IUP Graduate Handbook

Master of Science in Strategic Communication

Department of Communications Media

Handbook Updated 2022-2023

Master of Science in Strategic Communication
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Department of Communications Media
1175 Maple St., Stouffer Hall 121
Indiana, PA 15705
Phone: 724-357-2492
Fax: 724-357-5503

Program Website: https://www.iup.edu/commmedia/grad/strategic-communication-ms/

Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Indiana University of Pennsylvania 1
IUP's Civility Statement 1
Affirmative Action 1
Title IX Reporting Requirement 2
Student Conduct and Student Rights 2
Department of Communications Media 2
  Mission Statement and Program Objectives 2
  Faculty and Staff 2
Admission 3
Financial Assistance 3
  Graduate Assistantships 3
Academic Advisement 4
Campus Resources & Student Support 4
IUP Email 4
Graduate Student Assembly 4
Programs and Degrees 5
  Master's Program 5
  Program Outline 5
Program Policies 7
Internship for Applied Track Students 8
Master's Thesis for Research Track Students 10
  Course Descriptions 11
Evaluation of Students 13
Degree Completion 13
Thesis Completion 13
Evaluation Outcome for Thesis 15
University Policies and Procedures 16
Research 17
Appendices 18
Master of Science in Strategic Communication Student Advising Sheet 19
Thesis Committee Identification and Approval Form 20
Signature Page 21

Introduction

Welcome to the Master of Science in Strategic Communication program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. This 36-credit program is designed to serve current and aspiring communication professionals by combining writing, research, and production. The program prepares students to pursue a variety of careers in professional communication including crisis communication, communication management, political communication, health communication and strategic online messaging.

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Founded in 1875, Indiana University of Pennsylvania draws students from nearly every state and from scores of foreign countries. Located in the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains, IUP is the largest of the fourteen universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and the only one that grants doctoral degrees. IUP combines the academic opportunities of a large university with the highly personalized and intimate learning-centered environment of a small college.

IUP is classified as a Carnegie Doctoral/HSS University (Doctoral, Humanities/Social Sciences dominant) with over 2,000 graduate students in more than fifty graduate programs. IUP students enjoy traditional and nontraditional classroom experiences, engaging in research and service activities with their faculty mentors, becoming lifelong learners, preparing for rewarding careers and productive lives, and developing leadership skills for effective citizenship. With its original 1875 building standing at the heart of its campus, Indiana University of Pennsylvania has a long tradition of academic excellence. In addition to the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, IUP is a member of the Council of Graduate Schools.

IUP's Civility Statement

As a university of different peoples and perspectives, IUP aspires to promote the growth of all people in their academic, professional, social, and personal lives. Students, faculty, and staff join together to create a community where people exchange ideas, listen to one another with consideration and respect, and are committed to fostering civility through university structures, policies, and procedures. We, as members of the university, strive to achieve the following individual commitments:

To strengthen the university for academic success, I will act honestly, take responsibility for my behavior and continuous learning, and respect the freedom of others to express their views.

To foster an environment for personal growth, I will honor and take care of my body, mind, and character. I will be helpful to others and respect their rights. I will discourage intolerance, hatred, and injustice, and promote constructive resolution of conflict.

To contribute to the future, I will strive for the betterment of the community, myself, my university, the nation, and the world.

Affirmative Action

https://www.iup.edu/registrar/catalog/index.html

Title IX Reporting Requirement

https://catalog.iup.edu/index.php

Student Conduct and Student Rights

https://www.iup.edu/studentsupportandstandards/policies/index.html
https://www.iup.edu/registrar/catalog/index.html

Department of Communications Media

The Department of Communications Media is housed in the College of Education and Communications. We offer the Bachelor of Science in Communications Media that includes tracks in Media Marketing, Media Production, News Media, and Media Studies. In addition to the MS degree, we also offer a Ph.D. in Media and Communications Study. Our production facilities include dedicated space for audio, video, graphics, photography, radio, and film production.

Mission Statement and Program Objectives

As a professional and theoretical emphasis area of higher learning, the Department of Communications Media of IUP is committed to the creation, preservation, expansion, and transmission of knowledge. The Department has the responsibility to include, within its concern, the needs of the profession as a whole and the society at large as its resources allow. In meeting these responsibilities, the department is committed to preparing students for communications professions. In doing so, it offers quality undergraduate programs in which students learn to design, produce, and evaluate media messages.

The Department of Communications Media has designed the Master of Science in Strategic Communication program to meet the educational and career objectives of students as well as the needs of employers in the communication field and in higher education. To those ends, the goals of the program are to:

- Balance theoretical, writing, research and production components to aid students in creating, producing, and delivering goal-oriented messages
- Encourage critical thinking and development of strategies for solving organizational communication problems
- Develop teamwork and leadership skills through integrated communication writing and production projects
- Prepare students for advanced research and doctoral education (research track)
- Prepare students for careers in strategic communication in a variety of professional settings (applied track)

Faculty and Staff

All full-time faculty members have terminal degrees in Communications and other fields directly related to our discipline. The Communications Media office is staffed by an administrative assistant and student workers. The office can be reached at 724-357-2492. The fax number is 724-357-5503.

