

**DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH & HEARING SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

**Technical Standards for Graduate Clinical Education in Speech-Language Pathology:
Admission, Retention, Promotion and Graduation**

INTRODUCTION

The graduate degree in Speech and Hearing Sciences 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 requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills and development of judgment through patient care experience in preparation for independent and appropriate decisions required in professional clinical practice. The current practices of speech-language pathology emphasize collaboration among speech language pathologists, other health care and education professionals, the patient/client, and the patient/client's family.

The University of Washington Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences endeavors to select applicants who have the ability to become highly competent speech-language pathologists. As an accredited speech and hearing sciences program, the University of Washington curriculum in speech-language pathology adheres to the standards and guidelines of the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA). Within these guidelines, the University of Washington Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences has the responsibility for selecting and evaluating its graduate students; designing, implementing, and evaluating its curriculum; and determining who should be awarded a degree. Admission, retention, promotion and graduation decisions are based not only on satisfactory academic achievement but also on other academic factors, which serve to ensure that candidates can complete the core functions of the program required for graduation.

The University of Washington Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences also 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 succeed in the graduate program and in speech-language pathology clinical practice.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS

In order to acquire the knowledge and skills requisite to the graduate degree program and successful entry into clinical speech-language pathology practice, to function in a broad variety of clinical situations, and to render a wide spectrum of patient care, individuals must demonstrate and meet technical standards in six areas:

- 1) Communication
- 2) Motor
- 3) Sensory
- 4) Intellectual / Cognitive
- 5) Interpersonal
- 6) Cultural responsiveness

These core functions enable a student to meet graduate and professional requirements as measured by state and national credentialing agencies. Many of these skills can and will be further developed during the course of the graduate program through coursework and clinical experience. The technical standards required in these areas cannot be compromised without fundamentally jeopardizing a client/patient's safety and well-being, the University's educational mission, or the profession's social contract. Failure to meet or maintain the technical standards may result in action against the student, including but not limited to dismissal from the program.

The technical standards are not intended to deter any candidate for whom reasonable accommodation will allow fulfillment of the complete curriculum. Any student who might need any accommodation should carefully review the accommodations section of this document.

1. COMMUNICATION

Speech-language pathologists must communicate in a way that is understood by their clients/patients and others. It is recognized that linguistic, paralinguistic, stylistic, and pragmatic variations are part of every culture, and accent, dialects, idiolects, and communication styles can differ from general American English expectations. Communication may occur in different modalities depending on the joint needs of involved parties and may be supported through various accommodations as deemed reasonable and appropriate to client/patient needs. Some examples of these accommodations include augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, written displays, voice amplification, oral translators, assistive listening devices, sign interpreters, and other non-verbal communication modes.

Students must possess foundational communication skills at entry of the graduate program and are expected to gain and demonstrate higher levels of competence as they progress through the curriculum. With appropriate training, competence in this technical standard includes, but is not limited to, the ability to do the following:

- Employ oral, written, reading, and auditory communication in American English, as well as non-verbal communication, at a level of proficiency sufficient to meet academic and clinical competencies and demands.
- Adapt communication style to effectively interact with colleagues, clients, patients, caregivers, and invested parties of diverse backgrounds in various modes such as in person, over the phone, and in electronic format.

2. MOTOR

Clinical practice by speech-language pathologists involves a variety of tasks that require physical manipulation of items and environments. It is recognized that this may be accomplished through a variety of means, including, but not limited to, independent motor movement, assistive technology, or other accommodations/modifications as deemed reasonable to offer and appropriate to client/patient needs. Competence in this technical standard includes, but is not limited to, the ability to do the following:

- Engage in physical activities at a level required to accurately implement classroom and clinical responsibilities for the defined workday (e.g., manipulating testing and therapeutic equipment and technology, client/patient equipment, and practice management technology) while retaining the integrity of the process.
- Respond in a manner that ensures the safety of clients and others in emergency and non-emergency situations.
- Engage in physical activities at a level required to access transportation to clinical and academic placements.

3. SENSORY

Speech-language pathologists use auditory, visual, tactile, and olfactory information to guide clinical practice. It is recognized that such information may be accessed through a variety of means, including direct sensory perception and /or adaptive strategies. Some examples of these strategies include visual translation displays, text readers, assistive listening devices, and perceptual descriptions by clinical assistants. Competence in this technical standard includes, but is not limited to, the ability to:

- Access sensory information to identify, discriminate and differentiate functional and disordered auditory, oral, written, and visual communication and accurately identify the need for alternative modalities of communication.
- Access sensory information to correctly differentiate anatomical structures and diagnostic imaging findings.
- Access sensory information to correctly differentiate and discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests.

