

Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences  
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California State University East Bay

Policy Statement

**Essential Functions**

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In order to acquire the knowledge and skills requisite to the practice of speech-language pathology to function in a broad variety of clinical situations, and to render a wide spectrum of patient care, individuals must have skills and attributes in five areas: communication, motor, intellectual-cognitive, sensory-observational, and 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 (\*), however, are skills that are more inherent and should be present when a student begins the program.

If there are aspects of this policy that a graduate student would like to discuss, they should schedule an appointment with their academic advisor.

**COMMUNICATION**

A student must possess adequate communication skills to:

- Communicate proficiently in both oral and written English language.
- 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.

**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, 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 protocol 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 clinical management (e.g., telepractice, billing, charting, therapy programs).

## **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.\*
- 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 client/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 dependent decisions.

## **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 areas of semantics, pragmatics, syntax, morphology and phonology, hearing and balance disorders, swallowing cognition, social interaction related to communication.
- Identify the need for alternative modalities of communication.
- Visualize and identify anatomic structures.
- Visualize and discriminate imaging findings.
- Identify and discriminate findings on imaging studies.
- Discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests.
- Recognize when a client's family 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:

- Display mature empathetic and effective professional relationships by exhibiting compassion, 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.

Many of these skills will be acquired during the course of the program. However, to ensure success in learning during required graduate practica, the department wants to inform students about the following Essential Functions:

#### **A. Written Language:**

Prior to enrollment in Clinical Practicum, all students will have fulfilled university required writing skills requirements. Students who may have challenges in regards to their written language based on their academic or clinical assignments should meet with their advisor to discuss strategies/requirements to remediate their writing deficiencies prior to and/or during their clinical practicum coursework.

#### **B. Oral Communication:**

In accordance with ASHA standards, to demonstrate oral English proficiency, the student should be easily understood by familiar and unfamiliar listeners. The student's articulation, phonology, grammar and syntax abilities must be sufficient to enable them to provide reasonably accurate models in spoken English for their clients/patients.

Students who are later identified as having challenges in interpersonal management and/or professional skills will meet with their advisor to address possible concerns and determine a course of remediation.

The program will adhere to ASHA's guidelines regarding student clinicians identified as "accented speakers" <https://www.asha.org/policy/pi2011-00324/>

It is the position of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) that students and professionals in communication sciences and disorders who speak with accents and/or dialects can effectively provide speech, language, and audiological services to persons with communication disorders as long as they have the expected level of knowledge in normal and disordered communication, the expected level of diagnostic and clinical case management skills, and if modeling is necessary, are able to model the target phoneme, grammatical feature, or other aspect of speech and language that characterizes the client's particular problem.

#### **C. Hearing:**

If a graduate student has a history or a hearing loss that may affect participation in clinical practicum, they should consult with their academic advisor. Audiometric screenings only are available to graduate students on their request.

#### **D. Interpersonal Management and Professional Skills:**

Ours is a professional training program and students must demonstrate professional behavior in all interactions in the classroom, clinic, and with their peers on campus. The Cal State East Bay Student Conduct policies, at <http://www.csueastbay.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct.html>, outline expectations for student behavior consistent with our campus mission and vision. Should any concerns regarding a student's interpersonal management or professional behavior arise, individual instructors and clinical supervisors will contact the student's advisor who will schedule a meeting with the student to determine a plan for remediation.