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**

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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Deadline</td>
<td>May 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Deadline</td>
<td>October 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Deadline</td>
<td>The program does not admit in the summer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)</td>
<td>Required.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FUNDING**

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.

**GRADUATE SCHOOL 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 dissertation.

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 (WDF) (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.

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**REQUIREMENTS**

**MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS**

Review the Graduate School minimum academic progress and degree requirements (http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirementstext), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

**MAJOR REQUIREMENTS**

**MODE OF INSTRUCTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Instruction Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Face to Face</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Credit Requirement</td>
<td>30 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Residence Credit Requirement</td>
<td>30 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Graduate Coursework Requirement</td>
<td>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 (<a href="https://registrar.wisc.edu/course-guide/">https://registrar.wisc.edu/course-guide/</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Graduate GPA Requirement</td>
<td>3.50 GPA required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Grade Requirements</td>
<td>Students must earn a B or above in all coursework to count it toward the 30-credit total.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The M.S. has two tracks students can follow: a Thesis Master’s Degree or a Professional M.S.

**Thesis Track**

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.

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

**Professional Track**

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.

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.

**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 assistants (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.