

SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY, MS

The Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences offers a graduate program in speech-language pathology leading to the master of science (MS) degree. Our program is accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

The University of Alabama Master of Science degree program in speech-language pathology is designed to prepare speech-language pathologists to contribute to the prevention, assessment, and treatment of communication sciences and disorders.

Through formal academic coursework, clinical experience, and exposure to research, students enrolled in the program acquire

- knowledge of the literature in human communication sciences and disorders
- skill in the administration and interpretation of speech, language and hearing measures
- the ability to apply therapy techniques
- an appreciation of related behavior, physical and biological sciences
- an awareness of, and an appreciation for, the multicultural nature of our society
- insight into their own professional strengths and limitations

Students completing the requirements for the MS degree at The University of Alabama meet the academic and clinical practicum requirements for the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Certificate of Clinical Competence in speech-language pathology and for state licensure in Alabama.

The MS degree program provides the following:

- a prescribed sequence of courses in human communication sciences and disorders and related disciplines
- opportunities to observe, discuss, and participate in the assessment and treatment of individuals of all ages with a wide range of communication disabilities at The University of Alabama Speech and Hearing Center and various off-campus facilities
- experience in the assessment and treatment of individuals with speech, language and hearing disorders
- opportunities for research experiences which may include the writing of a thesis

Admissions

In addition to the minimum Graduate School admission requirements, to be considered for regular admission an application must include:

- Three letters of recommendation
 - Submit three letters of recommendation from individuals that can speak to your potential for success in graduate school. Letter writers should provide examples of your outstanding scholarship, leadership experience, community involvement, strength of character, independence, and any related experiences that have enhanced your undergraduate learning experience. Additionally, letter writers should speak to your strengths/weaknesses, resiliency and ability to overcome obstacles. *Note: all students regardless of undergraduate institution must submit 3 letters of recommendation.*
- Essay

- Compose and submit a standard five-paragraph essay in response to the guidelines and prompts on the Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences website.
 - *Note: This structured essay replaces the previous requirement of the unstructured statement of purpose.*

- Video Submission:
 - Prepare and submit a video of you responding to the following the guidelines and prompts on the Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences website.

- Resume
 - Construct and submit a comprehensive resume that documents your academic, professional, and community achievements.

Please make sure to regularly check the department's website for a complete listing of all required application materials.

See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

Deficiencies:

Undergraduate course deficiencies must be removed as soon as possible, but such courses may be taken concurrently with ones for graduate credit.

In unusual cases certain requirements or procedures may be modified or waived by the Graduate Faculty of the Department.

Curricular Requirements

First Year

Fall	HourSpring	HourSummer	Hours
Clinic: 8-12 Hours	Clinic: 10 - 15 Hours	Clinic: 15 - 20 Hours	
SLH 501	3 SLH 512	3 SLH 515	3
SLH 509	3 SLH 553	3 SLH 536	3
SLH 551	3 SLH 555	3 Elective Course	3-6
SLH 552	3 SLH 576	3	
SLH 516	1 SLH 526	2	
	13	14	9-12

Second Year

Fall	HourSpring	Hours
Clinic: 15 - 20 Hours	Clinic: 40 Hours	
SLH 554	3 SLH 508	3
SLH 556	3 SLH 528	6
SLH 575	3	
SLH 536	3	
Elective Course	3	
	15	9

Total Hours: 60-63

- Course sequence subject to change based on faculty availability.

