Master of Arts
Online
Program in Communication

2025-2026
STUDENT HANDBOOK

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The Hugh Downs School of Human Communication
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Arizona State University
PO Box 871205
Tempe, AZ 85287-1205
https://asuonline.asu.edu/online-degree-programs/graduate/communication-ma
https://humancommunication.asu.edu/degree/graduate/communication-ma

Hugh Downs School of Human Communication
Arizona State University

Arizona State University vigorously pursues affirmative action and equal opportunity in its employment, activities, and programs.

Introduction

Welcome to the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication's Master of Arts Degree Program in Communication!

Now, more than ever, career professionals benefit from understanding how to communicate effectively across contexts and channels. To a great extent professional and personal successes depend on the ability to connect with others and adapt one's interaction style to diverse audiences.

This handbook is designed to provide you with essential information that you need to thrive in our program. It sets shared expectations of ourselves as a community of learners. It also outlines the standards and policies set by the Hugh Downs School, The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and ASU's Graduate College. Please read these materials carefully and ask questions if policies are unclear to you.

I look forward to working with you to achieve your goals in the Hugh Downs School.

Sincerely,

Raena Quinlivan, Ph.D.
Director, Online M.A. in Communication

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Program Overview

Are you interested in becoming a leader in your profession, changing careers to one that you will find more fulfilling, or creating more successful teams at work? In the online master's program at the Hugh Downs School, you will develop skills that allow you to manage the modern-day challenges of communication in the workplace.

Program curriculum consists of 30 credits (10 courses) comprised of a set of core requirements, a variety of electives, and a culminating capstone project. Coursework is designed to combine theories about how communication functions with the application of these ideas in practice. In your courses, you will learn to:

- manage conflict more effectively
- influence others successfully
- communicate across global contexts
- respond to crises and disruptions in the workplace
- adapt communication for diverse audiences
- explain communication processes
- understand workplace dynamics
- present ideas and proposals clearly

All courses (with the exception of some summer classes) are offered in an intensive seven-and-a-half (7.5) week format. The program can be completed in as little as 12 months.

Graduates of the online MA in Communication are prepared for careers in communication consulting, corporate management, human resources management, marketing, communication education, public relations, sales management, and similar professions.

Our Commitment to Inclusive Excellence

The HDSHC is committed to fostering an environment where both faculty and students of diverse backgrounds feel safe and supported. We welcome students and faculty of diverse backgrounds, including, but not limited to, race/culture, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, ability, religious background, and nationality.

As communication scholars, we understand that messages have the power to create social transformation and improve lives. As a School, we embrace inclusive excellence as described in ASU's charter.

Tribal Lands statement

We acknowledge the 22 tribes who are native to Arizona, whose care and keeping of these lands allows us to be here today. More specifically we honor the Akimel O'odham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa) peoples, on whose ancestral homelands ASU's campuses reside.

Admission

Applications will be considered for Fall, Spring, and Summer admission. Applicants must fulfill the requirements of the Graduate College, The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication.

Admissions Application Requirements:

- Earned a bachelor's degree or higher from a regionally accredited institution in the U.S or the equivalent of a U.S. bachelor's degree from an international institution that is officially recognized by that country.
- Must have maintained a "B" (3.00 on a 4.00 scale) grade point average (GPA) in the last 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of undergraduate coursework.
- Proof of English proficiency – International students only. If you are from a country whose native language is not English (regardless of where you may now reside), you must provide proof of English proficiency. For more information including additional requirements for international students, please visit the ASU Graduate Admissions website.

Items Needed to Apply to the Program:

- Items that will be uploaded into the online application:
    - Personal Statement: ASU's MA in Communication provides students with a broad-based grounding in the theory and practice of effective communication and prepares students for success in the workplace. With this in mind, please describe your personal interest in the study of communication, the goals you wish to achieve while in the program, and your short and long-term career aspirations once you earn your degree. Personal statements should be approximately 500 words (2 pages, double spaced) and prepared in MS Word (.doc), Rich Text (.rtf), or Portable Document Format (.pdf).
    - Resume that includes relevant personal, professional, educational, and community activities (one – two pages). The resume should be prepared in an MS Word (.doc), Rich Text (.rtf), or Portable Document Format (.pdf).

- Items that need to be mailed to Graduate Admissions Services:
    - Official transcripts from every college and university from which you have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher. Transcripts must show the completion of your undergraduate degree as well as your final Grade Point Average. These must be sent to Graduate Admission Services directly from the institutions you attended.
    - Proof of English proficiency – International students only.