Program Coordinator

Dr. Erick Lauber
Department of Communications Media
121 Stouffer Hall, 1175 Maple Street
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Indiana, PA 15705
Phone: 724-357-2492
Email: Erick.Lauber@iup.edu

Admission

Students seeking admission to the Master of Science in Strategic Communication must complete the online application form; submit official transcripts, two letters of recommendation, a goal statement and a current résumé or curriculum vita.

Students must meet one of the following admission criteria:

- Have completed a bachelor's degree with a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA
- Be an IUP junior or senior seeking early admission to graduate studies https://www.iup.edu/admissions/graduate/howto/early-admission.html

Students are admitted to the Master of Science in Strategic Communication on a rolling admission basis. Students seeking to complete the program in one year must begin their studies in the fall semester.

An early application increases opportunities for financial assistance, including graduate assistantships. Graduate assistantships are typically assigned to incoming students in March and April. Students seeking assistantships are encouraged to have complete applications submitted by March 1. Graduate assistantship funds are disbursed prior to June 1. Applicants may be considered for admission after that date, but assistantships will likely not be available.

Graduate Admissions: www.iup.edu/admissions/graduate/

For more information regarding Admission Classification and Provisional Admission for International Graduate Application, view the Graduate Catalog: https://www.iup.edu/registrar/catalog/index.html

Financial Assistance

Graduate Assistantships

Students may apply for a part-time (10-hour) or full-time (20-hour) graduate assistantship. Students should indicate their interest in a graduate assistantship position by checking the box in the program application and by contacting the program coordinator. Information about graduate assistantships may be found at: https://www.iup.edu/admissions/graduate/financialaid/graduate-assistantships-at-iup.html

- https://www.iup.edu/admissions/graduate/financialaid/index.html
- Office of Financial Aid: www.iup.edu/financialaid/

Academic Advisement

The program coordinator serves as the academic advisor for students enrolled in the M.S. in Strategic Communication. The advisor will provide guidance on courses that should be taken each semester, according to students' full-time or part-time status. Students should take an active role in the advisement relationship through communication with the advisor, timely registration for classes, and responsiveness in submitting required documents and other information as needed.

Campus Resources & Student Support

The School of Graduate Studies and Research: www.iup.edu/graduatestudies/
Graduate Catalog: https://www.iup.edu/registrar/catalog/index.html
Office of Student Billing: https://www.iup.edu/student-billing/
Office of the Registrar: www.iup.edu/registrar/
Disability Support Services: www.iup.edu/disabilitysupport/
Office of Social Equity: www.iup.edu/socialequity/
IUP Campus Library: www.iup.edu/library/
MyIUP: www.iup.edu/myiup/
IT Support Center: www.iup.edu/itsupportcenter/
Veterans and Service Members: www.iup.edu/veterans/resource-center/
IUP Writing Center: www.iup.edu/writingcenter/
IUP Career and Professional Development Center: www.iup.edu/career/
IUP Parking Services and Visitor Center: www.iup.edu/parking/
University Policy: www.iup.edu/police/ | 724-357-2141
Crisis Intervention 24/7 Hotline: 1-877-333-2470
Student Registration: www.iup.edu/registrar/students/registration-resources/index.html

IUP Email

IUP offers an email account to all active students. **Your IUP email address is the primary means by with the university will contact you with official information and you should use for all IUP official communications. It is your responsibility to check your IUP email regularly.** Visit https://www.iup.edu/itsupportcenter/get-support/e-mail-and-calendar/general/ to learn more about setting up this account. For more information regarding University Policy on email communications, view the Graduate Catalog: https://www.iup.edu/registrar/catalog/index.html

Graduate Student Assembly

The Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) represents the graduate student body's interests at IUP and within the Indiana community. The GSA makes recommendations related University-wide and graduate-specific policies and in areas of concern in the cultural, intellectual, and social life of the part- and full-time graduate student. Visit https://www.iup.edu/graduatestudies/resources-for-current-students/student-engagement/graduate-student-assembly/index.html for more information.

Programs and Degrees

Master's Program

The Master of Science in Strategic Communication offers students the opportunity to select one of two tracks, applied or research.

- Individuals who are focused on career advancement or pursuit of careers in the communications industry are most likely to select the applied track. This track requires students to take COMM 793 Internship. The internship is offered only during the summer sessions and is a six-credit experience.
- Individuals who are seeking advanced graduate study beyond the Masters are mostly likely to select the research track. This track requires students to take COMM 795 Thesis (six-credits).
- Both tracks require the student to take COMM 715 - Research and Professional Development in Strategic Communication.