Degree Requirements

Code and Title	Hours
Required Courses	
SLH 501 Intro to Research Methods	3
SLH 508 Diagnostic Practicum	3

SLH 509	Language 1	3
SLH 512	Language 2	3
SLH 515	Professional Seminar	3
SLH 516	Adv Clin Prac Speech 1	1
SLH 526	Adv Clin Prac Speech 2	2
SLH 536	Adv Clin Prac Speech 3	3
SLH 528	Externship Practicum	6
SLH 551	Phonological Assessment	3
SLH 552	Neurology I	3
SLH 553	Neurology II	3
SLH 554	Fluency & Counseling	3
SLH 555	Seminar in Voice Disorders	3
SLH 556	Acq Motor Speech Disorders	3
SLH 575	Dysphagia in Children	3
SLH 576	Dysphagia In Adults	3
Elective Courses ¹		6
SLH 514	Comm in Autistic Individuals	3
SLH 525	Applied Research in SLHS	3
SLH 535	Medical SLP	3
SLH 546	Aural Rehab for SLP	3
SLH 549	Sociolinguistics in SLP	3
SLH 550	Advanced Independent Study	1 to 3
SLH 565	Advanced Aphasia	3
SLH 572	Adv Imaging Voice Swallowing	3
SLH 599	Thesis Research	1 to 6

Footnotes

¹ Electives offered each semester are subject to change.

Transfer Credit

Graduate School information about Transfer Credit.

Comprehensive Exam

Written Comprehensive Examination

1. Students will take written comprehensive examinations over the course of the five semesters Master's program. Students must pass comprehensive exams in order to graduate.
2. Students taking the examinations will be relieved of academic and clinical duties on the examination days. The time and place will be set and announced by the Chair of the Department but will take place in a campus computer lab with internet access disabled, unless announced otherwise.
3. The examination is designed to reveal the knowledge gained by students in multiple content areas, and their ability to express that knowledge in professional, clinical written communication. Therefore, in addition to content, clarity and grammar will be assessed. Comprehensive exams are the summative assessment for the educational program in speech-language pathology, CAA Standard 5.2.
4. Each answer will be reviewed by a graduate faculty member with expertise in the content area. Answers that do not receive a passing mark will be reviewed by a second faculty member.

Nature of Written Comprehensive Questions

As this is a comprehensive examination, the topics of the questions may overlap across course lines, requiring the student to integrate information

from more than one content area. Since the questions will be chosen to reflect the content areas represented on the ASHA Praxis exam for speech-language pathology, all areas must be studied in preparation for the comprehensive examination. Students must achieve a passing grade on comprehensive exams to graduate. Not all areas will be necessarily included in the test questions. The twelve content areas from which questions will be drawn are:

- Child language development
- Child language disorders
- Phonological/articulation disorders
- Fluency disorders
- Motor speech disorders
- Voice disorders
- Neurogenic language disorders
- Dysphagia
- Multicultural issues
- Audiology
- Research methods
- Professional issues

Supplementary Examination

The purpose of this examination is to provide a mandatory second comprehensive exam question for any student who fails one of the original questions given during the comprehensive examination period.

The second question may or may not be the original question and the examination format may be written or oral depending. This will be determined by the primary faculty member responsible for the question. A supplementary exam can be administered a maximum of two times.

If a student does not pass their supplementary examination(s) then the relevant academic faculty will meet to determine the plan for future academic remediation. The remediation plan may include additional coursework and/or enrollment in additional semesters of graduate study. The plan will be communicated to the student, and a signed copy of the remediation plan will be uploaded to the student file. Failure of the supplementary examination(s) may result in the student not finishing the graduate program in the typical 5 semester sequence.

Graduate School information on Comprehensive Exams.

Clinical Practicum

Clinical Practicum Experience Step 1: Pre-Professional Observations

Each student majoring in Speech-Language Pathology is required to complete 25 clock hours of observation of appropriate clinical activities prior to enrollment in the first practicum course.

Undergraduate students at UA typically gain this experience while enrolled in SLH 277 Preprof Lab Exp: Pre-professional Laboratory Experience. During this course, the student completes a minimum of 25 hours of observation of diagnostic and/or intervention activities with individuals representing a variety of age groups and types of speech, language, and hearing disorders via the interactive Simucase Guided Observation Program.

Students will complete the Observation Hour Form as a log of the observations completed. These hours will be verified by the instructor at the end of the course. The student must turn in the form to the course instructor before a grade will be posted. The student should keep a copy of the form for his/her records.

