



MASTER OF ARTS (M.A.) IN  
HEALTH & RISK COMMUNICATION

# HANDBOOK

College of Communication Arts and Sciences  
Michigan State University



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### 3 FAQ AND POLICIES

## 1 Program Overview

**The HRCMA program:** The Master of Arts degree in Health and Risk Communication (HRCMA) is an interdisciplinary program administered by the College of Communication Arts and Sciences (CAS) in cooperation with the College of Human Medicine (CHM). The HRCMA prepares students to harness the power of communication to promote positive public health outcomes.

**Topic:** The program is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of health and risk communication theories and principles, with hands-on experience in creating effective health and risk communication programs and interventions. They will learn how to communicate health messages with diverse populations and develop their research and critical thinking skills.

**Job prospects:** Graduates have pursued careers in government agencies, hospitals, HMOs, insurance companies, nonprofits, the medical trade press, and other health service-related organizations, as well as academia or as health entrepreneurs. The health sector is one of the most important industries and the bureau of labor statistics projects it to be among the fastest-growing sectors in the future.

**Target audience:** The program is designed to be flexible and accommodate students with a variety of academic backgrounds, such as biology, anthropology, communication, public relations, psychology, kinesiology, dietetics, pre-medicine, English, and many other disciplines.

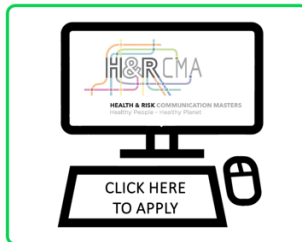
**Course contents:** Core courses include health communication, research methods, epidemiology, and a health or risk-related internship or practicum with a local, state, national, or international organization. Electives may be chosen from a broad range of health-related courses offered throughout the university.



## Application and Admission

**Prerequisites:** To be considered for admission to the Master of Arts degree program in Health and Risk Communication, applicants must have a bachelor's degree (or qualify for the linked BA-MA program) from an approved institution.

**Application Portal:** <https://explore.msu.edu/apply>



### Application Materials:

- An academic statement of purpose outlining academic and professional goals.
- A personal statement including background and life experiences, social, economic, cultural, familial, education or other experiences that motivated the decision to pursue graduate study.
- Two letters of reference from persons who are familiar with the applicant's academic and professional work.
- One transcript from each college and university attended.
- For international applicants only: Test of English Language Fluency (TOEFL) scores.

**Deadline:** For fall admission, the application materials should be received by April 1. For additional information regarding potential spring admission, temporary adjustments of requirements, and application procedures, please visit our website at [cas.msu.edu/hrcma](https://cas.msu.edu/hrcma)



## Credits and Courses

A total of 33 credits is required for the degree, based on the courses specified below as well as completion of required trainings, such as the Responsible Conduct of Research. Information about Plan A and Plan B track is provided below.

All of the following courses				
CORE	Number		Title	Credits
	CAS 825		Mass Communication and Public Health	3
	CAS 826		Health Communication for Diverse Populations	3
	EPI 810		Introductory Epidemiology	3
	COM 803		Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods	3
	One of these courses	ADV 845	Advertising and Public Relations for Health, Science, and the Environment	3
		JRN 872/873	Environment, Science and Health Journalism Seminar	
	COM 893		A practicum related to health/risk communication	3
Requirements for Plan A (Thesis Track)				
Plan A	CAS 899		Master’s Thesis Research	4
	COM 830		Applied Communication Research II	3
	Elective Courses		Additional credits in courses related to health communication that have been approved by the student’s academic advisor	8
	Thesis Defense		Pass a thesis examination defense during the final semester.	
Requirements for Plan B (Comprehensive Exam Track)				
	Elective Courses		Additional credits in courses related to health communication that have been approved by the student’s academic advisor.	15
	Comprehensive Exam		Pass a written comprehensive examination during the final semester.	

**Non-CAS Electives:** Outside CAS, there are many courses of potential interest to students in health and risk communication including (but again, not limited to), Please see section titled, "Potential Courses for M.A. Health and Risk Communication Students" for the listing.

## Sample Programs

Students can choose between two different tracks – Plan A and B – which are explained below.

Plan A – Thesis Track					Plan B – Exam Track			
Year 1	Fall	Tasks: Meet with enrollment officer before classes begin						
		CAS 825	Mass Communication and Public Health			CAS 825	Mass Communication and Public Health	
		COM 803	Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods			COM 803	Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods	
		Elective	Selected based on student interest.			Elective	Selected based on student interest.	
	Spring	Tasks: 1) Select an Advisor, 2) Committee, and 3) turn in Program of Study (no later than after completing 10 program credits).						
		CAS 826	Health Communication for Diverse Populations			CAS 826	Health Communication for Diverse Populations	
		COM 830	Applied Communication Research II			ADV 845 or JRN 872/3	Advertising and PR for Health, Science, and the Environment <b>or</b> Environment, Science and Health Journalism Seminar	
		Electives	Selected based on student interest.			Electives	Selected based on student interest.	
	Summer	COM 893	Practicum			COM 893	Practicum	
Year 2	Fall	Tasks: Thesis Proposal Defense			Tasks: Certifying Final Examination (see advisor early to arrange).			
		EPI 810	Introduction to Descriptive and Analytic Epidemiology			EPI 810	Introduction to Descriptive and Analytic Epidemiology	
		Electives	Selected based on student interest.					
		CAS 899	Thesis (2 credits of 4)					
	Spring	Tasks: Thesis Examination Defense. See your advisor early in the semester to arrange.						
		CAS 899	Thesis (2 credits of 4)			Electives	Selected based on student interest.	
		ADV 845 or JRN 872/3	Advertising and PR for Health, Science, and the Environment <b>or</b> Environment, Science and Health Journalism Seminar					

- Turn in application for graduation, <https://reg.msu.edu>
- Follow Graduate School guidelines for submission of thesis [grad.msu.edu](https://grad.msu.edu)

## Potential Elective Courses

In addition to the core courses, your program will let you choose your electives based on current trends, topics that interest you, or topics that match your academic goals.

