



## COMMUNICATION SCIENCES & DISORDERS

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS SCIENCES AND DISORDERS GRADUATE STUDENT

Graduate degrees in Speech Language Pathology and Audiology from the University of South Dakota Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders signify that the holder will be able satisfy the academic and practicum requirements for practice in the professions. As such, graduate students enrolled in the master's program in speech-language pathology and the doctoral program in audiology at USD are required to complete onsite and external clinical practicum experiences as well as didactic requirements. Therefore, it follows that graduate students must have the knowledge and skills to function in a broad variety of clinical, community, and school environments and to render a wide spectrum of audiology and speech-language pathology services. These skills enable a student to meet graduate and professional requirements as delineated by state licensure and national certification requirements. All students admitted to a Communication Disorders graduate degree program at the University of South Dakota must meet the abilities and expectations outlined below.

In order to acquire the knowledge and skills requisite to the practice of audiology or speech-language pathology, individuals must possess skills and attributes in five primary areas: Communication, motor, intellectual-cognitive, sensory-observational, and behavioral-social.

Regarding those students with verifiable disabilities, the university will not discriminate against such individuals who are otherwise qualified, but will expect applicants and students to meet certain minimal technical standards (essential functions) as set forth herein with reasonable accommodation. In adopting these standards, the university believes it must keep in mind the ultimate safety of the clients/patients served by its students and graduates. The standards reflect what the graduate program believes are reasonable expectations required of students and practitioners in performing the essential functions of the profession.

**Communication:** Students must be able to communicate proficiently in all languages of service delivery. This means at minimum, students should be able to:

- Communicate proficiently in both oral and written English. Prior to admission, international students must complete the TOEFL-IBT (Test of English as a Foreign Language Internet Based Test) with an overall score of 79 or higher, and a total score of 26 or higher on the spoken English subtest of the TOEFL-IBT. International students who do not have access to the TOEFLIBT may take the TOEFL paper -or computer-based tests for admission into a graduate program; however, they must also take the Test of Spoken English (TSE) and pass with a score of 50 or higher.
- Communicate professionally and intelligibly with patients, colleagues, other healthcare professionals, community or professional groups, and others.

- Effectively, confidently, and sensitively converse with patients and their families. This includes the ability to modify communication style to meet the communication needs of clients, caregivers, and other persons served.
- Possess reading and writing skills sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands. This includes reading course texts, journal articles, test manuals, clinical protocols, and patient's charts. Write effectively, and legibly completing patient documentation, clinical reports, and scholarly papers and assignments required as a part of course work and professional practice.

**Motor:** A student must possess adequate motor skills to:

- Sustain necessary physical activity level in required classroom and clinical activities including participation in classroom and clinical activities for the defined workday.
- Respond quickly to provide a safe environment for clients in emergency situations including fire, choking, etc.
- Efficiently manipulate equipment (e.g., audiometers, computerized speech programs, etc.) treatment materials, and patient utilized medical equipment (e.g., hearing aids, AAC devices) within the testing and treatment environments, without violation of testing protocol and best therapeutic practice.
- Travel to numerous clinical sites for practical experience.

**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 and solve problems, reason, and make sound clinical judgments in patient assessment and treatment.
- Self evaluate, identify, and communicate limits of one's own knowledge and skill to appropriate professional level and identify and utilize resources in order to increase knowledge.
- Utilize detailed written and verbal instruction in order to make unique and dependent decisions, and demonstrate an understanding of the rationale and justification for one's performance.
- Critically evaluate one's own performance and be flexible toward change to promote professional and clinical process and accept appropriate suggestions and constructive criticism and respond by modification of behaviors.

- Manage the use of time to complete clinical and academic assignments within realistic constraints.
- Conduct oneself in an ethical and legal manner, uphold the ASHA Code of Ethics, patient privacy policies and comply with administrative, legal, and regulatory policies.

**Sensory Observational:** A student must possess adequate sensory skills of vision, hearing, and tactile 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).
- Visualize, identify, and palpate anatomic structures such as the head, neck, and external ears.
- Visualize and discriminate imaging findings, text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests.
- Observe demonstrations and learn from experiences in the classroom, laboratory, and clinical situations.
- Observe and respond to subtle cues of patient's moods, temperament, and social behavior, and non 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.
- 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.

**Comments:** The description above is intended to reflect the essential functions in a general manner. It is not all-inclusive, and is not a contract, expressed or implied. The description also attempts to describe functions in multiple contexts from the didactic experience to the fieldwork/externship experience. Keeping this in mind, the importance of some essential functions may increase or decrease depending on the context. **The department will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability.** Any student who feels s/he may need academic accommodations or access accommodations based on the impact of a documented disability should contact and register with Disability Services during the first week of class. Disability Services is the official office to assist students through the process of disability verification and coordination of appropriate and reasonable accommodations.