

COMMUNICATION, MA

Banner Code: LA-MA-COM

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As the environment for public and private communication becomes increasingly complex, organizations rely more and more heavily on thoughtful and effective communication professionals. To this end, Communication MA students may choose to specialize in strategic communication/public relations; health communication; media and culture; science, environment, and risk communication; or individualized communication studies. Across all specializations, students receive a strong foundation in communication theory and learn to design, execute, and interpret rigorous communication research. Students are challenged to apply communication knowledge to help solve problems and to address important social issues.

Admissions & Policies

Admissions

Applicants to all graduate programs at George Mason University must meet the admission standards and application requirements for graduate study as specified by Graduate Admissions (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-policies/>). For information specific to the MA in communication, see Application Requirements and Deadlines (<http://communication.gmu.edu/programs/LA-MA-COM/application/>).

Admission to the graduate program in communication is competitive.

Policies

For policies governing all graduate degrees, see Graduate Policies (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/>).

Transfer of Credit

Students may request transfer of up to 12 hours of graduate coursework from graduate non-degree status or up to 15 hours of graduate study at another institution. Students should carefully review AP.6.5 (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-5>) and the policies governing graduate transfer of credit. Transfer of credit is subject to the approval of the program director and graduate dean.

Requirements

Degree Requirements

Total credits: 33

Students should be aware of the specific policies associated with this program, located on the Admissions & Policies tab.

Students complete two program core courses, two methods courses, two theory courses, two specialization and at least three elective courses (or 9 credits), of which 3 credits may be thesis.

Students must choose from one area of specialization (strategic communication/public relations; health communication; media and culture; science, environment, and risk communication; or individualized communication studies). Specific requirements are described below.

Core Courses

Code	Title	Credits
Two Core Courses		
COMM 600	Introduction to Graduate Studies	3
COMM 798	Communication Studies Project (only 3 credits can apply to the degree)	3
Two Methods Courses		
COMM 650	Intro to Research Methods in Communication (required course)	3
Select one course from the following:		3
COMM 725	Qualitative Methods	
COMM 750	Quantitative Methods	
COMM 775	Media Content Analysis	
Other graduate level methods course, taken in COMM or elsewhere, as approved by graduate director.		
Two Theory Courses		
Select two theory courses from the following:		6
COMM 602	Theories and Research of Mass Communication	
COMM 605	Intercultural Communication	
COMM 615	Political Communication	
COMM 620	Health Communication	
COMM 630	Theories of Public Relations	
COMM 632	Persuasion Theory	
COMM 634	Theories of Interpersonal Communication	
COMM 635	Organizational Communication	
COMM 637	Risk Communication	
COMM 639	Science Communication	
COMM 642	Science and the Public	
COMM 653	Graduate Seminar in Instructional Communication	
COMM 660	Climate Change and Sustainability Communication Campaigns	
COMM 706	Strategic Communication	
COMM 735	Crisis Communication	
Total Credits		18

Specializations

Students complete the degree by completing 6 credits of coursework in one of the four specializations and an additional 9 elective credits in any graduate coursework, to include an optional thesis. Courses outside the department require the prior written approval of the program director.

Available Specializations

- Strategic Communications/Public Relations Specialization
- Health Communication Specialization
- Media and Culture Specialization
- Science, Environment, and Risk Communication Specialization
- Individualized Communication Studies Specialization

Strategic Communications/Public Relations Specialization

The specialization in strategic communication/public relations requires a minimum of two courses from the list below. A course taken as a part of the general program cannot be duplicated in credits, but it can count as a course required for the specialization. Additional credits may be met through electives.

Code	Title	Credits
Two Specialization Courses		
Select two specialization courses from the following:		6
COMM 590	Seminar in Communication ¹	
COMM 602	Theories and Research of Mass Communication	
COMM 615	Political Communication	
COMM 630	Theories of Public Relations	
COMM 632	Persuasion Theory	
COMM 636	Communication Consulting	
COMM 637	Risk Communication	
COMM 642	Science and the Public	
COMM 660	Climate Change and Sustainability Communication Campaigns	
COMM 670	Social Marketing	
COMM 690	Special Topics in Communication ¹	
COMM 696	Directed Readings and Research	
COMM 706	Strategic Communication	
COMM 716	Global Public Relations Strategy and Practice	
COMM 735	Crisis Communication	
COMM 820	Health Communication Campaigns	
COMM 890	Special Topics in Communication ¹	
Optional Thesis ²		
Three credits of		3
COMM 799	Master's Thesis	
Electives ³		
Six to nine additional credits chosen from:		6-9
Courses from the list above		
Any other graduate COMM courses (https://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/comm/)		
Up to 6 credits of coursework from other departments with prior written approval of the program director.		
Total Credits		15

¹ When topic is strategic communication, as approved by program director.

² Students who do not choose to complete a thesis will take additional credits of elective. Students who choose to write a thesis should be aware of the policies governing theses as stated in AP.6.9.3 Master's Thesis (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-9-3>). If a thesis is chosen, students must follow the thesis

enrollment policy of the university and, once enrolled in COMM 799 Master's Thesis, maintain continuous enrollment.
³ Students choosing to write a thesis take 6 credits of electives. Those opting out of a thesis take 9 credits.

Health Communication Specialization

The specialization in health communication requires a minimum of two courses from the list below. A course taken as a part of the general program cannot be duplicated in credits, but it can count as a course required for the specialization. Additional credits may be met through electives.

Code	Title	Credits
Two Specialization Courses		
Select two specialization courses from the following:		6
COMM 590	Seminar in Communication ¹	
COMM 620	Health Communication	
COMM 632	Persuasion Theory	
COMM 682	Popular Culture and Health	
COMM 690	Special Topics in Communication ¹	
COMM 696	Directed Readings and Research	
COMM 705	Intercultural Health and Risk Communication	
COMM 720	Consumer-Provider Health Communication	
COMM 721	E-Health Communication	
COMM 820	Health Communication Campaigns	
COMM 890	Special Topics in Communication ¹	
Optional Thesis ²		
Three credits of		3
COMM 799	Master's Thesis	
Electives ³		
Six to nine credits chosen from:		6-9
Additional courses from the list above		
Any other graduate COMM course (https://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/comm/)		
Up to 6 credits of coursework from other departments with prior written approval of the program director.		
Total Credits		15

¹ When topic is health communication as approved by program director.

² Students who do not choose to complete a thesis will take additional credits of elective courses. Students who choose to write a thesis should be aware of the policies governing theses as stated in AP.6.9.3 Master's Thesis (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-9-3>). If a thesis is chosen, students must follow the thesis enrollment policy of the university and, once enrolled in COMM 799 Master's Thesis, maintain continuous enrollment.

³ Students choosing to write a thesis take 6 credits of electives. Those opting out of the thesis take 9 credits.

Media and Culture Specialization

Students who wish to focus their graduate study in media and culture complete the following requirements.

Code	Title	Credits
Two Specialization Courses		
Select two specialization courses from the following:		6
COMM 602	Theories and Research of Mass Communication	
COMM 605	Intercultural Communication	
COMM 615	Political Communication	
COMM 632	Persuasion Theory	
COMM 635	Organizational Communication	
COMM 640	The Issues of Science and Politics	
COMM 670	Social Marketing	
COMM 682	Popular Culture and Health	
COMM 690	Special Topics in Communication (when topic is cancel culture in public and political communication)	
COMM 690	Special Topics in Communication (when topic is gender, race and class in media)	
COMM 716	Global Public Relations Strategy and Practice	
Optional Thesis ¹		
Three credits of		3
COMM 799	Master's Thesis	
Electives ²		
Six to nine credits chosen from:		6-9
Additional courses from the list above		
Any other graduate COMM course (https://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/comm/)		
Up to 6 credits of coursework from other departments with prior written approval of the program director.		
Total Credits		15

¹ Students who do not choose to complete a thesis will take additional credits of elective courses. Students who choose to write a thesis should be aware of the policies governing theses as stated in AP.6.9.3 Master's Thesis (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-9-3>). If a thesis is chosen, students must follow the thesis enrollment policy of the university and, once enrolled in COMM 799 Master's Thesis, maintain continuous enrollment.

² Students choosing to write a thesis take 6 credits of electives. Those opting out of the thesis take 9 credits.

Science, Environment, and Risk Communication Specialization

Students who wish to focus their graduate study in science, environment, and risk communication complete the following requirements.

Code	Title	Credits
Two Specialization Courses		
Select two specialization courses from the following:		6
COMM 637	Risk Communication	
COMM 639	Science Communication	
COMM 640	The Issues of Science and Politics	
COMM 641	Environmental Communication	
COMM 642	Science and the Public	
COMM 644	Analysis and Criticism of Science Journalism	

COMM 660	Climate Change and Sustainability Communication Campaigns	
COMM 696	Directed Readings and Research	
Optional Thesis ¹		
Three credits of		3
COMM 799	Master's Thesis	
Electives ²		
Six to nine credits chosen from:		6-9
Additional courses from the list above		
Any other graduate COMM course (https://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/comm/)		
Up to 6 credits of coursework from other departments with prior written approval of the program director.		
Total Credits		15

¹ Students who do not choose to complete a thesis will take additional credits of elective courses. Students who choose to write a thesis should be aware of the policies governing theses as stated in AP.6.9.3 Master's Thesis (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-9-3>). If a thesis is chosen, students must follow the thesis enrollment policy of the university and, once enrolled in COMM 799 Master's Thesis, maintain continuous enrollment.

² Students choosing to write a thesis take 6 credits of electives. Those opting out of the thesis take 9 credits.

