

**Essential Functions and Technical Standards/Guidelines:
Knowledge and Skills Essential to the Practice of
Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology**

This document was developed by the Committee on Program Excellence (COPE) in the Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences, in consultation with University of Florida's Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance Office. It was approved by COPE on December 16, 2011.

PREAMBLE

In order to acquire the knowledge and skills requisite to the practice of speech-language pathology and/or audiology, to function in a broad variety of clinical situations, and to render a wide spectrum of patient/client care, individuals must have the following five types of skills:

- Communication
- Motor
- Intellectual-cognitive
- Sensory-observational
- 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 (*) in the expanded lists below are skills that are particularly relevant and should be present when a student begins the program. The burden is on the applicant to demonstrate that he/she can meet the essential functions or requirements of the program. The lists below represent technical standards and essential functions that are required (with accommodations when necessary) for admission and graduation.

All students pursuing a health care profession such as speech-language pathology or audiology “must possess those intellectual, ethical, physical, and emotional capabilities required to undertake the full curriculum and to achieve the levels of competence required by the faculty” and the profession (AAMC, p. 2). Some students may have certain disabilities or combinations of disabilities which will require accommodations in order to meet the technical standards and essential functions required of all students. The faculty of the Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences recognize that and will “take all necessary steps to prevent unjustified discrimination against” individuals with disability (AAMC, p. 2).

It is the goal of the communication sciences and disorders program to graduate qualified individuals in the fields of speech-language pathology and audiology. Academic faculty and clinical faculty are charged with evaluating students with respect to their performance on the standards presented below. If you feel you are unable to meet these standards, it is your responsibility to notify the appropriate faculty member(s) to seek accommodations, and then to register with and be verified as disabled by the Disabilities Resource Program on campus

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu>). All students admitted to the graduate programs in the Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences are beholden to the professional standards needed to successfully engage in the speech-language pathology and/or audiology professions.

COMMUNICATION: A student must possess adequate communication skills to:

1. Communicate sufficiently in English in order to engage in clinical activities independently, conduct accurate assessments and provide effective intervention, provide consultation to patients/clients, caregivers of patients/clients, and health care professionals and perform other related functions associated with professional practice.
2. Demonstrate reading and writing skills sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands.*
3. Demonstrate non-verbal communication skills sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands.*
4. Modify communication style to meet the communication needs of the patients/clients, caregivers, and other persons served.*
5. Communicate professionally and intelligibly with patients/clients, colleagues, other healthcare professionals, and community or professional groups.
6. Communicate professionally and effectively on patient/client documentation, reports, and scholarly papers required as part of coursework and professional practice.
7. Convey information that is accurate, relevant and culturally sensitive.

MOTOR: A student must possess adequate motor skills to:

1. Access transportation to academic and clinical placements.*
2. Participate in classroom and clinical activities for the defined workday.*
3. Efficiently manipulate testing and treatment environment and materials without violation of testing protocol and with best therapeutic practice.
4. Manipulate patient/client-utilized equipment (e.g., durable medical equipment to include AAC devices, hearing aids, etc.) in a safe manner.
5. Access technology for clinical management (i.e., billing, charting, therapy programs, etc.)
6. Be able to assist clinical clients/patients in case of fire or other emergencies.

INTELLECTUAL/COGNITIVE: A student must possess adequate intellectual and cognitive skills to:

1. Comprehend, retain, integrate, synthesize, infer, evaluate and apply written and verbal information sufficient to meet academic and clinical curricular demands.*
2. Identify significant findings from history, evaluation, and data to formulate a diagnosis and develop a treatment plan.
3. Solve problems, reason, and make sound clinical judgments in patient/client assessment,

diagnostic, and therapeutic planning and implementation.

4. Self-evaluate, identify, and communicate limits of one's own knowledge and skills to appropriate professional level and be able to identify and utilize resources in order to increase knowledge.
5. Utilize academic and clinical instruction in order to make unique and dependent decisions.

SENSORY/OBSERVATIONAL: A student must possess adequate sensory skills, i.e., visual, hearing, and tactile skills needed to

1. Identify normal and disordered speech, language, hearing, and swallowing, abilities,
2. Identify the need for alternative modalities of communication.
3. Identify anatomic structures.
4. Discriminate imaging findings.
5. Discriminate findings on imaging studies.
6. Discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests.
7. Recognize when a patient/client 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:

1. Display mature empathetic and effective professional relationships by exhibiting compassion, integrity, and concern for others.*
2. Recognize and show respect for individuals with disabilities and for individuals of different ages, genders, race, religions, sexual orientation, and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.*
3. Conduct oneself in an ethical and legal manner, upholding the ASHA Code of Ethics and university and federal privacy policies.
4. 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 settings.*
5. Adapt to changing academic and clinical environments which includes maintaining mature and professional demeanor while participating in a variety of settings. Manage the use of time effectively to complete professional and technical tasks within realistic time constraints.
6. Accept appropriate suggestions and constructive criticism and respond by modification of behavior.
7. Dress appropriately and professionally.

PURPOSE OF ADA

The purpose of the ADA is to provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to compete with other (students) on the basis of their ability. Like the Rehabilitation Act, the ADA requires many entities ... to provide certain accommodations to persons with disabilities so that they may enjoy the same benefits, services and opportunities as those without disabilities. Schools must judge persons on the basis of their ability to complete the educational program rather than on their status as disabled persons. Persons seeking admission must be able to perform the "essential functions" or meet the "essential eligibility requirements" of the program. It is up to each school to determine the "essential functions" or "essential eligibility requirements" of its educational program. Preadmission inquiry as to whether a person is disabled is not permitted, but a school may ask all students to review the essential functions and technical standards for admission and graduation to determine if they are able to meet those standards and functions needed to be successful as a student and as a future speech-language pathologist or audiologist. For more information see: <http://www.aamc.org/members/gsa/ada.htm>.

Speech-language pathology students and applicants who have any questions about the technical standards and essential functions should contact Mrs. Betsy Vinson (bvinson@ufl.edu; (352-273-3736). Audiology students and applicants who have any questions about the technical standards and essential functions should contact Dr. Scott Griffiths (sgriff@ufl.edu; (352-273-3725)

More information on ADA is available on the ADA website which is referenced below.

References

<http://www.ada.gov/infoline.htm>

American Association of Medical Colleges, n.d. *The Disabled Student in Medical School: An Overview of Legal Requirements*. Washington, D.C. Author

Schwartz, I., et al. (2007). *Eligibility requirements and essential functions*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Council on Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders.