

# LIFE SCIENCES COMMUNICATION, M.S.

The Department of Life Sciences Communication is a world leader in science communication research, education and practice. We offer 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 doctoral 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/>).

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.

## 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 restrictions 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.

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 graduate applicants for fellowship awards including the Advanced Opportunity Fellowships (AOFs) (<http://www.cals.wisc.edu/gradstudies/scholarships/>) and Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowships (WDGF) (<http://uwmadisonoffr.wordpress.com/funding-overview/fellowships/wisconsin-distinguished-graduate-fellowships/>), among others.

### Financial Aid

Students who are US 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/>) 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.

### Scholarships

LSC also encourages students to apply annually for college and departmental scholarships through the Wisconsin Scholarship Hub (WiSH) ([https://wisc.academicworks.com/users/sign\\_in/](https://wisc.academicworks.com/users/sign_in/)).

## 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

**Accelerated:** Accelerated programs are offered at a fast pace that condenses the time to completion. Students are able to complete a program with minimal disruptions to careers and other commitments.

**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

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 ( <a href="https://registrar.wisc.edu/course-guide">https://registrar.wisc.edu/course-guide</a> ( <a href="https://registrar.wisc.edu/course-guide/">https://registrar.wisc.edu/course-guide/</a> )).
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 master's degree. Students choose their track during the program application process.

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

The thesis-based master's degree requires 30 course credits, six of which can be LSC 990 Research credits. 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.

Code	Title	Credits
LSC 700	Colloquium in Life Sciences Communication	1
Communication Theory		3
LSC 720	Introduction to Communication Theory and Research	
or LSC 902	Public Opinion of Life Science Issues	
or LSC 625	Risk Communication	
or LSC/ ENVIR ST/ JOURN 823	Science and Environment Communication	
Research Methods		3
Graduate Level Statistics		3
Electives Based on Academic & Career Goals		17-20
LSC 990	Research	3-6
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>30-36</b>

<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>

This is a course-based master's degree (30 credits total) designed to prepare students for professional careers in science communication and related fields. Students in this track will usually not pursue a Ph.D. program in the future. In fact, many doctoral 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 presents a course narrative to the committee at the end of their program.

Coursework 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.

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Required Courses</b>		
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or LSC 902	Public Opinion of Life Science Issues	
or LSC 625	Risk Communication	
or LSC/ ENVIR ST/ JOURN 823	Science and Environment Communication	
Research Methods		3
Graduate Level Statistics		3
Electives Based on Academic & Career Goals		20
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>30</b>

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## POLICIES

### GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES

The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures (<https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/>) provide essential information regarding general university policies. Program authority to set degree policies beyond the minimum required by the Graduate School lies with the degree program faculty. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

### MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

#### 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.

## 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/>)
- Dean of Students Office (<https://doso.students.wisc.edu/>) (for all students to seek grievance assistance and support)
- 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/departmental or school/college grievance decisions)
- Office of Compliance (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/>) (for class harassment and discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence)
- 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)

## Grievance Procedures

Students who feel that they have been treated unfairly have the right to a prompt hearing of their grievance. Such complaints may involve course grades, classroom treatment, various forms of harassment, or other issues. Any student or potential student may use these procedures except those graduate assistants whose complaint is covered by campus policies for teaching assistants.

Procedures for student grievances:

- The student should speak first with the person toward whom the grievance is directed. In most cases, grievances can be resolved at this level.
- If this conversation does not yield satisfactory results, the student should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies in the student's home department.
- Should a satisfactory resolution not be achieved at that level, the student should contact their program's Grievance Advisor to discuss the grievance. The Graduate Program Coordinator can provide students with the name of this faculty member, who facilitates problem resolution through informal channels. The Grievance Advisor is responsible for facilitating any complaints or issues of students. The Grievance Advisor first attempts to help students informally address the grievance prior to any formal complaint. Students are also encouraged to talk with their faculty advisors regarding concerns or difficulties if necessary. University resources for sexual harassment concerns can be found on the Office of Compliance website.
- If the issue is not resolved to the student's satisfaction the student can submit the grievance to the Grievance Advisor in writing, within 60 calendar days of the alleged unfair treatment.
- On receipt of a written complaint, a faculty committee will be convened by the Grievance Advisor to manage the grievance. The program faculty committee will obtain a written response from the person toward whom the complaint is directed. This response will be shared with the person filing the grievance.
- The faculty committee will determine a decision regarding the grievance. The Grievance Advisor will report on the action taken by the committee in writing to both the student and the party toward whom the complaint was directed within 15 working days from the date the complaint was received.
- At this point, if either party (the student or the person toward whom the grievance is directed) is unsatisfied with the decision of the faculty committee, the party may file a written appeal. Either party has 10 working days to file a written appeal to the College.
- Documentation of the grievance will be stored for at least 7 years. Significant grievances that set a precedent will be stored indefinitely.

The Graduate School has established policies governing student conduct, academic dishonesty, and sexual and racial harassment. The Graduate School also has procedures for students wishing to appeal a grievance decision made at the college level. These policies are described in the Academic Guidelines.

## 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 (director of academic programs), Xenos; Associate Professors: Shaw, Shepard; Assistant Professors: Chen, Chinn, Li, Newman.