

Western Kentucky University
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
College of Health and Human Services

**ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS AND TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR ADMISSION AND
CONTINUED ENROLLMENT FOR THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN COMMUNICATION
DISORDERS PROGRAM**

The B.S. (Bachelor of Science) education program in Communication Disorders at Western Kentucky University prepares students academically for graduate study in speech-language pathology, audiology, or related areas. A master's degree is required for national certification in speech-language pathology and a clinical doctorate is required for national certification in audiology. Licensure is also necessary in Kentucky but other states have various mandates for practicing professionals. All coursework follows guidelines recommended by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

The major for students in Communication Disorders (reference number 595P prior to being accepted to the program and reference number 595 after being officially accepted to the undergraduate program) is a pre-professional program, which requires 52 hours in the specialization areas of speech-language pathology and audiology. Students should consider a minor or second major. Some certificate programs, majors, and/or minors which complement the B.S. in Communication Disorders major are: American Sign Language, Child Studies, Cross-Cultural Communication in Healthcare, Family Home Visiting, Family Studies, Gerontology, Health Care Navigator, Health Education, Health Care Administration, Non-Profit Administration, Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education, and Social Work. *If students choose to complete a second program, they should consider the impact on time frame for completion of degree.*

All undergraduate students are required to complete supervised clinical clock hours working with people having communication disorders (Clinical Internship). Students are required to undergo criminal background checks and provide proof of a recent physical examination, professional liability insurance, and a tuberculin skin test prior to beginning any clinical experiences.

In order to acquire the knowledge and skills requisite to the practice of speech-language pathology, audiology, or other health related fields 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: observational/sensory, communication, psychomotor, cognitive, and affective/behavioral. These skills enable a student to meet undergraduate and professional requirements as measured by state licensure and national certification in a graduate degree if pursued. Many of these skills can be learned and developed during the course of the undergraduate 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. All students admitted into the Communication Disorders undergraduate program must meet the following essential qualities.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

To be successful in the undergraduate Communication Disorders program and ultimately to perform the role of a speech-language pathologist, audiologist, or other health related professional, a student must consistently:

1. Utilize appropriate and effective spoken, written, and nonverbal communication with clients and colleagues from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Students must have the cognitive ability to learn complex information, be able to perform clinical problem solving, and synthesize and apply information from the discipline of Human Communication Sciences and Disorders and related disciplines to formulate diagnostic and treatment judgments.
2. Possess sufficient motor, sensory, memory, and coordination abilities to perform routine client/patient care in speech-language pathology.
3. Have the capacity to maintain composure and emotional stability during periods of high stress.

4. Demonstrate affective skills and appropriate demeanor and rapport that relate to professional education and quality client/patient care.
5. Demonstrate flexibility and the ability to adjust to changing situations and uncertainty in an academic or clinical environment.
6. Have the ability to reliably and critically self-evaluate their professional-technical and personal skills that contribute to positive client outcomes.
7. Have the ability to accept constructive criticism and respond by appropriate modification of behavior.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR ADMISSION AND CONTINUED ENROLLMENT

The technical standards for admission to and continued enrollment in the Communication Disorders undergraduate program reflect the essential qualities and abilities that are considered necessary to a student's academic and clinical performance. Ability to meet these Technical Standards is required for admission and must be maintained throughout a student's progress in the Communication Disorders undergraduate program. In the event that, during education, a student is unable to fulfill these technical standards, with or without reasonable accommodation, then the student may be asked to leave the program. Students should carefully review the technical standards below to determine if assistance is needed to perform any of the required tasks. To perform the essential functions of a speech-language pathologist, audiologist, or other health related professional and be successful in the Communication Disorders undergraduate program, an individual must possess specific skills and abilities in the following areas:

1. Observation Skills/Sensory Abilities
2. Communication Skills
3. Psychomotor Skills
4. Cognitive Abilities
5. Affective/Behavioral Skills

1. Observation Skills/Sensory Abilities

A student must possess:

- Observation skills adequate to observe, interpret, and document clients'/patients' activity and behavior accurately during assessment and treatment procedures.
- Visual ability sufficient for observation and assessment necessary in clinical settings.
- Tactile ability sufficient for physical treatment and assessment.
- Ability to accurately monitor through both visual and auditory modalities, equipment displays and controls used for assessment and treatment of patients.