Students who enter the program from another university must provide written documentation of observation hours before receiving any clinical assignments. Students who have not completed 25 hours of observation must do so before participating in clinical practicum.

Step 2: In-House Clinical Practicum

In-house clinical practicum is available to both undergraduate and graduate students. Students typically complete a minimum of 1 in-house clinical practicum before being assigned to an off-campus facility. Most students will complete at least 2 in-house placements. Graduate students participate in in-house and off-campus practicum through enrollment in SLH 516 Adv Clin Prac Speech 1, SLH 526 Adv Clin Prac Speech 2, SLH 536 Adv Clin Prac Speech 3, SLH 508 Diagnostic Practicum, and SLH 528 Externship Practicum.

Step 3: Off-Campus Clinical Practicum

All graduate students are expected to complete practicum at sites outside The Speech and Hearing Center once they have demonstrated acceptable professional conduct, academic performance, and clinical performance. A variety of settings are available. Ideally, students will complete at least one pediatric placement (i.e. public school) and one adult placement (i.e. skilled nursing facility, rehabilitation setting, or hospital). The student's preference for a particular site will be accommodated when possible if it is compatible with the knowledge and skill requirements that are appropriate for the student at that point in the clinical training process.

Decisions regarding off-campus clinical practicum placement will be made on a student-by-student basis by the Internship Coordinator with input from the Clinical Educators and Academic Faculty and approval from the Clinic Director and Department Chair. Students must abide by the terms for placement agreed upon by the site and The Speech and Hearing Center.

Some travel by the student may be required to provide adequate hours and experiences. Costs associated with all off-campus travel will be incurred by the student. Off-Campus Clinical Practicum sites considered to be in-area include any location within a two-hour drive of the city of Tuscaloosa.

Only students in good standing are assigned to off-campus clinical practicum. Good standing is defined by a student's professional conduct, academic performance and clinical performance. Students with a remediation plan are not eligible for off-campus placement until the terms of the remediation plan are met. Students under review for misconduct will not be assigned to an off-campus placement or might be removed from the site. If a student is on Academic Probation or demonstrates questionable academic misconduct (i.e. poor class attendance), the student may be required to complete the 5th semester practicum locally. Students who are not performing to the standards and expectations outlined prior to the placement (See Student Handbook Appendix X: Expectations for the Student Intern at an Off-Campus Site) will be required to complete a remediation plan. If a practicum experience is delayed or not completed due to review of good standing, the student will complete a rotation the following semester and graduation will be delayed one semester.

For information regarding the out-of-area clinical practicum requirements refer to Appendix VIII: Guidelines for Requesting Out-of-Area Sites for Clinical Training.

Time Commitment for Clinical Experience

Graduate students must be enrolled in clinical practicum each semester they are enrolled in the graduate program. They must complete a

minimum of 25 observation hours and 375 clock hours of clinical practice prior to graduation. The Clinic Director, Internship Coordinator and Clinical Educator determine the number of days and hours a student attends his or her practicum. Students must plan to be available as required for practicum assignments. Students who have jobs or are involved in activities outside the department must be prepared to schedule those time commitments around clinic assignments. Students must recognize that personal decisions (pregnancy, job changes, moves, getting married, etc.) may impact or delay graduation timelines.

Clinical Practicum Grading and Remediation

Graduate clinical practicum is graded as Pass/Fail/Incomplete. Graduate students will be formally evaluated and graded by their Clinical Educator at mid-term and at the end of the semester using CALIPSO, a web-based tool for managing student clinical education. Knowledge and skills in the following areas will be assessed according to the Performance Rating Scale below. These are equally weighted.

- Evaluation skills
- Intervention skills
- Preparedness, Interaction, and Interpersonal Qualities

A remediation plan may be put in place following a clinical practicum mid-term evaluation, a final evaluation, a diagnostic evaluation, or at any time when a student's clinical performance is not in good standing. A remediation plan is developed for any student who receives an "F" or "I" grade in clinic. If a remediation period carries over to the next semester, the student will receive a grade of "I" at the end of the semester in which the remediation period began. This grade will be changed to "P" or "F" at the completion of the remediation period.

