

# LIFE SCIENCES COMMUNICATION, MS

The Life Sciences Communication MS is being renamed Science Communication MS. Students will be able to earn a Life Sciences Communication MS through the end of Summer 2027. Beginning in Fall 2027, the program awarded will be the Master of Science in Science Communication.

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 pathway or professional course-based pathway.

The professional pathway is a course-based program that is designed to prepare students for professional careers in life sciences communication and related fields. Students in this pathway will not usually pursue a PhD 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 PhD program.

Teaching and research in the department focus on science communication in the areas of emerging technologies, bioenergy, environment, agriculture, health, and food.

The MS in Life Sciences Communication graduate program provides advanced professional training in communication and preparation for communication research and teaching. Students in the professional pathway MS 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 MS alumni are now, and additional details about the program, please visit the Life Sciences Communication website (<http://lsc.wisc.edu/>).

## ADMISSIONS

### 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)	Not required but may be considered if available.
English Proficiency Test	Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Requirements for Admission policy: <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241</a> ( <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241/">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241/</a> ).
Other Test(s) (e.g., GMAT, MCAT)	n/a
Letters of Recommendation Required	3

To be eligible for various fellowships and teaching assistantships, early application is recommended.

Applicants must meet the minimum requirements for admission (<https://grad.wisc.edu/admissions/requirements/>) set by the Graduate School.

Applicants must submit:

- An online application
- GRE scores: Not required but may be considered if available
- A statement of purpose
- Unofficial transcripts from all previously attended institutions
  - If recommended for admission, the Graduate School will request official transcripts.
- CV/resume
- Three letters of recommendation. Letters of recommendation should come from people who can speak to the scholarly abilities of the applicant.
- International degree-seeking applicants must prove English proficiency using the Graduate School's requirements (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/>).

## FUNDING

### FUNDING GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

[The Bursar's Office provides information about tuition and fees associated with being a graduate student.](#) [Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid.](#) [Further funding information 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% 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 MS students, three years for PhD 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. 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 dissertator.

The department also nominates competitive graduate applicants for Graduate Research Scholars (GRS) Fellowships (<https://grad.wisc.edu/funding/graduate-research-scholars/>), which provide full tuition and funding to highly qualified underrepresented applicants.

The department also nominates current students for Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowships (WDGF) (<https://research.wisc.edu/funding/wisconsin-distinguished-graduate-fellowship-administration-2022-23/>), 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 (<https://doso.students.wisc.edu/services/crisis-loan/>) 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/funding/grants-competition/>) (formerly known as the Vilas Travel Grants) each year. These grants are intended to support both Conference Presentation Funds and Research Travel Awards. It's 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. In order to be eligible for these awards, students need to fulfill all of the criteria. For more information, pay close attention to your student email.

## 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 degree requirements (<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#requirements-text>) and policies (<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policies-text>), 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 typically take enough credits aimed at completing the program in a year or two.

**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

Requirement Detail	
Minimum Credit Requirement	30 credits
Minimum Residence Credit Requirement	30 credits
Minimum Graduate Coursework Requirement	15 credits must be graduate-level coursework. Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Graduate Coursework (50%) Requirement policy: <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244</a> ( <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244/">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244/</a> ).
Overall Graduate GPA Requirement	3.50 GPA required.

**Other Grade Requirements** Students must earn a B or above in all coursework. Any courses with a grade lower than a B will be factored into the GPA, but they will not be considered as meeting any degree requirements.

**Assessments and Examinations** The research/thesis track requires a formal thesis and oral defense; the professional track requires a comprehensive report or course narrative, and presentation at the culmination of coursework.

**Language Requirements** No language requirements.

## REQUIRED COURSES

The MS offers two pathways students can follow: a thesis-pathway master's degree and a professional-pathway master's degree<sup>1</sup>.

### Thesis-Based Pathway<sup>1</sup>

The thesis-based master's degree requires 30 credits and a thesis based on original research. At least 4 credits must be Life Sciences Communication (LSC (<https://guide.wisc.edu/courses/lsc/>)) courses. Students may apply up to 6 credits of research (LSC 990) towards degree requirements.

