The PhD degree in mass communications is an interdisciplinary program offered jointly by the Department of Life Sciences Communication and 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.