

MASS COMMUNICATIONS, PHD

The Mass Communications PhD is an interdisciplinary doctoral program offered by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

The program offers several internationally recognized areas of research and teaching excellence:

- civic and political communication
- health and environmental communications
- history of media institutions
- information technologies
- social networking and digital media
- processes and effects of mediated communication
- law and ethics of media
- international and inter-cultural communication
- public opinion
- science and risk communication
- social marketing
- journalism studies
- media ecologies
- race and media

Working closely with their major professor and committee, students draw from courses offered in departments across the campus to develop a plan of study in preparation for independent and original research in their areas of interest.

Previously, this program was jointly offered with the department of Life Sciences Communication, and as of Fall 2025 is accepting applications for their newly created Science Communication PhD. Please see their Guide page for more information.

ADMISSIONS

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The Mass Communications PhD (Life Science Communications) is accepting applications for fall 2025. The program is suspended, to be discontinued, with a new revitalized PhD program in Science Communication proposed with an anticipated start of fall 2025.

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication will continue to offer a Mass Communications PhD which remains active and admissions are open.

Please consult the table below for key information about this degree program's admissions requirements. The program may have more detailed admissions requirements, which can be found below the table or on the program's website.

Graduate admissions is a two-step process between academic programs and the Graduate School. **Applicants must meet the minimum requirements (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/>) of the**

Graduate School as well as the program(s). Once you have researched the graduate program(s) you are interested in, apply online (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/>).

Requirements	Detail
Fall Deadline	December 15
Spring Deadline	The program does not admit in the spring.
Summer Deadline	The program does not admit in the summer.
GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)	Not required but may be considered if available.
English Proficiency Test	Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Requirements for Admission policy: https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241 (https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241/).
Other Test(s) (e.g., GMAT, MCAT)	n/a
Letters of Recommendation Required	3

Applicants for this program are expected to have demonstrated an interest and background in communication research by having earned a thesis-based MA or MS degree in communication or other relevant disciplines. The admissions committee, however, may accept other evidence of suitable preparation.

Applicants must submit an online application, a statement of purpose, a supplementary question response, unofficial transcripts from all previously attended institutions, a CV, and three letters of recommendation. Letters of recommendation should come from people who can speak to the scholarly abilities of the applicant. International degree-seeking applicants must prove English proficiency using the Graduate School's requirements (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/>). Test scores must be furnished to the school before the application is considered complete.

FUNDING

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GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

The Bursar's Office provides information about tuition and fees associated with being a graduate student. Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid. Further funding information is available from the Graduate School. Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and restrictions related to funding.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

Prospective students should see the program website (<https://journalism.wisc.edu/graduate/financial-aid/>) for funding information.

REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Review the Graduate School minimum degree requirements (<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#requirements>) and policies (<https://>

guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiestext), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

MODE OF INSTRUCTION

Face to Face	Evening/ Weekend	Online	Hybrid	Accelerated
Yes	No	No	No	No

Mode of Instruction Definitions

Accelerated: Accelerated programs are offered at a fast pace that condenses the time to completion. Students typically take enough credits aimed at completing the program in a year or two.

Evening/Weekend: Courses meet on the UW–Madison campus only in evenings and/or on weekends to accommodate typical business schedules. Students have the advantages of face-to-face courses with the flexibility to keep work and other life commitments.

Face-to-Face: Courses typically meet during weekdays on the UW–Madison Campus.

Hybrid: These programs combine face-to-face and online learning formats. Contact the program for more specific information.

Online: These programs are offered 100% online. Some programs may require an on-campus orientation or residency experience, but the courses will be facilitated in an online format.

CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

Requirement Detail	
Minimum Credit Requirement	68 credits
Minimum Residence Credit Requirement	35 credits
Minimum Graduate Coursework Requirement	34 credits must be graduate-level coursework. Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Graduate Coursework (50%) Requirement policy: https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244 (https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244/).
Overall Graduate GPA Requirement	3.50 GPA required.
Other Grade Requirements	Courses in which the student earns a grade below B do not satisfy degree requirements, but they do count in the cumulative GPA.
Assessments and Examinations	Doctoral students must pass preliminary exams once coursework is completed.
Language Requirements	No language requirements.
Graduate School Breadth Requirement	Breadth is provided via interdisciplinary training (doctoral minor or graduate/professional certificate is not required).