Consider specializing

- *in a topic, such as reproductive health, environmental, STDs, tobacco, etc.*
- *in a population, such as geriatrics, adolescents, a minority group, etc.,*
- *or in a theme, such as community organizations, health policy, education, or international<sup>1</sup> health.*

The listing below contains examples of courses taken by our past majors<sup>2</sup>. You are not limited to this listing but rather are encouraged to look through the course offerings each semester for electives to your interests!

### ADV 430 Social Marketing: Strategy and Practice

Fall/Spring of every year. 3 credits. Prerequisite: (MKT 300 or concurrently) or (MKT 327 or concurrently) Use of marketing concepts and tools from sociology, psychology, commercial marketing, and public opinion research to promote individuals' pro-social and health behaviors. Application of strategies that improve quality of life and result in behavioral and societal changes in positive ways.

### ADV 431 – Monitoring and Measuring Social Media of Brands

Fall/Spring of every year. 3 credits. Prerequisite: ADV 420. Restrictions: Open to students in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations or in the Sports Business Management Minor. Social media monitoring and analysis for businesses and brands including advanced keyword building and search

techniques. Discovering business insights through social media listening and applying insights through a social media response plan.

### ADV 433 – Internet Video Promotional Strategy

Fall/Spring of every year. 3 credits. Prerequisite: ADV 420. Promotional video production focusing on brands or companies. Use of metrics and analytical tools to determine impact of promotional video. Video distribution strategies.

### ADV 442 – Digital Analytics

Fall/Spring of every year. 3 credits. Restrictions: Open to students in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations. Data collection, analysis and reporting on cross- or multi-channel media analytics in order to inform strategic advertising and public

## COURSES

REQUIRED	
<b>COM 803</b> Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods	<b>CAS 825</b> Mass Communication and Public Health
<b>EPI 810</b> Introductory Epidemiology	<b>CAS 826</b> Health Communication for Diverse Populations
<b>COM 893</b> Practicum	
+ ONE OF THE FOLLOWING COURSES:	
<b>ADV 845</b> Advertising and Public Relations for Health, Science, and the Environment	<b>JRN 873</b> Environment, Science and Health Journalism Seminar
+ ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PLAN A:	
<b>COM 830</b> Applied Communication Research II	<b>CAS 899</b> Master's Thesis Research
<i>Thesis Examination Defense During the Final Semester</i>	
+ ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PLAN B:	
<i>Written Comprehensive Examination During the Final Semester</i>	
+ ELECTIVE COURSES APPROVED BY ACADEMIC ADVISOR TO MEET THE 33 CREDITS REQUIRED	

<sup>1</sup> Students interested in international, intercultural, or diversity issues, the Health and Risk Communication Center maintains a resource for HRCMA students with resources. The Diversity, Culture, and Internationalism Guide can be found here: <https://hrcc.cas.msu.edu/student/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> Some of these offerings may have restrictions or prerequisites that will hold you from registration until you receive an override from the instructor/department. Please contact the department offering the course for instructions on how to obtain an override. Final selection of electives should be in conjunction with your advisor and committee.

relations decision making. Evaluate impact of integrated communication decisions.

### **ADV 825 – Advertising and Public Relations Strategies**

Fall every year. 3 credits. Strategic planning for advertising and public relations campaigns. Emphasis on research for strategy and campaign evaluation, media planning, media relations, and integrating advertising and public relations tactics.

### **ADV 892 Advertising Special Topics**

Fall/Spring of every year. 3 credits. Emerging topics in advertising and public relations, such as generative AI, emerging media (Virtual Reality), or other trends.

### **ANP 425: Issues in Medical Anthropology**

Fall every year. 3 credits. Selected topics in the anthropological investigation of health issues with an emphasis on critical analysis of cultural, historical, and conceptual bases for trends in health research. Topics vary.

### **ANP 858: Gender, Justice and Environmental Change: Issues and Concepts**

Fall every year. 3 credits. Issues and concepts related to gender, ecology, and environmental studies. Key debates and theoretical approaches to addressing environmental issues from a gender and social justice perspective. Gender and environment issues and processes from a global perspective.

### **CAS 892 Special Topics (especially topics, Risk Communication or Health Communication & Technology).**

Fall/Spring of every year. Summer of every year. Variable 1 to 6 credits. May earn a maximum of 16 credits in all enrollments. Varied topics pertaining to advanced study of communication processes.

### **COM 820: Communication Theory and Process**

Fall of every year. 3 credits. Role that theory plays in different areas of communication scholarship.

### **COM 860 Persuasion**

Fall. 3 credits. Use of messages to gain compliance and effect social change. Persuasion and attitude change from Classical theories to contemporary situations.

### **CSUS 446: Environmental Issues and Public Policy**

Fall every year. 3 credits. Interrelationship of science and public policy in resolving environmental issues. Technical, social, economic, and legal influences. Case study approach.

### **CSUS 433: Grand Writing and Fund Development**

Fall/Spring of every year. 3 credits. Theoretical and practical background for proposal writing. Program and strategic planning. Fund-raising and organizational advancement.

### **ESP 801 Physical, Chemical & Biological Processes of the Environment.**

Fall. 3 credits. Open to all graduate students will approval from instructor. Interdisciplinary concepts in the natural sciences related to environmental problems. Ecology and human health.

### **ESP 803 Human and Ecological Health Assessment and Management**

Fall. 3 credits. Concepts and techniques used to evaluate human and ecological health impacts from anthropogenic activities. Policy formulation and management strategies to mitigate health effects.

### **HCM 808: Healthcare systems and economic policy**

Fall/Spring of every year. Credits Vary from 1 to 3. Organization of U.S. health system, policy process, and services. Dynamics of economic theory, valuation, financing and delivery of healthcare.

### **HDFS 442: Ethnic Families in America**

Fall/Spring/Summer of every year. 3 credits. Historical, structural, and functional components of selected ethnic minority family systems in America. Lifestyles, pressures, adaptations, viability, and continuity.

