

ACCELERATED DEGREE OPTION: BS-BA IN COMMUNICATION—MA LIFESPAN AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

WHAT IS IT?

The Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's Degree in Lifespan and Digital Communication is administered by the Communication and Theatre Arts Department within the College of Arts and Letters. The purpose of this accelerated option is to allow exceptional majors in Communication to count up to 12 hours of 500-level graduate coursework towards both the B.S. or B.A. in Communication and, if accepted, the M.A. in Lifespan and Digital Communication.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Students wishing to be considered for admission into the Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's Degree in Lifespan and Digital Communication must be a declared Communication major and have completed at least 60 undergraduate hours, including at least 6 hours at the 300/400 level in the major. At the time of admission to the accelerated program, students must have an undergraduate average of at least 3.25 in Communication and a 3.00 overall GPA. Admission to the program is competitive as there are a limited number of BS-BA/ MA openings each year.

HOW DO I APPLY?

To begin in a **spring** term applications are accepted during the fall (not later than 11/1) or a **fall term** applications are accepted during the spring (not later than April 1). Written applications are given to the Graduate Program Director.

- A completed BS-BA/MA Lifespan and Digital Communication application form
- Appropriate international paperwork, as required by the University (if relevant);
- Official transcripts from each undergraduate program attended;
- Two recent letters of recommendation from faculty members, or those who can evaluate the applicant's academic potential; and
- A 500-word essay that outlines any professional and personal goals the applicant holds in pursuing this degree, while explaining the relationship of these aforementioned goals to the Lifespan and Digital Communication degree program in general.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I COMPLETE THE BS/BA DEGREE? DO I HAVE TO APPLY TO THE MA IN LIFESPAN AND DIGITAL MEDIA DEGREE?

Upon successful completion of the BS/BA in COMM students must apply for acceptance to continue to pursue the MA degree program in Lifespan and Digital Communication. MA students are admitted only in the fall term so applications must be submitted prior to the preferred admission deadline (March 1).

In order to then continue in the Master's Degree in Lifespan and Digital Communication following the completion of the undergraduate degree, the student must deliver

- A transcript of the BS/BA COMM degree
- A completed application form for the MA in Lifespan and Digital Communication
- GRE scores that are typically at or above 1000 as a composite of the verbal and quantitative scores

Assuming that the student follows these guidelines and maintains a graduate GPA of 3.0 or above in these 500 level courses, he or she can then proceed into the master's program and finish the degree.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MA IN LIFESPAN AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION?

Students may pursue either a 36-hour non-thesis or 33-hour thesis option for an Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's Degree in Lifespan and Digital Communication. Both non-thesis and thesis option students will need to complete five required core courses:

1. COMM 601: Lifespan Communication Research and Theory
2. COMM 602: Digital Communication Theory and Research
3. COMM 603: Social Change and Communication Systems
4. COMM 604: Research Methods and Lifespan Communication
5. COMM 605: Critical Methods and Digital Communication

Non-Thesis Option:

36-hour non-thesis option:

- 15 credit hours of foundational core classes
- 18 credit hours of electives
- 3 credit hours of a core capstone seminar

Besides the aforementioned five foundational classes, students selecting the non-thesis option must also complete a culminating seminar, COMM 690: Lifespan and Digital Communication Capstone Course, which brings together students in their final semester of study to synthesize theories and knowledge from their previous coursework in order to better understand the relationship between lifespan and digital communication by looking at how individuals and groups are using media technologies in social, cultural, and political ways. Under the guidance of a graduate faculty leader, this seminar is organized as an intellectual support group of like-minded scholars where the faculty member and students serve as resources for one another as they do readings, engage in discussions, and work to produce a culminating research paper or a digital communication project. Students choosing to apply for the digital communication project option must obtain the approval of the graduate program director (GPD) and appropriate faculty advisors. Furthermore, students must orally defend their culminating research paper or digital communication project before the teacher of record of COMM 690 and either the GPD or another graduate faculty member chosen by the student and approved by the GPD.

In addition to the eighteen hours of core coursework comprised of the original five classes (COMM 601, COMM 602, COMM 603, COMM 604, COMM 605) and the capstone seminar (COMM 690), students will also select six more electives (from the currently existing forty-three graduate elective course options in Communication) in consultation with the GPD. Students can also petition the GPD and appropriate faculty advisors to take two electives from outside the department that contributes to specialized knowledge in preparing students for COMM 690. All electives are meant to enhance the student's scope of knowledge, critical thinking abilities, research proficiency, and/or multimedia production skills. Finally, no plan of study will contain more than four courses (twelve hours) at the 500 level.

Thesis Option:

33-hour thesis option:

- 15 credit hours of foundational core classes
- 9 credit hours of electives
- 3 credit hours of a core thesis preparation class
- 6 credit hours for the thesis

Besides the original five core classes (COMM 601, COMM 602, COMM 603, COMM 604, COMM 605), students pursuing the thesis option must also enroll in COMM 696: Thesis Preparation (three hours) the first semester they register for thesis hours as well as COMM 698-699: Thesis (six hours) in lieu of COMM 690. This thesis is based on original scholarly research and must address a specific and viable topic salient to the student's core and elective coursework in Lifespan and Digital communication. Thesis option students are also able to select three electives as part of their degree program in consultation with the GPD. Students can also petition the GPD and appropriate faculty advisors to take one of these electives from outside the department if it contributes to the student's scope of knowledge and research proficiency in preparing a thesis. No plan of study will contain more than three courses (nine hours) at the 500 level.

The thesis option is recommended for those students who have maintained a high GPA, have the support of a faculty advisor from the Communication and Theatre Arts Department, and who is considering further studies at the doctoral level. Approval of the thesis prospectus is required before the completion of 27 hours of coursework. Upon completion of the thesis, the committee will conduct a two-hour examination and defense of the thesis. Final approval is the responsibility of the thesis chair, the GPD, and ultimately the dean of the College of Arts and Letters, who together certify the candidate for graduation.