

## PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

### Course record information

Name and level of final award:	<b>MA Communication</b> The MA Communication is a Masters degree that is Bologna FQ-EHEA second cycle degree or diploma compatible.
Name and level of intermediate awards:	Postgraduate Diploma Communication Postgraduate Certificate Communication
Awarding body/institution:	University of Westminster
Teaching Institution:	
Status of awarding body/institution:	Recognised Body
Location of delivery:	Westminster School of Media Arts and Design (Harrow Site)
Language of delivery and assessment:	English
Mode, length of study and normal starting month:	One year (full time). September start. Two years (part time). September start.
<a href="#">QAA subject benchmarking group(s)</a> :	There are no Subject benchmark statements for Master's degrees in Media and Communication. The following benchmarks have been consulted; Honours Degree Benchmark Statements: Communication, media, film and cultural studies 2008 (QAA 251 06/08); and 'Securing and maintaining academic standards: benchmarking M level programmes' (2006)
Professional statutory or regulatory body:	N/A
Date of course validation/review:	Validated 1990. Reviewed 2005
Date of programme specification approval:	2011
Course Leader:	Jacob Johanssen (acting course leader)
Course URL:	<a href="http://westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate">westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate</a>
University of Westminster course code:	PMJMC01F (FT) PMJMC01P (PT)
JACS code:	P300 (Media Studies)
UKPASS code:	P004434

## Admissions Requirements

There are standard minimum [entry requirements](#) for all postgraduate courses. Students are advised to check the standard requirements for the most up-to-date information posted on [westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/how-to-apply](http://westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/how-to-apply)

For most courses a decision will be made on the basis of your application form alone. However, for some courses the selection process may include an interview to demonstrate your strengths in addition to any formal entry requirements. More information can be found here: [westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/how-to-apply](http://westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/how-to-apply)

## Aims of the course

The MA in Communications has been designed to provide you with the opportunity to study at graduate level:

- The main ways in which social scientists have analysed the role of the mass media in communication and how to develop, evaluate and apply research to evaluate these theories.
- An analytical approach to the structure and performance of the communication industries which takes account of their broader historical, economic, political and social contexts.
- The factors which shape mass communication policies in modern society.
- The range of cultural responses and the changing character of human subjectivity which have emerged as societies are modernised.
- The debates about the nature of modern societies and the roles which the media play in politics and everyday life.
- The major debates about the regulation and censorship of media.

And to

- Research and write your own thesis on an area of communication.

## Employment and Further Study Opportunities

Today's organisations need graduates with both good degrees and skills relevant to the workplace, i.e., employability skills. The University of Westminster is committed to developing employable graduates by ensuring that:

- Career development skills are embedded in all courses
- Opportunities for part-time work, placements and work-related learning activities are widely available to students
- Staff continue to widen and strengthen the University's links with employers in all sectors, involving them in curriculum design and encouraging their participation in other aspects of the University's career education and guidance provision
- Staff are provided with up-to-date data on labour market trends and employers' requirements which will inform the service delivered to students.

Graduates have found jobs in middle- and upper management in media industries, as well as the broader private (e.g. consulting and advertising firms) and public

sector (e.g. government ministries, regulatory authorities), international organisations and NGOs. Some graduates also continue to do PhD research. Success in their Masters degree has allowed many who have been in media jobs before joining the course to move into more senior roles within their companies or organisations, and to transfer to new sectors of the media.

## **Course Learning Outcomes**

Learning outcomes are statements on what successful students have achieved as the result of learning. These threshold statements of achievement are linked to the knowledge, understanding and skills that a student will have gained on successfully completing a course.

The skills strategy for the MA in Communication reflects the University's policy of "Educating for Professional Life" and is designed to provide a broad range of transferable skills that equip students to develop or enhance careers in the media and communication fields.

**Course Knowledge and Understanding (CKU):** By the end of the MA in Communication course students will:

- CKU1: have a deep and systematic understanding of the role the media play in diverse societies;
- CKU2: have a comprehensive understanding of the key theories by explain the role of the media in various societies may be explained;
- CKU3: have a comprehensive understanding of the key research methodologies and approaches relevant to the field of media and communication;
- CKU4: show critical awareness of current research issues, problems and/or insights relevant to the interdisciplinary field of media and communication;
- CKU5: have undertaken independent research related to the political, economic, cultural and/or sociological factors which shape the practices and outcomes of mass media, including media texts and audience reception of them.

