

Communication (MA) – Non-Thesis Option

Degree Requirements

Graduate Studies

The Master of Arts degree in Communication is a broad-based degree program that integrates theoretical and research components of mass communication and strategic communication. The program is designed to prepare recent graduates and experienced professionals for doctoral studies, professional advancement, and personal enrichment.

The Department's graduate faculty combines applied knowledge with communication theory and works to engage students to think critically as they address communication practices and issues. Courses examine how communication creates, sustains, and changes personal lives, organizations, political and cultural institutions, and society.

The program curriculum consists of 33 credit hours, including a 9-hour core, 24 hours from elective courses from the communication and other university departments, and successful completion of a written qualifying examination.

Requirements For Admission

All applications must receive approval from the Graduate Program Coordinator, the Director for Graduate Studies for the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Graduate Dean. Students are admitted each semester and must meet the following requirements:

Regular Admission

GRE/GMAT Scores

Students must submit a satisfactory score on the general portion of the Graduate Record Examination or the Graduate Management Admissions Test. The scores required for regular admission are:

- GRE - The required score is 297 or more combined points on the quantitative and verbal portions.
- GMAT - A combined score of 1000 or more when calculated as follows: $200 \times \text{undergraduate GPA} + \text{GMAT score}$.
Earned graduate degree - An earned graduate degree may substitute for graduate entry exam scores. Students must submit a written request along with evidence of the degree to the graduate coordinator for review.

Undergraduate Requirements

Students must submit official copies of undergraduate transcripts.

Applicants to graduate programs in Arts and Sciences typically have a minimum GPA of at least a 3.0 on all undergraduate work. In exceptional cases, applicants may be considered with at least a 2.5 GPA on all undergraduate work, or at least a 2.75 GPA on the last 60 hours of undergraduate work.

International Students

- International students must submit documentation of TOEFL test scores of at least 525 (197 on computer based test) or 71 on internet based test, or a minimum score of 6 on the IELTS.
- Students who are required to take the English Language Proficiency Examination and whose scores suggest an English language deficiency must take the appropriate English as a Second Language courses. These courses are not counted as part of the 33-hour degree program.

Non-Degree Admission

Students may register for and complete up to 15 hours without formal entrance into the program.

Degree Requirements And Courses

Students must complete a minimum of 33 semester hours of credit in approved 500-level courses. A minimum of 27 semester hours must be completed at the University of South Alabama. At least 27 semester hours must be taken in communication. All students are required to pass a written qualifying examination.

Core Courses

For students with an undergraduate degree in communication, the normal requirements consist of the following 3 courses. These courses must be completed at the University of South Alabama.

- CA 500, Introduction to Graduate Studies in Communication. Students must take CA 500 before or concurrently with their first 500-level classes, or be given permission by the graduate program coordinator to delay enrollment in CA 500.
- CA 502, Communication Theory (generally offered in the fall semester)
- CA 503, Quantitative Communication Research Methods (generally offered in the spring semester).

Although students are advised to take CA 502 and CA 503 sequentially, they are not required to do so.

Remaining Courses

- With advisor approval, students may take up to 6 of the 33 required graduate hours outside of the Communication Department. Students should work closely with their advisors to develop a plan of study.
- After completing the three required courses, the remaining hours (excluding any directed studies, courses outside the department, or thesis hours for those on the thesis-track) may be selected from any CA 500-level courses. The courses for a focus in strategic communication (above the core curriculum) are as follow:
 - CA 501, Qualitative Research Methods
 - CA 510, Persuasion and Professional Communication
 - CA 545, Communication Ethics
 - CA 549, Media Effects
 - CA 560, Digital Communication
 - CA 570, Audience Dynamics
 - CA 576, History of Strategic Communication
 - CA 585, Strategic Crisis Management
 - CA 522, Rhetorical Strategy for Communication Professionals
 - CA 555, Corporate and Public Communication Law
 - CA 590, Special Topics in Communication

Directed Studies - CA 594

Directed study courses involve independent study of a communication topic. The purpose is to provide study in an area of specialization not covered by an existing course.

