

# LIFE SCIENCES COMMUNICATION, M.S.

The Department of Life Sciences Communication offers a master's degree with the opportunity to pursue either a research/thesis track or professional course-based track.

Both tracks require a minimum of 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, a graduate level statistics course, and LSC 700 Colloquium in Life Sciences Communication. The thesis track requires a thesis based on original research.

The professional track is a course-based program 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 graduate program provides 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 fields such as consulting, policy, journalism, strategic communication, marketing and market research, particularly in science-related fields.

For more information on the types of research our faculty and students are doing, where our M.S. alumni are now, and additional details about the program, please visit the Life Sciences Communication website (<http://lsc.wisc.edu>).

## ADMISSIONS

### GRADUATE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Graduate admissions is a two-step process between academic degree programs and the Graduate School. Applicants must meet requirements of both the program(s) and the Graduate School. Once you have researched the graduate program(s) you are interested in, apply online (<https://grad.wisc.edu/admissions>).

Requirements	Detail
Fall Deadline	May 15
Spring Deadline	October 15
Summer Deadline	The program does not admit in the summer.
GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)	Required.

**English Proficiency Test** Every applicant whose native language is not English or whose undergraduate instruction was not in English must provide an English proficiency test score and meet the Graduate School minimum requirements (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/#english-proficiency>).

**Other Test(s) (e.g., GMAT, MCAT)** n/a

**Letters of Recommendation Required** 3

#### Admissions deadlines:

For spring admission: October 15

For fall admission: May 15

*In order to be eligible for various fellowships and teaching assistantships, early application is recommended.*

Students must meet the minimum requirements for admission (<https://grad.wisc.edu/admissions/requirements>) set by the Graduate School. Applicants must submit:

- An online application
- Official GRE scores
- A statement of purpose
- Official transcripts from all previously attended institutions
- A CV/resume
- 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.

A Life Sciences Communication graduate program application checklist is available for applicants on the program website (<http://lsc.wisc.edu/masters>).

## FUNDING

### GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid. Further funding information (<https://grad.wisc.edu/funding>) is available from the Graduate School. Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and processes related to funding.

### PROGRAM RESOURCES

Financial support is available for graduate students in LSC. Historically, nearly all of our graduate students have been funded through assistantships — either in our department, working under the direction of one of our faculty members, or in one of numerous other departments and programs that regularly look to LSC to provide them with students with strong communication skills.

#### Assistantships

Most graduate students who receive support serve as teaching, research, or project assistants. Assistantships are typically part-time positions that pay a monthly stipend. Additionally, positions that are 33.33% or more (based on a 40-hour work week) provide tuition remission for the student

and make the student eligible for comprehensive health insurance coverage (a benefit worth approximately \$4,200 annually).

Graduate students in the Department of Life Sciences Communication will be eligible for full consideration for LSC teaching assistant positions if they are in good academic standing (two years for M.S. students, three years for Ph.D. students). Preference is given to students who have not exceeded those limits, but all students in good standing are welcome to apply. Students pursuing double degrees will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

### Fellowships

The department nominates its most competitive grad applicants for fellowship awards. University Fellowships are awarded through the Graduate School. The Social Science division offers a Two-Year Recruitment Fellowship, which provides a stipend, tuition remission, fees, and eligibility for health insurance. The fellowship is awarded during the student's first year in the program and during the student's first year as a dissertator.

The department also nominates competitive graduate applicants for the Advanced Opportunity Fellowships (AOFs) (<http://www.cals.wisc.edu/gradstudies/scholarships>), which provide full tuition and funding to qualified minority applicants.

The department also nominates current students for Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowships (WDGF) (<http://uwmadisonoffr.wordpress.com/funding-overview/fellowships/wisconsin-distinguished-graduate-fellowships>), which are awarded by the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

### Financial Aid

Students who are U.S. citizens or Permanent Residents can apply for Federal Stafford Loans (subsidized and unsubsidized) and for Federal Work-Study through the Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA (<https://financialaid.wisc.edu>)). Eligibility is based on financial need. OSFA also offers information on the cost of attendance.

Short-term loans (<http://finaid.wisc.edu/159.htm>) are available on a limited basis. They are given only to assist in unanticipated emergency situations and must be repaid within the semester in which they are borrowed.

### Hourly Employment

Other employment opportunities are available both on campus and in the community. Student job opportunities can be found on the Student Job Center website (<http://jobcenter.wisc.edu>).

### Travel and Professional Development Grants

Every student is encouraged to apply for the Graduate School's Student Research Grants Competition (<https://grad.wisc.edu/diversity/summer-research-opportunity-program>) (formerly known as the Vilas Travel Grants) each year. These grants are intended to support both Conference Presentation Funds and Research Travel Awards. It is critical that students plan to apply early and follow campus travel policies for transportation and travel.

Also, graduate students in LSC can apply for financial support from the department for travel to academic conferences. Students can apply for up to \$1,000 for international travel and up to \$500 for domestic travel. More information is provided to students via e-mail during the application cycles.

## REQUIREMENTS

### MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Review the Graduate School minimum academic progress and degree requirements (<http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirements>), 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

**Evening/Weekend:** These programs are offered in an evening and/or weekend format to accommodate working schedules. Enjoy the advantages of on-campus courses and personal connections, while keeping your day job. For more information about the meeting schedule of a specific program, contact the program.

