

Proposal for Concurrent BS in Technical Communication/MA in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication

Approved by the Graduate Studies Committee 3-24-21

Approved by the English Department Graduate Faculty 5-3-21

Concurrent undergraduate and graduate degree programs can provide opportunities for well-qualified ISU juniors and seniors to apply for a program leading to both a masters and bachelors degree at the end of a fifth year of study. Students interested in research may apply for a graduate research assistantship during their fourth and fifth years of study. Individualized concurrent degree programs are available.

The following material describes the procedures to obtain approval for a recognized concurrent undergraduate and graduate degree program when both the undergraduate and graduate majors have already been approved. For students pursuing a concurrent undergraduate bachelor's degree and graduate degree, a maximum of 6 graduate credits can be double counted for both the bachelor's degree and the graduate degree subject to the Program of Study committee approval.

The proposal will be reviewed by the Graduate Curriculum and Catalog Committee, by the Graduate Council, by the Graduate College, and by the Dean of the Graduate College.

1. Name of the programs or majors

Technical Communication, Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication

2. Name of the degrees

BS in Technical Communication, MA in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication

3. Name of the department(s) which administer(s) the program

English

4. Rationale for the concurrent degree program

The BS in Technical Communication at ISU currently has 31 majors. One practical option for students with a Technical Communication (TC) major is to continue to graduate degrees, including MA degrees in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication (RCPC). Such a degree provides further coursework suitable for seeking employment in many private, educational, and governmental organizations in Iowa and across the US. A concurrent degree program would enable our TC majors to complete the requirements of the MA degree in less time than pursuing each degree separately. We believe that this option will add significant value to our undergraduate program while helping to recruit well-qualified students into the existing structure of our MA RCPC degree without requiring additional resources to administer.

Our RCPC program at ISU was one of the first programs to combine a traditional rhetoric/composition curriculum coursework in professional communication. As such, the program has been well-suited to preparing students for work as professional communicators in industry, academia, and government. In addition, the program's faculty are well-known for their research and teaching in rhetoric, composition, and professional communication. The courses required for the concurrent MA in RCPC already exist, and the concurrent degree option will add to the numbers of students in them. Faculty have had some positive experience with undergraduate TC majors in these courses because undergraduate TC majors occasionally enroll in them. Faculty find the undergraduate TC majors well-qualified to succeed in these courses.

The concurrent program would benefit students in several ways. First, TC majors often find the major late because they don't enter college knowing what TC is. This concurrent degree would allow them more

time to benefit from a greater array of courses, particularly practical courses such as technical editing and document design, visual communication, and web design and usability testing. Second, while few TC majors aspire to teach, those who complete the MA in RCPC could use the credential to teach at community colleges. They would benefit from our program's pedagogy courses. Third, students in the concurrent program will gain further training in research methods (ENGL 501 and 602C) and theory (ENGL 506 and 547) that will better frame the practical skills and knowledge that they acquire in other courses.

Overall, the concurrent MA in RCPC offers a better alternative for many undergraduate students in TC than spending two additional years after graduation in our MA program (or in an MA program at another university) or simply heading out in search of employment. Each of these options is right for some students, but we propose to add to them the most expedient and educationally valuable option of earning an MA in RCPC degree while spending only one additional year beyond the BS degree. The RCPC program at ISU is ideally situated for this type of concurrent degree given its focus on professional communication and a set of well-developed professional communication courses.

5. Admission procedures and requirements

See description below.

6. Requirements of the program

The requirements for the concurrent program would remain essentially the same for both the BS and MA degrees; however, six graduate credits could be counted toward the requirements of both degrees. The concurrent degree program, like the current MA in RCPC, will culminate in a thesis or creative component.

7. Expected enrollment

3 to 5 applicants per year

8. If not already addressed, answer the following:

a. How will the undergraduate degree plan and graduate program of study be developed?

The undergraduate TComm adviser works closely with RCPC graduate faculty, and scheduling for most undergraduate TComm as well as the graduate courses needed for the MA degree is carried out by an area coordinator in consultation with the undergraduate adviser and the full RCPC faculty. Thus, the TComm adviser will have the knowledge needed to advise students enrolled in the concurrent degree program in developing the undergraduate degree plan and graduate program of study. Graduate faculty in RCPC will be available for supplemental advising as needed until students select a major professor.

b. When will the student have a major professor?

Students will select a major professor in their second semester of the concurrent degree program. However, they will continue to work with the undergraduate adviser until all BS degree requirements are met.

c. Will graduate assistantships be provided?

Students will be eligible to apply for research assistantships upon entry into the program if those positions are available.

Most teaching assistantships in English involve the TA serving as the instructor of record for undergraduate communication courses. Thus, students will be eligible for teaching assistantships, but they can start one only after all BS degree requirements have been met.

d. Will a thesis be required?

No. Students can choose between a thesis or creative component.

e. Who will be responsible for the administration of the program?

The English department, with primary responsibilities residing with the RPC area group.

f. How much time is required to complete the program? Show a sample semester-by-semester plan.

