ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS, MA

Admission Requirements

Admission to graduate work in advertising and public relations requires a 3.0 or higher undergraduate grade point average (on a 4.0 scale) and a combined score of at least 1000 on the verbal and quantitative portions of the Graduate Record Examination general test. The department also accepts the Graduate Management Admissions Test with prior approval.

International students are required to obtain scores of 600 or better on the centrally administered version of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Required supporting materials include a statement of career objectives and three letters of reference (at least two from academic sources).

The deadline for all application materials to have arrived at the department is March 1. This is an earlier deadline than those established by the Graduate School and most other departments at the University of Alabama.

Conditional admission sometimes may be granted for a student who falls below the minimum grade point average or test score requirements. Students admitted conditionally must earn at least a 3.0 grade point average for their first 12 credit hours.

Each student’s progress will be guided by an academic advisor or by the departmental director of graduate studies. Students in each program must maintain minimum grade point averages of 3.0 and may receive no more than two “C” grades to be eligible to continue.

See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

Degree Requirements

Plan I, the Two-Year Research Program

The two-year master’s degree program is intended for students seeking a strong research emphasis in their study of advertising and public relations. The Plan I program focuses on important problems and questions, gathering evidence, and setting standards for inference. The program specifically prepares students in the areas of:

a. mastering the body of scholarly knowledge of advertising and public relations, and
b. contributing to the advancement of knowledge in these fields through basic and applied research.

Students may decide to continue their studies, pursuing doctorates in advertising or public relations. Students in the Plan I program specialize in either advertising or public relations, learn the concepts and methods involved in productive scholarship, and collaborate with faculty members in conducting research.

Plan I requirements

Plan I is normally a two-year program and requires

a. a minimum of 30 hours of approved graduate courses,
b. demonstration of proficiency in research skills,
c. passing of a comprehensive written examination, and
d. completion and successful defense of a master’s thesis.

Students admitted to the program with little or no previous coursework in advertising or public relations may be required to take one or more undergraduate courses in the department to supplement their graduate studies.

The Plan II program is for recent college graduates who see the advantages of having advanced skills in advertising and public relations.

All required graduate courses in the Plan I program are listed below; cognates and electives are chosen subject to the approval of the student’s academic advisor.

Required courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APR 550</td>
<td>Adv/Pub Rel Comm Res Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APR 551</td>
<td>Adv/Pub Rel Comm Theory</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APR 570</td>
<td>Contemporary Apr</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APR 583</td>
<td>Research Applicatns APR</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognates</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>breathed or TCF course numbered above 550</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APR 599</td>
<td>Thesis Research</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Nine hours of this program are devoted to a cognate area, usually outside the College of Communication and Information Sciences. The cognate is intended to provide concentrated study in an area related to the student’s career interests. The cognate typically consists of courses in one discipline, but it can consist of courses in several disciplines if the overall topic is unified and contributes to the student’s objectives. Cognate examples include marketing, organizational communication, psychology, sociology, and political science.

Research proficiency can be demonstrated by successful completion of one or more statistics or computer science courses approved by the student’s academic advisor, or by proficiency in the research methods appropriate to the student’s master’s thesis.

Following completion of all coursework, students must pass a comprehensive examination.

The student must select a faculty member to chair the thesis committee. In concert with the thesis chairperson, the student chooses a three-member thesis committee. One member must be from outside the Department of Advertising and Public Relations. Working with this committee, the student identifies an appropriate thesis topic and research approach. A thesis proposal must be approved by the thesis committee before a student is permitted to begin work on thesis research. The completed thesis must be defended in an oral examination before the thesis committee.

