

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

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| Graduate Program Head | Fuyuan Shen |
| Program Code | STCOM |
| Campus(es) | World Campus (M.P.S.) |
| Degrees Conferred | Master of Professional Studies (MPS) |
| The Graduate Faculty | View (https://secure.gradsch.psu.edu/gpms/?searchType=fac&prog=STCOM) |

The MPS degree in Strategic Communications is a program of study for individuals who are in the early and middle stages of their strategic communications careers, currently in or aspiring to managerial positions. The content of the program will be appropriate for such individuals employed in a wide range of functional specialties and industry sectors, including advertising, public relations, and strategic communications.

The MPS degree in Strategic Communications examines the process and application of purposive mass communication that is delivered to specific target audiences through varied mass media and other communications channels. Program content exposes the student to a broad range of strategic communications theory, research, and practical application related to developing and implementing effective communications plans for companies and organizations of all types. Courses examine:

- how persuasive communication functions through mass media and other communication channels;
- how specific communications goals are developed based on theory and rationale;
- how strategic communications plans and campaigns are created and executed; and
- how the effectiveness of communications plans is measured and evaluated.

Admission Requirements

Applicants apply for admission to the program via the Graduate School application for admission (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-admissions/how-to-apply/>). Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-300 Admissions Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>).

Educational Background

A minimum 3.00 junior/senior grade-point average (on a 4.00 scale) is recommended. Students also are expected to have some industry work experience prior to admission.

Language of Instruction

The language of instruction at Penn State is English. English proficiency test scores (TOEFL/IELTS) may be required for international applicants. See GCAC-305 Admission Requirements for International Students (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-300/gcac-305-admission-requirements-international-students/>) for more information.

Core Application Packet

- Completed official online Graduate School application (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply/>) and payment of nonrefundable application fee.
- Statement of purpose: a 2-3 page essay articulating career and educational goals that demonstrates the student's written communication skills.
- A current vita or résumé.
- Three letters of recommendation that attest to the student's readiness for graduate study and document the requisite industry experience. Letters must be submitted through the online application. Within the online application you will be asked to enter the names and email addresses of three individuals who will be providing your recommendation. Those individuals will receive a note via email asking them to complete a brief form that will serve as your recommendation. Please inform all recommenders they must submit the form in order for your application to be complete.
- Official transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended (<http://www.gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply/new-applicants/requirements-for-graduate-admission/>).

Degree Requirements

Master of Professional Studies (M.P.S.)

Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-700 Professional Degree Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>).

Total required credits for the MPS: at least 30 credits at the 400, 500, or 800 level; at least 27 must be at the 500 or 800 level, with at least 6 at the 500 level.

| Code | Title | Credits |
|---|--|-----------|
| Required Courses | | |
| COMM 530 | Research Methods in Strategic Communications | 3 |
| COMM 531 | Strategic Communications: Theory and Implementation | 3 |
| COMM 830 | Strategic Communications Industry | 3 |
| COMM 831 | Digital Media Analytics I | 3 |
| COMM 833 | Ethics and Decision Making in Strategic Communications | 3 |
| Electives | | |
| Select 6 credits of the following: | | 6 |
| COMM 832 | Multimedia Content Development and Delivery | |
| COMM 835 | Social Media Communications | |
| COMM 836 | Strategic Communications Leadership | |
| COMM 837 | Reaching Multicultural Populations in Strategic Communications | |
| COMM 838 | Strategic Communications Law | |
| COMM 839 | Digital Media Analytics II | |
| Select 6 credits from any World Campus course(s), including the elective courses listed above. ¹ | | 6 |
| Culminating Experience | | |
| COMM 834 | Strategic Communications Campaigns (Capstone Course) | 3 |
| Total Credits | | 30 |

¹ These 6 credits can be at the 400-level.

The culminating experience provides students with an opportunity to apply their knowledge of the theories and principles concerning strategic communications to a practical campaign project. Specific campaign clients and scope can vary, but all representative aspects of each project would include:

- setting effective communications goals;
- identifying proper target audiences to best achieve the goals;
- developing specific, effective messages for each target audience;
- creating the message content across multiple media platforms;
- implementing a message-delivery plan that optimizes effectiveness and efficiency; and
- evaluating campaign performance against predetermined, measurable benchmarks.

Course Substitutions

Substitutions for the above prescribed courses, either with resident-education courses, alternate online courses, or courses from other institutions, will be considered on a case-by-case basis subject to restrictions outlined in GCAC-309 Transfer Credit (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-300/transfer-credit/>), and must be petitioned and approved in advance by the program administrator, with input from the student's adviser.

Minor

A graduate minor is available in any approved graduate major or dual-title program. The default requirements for a graduate minor are stated in Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>) and GCAC-700 Professional Degree Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>), depending on the type of degree the student is pursuing:

- GCAC-611 Minor - Research Doctorate (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-611-minor-research-doctorate/>)
- GCAC-641 Minor - Research Master's (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-641-minor-research-masters/>)
- GCAC-709 Minor - Professional Doctorate (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-700/gcac-709-professional-doctoral-minor/>)
- GCAC-741 Minor - Professional Master's (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-700/gcac-741-masters-minor-professional/>)

Student Aid

World Campus students in graduate degree programs may be eligible for financial aid. Refer to the Tuition and Financial Aid section (<https://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/tuition-and-financial-aid/>) of the World Campus website for more information.

Courses

Graduate courses carry numbers from 500 to 699 and 800 to 899. Advanced undergraduate courses numbered between 400 and 499 may be used to meet some graduate degree requirements when taken by

graduate students. Courses below the 400 level may not. A graduate student may register for or audit these courses in order to make up deficiencies or to fill in gaps in previous education but not to meet requirements for an advanced degree.

Communications (COMM) Course List (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/university-course-descriptions/graduate/comm/>)

Contact

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| Campus | World Campus |
| Graduate Program Head | Fuyuan Shen |
| Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or Professor-in-Charge (PIC) | Ann Marie Major |
| Program Contact | Ann Marie Major 115 Carnegie Building University Park PA 16802 amm17@psu.edu (814) 865-3069 |
| Program Website | View (https://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/strategic-communications/) |