**Online:** These programs are offered primarily online. Many available online programs can be completed almost entirely online with all online programs offering at least 50 percent or more of the program work online. Some online programs have an on-campus component that is often designed to accommodate working schedules. Take advantage of the convenience of online learning while participating in a rich, interactive learning environment. For more information about the online nature of a specific program, contact the program.

**Hybrid:** These programs have innovative curricula that combine on-campus and online formats. Most hybrid programs are completed on-campus with a partial or completely online semester. For more information about the hybrid schedule of a specific program, contact the program.

**Accelerated:** These on-campus programs are offered in an accelerated format that allows you to complete your program in a condensed time-frame. Enjoy the advantages of on-campus courses with minimal disruption to your career. For more information about the accelerated nature of a specific program, contact the program.

### CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

#### Requirements Detail

Minimum Credit Requirement 30 credits

Minimum Residence Credit Requirement 30 credits

Minimum Graduate Coursework Requirement Half of degree coursework (15 credits out of 30 total credits) must be completed graduate-level coursework; courses with the Graduate Level Coursework attribute are identified and searchable in the university's Course Guide (<https://registrar.wisc.edu/course-guide/>).

Overall Graduate GPA Requirement 3.50 GPA required.

Other Grade Requirements Students must earn a B or above in all coursework to count it toward the 30-credit total.

**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.

**Language Requirements** No language requirements.

## REQUIRED COURSES

The M.S. has two tracks students can follow: a Thesis Master's Degree or a Professional M.S.

### Thesis Track <sup>1</sup>

The Thesis Master's degree requires 24 course credits plus a thesis (6 credits). Courses taken match the interests and needs of individual students. However, all students must take LSC 720 Introduction to Communication Theory and Research, a research methodology course, a graduate level statistics course, and LSC 700 Colloquium in Life Sciences Communication. The degree also requires a thesis based on original research.

The student meets with their advisor during the first semester of the program to outline a course trajectory for the next two years. In consultation with their advisor, the student assembles a committee of three faculty members. The student defends their master's thesis in front of the committee at the end of their program.

Course work can include classes in substantive areas other than communication. For example, a student wishing to become an environmental reporter might take courses in environmental studies. A student interested in health communication might take a nutrition or preventive medicine course. However, the complete program must have coherence and focus, and students should discuss all courses with their advisor prior to enrollment.

<sup>1</sup> These tracks are internal to the program and represent different pathways a student can follow to earn this degree. Track names do not appear in the Graduate School admissions application, and they will not appear on the transcript.

### Professional Track <sup>1</sup>

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

The student meets with their advisor during the first semester of the program to outline a course trajectory for the next two years. In consultation with their advisor, the student assembles a committee of three faculty members. The student present a course narrative to the committee and the end of their program, and the committee meets to approve the completed coursework.

Professional track master's students must take LSC 720 Introduction to Communication Theory and Research, a research methodology course, a graduate level statistics course, and LSC 700 Colloquium in Life Sciences Communication. Students fill their remaining credits with courses of interest after consulting with their advisor.

<sup>1</sup> These tracks are internal to the program and represent different pathways a student can follow to earn this degree. Track names do

not appear in the Graduate School admissions application, and they will not appear on the transcript.

## POLICIES

### GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid. Further funding information (<https://grad.wisc.edu/funding>) is available from the Graduate School. Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and processes related to funding.

### MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

The Graduate Program Handbook (<http://lsc.wisc.edu/resources-2>) is the repository for all of the program's policies and requirements.

### PRIOR COURSEWORK

#### 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.

#### UW–Madison Undergraduate

No credits from a UW–Madison undergraduate degree are allowed to count toward the degree.

#### 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.

### PROBATION

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.

### CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

15 credits (however, 12 credits are highly encouraged)

### TIME CONSTRAINTS

Students who pursue the thesis-track master's degree will have a limit of four semesters (including summer semesters) of LSC 990 Research/thesis enrollment. The four-semester limit starts with the first semester a student takes LSC 990 Research credits, whether or not in conjunction with other courses. Students will not be allowed to take leave once their LSC 990 Research 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 their 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, the student 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.

## OTHER

Teaching (TA), research (RA), and project assistantships (PA) are available. All TA position announcements are distributed to current students, and students with active applications to LSC programs, and are posted on the UW–Madison Student Job Center. RA and PA positions vary and are managed individually by the faculty.

## 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.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. 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.
2. Identifies sources and assembles evidence pertaining to questions or challenges in the field of study.
3. Demonstrates understanding of the primary field of study in a historical, social, or global context.
4. Selects and/or utilizes the most appropriate methodologies, tools, and practices.
5. Evaluates or synthesizes information pertaining to questions or challenges in the field of study.
6. Communicates complex ideas effectively across different audiences.
7. Recognizes, fosters, and applies principles of ethical and professional conduct.

## PEOPLE

**Faculty:** Professors Brossard (chair), Meiller, Scheufele; Associate Professor Shaw (director of graduate studies), Shepard; Assistant Professors Newman, Stenhouse.