- The student must submit a topic proposal to a graduate faculty member. Once the topic is approved, both the faculty member and the student must sign a contract describing student expectations and outcomes and grading criteria.
- The student can register for between 1 and 3 credit hours in CA 594 courses with course requirements determined accordingly.
- The student may take a maximum of 3 hours in directed study coursework.

Grade Requirements

- A minimum of a 3.0 GPA on all work attempted is required for graduation.
- Courses in which a student receives a "D" or below will not be counted toward the degree program.
- A maximum of 2 courses with a grade of "C" will be counted toward the degree program.
- Students receiving 3 grades of "C" or below, regardless of the overall GPA, will be dismissed from the program.
- A student who receives a failing grade in a course for graduate credit may be dismissed from the program.

Time Limitations

- All degree requirements must be completed within 7 calendar years.
- Most students who take 9 hours per semester complete the degree within a 2-year period.
- The time required for degree completion depends on how many courses a student can take each semester.

Course Load

- Two or three courses (6-9 credit hours) per semester constitute a full-time course load.

Written Qualifying Examinations

All degree candidates must successfully complete a written qualifying examination after successful completion of all core requirements and before the student completes 24 credit hours. The exams lasts 4 hours and covers material from Department graduate core courses. It provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate independent thought and depth of understanding of the discipline. Using examples from the area of specialization, students should be prepared to demonstrate the ability to:

- Conceptualize problems.
- Create and critique research designs
- Evaluate literature, research theories, models, and methodologies
- Discern, discuss, and explain substantive issues, problems, trends, alternative perspectives and research approaches in both general and specific areas.

The qualifying examination may be attempted no more than 2 times. A student who fails this examination must wait until the next, regularly scheduled examination before repeating it. Failure of the examination on the second attempt will result in dismissal from the program.

Department Information

Department of Communication website

<https://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/artsandsci/communication/index.html>

The purpose of the Department of Communication is to provide students with core competencies, within the context of a broad liberal arts and sciences curriculum, which will prepare them to be independent, critical thinkers who uphold the highest ethical standards as communication leaders in a global society.

Given this purpose, the Department attempts to meet individual performance and career needs with a flexible curriculum. Students select one of the concentrations offered and confer with their advisors to plan their courses of study. These focused areas of study help prepare students for a variety of careers in the communication field.

The concentrations of study offered in Communication are: Communication Studies, Digital Cinema and Television, Journalism (Multimedia Journalism and Broadcast Journalism), and Strategic Communication. Students pursuing a degree in Communication must also have a minor in another discipline.

All first-time freshmen must successfully complete CAS 100: First Year Experience as a degree requirement. Students must enroll during their first term at USA, except for summer-entry students who must enroll in the fall semester following entry.

Honors In Communication

The Communication Departmental Honors program offers undergraduate students an opportunity to prepare for a graduate program or professional career. Students in this program will use their communication skills to develop a formal research project. To be awarded Departmental honors in communication, students must:

1. Complete the standard requirements for the major in communication.
2. Have an overall institutional GPA of 3.5 or higher (University requirement).
3. Have a minimum 3.5 GPA in all communication courses (Department requirement).
4. Complete a communication research methods course (CA 300, mass communication concentrations or CA 424, communication studies concentration) with an earned grade of "B" or higher. This course may be counted toward the communication degree and toward 3 hours of upper division credit.
5. Complete a minimum of 3 credit hours, and no more than 6 credit hours in the Senior Honors Project, CA 499. Students receiving honors in communication will be required to take a minimum of 48 hours in communication (including CA 110, Public Speaking).
6. Successfully defend the final research project during an oral presentation to a faculty committee. It is recommended that the student present a summary of the project during the Department's colloquium series and/or another appropriate public forum.

Application procedure - Students must:

1. Have earned an overall institutional GPA of 3.5 or higher and a minimum 3.5 GPA in all communication courses.
2. Apply by April 1 of their junior year.

3. Receive agreement of a tenure-track faculty member of the Department of Communication to serve as mentor, and obtain a letter of recommendation from that faculty member.
4. Receive permission of the Department Chair.