See 5-Year Plan on page 7 below.

g. Will students be allowed to double count credits? If so, how many?

Yes. 6 credits may be used toward the requirements of both degrees.

9. Attach memos showing approval by appropriate department and college committees, faculty, and administrators.

- Bethany Gray, DOGE and Chair, Department of English Graduate Studies Committee
- Volker Hegelheimer, English department chair
- Jo Mackiewicz, RPC area coordinator
- Curriculum Committee, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

10. Proposal Contact

Jo Mackiewicz, RPC area coordinator, jomack@iastate.edu

Program Description: Concurrent BS in TC and MA in RCPC

A concurrent BS in TC and MA in RCPC offers well-qualified students the opportunity for accelerated study, achieving both degrees within a five-year time frame. A student enrolled in this program pursues a graduate MA degree while simultaneously completing the requirements for the BS in TComm. Completing the concurrent degree program would enable students to enter the workforce one year earlier than through the traditional MA-degree pathway. Up to six credits can be double-counted toward the requirements for both degrees. Students applying for the concurrent degree program should be motivated, focused, and able to handle a schedule demanding 16+ credit hours each semester.

Eligibility (all qualifications must be met to apply):

- A minimum 45 credits in undergraduate program completed
- At least 12 credits of TComm courses completed with a major GPA of 3.2 or higher,
- A minimum cumulative ISU GPA of 3.0

Timeline

Ideally, students would know by the middle of their sophomore year if they are interested in pursuing the concurrent program and would notify the TComm advisor of their intent. However, TComm is often a “found” major, so students may not determine they want to pursue the concurrent degree until their junior year. Even in this case, though, students could pursue the concurrent degree (with timely completion), depending on the number of TComm courses they had already taken. The electives/minor credits of a student’s senior year could be devoted to making up needed TComm courses. (See the 5-Year Plan on page 7 below.) We recommend that students plan ahead, and notify the undergraduate TComm adviser as soon as they know of their intent to apply for the concurrent degree.

Students should apply for concurrent enrollment by the end of the 5th semester of study (and no later than the end of the 6th semester) by filing the Request for Concurrent Enrollment and submitting the application materials (listed below).

If accepted into the concurrent enrollment program, students should begin taking graduate courses by the onset of the fourth year of study. Students accepted into the concurrent enrollment program will continue to work with the undergraduate TComm adviser until the BS degree requirements are met. By the onset of the fifth year of study, students should have identified an area for their thesis/creative component and establish a program of study committee, including a major professor.

Students become full-time graduate students upon acceptance into the concurrent degree program. Students are eligible to apply for a TA before the BS degree are met, but they cannot work as a TA until all the BS requirements are met; TA selection will follow the standard procedures for the department.

How to Apply

Follow these steps to create your application:

1. Fill out the Request for Concurrent Enrollment form.
2. Write a statement of purpose, usually 1 to 2 pages, explaining why you want to pursue the MA RCPC degree.
3. Obtain and submit three letters of recommendation.
4. Create a curriculum plan with the undergraduate TComm adviser, who works closely with members of the graduate faculty.
5. Submit a writing sample. This can be a paper written for an undergraduate course at ISU.
6. Submit your materials by email to Teresa Smiley in the Graduate English Office at englgrad@iastate.edu

The admission criteria are generally the same as those required for all graduate students in the department. Application materials are reviewed by the graduate faculty in RPC, the department's Director of Graduate Education (DOGE), and the department chair; their recommendations are forwarded on to the ISU Graduate College.

BS in Technical Communication

Majors develop advanced skills in multiple aspects of technical communication and apply their knowledge of technical communication to a specific discipline. Technical Communication majors must take 33 credits within the major, and 6 hours in a designated area of concentration related to science, technology, or design (an acceptable minor will also fulfill this requirement).

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| <u>ENGL 214</u> | Introduction to Technical Communication | 3 |
| <u>ENGL 310</u> | Rhetorical Analysis | 3 |
| <u>ENGL 313</u> | Rhetorical Website Design | 3 |
| <u>ENGL 314</u> | Technical Communication | 3 |
| <u>ENGL 415</u> | Business and Technical Editing | 3 |
| <u>ENGL 416</u> | Visual Aspects of Business and Technical Communication | 3 |
| Electives: 9 credits (with at least 6 credits from 400 or above courses) | | 9 |
| <u>ENGL 220</u> | Descriptive English Grammar | |
| <u>ENGL 302</u> | Business Communication | |
| <u>ENGL 309</u> | Proposal and Report Writing | |
| <u>SP CM 312</u> | Business and Professional Speaking | |
| <u>ENGL 312</u> | Biological Communication | |
| <u>ENGL 350</u> | Rhetorical Traditions | |
| <u>ENGL 418</u> | Seminar in Argumentation | |
| <u>ENGL 477</u> | Seminar in Technical Communication | |
| <u>ENGL 487</u> | Internship in Business, Technical, and Professional Communication | |
| <u>ENGL 542</u> | Document Design and Editing | |
| <u>ENGL 549</u> | Multimedia and Interaction Design | |
| Designated Area of Concentration (DAC) in technical, scientific, or design field | | 6 |
| Total Credits | | 33 |