### Professional Pathway<sup>1</sup>

The professional pathway is a course-based master's degree that requires 30 credits and culminates in a course narrative report and presentation. Students in the professional pathway will usually not pursue a PhD 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 PhD program. Students choose their pathway during the program application process.

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Colloquium</b>		
LSC 700	Colloquium in Life Sciences Communication	1
<b>Science Communication Theory</b>		
LSC 720	Introduction to Communication Theory and Research	3
or LSC 902	Public Opinion of Life Science Issues	
<b>Research Methods</b>		
Students must complete at least 3 credits of research methods. Courses are to be selected in consultation with advisor. Examples of courses that may fulfill this requirement include the following:		3-4
COM ARTS 762	Communication Research Methods	
ED PSYCH/ COUN PSY/ CURRIC/ ED POL/ELPA/ RP & SE 719	Introduction to Qualitative Research	
JOURN 658	Communication Research Methods	
JOURN/LSC 811	Conceptualization and Design of Mass Communication Research	
JOURN 812	Qualitative Communication Research Methods	
SOC/ C&E SOC 750	Research Methods in Sociology	
SOC 751	Survey Methods for Social Research	

SOC 752	Measurement and Questionnaires for Survey Research
---------	--

### Graduate Level Statistics

Students must complete at least 3 credits of graduate level statistics. Course is to be selected in consultation with advisor. Examples of courses that may fulfill this requirement include the following:

ED PSYCH 760	Statistical Methods Applied to Education I	3-4
--------------	--	-----

ED PSYCH 761	Statistical Methods Applied to Education II	
--------------	---	--

LSC 660	Data Analysis in Communications Research	
---------	--	--

SOC/ C&E SOC 360	Statistics for Sociologists I	
---------------------	-------------------------------	--

SOC/ C&E SOC 361	Statistics for Sociologists II	
---------------------	--------------------------------	--

### Electives Based on Academic & Career Goals

Students must complete 20 credits of electives. Courses selected in consultation with your advisor to create a cohesive program of study. Thesis-pathway students may count up to 6 credits of LSC 990 Research toward their electives to reach the 30 credits required for the program. Students may count up to two colloquia (including LSC 700) toward the 30 credit requirement for the program

<b>Total Credits</b>	<b>30</b>
----------------------	-----------

<sup>1</sup> These pathways are internal to the program and represent different curricular paths a student can follow to earn this degree. Pathway names do not appear in the Graduate School admissions application, and they will not appear on the transcript.

Credits outside of the required coursework can include classes in science communication and other areas based on a student's academic and career goals. 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.

## POLICIES

### GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES

The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures (<https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/>) serve as the official document of record for Graduate School academic and administrative policies and procedures and are updated continuously. Note some policies redirect to entries in the official UW-Madison Policy Library (<https://policy.wisc.edu/>). Programs may set more stringent policies than the Graduate School. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

## MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

### PRIOR COURSEWORK

#### Graduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions

No credits from graduate work from other institutions are allowed to transfer.

#### Undergraduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions or UW-Madison

No credits from another institution or UW-Madison undergraduate degree are allowed to transfer.

#### Credits Earned as a Professional Student at UW-Madison (Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, and Veterinary careers)

No credits earned as a professional student at UW-Madison are allowed to transfer.

#### Credits Earned as a University Special Student at UW-Madison

No credits earned as a University Special student are allowed to transfer.

### PROBATION

Refer to the Graduate School: Probation (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1217/>) policy.

### ADVISOR / COMMITTEE

Refer to the Graduate School: Advisor (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1232/>) and Graduate School: Committees (Doctoral/Master's/MFA) (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1201/>) policies.

### CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

15 credit maximum. Refer to the Graduate School: Maximum Credit Loads and Overload Requests (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1228/>) policy.

### TIME LIMITS

Students who pursue a thesis-pathway master's degree will have a limit of four semesters (including summers) during which they can enroll in LSC 990 Research credits. Students who have not defended their thesis at the end of the fourth semester in which they are enrolled in LSC 990 will be awarded a professional pathway master's degree, assuming they have completed all the requirements for the degree.

Refer to the Graduate School: Time Limits (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1221/>) policy.

### 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/>)
- 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://employeeabilities.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 Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) (<https://osas.wisc.edu/>) (for all students to seek grievance assistance and support)
- 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

n/a

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### 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

### 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.