The core course specific modules address these course learning outcomes as follows:

- 7COMM013W Theories of Communication (CKU1, CKU2)
- 7COMM002W Approaches to Media & Communication research (CKU3, CKU5)
- 7MEST001W Advanced Independent Study (CKU1, CKU2, CKU3, CKU4, CKU5)

## **Skills**

In the case of communications, we are aware that the range of skills is exceptionally diffuse, and that students on the course hope to develop careers in a variety of fields in many different countries. As an individual the nature of your work may change dramatically as you change jobs. We are also aware that we are preparing you for careers in a rapidly changing industry; we want you to be able to take advantage of change, and not to be its victim. It therefore would be misleading and unhelpful to

place too much emphasis on acquiring a precise set of skills drawn from one part of the UK's communications industry.

Some of the most important skills developed on the course are transferable and are not developed in a prescriptive way. Believing that communications is a rapidly evolving area, not an exact science, we feel that such skills are crucial to successful careers in the field. The course will, for example, develop your skills as an independent researcher. We also encourage you to think creatively, to display initiative and to develop original ideas in a self-confident but at the same time reflective way. We emphasise written and oral communication skills. Optional modules place particular stress on developing oral presentation techniques. Others involve teamwork, another important element in media and communications industries.

Finally, with a view to your professional development planning, the course is designed to give you a wide-ranging and critical knowledge of the industry you plan to enter.

The specific skills and learning outcomes in the MA in Communication aim to explain what students achieve at the end of each module of study on the course. These are explained in detail under the individual entries for each module in the course handbook.

**Course Specific Skills (CSS):** On completion of the course, students will have developed the following subject-specific skills:

CSS1:	Ability to interpret the role the media play in diverse societies;
CSS2:	Ability to analyse, in depth, key current issues facing the mass media and communication fields and critically assess relevant theories;
CSS3:	Ability to interpret the context in which communication takes place, using a variety of approaches, judging the appropriateness of the methodologies used, and recognising alternative approaches;
CSS4:	Ability to design and undertake a substantial independent piece of research in the field of media and communication to address significant areas of conceptual and/or empirical knowledge which will require the extensive use of a variety of information resources. In doing so, they will select and apply appropriate methodological approaches and critically evaluate their effectiveness.

The core course specific modules address these course learning outcomes as follows:

- 7COMM013W Theories of Communication (CSS1, CSS2)
- 7COMM002W Approaches to Media & Communication research (CSS2, CSS3)
- 7MEST001W Advanced Independent Study (CSS1, CSS2, CSS3, CSS4)

## **Key Transferable Skills (KTS)**

Upon completion of the course students will have developed a number of general rather than discipline-specific skills which any practitioner must have if s/he is to be successful. These Key Transferable Skills developed and assessed at postgraduate level are:

**KTS1: Group working:**

Students will be able to (a) work effectively within a group both as group leaders and/or group members; (b) clarify tasks and make appropriate use of group members abilities; (c) negotiate and handle conflict with confidence; and (d) participate effectively in the peer review process;

**KTS2: Accessing Learning resources:**

Students will be able to locate and use a full range of learning resources to carry out literature reviews and engage in research activity;

**KTS3: Self evaluation:**

Students will be able to reflect on their own and others' performance; participate effectively in the peer review process and analyse and identify ways to improve practice; know how to advance their knowledge and understanding, how to recognise their development needs and develop new skills to a high level;

**KTS4: Management of information:**

Students will be able to competently undertake research tasks with minimum guidance; sieve through information clutter to identify relevance, to organise and present information effectively using different media;

**KTS5: Autonomy:**

Students will be independent and self-critical learners, who can act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks and who will be able to guide the learning of others;

**KTS6: Communication:**

Students will engage confidently in academic and professional communication both orally and in writing with others, reporting on action clearly, autonomously and competently;

## KTS7: **Problem solving:**

Students' abilities in independent learning and self-evaluation will equip them to regard problems as challenges and adopt the problem-solving approach required for professional life and continuing professional study, including making professional and ethical use of others where appropriate.

