

## **Core Functions in Speech-Language Pathology for Students in the M.S. Program**

The Idaho State University Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Idaho State University is committed to the education of all qualified individuals, including persons with disabilities who, with or without reasonable accommodation, are capable of performing the core functions required of the professional program in Speech-Language Pathology. Idaho State University's policy is to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1973, and all the state and local requirements regarding students and applicants with disabilities. Under these laws, no otherwise qualified and competent individual with a disability shall be denied access to or participation in services, programs, and activities solely on the basis of the disability.

In accordance with federal regulations established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the following standards are described to assist each student or candidate in evaluating his or her prospects for academic and clinical success. When a student's ability to perform is compromised, the student must demonstrate alternative means and/or abilities to perform the core functions described.

### Sensory/Observational Abilities

In our profession, we must perform objectives requiring specific sensory/observation skills. Students must have or obtain the following abilities/qualifications to perform the core functions of a Speech-Language Pathologist with or without reasonable accommodation:

- Perceive, assimilate, and integrate information from presentations, printed material, media, and live demonstrations
- Demonstrate adequate functional use of sensory and perceptual modalities (i.e., visual, tactile, auditory) to enable such observations and information acquisition necessary for academic and clinical performance
- Recognize disorders of speech fluency; abnormal articulation; abnormal voice including resonance and respiration characteristics; oral and written language disorders in the areas of semantics, pragmatics, syntax, morphology, and phonology; signs of hearing disorders; signs of cognitive disorders; signs of dysphagia and signs of abnormal social behavior related to communication disorders
- Visualize anatomic structures and discriminate findings on various imaging studies, as well as discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests
- Develop sufficient sensory function (i.e., visual and auditory) and motor coordination to safely and accurately assess and remediate patients using the equipment and materials of the profession

### Communication Abilities

The ability to communicate effectively is a critical core function as both a student and a professional in Speech-Language Pathology. All relationships (with faculty, advisors, fellow students, coworkers, clients, and client significant others) are built upon the foundation of communication in individual and group settings. According to professional standards, in the role of learners, colleagues, consultants, and leaders, students must be able to perform a wide variety of core functions and demonstrate the ability to do the following with or without reasonable accommodation:

- Communicate proficiently in English (i.e., verbally, in writing, or other communication modes) at a level



sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands

- Elicit information, gather information, and describe findings (i.e., verbally, in writing, or in other communication modes) in a manner that is understandable by patients, professionals, and laypersons
- Show the potential for communicating effectively and sensitively with patients and colleagues, including individuals from different cultural and social backgrounds, as evidenced by an openness to feedback (demonstration of “cultural competence” in accordance with a professional issues statement developed by ASHA per Cultural Competence in Professional Service Delivery available at <https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/professional-issues/cultural-responsiveness/>.)
- Establish rapport with clients
- Observe, recognize, and understand a variety of behavioral cues (i.e., non-verbal)
- Deliver clinically competent services to individuals with communication disorders, providing an openness to feedback
- Demonstrate the ability to advocate for clients and family members in a variety of settings
- Demonstrate the ability to present clinical information in various interprofessional contexts such as medical staffings, team meetings, educational meetings, and in-service workshops.

Further, according to a technical report developed by ASHA’s Joint Subcommittee of the Executive Board on English Language Proficiency (see Students and Professionals Who Speak English with Accents and Nonstandard Dialects: Issues and Recommendations available at <https://www.asha.org/policy/tr1998-00154/>), those “who speak a nonstandard dialect or who speak with an accent,” must be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- Model a “target phoneme, grammatical feature, or other aspect of speech and language that characterizes” a client’s deficit when necessary with or without reasonable accommodation

### Motor Abilities

Speech-language pathologists and students must possess the motor functions needed to manipulate testing and treatment materials, manipulate equipment (such as prostheses, devices, or wheelchairs), or provide general and emergency treatment to clients or patients as part of professional practice, some of which are dependent on the type of setting (e.g., schools, private practice, medical facilities). Depending upon the type of setting, motor capacities usually include the ability to demonstrate the following with or without reasonable accommodation:

- Use physical strength and coordination to handle and move clients safely
- Act accordingly in drills in preparation for an emergency and perform adequately in an actual emergency procedure
- Direct clients using motor abilities to show the location of a place, person, or object

### Intellectual/Cognitive Abilities

Speech-language pathologists possess intellectual and cognitive abilities that align with the roles and responsibilities in various employment and dynamic settings. Students must demonstrate critical thinking skills and demonstrate the ability to discriminate the ability to demonstrate the following with or without reasonable accommodation:

- Problem-solve creatively and perceive a problem from multiple viewpoints
- Master abstract ideas
- Synthesize information presented in academic, laboratory, and fieldwork settings
- Comprehend, retain, integrate, and apply information sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands
- Identify relevant findings from client history, evaluation, and data to formulate a diagnosis, prognosis,



and management plan

- Solve problems, reason, and make sound clinical judgments in patient assessment, diagnostic planning, and therapeutic planning consistent with the principles of evidence-based practice in Speech-Language Pathology
- Comprehend three-dimensional relationships in sensing figures and understanding spatial relationships of structures
- Implement ethical methods as defined by ASHA and also recognize and apply pertinent legal and ethical standards
- Critically examine and apply evidence-based practices to keep up with best practices for the care of client
- Engage in self-reflection and the ability to evaluate one's existing knowledge and skills.

