

COMMUNICATION, PHD

Banner Code: LA-PHD-COM

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Fairfax Campus

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The PhD in Communication explores key issues in the discipline such as communicating complex information, social influence and behavior change, the digital divide, public advocacy, intercultural sensitivity, media literacy, and national security. The PhD program offers three major areas of emphasis: health communication, science communication, and strategic communication. Faculty and students conduct research concerning health communication, risk communication, climate change communication, science communication, crisis management, organizational communication, media systems, public communication campaigns, new information technologies, communication policy, and media advocacy.

Admissions & Policies

Admissions

Applicants to all graduate programs at George Mason University must meet the admission standards and application requirements for graduate study as specified in Graduate Admissions (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-policies/>). For information specific to the PhD in Communication, see Application Requirements and Deadlines (<http://communication.gmu.edu/programs/LA-PHD-COM/application/>).

Policies

For policies governing all graduate degrees, see Graduate Policies (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/>).

Reduction of Credit

For students entering the doctoral program with a master's degree, the number of required credits may be reduced by a maximum of 30 credits, subject to approval of the program faculty and the dean. Requests for reduction of credit are reviewed only after acceptance to the doctoral program.

Program Requirements

To receive the PhD in Communication, students must complete a minimum of 90 credits, 60 beyond the master's degree, including core courses in theory and research methods, coursework in substantive fields of study, and a research practicum. Following completion of all required coursework, students must pass a written qualifying examination and an oral defense of it, after which they are advanced to candidacy by the dean and complete a dissertation, an original and independent research project.

If specific requirements are waived, students must complete substitutions, which are recorded on their Program of Study. All substitutions to degree requirements must be approved by the graduate committee.

Requirements

Degree Requirements

Total credits: 90

Students should be aware of the specific policies associated with this program, located on the Admissions & Policies tab.

Core Courses

Four Theory Courses

Code	Title	Credits
COMM 700	Building Social Science Theory	3
Select one additional theory course from the following:		3
COMM 602	Theories and Research of Mass Communication	
COMM 605	Intercultural Communication	
COMM 632	Persuasion Theory	
COMM 634	Theories of Interpersonal Communication	
COMM 635	Organizational Communication	
Select two additional theory courses from the following:		6
COMM 602	Theories and Research of Mass Communication	
COMM 605	Intercultural Communication	
COMM 620	Health Communication	
COMM 630	Theories of Public Relations	
COMM 632	Persuasion Theory	
COMM 634	Theories of Interpersonal Communication	
COMM 635	Organizational Communication	
COMM 639	Science Communication	
COMM 642	Science and the Public	
COMM 706	Strategic Communication	
Total Credits		12

Three Research Methods Courses

Code	Title	Credits
Methods Course		
COMM 650	Intro to Research Methods in Communication	3
Specialized Methods Course		
Select 3 credits from the following:		3
COMM 725	Qualitative Methods	
COMM 750	Quantitative Methods	
COMM 775	Media Content Analysis	
One additional course at the 700-level or above. ¹		3
Total Credits		9

¹

This course should be chosen to help prepare for the dissertation and must be approved by the graduate committee.

Substantive Field of Study

Students choose one of the following substantive fields of study.

Health Communication

Code	Title	Credits
Select three courses from the following:		
COMM 620	Health Communication	9
COMM 705	Intercultural Health and Risk Communication	
COMM 720	Consumer-Provider Health Communication	
COMM 820	Health Communication Campaigns	
Select three elective courses chosen with approval of the advisor and director		
		9
Total Credits		18

Science Communication

Code	Title	Credits
Select three courses from the following:		
COMM 632	Persuasion Theory	9
COMM 639	Science Communication	
COMM 642	Science and the Public	
COMM 660	Climate Change and Sustainability Communication Campaigns	
Select three courses chosen with approval of the advisor and director		
		9
Total Credits		18

Strategic Communication

Code	Title	Credits
Select three courses from the following:		
COMM 630	Theories of Public Relations	9
COMM 705	Intercultural Health and Risk Communication	
COMM 706	Strategic Communication	
COMM 735	Crisis Communication	
Select three elective courses chosen with approval of the advisor and director		
		9
Total Credits		18

One Research Practicum

Code	Title	Credits
COMM 701	Communication Science Research Practicum	3
Total Credits		3

Elective Courses

Code	Title	Credits
Students complete the remaining credits through additional elective courses chosen in consultation with an advisor		
		0-30
Total Credits		0-30

Advancement to Candidacy

To advance to candidacy, students must complete all coursework required on their approved program of study. Students must also successfully pass a written qualifying exam and an oral qualifying exam. In addition, students must have a dissertation committee appointed by the Dean's Office as well as an approved proposal. Evidence of the

approved proposal must be on file in the Dean's Office before a student can advance to candidacy.

Dissertation

Once enrolled in COMM 998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal, students in this degree program must maintain continuous registration for at least 1 credit. Once enrolled in COMM 999 Doctoral Dissertation Research, student must maintain continuous registration each semester (excluding summers) until the dissertation is submitted to and accepted by the University Libraries. Once enrolled in COMM 999 Doctoral Dissertation Research, students must follow the university's continuous registration policy as specified in AP.6.10.6 Dissertation Research (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-10-6>). Students who defend in the summer must be registered for at least 1 credit of COMM 999 Doctoral Dissertation Research.

Students complete a minimum of 3 credits of COMM 998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal and 3 credits of COMM 999 Doctoral Dissertation Research. They must apply a minimum of 18 dissertation credits (COMM 998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal and COMM 999 Doctoral Dissertation Research combined) to the degree. Because of the continuous registration policy, students may be required to register for additional credits of these courses.

Code	Title	Credits
At least eighteen credits of the following:		
COMM 998	Doctoral Dissertation Proposal	18
COMM 999	Doctoral Dissertation Research	
Total Credits		18

Program Outcomes**Program Outcomes***1. Communication Theories and Approaches (Theory)*

All graduates are expected to develop a solid conceptual grasp of a broad body of literature regarding different theories of communication.

2. Understanding Influences in the Field (Context)

All graduates must demonstrate an understanding of the social, cultural, and historical influences on strategic, health, and/or science communication.

3. Scientific Research (Methods)

Doctoral students must demonstrate a capability to conduct independent and rigorous social science research in strategic, health, and/or science communication, and demonstrate strength in methods appropriate for the student's specific area of research.

4. Contributions in the Field (Publications)

Doctoral students must demonstrate the ability to contribute to the development or testing of theories relevant to the field.

5. Effective Communication (Writing)

Doctoral students must demonstrate the ability to communicate their knowledge effectively to both academic and policy/practitioner audiences in the field.