2. Communication Skills

A student must possess adequate communication skills to:

- Communicate effectively with patients, faculty, staff, peers, and other health care professionals in spoken, written and non-verbal forms.
- Understand and speak the English language at a level consistent with competent professional practice.
- Read, comprehend, and interpret information accurately from diagnostic tests, equipment, and patient records. Proofread and edit own documentation. Legibly complete documentation in a timely manner.
- Modify his/her communication style to meet diverse communicative needs.

3. Psychomotor Skills

A student must possess adequate motor skills to:

- Attend and participate in lecture and laboratory classes, and access laboratories, classrooms, and workstations.
- Attend and participate in clinical internships/externships in assigned locations.
- Accomplish required tasks in clinical and academic settings.

- Have the fine motor coordination to accurately and efficiently use equipment and materials during assessment and treatment of clients/patients.
- Participate in classroom and clinical activities for the defined workday (minimum 4 hours).
- Execute movements reasonably required to move from area to area, maneuver in small places, use equipment, materials, technology, and AAC devices, etc. as needed to provide clients with appropriate general care.
- Access transportation to clinical and academic placements.

4. Cognitive Abilities

A student must possess adequate intellectual, ethical, emotional, and cognitive skills to:

- Comprehend, integrate, and synthesize a large body of information/knowledge in a short period of time.
- Analyze complex client/patient problems.
- Reflect on clinical and academic performance and self-assess performance accurately.
- Maintain attention and concentration for sufficient time to complete clinical activities for at least 4 hour blocks of time.
- Achieve academic and clinical knowledge and lifelong learning skills.
- Participate in clinical settings and achieve the levels of competence required by the academic and clinical faculty and off-campus supervisors.
- Solve problems critical to the practice of speech-language pathology.
- Self-evaluate, identify, and communicate limits of one's own knowledge and skills.
- Identify and utilize resources in order to increase knowledge and skills.
- Utilize detailed written and oral instruction in order to make independent decisions. Measure, calculate, reason, analyze, judge, and synthesize as needed in the academic and clinical arenas.

5. Affective/Behavioral Skills

A student must possess adequate social and behavioral attributes to:

- Demonstrate appreciation and respect for individual, social, and cultural differences in fellow students, colleagues, staff, clients/patients, and significant others.
- Demonstrate appropriate behaviors, emotional stability, and attitudes to protect the safety and well-being of clients/patients and classmates.
- Possess and demonstrate empathy, and demonstrate commitment to the role of the Speech-Language Pathologist.
- Demonstrate ability to appropriately handle situations that may be emotionally, physically, or intellectually stressful.
- Demonstrate flexibility and the ability to adjust to changing situations and uncertainty in academic and clinical situations.
- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, and professionalism.
- Maintain confidentiality of client/patient information.
- Recognize when a client or client's family does or does not understand the clinician's written and/or oral communication and adjust communication accordingly.
- Dress appropriately and professionally.
- 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.
- Recognize the changing levels/roles of supervision as competence grows or settings change.
- Manage the use of time effectively to complete professional and technical tasks within realistic time constraints.
- Accept constructive criticism and respond by modification of behaviors.

Applicants to the undergraduate program in Communication Disorders will be required to verify they understand and meet these technical standards and will submit this form with their application.

Acceptance decisions are made on the assumption that each candidate can meet the technical standards without consideration of disability. Letters of acceptance will be offered contingent on this

signed statement from the applicant that she/he can meet the program's technical standards without accommodation, or this signed statement from the applicant that she/he believes she/he can meet the technical standards if reasonable accommodation is provided.

Once a student has communicated the need for accommodations, the Student Accessibility Resource Center (SARC) will determine that the stated condition qualifies as a disability under applicable laws, and will recommend accommodations based upon provided documentation from licensed professionals. SARC and the Communication Disorders Department would then jointly determine whether or not the recommended accommodations are reasonable, whether or not they provide the student with an equal opportunity for success, and whether or not they can be carried out within the academic and clinical structure of the program.

Read and sign **ONLY ONE** of the below statements:

I certify that I have read and understand the technical standards of admission listed above and that I believe to the best of my knowledge that I meet each of these standards without accommodation. I understand that if I am unable to meet these standards it may void admission or result in dismissal from the program.

Signature of Applicant

Date

Alternative statement for students requesting accommodations.

I certify that I have read and understand the technical standards of admission listed above and that I believe to the best of my knowledge that I can meet each of these standards with certain accommodations. I have contacted the Student Disabilities Office to determine what accommodations may be available. I understand that if I am unable to meet these standards with or without accommodations, it may void admission or result in dismissal from the program.

Signature of Applicant

Date

Submit this completed departmental application as an attachment to the application to the program.