Student Learning Outcomes

The curriculum design incorporates required and elective courses that position students to successfully obtain the following Student Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the program, students will be able to:

- Analyze organizational communication needs.
- Develop effective, goal-driven communication messages.
- Understand audience behaviors to match messages with audience motivations.
- Integrate written and verbal messages with digital media production.
- Construct strategic messages, utilizing critical thinking and argumentation.
- Deliver communication campaigns in writing, in person and online.

At the conclusion of the program, students who pursue the applied track will be able to:

- Implement communications strategies, including planning, writing and evaluating in various industries (corporate, health, education, non-profit)
- Apply learning in strategic communication in an experiential education activity.

At the conclusion of the program, students who pursue the research track will be able to:

- Perform research and analyze data.
- Apply learning in strategic communication in a culminating thesis research project.

Program Outline

It is possible for full time students to complete the MS in Strategic Communication in 12-14 months if they begin in the fall semester. Fall and spring semester registration for full time students is four courses (12 credits). To complete the program in 12-14 months, students would take additional elective courses in summer or winter term. Students must complete all 36 programs credits, including either the internship or thesis, to graduate.

Master of Science in Strategic Communication – Sample Academic Map		
A Suggested Sequence of Courses for full-time enrolled students		
Fall (year 1)		
3	COMM 511	Theories and Principles of Strategic Comm.
3	COMM 512	Writing for Strategic Communication
3	COMM 513	Multimedia Content Development and Production
3	COMM xxx	Elective
Total 12		
Winter (year 1)		
3	COMM xxx	Elective
Total 3		
Spring (year 1)		
3	COMM xxx	Elective
3	COMM xxx	Elective
3	COMM xxx	Elective
3	COMM 715	Research and Professional Development in Strategic Communication
Total 12		
Summer (year 2)		
6	COMM 793	Internship (or)
	COMM 795	Thesis
	COMM xxx	Elective
Total 9		
Total Degree Credits 36		

Part-time Enrollment

Any graduate student enrolled for fewer than nine (9) credits per semester is considered to be a part-time student. The department recognizes that personal commitments and work demands may necessitate part-time study. Students may elect to begin the Master's program on a part-time basis.

Elective Courses

The Department of Communications Media offers a number of elective courses for the program. However, students are advised that some electives may not be offered during the course of their program. It is not possible to offer every elective every year.

We frequently offer dual listed electives that will include enrollment of students in our undergraduate Bachelor of Science in Communications Media or our Media and Communication Studies Ph.D. program. Requirements for advanced students in dual-listed courses may be different from other students in lower-level programs. Students may take elective courses in other departments at IUP with permission of the coordinator of the MS in Strategic Communication and representatives from the other department. Undergraduate courses that are not dual-listed at least at the 500-level, do not count toward the completion of your MS degree.

Program Policies

Communication

IUP provides all students, free of charge, an e-mail account with the university email system. Students activate this account online through the university website; the Student Computing Help Desk also can provide assistance. It is required that students will activate and use this address for all communication with the Masters Program and the Department of Communications Media. Any announcements or the dissemination of necessary information will be made using students' university e-mail addresses. Students are responsible for checking their campus e-mail in order to keep abreast of important announcements, reminders, etc. Failure to do so may result in missing important information. The department will not make provisions to contact students at alternative email addresses.

Registering for classes

Each semester's Masters degree classes, including winter and summer courses, are open for registration by permission only. Students are not permitted to register until they have conferred with the Masters program coordinator to determine the appropriate classes for each semester. Students are assigned a unique four-digit "alternate PIN" by the IUP Scheduling Center. This PIN is required to access the registration system, to make the initial registration and any schedule changes to that same semester.

Following a consultation with the Masters coordinator, the student will be provided with the Course Record Number (CRN) for all courses for which they should register during a given semester. During the registration process, the courses will not appear in the registration system as open courses, therefore students will need to use the specific CRN number(s) they have been provided to register for courses and/or thesis credits.

Students who are registering for thesis credits (COMM 795) are required to secure a thesis advisor and thesis committee.

The deadline for all graduate student registration is typically the last day of classes during the semester prior to the semester for which students are registering. For example, the deadline for registration for the fall semester of any year is the last day of classes of the spring semester of that same calendar year. The deadline for registration for the spring semester is the last day of classes of the fall semester of that same academic year. Students who fail to register by the stated deadlines will be subject to a late registration fee.

Incomplete (I) Grades

The designation of an "I" is used to record work which, so far as covered, is of a passing grade but incomplete because of personal illness or other unavoidable emergency circumstances. Incomplete (I) grades are issued to students enrolled in the MS in Strategic Communication program only when extreme circumstances have prevented a student from completing course work on schedule. The issuance of an incomplete grade is a decision made by the instructor of each course at his or her discretion, and students should not anticipate this as an option simply because they are unable to complete the course work on deadline due to time management issues. At least two-thirds (2/3) of the required course work must be completed for a student to be eligible to receive an incomplete grade designation.

