

# **Frequently asked questions about** **Journalism Studies at Mount Royal**

## **What is the teaching philosophy in the journalism program?**

The degree is a combination of theory and application. Students are expected to actively participate in class, challenge theories and ideas based on their readings, ask questions of their instructors and others, get out into the community to report their stories, adhere to ethical practices vital to the journalism profession, take advantage of volunteer opportunities to hone their writing and planning skills, and honourably fulfill their group work obligations. Students are treated as independent thinking adults; they are expected to help make the classroom interactive and dynamic and speak up if their learning needs are not being met. In return the instructors work hard to make discussions relevant and interesting, and are widely available for out of class interaction with and help for students.

*A hallmark of our program is in-depth, one-on-one story vetting (editing) sessions with students, in which faculty work with you individually (both in--class and out) to help you make your journalistic content (whether written, text, video, photographs, graphics or multimedia) as engaging and professional as possible.*

## **How many students are admitted every year?**

We currently accept 63 bachelor's degree students into the fall semester each year (we have only one intake per year). We generally have 200 or more applicants for those spots, so acceptance into the program can be fairly competitive.

## **I received notice that I've been accepted. But will there be a chance to meet the faculty before Sept. 2017?**

Yes. We want you to be sure that you've made the right decision for your future. We know that there are many programs and universities to choose from, and so we want to give you as much information as possible to help you feel comfortable that you've made the right choice for you. We will have information sessions on campus each month during the winter and spring in 2017.

## **My letter said "Conditionally Accepted." What does that mean?**

Students, who have self-reported their grades, including most high school seniors, will be termed "conditionally accepted" until their final grades are received. As long as those grades meet the university minimum, you will be fine. You should go ahead and pay your deposit, and then register for courses as soon as you're able.

## **How much is tuition?**

Please connect to our admissions department for the most recent tuition costs.

<http://www.mtroyal.ca/Admission/MoneyMatters/index.htm>

You can also call the Admissions and Recruitment Office (403-440-5000, or toll free 1-877-440-5001).

### **Can I live on campus?**

Yes. Get in touch with residence services for details.

<http://www.mtroyal.ca/CampusServices/LivingonCampus/>

### **Are there other costs to students?**

Yes. *Students need to purchase some textbooks, a dSLR camera, and some computer and audio/video supplies.* The first year of the program is the most costly because you're purchasing equipment that you'll use throughout the entire program (***an equipment list will be sent to you during the winter 2017 and will also be posted on [www.jtimes.ca](http://www.jtimes.ca).***

Depending on the model of camera you choose, first-year equipment costs are usually around \$1,200. Textbook costs, meanwhile, vary semester to semester and vary by particular course (though many journalism courses have limited, or no texts at all). The journalism program routinely informs the student finance office of the equipment demands so that they can be factored into student loans. Having a personal laptop computer is not required by the program though many students find them helpful to have.

### **How long is the journalism degree program?**

If you take a full 5 course load per semester, the journalism stream of the Bachelor of Communication will include eight semesters or four years on campus, and one semester of a mandatory non-credit work experience.

### **Do I need to complete the program in four years?**

No! ***Many students take an extra semester or two to complete the program.***

This is most often because they need to work more than the recommended limit of 12-18 hours per week outside of school. Other students have time consuming personal or family commitments, or other reasons for slowing the program down. We hope you will look at completing the degree not as a race, but as a journey to be enjoyed. The focus should be on using your time well, keeping your workload manageable, and building a strong portfolio.

***We strongly encourage any student who must work 20 hours or more a week to meet with a faculty advisor to discuss a slightly reduced study plan.***

### **Do my grades in the program matter?**

Yes. A key goal of the program is that each student builds a professional entry-level portfolio of his or her work, and B or better work in every course will help you toward this goal. Second, to continue at MRU from year-to-year you need keep your GPA above 2.00 average (which is a C average), and a passing grade in all COMM courses is also a C or better.

Review the Mount Royal calendar (which is like the school's rule book) for policies on "continuance" and graduation. The calendar is available online through [mtroyal.ca/AcademicSupport/AcademicCalendar](http://mtroyal.ca/AcademicSupport/AcademicCalendar). Lastly, it is important to understand that core (or communication) courses are often prerequisites, or required, to continue to the next semester or level. Getting a poor grade in a given course could, as a result, prevent you from taking the next course in that sequence in the semester that follows.