All optional modules contribute in some way to the acquisition of these transferable skills. The following shows how the above key transferable skills are mapped to the core course modules:

- 7COMM013W Theories of Communication (KTS2, KTS3, KTS4, KTS5, KTS6, KTS7)
- 7COMM002W Approaches to Media & Communication research (KTS1, KTS2, KTS3, KTS4, KTS5, KTS6, KTS7)
- 7MEST001W Advanced Independent Stud (KTS2, KTS3, KTS4, KTS5, KTS6, KTS7)

## **Learning, Teaching and Assessment Methods**

Teaching and learning on the course is defined to be appropriate to the needs of each module. The teaching and learning methods on the course include the following:

*Lectures:* These are designed to give you a general overview of the topic and are usually concise, topical and interactive. If you do not understand a point, or disagree with it, feel free to ask questions or argue your case.

*Seminars:* These are designed to encourage students to discuss a topic, based on the lecture and their reading. Sometimes individual students will be asked to introduce a specific topic in a seminar.

*Individual Reading:* A written list of recommended reading for each topic will be given out at the beginning of each module. This reading list represents a basis for exploration of the subject and students are expected to go beyond the reading list and seek out other material.

*Internet Use:* Modules may require students to undertake web searches on particular topics. The intention is that they should gain expertise in the use of on-line data and the integration of this material into presentations and essays.

*Presentations:* The intention of asking students to give individual presentations is to give them experience in presenting ideas and arguments concisely, to familiarise them with the preparation and use of visual aids, and to teach them how to interact with an audience. In some modules individual presentations will be formally assessed for clarity of argument, evidence of reading and presentational style.

Even where the individual presentation is not formally assessed, students will normally be given feedback on their performance. Group presentations are designed to give experience of working on a particular topic as a member of a team, so that students learn how to divide up topics, work to a schedule and co-ordinate presentation.

*Workshops and Classes:* These are designed so that students work in a group in class on a particular topic, often using a real scenario or current example. Led by specialist staff, they enable everyone in the group to work intensively, pool ideas and solve

problems together.

*Independent Research:* Student led project work involving interviews and other external contact and research activity, leading to the assessed dissertation.

### Assessment

There are no formal exams in this course. This course focuses on imparting knowledge and skills. The assessment strategy is designed to facilitate and test this process. Your progress will be assessed by a variety of methods which we have carefully developed in order to equip you with the course skills identified above as well as the transferable critical thinking and problem solving skills that you would expect to learn on any postgraduate course.

The assessment criteria for oral presentations and written assignments are clearly set out in the course handbook. In addition, you will be provided with a full brief for each assessment in the relevant module handbook, and the brief will be discussed in class with an opportunity to ask questions. All Semester One modules have the same type of assessment. They require students to submit quite early on in the academic year a short diagnostic essay (20 weighting). This assignment enables the student and module leader to identify potential problems that can be addressed through Study Skills and as such students have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve. In addition, students have to submit a second substantial written essay towards the end of the semester. There is more variety in assessment techniques in second semester modules. These include business proposals, group work and assessed presentations in addition to essays.

### Course Structure

See separate diagram.

The MA in Communication is taught in two different modes: full-time and part-time.

This section shows the core and option modules available as part of the course and their credit value. Full-time Postgraduate students study seven modules (totalling 180 credits) per year.

<b>Credit Level 7</b>				
<b>Module code</b>	<b>Module title</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>UK credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
<b>Core modules to the value of 100 credits</b>				
7COMM013W	Theories of Communication	Core	20	10
7COMM002W	Approaches to Media & Communication Research	Core	20	10
7MEST001W	Advanced Independent Study	Core	60	30
<b>Two further modules worth 40 credits from</b>				
7MEDS005W	Political Economy of Communication	Option	20	10
7MEST002W	Global Media	Option	20	10

7COMM011W	Political Analysis of Communications Policy	Option	20	10
7COMM012W	Technology and Communications Policy	Option	20	10
<b>Two optional modules to the value of 40 credits from</b>				
7COMM008W	Media, Activism & Politics	Option	20	10
7COMM006W	Media Audiences	Option	20	10
7MEST004W	Chinese Media	Option	20	10
7COMM003W	Development and Communication Policy	Option	20	10
7COMM007W	Media Business Strategy	Option	20	10
7COMM010W	Policies for Digital Convergence	Option	20	10
7JRNLO16W	The Sociology of News	Option	20	10
Or another Level 7 module as agreed with the Course Leader				

NB: Not all option modules will necessarily be offered in any one year.