### **HDFS 448: Child and Family Policy**

Fall/Spring of every year. 3 credits. Issues faced by American families and children. Relationships among social science research, theory, and public policy.

### **HNF 840 Human Nutrition and Chronic Diseases**

Fall of odd years. 3 credits. Dietary intervention and treatment of chronic diseases: obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, gastrointestinal disorders and cancer.

### **JRN 872: Environmental Science & Health Reporting Topics**



Fall and Spring. 3 credits. Resources and practical experience in reporting and writing about environment, science and health topics.

#### **JRN 892 Journalism Special Topics**

Fall/Spring/Summer of every year. 3 credits. A student may earn a maximum of 6 credits in all enrollments for this course. Restrictions: Open only to graduate students in Journalism. Topics vary.

#### **MI 450: Creating Human-Centered Technology**

Fall/Spring of every year. 3 credits. Prerequisite: MI 320 and MI 350 and MI 420 or approval of department. Entire human-centered design process, including assessing needs, forming ideas, designing a solution, building prototypes, evaluating the effectiveness of those solutions, and iterating to improve the solutions. Creation of a portfolio piece to illustrate capabilities.

#### **MI 462: Social Media and Social Computing (Fall)**

Fall of every year. 3 credits. Prerequisite: MI 349 or MI 361 or approval of department. Social and technological perspectives on how people collaborate using social media and other information and communication technologies. Experience with using multiple collaboration platforms and analysis of differences between enabling technologies.

#### **MKT 805 Marketing Management**

Spring of every year. Variable from 2-3 credits. Strategic and decision-making aspects of marketing functions. Analysis, coordination, execution of marketing programs. Development of strategies and tactics. Segmentation, marketing mix, market response modeling, and ethics in a global context.

#### **PR 425 – Public Relations and Ethics in a Digital World**

Fall/Spring of every year, Summer of every year. 3 credits. Restrictions: Open to students in the Public Relations Minor or in the Public Relations major. Strategic planning and ethical considerations in public relations, social media and digital media.

Spring

#### **ADV 816 – Fundraising and Philanthropy in Nonprofit**

Spring of every year. 3 credits. Principles, function, practice, ethics, and process of fundraising and philanthropic development. Societal role of nonprofit organizations.

#### **ADV 835 – Multimedia Content Creation for Advertising and Public Relations**

Spring of every year. 3 credits. Creating strategy-driven, multimedia content for advertising and public relations campaigns. Emphasis on campaign objectives, brand positioning, message strategy, and creative execution.

#### **ADV 840 – Advertising and Public Relations for Social Impact**

Spring of every year. 3 credits. Principles and techniques for social impact advertising and public relations campaigns. Emphasis on strategies for non-profit, activist, and political organizations.

#### **ANP 826: International Development: Theory and Practice**

Spring of every year. 3 credits. Evolution of international development theory across disciplines. Changing conceptualizations, measurements, processes and effects of development and poverty. Ethnicity, social class, gender, and community influences on socioeconomic processes. Current issues, concerns, and strategic alternatives.

#### **ANP 834 Medical Anthropology Overview**

Spring of every year. 3 credits. Restrictions: Approval of department. Note: assumes advanced coursework in Anthropology. Anthropological approaches to the study of sickness, disease, and healing. Medical anthropology as a sub discipline.

#### **ANP 835: Topics in Medical Anthropology**

Spring of every year. 3 credits. Restrictions: Open to graduate students in the Department of Anthropology or approval of department. Seminar in the description and analysis of themes in medical anthropology.

#### **COM 830 – Applied Communication Research II**

Spring. 3 credits. Thesis production. Reporting and evaluating the results of communication research.

#### **CSUS 464: Environmental and Natural Resource Policy in Michigan**

Spring of every year. 3 credits. Prerequisite: CSUS 200 or EEM 255 or approval of department. State legislative process and its role in environmental and natural resource policy formulation. Influence of lobbying, citizen engagement and political factors.

**CSUS 473: Social Entrepreneurship and Community Sustainability**

Spring of every year. 3 credits. Start-up and management of private sector, non-profit, and public organizations. Identifying and overcoming the challenges associated with the sustainable operations of small organizations.

**CSUS 805: Proposal Development for Interdisciplinary Inquiry**

Spring of every year. 3 credits. Prerequisite: CSUS 800 and CSUS 802. Preparation of proposals for inquiry in practical and research settings. Application of inquiry concepts and practices in designing projects or research. Professional oral and written communications in sustainability inquiry. Processes of peer support and critique. Offered first ten weeks of semester.

**HM 804: Public Health Policy and Administration**

Spring of every year. 3 credits. Restrictions: Open to master's students in the Public Health Major. Structural, operational, leadership and components of health policy and public health administration.

Community health assessment, advocacy and evaluation within public health agencies and programs. Major business systems used for administration of public health agencies and programs.

**MI 425: Advanced Data Analysis**

Spring of every year. 3 credits. Prerequisite: MI 320. Conduct research using appropriate statistical models and to communicate their results to both technical and nontechnical audiences. Foundation in probability theory, maximum likelihood, and various types of regression models to investigate and implement a wide range of advanced statistical models. Manipulate data to answer the research questions in the field of Media and Information.

**MI 851: Understanding and Managing Social Media Lecture**

Spring of every year. 3 credits. Overview of social media applications and services, social media history, social media affordances, effects on individuals, organizations, and society, and best practices for the management and study of social media.



## Funding

We realize how difficult it is to support your education. Therefore, we strive to help our students gain access to funding via our professional networks and regular email information about emerging opportunities. We recommend you search the funding section on our program website and the Graduate School's website on the topic of funding and scholarships: <https://grad.msu.edu/funding>. Other helpful resources can be found at <https://thisispublichealth.aspph.org/financing-your-degree/>. In general, there are about four options to secure funding: Assistantships, Fellowships, Employment, or Loans.