### **What kinds of courses will I take?**

See the curriculum and course descriptions included in this package. But in general terms, the degree is approximately 55 per cent journalism core courses and 45 per cent General Education requirements and options. Generally COMM courses fulfill your core requirements, though you may take a few additional COMM courses as general education options. A list of General Education courses offered is available at:

<http://mtroyal.ca/AboutMountRoyal/TeachingLearning/GeneralEducation/Courses/index.htm>

### **What is General Education?**

General Education is the component of a university degree that includes courses from disciplines other than your core area of study. General Education courses encompass such things as languages, sociology, political science, the natural sciences, math etc., and are organized in 4 clusters, or disciplinary areas. Full details are available in the link above, and General Education course offerings are at

<http://mtroyal.ca/AboutMountRoyal/TeachingLearning/GeneralEducation/Courses/index.htm>

In addition to the core (Journalism and Communication) course requirements, the degree requires 12 General Education courses and four electives (or student-- -chosen options).

### **Can I work while going to school?**

Yes. Most of our students do. However, working more than 12-18 hours a week outside of school while taking a full could make it difficult to do well in the program, and to build the professional portfolio you will need. Students who must work more than that therefore can and ***should choose to do fewer courses*** in a given semester. Faculty mentors can help you work through these options and choices.

### **Can I transfer courses I've taken previously at MRU or other post-secondary institutions?**

Yes. If you have already completed a degree or some post-secondary course work from a recognized college or university, you may not be required to take all/or some of the General Education courses required in the Bachelor of Communications degree. You may also be able to transfer in individual courses, including journalism courses taken at other institutions. Enrolment Services will automatically determine which courses transfer to Mount Royal by reviewing your transcripts. If you feel you should have received more transfer credit you can get in touch with the transfer credit office ([transfercredit@mtroyal.ca](mailto:transfercredit@mtroyal.ca)) and ask that it review your file.

*Ensure you have all relevant official transcripts forwarded to Mount Royal directly from the other schools. MRU journalism also has direct transfer arrangements for graduates of several Alberta media diploma programs.*

### **What kind of support is there for me at MRU?**

Mount Royal has many services and professionals that are ready to help you once you join us as a student. These include the Learning Skills Centre, Peer Support Centre, Student Counseling Services, Accessibility Services and the Student's' Association. *A list of helpful links is included at the end of this package, or in the current MRU Calendar at <http://www.mtroyal.ca/academic support/academic calendar/index.htm>.*

### **Can I use this degree to get into other post-secondary programs?**

Mount Royal University is a member of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). Other AUCC member schools therefore generally accept Mount Royal degrees, but a student should never assume anything about transfer given that each school has its own rules. So the student rule is to check with the school you wish to attend. In addition, entrance to graduate school is often dependent on the grades you receive in your baccalaureate degree , so if you plan on pursuing advanced studies, it's important to do well here at MRU.

### **Work Experiences**

#### **What are work experiences?**

Work Experiences are semester long (12 to 16 weeks), full-time internships in the communications industry that provide Journalism students with an opportunity to put their on campus education into practice. We recognize that academic learning is enhanced by real life experience, and it's important for you to work alongside professionals other than just your program instructors. You must complete one experience as part of your degree, but we recommend you complete two, as that will allow you double the experience, double the portfolio material, and double the references to call upon after graduation. Also, many students uncertain about their future career paths try out two different types communications positions – perhaps corporate communications and a TV news station, or a newspaper and a non-profit to see which type of position they find most rewarding.

### **What will I do during my work experiences?**

There are a range of jobs posted each semester and journalism students find themselves in professional print, broadcast and online working environments using their interviewing, research, writing, editing and photography skills to produce news and information for public consumption. They also work in corporate communications, non-profit and advocacy organizations, for education and sports programs, and various other entities where communications work is needed.

### **Where will I go for my work experiences?**

As a Journalism student, you could be offered a work-term position at almost any location across Canada. Some students choose to contact their hometown media outlet while others travel to foreign countries to enjoy international work experiences.

