

Communication skills are consistently rated among the top five characteristics of successful managers. Without adequate communication skills, an individual's academic, technical, and professional expertise may not be recognized. Recruiters at Ross regularly stress the importance of communication; it is the lens through which a manager is perceived. We strive to ensure that our graduates are not merely adequate communicators – we want you to be recognized for excellence in communication. Below you will find an explanation of the Communication Requirement, a description of the courses offered, and an overview of the Waiver Exam.

The following outline lists the questions in the order they are answered in this document.

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MBA Communication Requirement

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MBA COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENT

What is the MBA Communication Requirement?

The MBA Communication Requirement can be fulfilled through course work or a Waiver Exam. Unlike other MBA waivers, however, students have more than one opportunity to take the test, or to try the test again should they not pass the first time. This flexibility in test taking, as well as flexibility in course options, allows students to select the option that best fits their curriculum objectives.

How can I satisfy the Communication Requirement?

Option 1: Take one of the following courses and receive a passing grade.

- LHC 520 (3.0 crs)
- LHC 521 (1.5 crs)
- LHC 522 (1.5 crs)
- LHC 524 (1.5 crs)
- LHC 560 (3.0 crs)

A description of these courses can be found in the Courses section below.

Option 2: Take the Waiver Exam and receive a passing score.

A Waiver Exam is offered near the start of each full term (typically, August and November). The Waiver Exam presents a specific management situation and requires a written persuasive response. The written response is evaluated for clarity of thought, organization and development of ideas, audience awareness, persuasive appeal and English usage.

Day MBA:

For Day MBA students admitted Fall 2004 or Fall 2005, the Waiver Exam may be taken up to four times. The Waiver Exam is offered in August and late Fall of each year, typically in November. A pass on the Waiver Exam fulfills the MBA communication requirement. The Waiver Exam will be given in November, 2005, and again in August, 2006, and November, 2006, for the Class of 2007 students.

For Day MBA students admitted Fall 2006 and later, the Waiver Exam must be taken within the first year of the program. This means taking the exam in August prior to start of classes, or in November of their first Fall term.

Evening MBA:

For Evening students admitted prior to Winter 2006, the Waiver Exam must be taken within 18 months, and no later than November 2006. Students who have not taken the assessment by that deadline will need to fulfill the Communication requirement with course work.

For Evening students admitted Winter 2006 and later, the Waiver Exam must be taken within 18 months of entering the program.

NOTE: Evening students may enroll in day courses, and day students may enroll in evening courses to satisfy the writing requirement.

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COURSES

What course work is required?

A passing grade in one of the of the following communication courses must be obtained to fulfill the requirement, unless a student passes the Waiver Exam during the time frame specified above. All these courses cover ways to develop and structure management messages as well as communication strategies to achieve management goals. Also covered are techniques for managing multiple messages within organizations. Cases and writing tasks provide students ample opportunity to practice writing for various management situations. Ross's MBA writing courses are *not* remedial; they address strategic, real-world communication issues managers face daily.

Managerial Writing (LHC 520)

3.0 credits **Terms offered: W 06, Sp 06, Su 06**

This course introduces conceptual and analytical tools that facilitate decisions about written communications in organizations. Its perspective is that of the manager; its focus is on the complex role writing plays in key management activities such as the written presentations of complex data to multiple constituencies (e.g. writing connected with performance appraisals; informational memos, proposals, annual reports). Through a series of cases and writing tasks, participants learn to associate managerial goals and receiver responses with textual variations involving the organization and development of content, syntactic constructions, and document design. Also explored, in the second half of the course, are in-basket management, media selection, and message distribution and timing.

Writing Fundamentals for Entrepreneurs (LHC 521)

1.5 credits **Terms offered: W 06 A**

This course explores fundamental communication principles for writing required in entrepreneurial contexts. The course overviews relevant business writing principles giving participants an opportunity to complete entrepreneurial documents including personal biographical statements, product descriptions, industry overviews, value propositions, target market analyses, and mission statements. Participants also evaluate business plans and solicitations for funding.

Managerial Writing Fundamentals (LHC 522)

1.5 credits **Terms offered: F 05 A, F 05 B, W 06 A, W 06 B**

Fundamentals for managerial writing are central to the course. Students review the punctuation, grammar, syntax, organizational approaches, content development and conventional formats necessary for managerial documents. Goals include writing clearly, concisely and correctly, achieved through numerous writing exercises and by composing a variety of business memoranda and letters

Persuasive Management Communication (LHC 524)

1.5 credits **Terms offered: W 06 A**

This course presents persuasive communication strategies that facilitate effective management. Specifically, the course covers fundamental persuasive frameworks (e.g. compliance-gaining, conflict management, credibility control) applied to oral and written messages. These frameworks provide a basis for exploring persuasive communication in a variety of management settings. Special emphasis is placed on differing strategies associated with cultural variation, focusing on those most critical for global business communication.

