

MESM Environmental Communication Track FAQs

How is the Environmental Communication track different from other general Science Writing programs?

URI offers a graduate certificate in [Science Writing and Rhetoric](#). This certificate is focused on the writing side of science communication.

The [MESM Environmental Communication](#) (EC) track offers a broader approach toward science communication, encompassing not just writing and rhetoric but other skills that are essential and useful for environmental communicators. There is overlap between the EC track and the Science Writing certificate in terms of courses, which we view as a benefit for students: you can easily achieve both the MESM degree in the EC track and the Science Writing certificate, since several classes would count for both programs.

Which classes do you see as most important to this track?

When you look at the EC track page you will see that two communication courses are required: Writing in the Life Sciences and Public Engagement with Science. Note that these two courses are also required for the Science Writing and Rhetoric graduate certificate. Our goal with the EC track is to provide students with a variety of options that introduce diverse methods and competencies for environmental communication. Students can then create a curriculum that reflects their specific interests. In other words, some students may wish to build out their multimedia communication skills, while others may want to focus on communication with specific audiences. The list of electives grows each year.

About how many students are in this track?

The EC track launched in the 2020/2021 academic year. As the track gains attention, we anticipate that we could grow to approximately 20+ students in the EC track per year.

What do you hope for students to gain coming out of the program?

As a result of completing this track, students will be prepared to:

- Understand and engage with the complexity and challenges of effective environmental communication;
- Explain and apply major theoretical concepts in the field of environmental communication to analyze real-world cases;
- Identify clear, audience-specific communication strategies;
- Understand the key traits of inclusive science communication and know how to apply them;
- Analyze and critique case studies in environmental communication;
- Develop communication and/or public engagement strategies to inform and engage a range of stakeholders via culminating class projects;
- Develop and practice effective environmental communication and public engagement activities for diverse audiences using varied media (e.g., writing, video, podcasting, social media); and

- Identify collaborative strategies for addressing conflict and uncertainty in environmental communication and public engagement efforts.

What courses count for the 9 required communication and public engagement credits?

NRS 543: Public Engagement with Science (Sp, 3 credits) - Required

WRT 533: Graduate Writing in the Life Sciences (Fall, 3 cr) - Required

Select at least one course from the following options:

COM 460: Environmental Communication: Local and Global (Fall, 3 cr)

COM 520: Media and the Environment (Fall, 3 cr) *note that the course number may change for this class and it may not be offered every year

JOR 445: Video Storytelling for Science and the Environment (Fall, 3 cr)

NRS 542: Environmental Crisis Communication (Fall, 3 cr)

NRS 568: Visualizing Environmental Rhetoric (Sp, 3 cr) *note that the course number may change for this class

OCG 533: Graduate Writing in Marine and Environmental Sciences (Fall of odd-numbered years, 3 cr) *note that this class is appropriate for students who wish to gain more experience with writing in academic/research contexts.

Is there a consistent experience you're looking for in applicants?

A: Not really. Some MESM EC students come into the program with a good amount of communication experience, while others have had little or no experience with communication. We're looking for a clear commitment to developing these skills in your application materials.

Is there any funding available for MESM EC students?

The URI College of Environment and Life Sciences (CELS) offers the [CELS Communication Fellowship](#) to two MESM students each year: one incoming student and one second year student. This is a two-year fellowship funded by the CELS Dean's Office that provides full tuition, a stipend (20 hours/week during the academic year and one summer), and the opportunity to attend a relevant conference. Interested students should submit their applications by March 15 to be considered for this program.

Other funding opportunities may be available. See [this list](#) for more information.

Where can I find out about related job opportunities?

Dr. Virginia Schutte, a professional science communicator, created [this great resource](#) to answer this question. It's important to recognize that environmental (and, more broadly, science) communication jobs are often listed with a wide variety of position titles and descriptions. There is a growing number of employment opportunities, but you may need to conduct broad searches (with a variety of keywords) to find the positions of interest to you.