The remediation plan will be developed by a remediation committee and will include:

- A description of the problem(s) or area(s) of concern
- Plan/process for remediation
- Explanation of how outcome/success will be measured/determined
- Timeline for completion will be specified in the remediation plan

The remediation committee may include the Department Chair, at least one Clinical Educator, and the Clinic Director.

If the student successfully meets the terms of the remediation plan within the timeline specified, the student proceeds with graduate study as normal. If the student does not successfully complete the remediation process, a second remediation plan may be developed. A maximum of 2 remediation plans may be implemented for a student during their graduate program. If after a second remediation plan, the deficits in clinical performance are not successfully resolved, as determined by the remediation committee, the student will be dismissed from the graduate program, even if the student is not on academic probation.

A student who earns an "F" or Fail grade in clinic is not awarded the clinical clock hours earned that semester. A student who earns an "F" or Fail grade in clinic will be required to complete an additional semester of clinical work.

A student who earns an "F" or Fail grade in clinic may be at risk for academic probation.

Evaluation of Clinical Performance

Clinical Educators will observe treatment (therapy sessions) a minimum of 25% of the student's contact time and each diagnostic session a minimum of 50% of the time. Observation is not the only method used in determining competency. The student will also be evaluated on quality

of written work, professionalism, as well as other pertinent indicators of professional development.

Time Limits for Degree Completion

The MINIMUM length of the program for the master's degree is the equivalent of five semesters for a student with an undergraduate background in speech, language and hearing sciences, or seven semesters for a student without such a background. The Graduate School requires that the degree be completed within six years.

Students with a typical pre-professional undergraduate background in speech, language and hearing sciences generally can complete the above requirements in five continuous semesters beginning in the Fall semester (F, SP, S, F, Sp).

Students with no undergraduate background in speech, language and hearing sciences typically are able to complete the above requirements in seven semesters beginning only in Fall Semesters (F, Sp, F, Sp, S, F, Sp).

Graduate School information on Time Limits.

Certification and Licensure

In addition to having completed all the academic and clinical requirements for the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology, students completing this program will be eligible to apply for a state license granted by the Alabama Board of Examiners in Speech Pathology and Audiology.

Graduates may also become employed in the public schools of Alabama on a provisional basis prior to becoming licensed, and on a permanent tenure earning basis after obtaining licensure and receiving a Class A teacher's certificate from the State Department of Education.

HIPAA Policy

The security and privacy of clinical records is protected by professional ethics (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association) and federal legislation (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act). The Speech and Hearing Center is bound by ethics and law to adhere to HIPAA Policies and Practices as prescribed by The University of Alabama HIPAA Compliance Committee. (HIPAA, Appendix III) All members of The Speech and Hearing Center workforce must comply with HIPAA Policies and Practices.

- Students enrolled in clinical practicum/courses are part of The Speech and Hearing Center workforce.
- The obligation to protect the confidentiality and security of clinical records begins with enrollment in clinical courses and is ongoing (i.e., does not end with completion of clinical coursework or graduation).

Clinical practicum students will complete HIPAA training prior to engaging in delivery of clinical services. Documentation of training will be kept by The Speech and Hearing Center HIPAA Privacy Officer.

HIPAA Policies and Practices apply to all clinical records, which includes all paper and electronic clinical records, billing records, photographs, video and audio recordings, and verbal and telephone conversations.

Important Points related to HIPAA

- Violations of HIPAA Policies and Practices will be reported to The Speech and Hearing Center Privacy and Security Offices, Clinic Director, and Department Chair.
- Students who violate HIPAA Policies and Practices will be subject to sanctions.