Plan II, the One-Year Professional Program

The professional program is an intensive, professionally oriented, one-year program that combines advertising and public relations. Recognizing the increasingly close links between the advertising and public relations professions, the Plan II program provides advanced preparation in both disciplines. The program provides intensive training to meet specific objectives. Graduates will be prepared to:

- develop a thorough understanding of the institutions and processes involved in advertising and public relations, through a combined program of study
- use research both to generate communication strategies and to evaluate the success of communication programs
- write idea-driven persuasive communication
- plan, implement, and evaluate media plans for advertising and public relations programs and campaigns

The Plan II program is for recent college graduates who see the advantages of having advanced skills in advertising and public relations.
The students will recognize that preparation in the liberal arts, business administration, or communication has provided them with important knowledge but has not sufficiently prepared them in the communication concepts and skills needed to be a leader.

Speaking and writing skills are emphasized in all courses, with frequent papers and presentations. One course each semester emphasizes writing skills involved in the advertising and public relations professions.

**Plan II requirements**
The one-year Plan II program requires:

a. completion of a specific 33-hour program of graduate courses,

b. demonstration of proficiency in research skills,

c. passing of a comprehensive written examination, and

d. completion of a master's project in the course APR 598 Comm Campaign Wkshp II.

Students admitted to the program will receive a list of critical readings and will be expected to become familiar with these materials before beginning the program. The program starts with a series of orientation sessions aimed at evaluating each student's grasp of the critical readings and ability to proceed with the program without further background study.

Plan II required courses are as follows (semester assignments are provided only as illustration):

### Fall semester
- APR 570: Contemporary Apr 3
- APR 572: Persuasive Communication 3
- APR 550: Adv/Pub Rel Comm Res Methods 3
- APR 551: Adv/Pub Rel Comm Theory 3

### Spring semester
- APR 522: Advertising Media 1 3
- APR 582: APR Management 3
- APR 583: Research Applicatns APR 3
- APR 592: Integratd Communctn Proj 1 3

### Interim session
- APR 590: Special Topics 3

### First summer session
- APR 597: Comm Campaign Wkshp I 3

### Second summer session
- APR 598: Comm Campaign Wkshp II 3

Total Hours 33

1 Depending on the student's background, an elective course may be substituted for APR 522 Advertising Media or APR 592 Integratd Communctn Proj.

Research proficiency can be demonstrated by completion of APR 550 Adv/Pub Rel Comm Res Methods and APR 583 Research Applicatns APR with grades of "B" or better, or by successful application of research methods appropriate to the student's project.

The comprehensive examination will be conducted during the first week of the first summer term and may be attempted only twice.

Each year two faculty members serve on the project committee for the Plan II master's degree program. Those faculty members read each of the project reports submitted by students at the conclusion of APR 597 Comm Campaign Wkshp I/APR 598 Comm Campaign Wkshp II, and other faculty members may also attend the project presentations given by students at the end of this course.

**Master's Degrees**
The primary purpose of master's degree programs is to provide students with subject matter at an advanced level in their fields of study. Master's degrees are designed to assist students either to continue their graduate studies or to meet the goals of their professions. In most cases, master's programs also help students become familiar with methods of independent investigation.

**Program Requirements**
Two plans are offered for the master's degree:

**Plan I.** Candidates for the master's degree under Plan I must earn a minimum of 24 semester hours of credit in coursework plus earn a minimum of 6 additional hours of thesis research hours, for a total of 30 hours.

**Plan II.** Candidates for the master's degree under Plan II must earn a minimum of 30 semester hours of coursework credit and pass the comprehensive examination or complete a culminating or "capstone experience" as described under the Comprehensive Examinations section below.

Both plans require a minimum of 18 semester hours in the major subject. With the approval of the major department, the remainder of the coursework may be completed in either the major or a related field.

In some divisions and in many departments of the University, candidates are required to do their work under Plan I. Candidates working under Plan II may be required to participate successfully in seminar or problem courses that will give them an acquaintance with the methods of research and an appreciation of the place and function of original investigation in the field.

**Residency Requirements**
A student's program at the master's level must provide sufficient association with the resident faculty to permit individual evaluation of the student's capabilities and achievements.

**Graduate Credit**
A student must be admitted to the Graduate School and must register as a graduate student in order to receive graduate credit. Approval for graduate registration must be obtained from program advisors prior to registration.

