INTRODUCTION

The graduate degree in Speech and Hearing Sciences provides students with the academic coursework and clinical practicum experiences required for clinical certification by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. The education of speech-language pathologists requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills, and development of judgment in preparation for independent and appropriate decisions required in clinical practice. The starred items (*), however, are skills that are more inherent and should be present when a student begins the program.

POLICY

The graduate program in Speech and Hearing Sciences at Portland State University adheres to the standards of the Council of Academic Accreditation (CAA). Operating within the scope of the CAA Standards, the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences has the freedom and ultimate responsibility for (1) the selection of students, (2) the design, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum, (3) the evaluation of student progress, and (4) the determination of who should be awarded a degree. Admission and retention decisions are based not only on satisfactory academic achievements, but also on other academic and professional factors which serve to ensure that the candidate can complete the essential function of the program required for graduation.

The Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences has a responsibility to the public to assure that graduates become fully competent speech-language pathologists, capable of delivering quality services and preserving the well-being of the clients they serve. Thus, it is important that persons admitted, retained and graduated possess the cognitive skills, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, and physical and emotional capacity necessary to practice speech-language pathology.

The Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, as part of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Portland State University, is committed to the principle of equal opportunity. The University, College, and Department do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, ability, or veteran status. When requested, the University will provide reasonable accommodation to otherwise qualified students with properly documented disabilities. The SPHR faculty and professional staff have responsibility for the welfare of students in the Department and for the clients in the Speech-Language and Hearing Clinic. To meet this responsibility, the Department has established academic standards and minimal essential functions (defined on the following pages) that must be demonstrated by students with or without reasonable accommodations in order to participate in the program and to complete it successfully. Students with conditions that may
require accommodations will be referred to the Disability Resource Center (DRC) for a determination of whether the condition is a disability as defined by applicable laws, and for a determination of what accommodations are reasonable. The determination will specifically take into consideration whether the requested accommodation might jeopardize the safety of clients or the ability of the student to complete the classroom, laboratory, and clinical coursework required for the SPHR graduate program. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities to enable them to meet these standards and ensure that they are not denied the benefits of, excluded from participation in, or otherwise subjected to discrimination.

Essential Functions

PSU’s Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences endeavors to select applicants who have the ability to become highly competent SLP professionals. Admission and retention decisions are based not only on satisfactory prior and ongoing academic achievement but also on clinical program requirements for graduation. Essential functions, as distinguished from academic standards, refer to those cognitive, physical, and behavioral abilities that are necessary for satisfactory mastery of the curriculum, and the professional attributes required of all students at graduation.

Failure to meet or maintain the Essential Functions may result in action, including, but not limited to dismissal from the program.

Essential functions can be described in relation to five areas: motor, sensory, communication, intellectual/cognitive (conceptual, integrative, and quantitative abilities for problem solving and diagnosis), behavioral/emotional, and the professional aspects of the performance of an SLP profession. Each is described below.

A. COMMUNICATION

A student must possess adequate communication skills to:

1. Communicate proficiently in both oral and written English language.*
   - Students who do not speak English as their first language will demonstrate proficiency in oral and written language by earning the minimum required official score on the International Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the PSU Institutional TOEFL, or the International English Language testing System (IELTS) exam
   - Students will demonstrate oral language proficiency by passing an oral screening administered as part of the Clinic Orientation
   - Students who do not pass the oral screening have the option to enroll in language intervention classes provided by the IELP and/or to receive assistance in the Speech and Hearing Clinic

2. Possess reading and writing skills sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands.
3. Perceive and demonstrate appropriate non-verbal communication for culture and context.
4. Modify communication style to meet the communication needs of clients, caregivers, and other persons served.
5. Communicate professionally and intelligibly with patients, colleagues, other healthcare professionals, and community or professional groups.
6. Communicate professionally and effectively on patient documentation, reports, and scholarly papers required as a part of course work and professional practice.
7. Convey information accurately with relevance and cultural sensitivity.

B. MOTOR

A student must possess adequate motor skills to:

1. Sustain necessary physical activity level in required classroom and clinical activities.
2. Respond quickly to provide a safe environment for clients in emergency situations including fire, choking, etc.
3. Access transportation to clinical and academic placements.
4. Participate in classroom and clinical activities for the defined workday.
5. Efficiently manipulate testing and treatment environment and materials without violation of testing protocol and with best therapeutic practice.
6. Manipulate patient-utilized equipment (e.g. durable medical equipment to include AAC devices, hearing aids, etc) in a safe manner.
7. Access technology for clinical management (i.e. billing, charting, therapy programs, etc.).

C. INTELLECTUAL / COGNITIVE

A student must possess adequate intellectual and cognitive skills to:

1. Comprehend, retain, integrate, synthesize, infer, evaluate and apply written and verbal information sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands.*
   - Adequate skills in this area will be determined by review of the student’s academic record as presented in their graduate application through academic transcripts, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, and a written statement
2. Identify significant findings from history, evaluation, and data to formulate a diagnosis and develop a treatment plan.
4. 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.
5. Utilize detailed written and verbal instruction in order to make unique and dependent decisions.

D. SENSORY/OBSERVATIONAL

A student must possess adequate sensory skills of vision, hearing, and tactile to:

1. 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).
2. Identify the need for alternative modalities of communication.
3. Visualize and identify anatomic structures.
4. Visualize and discriminate imaging findings.
5. Identify and discriminate findings on imaging studies.
6. Discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests.
7. Recognize when a client’s family does or does not understand the clinician’s written and or verbal communication.
8. Identify and discriminate a client’s spoken responses.
9. Accurately monitor through both visual and auditory modalities, equipment displays and controls, including those of hearing instruments, used for assessment and treatment of patients.

E. BEHAVIORAL/ SOCIAL

A student must possess adequate behavioral and social attributes to:

1. Display mature, empathetic, and effective professional relationships by exhibiting compassion, integrity, and concern for others.
2. Recognize and show respect for individuals with disabilities and for individuals of different ages, genders, race, religions, sexual orientation, and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.
3. Conduct oneself in an ethical and legal manner, upholding the ASHA Code of Ethics and university and federal privacy policies.
4. 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.
5. Adapt to changing and demanding environments (which includes maintaining both professional demeanor and emotional health).
6. Manage the use of time effectively to complete professional and technical tasks within realistic time constraints.
7. Accept appropriate suggestions and constructive criticism and respond by modification of behaviors.
8. Dress appropriately and professionally.

Program Participant Agreement Statement

☐ As a graduate student in the Speech and Hearing Sciences Department at Portland State University, my signature below indicates that I have read all four pages of the Essential Functions document; that I agree with its contents; that I am committed to the policies expressed therein; and that I may be advised to discontinue the program should I fail to demonstrate all of the Essential Functions despite reasonable accommodations (if recommended by the DRC) and reasonable levels of support from the faculty.

_________________________  ______________________
Participant’s Name         Date
The Essential Functions Policy is adapted from the following sources:

Department of SPHR, UW.

Department of ComDis, West Chester University.