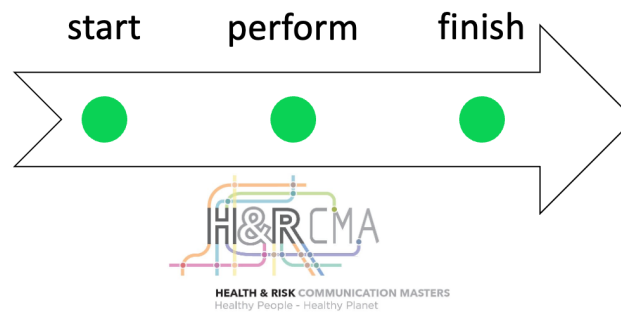
- **Assistantships:** We often offer some RA (research assistantship) positions to students. However, the availability of such assistantships depends largely on external factors. For instance, if a researcher receives a grant and the grant includes RA-money, then the researcher could offer the RA position to a talented HRCMA student.
- **Fellowships:** These are largely dependent on your own initiative, - and perseverance. If you look for fellowships at MSU, the state of Michigan, or federal (e.g. CDC), corporate (e.g. Dow), or international sources (e.g. WHO), there are many opportunities for fellowships in the health and risk arena. Also, our very own Health and Risk Communication Center ([hrcc.msu.edu](http://hrcc.msu.edu)) does offer the Iris fellowship (1 student per year), which is typically held by HRCMA students.
- **Employment:** Most of our students have some kind of employment (this includes assistantships, which are basically employment with the university) while they are in the HRCMA program. If not employed as a Research or Teaching assistant, students could be employed on-campus at one of the many on-campus services (our MSU campus is huge: It is basically a city with a population of 60-80.000 people!). These include, to name but a few: the dormitory system, the student health and services system (including health promotion department on campus), the dining hall system, the sports/activities centers, etc.. Typically, such job opportunities arise in a rather ad-hoc manner, making it hard to plan ahead and before you are on site. Finally, there are also many non-university jobs in the Lansing area and beyond. For instance, some of our students have worked in Lansing or Detroit with various agencies (Lansing as the capital of Michigan is also the seat of many government branches). And of course, some students work online/remote, or simply work regular jobs<sup>3</sup>.
- **Loans:** Information about Loans: <https://finaid.msu.edu/prospective/getting-started/loans>



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<sup>3</sup> Note that a student can work in parallel to the HRCMA, but check out the information about minimum and maximum credit hours below. Generally, a full-time job is not compatible with this program, but a part-time job is ok as long as you can still prioritize the academic work.

## 2 Program Guidelines



### Getting Started in the Program

#### First Steps

Once admitted, your next steps should be:

- The first and most important step at this point is to set up your university email account (see acceptance letter). Once you have completed your email account please email this address to the graduate program assistant (GPA, [bylinali@msu.edu](mailto:bylinali@msu.edu)) so we can use it for all MSU contacts.
- Second, please review the *Schedule of Courses* found on <https://student.msu.edu> website under *Class Search* as to familiarize yourself with the courses that are available.
- Third is registration, which is also found at <https://student.msu.edu>. Your MSU email account will also grant you access to registration. Because it is your first semester you do not have to be registered for all your courses prior to orientation but it is highly recommended. In future semesters you will be required to be registered by the university deadline to avoid late fees. If you choose to register now, we recommend you contact your enrollment officer (please see your program acceptance letter for this name) prior to registration. Normally, all master's students are recommended to register for CAS 825 or CAS 826 during their first semester in the program. There are other possible selections but should be made with your enrollment officer's suggestions.

#### Advisor and Committee

Students are assigned an *Enrollment Officer* upon recommendation of admission. This faculty member will act as your advisor during your first semester in the program. After you have completed no more than 10 credits in the program you are required to submit forms for:

- Selecting an advisor
- Selecting the Program track (Track A or B)
- Selecting a committee.
- Completing your program of study.

Your advisor and committee members must consist of three regular tenure track faculty and should be selected from the Health and Risk Communication Faculty listing (please see <https://hrcc.cas.msu.edu/people/faculty/index.html>).

[Note] Exemptions can be made to this listing by the Director of the Master's in Health and Risk Communication following university guidelines requiring member be a regular faculty at Michigan State University. Your committee will help in the selection and recommendation of your program of study, and the development and grading of your final certifying examination. Forms are found at end of this document.

If there becomes need to change the advisor or a committee member(s) the student must complete the Form IV, Modification of Program (the form is located later section of this document). We request that students notify the faculty member(s) who are being removed from the committee in writing (either email or letter format) of such changes. The new faculty member(s) will be required to sign the Form IV, Modification of Program, to show their approval to join your committee. This can also be handled through GRADPLAN in <https://student.msu.edu> but members MUST be notified prior to creating and routing in student.msu.edu.

### **Credit Transfer**

With your committee's approval, up to a combined total of 10 semester credits can be transferred from another program to the Masters in Health & Risk Communication. To qualify, courses should be graduate level courses that fit topically with the electives for the HRCMA and with the program of study (or from matching undergraduate courses in the case of Linked BA-MA-students). An online University Administrative Action form must be processed by our Academic Programs Office to post these courses to your transcript. To transfer courses taken at MSU in another graduate program or Lifelong Education status or Graduate Certificate program bring written verification from your committee. For course work from another university please follow the procedure above PLUS have an official transcript from the other institution sent to the Communication Academic Program Office. On your Program of Study form, these transferred courses will be listed as "trf" (transferred).

### **Responsible Conduct of Research Courses**

Students are required to stay up-to-date about the responsible conduct of research (RCR).

Year 1 (Plan A/Thesis Track and Plan B/Exam Track):

- Complete the following 4 CITI Modules, 1) Introduction to Responsible Conduct of Research, 2) Authorship, 3) Plagiarism, and 4) Research Misconduct, within first year of student's program. CITI login & instructions.
- Complete online HRPP/IRB Certification. (HRPP 1121A-SOC & HRPP 2241A-SOC)
- Complete 6 discussion-based training hours (complete before graduation). These workshops are offered by The Graduate School. Registration required.

