

COMMUNICATION STUDIES, MA

Master of Arts in Communication Studies

The 30 hour master of arts degree program in the Department of Communication Studies is designed to promote advanced understanding of the social influence of communication in its various forms and venues. The program celebrates the rich diversity of communication by emphasizing four areas of study: rhetoric and political discourse, interpersonal communication, communication and culture, and organizational leadership (online).

After becoming familiar with the theoretical and methodological foundations of communication, students can customize their plan of study to support their particular interests and professional aspirations, including doctoral study, teaching, public service, communication consulting, entrepreneurship, and corporate or nonprofit leadership.

Areas of Study:

Rhetoric and Political Discourse

Rhetoric and Political Discourse focuses on how communication shapes political identity, community, and public culture. Students gain expertise in ancient and contemporary approaches to rhetoric and political discourse and use those ideas to understand and critique public messages. Ultimately, the program aims to develop engaged citizen-scholars equipped with the skills to invent, understand, and critique impactful communication.

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal Communication provides a theoretical and methodological foundation for verbal and nonverbal communication within families, romantic partnerships, social groups, and organizations. Student learn the history, empirical developments and practical applications of interpersonal communication research, aligning with ongoing research with the Interpersonal Research Group (IRG) and the Alabama Life Institute.

Communication & Culture

In this area of study, students learn to understand and appreciate the nuances of human communication within and across multiple cultures. By studying communication in a variety of cultural settings, students become more equipped to meaningfully connect with others in an increasingly global world.

Organizational Leadership (Online)

Whether you want to move up in your company or make a career change, this curriculum is designed to foster effective leadership and improve group and interpersonal dynamics. Through the Organizational Leadership specialization, you will gain additional skills that are directly applicable to any workplace.

Admissions

Main Campus

Applications for main campus admission are reviewed for both fall and spring term entry, though fall entry is encouraged.

Recommended Dates for Submitting Applications for Admission

- **December 1:** for fall applicants requesting departmental nomination for Graduate School fellowship opportunities
- **February 1:** for fall applicants requesting consideration for departmental assistantships

- **May 1:** for applicants seeking fall term entry
- **November 1:** for applicants seeking spring term entry

Distance Learning

Applications for distance learning admission are reviewed year-round for fall, spring, and summer term entry. Decisions for distance learning admission are made on a rolling basis, based on available space.

Recommended Deadlines for Submitting Completed Applications

- **April 1:** for distance learners seeking summer entry
- **July 1:** for distance learners seeking fall term entry
- **November 1:** for distance learners seeking spring term entry

Applicants who submit after these deadlines may be asked to move to a later entry term.

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

Curricular Requirements

The Department of Communication Studies uses a *plan of study*, either pre-approved or planned with a faculty advisor. Each plan of study must meet the minimum program requirements established by the Department of Communication Studies and the Graduate School. A master of arts degree in communication studies requires a minimum of 30 hours. A minimum of 21 graduate hours must be completed in the communication discipline.

Students are encouraged to review the Communication Studies departmental website for advising information and submit a plan of study.

Communication Studies MA		Hours
Foundation Requirement		3
COM 500	Intro Graduate Studies	
Theory Requirement		6
COM 561	Human Communication Theory	
COM 541 or COM 571	Contemporary Rhetorical Theory Organizational Com	
Method I Requirement		3
COM 548	Sem Rhetorical Criticism	
or		
	COM 550 Qualitative Research Methods	
Method II Requirement		3
Choose one of the following courses, or an advisor approved methods course within or outside the communication studies discipline: COM 550, COM 548, COM 572, COM 573, COM 578, CIS 603, CIS 608, CIS 609, CIS 675, CIS 679, EN 653, BER 631, BER 632, BER 637, PY 602		
Electives		9-15
9-15 credits depending on degree completion option, including up to 6 hours outside of the communication discipline		
Degree Completion Options		3-6
Students must complete one of the following options according to their approved plan of study		
COM 599	Thesis Research (6 hours)	
COM 598	Professional Project (3 hours)	
or		

COM 590 Internship	
COM 580 Capstone Seminar (3 hours)	
Comprehensive Exams (No Course Required)	
Total Hours	30

Accelerated Master's Program

Admission into the program begins when the student applies for admission to the Graduate School. Upon admission to the Graduate School, the student will be allowed to take graduate-level courses and begin a program of study leading to the Master of Arts degree in Communication Studies. For more information, consult the Graduate School policies. Graduate School information on Accelerated Master's Program.

Comprehensive Exam

Taken during the final semester, the examination allows students to demonstrate knowledge gained from theory, method, and elective courses. Students will form a committee of three faculty members who will administer and evaluate the exams. Graduate School information on Comprehensive Exams.

Professional Option

Students who choose to pursue the professional option for degree completion must secure permission before enrolling in the completion course (COM 598 or COM 590) by submitting a formal proposal to their academic advisor. Additionally, students in the professional option are required to submit, at the end of their coursework, a Capstone Portfolio for their advisor's approval.