In situations where an "I" grade is warranted, the student and the faculty member will outline the steps necessary to rectify the incomplete grade including appropriate deadlines. Change of Grade forms to convert designations of "I" must be received in the Office of the Registrar no later than the final day of classes in the next regular (fall/spring) semester after the designation was assigned. If the student does not complete the work in time for this grade change to be accomplished, the "I" will convert to an F.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is required for all students in the Master of Science in Strategic Communication program. Students are required to attend all class sessions in their entirety. Acceptance of absences and the circumstances leading to those absences is at the discretion of individual faculty who are the designated course instructor. However, students should not expect to be excused from class for anything other than a personal illness, family illness or family emergency. Department faculty will specify their course attendance policy in the class syllabus.

Students who miss class, are late for class, or must leave class early for an acceptable reason such as an illnesses or other unavoidable emergency, should expect to be given additional readings or work assignments as deemed appropriate by the instructor and as specified in the course syllabus.

Internship for Applied Track Students

An internship is required for all students in the Applied Track of the Master of Science in Strategic Communication. Students in this track are required to subscribe to the Communications Media Internship blog: http://iblog.iup.edu/comminterns/

The internship site and student work performed on the internship must be consistent with the program goals of the MS in Strategic Communication and with the student learning outcomes and assessment methods approved for COMM 793 Internship.

Student Learning Outcome	Assessment Method
Apply learning from previous coursework in a professional work setting	Each student will be supervised by a Communications Media faculty member who will maintain regular contact with the student, communicate expectations for assignments, communicate with the host site and provide appropriate feedback to the student to determine his or her level of understanding of how previous course work applies to the internship experience.
Acquire skills, knowledge and experience in strategic communication writing and production	The approval process of internship sites will be coordinated by a departmental internship supervisor. This approval process will include advising students to write goals and objectives for the internship experience that allows them to gain appropriate experience in writing and production of strategic communication messages.
Participate in advanced project planning and implementation	The internship site approval process will ascertain that students are situated in an internship site

	that permits them to be engaged in planning, discussion and implementation of strategic communication plans. Near the mid-term point of the internship, the faculty supervisor conducts an in-person site evaluation, where geographically reasonable, and communicates with the student and the on-site supervisor. The faculty member evaluates the student and considers such criteria as the student's ability to complete tasks effectively, to demonstrate creativity and initiative, to interact effectively with professional staff members, to maintain a professional attitude and to use the information and experience gained to further career goals.
Prepare culminating report of the internship experience	Students will submit a culminating report that identifies their achievement of personal internship goals. This project will provide opportunities for assessment of writing and production skills through the submission of appropriate internship work samples.

Internship Policies

The Communications Media Department Internship coordinator manages the process of internship placement and registration for COMM 793 Internship. Students are responsible for meeting the established deadlines and adhering to the processes communicated to them by the internship coordinator and in the prerequisite course, COMM 715. Students are responsible for securing their internship however, the internship coordinator, MS program coordinator and other department faculty will work with students throughout this process.

During the internship search process, students will provide the "site offer form" to the internship site representative for his or her signature. This signed form must be returned to the internship coordinator by the established deadline. Once this form has been completed, students will complete an internship application form.

Internship sites are subject to approval by the Internship Coordinator and/or Program Coordinator. The internship coordinator and program coordinator will review all site offer forms and applications before approving the internship. Approval will only be given for sites where the student will work on-site in the field of strategic communication under the direct supervision of someone who has the skills and/or position the intern is seeking.

Students who are full-time or part-time employed in a paid, professional organization may complete their internship on their work site so long as the work is consistent with the program goals and student learning outcomes described above. These sites are also subject to approval of the internship coordinator and/or program coordinator.

Following the return of the signed site offer form and internship application, students will register for COMM 793 for six credits, for which the appropriate tuition and fees will apply. COMM 793 is offered

only in summer sessions. To earn six credits, students complete 240 work hours at the internship site.

As indicated in the student learning outcomes and course assessment plan, students will complete an internship project that provides a culminating report of the internship. Students will report to and be evaluated by a faculty member in the Department of Communications Media who serves as the internship supervisor. The faculty internship supervisor will provide the student with a course syllabus that outlines the expectations and requirements for the internship.

All students engaged in any field experience, including internships, must have up to date clearances. This includes annual completion of the Title IX and Protection of Minors training and completion of the Child Abuse History Clearance.