Year 2 (additionally for Plan A/Thesis Track):

- complete 3 additional CITI modules in any of the following areas: Collaborative Research, Conflicts of Interest, Data Management, Financial Responsibility, Mentoring, Peer Review, or Rigor and Reproducibility. Due by the end of student's second year in the program.

### **During the Program**

You will find that the first weeks will pass by quickly and soon the first semester is over! During the main phase of the program, you will work towards your credit requirements, should meet periodically with your advisory to discuss your progress and goals, and you should start to consider specializing in an area and start looking for a practicum opportunity.

### **Annual Evaluation**

Each Spring the HRCMA students are evaluated on their academic performance by the Director the HRCMA program. Reviewed is the student's coursework as well as other aspects (if appropriate), such as research participation. Future program expectations are recommended in these evaluations, such as selection of committee, program of study, or degree requirements (final certifying examination) or time limit being reached for program. The student receives an email letter shortly after the completion of Spring semester and if it makes sense, the student and the HRCMA director or GPA have a quick meeting about this topic. The student's advisor or enrollment officer receives a copy of the evaluation, and a copy is placed in the student's academic department file. Students may challenge the evaluation in writing to the Director Health and Risk Communication Master's Program. A copy of this letter will be kept in the student's academic department file, located in the Academic Programs Office, 472 Communication Arts Bldg.

### **Practicum**

HRCMA students must complete a practicum working in a health-related field in an organization of their choice. Although only one practicum is required for credit, students are encouraged to volunteer for additional practicum experiences throughout their academic program.

**Practicum Prerequisites:** Students may register for the practicum/internship after they have successfully completed a minimum of 15 credits of their coursework for the program. Student must have selected their advisor, committee, and program of study and have submitted the forms to the Academic Programs Coordinator, 472 Com Arts prior to enrollment in the practicum.

**Practicum Selection:** Students are required to locate and secure their own practicum experience but listings of possible opportunities are available on our website, <https://comartsci.msu.edu/hrcma>. Practicums can be unpaid or paid but each requires registration for credits to be applied to program requirements. Please contact your advisor the semester prior to the desired semester of registration to arrange an appointment to discuss your interests for practicum/internship opportunities.

**Practicum Application Form and Guidelines:** Once you have secured a practicum you will need a letter from your employer indicating your responsibilities/job description. Take this letter to your advisor to complete the practicum application form. Students will be unable to enroll for practicum/internship credits until this form has all required signatures



and has been processed by the Academic Programs Office<sup>4</sup>. The student will be registered in practicum credits (COM 893). In order to successfully complete the practicum requirement, students must work in their practicum position for a minimum of 20 hours per week for at least 14 weeks in the semester of enrollment.

**Practicum Evaluation:** Students are required to complete two (2) written assignments (criteria of the written assignments is arranged when completing the Practicum application prior to registration (found on following page). The written assignments must be submitted to the student's advisor by the last week of classes the practicum semester. Evaluation and grading of the practicum is based upon input from the employer to the student's academic advisor. The academic advisor is responsible for the grading of the written assignments and ultimately the grading of the practicum. Evaluation forms for faculty use can be found online at <https://comartsci.msu.edu/hrcma>.

### ***List of Potential Practicum Opportunities***

- National Institute of Health (NIH, including e.g. NCI, National Cancer Institute)
- Center for Disease Control (CDC)  
<http://www.cdc.gov/Fellowships/>
- US Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- World Health Organization (WHO)  
<http://www.who.int/employment/internship/en>
- Presidential Management Intern Program (Deadline: Oct 31 for the following year)  
<http://www.pmi.opm.gov/>
- Kansas Health Institute
- ORISE (Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education) <http://orise.ornl.gov/science-education/internships-scholarships-fellowships/default.aspx>
- Michigan Women's Commission
- Michigan Department of Community Health
- American Public Health Association
- American Medical Center for Cancer Research (AMC)
- National Cancer Institute Health Communication Intern
- NYU College of Public Health
- Livingston County Health Dept.
- Carter Center Educational Program
- Mayo Clinic Health Writer Intern
- Reporting for Young Journalists
- Surgeon General Michigan
- Kaiser Family Foundation in Health
- Department of Community Health
- AARP
- Michigan Fitness Foundation
- MSU Children's Health Initiative
- Affairs Office
- Harvard Medical School Public
- Northwestern University, Dept. of Emergency Medicine
- National Cancer Institute
- Cristo Rey Community Center
- Lansing Health Fair
- Michigan Department of Community Health
- American Hospital Association
- Michigan, Lansing Regional Office
- National Kidney Foundation
- American Lung Association
- Michigan Education Special Services Association
- Center for Disease Control (CDC)
- American Cancer Society
- National Food Safety Toxicology Center
- Michigan Public Health Institute
- Ingham Regional Medical Center
- UNICEF

<sup>4</sup> International Students will have to work out the details regarding their VISA status for the practicum requirements with the MSU Office for International Students and Scholars, <http://oiss.isp.msu.edu/>, before they can enroll in the practicum, especially if the practicum is out-of-state or a paid experience. They may need to complete a Curricular Practical Training form.



### ***Tips for Finding a Practicum***

Your practicum is an invaluable opportunity to bridge theory and practice, setting the stage for a successful career in health and risk communication. By being proactive, well-prepared, and selective in your choices, you'll maximize the benefits of this transformative experience.

- **Be Proactive in Your Search:** The journey towards securing a practicum begins with proactive engagement. Initiate conversations with faculty, career advisors, and professionals in the field early on! Also attend networking events, workshops, and conferences to expand your connections.
- **Prepare Your Materials:** Craft a polished resume, cover letter, and portfolio highlighting your skills, experiences, and aspirations in health and risk communication. Tailor these materials to the specific practicum opportunities you're pursuing.
- **Choose a Practicum Aligned with Your Goals:** Consider the practicum's alignment with your career aspirations and academic interests. Whether it's working with a public health agency, a non-profit organization, a research institute, or a corporate setting, select a practicum that complements your learning objectives.
- **Network and Seek Guidance:** Utilize your network, including professors, alumni, and industry professionals, to seek advice and potential leads for practicum placements. Don't hesitate to ask for informational interviews to gain insights into different organizations.
- **Research and Apply Strategically:** Conduct thorough research on practicum hosts. Explore their mission, projects, and the roles they offer. Tailor your application and be strategic in applying to multiple opportunities, but ensure each application reflects your genuine interest and tailored expertise.
- **Stay Persistent and Positive:** Securing a practicum might involve facing rejections or encountering setbacks. Stay persistent and maintain a positive attitude. Every effort, application, and connection made is a step forward in your professional development.

