

Frequently Asked Questions

Why earn a degree in communication studies?

Everything we do in our workplaces—and everywhere else—is about effective communication with another individual, a group, an organization, or the public. Through investigating theories of communication and practicing a variety of communication skills, you will expand your abilities beyond the frame of your specialty and set yourself apart from the crowd with training in areas typically neglected in management and business programs. A degree in Communication Studies will help you develop the versatility that is crucial to long term success in today's rapidly changing world.

What's so special about the program at KU's Edwards Campus?

The Edwards Campus MA program focuses on organizational communication and is designed to help you understand and explore the extensive and powerful role communication plays in organizations, teams, and interpersonal relationships. The program's coursework will help you develop greater proficiency in writing, speaking, critical reading, and group interaction to improve your own communication abilities.

In addition to learning from KU faculty who are recognized as topical experts and outstanding educators in their field, students in this program benefit from the breadth of experience and wide-ranging backgrounds of their peers in the classroom. This creates lively and meaningful class discussions, and often leads to relationships that last well beyond the program.

What is “organizational communication”?

Organizational communication is a field that explores the role of messages, language, emotions, and symbols in creating and sustaining organizations. In particular, our courses examine the networks and cultures that are created and reflected through communication processes and the role of communication in organizational effectiveness. This includes interactions between superiors and subordinates, among team and group members, and with stakeholders and other constituents. Organizational communication also examines how organizations use and misuse technology and how they use rhetorical strategies to persuade their members and publics.

What will I study in my courses?

In our courses, you'll learn about

- communication theory, to ground your thinking in a variety of perspectives and approaches to communication
- current research in communication studies, to help you learn to evaluate messages, communication strategies, and the effects of communication
- how to effectively practice communication, to enhance your own skills and communication strategies
- a variety of communication contexts, including interpersonal, team, organizational, and legal communications.

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Who could benefit from this degree?

- Those who seek leadership and management positions and want a degree that will set them apart from the crowd.
- Those who know the “subject” of their jobs but want additional tools and knowledge to enhance their work performance.
- Those who want to be challenged—who are invigorated by critical thinking, analysis and lively discussion.
- Those who sense communication is at the heart of the human experience and seek to better understand that experience.
- Those who recognize the advantages of having a degree from KU, including the national reputation, alumni network and career services.

How is this degree different from an MBA or a journalism degree in marketing & communications?

While our communication studies degree tends to focus on communication in the workplace, our students develop an understanding of communication that translates into and applies in a wide variety of contexts. The skills you develop in the classroom will easily translate into workplace, social, civic, and personal settings. Even as business trends, technologies, and your career path change, your understanding of the principles of communication will continue to serve you throughout your life.

While an MBA or a strategic marketing degree can be extremely useful, the topical, business decision-oriented foci of these programs differ from what we offer. By orienting our program around how people communicate with one another—the single most critical component in all human outcomes—the concepts and applications we study can have immediate applicability to all the domains of our lives.

What does the degree cost for the 2011-2012 school year?

- For Kansas residents and KCMetro residents (Missouri residents living in Jackson, Clay, Platte, and Cass counties), our classes cost \$423.25 per credit hour (all tuition and fees included).
- For non-residents, our classes cost \$843.55 per credit hour (all tuition and fees included).

Can I work full-time and still take classes?

Yes! In fact, most Edwards Campus students are full-time working professionals. Our classes are held on weekday evenings and (during regular fall and spring semesters) meet only once per week. Many of our student services and support staff work evening hours to meet the needs of working students, and our classroom discussions always value students’ real-world experiences as a valuable supplement to traditional academic work.

What are the degree requirements?

The Master of Arts in Communication Studies is a 30 credit-hour degree. Most Edwards Campus students complete their degrees by successfully passing a comprehensive written and oral exam at the end of the program, though students can also petition to complete their degree by thesis, if desired. (These students complete 24 hours of coursework and 6 hours of thesis credit. Please talk to program director Tracy Russo if you are interested in this option.)

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What classes will I take?

