

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION DISORDERS
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY**

**Essential Requirements of Graduate Students in The Department of
Communication Disorders:
Graduate Admission, Retention, and Standards**

INTRODUCTION

The graduate degree in Communication Disorders is designed to be 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 client¹ care experience in preparation for independent and appropriate case management required in practice. The graduate degree prepares students to function in a collaborative context with audiologists, other health care and education professionals, the client, and the client's family.

POLICY

The Brigham Young University Department of Communication Disorders endeavors to select applicants who have the ability to become highly competent speech-language pathologists. As an accredited speech and language program, the curriculum in Communication Disorders adheres to the standards and guidelines of the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. Within these guidelines, the Department of Communication Disorders has the responsibility for selecting, teaching, and evaluating its graduate 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 achievement but also on other non-academic factors. These serve to ensure that the candidate can complete the essential requirements of the program required for graduation and possesses the skills necessary to fulfill the essential functions of a speech-language pathologist in a successful clinical practice.

The Department has a responsibility to the public to prepare its graduates to become fully competent, independent, and caring speech-language pathologists, capable of providing benefit and doing no harm. Thus, it is important that persons admitted to the program possess the intelligence, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, and physical and emotional capacity necessary to fulfill the essential functions of an effective speech-language pathologist.

ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

In order to acquire the knowledge and skills requisite to the practice of speech-language pathology in a broad variety of clinical situations and to render a wide spectrum of patient 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, but not all, of these skills can be learned and developed during the course of the undergraduate and graduate programs through coursework and clinical experience. A critical

¹ Client refers to patient/client. No distinction is made between the two terms in this document.

deficiency in any one of these Essential Requirements, as determined by the University's Communication Disorders faculty solely in its professional opinion, constitutes grounds sufficient for the rejection of any applicant to the program or the suspension or dismissal of any student from the program. Students must possess and consistently demonstrate the skills necessary to fulfill the Essential Requirements of the program, with or without a reasonable accommodation. Those skills include the following:

A. COMMUNICATION

A student must possess adequate communication skills to:

- Accurately model voice, fluency, articulation, and language skills needed for effective evaluation and treatment.
- Communicate proficiently in both oral and written English.
- Communicate professionally with clients, colleagues, other healthcare professionals, and community or professional groups.
- Possess reading and writing skills sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands.
- Perceive and demonstrate appropriate non-verbal communication for diverse cultures and context.
- Appropriately modify communication style to meet the communication needs of clients, caregivers, and other persons served.
- Write 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 and be able to demonstrate adequate motor skills to:

- Sustain the 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 entire length of the defined workday.
- In line with best therapeutic practice, efficiently manipulate testing and treatment environments and materials without violation of testing protocol.
- Safely and effectively handle equipment used by clients (e.g. durable medical equipment to include AAC devices, hearing aids, etc.) in a safe manner.

C. INTELLECTUAL / COGNITIVE

A student must possess and demonstrate 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 client assessment, diagnostic and therapeutic planning and treatment implementation.

- Self-evaluate, identify, and communicate limits of one's own knowledge, skill, and professional experience, and be able to identify and use resources in order to increase knowledge or meet client needs through other means.
- Make use of detailed written and verbal instruction in order to make unique and independent decisions.
- Access technology for clinical management (i.e. billing, charting, therapy programs, etc.).

D. SENSORY-OBSERVATIONAL

A student must possess and demonstrate adequate sensory skills (vision, hearing, touch and smell) to:

- Perceive and identify normal and disordered functions of 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; and social interaction related to communication.
- Identify the need for alternative modalities of communication.
- See/view and identify anatomic structures.
- Identify and discriminate findings from 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 and demonstrate adequate behavioral, social, and emotional knowledge and skill to:

- Interact professionally in relationships by exhibiting compassion, integrity, and concern for others.
- Show respect for individuals with disabilities and those who differ in age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Uphold the ASHA Code of Ethics, and follow university, state, and federal privacy policies.
- Maintain general good physical and mental health and self-care in order not to jeopardize the health or safety of the student or others in the academic and clinical setting.
- Adapt to changing and demanding environments (which includes maintaining both professional demeanor and emotional health).
- Manage time effectively to complete professional and technical tasks within realistic time constraints.
- Accept appropriate suggestions and constructive criticism and respond by modifying behaviors.
- Dress appropriately and professionally.

Brigham Young University is committed to providing access, equal opportunity, and reasonable accommodation in its services, programs, activities, education, and employment for individuals with disabilities. Applicants or enrolled students with disabilities who believe they can meet the Essential Requirements of the program with a reasonable accommodation should request disability accommodation from the University Accessibility Center at (801) 422-2767 (Voice), (801) 422-0174 (FAX) or uacfrontdesk@byu.edu (Email). The Accessibility Center is located in the Wilkinson Center at 2170 WSC. The University cannot grant accommodations that excuse students from fulfilling any of the Essential Requirements of the program or that would otherwise fundamentally alter the program. More information may be found at <https://uac.byu.edu>.