MA in RCPC

| Area of Coursework | Courses | Credits |
|--|--|-----------------------|
| CORE COURSEWORK | Engl 501 Engl 506 Engl/Sp Cm 547 or 548 Engl 602C | 12 |
| ADVANCED STUDY IN RCPC Choose from any of the courses in the categories listed. TAs may count 3 credits of either Engl 500 or Sp Cm 513. | <i>Multimodal composition and speech communication</i> Engl 503, 504, Engl/Sp Cm 592B <i>Professional communication</i> Engl 505, 508, 529, 542, 549, 586, 587, Engl/Sp Cm 592C <i>Rhetoric</i> Engl/Sp Cm 547 or 548 (whichever one is not counted as Core Coursework above), 586, Engl/Sp Cm 592A After designated prerequisites and 6 graduate credits completed, students may take Engl 602A, 602B, 603, 611, 631 | 9 |
| ELECTIVES Electives may represent a cohesive set of graduate courses (6 credits) from English Department course offerings or from other university departments or programs (such as WGS 501, Sp Cm 504, Engl 522, and Engl 527). | | 6 |
| INDEPENDENT RESEARCH | Engl 699: Thesis Research <i>or</i> Engl 599: Creative Component | 3 |
| TOTAL | | 30 minimum |

Five-Year Plan for Concurrent BS in TC and MA in RCPC

| | Fall | Spring |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| First Year (Freshman) | ENGL 150 (or ENGL 250) (3) Humanities Choice (3) LIB 160 (1) MATH or STAT (3) ENGL 214 (3) Foreign Lang/Elective (3-4) Total = 16-17 | ENGL 250 (if not in fall) or ENGL 310 (3) Social Science Choice (3) Natural Science Choice (3) Humanities Choice (3) Foreign Lang/Elective (3-4) Total = 15-16 |
| Second Year (Sophomore) | ENGL 313 (3) TC Elective/Minor (3) Social Science Choice (3) US Diversity Choice (3) Natural Science Choice (3) Total = 15 | Technical/Scientific/Design (3) ENGL 314 (3) ENGL 415 (3) Humanities Choice (3) Elective/Minor (6) Total = 18 |
| Third Year (Junior) | ENGL 416 (3) Elective/Minor (3) International Perspectives Choice (3) Humanities Choice (3) Social Science Choice (3) Total = 15 | ENGL 487 (recommended) (3) ENGL 477 (3) Technical/Scientific/Design (3) Elective/Minor (6) Total = 15 |
| Fourth Year (Senior/MA) | Technical/Scientific/Design Course (3) ENGL 501, 505, 506, or 586 (6) ENGL 547 or 602C (3) Total = 12 | ENGL 529, 542, 548, or 549 (6) Electives or Minor (9) Total = 15 |
| Fifth Year (MA) | ENGL 501, 505, 506, or 586 (3) ENGL 547 or 602C (3) ENGL 500 or 513 (3) Total = 9 | ENGL 599/699 (3) ENGL 529, 542, 548, or 549 (3) Total = 6 |

RED = TComm courses

PURPLE = Six credits of double-counted courses

BLUE = RCPC courses

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To: Whom it may concern

From: Volker Hegelheimer, Professor and Chair, Department of English

Date: November 17, 2021

Re: Concurrent BS in Technical Communication/MA in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication



I strongly support the proposal for a concurrent BS program in Technical Communication and MA program in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication at Iowa State University. The Department of English is home to a developing undergraduate program in Technical Communication (TComm) with as many as 40 first and second majors. The department also offers a strong MA Program in Rhetoric, Composition and Professional Communication (RCPC). This proposal will provide additional opportunities for our undergraduate technical communication majors and better prepare them for a successful career after graduating from ISU. This degree provides coursework that ideally prepares students to seek employment in many private, educational, and governmental organizations in Iowa and across the US. This proposal does not require additional resources, but rather builds on the synergies already in place among the programs and the faculty and thus receives my highest recommendation.

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November 17, 2021

To whom it may concern:

The Graduate Studies Office in the Department of English wholeheartedly supports this proposal for a concurrent BS in Technical Communication (TComm) and MA in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication (RCPC) degree. The rhetoric and professional communication area faculty have taken care to develop a proposal which capitalizes on the well-established undergraduate technical communication degree and the existing MA in RCPC. This proposal was then discussed extensively by the Graduate Studies Committee in the Department of English, where it was voted to move it to the full graduate faculty. The proposal was approved by the English Department graduate faculty (by Qualtrics vote) in May 2021.

As DOGE of all graduate programs in the Department of English, I also support this proposal for the new concurrent BS/MA, as we anticipate that it will (a) benefit our many excellent undergraduate majors who go on to pursue graduate degrees, (b) build robust enrollment in the MA degree program with high-achieving students, and (c) rely on existing resources within the department.

Sincerely,



Bethany Gray
Director of Graduate Education, Department of English
Associate Professor
begray@iastate.edu