Western Washington University
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD)

Essential Functions/Technical Standards of Degree Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders Admission, Retention and Graduation Standards

INTRODUCTION

The graduate degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders is recognized as a broad degree requiring the acquisition of general knowledge and basic skills in all applicable domains of speech and hearing sciences. The education of speech-language pathologists and audiologists requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills and development of judgment through academic and clinical experience in preparation for independent and appropriate decisions required in practice. The current practices of speech-language pathology and audiology emphasizes collaboration among speech-language pathologists, audiologists, other health care and education professionals, the patient/client, and the patient/client’s family.

POLICY

The accredited graduate program in speech-language pathology of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) at Western Washington University adheres to the standards and guidelines of the Council of Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. Within these guidelines, the CSD program has the freedom and ultimate responsibility for: the selection of students; the design, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum; the evaluation of student progress; and, the determination of who should be awarded a degree. Admission and retention decisions are based not only on satisfactory academic achievement, but also on other academic factors that 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 it graduates can become fully competent and caring speech-language pathologists and audiologists, 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/or audiology.
The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, as part of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Western Washington University is committed to the principle of equal opportunity. The University, College, and Department do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, disability, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, pregnancy, parenting status or genetic information. The University, College, and Department are committed to providing access, equal opportunity, and reasonable accommodation in its services, programs, activities, education, and employment for individuals with disabilities. When requested, the University will provide reasonable accommodation to otherwise qualified students with properly certified disabilities. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations utilize the disAbility Resources for Students, drs@wwu.edu. More information can be found at: http://www.wwu.edu/depts/drs/

The CSD Department’s faculty and professional staff have responsibility for the welfare of students in the Department. In order to fulfill this responsibility, the Department has established academic standards and minimum essential requirements that must be met with or without reasonable accommodations in order to participate in the program and graduate.

**ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS**

In order to acquire the knowledge and skills requisite to the practice of speech-language pathology to function in a broad variety of clinical situations, and to render a wide spectrum of patient care, individuals must have 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 licensure and national certification. 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.

**COMMUNICATION**

A student must possess adequate communication skills to:

- Communicate proficiently in both oral and written English language. (Language to be determined by program.)*
- 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 patient documentation, reports, and scholarly papers required as a part of course work and professional practice.
• Convey information accurately with relevance and cultural sensitivity.

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.)

INTELLECTUAL / COGNITIVE
A student must possess adequate intellectual and cognitive skills to: Schwarz et al. 2007 2
• 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 dependent decisions.
SENSORY/OBSERVATIONAL
A student must possess adequate sensory skills of vision, hearing, tactile, and smell to:
  • Visually and auditorily identify normal and disordered (fluency, articulation, voice, resonance, respiration characteristics, oral and written language in the areas of 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 when a client’s family does or does not understand the clinician’s written and or verbal communication.

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.
As an accepted student in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorder Graduate Programs at Western Washington 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 will 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.

Sources:


Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (01-24-03). Essential Functions of Candidates for Program Admission and Continuance. Western Washington University. Prepared by Dr. Rieko Darling, Dr. Michael Seilo, and Dr. Lina Zeine.

Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences (2009). Essential Functions of Speech and Hearing Sciences Education. University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, and retrieved from [https://catalyst.uw.edu/workspace/sphscfw/39520/278617](https://catalyst.uw.edu/workspace/sphscfw/39520/278617) on 08.17.15.