Master's Thesis for Research Track Students

A thesis is required for all students in the Research Track. Students in this track are advised to review the School of Graduate Studies and Research web page: https://www.iup.edu/graduatestudies/resources-for-current-students/research/thesis-dissertation-information/index.html. Related forms, deadlines, formatting aids and the Thesis-Dissertation Manual can be found via links from this page. The Department of Communications Media utilizes the most current citation method outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA) for all research projects in the Master of Science in Strategic Communication, including the thesis.

The thesis research must be consistent with the program goals of the MS in Strategic Communication and consistent with the student learning outcomes and assessment methods approved for COMM 795 Thesis.

Student Learning Outcome	Assessment Method
Recognize ethical demands of research	Following the IUP processes for evaluation of research projects students will have completed an IRB as required for their project. With communication from the thesis committee, students will determine the ethical considerations of their research project.
Develop deeper knowledge of research methods in the field of strategic communication	Each student's research proposal will be unique to his or her professional, academic and research aspirations but must be consistent with the academic goals of the Master of Science in Strategic Communication.
Find, analyze, evaluate and select information from various sources	Through the research process, students will complete a literature review, identifying appropriate contemporary and seminal research that provides the background to their study. With guidance from the thesis chair and committee, students will evaluate these sources.
Apply research strategies from previous course work to design, implement and write original research	Chapters 3 and 4 of the thesis project will require students to execute a defined research plan, including the appropriate research methodology.

	From this data collection, students will analyze the results and discuss the implications of the data.
Analyze research problems within the larger context of strategic communication and defend research aspirations within the field of study	The final chapter of the thesis will require students to present conclusions, observations about the data and study participants and provide recommendations for research.

Course Descriptions

COMM 511 Theories and Principles of Strategic Communication

Provides students a solid foundation of the study of strategic communication with emphasis on organizational communication theories, strategic storytelling, participatory media, and online media's impact on behaviors and attitudes. Students will learn key elements of the field, analyze and evaluate messages for their strategic communication effectiveness and create and present examples of Strategic Communication in written and oral presentations. This course will provide an overview of discipline specific applications of strategic communication.

COMM 512 Writing for Strategic Communication

Course Description: Prepares students to write goal-driven messages aimed at promoting action across a wide variety of media platforms. Students evaluate and write strategic communications documents for communication platforms including in-person, online and on-air.

COMM 513 Multimedia Development and Production

Focuses on the planning, development, and production of multimedia for strategic communication. Particular focus is placed on both the function and promotion of interactions between developer and the target audience with the goal of creating media that both provide content and motivate and equip audiences to respond with user-generated content.

COMM 611 The Strategic Communicator

Prepares students to become strategic communicators. Students will learn about interpersonal communication, group dynamics, problem-solving, and conflict resolution to become effective strategic communicators in the field. Course content will help students identify challenges, develop solutions and use appropriate presentation techniques to solve organizational problems.

COMM 612 Persuasion

Introduces students to the theories and practices involved in understanding the creation of persuasive messages, or messages intended to influence people's attitudes, behaviors, and opinions through all forms of media and interpersonal discussion. This course will look at how people process persuasive messages and the subsequent effects of these messages. This course will explore theories of persuasion, attitude change, and message design that can be used for message creation.

COMM 613 Strategic Communication and Online Campaigns

Prerequisite: COMM 513

Exposes students to the current and evolving terminology for online distribution of media campaigns. The course will require students to study successful and unsuccessful campaigns of the past. Students will then plan and develop a media campaign that is strategically targeted to a narrow audience and delivered and promoted via online media.

COMM 712 Global Strategic Communication
Exposes students to the complexities of strategic communication for global organizations, with an emphasis on leadership and management of communication. Students will be engaged in research, discussion and writing to gain an understanding of how organizations develop information for a multicultural and global audience, both internal and external. Includes analysis of ethical, legal, political and social communication issues around the globe. Skills and practices learned in this course will be transferable to multiple contexts of globally-oriented communication.

COMM 713 Advanced Strategic Communication Writing and Production
Prerequisites: COMM 512, 513
Prepares students to write and produce strategic messages at the professional level and to meet the needs of employers in internships and careers. Using theory, research, writing and production concepts from previous coursework, students will be engaged in the purposeful creation of strategic communication products that meet the needs of organizations and audiences.

COMM 714 Crisis Communication
Explores the challenges of communication during crisis situations and emphasizes the practical and theoretical applications of communication strategies used by companies, organizations, and governmental bodies during headline-grabbing crises. The course focuses on the issues relevant to planning, developing, and executing of crisis communications plans. Students will explore communication and media relations techniques for communicating with stakeholders during a crisis. Cases discussed will examine crisis situations in business, political, educational, and non-profit settings.

COMM 715 Research and Professional Development in Strategic Communication
Provides a broad overview of the diverse perspectives and approaches to strategic communication. Using theory, research, writing, and production concepts from previous coursework, students will be engaged in the purposeful creation of strategic communication products or a research project that reflects the goals of the MS in Strategic Communication program. This project-driven course provides a capstone course experience for students in the Master of Science in Strategic Communication.