**Graduate Credit for Noncredit Experiences**
All course credit used toward a UA graduate degree must be taught at the graduate level. No graduate credit may be earned by correspondence study or for experiential learning not conducted under the direct supervision of graduate faculty of The University of Alabama. The UA does not offer graduate credit for noncredit workshops, seminars, continuing education experiences, professional development, internships, work/life experience, and so forth.

**Transfer of Credit**
Courses of full graduate-level credit earned in a regionally accredited institution where a student was enrolled in the graduate school may be submitted for review for inclusion in a master's degree program. Evaluation of credit for transfer will not be made until after the student has enrolled in the Graduate School of The University of Alabama. Acceptance of credit requires the approval of the student's advisory committee and the dean of the Graduate School. Credit will not be accepted for transfer from any institution at which the student failed to
achieve a "B" average on all graduate work attempted. Only courses in which a student earned a "B" grade or better may be transferred.

In some cases, foreign educational credentials may not meet the Graduate School’s criteria for transfer of credit. It may be necessary for students in this situation to secure an evaluation of their credentials from World Education Services Inc. (WES), an external foreign credential evaluation service. Additional information on their services can be found at their website.

A student initiates at the Graduate School’s website a Request for Transfer of Graduate Credit earned at another institution. It is also the student’s responsibility to assure that the Graduate School receives an official transcript of the credit requested for transfer, well in advance of the final semester.

With the approval of the student’s department and the dean of the Graduate School, the greater of 12 hours or 25 percent of the required coursework for a master’s degree may be transferred from another institution. All credit toward the master’s degree, including transfer credit, must have been earned during the six years (18 fall, spring, and summer semesters) immediately preceding the date on which the master’s degree is to be awarded. Revalidation (recertification) of graduate credits that will be more than 18 semesters old at the time of UA master’s program completion is not an option.

Please note that some departments allow fewer than 12 hours of graduate transfer credit. Be sure to check with your department’s graduate coordinator regarding your department’s transfer policy.

400-Level Courses
A maximum of 6 semester hours of 400-level course credit may be accepted for a master’s degree program, but only if a form for Approval of 400-Level Course Work for Master’s Credit is approved by the Graduate School prior to the semester in which the 400-level coursework will be taken.

Time Limit
All requirements for the master’s degree must be completed during the six years (18 fall, spring, and summer semesters) immediately preceding the date on which the degree is to be awarded. There is no provision for an extension of the time limit beyond 6 years for master’s students.

Admission to Candidacy
During the 2013-2014 academic year, the Graduate Council eliminated the master’s candidacy requirement. Departments may monitor master’s candidacy if they wish, but the Graduate School does not monitor it and will not accept master’s candidacy forms. Doctoral candidacy is not affected and remains an important doctoral program requirement.

Thesis
A thesis evidencing research capacity, independent thought, and the ability to interpret materials is required of all master’s degree candidates who pursue Plan I. The subject chosen must be in the major field and must be approved by the graduate committee of the major department or school and by the head of the student’s major department or division.

The final oral thesis defense is the culminating experience in the master’s program. As such, all members of the thesis committee are expected to attend and participate in real time. Virtual attendance via interactive video or teleconference is permitted for off-campus external committee members, but Tuscaloosa campus faculty should attend in person unless extraordinary circumstances dictate the need for virtual attendance.

Article Style vs. Journal Format

Article Style.
At the doctoral level, “article-style dissertations” are unified works that include several distinct but related studies of research or creative activity, each of which is of publishable quality. The University does not permit an "article-style thesis" to be presented for a master’s degree.

Journal Format.
A “journal-format thesis” is acceptable. Such a thesis follows the format of a particular journal in which the student and advisor want the thesis to be published. To prepare a journal-format thesis, the student uses the journal’s “information for authors” or similarly titled guidelines in conjunction with the Graduate School’s Student Guide to Preparing Electronic Theses and Dissertations.