Best of luck in your search and future endeavors!

### **Specializations and Certificate Programs**

While you work towards your HRCMA degree, you will come across several options to specialize along the way. For example, MSU offers many options for specializations and graduate certificates. Some example specializations/certificates are:

- Graduate Specialization in Nonprofit Fundraising,
- Graduate Certificate in Food Safety, or
- Graduate Certificate in Global Health.



On the Academic Programs website, you will find many other Certificates and Specializations:

- <https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Programs.aspx?PType=SPCG>
- <https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Programs.aspx?PType=GC>.

It is recommended that you talk to your advisor regarding these options.





## Credit Loads

Without Assistantship: 9 credits.

With Assistantship: Graduate assistants must be registered each semester in which they hold assistantships. The minimum and maximum credit loads are as follows: For a quarter-time [half-time] graduate assistant, minimum enrollment is 6 [6] credits (including credits in courses numbered 899 or 999); maximum enrollment is 16 [12] credits (excluding credits in courses numbered 899 or 999). Deviation from the minimum requirements listed above is permitted only in the following cases: Summer session, when a 3-credit minimum registration is allowed for all types of assistants, no deviation from the minimum requirements listed above is permitted. The semester in which the degree is granted, when the student is required to register only for the credits required to complete the degree or for the University minimum registration if all credits for the degree have been completed. In meeting the credit requirements, graduate assistants should be enrolled in courses that are recognized as being of graduate level unless the student's department or school has granted written permission for course work constituting an exception to this rule. Visitor credits do not count as part of a graduate assistant's credit load.

## Academic Standards

When a student receives a grade below 3.0 in more than two 400–level or higher courses taken for graduate credit at Michigan State University, the student is automatically withdrawn from the program. A graduate student who has been withdrawn under this regulation is required to wait a minimum of one calendar year from the date of the withdrawal before being eligible to apply for readmission to a graduate program in the College of Communication Arts and Sciences. The student may be readmitted, contingent upon repeating one of the three courses in which a grade below a 3.0 was earned and earning a 3.0 or better grade in the course. The course to be repeated may be specified by the department. Following readmission, any additional grade below 3.0 in any course numbered 400 or higher will result in permanent dismissal. Courses below the 400 level may also be included under this regulation at the discretion of the individual academic unit. While permission may be granted by the student's academic unit chairperson and the associate dean of the College to repeat a course in which a grade of less than 3.0 has been earned, subsequently earning a grade of 3.0 or higher does not eliminate the first earned grade in the course as one of the two allowed under this regulation. The student must also have at least a 3.00 average in all courses taken for graduate credit. (<https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=1157>)



## Finishing the Program

### Plan A Track: Thesis Proposal and Defense

**Thesis Proposal:** Your Thesis Proposal is a formal description of your Master's research. It normally includes an introduction with hypotheses, methods, anticipated analyses, and complete references. It takes much thought and patience to create a good thesis proposal. You will work closely with your academic advisor to prepare it. Ideally, your thesis is something that interests you, builds your experience and confidence as a health communication researcher, and eventually contributes to the field of communication in the form of a publishable article. Once the proposal is ready, you will schedule an oral defense with your guidance committee. When the committee approves the proposal, you may pursue the thesis project as proposed. Please see “Program Forms” for the necessary form requiring your committees’ acceptance/signatures. After the thesis proposal has been accepted and form returned than student can beginning writing the thesis.

**Thesis Defense:** Students in Plan A are required to pass an oral examination in defense of the thesis. The examination must be scheduled with your committee during your final semester in the program and you have applied to graduate through the <https://student.msu.edu>, after clicking on the Academic Progress tile, you will see a link to Apply for Graduation in the left-hand navigation under the Graduation heading. Once the examination is scheduled with your committee please see “Program Form VI”, requiring your committees’ acceptance/signatures for approval of your passing.

**Thesis Submission:** After acceptance of thesis by committee please go to The Graduate School website, <https://grad.msu.edu/etd>, for submission of thesis information, including deadlines and formatting requirements. The Graduate School only accepts electronic theses submitted via ProQuest. The instructions for electronic submissions are available from <https://grad.msu.edu/etd/>. Please be certain to follow all the step-by-step instructions. The target date for the FINAL APPROVAL of an electronic Thesis to the Graduate School for graduating the semester of that submission is FIVE working days prior to the first day of classes for the next semester (see future target dates below). Be aware that a submission via ProQuest does not mean that the document has been ACCEPTED. The review process is interactive and final approval can take anywhere from a few hours to weeks, depending upon the extent of the necessary revisions and how diligent the author is when making the necessary revisions.

**Electronic Submission’s Approval Target Dates.** The deadline dates for SUBMISSION and FINAL APPROVAL of an electronic Thesis to the Graduate School must be fulfilled. You can find the most up to date deadlines for this semester on the Graduate School’s website.

### Checklist for Students with Thesis Track/Plan A:

- At the beginning of the semester, you wish to graduate complete the University Application for Graduation online at <https://student.msu.edu>, select Academic Progress tile, and then you will see a link to Apply for Graduation in the left-hand navigation under the Graduation heading. The



degree is not conferred the semester of the thesis defense unless the course work is completed and all other requires such as RCR are completed.

- The scheduling of your thesis defense is a committee decision. Please contact your committee early in the semester about this.
- You must be registered for a minimum of one credit the semester that you defend your thesis. This can be any course or even an independent study but normally it is CAS 899 (Thesis credits).
- Please bring Form VI, “Results of the Final Examination” to have your committee sign when they approve the passing of your thesis defense, or you can route electronically to each member. Then return the form to the Academic Programs Office, 472 CAS.