### Behavioral and Social Abilities

Speech-Language Pathologists and students are expected to possess appropriate behavioral and social abilities. In our profession, an awareness of one's belief system, values, needs, and the impact on relationships with self and others is essential. These abilities are evidenced by the ability to demonstrate the following with or without reasonable accommodation:

- Integrate constructive feedback
- Use appropriate professional boundary management, knowing when to intervene and assist others and when to care for oneself
- Challenge assumptions that could be harmful to self and/or others
- Demonstrate trustworthiness, dependability, and approachability
- Consider another person's perspective
- Demonstrate diversity consciousness by treating all individuals with respect, dignity, and worth
- Express a range of feelings in a professional manner
- Show emotional regulation and stability
- Demonstrate the enactment of care and compassion towards self and others
- Maintain adequate self-care both physically and mentally
- Examine verbal and nonverbal behavior that interferes with productive individual relationships
- Adapt to changing environments and workloads with flexibility
- Express empathy to establish effective interpersonal relationships
- Show openness to new experiences and fully engage in all aspects of the academic and clinical learning environment
- Implement effective time management skills
- Demonstrate composure under stressful situations as shown by a demeanor that is professional, authentic, and confident

### Cultural Responsiveness

Within Idaho State University's College of Health, which includes all Communication Sciences and Disorders programs, we are committed to caring for the People of Idaho. We prioritize this by valuing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. We believe everyone should have equal opportunities and access, regardless of background. That's why we strive to promote these values and create a climate of respect and equity. We want to ensure everyone feels safe, valued, welcomed, and respected in our spaces. These ideals are important for collaborative partnerships and diversifying the health professions workforce. We know that promoting diversity is a continuous process, and we are committed to creating an environment where everyone's contributions are respected and supported.

Speech-language pathologists are responsible for providing their services in a way that acknowledges and respects individuals from diverse backgrounds. This includes people from different cultures, linguistic communities, social identities, beliefs, values, and worldviews. These individuals may have different abilities, ages, cultures, dialects, disabilities, ethnicities, genders, gender identities/expressions, languages, national/regional origins, races, religions, sexes, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and/or lived experiences. Students must demonstrate their ability to practice cultural responsiveness, with or without reasonable accommodation, by considering all these areas.

- Actively participate in continuing to learn about different cultures and belief systems to better serve individuals within care
- Use evidence-based practice that demonstrates cultural responsiveness within all areas of clinical practice

NOTE: Idaho State University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution committed to social justice. The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders fully supports that commitment and expects to maintain a positive clinical and learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and nondiscrimination. Our facility does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. The Idaho State University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. Students with a disability who anticipate the need for any accommodation to participate in class or clinic are encouraged to make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services: <https://www.isu.edu/disabilityservices/>. For more information on Idaho State University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://www.isu.edu/drc/>.

The material in this document has been adapted from:

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (1998). Students and professionals who speak English with accents and nonstandard dialects: Issues and recommendations [Technical Report]. Available from [www.asha.org/policy](http://www.asha.org/policy).
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2011). Cultural competence in professional service delivery [Professional Issues Statement]. Available from [www.asha.org/policy](http://www.asha.org/policy).
- Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (2023). A guide for future practitioners in audiology and speech-language pathology: Core functions. <https://www.capcsd.org/academic-and-clinical-resources/>
- Department of Counseling, Master of Counseling Graduate Program Handbook, Idaho State University.
- Hayes, L., et al. (2005). Essential functions checklist. Communication Sciences and Disorders, College of Health Professions, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC.
- Katz, J. R., Woods, S. L., Cameron, C. A., & Milam, S. (2004). Essential qualifications for nursing students. *Nursing Outlook*, 52, 277-288.
- Seton Hall University (2011). Standards for essential functions. Speech-Language Pathology, School of Health and Medical Sciences, South Orange, NJ. Available at [http://www.shu.edu/academics/gradmeded/ms-speech-language-pathology/upload/SLP\\_Essential\\_Functions.pdf](http://www.shu.edu/academics/gradmeded/ms-speech-language-pathology/upload/SLP_Essential_Functions.pdf)
- West Virginia University (2013). Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders strategic plan. College of Education and Human Services, Morgantown, WV. Available at <http://spa.wvu.edu/home/spa-mission>



**Idaho State University  
Speech-Language Pathology  
Core Functions  
Statement of Student Understanding and Responsibility**

I confirm that I have downloaded the information described in the Core Functions for Students in the M.S. Program in Speech-Language Pathology. I have read the entire document and understand the contents. I also understand that failure to demonstrate a core function with or without reasonable accommodation as determined by a review by the appropriate faculty member(s), the next step may culminate in a dismissal from the program. I realize it is my responsibility to initiate services with University Disability Services before the need for accommodations in classes and clinical experiences. I will contact my Tier 3 Academic advisor if I have questions about the content. My signature confirms that I am responsible for and will abide by the contents therein.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature