



Medical University of South Carolina
Department of Health Professions
Speech-Language Pathology Program

**Essential Functions/Technical Standards for
Program Admission, Continuance and Graduation**

Approved: 03/09/2020

Policy

The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) Division of Speech-Language Pathology endeavors to select applicants who have the ability to become highly competent speech-language pathologists. The MUSC Curriculum in Speech-Language Pathology adheres to the standards and guidelines of the Council on Academic Accreditation and Council for Clinical Certification in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology.

Within these guidelines, the MUSC Division of Speech-Language Pathology has the freedom and ultimate responsibility for the selection and evaluation of its students, the design, implementation, and evaluation of its curriculum, and the determination of who should be awarded a degree. Admission and retention decisions are based not only on prior satisfactory academic achievement, but also on non-academic factors which serve to ensure that the candidate can complete the essential functions of the academic program required for graduation.

The Division has the responsibility to the public to assure that its graduates can become fully competent and caring speech-language pathologists, capable of doing benefit and not harm. Thus, it is important the persons admitted possess the intelligence, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, and physical and emotional capacity necessary to practice speech-language pathology.

The Division is committed to the principle of equal opportunity. The Division does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or disability. When requested, the University will provide reasonable accommodation to otherwise qualified students with disabilities. Additional information related to disabilities is addressed below.

Program

The purpose of technical standards is to delineate skills deemed essential for continuation in and completion of the educational program, as distinguished from academic standards. Technical standards refer to those physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities required 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: sensory, communication, motor, intellectual (conceptual,

integrative, and quantitative abilities for problem solving and patient assessment) and the behavioral and social aspects of the performance of a speech-language pathologist.

The student must have the ability to master information presented in course work in the form of lectures, written material, and projected images. The student is held accountable to all compliance documents (including CPR, First Aid, HIPAA, OSHA, immunizations, TB, criminal background screening and drug screening) and **any lapse in currency will result in the student being removed from the classroom or clinic**. Additional compliance items may be required by affiliating facilities during the clinical practicums.

The Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology (M.S. SLP) degree signifies that the holder of that degree has been educated to competently practice the profession in all settings and to apply for licensure and certification. The education of a healthcare professional requires the assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills and development of judgment through patient care experiences in preparation for practice. The practice of the profession emphasizes collaboration among healthcare providers and the patient.

The curriculum for the M.S. SLP degree requires the student to engage in diverse, complex and specific experiences essential to the acquisition and practice of speech-language pathology. Unique combinations of cognitive, affective, psychomotor, physical and social abilities are required to satisfactorily perform these functions. In addition to being essential for the completion of the requirements for the M.S. SLP, these functions are necessary to ensure the health and safety of patients/clients, fellow candidates, faculty and other healthcare providers.

The essential functions necessary to acquire or demonstrate competence in speech-language pathology and needed for successful admissions and continuance by candidates for the M.S. SLP Program at MUSC, in addition to the standards of professional conduct set forth by the College of Health Professions, include but are not limited to the following abilities:

Essential Function Domain 1 - Communication

A student must possess adequate communication skills to:

- Communicate proficiently in both spoken and written English.
- 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.
- Express ideas clearly and freely, including giving and receiving feedback.
- Complete reading assignments, writing assignments, search and evaluate the literature, and maintain written records in a timely manner.

Essential Function Domain 2 - 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, CPR, 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 protocols 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 education and clinical management (i.e., billing, charting, therapy programs, etc.).
- Elicit information from patients by palpation, auscultation, percussion and other evaluative procedures.
- Demonstrate adequate gross and fine motor movements, balance, manual dexterity and kinesthetic awareness to safely perform speech-language pathology procedures.

Essential Function Domain 3 – Intellectual / Cognitive

A student must possess 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 in a timely manner.
- 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 independent decisions.
- Use sound judgment, prioritize therapeutic interventions, and measure and record outcomes.
- Use the computer for searching, recording, storing and retrieving information.