All students must take two required core courses (6 credits):

- COMS 859: Proseminar in Communication Studies
An overview of the discipline of communication studies, including review of various theories for understanding the processes and outcomes of communication.
- COMS 850: Communication Research Methods
An introduction to the key methodological approaches that are used in research in the field, including humanistic message analysis and evaluation, observational techniques, survey creation and analysis, and experimental design.

Beyond these two required courses, students complete up to 24 hours of electives that may include any combination of graduate courses offered by the department. Common courses include

- Writing and Speaking for Decision Makers
- Survey of Theory and Research in Organizational Communication
- New Communication Technologies and the Workplace
- Communication in Coaching and Leadership
- Interpersonal Communication
- Organizational Rhetoric
- Communication Challenges in Distributed Organizations
- Micro-level Organizational Communication
- Macro-level Organizational Communication
- Health Communication
- Communication in Diffusion of Innovation

To help you customize the degree to fit your needs, up to 6 hours of coursework may be completed outside the department with the approval of the program director.

When should I apply, and when can I start?

- To start in the summer or fall semester of any year, students should apply by May 5th.
- To start in the spring semester (January), students should apply by November 15th.

Students who cannot meet those deadlines but who want to begin classes more quickly should ask about admission as a non-degree-seeking student. Students can take a graduate-level course with us as a non-degree-seeking student to get a feel for the program and to strengthen their applications, and this course credit can be applied to their degree if/when they are fully admitted at a later date.

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What are the minimum requirements to get into the program?

- An undergraduate degree from an accredited institution with substantially the same requirements as KU (approximately 120 credit hours) for a bachelor's degree.
- An undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher. (If other factors suggest the potential for success in graduate school, applicants with slightly lower GPAs may be admitted on a provisional basis.)
- GRE scores at the 60th percentile level on the verbal section, 50th percentile on the quantitative section and 4.5 or higher on the written portion of the exam. (Students with a high undergraduate GPA as well as significant work experience and/or another graduate degree may petition for a waiver of the GRE; contact Tracy Russo if you believe you may qualify to petition for a waiver.)
- Strong writing skills, as evidenced in the admissions essay.
- TOEFL scores are required for international applicants unless the baccalaureate degree was granted by an accredited U.S. institution of higher education.

****The list of required application materials is provided on the next page.****

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So how do I apply?

For detailed directions on how to apply, please visit

<http://coms.ku.edu/~coms/graduate/admission/> and <http://www.graduate.ku.edu/01-00_abt_admissions.shtml>.

To apply, you will need to

- 1) Complete KU's online application for admission. The application can be found online at http://www.graduate.ku.edu/01-04_apply.shtml.
- 2) Pay KU's application fee, which you can submit online along with your application.
- 3) Have your previous academic institutions (including all undergraduate and graduate schools you've attended) send transcripts to KU.
- 4) Take the GRE and have your scores sent to KU (KU's school code is 6871). Information about GRE testing centers and schedules is available at www.gre.com.
- 5) Write a letter stating your academic and professional objectives for pursuing this degree.
- 6) Submit an updated vitae or resume.
- 7) Request three letters of reference from individuals who can address your skills in areas necessary to success in a graduate program, such as critical thinking and analysis, project participation and completion, and writing. These letters can be mailed directly to KU along with the cover sheet on our admissions page (see above) or submitted electronically through KU's online application system.

We prefer materials to be submitted online, but materials sent by mail can be directed to the following address:

The University of Kansas
Department of Communication Studies
Attn: Dr. Robert C. Rowland
Director of Graduate Studies
102 Bailey Hall
1440 Jayhawk Blvd.
Lawrence, KS 66045-7574

I have other questions—who can I talk to?

Please contact us directly if you have any questions or are interested in applying. We'd love to speak with you more about the program and get to know you and your educational goals!

Dr. Tracy C. Russo

Edwards Campus Program Director
785-864-9877
trusso@ku.edu

Lesley Owens

Edwards Campus Graduate Advisor
913-897-8510
laowens@ku.edu

Other useful resources:

<http://www.iwentback.com/>.

<http://www.edwards.ku.edu/prospective/graduate/coms.shtml>

<http://coms.ku.edu/graduate/edwards/index.shtml>

<http://comstudiesatedwards.wordpress.com>

Thank you for your interest in Communication Studies at the Edwards Campus!