LIFE SCIENCES COMMUNICATION, M.S.

The department offers a master's degree in life sciences communication, with available research/thesis or available professional course-based tracks.

The thesis track requires 30 credits. Study programs match the interests and needs of individual students. However, all students must take a communication theory course, a research methodology course and a statistics course. The program requires a thesis based on original research.

The professional track is a course-based program (30 credits total) that is designed to prepare students for professional careers in life sciences communication and related fields. Students in this track will not usually pursue a Ph.D. program in the future. In fact, many graduate programs (including life sciences communication) do not accept a non-thesis master's as a criterion for admission to their Ph.D. program.

Teaching and research in the department focus on science communication in the areas of emerging technologies, bioenergy, environment, agriculture, health, and food.

The M.S. in life sciences communication and Ph.D. in mass communications graduate programs provide advanced professional training in communication and preparation for communication research and teaching. Students in the professional track M.S. program are studying for careers in a variety of fields, including consulting, policy, journalism, strategic communication, marketing and market research, particularly in science-related fields.

For more information on the master's program, funding, resources, and FAQs, go to the "graduate" tab on the life sciences communication website (http://lsc.wisc.edu).

MINIMUM DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND SATISFACTORY PROGRESS
To make progress toward a graduate degree, students must meet the Graduate School Minimum Degree Requirements and Satisfactory Progress (http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirementstext) in addition to the requirements of the program.

MASTER’S DEGREES
M.S.: with available professional course-based track and research/thesis track

MINIMUM GRADUATE DEGREE CREDIT REQUIREMENT
M.S.—professional course-based track: 30 course credits
M.S.—research/thesis track: 24 credits coursework, up to 6 credits of 990/thesis for total of 30 credits

MINIMUM GRADUATE RESIDENCE CREDIT REQUIREMENT
30 credits

MINIMUM GRADUATE COURSEWORK (50%) REQUIREMENT
Half of degree coursework (15 out of 30 total credits) must be completed in courses numbered 700 or higher, or in any LSC courses numbered 300–699. Courses in LSC in this range have:
1. an additional graduate-level component and
2. assess graduate students separately from undergraduate students.

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: GRADUATE WORK FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS
In consultation with the student’s advisor and with program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 6 credits of graduate coursework from other institutions. Coursework earned ten or more years prior to admission to a master’s is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: UW–MADISON UNDERGRADUATE
No credits from a UW–Madison undergraduate degree are allowed to count toward the degree.

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: UW–MADISON UNIVERSITY SPECIAL
With program approval and payment of the difference in tuition (between Special and graduate tuition), students are allowed to count no more than 12 credits of coursework numbered 600 or above taken as a UW–Madison Special student. Coursework earned ten or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED
15 credits (however, 12 credits are highly encouraged)

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC COURSES REQUIRED
LSC 720 Introduction to Communication Theory and Research, one graduate-level research methods course, one graduate-level statistics course.

OVERALL GRADUATE GPA REQUIREMENT
3.5 GPA required.

OTHER GRADE REQUIREMENTS
Students must earn a B or above in all coursework to count it toward the 30-credit total.

PROBATION POLICY
Students must be in good standing in accordance with the Graduate School Policies and Procedures in order to earn and retain an assistantship within the department. Students who fall out of good standing must meet with the director of graduate studies.

ADVISOR / COMMITTEE
All students are required to meet with their advisor a minimum of once per semester.

ASSESSMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS
The research/thesis track requires a formal thesis and oral defense; the non-thesis track requires a comprehensive report or course narrative, and presentation at the culmination of coursework.
TIME CONSTRAINTS
Students who pursue the thesis-track master's degree will have a limit of four semesters (including summer semesters) of 990/thesis enrollment. The four-semester limit starts with the first semester a student takes 990 credits, whether or not in conjunction with other courses. Students will not be allowed to take leave once their 990 enrollment commences. Students who do not produce and defend a thesis at the end of the four semesters will be issued a professional-track thesis.

If a student in good standing encounters extenuating circumstances and wishes to interrupt her/his program of graduate study, the student can take a leave of absence but must notify the LSC graduate committee in writing prior to the start of the semester they wish to take leave, and specify the reason and anticipated length of the leave. If the student wishes to extend the leave, she or he must again notify the LSC graduate committee in writing to the director of graduate studies and the student services coordinator. The leave of absence guarantees re-entry to the program if the student applies to the Graduate School for readmission within the time period specified. Students whose requests are denied may later apply for readmission, but their acceptance cannot be guaranteed.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS
No language requirements.

ADMISSIONS
Students must meet the minimum requirements for admission set by the Graduate School. Applicants must submit an online application, GRE scores, a statement of purpose, official transcripts from all previously attended institutions, a CV/resume, and three letters of recommendation. Letters of recommendation should come from people who can speak to the scholarly abilities of the applicant. International applicants are required to take and attain a satisfactory score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam. In order to be eligible for various fellowships and teaching assistantships, early application is recommended. A life sciences communication graduate program application checklist is available for applicants on the program website (http://lsc.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2014/09/LSC-grad-programs-applicant-checklist.pdf).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
• Articulate research problems, potentials, and limits with respect to theory, knowledge, and practice within the field of study. Demonstrating knowledge of the theories, concepts, frameworks, empirical findings, and controversies in the field.
• Identifies sources and assembles evidence pertaining to questions or challenges in the field of study.
• Demonstrates understanding of the primary field of study in a historical, social, or global context.
• Selects and/or utilizes the most appropriate methodologies, tools, and practices.
• Evaluates or synthesizes information pertaining to questions or challenges in the field of study.
• Communicates complex ideas effectively across different audiences.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
• Recognizes, fosters, and applies principles of ethical and professional conduct.

PEOPLE
Faculty: Professors Brossard (chair), Loew, Meiller, Reaves, Scheufele (director of graduate studies); Associate Professors Shaw, Shepard; Assistant Professor Stenhouse