4. INTELLECTUAL / COGNITIVE

Speech-language pathologists must engage in critical thinking, reasoning, comprehension and retention of information required in clinical practice. As such, students must have the ability to master information presented in course work through lectures, written material, projected images, and other forms of media and web-based presentations, and through simulations that require a variety of different skills. Students must also have the cognitive abilities necessary to master relevant content in basic science and clinical courses at a level deemed appropriate by the faculty. These skills may be described as the ability to comprehend, memorize, analyze, and synthesize material. It is recognized that such skills may be fostered through a variety of means, including assistive technology and /or accommodations/modifications as deemed reasonable and appropriate to client/patient needs.

Students are expected to have core abilities in information acquisition, integration and problem

solving at entry into the graduate program entry and are expected to gain and demonstrate higher levels of competence as they progress through the curriculum. Competence in this technical standard includes, but is not limited to, the ability to:

- Retain, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and apply auditory, written, and oral information, evaluation and feedback in a timely manner and at a level sufficient to meet curricular and clinical competencies.
- Employ timely and informed critical thinking, problem solving and ethical reasoning to formulate a differential diagnosis and create, implement, and adjust evaluation and treatment plans as appropriate for the client/patient's needs.
- Engage in ongoing self-reflection and evaluation of one's existing knowledge and skills and be able to identify and utilize resources in order to increase knowledge.
- Critically examine and apply evidence-based judgment in keeping with best practices for client/patient care.

5. INTERPERSONAL

Speech-language pathologists must interact effectively with a diverse community of individuals in a manner that is safe, ethical, collaborative, and supportive. It is recognized that personal interaction styles may vary by individuals and cultures and that good clinical practice honors such diversity while meeting this obligation. Students are expected to have core interpersonal abilities at entry into the graduate program entry and are expected to gain and demonstrate higher levels of competence as they progress through the curriculum. Competence in this technical standard includes, but is not limited to, the ability to:

- Display compassion, respect, and concern for others during all academic and clinical interactions.
- Demonstrate integrity and adhere to all aspects of relevant professional codes of ethics, privacy, and information management policies.
- Take personal responsibility for maintaining physical and mental health at a level that ensures safe, respectful, and successful participation in didactic and clinical activities.

6. CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

Speech-language pathologists have an obligation to practice in a manner responsive and inclusive to individuals from different cultures, linguistic communities, social identities, beliefs, values, and worldviews. This includes people representing a variety of abilities, ages, cultures, dialects, disabilities, ethnicities, genders, gender identities or expressions, languages, national/regional origins, races, religions, sexes, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and lived experiences. Students are expected to have core abilities in cultural responsiveness at entry into the graduate program entry and are expected to gain and demonstrate higher levels of competence as they progress through the curriculum. Competence in this technical standard includes, but is not limited to, the ability to:

- Engage in ongoing learning about cultures and belief systems different from one's own and the impacts of these on healthcare and educational disparities to foster effective provision of services.

- Demonstrate the application of culturally responsive evidence-based decisions to guide clinical practice.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The University of Washington and the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences are committed to ensuring that otherwise qualified students with disabilities are given equal access through reasonable accommodations to its services, programs, activities, education and employment. Within the context of the graduate program’s rigorous theoretical and clinical curriculum, SPHSC works closely with the UW Disability Resources for Students (DRS) office on the Seattle campus in the process of investigating reasonable accommodation requests. Students with known disabilities, or those who believe they have a disability for which they wish to request reasonable accommodations, should contact DRS to start the process for documenting their disability and determining eligibility for services. This communication should be initiated by students as soon as possible and preferably prior to the start of their academic program where feasible.

Disability Resources for Students (DRS)
011 Mary Gates – Box 352808
Seattle, WA 98195-5839
206- 543-8924 (Voice) | 206- 543-8925 (TTY) | 206- 616-8379 (FAX)
uwdrs@uw.edu (email)

By signing this, I certify:

- I am aware of how to seek accommodations for disability, should they be required, through the office of Disability Resources for Students (DRS) at the University of Washington.
- I have read the “Technical Standards for Graduate Clinical Education in Speech-Language Pathology: Admission, Retention, Promotion and Graduations” and understand the expectations for successful completion of the MS degree program in speech-language pathology.
- I understand that should I fail to meet and/or maintain the technical standards, I may be subject to action against me by the University, including but not limited to dismissal.

Before signing this acknowledgement, please contact the Speech and Hearing Sciences Department or Disability Resources for Students (DRS) if you have any questions about the core functions and technical standards and/or the process for requesting accommodations.

Signature of Applicant

Date

Return this signed document to Graduate Student Services at shgradv@uw.edu

Reference: Adapted from the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders, A Guide for Future Practitioners in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology: Core Functions (2023).