How to Complete and Submit the Graduate College Admission Online Application:

- Review the application deadlines prior to applying: https://humancommunication.asu.edu/graduate-admission
- Start the online application at this website: https://admission.asu.edu/apply/graduate/admission
- Select the appropriate term for planned semester and year of enrollment
- Upload required items listed above and request official transcripts

- Submit the application and pay the appropriate application fee

Students who are not accepted into the MA in Communication degree program may, if accepted by Graduate Admission Services as Non-degree graduate students, take up to 3 elective courses and then request to be reconsidered for admission (submission of new application and fee will be required).

Provisional Admission

Provisional admissions may be granted to students who do not meet the GPA requirements for general admission. A provision is a stipulation that a student must complete a required number of hours and receive a specific GPA in their first semester. To meet this provision in your first semester, you will need to take 6 credit hours (2 3-credit hour classes) and obtain at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA, at which point you will be automatically transitioned into COM grad student status. If you do not meet this provision, the Graduate College may dismiss you from the program.

Accelerated Programs

An accelerated program allows students to earn their bachelor's and master's degrees in as little as 5 years. If taken separately, undergraduate degrees require 120 credit hours and the Online MA in Communication graduate degree requires 30 credit hours. This accelerated degree allows for up to twelve shared credit hours. Thus, students will complete 138 overall credit hours for the accelerated degree programs.

HDSHC offers two accelerated programs. One for W.P. Carey Business Communication bachelors students and the other for HDSHC bachelors students. To see if you qualify and for more information please visit:

https://humancommunication.asu.edu/accelerated-bachelors-bus-com-masters-com

https://humancommunication.asu.edu/accelerated-bachelors-com-masters-com

Program Requirements

The MA in Communication is a 30 credit hour program consisting of required core courses, a selection of other requirements, and a capstone project. Students typically take one or two courses per session, and students are allowed to enroll in no more than 12 hours (4 classes) per semester (each semester includes a Session A and a Session B).

Required Core (COM 501, COM 504, COM 530, and COM 540):	12 credits
Choose 15 credits of other requirements:	15 credits
Culminating Experience (COM 550 Capstone):	3 credits
	30 credits

Students need to maintain a 3.0 overall grade point average during their MA course of study and must earn a **B** (3.0) or higher grade in each of the core classes (501, 504, 530, 540, and 550). Note: A B- (2.67) is not a satisfactory grade for a core class. You can find more information about the +/- grading policy here. Students may retake a core class one time. A maximum of two incompletes at the end of the second semester is allowed. No grades lower than a C may appear on a master's

student's Plan of Study. If students fail to adhere to these requirements, they will be placed on academic probation and may be terminated from the program. There is a formal process for any student wishing to appeal a grade.

Students are responsible for monitoring the progress of their program plan of study! It is imperative that you always understand your program status.

Current courses offered include:

Required Core (12 credit hours) (must obtain B (3.0) or higher in each required core class)
All students must take the following **core** courses:

COM 501 Research Methods in Communication (3 credits)
COM 504 Theories and Models in Communication (3 credits)
COM 530 Training and Development (3 credits)*
*Students can enroll in COM 530 upon completion of COM 501 and COM 504
COM 540 Conducting Communication Research (3 credits)*
*Students can enroll in COM 540 upon completion of COM 530 and at least three electives

Other Requirements (15 credit hours) - Select 5 courses (additional topics may be added later)
In addition to the required core coursework, students must choose 15 credits of Special Topic coursework.

COM 514: Communication and Gender (3 credits)
COM 515: Communication in the Workplace (3 credits)
COM 517: Communication and Conflict Transformation (3 credits)
COM 518: Communication in Global Contexts (3 credits)
COM 519: Social Influence and Persuasion (3 credits)
COM 520: Crisis Management and Communication (3 credits)
COM 521: Negotiation Theory and Practice (3 credits)
COM 598: Health Communication and Social Change (3 credits)
COM 598: Race and Communication in Public Culture (3 credits)

While in the program, a maximum of 6 credits of 400 level coursework may be applied to the master's degree. *Written permission MUST be obtained by the program director in advance of registering for 400 level courses.*

Required Culminating Experience (3 credit hours)
COM 550 Capstone (3 credits)

The capstone course allows each student to create a training and development (T&D) module using a web-based platform. Students select an organization to work with, administer a needs assessment, uncover a communication problem at the organization, and develop training tools to help curb or eliminate the communication problem. The entire project follows a working template as a starting point. Students are encouraged to bring creativity and innovation to the process and develop something truly useful for the organization. Once created, the T&D module can be shared with the organization and/or current employers, as well as potential future employers. Also, each

student is paired with a communication scholar in the field who will act as a mentor through the entire development process. The instructor of the course and mentor will act as the two-person committee for capstone projects.

Plan of Study (iPOS)

The program has 30 credits. All classes must be taken at Arizona State University, and no transfer credits or substitutions will be considered. Students must have their Interactive Plan of Study (iPOS) approved in their first semester in the program. The iPOS is submitted online via MyASU. Students must list Dr. Raena Quinlivan (Program Director) as the Committee Chair and Patrick McDonald (Program Advisor) as the Committee Member when submitting the iPOS. These are the only two names you will need on your iPOS Committee.

More information (completion process, sample iPOS, and course descriptions) can be found on the Student Engagement Site. Once you are admitted to the program, you will be provided with a link to self-enroll.

ASU and Graduate College Policies

Being a part of ASU means that all students, regardless of program, are held to the same high standards of academic integrity and excellence. The failure of any graduate student to uphold these standards may result in serious consequences including suspension or expulsion from the university and/or other sanctions as specified in the academic integrity policies of individual colleges as well as the university.

While some aspects of your academic training are controlled by the MA program itself (and the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication more generally), other aspects, such as program time limits, are controlled by the university. These policies are outlined at the website below. It is important that all students familiarize themselves with these graduate policies and procedures. Each student should also communicate directly with his/her academic unit to be clear on its expectations for degree completion.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

Note: The MA Program follows Graduate College Academic Progress Policy. The current policy can be found at Policy Manuals | Graduate College (asu.edu).

Below is the policy put into effect in August, 2024, Graduate College – Satisfactory Academic Progress.

All graduate students are expected to make systematic progress toward completion of their graduate program. This progress includes satisfying the conditions listed below, and achieving the benchmarks and requirements set by the individual graduate programs as well as the Graduate College.

If a student fails to satisfy the requirements of their program and/or the benchmarks outlined below, the student may be dismissed from their program based on the academic unit's recommendation to the Graduate College at which time the Dean of the Graduate College makes the final determination.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Criteria

To make satisfactory academic progress for the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication (HDSHC) MA program, a graduate student must:

1. Maintain a Plan of Study (iPOS) GPA of at least 3.0 (scale is 4.0 = "A") every semester.
2. Maintain a graduate GPA of at least 3.0 every semester.
3. Earn 84% (B) or better in each core class (COM 501, COM 504, COM 530, & COM 540).
4. Earn a C or better in each elective.
5. Satisfy the maximum time limit for graduation for the student's graduate program (six years for master's and certificates), see "Time Limit" sections.
6. Successfully complete the culminating experience (COM 550) with at least 84% (B).
7. Maintain continuous enrollment in their graduate program. Failing to do so without a Graduate College approved Leave of Absence is a lack of academic progress and may result in the Graduate College withdrawing the student from their program.

Cumulative GPA is based on all courses completed after a student becomes a graduate student including both graduate and undergraduate courses. A student's Cumulative GPA includes all courses that appear on their transcript including those not on their iPOS. Overall Graduate GPA is based on all graduate courses (courses numbered 500 or higher) that appear on a student's transcript after admission to a graduate degree, graduate certificate, non-degree, or accelerated bachelor's/master's program. A student's Overall Graduate SPA includes all graduate courses that appear on their transcript including those not listed on their iPOS. iPOS GPA is based on all courses that appear on a student's approved iPOS (excluding Law and transfer coursework). Courses not listed on a student's iPOS are not included in their iPOS GPA.

Academic Probation Process

If a student falls below the requisite GPAs listed above, they will be placed on academic probation and notified by the unit using their asu.edu email address. Students on academic probation will be given a period to bring their GPA into compliance with program standards.

The HDSHC may recommend the student for dismissal if they fail to obtain the requisite GPA in the given time frame. Recommendations for dismissal are forwarded to the College of Liberal Arts and Science (CLAS). CLAS will review the dismissal recommendation and forward the recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate College. If the Dean of the Graduate College (or the Dean's designee) concurs with the recommendation, the student will receive the official notification of dismissal from the Graduate College. Only the Dean of the Graduate College may dismiss students from a graduate program due to lack of compliance with satisfactory academic progress policies.

See the dismissal appeal process and sample dismissal letter below.

Dismissal Appeal Process

Students may appeal the dismissal recommendation at the level of their program, department, and/or college level.

If you plan to appeal the decision of the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication you may do so in writing to the attention of Patrick McDonald (pgmcdona@asu.edu) by 5:00 p.m., within 10 business days of the date of this letter. Appeals will be considered by the Online M.A. in

Communication Appeals Committee and you will be notified of their recommendation and the final decision. Your appeal letter should include:

A. Your full name, ASU affiliate ID#, e-mail address, and telephone number.
B. The name of the degree program from which your Academic Unit has recommended you be dismissed.
C. An outline of why the Academic Unit should consider your request to be allowed to remain in this degree program.
D. A description of any extraordinary situations or unusual difficulties you encountered that should be considered in this appeal.
E. Your strategies for future success if allowed to continue in this degree program.

Students who have been dismissed from a graduate program due to lack of compliance with published departmental or Graduate College policies, or lack of satisfactory academic progress are eligible to apply for admission to the same program only after one year has passed from the term of the dismissal.

It is important to note that program dismissal is not an option for students who have been found in serious violation of ASU's Academic Integrity policies by their unit; they must be recommended either for suspension (for a specified period of time) or expulsion (with no expectation of readmission) to the Provost's office, which has the ultimate authority in matters of suspension and expulsion.

Students are afforded a final appeal at the university level in such cases. For further information on policy and procedures, consult the Academic Integrity Student Policy.

Sample Dismissal Notice

Student's Name: XXXXXXXXXX

Affiliate ID#: XXXXXXXXXX

Online M.A. in Communication

Dear [name of student],

According to the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication Satisfactory Progress Policy Guidelines, students must remain active in the program with a minimum 3.0 GPA. Based on your inactivity and GPA, the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication must regrettably inform the Dean's Office that you have not made satisfactory progress in your program and recommend that they review your case for dismissal. If the Dean's Office concurs with the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication decision, you will be recommended to the Graduate College for dismissal from the Online M.A. in Communication. You can review the Graduate College Satisfactory Progress Policy at https://graduate.asu.edu/sites/default/files/asu-graduate-policies-and-procedures_032019.pdf. The Online MA in Communication Satisfactory Progress Policy is located at https://asuonline.asu.edu/online-degree-programs/graduate/communication-ma/.

If you plan to appeal the decision of the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication you may do so in writing to the attention of Patrick McDonald (pgmcdona@asu.edu) by 5:00 p.m.,

within 10 business days of the date of this letter. Appeals will be considered by the Online M.A. in Communication Appeals Committee and you will be notified of their recommendation and the final decision. Your appeal letter should include:

Your full name, ASU affiliate ID#, e-mail address, and telephone number.

- The name of the degree program from which your Academic Unit has recommended you be dismissed.
- An outline of why the Academic Unit should consider your request to be allowed to remain in this degree program.
- A description of any extraordinary situations or unusual difficulties you encountered that should be considered in this appeal.
- Your strategies for future success if allowed to continue in this degree program.

If you do not plan to appeal this decision, please let us know in writing before the above deadline. If we do not hear from you by the deadline, we will assume that you concur with this decision and the Dean's Office of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences will be notified that you are being recommended for dismissal from the Online MA in Communication degree program.

Sincerely,

Raena Quinlivan, Ph.D. (rquinliv@asu.edu)

Director of Online M.A. in Communication, HDSHC

cc: Bradley Ryner, Ph.D. (bradley.ryner@asu.edu)

Associate Dean of Graduate Initiatives, The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Registration and Continuous Enrollment

Once admitted to the program, students must be registered for a minimum of one graduate-level credit hour during all phases of their graduate education, including the term in which they graduate. Registration every fall semester and spring semester is required. Summer registration is required for students graduating from the degree program in the summer.

Graduate students register through MyASU at the time they are assigned an enrollment appointment. Details regarding registration and course drop/add procedures are provided in the Registration and Tuition Payment Guide.

Leaves of Absence

Graduate students planning to discontinue registration for a semester or more must submit a Leave of Absence request via their Interactive Plan of Student (iPOS). A copy of the Leave of Absence form can be located at https://graduate.asu.edu/current-students/policies-forms-and-deadlines/student-forms-and-petitions. This request must be submitted and approved before the anticipated semester of non-registration. Students may request a maximum of two semesters of leave during their entire program.