Full-time students will complete the course in one year, part-time students in two years. Over this one year (full-time students) or two years (part-time students) students will take the equivalent of six (20 credit) taught modules. In addition they will complete a (60 credit) Advanced Independent Study dissertation module based on a taught component of 10 credits and independent research leading to a dissertation (50 credits) which is submitted at the end of August of the first year (for full-time students) or at the end of August of the second year (for part-time students).

The Advanced Independent Study dissertation should include primary research on a subject chosen by the student but which is relevant to the MA in Communication and is agreed with the supervisor, for instance related to the political, economic, cultural and/or sociological factors which shape the practices and outcomes of mass media, including media texts and audience reception of them.

In semester one, **full time students** take three taught modules (of 20 credits each). Of these one is *compulsory* (*Theories of Communication*). In the second semester students take three 20-credit taught modules. Of these one is *compulsory* (*Approaches to Media & Communication Research*). In addition, students take the compulsory Advanced Independent Study (*Dissertation*) module *over the whole year*. This module will consist of a taught module during the first semester of 10 credits. In the second semester students undertake independent study under the guidance of a dissertation supervisor personally assigned to them from the beginning of the semester. The final dissertation, to be delivered by the end of August, will be worth 60 credits.

**Part-time students** will take the compulsory taught module (*Theories of Communication*) plus another taught module in semester one of the 1<sup>st</sup> year. In semester two of the 1<sup>st</sup> year, they will take one compulsory module (*Approaches to Media & Communication Research*) and one optional module. In their second year

of study, part timers will take one optional taught module in each semester. In addition, they have to take the compulsory Advanced Independent Study (*Dissertation*) module *over the whole year*. This module will consist of a taught module during the first semester of 10 credits each. In the second semester students undertake independent study under the guidance of a dissertation supervisor personally assigned to them from the beginning of the semester. The final dissertation, to be delivered by the end of August of your second year, will be worth 60 credits.

**Advanced Independent Study Parts I and II (60 credits)  
(Core)**

*Theories of Communication Policy  
(Core to MA Communication) (20 credits)*

*Approaches to Media & Communication  
Research (Core) (20 credits)*

*Plus two 20-credit modules from:*

*Plus Two 20-credit modules from:*

*Political Analysis of  
Communication Policy*

*Sociology of News*

*Political economy of  
communication*

*Chinese Media*

*Global Media*

*Development and communications policy*

*Technology and  
communications policy*

*Media audiences*

*Study Skills (non-assessed)*

*Media, Activism & Politics*

Xmas

*Media Business Strategy*

*Policies for Digital Convergence*

*Another Level 7 module as agreed with the Course leader*

Easter

All modules are Level 7

Assessment Exam Board

## Academic regulations

The current Handbook of Academic Regulations is available at [westminster.ac.uk/academic-regulations](http://westminster.ac.uk/academic-regulations)

## How will you be supported in your studies?

### Course Management

The *MA Communication* is taught within Westminster's Cluster for Media and Society. The management structure supporting the course is as follows:

- Jacob Johanssen, Acting Course Leader responsible for day to day running and overall management of the course and development of the curriculum. He can be contacted on extension (x68377) or by email: [j.johanssen@wwestminster.ac.uk](mailto:j.johanssen@wwestminster.ac.uk).
- Jonathan Stockdale, Head of Postgraduate, holds academic responsibility for the course and for other courses run within the Media and Society cluster.
- Kerstin Mey, Dean of Faculty, holds overall responsibility for the course and for the other courses run by the Faculty of Media, Arts & Design.

