

# JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

## Essential Functions of Speech and Hearing Sciences Education at James Madison University, Communication Sciences and Disorders Admission, Retention, and Graduation Standards

### INTRODUCTION

The graduate degree in speech-language pathology and audiology is recognized as a broad degree requiring the acquisition of general and specialized knowledge and skills in all applicable domains of speech and hearing sciences. The education of speech-language pathologists and audiologists requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills and development of judgment through patient care experience in preparation for independent and appropriate decisions required in practice. The current practices of speech-language pathology and audiology emphasize collaboration among speech language pathologists, audiologists, other health care and education professionals, the patient/client, and the patient/client's family.

### POLICY

The James Madison University Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) Department endeavors to select applicants who have the ability to become highly competent speech-language pathologists and/or audiologists. As an accredited speech and hearing sciences program, the CSD Department's curriculum in Speech and Hearing Sciences adheres to the standards and guidelines of the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. Within these guidelines, the CSD Department has the responsibility for selecting and evaluating its students; designing, implementing, and evaluating its curriculum; and determining who should be awarded a degree. Further, the Department has a responsibility to the public that its graduates can become fully competent and caring speech-language pathologists and audiologists, capable of doing benefit and not harm. Thus, it is important that students admitted to our graduate programs possess the intelligence, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, and physical and emotional capacity necessary to practice speech-language pathology and/or audiology. Therefore, **admission and retention decisions are based not only on satisfactory academic achievement of prospective and current candidates but also on the candidate's ability to conduct the essential functions necessary to achieve the knowledge and skills standards required for graduation and certification by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).**

### ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

The essential functions are necessary foundation skills that allow students to safely participate in the program of study (including performing tasks and serving a variety of individuals across diverse clinical settings) in order to acquire the knowledge and skill sets for meeting ASHA certification standards in speech-language pathology and/or audiology. Prospective and current students must possess adequate skills in **communication, physical abilities, cognitive abilities, and personal, behavioral,**

**and social attributes**, following the recommendations of the Council on Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CAPCSD) [1]. The essential functions outlined and described below have been adopted and adapted from essential functions documents established by other ASHA-accredited programs [2-3]. Failure to meet or maintain the Essential Functions may result in action against the student, including, but not limited to dismissal from the program.

Prospective and current students must possess adequate **communication skills** to:

- ☞ Communicate effectively and in a timely manner with people in person, by phone, and in written form by considering the communication needs and cultural values of the communication partner(s).
- ☞ Be proficient in written and spoken English.
- ☞ Read and write sufficiently to meet curricular and clinical demands, including, but not limited to, medical records, standardized assessments, and clinical reports.
- ☞ Perceive and demonstrate appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication effectively and respectfully across settings in academic, community and clinical environments.

Prospective and current students must possess adequate **physical abilities** to:

- ☞ Sustain necessary physical activity level in required classroom and clinical activities.
- ☞ Negotiate patient/client care environments and be able to move between settings such as the classroom, health care facility, educational, or community settings.
- ☞ Manipulate and monitor equipment and materials to complete screening and evaluation protocols and treatment and behavior plans as well as reporting.
- ☞ Use fine motor and other sensorimotor skills to navigate the outer ear and speech mechanism (e.g., ear canal impressions, otoscopy, hearing aid fittings, oral mechanism exams, and swallowing protocols).
- ☞ Discriminate text, numbers, tables, graphs, and visualizations associated with diagnostic instruments and tests (e.g., identify anatomic structures and imaging findings).
- ☞ Monitor communicative responses across communicative domains.
- ☞ Recognize, identify, discriminate, and interpret linguistic and acoustic signals.
- ☞ Make travel arrangements to and from classroom and practicum/externship settings.
- ☞ Provide a safe environment for others when responding to emergency situations such as fire or choking or other medical emergencies, and in the application of universal precautions.