COMM 720 Political Communication
Provide students with a survey of communications role in politics and the political process. An interdisciplinary exploration of the field will explore the role of communication in and through legislative processes and outcomes, political campaigns and debate, news media, civic engagement, public opinion, political discourse and political identity construction.

COMM 745 Health Communication
Explores the role of communication campaigns in the area of public health. Students will develop the skills necessary to use media strategically to advance persuasive health messages through design, production and dissemination. Applies communication theory to the promotion of health messages.

COMM 793 Internship
Prerequisites: COMM 715, departmental approval
Course Description: Provides for a summer experiential education experience in a professional setting. This faculty-supervised experience may include placement at approved academic, business, non-profit, governmental or other organizations in a department or area related to the goals of the MS in Strategic Communication. Students will complete 240 work hours for this six credit culminating experience.

COMM 795 Thesis
Prerequisites: COMM 715, department approval
Requires students to design, develop and execute an original research study in an area related to strategic communication. The culmination of the research will be a written thesis.

Evaluation of Students

For information regarding School of Graduate Studies and Research policies on grading, view the Graduate Catalog: https://www.iup.edu/registrar/catalog/index.html

Comprehensive/Candidacy Examinations

Candidacy and Comprehensive Exams are not administered in this program.

Degree Completion

As outlined in the IUP Graduate Catalog, all Masters students must maintain a 3.0 Cumulative Grade Point Average to be considered in good academic standing. Students must complete 30 course credits and an additional six credits of either thesis (COMM 795) or internship (COMM 793) to earn the Master of Science in Strategic Communication degree.

Students will apply for graduation following the processes and complying by the deadlines established by the University. https://www.iup.edu/graduatestudies/resources-for-current-students/graduation/index.html
Once a student has applied for graduation, each student's academic record will be reviewed by the MS program coordinator to determine eligibility for graduation. Any discrepancies will be communicated to the student by the program coordinator.

For more information, view the Graduate Catalog: https://www.iup.edu/registrar/catalog/index.html

Thesis Completion

Thesis Committee Selection

Each student in the research track of the program is responsible for securing a thesis chair from the approved Masters faculty who are current members of the Department of Communications Media. The chair of the thesis committee must be a member of the Department of Communications Media and be approved by the School of Graduate Studies and Research (SGSR) to teach Master's-level courses.

In considering the selection of a thesis committee, the student will consult with potential faculty, the student's thesis chair, and the Masters program coordinator. The student and the thesis committee chairperson will collaborate in the selection of the other members of the committee. The thesis committee will consist of at least three members, all of whom must have approval from the School of Graduate Studies and Research to serve on Masters thesis committees. At least two of the members, the thesis chair and one other, must be faculty in the Department of Communications Media.

Students register for a section of COMM 795 Thesis assigned to their thesis chair. Students will not be given permission to register for thesis credits until their thesis committee chair has been confirmed and approved by the Masters program coordinator.

Thesis Committee Approval on the Department Level

Each student will submit the Thesis Committee Approval Form (Appendix B) to the Masters Coordinator (MC) by the announced deadlines, typically around mid-term of the semester prior to the student's planned registration for COMM 795. This form will be reviewed and approved by the MC and department chairperson. Students will be notified by the MC of any need for changes to their proposal. Students are advised that faculty signatures on this form do not indicate official approval of a thesis topic – merely the faculty members' consent to serve on the thesis committee.

If the MC and department chairperson deny the student's request for a thesis chair, the student must solicit a new chair from within the department's Masters faculty following the same process as outlined above.

No member of the committee may be replaced, even at the request of the student, without approval by the thesis committee chair. Replacement members are subject to the same approval process as the initial members of the committee. If the student wishes, or needs, to replace the thesis committee chair, approval from the Masters Coordinator and department chairperson is required. If the thesis committee chair or any members are removed or resign from the committee for any reason, it is the students' responsibility to consult with potential faculty and the MC to identify a replacement. If any changes in the composition of the thesis committee occur after the submission and approval of the Research Topic Approval Form (RTAF), a thesis committee change form must be submitted to the SGSR.

Once approved, the thesis committee chair is responsible for supervising and advising the student, coordinating thesis committee meetings, and communicating with the student and other committee members in a timely manner. This obligation continues through the completion of the degree program. The thesis committee is responsible for overseeing the thesis research and the general meeting of degree requirements as pertains to the completion of the thesis, submission of documents including the RTAF, IRB (Institutional Review Board), and thesis drafts by the appropriate deadlines. All committee members are expected to be actively involved in the thesis process, to respond to student questions in a timely fashion, and attend all thesis meetings as coordinated by the thesis chair.