A thesis committee must consist of at least three members appointed by the dean of the Graduate School. A form for Appointment or Change of Master’s Thesis Committee is used to request that the graduate dean appoint a thesis committee. The request normally is made as soon as the successful defense of the thesis proposal has been completed. All members of a thesis committee must be members of the Graduate Faculty. The Committee Chair must be a full or associate member of the Graduate Faculty. One member must be from outside the student’s major department. If the outside member is not a full or associate member of the UA Graduate Faculty (e.g., a highly qualified person from another university, a business or industry), the graduate dean needs to appoint that member by approving Temporary Graduate Faculty status for the specific purpose of serving on the student’s thesis committee. Unless there are extraordinary circumstances meriting approval by the graduate dean before the final oral defense of the thesis, all members of the thesis committee must attend the defense.

The candidate must give members of the examining committee a minimum of two weeks to read the thesis before the date of the final oral examination. A final oral examination is required of all students completing a thesis. All members of the thesis committee must be members of the UA graduate faculty and must attend the final oral examination unless there are extraordinary circumstances warranting the graduate dean’s approval of the absence prior to the defense meeting.

As of August 15, 2009, all theses are submitted electronically rather than on paper. See the graduate school’s homepage for a link to information on Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) for details.

Theses must comply with the regulations set out in A Student Guide to Preparing Electronic Theses and Dissertations, available on the Graduate School’s website. Approval of the thesis by the graduate dean is necessary before graduation.

The thesis should be completed, if possible, while the student is in residence at the University. To request permission to complete a thesis in absentia, the student must, before leaving the University, submit a satisfactory outline of the thesis, as well as evidence that adequate facilities are available where the work will be done, to the head of the student’s major department.

Protection of Human Subjects for Research
Scientific research involving human subjects has produced substantial benefits for society, but it also can pose troubling ethical questions. The mission of the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Protection of Human Subjects is to ensure that research involving human subjects is conducted ethically. University and federal policies require that review and approval to use human subjects in research precede the research. In the case of thesis research that involves the use of human subjects...
in any way, the principal investigator is responsible for contacting the college Human Research Review Committee to obtain approval for the planned research.

**Comprehensive Examinations**

In addition to the regular course examinations, a final comprehensive examination representing a "culminating" or "capstone" experience for a degree is required of all candidates for the master's degree (except for those candidates pursuing the master of accountancy, the master of business administration, the master of library and information studies, the master of social work, and the master of tax accounting). The comprehensive examination is a culminating experience in which the student is expected to integrate prior learning. Each department, with approval of the Graduate Council, determines the most appropriate format. The various exams may consist of one or more of the following:

- a written and/or oral examination based on the content of the degree program;
- a thesis and final oral defense;
- a course requiring interpretation and integration of information from previous courses;
- a research paper, a "policy and practice" paper, or equivalent experience;
- a public performance or exhibition along with a contextualizing paper; and/or
- a practicum or internship.

If the comprehensive exam requirement is met with option 1 and/or 2 above, then the examining committee for comprehensive examinations must consist of at least three members of the graduate faculty from that department and appointed by the dean of the Graduate School. The examination must be given at least six weeks before the date of graduation (two weeks before for Plan II) and reported promptly to the dean of the Graduate School on appropriate forms. A final report, on the Master's/EdS Examination Form, is on the Graduate School website. The form should be submitted when all examinations are completed. A student may take the final oral or written examination only twice. Failing the examination twice results in dismissal from the degree program and the Graduate School.

**Application for Graduation**

Each candidate for a master's degree must apply for graduation through myBama no later than the registration period for the semester or the first session of the summer term in which requirements for the degree are to be completed.

**Second Master's Degree**

Six (6) semester hours of eligible credit from one master's degree at The University of Alabama may be applied to the requirements for a second master's degree, but only if the department of the second master's agrees to the courses in the plan of study. Any hours from the previous master's degree must have been earned during the six years (18 fall, spring, and summer semesters) immediately preceding the date on which the second degree is to be awarded. ***Please note that if a student double counts six hours between two master's degrees, no hours may double count toward any additional master's degrees.