Having an approved Leave of Absence by the Graduate College will enable students to reenter their program without re-applying to the university. Students who do not register for a fall or spring semester without an approved Leave of Absence are considered withdrawn from the university under the assumption that they have decided to discontinue their program. Students removed for

this reason may reapply for admission to resume their degree program; the application will be considered along with all other new applications to the degree program.

Students with a Graduate College approved Leave of Absence are not required to pay tuition and/or fees, but in turn are not permitted to place any demands on university faculty or use any university resources. These resources include university libraries, laboratories, recreation facilities or faculty and staff time.

There are sometimes circumstances when students may need to withdraw from the university (i.e. medical withdrawal, compassionate leave). The policies for such withdrawals are the same for both undergraduate and graduate students.

Graduation

Students must apply for graduation through MyASU in accordance with the University Registrar policies. See Application for Graduation at https://students.asu.edu/registration/graduation-apply. Students must meet all University and Graduate College degree requirements prior to the conferral of their degree or awarding of their certificate. For more information on the graduation process, see https://graduation.asu.edu/onlinegrads. The most current pdf version of the ASU Graduate Policies and Procedures can be found at: asu-graduate-policies-and-procedures.pdf.

Graduation deadlines and procedures set by the Graduate College are available online at https://graduate.asu.edu/current-students/policies-forms-and-deadlines/graduation-deadlines. Deadline dates vary slightly depending on the calendar year, so students should check them carefully in advance of the semester they plan to defend their thesis/dissertation. It is important students become familiar with the deadlines so graduation can occur during the expected term.

Student Code of Conduct

The Student Code of Conduct sets forth the standards of conduct expected of students who choose to join the university community. Students who violate these standards will be subject to disciplinary sanctions in order to promote their own personal development, to protect the university community, and to maintain order and stability on campus. All Students are expected to adhere to the ABOR Student Code of Conduct.

Academic Integrity

All graduate students are subject to University standards of academic honesty, integrity, and professionalism in their relations with graduate student peers and faculty. All students must adhere to the ASU Academic Integrity Policy. Students who violate University standards of academic honesty, integrity, and professionalism are liable to academic probation or termination from the program.

Title IX

ASU prohibits all forms of discrimination, harassment and retaliation. To view ASU's policy please see https://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd401.html.

Title IX protects individuals from discrimination based on sex in any educational program or activity operated by recipients of federal financial assistance. As required by Title IX, ASU does not discriminate on the basis of sex in the education programs or activities that we operate, including in admission and employment. Inquiries concerning the application of Title IX may be

referred to the Title IX Coordinator or to the U.S. Department of Education, Assistant Secretary, or both. Contact titleixcoordinator@asu.edu or 480-965-0696 for more information. Office located at 1120 S. Cady Mall, INTDSB 284. For information on making a report please go to www.asu.edu/reportit/.

International Teaching Assistants (ITA)

The ITA program serves Arizona State University (ASU) academic departments that employ international students as teaching assistants, and ASU international graduate students who want to become teaching assistants. The program provides testing services, teacher training, and language support services. The guidelines for international teaching assistants can be found here International Teaching Assistant | Global Launch (asu.edu).

Archived Handbooks

Please contact the Online MA Program in Communication's advisor for archived handbooks at Patrick.G.McDonald@asu.edu.

Student Resources/Helpful Links

ASU Student Accessibility and Inclusive Learning Services (SAILS)

ASU SAILS

Graduate Writing/Tutoring Center

Writing Center

Financial Resources

Financial Aid and Scholarship Services

Tuition and Fees

Health/Counseling

Student Well Being 10 Best Practices

Graduate Wellness Resources

ASU Health Services

ASU Counseling Services

Resources for International Students

International Students and Scholars Center

ASU International Students

Resources for Veterans and Military

Pat Tillman Veterans Center

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities

Office of Equity and Inclusion

Title IX

Career Services

Graduate and Professional Student Association

Career & Professional Services

Contact Information

Success Coach Name:	Found on your MyASU site
Success Coach Email:	Found on your MyASU site
Success Center's Number:	(844) 691-2240

Graduate Advisor Name:	Patrick McDonald
Graduate Advisor Email:	Patrick.G.McDonald@asu.edu

Director of MA Program Name:	Raena Quinlivan, Ph.D.
Director of MA Program Email:	Raena.Quinlivan@asu.edu