strengthen your proposal. When you reach out, be prepared to share a brief summary (one to two paragraphs) of your proposed research topic, your academic background, and your motivation for pursuing a research degree.

The Research Proposal

The research proposal is the centrepiece of your application. It demonstrates your ability to identify a researchable problem, situate it within the relevant literature, and design a feasible study. The proposal is not a final research plan—it will evolve significantly

during your degree—but it should show clarity of thought, familiarity with the field, and methodological awareness.

Required Proposal Sections

- **Preferred Supervisors:** Name a first-preferred and a second-preferred supervisor, with a brief rationale for each. Your chief supervisor must be a CARIMAC faculty member.
- **Title:** Provide a concise, descriptive working title for the proposed study that indicates the topic, scope, and context of the research.
- **Introduction and Background:** Introduce the topic and provide the context from which the research problem emerges. Explain why this topic matters and situate the problem within the broader social, cultural, or institutional landscape.
- **Statement of the Problem:** Clearly and precisely state the research problem. Address the gap, contradiction, or unanswered question in the existing knowledge.
- **Research Questions or Objectives:** State the specific questions your study will answer or the objectives it will achieve.
- **Literature Review:** Demonstrate your familiarity with key scholarly conversations relevant to your topic. Engage critically with the literature rather than simply summarising individual sources.
- **Theoretical or Conceptual Framework:** Identify the theory or theories that will guide your study. Explain how this framework shapes your understanding of the problem.
- **Proposed Methodology:** Describe your research design and paradigm, population and sampling strategy, data collection method(s), planned data analysis approach, and any ethical considerations.
- **Significance of the Study:** Explain the potential contribution of your study. Detail who will benefit from the findings and consider contributions to theory, methodology, professional practice, and/or policy.
- **Proposed Timeline:** Provide a realistic timeline for the major phases of the research (e.g., coursework, literature review, data collection, analysis, writing).
- **References:** List all sources cited in the proposal, formatted in APA style.

Formatting and Length Requirements

Element	Requirement
Length	3,000–5,000 words (approx. 10–15 pages), excluding references and appendices.
Font	12-point Times New Roman or 11-point Arial.
Spacing	Double-spaced throughout, with 1-inch (2.54 cm) margins on all sides.
Headings	Use APA 7 heading levels to organise the proposal.
Pagination	Include page numbers in the top right-hand corner of each page.
References	Begin on a new page, formatted per APA 7 guidelines.

Citation Style: APA 7th Edition

CARIMAC requires the use of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th edition (APA 7) for all citations and references in the research proposal and throughout the degree. APA style governs in-text citations, the reference list, headings, table and figure formatting, and general manuscript structure.

Before You Submit

Proofread your proposal carefully for clarity, coherence, and grammatical accuracy. The proposal is itself a writing sample that demonstrates your readiness for the sustained intellectual work of a research degree. Ask a trusted colleague or mentor to read a draft before submission.

Timelines and Benchmarks

A research degree is a sustained commitment, not a short sprint. Once admitted, you will be expected to meet defined benchmarks at the end of each semester (e.g., coursework, research seminars, ethics approval, progress reports, and draft chapters) as set out in the CARIMAC Timeline and Benchmark Targets document.

The registration periods below are governed by UWI Regulations 1.48–1.50:

Programme	Minimum Registration Limit	Maximum Submission Limit
MPhil	2 years full-time or 4 years part-time.	Submit thesis within 3 years full-time or 5 years part-time.
PhD	3 years full-time or 5 years part-time.	Submit thesis within 5 years full-time or 7 years part-time.
MPhil with Upgrade	Years spent in the MPhil count toward PhD.	Total of 5 years full-time or 7 years part-time from initial registration.

Note: These are the maximum periods within which the thesis must be submitted, not the expected pace of completion.

Next Steps

If you have questions about the MPhil or PhD programme, research supervision, or the application process, please do not hesitate to contact CARIMAC's Graduate Studies and Research Coordinator or any of the eligible supervisors you identify.

For general application procedures and deadlines, visit:

www.mona.uwi.edu/postgrad/