Prospective and current students must possess adequate **cognitive abilities** to:

- ☞ Comprehend, retain, integrate, synthesize, infer, evaluate, and apply written and verbal information sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands.
- ☞ Generate discipline-specific documents and clinical reports in English.
- ☞ Seek relevant information, synthesize, and apply concepts and information from

various sources and disciplines.

- ☞ Analyze, synthesize, and interpret ideas and concepts in academic and diagnostic/treatment settings.
- ☞ Problem-solve through critical analysis.
- ☞ Self-evaluate one's own knowledge and skill and be able to think reflectively and identify and utilize resources to increase knowledge.

Prospective and current students must possess adequate **personal, behavioral, and social attributes** to:

- ☞ Maintain appropriate personal hygiene and dress appropriately and professionally for varied environments and settings.
- ☞ Show respect for all individuals.
- ☞ Comply with administrative, legal, and regulatory policies.
- ☞ Uphold the code of ethics established by professional organizations such as the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and the American Academy of Audiology.
- ☞ Meet responsibilities in a timely manner.
- ☞ Develop and maintain appropriate relationships with clients/patients and colleagues.
- ☞ Maintain composure in demanding situations.
- ☞ Adapt to changing environments and situations in clinic and classroom.
- ☞ Manage the use of time effectively to complete professional and technical tasks within realistic time constraints.
- ☞ Accept appropriate suggestion and constructive criticism and respond by modification of behaviors.
- ☞ Display mature, empathetic, and effective professional relationships by exhibiting compassion, integrity, and concern for others.

James Madison University and our CSD department endeavor to educate a diverse group of students recognizing that in such diversity lies excellence. Included in this group are otherwise qualified students who have disabilities. The University and CSD department will provide reasonable accommodations to otherwise qualified students with properly documented disabilities who meet the minimum CSD requirements. *Reasonable accommodations will be provided as needed to facilitate a student's progress in learning, performing, and satisfying the essential functions presented in this document.* A reasonable accommodation should not fundamentally alter the academic and clinical requirements of the CSD program, pose a direct threat to the health or safety of the student or others, or present an undue burden to the institution. Determining appropriate and reasonable accommodations is an interactive and collaborative process involving the student, the CSD department and the Office of Students with Disabilities (ODS) [3].

James Madison University is committed to providing access and equal opportunity for all students. JMU also strives to provide reasonable accommodations in its services, programs, activities, education, and employment for individuals with disabilities. Students who believe they have a disability for which they seek accommodation should request disability accommodation from the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at (540) 568-6705 (Voice/TDD), (540) 568-7099 (FAX), or [disability-svcs@jmu.edu](mailto:disability-svcs@jmu.edu).

More information about ODS can be found at <http://www.jmu.edu/ods>

By signing this, I certify that I have read and understand the “Essential Functions of Speech and Hearing Sciences Education” and I understand that should I fail to meet and/or maintain the Essential Functions, I may be subject to action against me by the University, including but not limited to dismissal.

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Signature of Applicant

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Date

Return this document to:

Graduate Program Coordinator  
Communication Sciences and Disorders MSC 4304  
James Madison University  
800 S Main Street  
Harrisonburg, VA 22807

## REFERENCES

[1] Essential Functions in Communication Sciences and Disorders Pre-Conference Workshop Council on Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007). Retrieved from <http://www.capcsd.org/proceedings/2007/PreConferenceEFCasesandChecklist.pdf> .  
*\*Last downloaded and viewed July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017.*

[2] MGH Institute of Health Professions Department of Communication Science and Disorders Essential Functions/Technical Standards (December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016). Retrieved from <https://www.mghihp.edu/sites/default/files/csd-essential-functions-12-16.pdf> .  
*\*Last downloaded and viewed July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017.*

[3] Essential Functions for Professional Education University of Iowa Communication Sciences & Disorders [PDF document] (nod). Retrieved from <https://clas.uiowa.edu/sites/clas.uiowa.edu.comsci/files/2013-Essential%20Functions%20CSD.pdf> . *\*Last downloaded and viewed July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017.*