

COMMUNICATION (MA)

Degree Requirements

Graduate Studies

The Master of Arts in Communication integrates theoretical and research components of mass, interpersonal and organizational communication, preparing students for work and further academic studies. The graduate faculty combines applied knowledge with communication theory as they engage students to think critically about current communication issues and practices. Courses examine how communication creates, sustains, and changes organizations, political institutions, and society as a whole.

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The program curriculum consists of 33 credit hours, including a 6-hour core, and 27 hours from elective courses from the Communication and other university departments.

Thesis/Non-Thesis Option

The program provides a thesis or non-thesis option. The non-thesis curriculum consists of 33 credit hours, including a 6-hour core, 27 hours of elective courses. The thesis curriculum consists of 33 credit hours, including a 6-hour core, 21 hours of elective courses, and 6 credit hours toward completion of a thesis.

Thesis hours count toward degree completion only when a thesis is completed. In the event of non-completion, students will substitute 6 additional credit hours to complete the non-thesis degree option.

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

A bachelor's degree from an institution accredited by the appropriate United States accrediting agency or equivalent for international institutions.

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 250 on computer-based test or 100 on internet-based test, or a minimum score of 7 on the IELTS.
- A documented evaluation by the USA host department to be conducted by video teleconference.
- 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.

Core Courses

The following 6 hours are required and must be completed at the University of South Alabama.

- CA 502 (generally offered in the fall semester)
- CA 503 (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 two 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.

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.

Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's Program in Communication Option

Program Description

The USA accelerated bachelor's to master's (ABM) in Communication provides exceptional undergraduate students the opportunity to earn a bachelor's and master's degree at an accelerated pace.

Communication majors with a major in Advertising and Public Relations are encouraged to apply for the Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's Program in Communication (ABM). Students pursuing concentrations outside of Advertising and Public Relations are also encouraged to apply.

This program is designed to allow students to complete the Bachelor's degree in Advertising and Public Relations and the Master of Arts degree in Communication in five years.

Admission Procedures

Admission will be a competitive process. The minimum standards are:

- Completed at least 90 credit hours
- Competed at least 30 credit hours at USA
- An overall GPA of 3.3 (Cumulative and AD/PR)
- Two letters of recommendation.

Admission will be based on characteristics of the applicant and research match to the Communication faculty.

Once admitted into the ABM program, students must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA and remain in good standing in order to stay in the program.

Credit Hour Requirements

Completion of the ABM program requires students complete at least 150 approved unique credit hours. To qualify for a baccalaureate degree, a student must complete at least 120 approved semester hours. To qualify for a master's degree a student must complete a minimum of 30 approved semester hours. Generally, undergraduate students are not approved to take more than 12 credit hours of graduate coursework.

Program Procedures

ABM students may begin taking graduate courses after completing at least 90 hours of undergraduate credit.

Upon completing the undergraduate degree, students will apply to the Master of Arts in Communication program. ABM students, who are in good standing, will be accepted into the Master of Arts in Communication program.

Completion of the Master of Arts in Communication requires successful completion of all requirements, including at least 33 graduate credit hours. Graduate credit taken while an undergraduate that is completed with at least the grade of B will be transferred into the Master's program upon acceptance into the program and will apply toward the 33 hours required for the Master of Arts in Communication degree, as long as the requirement of 150 approved unique undergraduate credit hours and 30 unique graduate credit hours is met.

A student who withdraws or is dismissed from the ABM program may not count graduate coursework towards both degrees. Graduate courses for which an undergraduate student did not earn an "A" or "B" grade, may not be counted towards the graduate degree.

An ABM student must be a full-time student and must complete all degree requirements for the master's within three semesters of the semester in which they were admitted to the Graduate School. An exception for a fourth semester may be granted where an additional semester is required for final revisions to and submission of a defended thesis. Exceptions to the ABM policy are at the discretion of the Dean of the Graduate School.

To qualify for a baccalaureate degree a student must complete a minimum of 120 approved semester hours, meet the university's general education requirements, meet the requirements of the major, and meet any specific requirements of the college or school. To qualify for a master's degree a student must complete a minimum of 30 semester hours of credit in an approved program of study.