### **Plan B Track: Final certifying examination**

**Final Exam:** The final certifying examination (sometimes called “Comps” – comprehensive exam) will be held during the student’s last semester in the program, normally Fall semester of the 2nd year. The examination will consist of a three-part examination, with questions based on the core courses of the program, CAS 825 and CAS 826 and your area of interest in Health Communication.

**Scheduling/planning the Final Exam:** It is highly recommended that you meet with your committee members about the examination beforehand (2-3 weeks). The student is recommended to prepare an outline before writing the responses to the questions. Resources used must be included in the form of a bibliography. The exam is designed to be written in ten (10) days. It will be sent out via email and should be returned in email form (preferably as a Microsoft Word attachment) no later than 5pm on the tenth (10th) day. The examination is graded by the student’s faculty committee. The faculty members have two weeks to grade the examination. Results are sent to the student via email from the Academic Programs Office.

**Final Exam Procedures:** The procedures for final certifying examination are as follows: The student must have completed all program required paperwork to proceed to the final certifying examination. The student shall talk to the advisor and committee members about the upcoming exam. Then, the student’s advisor gathers questions from the committee members and submits to the Academic Programs Office at least three (3) days prior to their distribution to the student. The student receives the examination via email and completes them within the 10-day time frame. The committee members will read the student’s answers. Committee members can either submit a passing grade or request written clarification to questions they have (the latter being the default for pedagogical reasons). If written clarification is requested, the student will have three (3) days to respond (or deadline to be set by the advisor). Committee members will read revisions within the time frame specified by the advisor and determine a grade for the examination. If the student earns less than a 3.0 on any of the examination questions, an oral examination will be scheduled. The advisor will notify the Academic Programs Office of the student’s passing of the examination.

### **Checklist for HRCMA Students with Certifying Examination/Plan B:**

- At the beginning of the semester you wish to graduate, complete the University Application for Graduation online at <https://student.msu.edu>, click



on the Academic Progress tile, then you will see a link to Apply for Graduation in the left-hand navigation under the Graduation heading. The degree is not conferred the semester of the final exam unless the course work is completed and other requirements such as RCR are completed.

- The scheduling of your certifying exam is a committee decision. Please contact your committee early in the semester about getting your certifying examination questions.
- You must be registered for a minimum of one credit the semester that you take your certifying examination. This can be any course or even an independent study.
- Once the certifying examination is arranged with your committee, please have your advisor sign and you submit Form V, "Eligibility to Hold Certifying Exam." This should be submitted at least two (2) weeks before the examination is scheduled to take place.
- Normally the Academic Programs Office will use the email contacts from your committee as Form V, "Results of Certifying Examination. You may wish to check with your advisor and see if they would prefer you circulating this form for their signatures. If so, please return the form to the Academic Programs Office, 472 CAS.



### Graduation and Commencement

Application for graduation must be completed by the beginning of the semester you wish to graduate. The application can be found at the <https://student.msu.edu>, click on the Academic Progress tile, you will see a link to Apply for Graduation in the left-hand navigation under Graduation heading. For information regarding the commencement ceremonies please visit - <https://commencement.msu.edu>.



### 3 FAQ and Policies



#### Frequently Asked Questions

**Where can I find class information, textbook, course dates, and exam schedules?** The class registration link is <https://student.msu.edu>. Class Information now located on the “Class Search” tab. Select the course/section you will find details, availability, textbook information, exam schedule, and course dates. More details will be provided by the syllabus and MSU’s academic calendar.

**Where can I see the faculty directory?** You will find a complete listing of our health & risk communication faculty along with their research interests, publications, and contact information at <http://hrcc.cas.msu.edu/people/faculty/index.html>.

**What is an enrollment officer?** An enrollment officer is a temporary advisor. Each student is assigned a faculty member to act as his/her enrollment officer for the first semester in the program. He/she is responsible to direct the student in his/her choice of courses the first semester and to select a permanent advisor. Note: The student may select the enrollment officer as his/her advisor, if he/she agrees. The enrollment officer is to be used for only one semester. Then the student should select a permanent advisor. The enrollment officer should not continue for multiple semesters.

**What forms exist and where do I find them?** The HRCMA program requires students to complete program forms to mark their milestones in the program and the progress towards the degree. You can find the forms online on the HRCMA’s website. You can also email the GPA. Generally, we use the following forms:

- FORM I: REQUEST FOR APPOINTMENT OF ADVISOR
- FORM II: REQUEST FOR APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINING COMMITTEE
- FORM III: PROGRAM OF STUDY
- FORM IV: REQUEST FOR MODIFICATION OF THE MASTER’S PROGRAM
- FORM V: DEFENSE OF THESIS PROPOSAL (Required for PLAN A Track Only)
- FORM VI: ELIGIBILITY TO HOLD: \_ FINAL CERTIFYING EXAM OR \_ DEFENSE OF THESIS



- FORM VII: RESULTS OF FINAL EXAMINATION (Thesis, Plan A, OR Exam track, Plan B)
- PRACTICUM APPLICATION FORM

**I hate forms! Why do we need to complete them? And which ones?** Yeah, forms are something. We'll keep them to a minimum, but some are needed. Here's why: The forms are your contractual agreement for fulfillment of your program requirements. If you do not complete the forms in a timely manner, you might find that the following occur: Your committee may not agree with your program of study and you will have to take additional course work. You may think that you are ready to take the certifying examination and find that your committee does not agree, thus, delaying the completion of your degree until you have met your committee's expectations. Some of the most important choices and milestones in the program are thus made official via those forms, especially the selection of an advisor, committee, and the program of study. Talk to our GPA to make sure that everything is properly set up and then all will be a smooth sail!

**I want to get into a class, but the computer says I don't meet the restrictions. What can I do?** Make sure that you have met the prerequisites in the Description of Courses catalog, <https://reg.msu.edu/Courses/Search.aspx>. If you feel that you have completed the prerequisites, or they could be waived, contact the Department offering the course for assistance in receiving an override. Once the override is given you will be able to register for the course.