Organizational Leadership Emphasis Requirements

The following courses fulfill the Organizational Leadership Emphasis and can be combined with a recommended pathway to fulfill the Communication Studies MA degree program requirements. The recommended pathway can be found on the Communication Studies Graduate Program website.

Code and Title	Hours
Organizational Leadership Emphasis (12 hours)	
COM 555 Conflict and Negotiation	3
COM 560 Group Leadership	3
COM 571 Organizational Com	3
COM 572 Org Assessment/Intervent	3
Total Hours	12

Transfer Credit

Although the Graduate School permits up to 12 hours of transfer credit, the department rarely approves more than 3-6 hours of graduate course work completed in another program. No transfer requests will be considered prior to a student's entry into the MA program. After having successfully completed at least one semester in the program and with their advisor's approval, MA students may petition the department to consider transfer credit toward completing their plans of study. For approval, graduate coursework completed in another program should either correspond with a required course in the program or be approved as a relevant elective course.

Time Limits for Degree Completion Requirements

See Graduate School policy for more information

Academic Misconduct Information

See Graduate School policy for more information

Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information

See Graduate School policy for more information

Academic Grievances information

See Graduate School policy for more information

Grades and Academic Standing

See Graduate School policy for more information

Graduate School Deadlines

See Graduate School policy for more information

Application for Graduation Information

See Graduate School policy for more information.

Acquisition of Financial Support:

All admitted and currently enrolled graduate students in good standing in the College of Communication & Information Sciences, both main campus and online, are eligible to apply for a graduate teaching assistantship (GTA), graduate research assistantship (GRA), and/or graduate administrative assistantship (GAA) position funded by the college by submitting the C&IS Graduate Assistantship Interest Application.

Positions range from 10 hour a week (.25 FTE) positions with half tuition and benefits to 20 hour a week (.5 FTE) positions with full tuition and benefits, although online students are not eligible for university sponsored health insurance. Positions and funding offers vary from one semester in duration to multiple years. Funding levels and lengths are communicated via an offer letter or memorandum of appointment, which will indicate an end date of financial support.

Funding decisions for incoming students are generally made between January and May, and decisions for currently enrolled students without funding are generally made between May and July. Currently enrolled students in good standing whose funding is expiring may petition the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies in writing for continued support, and those decisions are also generally made between May and July.

In addition to college assistantships, excellent students may be nominated by the college for University of Alabama fellowships. Fellowship recipients are guaranteed paid tuition and fees, a stipend, and benefits without work expectations for a defined period set by the Graduate School.

Beyond college-funded assistantships, additional funding opportunities may arise from individual faculty or departments in support of grant work, research projects, teaching specific courses, assisting with administrative projects, etc.

All students funded on assistantships must meet the Performance Expectations for Continuing Financial Support (see below) and funding

may be removed prior to the end date of financial support in accordance with the Conditions for Termination of Financial Support (see below).

Performance Expectations for Continuing Financial Support:

- The student must be in good academic standing in a degree program in the College of Communication & Information Sciences and be making satisfactory academic progress to the completion of the degree.
- The student must complete all mandatory trainings and abide by all rules and policies held by The University of Alabama, College of Communication & Information Sciences, and the department of their work assignment.
- The student must adequately perform all duties assigned to them in a timely manner as defined by the supervisors of their work assignments, including logging work hours if assigned for the position and submitting a semesterly evaluation of their work assignment.
- The student must remain clear of all infractions outlined under Conditions for Termination of Financial Support.

Conditions for Termination of Financial Support:

Students who meet one or more of the following criteria may be subject to termination of financial support pending C&IS Office for Graduate Studies administrative review. Depending upon the severity of the infraction or the extent of non-compliance, the Academic Unit Head and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies may recommend immediate termination of financial support, termination of financial support at the end of the current semester or termination of financial support at the end of the following semester. Students will be notified in writing of any decision to terminate financial support prior to the original end date of funding.

- *Dereliction of Duty.* Dereliction of duty includes, but is not limited to, failure to comply with UA safety and interpersonal conduct policies; absence from scheduled obligations without prior notification to the supervisor; failure to satisfactorily complete all activities associated with the funded position as defined by the supervisor; failure to submit required performance evaluations, etc.
- *Academic Misconduct.* Penalties for resolved academic misconduct cases, including potential loss of financial support, will be determined with guidance from the UA Graduate School and the Office for Graduate Studies.
- *Insufficient Academic Progress.* Insufficient academic progress, as determined by the student's advisor and the Office for Graduate Studies, includes, but is not limited to, students taking courses that do not align with the program requirements; students admitted to candidacy who do not make adequate research progress on their dissertation, failure to pass comprehensive exam, failure to pass proposal defense, etc.
- *Academic Warning & Academic Suspension.* Students on academic warning from the UA Graduate School are not eligible to hold assistantships. In addition to the loss of the assistantship for the semester of Academic Warning, a review of the student will determine if future committed funding will be revoked regardless of successfully earning good standing within the completion of the next 12 credit hours. In all cases, if a student is suspended, all future funding commitments are revoked.