



Essential Functions for Graduate Students in Speech-Language Pathology

Introduction

The Grand Valley State University Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders' speech-language pathology and audiology preparation programs lead to a Master of Sciences in Speech Language Pathology and/or Audiology. The core curriculum is designed to support student attainment of the academic and clinical competencies needed for graduation and to apply for a speech-language pathologist licensure in the state of Michigan. The education of a speech language pathologist requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills, and development of judgment through patient care experience in preparation for independent and appropriate decision making practices. The current practices of speech-language pathology emphasize collaboration among audiologists, speech language pathologists, other allied health care professionals, physicians, and patients.

Policy

The accredited graduate program in speech-language pathology of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) at Grand Valley State University adhere to the standards set by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Within ASHA standards, 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.

Faculty and professional staff in the CSD Department have a responsibility for the welfare of patients tested, treated, or otherwise affected by students enrolled in the CSD Program. The Department has the responsibility to the public to assure that its graduates can become fully competent speech-language pathologists, capable of delivering quality care in a timely manner and preserving the well-being of the patients they serve. Thus it is important that persons admitted, retained, and graduated possess the intelligence, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, and physical and emotional capacity necessary to practice speech language-pathology.

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, as part of the College of Health Related Professions at Grand Valley State 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, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, disabled veteran or Vietnam era veteran status. When requested, the University will provide reasonable accommodation to

otherwise qualified students with properly certified disabilities. 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.

Program

The Communication Sciences and Disorders Department at Grand Valley State University endeavors to select applicants who have the ability to become highly competent speech-language pathologists. Admission and retention decisions are based not only on satisfactory prior and ongoing academic achievement but also on non-academic factors that serve to insure that the candidate can complete the essential functions of the academic and clinical program required for graduation. Essential functions, as distinguished from academic standards, refer to those cognitive, physical, and behavioral abilities that are necessary for satisfactory completion of all aspects of the curriculum, and the development of professional attributes required by the faculty of all students at graduation. The essential functions required by the curriculum are in the following areas: motor, sensory, communication, intellectual/cognitive (conceptual, integrative, and quantitative abilities for problem solving and diagnosis), behavioral/emotional, and the professional aspects of the performance of a speech language pathologists and/or audiologist.

If, after reading these definitions and examples, you become aware that you may need accommodations to successfully complete the program, many Grand Valley State University resources are available to you. These services are listed at the bottom of this page. It is your responsibility to access these services and provide appropriate documentation to the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders as required.

*Please note that many of the specific skills listed below will be taught to you during your educational career, however, you need to have the motor, intellectual, cognitive, professional, and sensory capabilities to successfully acquire them.

Motor Skills

As a speech language pathologist you will be asked to:

- Sustain necessary physical activity level in required classroom and clinical activities (e.g., 60 minute sessions including organization and cleanup of materials, room, clinic, for treatment across ages and abilities in areas which may include oral motor and play; 2 ½ hour classes including class presentations and projects).

- Respond quickly to provide a safe environment for clients in emergency situations including fire, choking, *etc.*
- Be responsible for transportation to clinical and academic placement
- Participate in classroom and clinical activities for the defined workday (*e.g.*, three 2 ½ hour classes all on Mondays; two/three 60 minute treatment sessions plus 30 minute supervisory conference in an 8 hour day three/four days weekly.
- Efficiently manipulate testing and treatment environment and materials without violating testing protocol and with best therapeutic practice.
- Manipulate patient-utilized equipment (*e.g.*, durable medical equipment to include AAC devices, hearing aids, wheelchairs, *etc.*) in a safe manner
- Access technology for clinical management (*i.e.*, billing, charting, therapy programs, *etc.*)

*An example of an accepted accommodation is using an assistant (provided by disability support services) to manipulate therapy material.

Intellectual and cognitive skills

As a speech language pathologist you will be asked to:

- Comprehend, retain, integrate, synthesize, and apply information to meet curricular and clinical demands.
- Solve problems, reason, and make sound clinical judgments in patient assessment, diagnostic planning, and therapeutic planning.
- Identify and communicate the limits of their knowledge to others when appropriate
- Follow detailed written and verbal instruction

*An example of an accepted accommodation is using a note taker (provided by disability support services) to capture information provided in the classroom.

Professional behavior and social abilities

As a speech language pathologist you will be asked to:

- Display mature, empathic, and effective relationships with clients and faculty/staff while maintaining professional boundaries.
- Recognize and show respect for individuals with disabilities and for individuals of different ages, genders, race, religions, sexual orientation, and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Manage the use of time effectively and prioritize actions to complete professional and technical tasks within expected time constraints.
- Accept appropriate suggestions and constructive criticism and if necessary, respond by modification of behavior.
- Conduct oneself in an ethical and legal manner, upholding the ASHA code of Ethics, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.
- Maintain general good health and self-care in order not to jeopardize the health and safety of self and individuals with whom one interacts in the academic and clinical settings.

*An example of an accepted accommodation is accessing the Counseling Center to arrange a leave of absence secondary to a family emergency.

Sensory and observational communication

(e.g. vision, hearing and perceptual abilities)

As a speech language pathologist you will be asked to:

- Recognize disorders of speech, language, pragmatics and cognition.
- Recognize oral and written language disorders.
- Recognize signs of voice, swallowing, and fluency disorders.
- Recognize signs of hearing disorders and identify and use appropriate alternative modalities of communication
- Recognize various anatomic structures related to and important for communication.

- Interpret imaging testing.
- Discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests.

*An example of an accepted accommodation is using a textbook with enlarged print (provided by disability support services) to capture information provided in the classroom.

Communication Abilities

As a speech language pathologist you will be asked to:

- Communicate proficiently in both oral and written English.
- Possess reading and writing skills sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands.
- Communicate professionally, intelligibly, and appropriately.
- Communicate proficiently and legibly on patient documentation, reports, and academic papers, and projects.
- Accurately perceive and appropriately use non-verbal communication.
- Accurately model voice, fluency, articulation, and language skills needed for effective evaluation and treatment.

*An example of an accepted accommodation is a student accessing clinical services to remediate a voice or dialect concern.