REQUIRED COURSES

Code	Title	Credits
Colloquium		
JOURN 901	Colloquium in Mass Communication	1
Communication Perspectives		
Students are recommended to complete 3 courses from this area, such as these example courses.		9
JOURN 801	Mass Communication and the Individual	
JOURN 802	Mass Communication and Society	
JOURN 803	Mass Communication and Culture	
JOURN/ HISTORY 808	Mass Communication History	
Research Methods		
Students are recommended to complete at least 9 credits from this area, such as these example courses.		9
JOURN 658	Communication Research Methods	
JOURN/LSC 811	Conceptualization and Design of Mass Communication Research	
JOURN 812	Qualitative Communication Research Methods	
JOURN 813	Practicum in Communication Research	
JOURN 818	Computational Approaches to Communication Research	
Communication Areas		
Students are recommended to complete 3 courses from this area, such as these example courses.		9
JOURN 821	Health Communication	
JOURN 822	Global Communication	
JOURN/ ENVIR ST/ LSC 823	Science and Environment Communication	
JOURN 824	Race, Ethnicity and Media	
JOURN/LSC 825	Law and Ethics of Communication and Media	
JOURN/LSC 826	Journalism Theory	
JOURN/ GEN&WS 828	Gender and Sexuality in Mass Communication	
JOURN/ POLI SCI 829	Political Communication	
Communication Specialities		
Students are recommended to complete 2 courses from this area, such as these example courses.		6
JOURN/LSC 833	Technology and Society	
JOURN 835	News Framing and Social Protest Movements	
Additional Coursework		
To satisfy the minimum credit requirement, students must complete additional Journalism and Mass Communication (JOURN) or other approved courses. See Electives below for some of the recommended options.		31
Electives		
JOURN 880	Topics in Mass Communication	
JOURN 902	Graduate Teaching Colloquium	

JOURN 999	Independent Research Problems	
<i>Research and Dissertation</i>		
Students enroll in thesis credits during dissertation research to satisfy degree requirements.		3
JOURN 990	Thesis	
Total Credits		68

Additional requirements are detailed in the Academic Policies and Procedures Handbook for Graduate Work (https://journalism.wisc.edu/wp-content/blogs.dir/41/files/2024/06/Mass_Communications_PhD-Handbook_Revised2024.pdf) in the PhD program in Mass Communications.

POLICIES

GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES

The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures (<https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/>) serve as the official document of record for Graduate School academic and administrative policies and procedures and are updated continuously. Note some policies redirect to entries in the official UW-Madison Policy Library (<https://policy.wisc.edu/>). Programs may set more stringent policies than the Graduate School. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

PRIOR COURSEWORK

Graduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions

In consultation with the student's advisor, and with program approval, students are allowed to transfer no more than 33 credits of graduate coursework from other institutions. Coursework earned ten years or more prior to admission to a doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

Undergraduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions or UW-Madison

With program approval, up to 7 credits numbered 600 and above from a UW-Madison undergraduate degree are allowed to count toward the degree. Credits earned at other institutions do not transfer. Coursework earned ten years or more prior to admission to a doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

Credits Earned as a Professional Student at UW-Madison (Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, and Veterinary careers)

In consultation with the student's advisor and with program approval, students may be allowed to transfer professional credits completed at UW-Madison to this program, within constraints noted in the Graduate School: Transfer Credits for Prior Coursework (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1216/>) policy.

Credits Earned as a University Special Student at UW-Madison

In consultation with the student's advisor and with program approval, students are allowed to transfer no more than 12 credits of coursework numbered 600 and above taken as a UW-Madison University Special student. However, these credits are not allowed to count toward the 50% graduate coursework minimum unless numbered 700 or above or are taken to meet the requirements of a capstone certificate and has the

"Grad 50%" attribute. Coursework taken ten years prior to admission to the doctoral program is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

PROBATION

Doctoral students must do the following to maintain satisfactory progress:

1. Earn a minimum 3.5 cumulative GPA by the end of the second semester in residence and maintain that GPA for the duration of the degree program.
2. Remove grades of Incomplete in the semester following their occurrence. A course proposal cannot be approved until all incompletes are removed.
3. Complete preliminary exams within three to six months of completing coursework.
4. Maintain steady progress toward completion of degree, including final oral exam and deposit of dissertation. Full-time students can expect four to five years; completion will vary for part-time students.

ADVISOR / COMMITTEE

Doctoral committees must include at least two members from outside the field of communications. At UW this includes the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Department of Life Sciences Communication, and Communication Arts Department. Outside the UW, this includes scholars who have their tenure home in a mass communications department.

CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

15 credit maximum. Refer to the Graduate School: Maximum Credit Loads and Overload Requests (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1228/>) policy.

TIME LIMITS

Refer to the Graduate School: Time Limits (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1221/>) policy.

GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS

These resources may be helpful in addressing your concerns:

- Bias or Hate Reporting (<https://doso.students.wisc.edu/bias-or-hate-reporting/>)
- Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/#grievance-procedure>)
- Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/>)
 - Office of the Provost for Faculty and Staff Affairs (<https://facstaff.provost.wisc.edu/>)
- Employee Assistance (<http://www.eao.wisc.edu/>) (for personal counseling and workplace consultation around communication and conflict involving graduate assistants and other employees, post-doctoral students, faculty and staff)
- Employee Disability Resource Office (<https://employee disabilities.wisc.edu/>) (for qualified employees or applicants with disabilities to have equal employment opportunities)
- Graduate School (<https://grad.wisc.edu/>) (for informal advice at any level of review and for official appeals of program/departamental or school/college grievance decisions)
- Office of Compliance (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/>) (for class harassment and discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence)
- Office Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) (<https://osas.wisc.edu/>) (for all students to seek grievance assistance and support)

- Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/>) (for conflicts involving students)
- Ombuds Office for Faculty and Staff (<http://www.ombuds.wisc.edu/>) (for employed graduate students and post-docs, as well as faculty and staff)
- Title IX (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/>) (for concerns about discrimination)

L&S POLICY FOR GRADUATE STUDENT ACADEMIC APPEALS

Graduate students have the right to appeal an academic decision related to an L&S graduate program if the student believes that the decision is inconsistent with published policy.

Academic decisions that may be appealed include:

- Dismissal from the graduate program
- Failure to pass a qualifying or preliminary examination
- Failure to achieve satisfactory academic progress
- Academic disciplinary action related to failure to meet professional conduct standards

Issues such as the following cannot be appealed using this process:

- A faculty member declining to serve as a graduate student's advisor.
- Decisions regarding the student's disciplinary knowledge, evaluation of the quality of work, or similar judgements. These are the domain of the department faculty.
- Course grades. These can be appealed instead using the L&S Policy for Grade Appeal (<https://kb.wisc.edu/lis/22258/>).
- Incidents of bias or hate, hostile and intimidating behavior (<https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/>), or discrimination (Title IX (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/>), Office of Compliance (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/eo-complaint/formal-investigations/>)). Direct these to the linked campus offices appropriate for the incident(s).

Appeal Process for Graduate Students

A graduate student wishing to appeal an academic decision must follow the process in the order listed below. Note time limits within each step.

1. The student should first seek informal resolution, if possible, by discussing the concern with their academic advisor, the department's Director of Graduate Studies, and/or the department chair.
2. If the program has an appeal policy listed in their graduate program handbook, the student should follow the policy as written, including adhering to any indicated deadlines. In the absence of a specific departmental process, the chair or designee will be the reviewer and decision maker, and the student should submit a written appeal to the chair within 15 business days of the academic decision. The chair or designee will notify the student in writing of their decision.
3. If the departmental process upholds the original decision, the graduate student may next initiate an appeal to L&S. To do so, the student must submit a written appeal to the L&S Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Academic Affairs within 15 business days of notification of the department's decision.
 - a. To the fullest extent possible, the written appeal should include, in a single document: a clear and concise statement of the academic decision being appealed, any relevant background on what led to the decision, the specific policies involved, the relief sought, any relevant documentation related to the departmental appeal, and

the names and titles of any individuals contributing to or involved in the decision.

- b. The Assistant Dean will work with the Academic Associate Dean of the appropriate division to consider the appeal. They may seek additional information and/or meetings related to the case.
 - c. The Assistant Dean and Academic Associate Dean will provide a written decision within 20 business days.
4. If L&S upholds the original decision, the graduate student may appeal to the Graduate School. More information can be found on their website: Grievances and Appeals (<https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/grievances-and-appeals/>) (see: Graduate School Appeal Process).

OTHER

Applicants are considered for funding as part of the admissions process. We offer a range of funding, including graduate assistantships, fellowships and research scholarship awards.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Take advantage of the Graduate School's professional development resources (<https://grad.wisc.edu/pd/>) to build skills, thrive academically, and launch your career.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

We offer a research colloquium (JOURN 901) during the academic year where faculty share their research findings and methods and engage students in lively conversations about how to conduct research. We offer a teaching colloquium (JOURN 902) that explores pedagogical principles and applications that prepare students for teaching careers. Teaching assistantships provide hands-on training.

Within our research groups and centers, graduate students work side by side with faculty and with each other, allowing the senior students to mentor younger students and for faculty to mentor students who are not their advisees. Our graduate students organize and host an annual day-long conference where they present their research in a series of panels, and they present their research at conferences around the world.

We offer a series of professional development workshops for graduate students with faculty and alumni panelists. The topics include: navigating the academic job market, exploring the non-academic job market, turning a paper into a presentation and how to find funding for research.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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1. Articulate research problems, potentials, and limits with respect to theory, knowledge, and practice within the field of study. Demonstrating comprehensive and intensive knowledge of the theories, concepts, frameworks, empirical findings, and controversies in the field.
2. Formulate ideas, concepts, designs, and/or techniques beyond the current boundaries of knowledge within the field of study. Demonstrating a comprehensive and intensive knowledge of appropriate and relevant research methods and analytical techniques.

3. Create research or scholarship that makes a substantive contribution to knowledge.
4. Demonstrate breadth within their learning experiences.
5. Advance contributions of the field of study to society.
6. Communicate complex ideas effectively.
7. Foster ethical and professional conduct.