Essential Function Domain 4 – 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 area of semantics, pragmatics, syntax, morphology and phonology, hearing, swallowing, cognition, and social interaction related to communication.
- Identify the need for alternative modalities of communication.
- Visualize and discriminate anatomic structures and imaging findings (e.g., MBSS, FEES, etc.).

- Discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests.
- Recognize when a client and/or client's caregivers do or do not understand the clinician's written and/or verbal communication.

Essential Function Domain 5 – Behavioral / Professional / Social

A student must possess adequate behavioral, professional and social attributes to:

- Display mature empathetic and effective professional relationships by exhibiting compassion, collaboration, responsibility, 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.
- Engage in patient care in all clinical settings.
- Deliver care to all patient populations.

Reasonable Accommodation for Disabilities

MUSC Division of Speech-Language Pathology is committed to ensuring that otherwise qualified candidates with disabilities are given equal access through reasonable accommodations to its services, programs, activities and education. The Division of Speech-Language Pathology works closely with the ADA officers in this process. Each case is considered individually for best outcomes.

Students wishing to request reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact disability services to start the process of documenting their disability and determining eligibility for services prior to the start of the program. While this can be started at any time, accommodations cannot be implemented retrospectively. MUSC does have policies regarding the type of documentation required in order to document a disability and request accommodations.

Students requesting special accommodations for testing / examinations, lab courses, and learning experiences must have the appropriate documentation. The request for accommodations is made through the MUSC ADA compliance officer. For more information as well as the necessary request form, please visit this Website: <https://education.musc.edu/leadership/diversity/ada->

resources

Students with disabilities are expected to perform all essential functions of the program with or without reasonable accommodation. The University will work with the student and respective campus disability office to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations. While we will make every effort to work with our students with disabilities to accommodate their disability-related needs, it is important to note we are not required to provide requested accommodations that would fundamentally alter the essential functions or technical standards of the program.

Implementation of Essential Functions for Admission, Continuance and Graduation

Incoming students will be alerted to the Essential Functions during program orientation and where to locate the information for future reference (student handbook). Faculty will address student performance and abilities to meet essential functions during regularly scheduled faculty meetings. Faculty advisors in conjunction with course instructors and the Division Director will be responsible for monitoring whether the student is meeting the essential functions for the program.

By signing below, you indicate that you have read and understand the content of the previous four pages entitled **Division of Speech-Language Pathology Essential Functions and Technical Standards**. I confirm that I have the ability to demonstrate all of the above requirements.

Print your name on this line

Sign your name on this line

Date _____

This policy was developed utilizing the following resources:

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2020). 2020 Standards and Implementation Procedures for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology. Retrieved from <https://www.asha.org/Certification/2020-SLP-Certification-Standards/>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (1998). Students and Professional Who Speak English with Accents and Nonstandard Dialects: Issues and Recommendations. Retrieved from the internet at <http://www.asha.org/policy/PS1998-00117/>

Department of Communicative Disorders (2016). Essential Functions/Technical Standards. MGH Institute of Health Professions, Boston, MA. Retrieved from <https://www.mghihp.edu/sites/default/files/csd-essential-functions-12-16.pdf>

Department of Speech-Language Pathology (2017). Essential Functions in Clinical Speech-Language Pathology. New York Medical College, Valhalla, NY. Retrieved from <https://www.nymc.edu/media/schools-and-colleges/nymc/pdf/shsp/SLPEssentialFunctions.pdf>

Council of Academic Programs in Communicative Sciences and Disorders (2008). Essential Functions in Speech-Language Pathology. Retrieved from <https://wordpressstorageaccount.blob.core.windows.net/wp-media/wp-content/uploads/sites/1023/2019/06/Essential-Functions-Presentation-2008.pdf>

Division of Physical Therapy (2020). Student Handbook. Retrieved from <https://chp.musc.edu/current-students/college-and-program-handbooks>