Students in the thesis process are responsible for consistent and timely communication with their thesis committee, particularly the thesis chair. Once the committee has approved the RTAF, the student is expected to maintain contact at least twice a month, or more, until the final thesis is defended and approved. Students are required to submit drafts and respond to requests for revisions to documents by deadlines, as established by their thesis chair and thesis committee. All students, but particularly those students in the thesis process, should be aware of IUP's academic calendar and recognize that when classes are not in session, most faculty are not on campus and not available. Advance planning is necessary to meet related thesis deadlines and is the responsibility of the student. Students are expected to give faculty no less than two weeks to read and respond to thesis-related documents.

MS Strategic Communication students are advised to secure an editor to proofread and perform final edits on their thesis prior to submitting the draft to the School of Graduate Studies and Research. The

role and responsibility of the thesis committee does not include thesis editing.

Evaluation Outcome for Thesis

Thesis Research Topic Approval Process

MS students in the Research Track will register for COMM 795 Thesis for a minimum total of six credits. During the term in which students are registered for COMM 715 Research Development in Strategic Communication, they will begin the process of outlining their thesis project and completing the Research Topic Approval Form (RTAF). This form is available on the School of Graduate Studies and Research (SGSR) web site. Students may submit the RTAF and defend their research proposal during the same semester they are enrolled in COMM 715, so long as the thesis committee has been approved.

The completed RTAF must include an indication of special resources, equipment or conditions needed for the research, an intended time frame, and a list of references. While taking COMM 715, students will receive guidance on the thesis process and work with their thesis chair and the instructor on their RTAF and research design. The defense of these documents will be presented, in person, to the thesis committee prior to the submission of the RTAF to the Masters Coordinator. All members of the thesis committee must be present in person for this meeting. The date and time of this meeting will be made available by the thesis chair to the other COMM faculty, who may attend the meeting. Visiting faculty are permitted to ask questions but are not part of any deliberation on the part of the committee and will be excused once deliberations begin.

The RTAF must be found satisfactory by all members of the committee, and an RTAF must be approved and signed by all members of the thesis committee before the candidate may proceed with the thesis research. *The Thesis/Thesis Manual* outlines this procedure and is available from the School of Graduate Studies and Research (SGSR). Once the committee has approved the RTAF, the student will forward the RTAF and related documents to the Masters Coordinator, College Dean, and the SGSR. Revisions to the research plan may be necessary, as requested by the SGSR, following the submission of the RTAF.

Following approval of the thesis proposal, but before data collection begins, the student must obtain permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (and other review boards as appropriate) following the procedures established for the protection of human subjects. If the thesis is theoretical or data collection involves no human subjects, IRB approval may not be required, or may be expedited.

Approval of Thesis Prospectus - Chapters 1-3

The thesis committee will require students to submit and defend the first three chapters of their thesis before any data collection may begin. The student will meet with the committee, in person, to review the first three chapters of the thesis and obtain approval of the research methodology before beginning data collection. Students will submit the written draft of the three chapters to the thesis committee no later than two weeks before the scheduled defense meeting.

Thesis Oral Defense and Completion Process

The student will work closely with, and is expected to meet regularly with, the thesis chairperson and committee members to complete the thesis and all related components. The student will be required to

defend the completed thesis, in person, during an oral defense. All members of the thesis committee must be present, in person, for this meeting. The defense of the thesis is open to the IUP faculty and MS Strategic Communication students as approved by the thesis chairperson. During the defense, the candidate is expected to respond to substantive and methodological questions related to the thesis. The decision regarding the outcome of the defense will be made by a two-thirds majority vote of the thesis committee members. The thesis must be approved, in writing, by each member of the committee.

The evaluation of the thesis can be pass, pass with revisions, or revise and repeat defense. Students whose thesis is passed with revisions will work with the committee to make the identified revisions and return the document to the committee for review as directed. Students whose thesis is evaluated as requiring revision and a repeated defense will work with the committee to make appropriate revisions and a repeated defense will be scheduled at the discretion of the committee. Students may repeat their defense one time. If the second defense does not result in an evaluation of pass or pass with revisions, the thesis (COMM 795) has been failed and the student is dismissed from the program.

The role of faculty and student visitors at the thesis defense will be determined by the thesis committee chair, but visitors are not part of the deliberation process and will be excused from the meeting at the conclusion of the student's defense. No visitors other than IUP faculty and MS Strategic Communication students are permitted to attend the thesis defense.

Until the thesis is successfully defended, a grade of "R" is assigned to each registered credit. Upon successful completion of the thesis, the final grade assigned will apply to all registered thesis credits. Upon acceptance of the final thesis by the thesis committee, the student must submit copies for review to the SGSR thesis editor.

Time Limitations

Masters students must complete degree requirements no later than six years from the date of earning or transferring credits unless the period is extended through student petition. Thesis students must be continuously enrolled for at least one credit of thesis (COMM 795) each semester (fall and spring) annually, through the graduation of the student or until the time limit is exceeded. See additional University Policies below.

