

# GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN HEALTH COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

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This interdisciplinary certificate program is aimed primarily at post-baccalaureate students interested in developing expertise in health-related communication as it applies in both academic and non-academic settings. Health communication specialists help individuals and communities understand topics such as medical treatment, health lifestyle choices, disease prevention, new product development and government policies. They focus primarily on disseminating information that impacts health and well-being.

Today's health communicators must understand and effectively use new technologies and media, social marketing, and culturally sensitive tactics. Health communication specialists must articulate technical information clearly and concisely. They need to be skilled researchers, fact checkers, problem solvers, strategists, and decision makers who can write and edit in a variety of media such as print, online, and broadcast.

This certificate is offered as a collaboration of the departments of Mass Communication, Population Health and Sociology.

## Upon completion of the certificate program, students will be able to:

- Assess the impact of health messages and campaigns on individuals and populations;
- Apply principles and theories of health communication to practice and research;
- Design health messages and campaigns that are effective in changing health-related behaviours;
- Use both traditional and new media to help influence public policy and educate the public about various health and wellness issues;
- Analyze current programs and interventions to determine how health communication efforts could be changed for better results.

## The program is intended to serve:

- Students completing undergraduate degrees in mass communication (especially the public relations/advertising track) or in public health, who wish to build specialized skills in health communication.
- Communication practitioners who want to update their skills with new techniques and technologies specifically directed toward health communication.
- National and international students who need the access and flexibility offered by online coursework and a virtual internship.

This Graduate Certificate is eligible to receive Title IV funding – Direct Unsubsidized Loans and Graduate PLUS loans by request. To be considered for aid, students need to submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Applicants should submit the following directly to the Office of Graduate Admissions (<https://www.shsu.edu/dept/graduate-admissions/prospective-students.html>):

1. Graduate Application (<http://www.shsu.edu/admissions/apply-texas.html>)
2. Application Fee (<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/graduate-studies/application-fee.html>)
3. Official transcripts of all academic work previously undertaken
4. Bachelor's or master's degree in communication, public health or an associated area with a minimum GPA of 2.8
5. A personal essay regarding career background and goals
6. **International students ONLY:** Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). A minimum score of 550 (paper-based), 213 (computer-based), or 79 (internet-based) is required.

## Inquiries may be directed to:

Ruth Massingill, Ph.D.  
Associate Chair

Department of Mass Communication  
Sam Houston State University  
Huntsville, TX 77341-2207  
Telephone: (936) 294-1494  
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Five graduate courses, or 15 semester credit hours, are required for the Certificate in Health Communication and Public Relations. The core requirements include a graduate course in health communication and one in strategic public relations, for a total of six credit hours. Students choose two elective courses for six more credits. The required capstone course is a virtual internship with a health organization, a NGO (non-governmental organization) or an approved non-profit.

The program is designed so it can be taken fully on-line, though some courses may be also offered face-to-face. The certificate can be completed on a part-time basis in one year.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Hours</b>
<b>Graduate Certificate in Health Communication and Public Relations</b>		
<b>Required Courses (6 hours)</b>		
HLTH 5360	Comm Theory Prac Health Prof	3
MCOM 5314	Strategic PR&Advert-Healthcare	3
<b>Restricted Electives (6 hours)</b>		
Choose two of the following:		6
HLTH 5331	Foundation of Community Hlth	
HLTH 5332	Human Ecology	
HLTH 5338	Colloq in Consumer Hlth Edu	
MCOM 5050	Special Topic	
MCOM 5324	Social Marketing	
MCOM 5330	Advanced Digital Writing	
MCOM 6360	Mass Comm Research Methods	
<b>Required Capstone Course (3 hours)</b>		
MCOM 6354	Virtual Internship	3
Total Hours		15