*Since Calgary is a large media market that attracts people with a lot of experience, many students will need to leave the city to complete their work terms. The more willing you are to travel, the more opportunities will be available to you.*

### **Who are some of the employers that hire students?**

Previous work term employers include:

- Television, radio stations, magazines, newspapers
- Web design and content workplaces
- Large and small businesses, sports organizations and non-profits requiring communications support

### **How will I get a placement?**

The Journalism Work Experience Coordinator, a former program graduate who works out of our career services area, posts jobs as they become available. Employers across the country are acquainted with the Mount Royal University Journalism program. They submit job descriptions that are posted on a website for internship students only. Students then apply as they would for any other job posting, and employers review the applications, interview candidates and make their selections. Students are offered and accept positions. Students are also encouraged to secure their own opportunities outside of our job listings, which are termed “self-identified” positions. International positions are generally self-identified.

### **Will I have help when it comes time to apply for positions?**

Yes. In fall semester Year Three you will take COMM 4790 – a 90-minute weekly non-credit seminar that helps you prepare and plan for your work experience. The course also helps you build a suitable resume, cover letter and portfolio that demonstrate your capabilities. We'll coach you when it comes time to interview and we'll be there to congratulate you when you've been offered the job. We also have industry guests come into this class to offer tips and talk about what they do in communications.

### **What about expenses during a Work Experience?**

By starting to plan now, you can be financially prepared for your work terms. Expenses include:

- Course fees (see the current MRU Calendar).
- Re-location expenses – you may be offered a work term position in a town or city outside of Calgary or your own hometown. It may be necessary to travel to and from the workplace location and pay rent on a different place to live for four months.
- *Many – though not all – work terms require the use of a vehicle (which also means you must have a valid driver's license).*
- Often you will use your own camera and other equipment (purchased for the program) during the work term. If you're ready to upgrade any of your equipment, your instructors can offer suggestions.
- Because it is required for graduation, your Internship may qualify you for a student loan. Checking your status for a loan is entirely your responsibility.

### **Will I be paid while I'm on my Work Experience?**

Yes. Employers who offer work term positions to Mount Royal Journalism students state the salary they will offer at the time they post the position. Some pay by the month while others pay by the hour. Others offer only honorariums. *Students may opt to accept unpaid work terms at times and for various reasons with program approval, but that is their choice.*

*Please note: Because work terms are employer paid, you will collect your pay cheque at the same time as others in the company. Therefore you may have to budget for expenses incurred until your first payday.*

### **When will I take my first Work Experience?**

You'll be ready to do your first Work Experience in the spring/summer semester following your third year in the program. Your second Work Experience, should you choose to complete another, can fall in any semester thereafter, including the semester, or spring/summer, after you complete your required coursework.

### **Will I have support while I'm on my Work Experience?**

Yes. You will be assigned a faculty member to assist you throughout your internship. The instructor will also inform you of any requirements that need to be fulfilled during your work term. Your Work Experience Coordinator will also be available to assist with any concerns about your workplace environment.

### **Do you give credit for previous work experience?**

Previous journalism work experience may be considered for credit, but only if the application is made prior to being eligible for your program-specific work experience. If applicable, see the program chair for details. In general, however, we believe that the more work experience you have the better, and so we encourage you to do at least one work experience during your time with us in the program.

**Where can I obtain more information about the Journalism program and the Faculty of Communication Studies at Mount Royal?**

Program publication: [www.calgaryjournal.ca](http://www.calgaryjournal.ca)

School of Communication Studies information:

<http://www.mtroyal.ca/communicationstudies/>

**If I have other questions, whom can I call for answers?**

Journalism Work Experience Coordinator Chad Wilson: [cewilson@mtroyal.ca](mailto:cewilson@mtroyal.ca); 403-440-6008

Program advisors: Sally Haney, [shaney@mtroyal.ca](mailto:shaney@mtroyal.ca) 403-440-5957; Janice Paskey, [jpaskey@mtroyal.ca](mailto:jpaskey@mtroyal.ca), 403-440-8744; Sean Holman, [sholman@mtroyal.ca](mailto:sholman@mtroyal.ca), 403-440-6334

Or call the main office: School of Communication Studies office: 403-440-6901