- The sanction imposed will be based on the severity of the breach. Mitigating factors as well as whether the breach was a first or repeat offense will be considered.
- Neither The University of Alabama nor the Speech and Hearing Center can protect the students from legal charges filed through the court system on behalf of a client should such an action occur.
- If a student is accused of a HIPAA violation, a meeting will be scheduled to address the accusation. The HIPAA Privacy and Security Officers, Clinic Director, and Department Chair will attend the meeting with the student. Other Speech and Hearing Center personnel, such as a clinical educator, may be present as well.
 - The accusation and concerns will be presented. The student will be given the opportunity to provide an explanation/defense.
 - If it is determined that the student is guilty of a HIPAA violation, the HIPAA Officers, Clinic Director, and Department Chair will determine the appropriate sanctions.
 - The purpose of the meeting and the outcome will be documented. A copy will be placed in the student's department file.
- Sanctions can include but are not limited to the following:
 - Both a first offense and a serious offense typically require disciplinary sanctions but do not threaten the student's opportunity to complete the program in the expected number of semesters. HIPAA re-training, loss of clock hour credit, and a letter of reprimand are examples of possible sanctions.
 - A second serious offense or critical offense warrants a grade of "F" or "fail" in the clinical course. The student will remain in-house one extra semester for clinic rather than be placed at an off-campus site. The student will have to extend the completion date of the graduate program by one semester.
 - A fatal offense, third serious offense, or second critical offense warrants dismissal from the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences for a graduate student.

Student Progress Requirements

The M.S. degree in Speech-Language Pathology offered by the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences at The University of Alabama is a standards-based education program. Standards based educational programs are systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating understanding or mastery of the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their educational programs. Our degree program is based on the 2020 Standards and Implementation Procedures for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology (Council for Clinical Certification in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2018). 2020 Standards for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology. Retrieved from www.asha.org/certification/2020-SLP-Certification-Standards.)

Students will work systematically through all of the required standards during their clinical training and academic coursework. Students must maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher throughout their graduate program to avoid academic probation. However, regardless of overall grade earned in the course- the professor for each course will evaluate a student's mastery of standards on each summative assessment offered in the course. If a student fails to show mastery on any of the targeted standards in a course, the professor will meet with the student to outline a remediation plan to ensure that the standard is met prior to the end of the course. The professor will document the plan; the student and professor will sign the documented plan, and it will be filed within the

professor's records for the course. Successful completion of the plan should also be documented within the professor's records for the course.

At the conclusion of the course, the professor of record will evaluate each student's mastery of targeted standards for each course. They will provide a list of students that require remediation due to failing to meet mastery criteria for standards addressed in their courses by the due date for final grade reporting. This list will be provided to the Chair and Director of Graduate Studies. The Chair, Director of Graduate Studies, Professor, and student will meet to discuss and finalize the remediation plan for the standards that require additional work to demonstrate mastery by the first week of the following semester. The remediation plan will include the standards to be targeted, activities to teach/remediate understanding of the standards, assessment of mastery for each standard, and the timeline for accomplishing the tasks. This will be signed by all parties and filed in the student's department record.

Academic Misconduct

Graduate School information on Academic Misconduct.

Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information

Graduate School information on Withdrawals and Leave of Absence.

Academic Grievances Information

Graduate School information on Academic Grievances.

Grades and Academic Standing Probation

1. Academic GPA

A graduate student with unconditional standing who drops below a B average in grades at any time after earning 6 semester hours will be placed on probation. Probationary status must be removed by raising the overall average to a B or better during the next 12 hours of graduate work following the semester in which the probation was incurred. Failure to do so will result in dismissal from the Graduate School. If a student's overall average drops below a B during the last 12 hours of prescribed course work this will result in dismissal from the program and academic suspension from the Graduate School.

2. Clinic Grades

A "Fail" grade in clinic will place any student on probation. A remediation plan will be instituted. If a "fail" grade is earned after implementation of the remediation plan the student will be dismissed from the program. A student will not be allowed to graduate with a "Fail" grade in clinic in their last semester.

Graduate School information on Grades and Academic Standing.

Graduate School Deadlines Information

Information on Graduate School Deadlines.

Application for Graduation Information

Information on the Application for Graduation.