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Communication Management (LHC 560)

3.0 credits **Terms offered: F 05**

Focusing on oral and written communications managers use to get work done in organizations, participants in this class respond to cases, complete interpersonal/scenarios, give individual and team presentations, run meetings, and write a variety of messages using diverse media replicating communications that managers must produce to perform their organizational responsibilities. Participants learn linguistic and rhetorical alternatives for structuring and delivering content, analytical tools for assessing message effectiveness, and frameworks that facilitate decisions involving information timing, media selection, and targeting multiple constituencies. Participants also collect evaluative data on their own communication effectiveness using a survey instrument to gather information from external associates as well as through videotape review of in-class performances and evaluations from the professor and class colleagues. There are two quizzes and every class involves case analyses and communication performances.

What additional communication courses are available?

Passing one of the courses listed above satisfies the Communication Requirement. We also offer other classes as electives to help you add to your communication skill set. The elective courses include the following:

- **Business & Media Relations (LHC 526)**
- **Communication for the Global Manager (LHC 559)**
- **Management Presentations (LHC 561)**

What writing resources are available for Ross MBA students?

In addition to a variety of communication courses that cover aspects of managerial writing, the Ross School of Business also provides a Writing Consultant Service. Consultants available through this service are professional writers who have extensive business writing experience and Ross communication training. Throughout the academic year, Consultants are available to assist individual students and student groups with written course assignments, application materials, essays, case analyses, MAP reports, etc. Consultants are available to work with students at various stages of the writing process: brainstorming, drafting, and revising. Consultants also provide assistance with English as a second language.

In addition, Consultants are an excellent resource for the Waiver Exam. Prior to taking the Exam, students may visit the Consultants to discuss a practice assessment or to get advice on strategies for passing the Exam. For detailed feedback after the Waiver Exam is scored, we also encourage you to visit a Consultant to discuss your writing strengths and areas to improve. Because we must evaluate hundreds of assessments in a timely manner, we cannot provide specific information about your assessment in the letter you receive notifying you of your score. Consultants can also offer personalized advice on choosing the best communication course work to meet your needs.

You may arrange a meeting with a writing consultant by signing up on the schedule posted online at <http://www.bus.umich.edu/CounselingCalendar/WritingProgram/>. The Writing Consultants' office is Room K1325.

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WAIVER EXAM

What is the MBA Communication Waiver Exam like?

The MBA Communication Waiver Exam tests managerial writing abilities. For a practice test, please go to https://lessons.ummumich.edu/2k/mbawa/practice_02. The Exam presents MBA students with a communication case involving a critical management situation that requires a written response. The writing abilities required for management are different from those needed for academic, journalistic, or creative writing. Managers use writing to get work done. The Exam is designed to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the writing sample, not to focus on grammatical or syntactical errors. For example, students may be asked to provide arguments in favor of keeping a sales training program or to advocate for a change in policy at work.

How is the MBA Communication Waiver Exam evaluated?

Students' written responses to the MBA Communication Waiver Exam are evaluated for managerial writing ability. Each response is read with the following question in mind: To what extent does this student demonstrate competency in selecting, developing, and organizing content; employing language choices; and using persuasive appeals to achieve management goals? To address this question, evaluators use the four criteria areas shown in the chart below.

Audience Adaptation	Content Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize and address reader concerns• Structure and develop arguments that lead to the desired response• Select personal references, nouns and verbs, modals, negative and positive words, to create a message suited to the reader and the situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• State claims (conclusions and recommendations) clearly and consistently• Develop sufficient arguments to support his/her claims• Employ data to support claims• Present content that is essential rather than trivial
Organizational Strategy	Language Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop the message from beginning to end with a clear sense of logic• Use paragraph-to-paragraph and sentence-to-sentence transitions so that the message is coherent• Position claims according to a deliberate communication strategy suited to the situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manage grammar, spelling, and mechanics so that they do not interfere with comprehension and so that management goals for the situation may be achieved• Use vocabulary suited to the situation• Demonstrate overall mastery of correct sentence structure

Who evaluates the MBA Communication Waiver Exam?

The MBA Communication Waiver Exam is evaluated by a team of trained assessors. All team members have advanced degrees in linguistics, communication, and/or composition, as well as professional writing and consulting experience. Most also have experience teaching at the university level.

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How does the Michigan MBA Communication Waiver Exam differ from the GMAT Analytical Writing Assessment?

The MBA Communication Waiver Exam is a case-based test, which involves writing in response to a particular management situation or specific audience that reflects the kind of on-the-job writing that Ross MBAs will encounter in the workplace. The GMAT Analytical Writing Assessment is an essay writing test, which assesses academic writing competency.

How often is the MBA Communication Waiver Exam offered, and may it be taken more than once?

The Waiver Exam is administered twice a year, in August (just before the Fall term) and in November (just before the Winter term).

Day MBA students who enter in Fall 2006 or later must take the Waiver Exam during their first year of coursework. Day MBA students have up to two opportunities to take the Waiver Exam.

Evening MBA students who enter in Winter 2006 or later must take the Waiver Exam during their first 18 months of coursework. Evening MBA students have up to three opportunities to take the Waiver Exam.

CONTACT US

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