



Essential 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. If a student or a potential student has concerns regarding their abilities to meet the essential functions with or without alternative means, the student is encouraged to contact faculty in the department to discuss the possibility of options to facilitate success within the program and profession.

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 essential functions required of the professional program in Speech-Language Pathology. It is the policy of Idaho State University 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 prospect 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 essential functions described.

Sensory/Observational Abilities

In our profession, we have to be able to perform particular objectives that require certain sensory/observation skills. It is required that students have or obtain the following abilities/qualifications in order to perform the essential functions of a Speech-Language Pathologist:

- Perceive, assimilate, and integrate information from an oral presentation, printed material, visual media, and live demonstrations
- Demonstrate adequate functional use of visual, tactile, auditory, and other sensory and perceptual modalities, 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 to discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests
- Develop sufficient sensory (visual and auditory) function 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 essential 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 as learners, colleagues, consultants, and leaders, students must be able to perform a wide variety of essential functions and demonstrate the ability to:

- Communicate proficiently in both oral and written English, at a level sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands
- Elicit information, gather information, and describe findings verbally and in writing, in a manner that is comprehensible 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 <http://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Professional-Issues/Cultural-Competence/>)
- Establish rapport with clients
- Observe, recognize, and understand non-verbal behavior
- 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 a variety of 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 <http://www.asha.org/policy/TR1998-00154.htm>), 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 individual deficit when necessary

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 as part of professional practice. Motor capacities usually include the ability to:

- Use physical strength and coordination to safely handle and move clients
- Act accordingly in drills in preparation for an emergency situation and perform adequately in an actual emergency procedure
- Direct clients using motor abilities to show 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 a variety of employment settings and dynamic settings.

Students must demonstrate critical thinking skills and demonstrate the ability to:

- 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 judgements in patient assessment, diagnostic planning and therapeutic planning consistent with the principles of evidence-based practice in Speech-Language Pathology
- Comprehend of three-dimensional relationships in sensing figures and understanding of spatial relationships of structures
- Implement ethical methods as defined by ASHA and also recognize and apply pertinent legal and ethical standards

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 own belief system, values, needs, and the impact on relationships with self and others is important. These abilities are evidenced by the ability to:

- Integrate constructive feedback
- Use of 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

Professional Responsibility

Speech-Language Pathologists are representations of our program and the profession, and as such, students must act in a professional manner. Students must show the ability to:

- Meet the challenges of any medical situation that requires readiness for immediate and appropriate response without interference of personal or medical problems; may require training (CPR, first aid, infection control, evacuation procedures)
- Attend and to be able to travel to and from classes and clinical assignments on time
- Possess organizational skills and stamina for performing required tasks and assignments within allotted time frames with adherence to deadlines and expectations of the department
- Perform problem solving tasks in a timely manner
- Exhibit adherence to policies of the university, the program, and clinical sites: professional dress and behavior, and adequate attendance to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the program's objectives
- Learn and demonstrate knowledge of a commitment to code of ethics of their profession and behavior that reflects a sense of right and wrong in the context of care
- Take initiative in clinical and academic endeavors and be proactive in learning
- Work cooperatively and collaboratively with other students on assigned projects and participate willingly in a supervisory process involving evaluation of abilities and reasoning skills
- Accept and comply with the mission of the Department of CSD to become clinicians who utilize "evidence based practice, adhere to the highest personal and professional ethical standards; employ critical thinking and self-analysis, recognize the value of continuing education, demonstrates empathy, concern for others, and accountability in their academic and clinical practice; and aspire to provide exceptional service to persons of all ages with communication and swallowing disorders in an equitable and inclusive manner"

NOTE: Idaho State University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution and is 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 upon 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 type of accommodation in order to participate in class or clinic are encouraged to make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services <http://www2.isu.edu/ada4isu/>. For more information on Idaho State University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://www.isu.edu/drc/>.

1 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.

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2011). *Cultural competence in professional service delivery* [Professional Issues Statement]. Available from www.asha.org/policy.

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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

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>

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Essential Functions

Statement of Student Understanding and Responsibility:

I _____ confirm that I have downloaded the information described in the Essential 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 an essential function as determined by a review by the appropriate faculty member(s), the next step may culminate in a dismissal from the program. If I have questions about the content, I will contact my advisor. My signature confirms that I am responsible for and will abide by the contents therein.

Signature

Date