

COMMUNICATIONS, B.A. (CAPITAL)

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: Harrisburg

Program Description

Communications is an interdisciplinary program that combines practical, professional instruction with critical and cultural examinations of mass media. Our interdisciplinary and theoretical approach enables our students to understand the contextual relationships between contemporary media and ethics, history, drama, and art, as well as the mechanics of emerging information technologies. We feature small classes, a multidisciplinary faculty with real-world professional experience, high-technology laboratories, and an excellent location for media internships. This major prepares students for careers in areas such as public relations, journalism, graphic design, photography, new media, advertising, media production, and telecommunications. Because of our analytical approach, students can use the major to prepare for postgraduate studies.

What is Communications?

Communications is an academic discipline that deals with the creation and distribution of mass communication messages through media such as books, newspapers, television, radio, film, video games, and the Internet. Mass communications use writing, speech, photographs, video, and interactive content to give information or influence the audience. Communications also concerns the study of how we communicate in different ways with diverse audiences through marketing, advertising, public relations, corporate communications, digital journalism, film and other media.

You Might Like This Program If...

- You enjoy writing, design, photography, or film/video production.
- You enjoy solving problems or influencing others with your ability to create messages.
- You are interested in a career in public relations, journalism, graphic design, advertising, multimedia production.

Entrance to Major

Entry to the Communications major requires a 2.00 or higher cumulative grade-point average and successful completion (earning a grade of C or better) of COMM 100N.

Degree Requirements

For the Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications, a minimum of 120 credits is required:

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Electives	12
Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements	24
Requirements for the Major	39

3 of the 24 credits for Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements are included in the Requirements for the Major, General Education, or Electives and 0-12 credits are included in Electives if world language proficiency is demonstrated by examination.

Requirements for the Major

At least 12 credits of Communications courses must be taken at the 400 level.

To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn a grade of C or better in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>).

Code	Title	Credits
Prescribed Courses		
<i>Prescribed Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
COMM 251	The Nature of Media	3
COMM 342W	Screenwriting I	3
COMM 456	Media Criticism and Theory	3
COMM 458	Media Law and Ethics	3
Additional Courses		
<i>Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
COMM 230W	Writing for Media	3
	or COMM 260W News Writing and Reporting	
Select two courses in visual communication from the following:		6
COMM 215	Basic Photography for Communications	
COMM 241	Graphic Design for Communications	
COMM 242	Basic Video/Filmmaking	
COMM 269	Photojournalism	
COMM 270	Introduction to Multimedia Production	
COMM 337	Intermediate Documentary Production	
COMM 415	Advanced Photography for Communications	
COMM 437	Advanced Documentary Production	
COMM 438	Advanced Narrative Production	
COMM 441	Advanced Graphic Design for Communications	
Select 6 credits in Communications from the following:		6
CC 200	Introduction to Corporate Communication	
COMM 110	Media and Democracy	
COMM 150N	The Art of the Cinema	
COMM 160	Basic News Writing Skills	
COMM 168	American Journalism: Values, Traditions, and Practices	
COMM 215	Basic Photography for Communications	
COMM 234N	Digital Cultures	
COMM 241	Graphic Design for Communications	
COMM 242	Basic Video/Filmmaking	
COMM 250	Film History and Theory	
COMM 269	Photojournalism	
COMM 270	Introduction to Multimedia Production	
COMM 320	Introduction to Advertising	
COMM 346	Writing for the Screen I	
COMM 360	Radio Reporting	
COMM 363		

COMM 370	Public Relations
COMM 372	Digital Public Relations
COMM 374	Audio Production
COMM 405	Political Economy of Communications
COMM 414	Media Management
COMM 415	Advanced Photography for Communications
COMM 418	Media Effects: Theory and Research
COMM 420	Research Methods in Advertising and Public Relations
COMM 421W	Advertising Creative Strategies
COMM 424	Advertising Campaigns
COMM 428E	Social Media Strategies
COMM 430	Mass Media and Politics
COMM 436	Advanced Audio Production
COMM 457	Media Audiences and Contexts
COMM 459	Cultural Effects of Interactive and Online Media
COMM 461	Magazine Writing
COMM 462	Feature Writing
COMM 471	Public Relations Media and Methods
COMM 472	Public Relations Event Planning
COMM 473	Public Relations Campaigns
COMM 474	Depth Reporting
COMM 481	Visual Storytelling for Journalists
COMM 488	Writers' Seminar
COMM 495	Internship
COMM 496	Independent Studies

Supporting Courses and Related Areas

Select 12 credits in consultation with an academic adviser. These 12 credits, combined with electives, may be applied to a minor in support of the student's interests.