For students admitted after Fall 2017 – Dissertation and thesis credits will be assigned Pass or Fail as the final evaluation outcome for the taken credits and carry no quality points weighted towards a student's CGPA.

For students admitted prior to Fall 2017 – Dissertation and thesis credits will be assigned a letter grade as the final evaluation outcome for the credits taken and carry quality points weighted towards a student's CGPA for the number of dissertation credits required for the program. "Extended" dissertation credits are not calculated into a student's CGPA.

For more information, view the Graduate Catalog: https://www.iup.edu/registrar/catalog/index.html

University Policies and Procedures

University policy is the baseline policy. Programs may have policy that is more stringent than the University baseline policy; however, not less stringent than the University baseline policy. For questions

regarding this statement, please contact [Program Coordinator] or the School of Graduate Studies and Research.

Academic Calendar
View the IUP Academic Calendar: www.iup.edu/news-events/calendar/academic/

The Following University and SGSR policies can be found at
https://www.iup.edu/registrar/catalog/index.html
Academic Good Standing
Academic Integrity
Bereavement-Related Class Absences
Continuous Graduate Registration for Dissertation and Thesis
Grade Appeal Policy
Graduate Fresh Start Policy
Graduate Residency Requirement
Leave of Absence Policy
Time Limitations
Time-to-Degree Masters/Doctoral Dismissal Appeal Policy
Time-to-Degree Extensions for Master's Thesis and Doctoral Dissertation
Transfer of Credits Policy

Research

For more information, visit the website of the School of Graduate Studies and Research, click on *Research*: www.iup.edu/graduatestudies/

https://www.iup.edu/registrar/catalog/index.html
www.iup.edu/research/

Appendices

Student Advising Sheet
Thesis Committee Identification Form
Signature Page

Master of Science in Strategic Communication Student Advising Sheet

Student Name: _____ Banner ID: @_____

Contact Information: _____

Common Core Course Requirements (12 credits)			**Sem. taken**	**Grade**
COMM 511	Theories & Principles of Strategic Communication	3	_____	_____
COMM 512	Writing for Strategic Communication	3	_____	_____
COMM 513	Multimedia Content Development & Production 3	3	_____	_____
COMM 715	Research and Professional Development in Strategic Communication	3	_____	_____
GSR 615	Elements of Research	3	_____	_____
Electives (15 Credits)				
_____		3	_____	_____
_____		3	_____	_____
_____		3	_____	_____
_____		3	_____	_____
_____		3	_____	_____
Applied Track Requirements (9 credits)				
COMM 793	Internship	6	_____	_____
COMM Elective	_____	3	_____	_____
(OR)				
Research Track Requirements (9 credits)				
COMM 793	Thesis	6	_____	_____
Research Methods	_____	3	_____	_____
Total Credits		**36**		

Thesis Committee Identification and Approval Form

This form is due to the Masters Coordinator before the middle of the semester prior to registering for COMM 795. For students conducting thesis research in the summer, this is mid-term of the previous spring semester. Students are not permitted to register for thesis credits until this form is completed and approved by the program coordinator.

Date: _____

Student Name: _____ Student Banner ID @_____

Student Signature: _____

Tentative Thesis Topic: _____

_____

Signatures below indicate the faculty members' willingness to serve on this thesis committee, but the committee structure is subject to approval by the Master's coordinator and department chairperson. These signatures do not indicate final approval of any intended thesis topic.

Thesis Chair: _____ Signature: _____

Committee Member: _____ Signature: _____

Committee Member: _____ Signature: _____

Student signature indicates he/she is making this request and that he/she has reviewed the SGSR thesis/dissertation web site, pertinent deadlines, instructions for RTAF and IRB submissions, and has read the thesis/dissertation manual.

Master's Coordinator Approval: _____ Date: _____

Signature Page

Dear Student,

Congratulations on choosing to further your education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The goal of the Master of Science in Strategic Communication is your success. So that your experience in the graduate program is the best it can be, this Handbook provides information that is essential to you. It contains information about the policies and procedures of the MS in Strategic Communication program.

This document is a supplement to the Graduate Catalog, the Academic Policies and the Thesis/Dissertation Manual prepared by the School of Graduate Studies and Research. Policies and procedures contained in the Graduate Catalog provide the framework for your role as an IUP citizen and a member of our IUP family. The Thesis/Dissertation Manual provides a detailed explanation of deadlines and requirements for submitting a Master's Thesis.

My signature below indicates that I am responsible for reading and understanding the information provided and referenced in this department/program student handbook.

_____[***please initial***] I understand my program coordinator may share this document with the School of Graduate Studies and Research.

_____
Print Name

_____
Signature

_____
Date

Please sign and date a copy of this page, and return it to the Masters Program Coordinator by September 9, 2022.
The Department of Communications Media will keep this signed document on file.