Individualized Communication Studies specialization

Students pursuing a specialization in individualized communication studies design a program of courses to reflect their interests.

Code	Title	Credits
Two Specialization Courses		
Select from the following: ¹		6
COMM 590	Seminar in Communication	
COMM 690	Special Topics in Communication	
COMM 890	Special Topics in Communication	
Optional Thesis ²		
Three credits of		3
COMM 799	Master's Thesis	
Electives		
Six to nine credits chosen from: ³		6-9
Additional courses from the list above		
Any other graduate COMM course (https://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/comm/)		
Up to 6 credits of coursework from other departments with prior written approval of the program director.		
Total Credits		15

¹ Two courses in a field of specialization are chosen in consultation with an advisor or the program director. These courses may include select special topics courses shown above as approved by the program director.

² Students who do not choose to complete a thesis will take additional credits of elective courses. Students who choose to write a thesis should be aware of the policies governing theses as stated in AP.6.9.3 Master's Thesis (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-9-3>). If a thesis is chosen, students must

follow the thesis enrollment policy of the university and, once enrolled in COMM 799 Master's Thesis, maintain continuous enrollment.

³ Students choosing to write a thesis take 6 credits of electives. Those opting out of the thesis take 9 credits.

Accelerated Master's

Bachelor's Degree (any)/Communication, Accelerated MA

Overview

Highly qualified undergraduates may be admitted to the bachelor's/accelerated master's program and obtain a BA/BS in a chosen major and an MA in Communication in an accelerated time-frame after satisfactory completion of a minimum of 141 credits.

See AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-7>) for policies related to this program.

Students in an accelerated degree program must fulfill all university requirements for the master's degree. For policies governing all graduate degrees, see AP.6 Graduate Policies (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/>).

BAM Pathway Admission Requirements

Applicants to all graduate programs at George Mason University must meet the admission standards and application requirements for graduate study as specified in Graduate Admissions (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-policies/>) Policies (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-policies/>) and Bachelor's Accelerated Master's Degree policies (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-7>). For information specific to this accelerated master's program, see Application Requirements and Deadlines (<http://communication.gmu.edu/programs/LA-MA-ACEL-COM/application/>).

Students will be considered for admission into the BAM Pathway after completion of a minimum of 60 credits.

Students who are accepted into the BAM Pathway will be allowed to register for graduate level courses after successful completion of a minimum of 75 undergraduate credits.

Accelerated Master's Admission Requirements

Students already admitted to the BAM Pathway will be admitted to the MA program, if they have met the following criteria, as verified on the Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Transition form:

- Minimum overall GPA of 3.25
- Completed at least one approved undergraduate Methods course COMM 400, COMM 490/COMM 491, or another methods course approved by the COMM BAM director.
- Successfully meeting Mason's requirements for undergraduate degree conferral (graduation) and completing the application for graduation.

Accelerated Pathway Requirements

To maintain the integrity and quality of both the undergraduate and graduate degree programs, undergraduate students interested in taking graduate courses must choose from the following:

Advanced Standing courses (up to 12 credits)

Code	Title	Credits
COMM 600	Introduction to Graduate Studies	3
COMM 602	Theories and Research of Mass Communication	3
COMM 605	Intercultural Communication	3
COMM 615	Political Communication	3
COMM 620	Health Communication	3
COMM 630	Theories of Public Relations	3
COMM 632	Persuasion Theory	3
COMM 634	Theories of Interpersonal Communication	3
COMM 635	Organizational Communication	3
COMM 636	Communication Consulting	3
COMM 637	Risk Communication	3
COMM 639	Science Communication	3
COMM 640	The Issues of Science and Politics	3
COMM 641	Environmental Communication	3
COMM 642	Science and the Public	3
COMM 644	Analysis and Criticism of Science Journalism	3
COMM 653	Graduate Seminar in Instructional Communication	3
COMM 660	Climate Change and Sustainability Communication Campaigns	3
COMM 670	Social Marketing	3
COMM 690	Special Topics in Communication	3

Reserve Graduate Credit courses (up to 6 credits) taken while an undergraduate and will only count for the graduate degree program

All courses listed above as advanced standing can be used for reserve graduate credit.

For more detailed information on coursework and timeline requirements, see AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees. (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-7>)

Program Outcomes

Program Outcomes

1. Communication Theory

Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the major theories that shape the field of communication, including historical developments and current trends.

2. Communication Inquiry

Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of social scientific, rhetorical, and/or critical methods of communication research and inquiry. All such methods involve structured, systematic, and theoretically-driven approaches to data analysis.

3. Application of Knowledge

Students will be able to apply communication theory and research in practical contexts to address communication problems, issues, or challenges.

4. Communication Competence

Students will develop the ability to communicate complex concepts and findings clearly and persuasively in written projects.

5. Apply Ethical Communication Principles

Students should be able to identify ethical perspectives in communication theory and research, and evaluate the ethical issues involved in a communication situation, including protections for research participants.