General Education

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/>) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Quantification (GQ):** 6 credits
- **Writing and Speaking (GWS):** 9 credits

Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Arts (GA):** 3 credits
- **Health and Wellness (GHW):** 3 credits

- **Humanities (GH):** 3 credits
- **Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS):** 3 credits
- **Natural Sciences (GN):** 3 credits

Integrative Studies

- **Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain):** 6 credits

Exploration

- **GN**, may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- **GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses.** This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher: 6 credits

University Degree Requirements

First Year Engagement

All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

Cultures Requirement

6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

- **United States Cultures:** 3 credits
- **International Cultures:** 3 credits

Writing Across the Curriculum

3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

Total Minimum Credits

A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

Quality of Work

Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition

The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

B.A. Degree Requirements

World Language (0-12 credits): Student must attain 12th credit level of proficiency in one world language in addition to English. This proficiency must be demonstrated by either examination or course work. See the Placement Policy for Penn State World Language Courses (<https://>

bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/advising-planning-degree-program/course-placements/placement-policy-world-language-courses/).

B.A. Fields (9 credits): Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Arts, World Languages, Natural Sciences, Quantification (may not be taken in the area of the student’s primary major; world language credits in this category must be in a second world language in addition to English or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the first language). Credits must be selected from the list of approved courses.

World Cultures (0-3 credits): Select 3 credits from approved list. Students may count courses in this category in order to meet other major, minor, elective, or General Education requirements, except for the University Cultural Diversity (US/IL) requirement.

Program Learning Objectives

- **Communications Theory:** Students will recall Communications theory and theorists.
- **Creativity:** Students will assess the Communication situation and create original written documents, images, sound, or graphics accordingly.
- **Practical Knowledge:** Students will construct media projects using a variety of visual, audio and Web technologies.
- **Professional Ethics:** Students will develop the professional, ethical and social responsibilities of the media professions.
- **Research Methods:** Students will analyze media using Communications theory and methods in their own research and writing.

Academic Advising

The objectives of the university’s academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee’s unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/>)

Harrisburg

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Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2025-26 academic year. To access previous years’ suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/>) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition.

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Communications, B.A. at Harrisburg Campus

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
ENGL 15, 15S, 30T, or ESL 15 [‡]	3 CAS 100A or 100S [‡]	3
Quantification (GQ) [‡]	3 COMM 160 (Needed if planning on taking COMM 260W) [*]	1
General Education Course	3 Quantification (GQ) [‡]	3
World Language, Level 1	4 World Language, Level 2	4
General Education Course (GHW)	1.5 General Education Course	3
	General Education Course (GHW)	1.5
	14.5	15.5
Second Year		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
COMM 100N [#]	3 Elective or Minor Course	3
COMM 251 [*]	3 COMM 215 (or Visual COMM Course from List F) [*]	3
COMM 260W (General Education Course (Choose 260W or 230W)) [*]	3 ENGL 202B or 202D [‡]	3
World Language, Level 3	4 COMM 230W (or General Education Course (Choose 260W or 230W)) [*]	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
	16	15
Third Year		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
General Education Course	3 COMM 342W ^{*3}	3
Supporting Course	3 General Education Course	3
Visual COMM Course from List F [*]	3 COMM Selection from List E [*]	3
BA Requirement: World Cultures	3 Elective or Minor Course	3
BA Requirement: BA Fields	3 Supporting Course	3
	15	15
Fourth Year		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
COMM 456 ^{*4}	3 COMM 458 ^{*5}	3
Supporting Course	3 General Studies Course	3
COMM Selection from List E [*]	3 Supporting Course	3
BA Requirement: BA Fields	3 Elective or Internship	3

Elective or Minor Course	3 BA Requirement: BA Fields	3
	15	15

Total Credits 121

- * Course requires a grade of C or better for the major
- ‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education
- # Course is an Entrance to Major requirement
- † Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

¹ COMM Selection - 6 credits from Department List E, at least 12 credits of COMM courses must be taken at the 400 level. See List E below.

² Visual COMM – 6 credits from Department List F, at least 12 credits of COMM courses must be taken at the 400 level. See List F below.

³ COMM 342W is offered in spring only

⁴ COMM 456 is offered in fall only

⁵ COMM 458 is offered in spring only

University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

Bachelor of Arts Requirements:

Bachelor of Arts students must take 9 credits in Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Fields (Humanities; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Arts; World Languages [2nd language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the 1st]; Natural Sciences; Quantification). The B.A. Fields courses may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major. See your adviser and the Degree Requirements section (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/>) of this Bulletin.

Bachelor of Arts students must take 3 credits in World Cultures. See your adviser and the full list of courses approved as World Cultures courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/course-lists/ba-world-cultures/>).

Program Notes:

- Prescribed Courses (12 Credits):
 - Select 6 credits each from the Comm List and the VISUAL COMM List of courses below.
- Supporting Courses (12 Credits):
 - Select 12 credits in consultation with an academic adviser. These credits, combined with electives, may be applied to a minor in support of the student's interests.
- COMM List (E) (6 credits required):
 - COMM 1 Newspaper Practicum (2)
 - COMM 2 Newspaper Editorial Staff (2)

- COMM 3 Radio Practicum (2)
- COMM 4 Television Practicum (2)
- COMM 110 Media and Democracy (3)
- COMM 150N The Art of the Cinema – The Art of the Cinema (3)
- COMM 168 American Journalism: Values, Traditions, and Practices (3)
- COMM 190 Gaming and Interactive Media (3)
- COMM 234N Digital Cultures (3)
- COMM 320 Introduction to Advertising (3)
- COMM 346 Writing for the Screen I (3)
- COMM 370 Public Relations (3)
- COMM 372 Digital Public Relations (3)
- COMM 414 Media Management (3)
- COMM 421W Advertising Creative Strategies (3)
- COMM 454 Documentary in Film and Television (3)
- COMM 457 Media Audiences and Contexts (3)
- COMM 471 Public Relations Media and Methods (3)
- COMM 472 Public Relations Event Planning (3)
- COMM 488 Writers' Seminar (3)
- COMM 495 Internship (3)
- COMM 496 Independent Studies (3)
- VISUAL COMM List (F) (6 credits required):
 - COMM 215 Basic Photography for Communications (3)
 - COMM 241 Graphic Design for Communications (3)
 - COMM 242 Basic Video/Filmmaking (3)
 - COMM 269 Photojournalism (3)
 - COMM 337 Intermediate Documentary Production (3)
 - COMM 338 Intermediate Narrative Production (3)
 - COMM 374 Audio Production (3)
 - COMM 415 Advanced Photography for Communications (3)
 - COMM 436 Advanced Audio Production (3)
 - COMM 437 Advanced Documentary Production (3)
 - COMM 441 Advanced Graphic Design for Communications (3)
 - COMM 495 Internship (1-3 per semester/maximum of 6)
 - COMM 496 Independent Studies (3)

Career Paths

Penn State Harrisburg's communications program features small classes, a multidisciplinary faculty with real-world professional experience, high-technology laboratories, and an excellent location for media internships.

Careers

This major prepares students for careers in areas such as public relations, journalism, graphic design, advertising, media production, and telecommunications.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT POTENTIAL CAREER OPTIONS FOR GRADUATES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM (<https://harrisburg.psu.edu/humanities/communications-ba/>)

Opportunities for Graduate Studies

Communications is an interdisciplinary program combining practical, professional instruction with critical and cultural examinations of mass media, including Penn State's Master of Arts in Communications.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDIES
(<https://harrisburg.psu.edu/humanities/communications-ma/>)

Contact

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<https://harrisburg.psu.edu/humanities/communications-ba/> (<https://harrisburg.psu.edu/humanities/communications-ba/>)