

Syracuse University

Essential Functions Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Programs Communication Sciences & Disorders Syracuse University Admission, Retention and Graduation Standards

INTRODUCTION

The graduate degrees in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology are recognized as broad degrees requiring the acquisition of general knowledge and basic skills in all applicable domains of speech and hearing sciences and disorders. The education of speech-language pathologists and audiologists require assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills and development of judgment through clinical experience in preparation for independent and appropriate decisions required in practice. The current practices of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology emphasize collaboration among speech-language pathologists, audiologists, other health care and education professionals, the client, and the client's family.

POLICY

The clinical programs in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Programs in the Communication Sciences & Disorders Department at Syracuse University attempt to select applicants who have the ability to become highly competent speech-language pathologists or audiologists. As accredited programs, the Master's Program in Speech-Language Pathology and the Clinical Doctoral Program in Audiology adhere to the standards and guidelines of the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. Within these guidelines, the CSD Department has the freedom and ultimate responsibility for selecting and evaluating its students; designing, implementing, and evaluating its curriculum; and determining who should be awarded a degree. Admission and retention decisions are based not only on satisfactory academic and clinical achievement but also on other factors, which serve to ensure that the candidate can complete the essential functions of the program required for graduation.

The Department has a responsibility to the public that its graduates can become fully competent and caring speech-language pathologists, capable of doing benefit and not harm. Thus, it is important that persons admitted possess the intelligence, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, and physical and emotional capacity necessary to practice Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

In order to acquire the knowledge and skills requisite to the practice of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology to function in a broad variety of clinical situations, and to render a wide spectrum of client care, individuals must have essential skills and attributes in five areas: communication, motor, intellectual-cognitive, sensory-observational, and behavioral-social. These skills enable a student to meet graduate and professional requirements as measured by state and national credentialing agencies. Many of these skills can be learned and developed during the course of the graduate program through coursework and clinical experience. The starred items (*), however, are skills that are more inherent and should be present when a student begins the program. Failure to meet or maintain the Essential Functions may result in action against the student, including, but not limited to dismissal from the program.

A. COMMUNICATION

A student must possess adequate communication skills to:

- Communicate proficiently in both oral and written English language. Students who speak English with accents and nonstandard dialects must be capable of modeling "the target phonemes, grammatical features or other aspects of speech and language that characterize the client's particular problem." (ASHA Technical Report, 1998)
 1. Students with a communication disorder and/or accents or non-standard dialects which may negatively impact their ability to communicate effectively and provide clear speech and/or language models may be required to address the identified area.
 2. Students who speak English as a second language will be required to achieve a minimum

overall score of 105 on the TOEFL with a minimum score of 26-28 on the Speaking section of the TOEFL.

- *Possess reading and writing skills sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands.
- *Perceive and demonstrate appropriate non-verbal communication for culture and context.
- *Modify communication style to meet the communication needs of clients, caregivers and other persons served.
- Communicate professionally and intelligibly with patients, colleagues, other healthcare professionals, and community or professional groups.
- Communicate professionally, effectively, and legibly on client documentation, reports, and scholarly papers required as a part of course work and professional practice.
- Convey information accurately with relevance and cultural sensitivity.

B. MOTOR

A student must possess adequate motor skills to:

- *Sustain necessary physical activity level in required classroom and clinical activities.
- *Respond quickly to provide a safe environment for clients in emergency situations including fire, choking, etc.
- *Access transportation to clinical and academic placements.
- *Participate in classroom and clinical activities for the defined workday.
- Efficiently manipulate testing and treatment environment and materials without violation of testing protocol and with best therapeutic practice.
- Manipulate patient-utilized equipment (e.g. durable medical equipment to include AAC devices, hearing aids, etc) in a safe manner.
- Access technology for clinical management (i.e. billing, charting, therapy programs, etc.).