**I want to take an independent study. How do I do it?** The first think you need is an idea of what you want to learn (that isn't offer in a regular course) and a person who wants to work with you on that. Then you need to talk to the person and scope ouf the topic of the IS, and then talk to your advisor. Next, you complete an independent study form and check in with the GPA. A maximum of 3 credits of independent study in addition to practicum/internship credits are allowed for your program of study.

**Where can I find information about my academic records?** Y Students have access to view online their academic transcripts through <https://reg.msu.edu> or Student Resources, <https://student.msu.edu>. Please use your MSU Netid to login. Student Folder. Student departmental academic files are housed in the Academic Programs Office, 472 Communication Arts Bldg. Students are allowed to view these files and to check the files out for one-week intervals.

**Where can I find information about students' rights and responsibilities (MSU guidelines)?** Here: <https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/index.html>

**Do I have to be registered for credits the semester I take my certifying exam?** You must be registered the semester you defend but it may be for ANY course, even a 1 credit course.

**I am having legal issues (including items such as rental issues). Is there legal services available on campus?** Yes, the Associated Students of Michigan State University offers legal services. The website is <http://asmsu.msu.edu/services/legal-services/>. And the office is located at 556 East Circle Drive, Room 307, East Lansing, MI 48824. The phone number is 517-355-8266. Or you may email them at [info@asmus.msu.edu](mailto:info@asmus.msu.edu).





**I have questions about my student health benefits. Who do I contact?** The University Human Resources Office will be able to assist you. Their office is in 140 Nisbet Bldg, telephone 353-4434 ext.170 or 144. The website is <https://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/students/health/>.

**Where can I find information regarding Student Rights, Responsibilities and Regulations?** [HTTP://SPLIFE.STUDENTLIFE.MSU.EDU/](http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/) This site contains the online catalog, Student Life. This catalog covers topics as “Rights and Responsibilities” of students, and University Regulations. Please take the time now to review for both your interests as well as your responsibilities.

**Where can I find information regarding my records, financial aid, and billing statements?** [HTTPS://STUDENT.MSU.EDU](https://student.msu.edu) Student.msu.edu offers a menu of available student information regarding your records and billing here at Michigan State University. The menu offers information in three different subject areas, 1) Academic, 2) Financial, and 3) Online Services. Academic information includes such items as Enrollment Appointment, Grade Reports, Courses by Subject to name just a few. Financial information includes Financial Aid, and Account Details. This can be done immediately online through this site which keeps you from being dropped from your courses for “nonpayment”.

**How long do I have to complete this degree?** A student is expected to make timely progress toward his/her degree requirements meeting the university time limit of 5 years. The student will take the required core courses and meet the other program course recommendations. If the student encounters a situation where he or she cannot meet a requirement, he/she should immediately contact their academic advisor in writing. The academic advisor will work with the student to find a suitable alternative.

**How can I order a transcript?** Transcripts may be ordered online (secure site) through the Office of the Registrar’s site, <https://reg.msu.edu/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx>.

**What support is available on campus to support my health and wellness?** Michigan State University Student Affairs and Services states, “Student health and well-being is central to academic success. Michigan State University provides information and services to help students develop and maintain good physical, psychological, and emotional health.” A variety of services are at your disposal in support of wellness. Resource: <http://studentaffairs.msu.edu/health-wellness-safety/index.html>.

One important resource for special consideration is MSU’s Counseling and Psychiatric Services. Resource: <https://caps.msu.edu/>. This includes 24-hour access for all MSU students to a counselor for emotional or mental health services through a phone app to talk or instant message. The My SSP app, <https://appadvice.com/app/my-ssp/1112006222>, is available to all students (both undergraduate and graduate) and has proven highly beneficial, and now will complement existing on-campus mental health services. If you have concerns regarding an individual other than yourself, take action: Resource: <https://caps.msu.edu/services/help-a-friend.html>

**What are guidelines for Integrity of Scholarship, Grades, and Research and Creative Activities?**

The HRCMA Program places high value intellectual integrity in all aspects of graduate education. We support and comply with the Graduate School's research and scholarly integrity guidelines, which are outlined at <https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity>. This page is your guide to resources for teaching responsible conduct of research, scholarship, and creative activities. The website offers resource links to avoiding unintentional plagiarism, acceptable and unacceptable use of writing aids and generative artificial intelligence, principles of ethics, privacy, and orderliness in Research and Creative Activities, and workshop opportunities for Responsible Conduct on Research (RCR). We ask you take the time now (early in your program) to review this information. The university policy addresses the principles and procedures to be used in instances of academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards, and falsification of academic or admission records.

The College of Communication Arts and Sciences supports the federal requirements for training set forth in the Competes Act and by the Graduate School which teaches the responsible conduct in research, scholarship, and creative activities. As a graduate student you will be required to complete the appropriate training. Please select the appropriate program below. You can find resources to help fulfill these requirements at the college website (<https://comartsci.msu.edu/responsible-conduct-research-rcr>) and via the Graduate School website. Relevant resources include the CITI (module online training, please watch video instructions), Tracking of RCR & CITI courses, HRPP/IRB Certification, and workshops and courses.

**What are the procedures for conflict resolution and grievance hearing procedures?** If a conflict should arise between a master's student and her/his advisor, committee, or course instructor, then the following procedure should be followed.

- First, the student should discuss the problem with the advisor, committee member or the faculty member.
- If a satisfactory solution is not reached, then the student should discuss the matter with the Director of Master's Studies.
- If a satisfactory solution is still not reached, then the student should present her/his case to the Chair/Dean.
- If the student is not satisfied at this point, then the Chair/Dean will advise the student as to further lines of appeal.

For academic grievance hearings involving graduate students who allege violations of academic rights or seek to contest an allegation of academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards or falsifying admission and academic records), students should refer to the "Graduate Student Academic Grievance Hearing Procedures for the Department of Communication's MA and PhD Programs, which apply for the HRCMA program.