The Acting Course Leader, Jacob Johanssen will be responsible for:

- Admissions
- Approving students' programme of study
- Organisation of tutorial and supervisory support and pastoral care
- Co-ordination of Dissertation supervision
- Co-ordination of marks for assessment boards
- General management of the course

The **Course Team** reviews and develops the course and sets the framework for the above procedures, in which all members of course team participate. The Course Team of the MA in Communication consists, in addition to the Acting course leader, of Prof. Christian Fuchs, Dr. Winston Mano, Dr. Maria Michalis, Prof. Daya Thussu and all other module leaders of modules included in the course.

**Module leaders** oversee the delivery of all aspects of the module(s) they are responsible for. They consult students on matters relevant to their module.

### Academic Support

Upon arrival, an induction programme will introduce you to the staff responsible for the course, the campus on which you will be studying, the Library and IT facilities, additional support available and to your Faculty Registry Office. You will be provided with the Course Handbook, which provides detailed information about the course. Each course has a course leader or Director of Studies. All students enrolled on a full-time course and part time students registered for more than 60 credits a year have a personal tutor, who provides advice and guidance on academic matters. The University uses a Virtual Learning Environment called Blackboard where students

access their course materials, and can communicate and collaborate with staff and other students

### **Learning Support**

The Academic Learning Development Centre supports students in developing the skills required for higher education. As well as online resources in Blackboard, students have the opportunity to attend Study Skills workshops and one to one appointments.

Learning support includes four libraries, each holding a collection of resources related to the subjects taught at that site. Students<sup>1</sup> can search the entire library collection online through the Library Search service to find and reserve printed books, and access electronic resources (databases, e-journals, e-books). Students can choose to study in the libraries, which have areas for silent and group study, desktop computers, laptops for loan, photocopying and printing services. They can also choose from several computer rooms at each campus where desktop computers are available with the general and specialist software that supports the courses taught at their Faculty. Students can also securely connect their own laptops and mobile devices to the University wireless network.

### **Support Services**

The University of Westminster Student Affairs department provide advice and guidance on accommodation, financial and legal matters, personal counselling, health and disability issues, careers, specialist advice for international students and the chaplaincy providing multi-faith guidance. The University of Westminster Students' Union also provides a range of facilities to support students during their time at the University.

### **How do we ensure the quality of our courses and continuous improvement?**

The course was initially approved by a University Validation Panel in 2016. The panel included internal peers from the University, academic(s) from another university and a representative from industry. This helps to ensure the comparability of the course to those offered in other universities and the relevance to employers.

The course is also monitored each year by the Faculty to ensure it is running effectively and that issues which might affect the student experience have been appropriately addressed. Staff will consider evidence about the course, including the outcomes from Course Committees, evidence of student progression and achievement and the reports from external examiners, to evaluate the effectiveness of the course. Each Faculty puts in to place an action plan. This may for example include making changes on the way the module is taught, assessed or even how the course is structured in order to improve the course, in such cases an approval process is in place.

A Course review takes place periodically to ensure that the curriculum is up-to-date and that the skills gained on the course continue to be relevant to employers. Students meet with review panels to provide feedback on their experiences. Student

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<sup>1</sup> Students enrolled at Collaborative partners may have differing access due to licence agreements.

feedback from previous years e.g. from Course Committees is also part of the evidence used to assess how the course has been running.

### **How do we act on student feedback?**

Student feedback is important to the University and student views are taken seriously. Student feedback is gathered in a variety of ways.

- Through Course Committees students have the opportunity to express their voice in the running of their course. Student representatives are elected to Committee to expressly represent the views of their peer. The University and the Students' Union work together to provide a full induction to the role of the student representatives.
- Each Faculty also has its own Faculty Student Forum with student representatives; this enables wider discussions across the Faculty. Student representatives are also represented on key Faculty and university committees.
- All students are invited to complete a questionnaire before the end of each module. The feedback from this will inform the module leader on the effectiveness of the module and highlight areas that could be enhanced.
- The University also has an annual Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey or PTES which helps us compare how we are doing with other institutions, to make changes that will improve what we do in future and to keep doing the things that you value.

**Please note:** This programme specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. This specification should be read in conjunction with the Course Handbook provided to students and Module Handbooks, which provide more detailed information on the specific learning outcomes, content, teaching, learning and assessment methods for each module.

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