C. INTELLECTUAL / COGNITIVE

A student must possess adequate intellectual and cognitive skills to:

- *Comprehend, retain, integrate, synthesize, infer, evaluate and apply written and verbal information sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands.
- Identify significant findings from history, evaluation, and data to formulate a diagnosis and develop a treatment plan.
- Solve problems, reason, and make sound clinical judgments in patient assessment, diagnostic and therapeutic plan and implementation.
- Self evaluate, identify, and communicate limits of one's own knowledge and skill to appropriate professional level and be able to identify and utilize resources in order to increase knowledge.
- Utilize detailed written and verbal instruction in order to make unique and independent decisions.

D. SENSORY/OBSERVATIONAL

A student must possess adequate sensory skills of vision, hearing, touch, and smell to:

- Visually and auditorily identify normal and disordered abilities in the areas of fluency, articulation, voice, resonance, respiration characteristics, oral and written language (semantics, pragmatics, syntax, morphology and phonology), hearing and balance disorders, swallowing cognition, social interaction related to communication.
- Identify the need for alternative modalities of communication.
- Visualize and identify anatomic structures.
- Visualize and discriminate imaging findings.
- Identify and discriminate findings on imaging studies.
- Discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests.
- Recognize and adjust when a client and/or client's family does or does not understand the clinician's written and or verbal communication.
- Identify and discriminate a client's spoken responses.
- Accurately monitor through both visual and auditory modalities, equipment displays and controls, including those of hearing instruments, used for assessment and treatment of clients.

E. BEHAVIORAL/ SOCIAL

A student must possess adequate behavioral and social attributes to:

- *Display mature, empathetic and effective professional relationships by exhibiting compassion, integrity, and concern for others.
- *Recognize and show respect for individuals with disabilities and for individuals of different ages, genders, race, religions, sexual orientation, and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- *Conduct oneself in an ethical and legal manner, upholding the ASHA Code of Ethics and university and federal privacy policies.
- *Maintain general good physical and mental health and self care in order not to jeopardize the health and safety of self and others in the academic and clinical setting.
- Adapt to changing and demanding environments (which includes maintaining both professional demeanor and emotional health).
- Manage the use of time effectively to complete professional and technical tasks within realistic time constraints.
- Accept appropriate suggestions and constructive criticism and respond by modification of behaviors.
- Dress appropriately and professionally.

Syracuse University is committed to providing access, equal opportunity, and reasonable accommodation in its services, programs, activities, education, and employment for individuals with disabilities. Enrolled students who have a documented disability for which they seek accommodations should request disability accommodations from the Office of Disability Services, 804 University Avenue, Suite 309, (315) 443-4498.

As an accepted student in the Speech-Language Pathology or Audiology Program within the Communication Sciences & Disorders Department at Syracuse University, my signature below indicates that I have read the Essential Functions document; that I agree with the contents; that I am committed to the policies expressed therein; and that I may be dismissed from the program should I fail to demonstrate any or all of the Essential Functions despite reasonable accommodations and reasonable levels of support from the faculty.

Student's Signature

Date

Sources:

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (1998). *Students and Professionals Who Speak English with Accents and Nonstandard Dialects: Issues and Recommendations* [Technical Report]. Available from www.asha.org/policy.

Council of Academic Programs in Communicative Sciences and Disorders (2007). *Eligibility Requirements and Essential Functions*. Prepared by Schwartz et al., and retrieved from <http://www.capcsd.org/proceedings/2007/talks/EFChecklist.pdf>

Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences (2009). Essential Functions of Speech and Hearing Sciences Education. University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, and retrieved from <http://www.capcsd.org/proceedings/2007/talks/EFChecklist.pdf>

Department of Communicative Disorders (06-03-09). Essential Functions of Candidates for Program Admission and Continuance. West Chester University, West Chester, PA, and retrieved from <http://www.capcsd.org/proceedings/2007/talks/EFChecklist.pdf>

Essential Functions Committee (2007). Disability Law in Higher Education. Council of Academic Programs in Communicative Sciences and Disorders. Retrieved from <http://www.capcsd.org/proceedings/2007/talks/EFChecklist.pdf>