

Technical Standards

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

Department of Speech, Language, & Hearing Sciences Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Program

The accredited programs of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology in the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, Department of Speech, Language, & Hearing Sciences (SLHS) adhere to the standards set by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), including a code of ethics <http://www.asha.org/policy/ET2016-00342/>. Faculty members have a responsibility for the welfare of clients/patients tested, treated, or otherwise affected by students enrolled in the SLHS programs. Thus, it is important that individuals admitted, retained, and graduated possess the intelligence, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, and physical and emotional capacity necessary to practice audiology and speech-language pathology.

In order to fulfill this responsibility, the department of SLHS has established a document of technical standards that reflects the functions that are considered essential to the professions of audiology and speech-language pathology. Ability to meet these technical standards is required for admission to the graduate programs and must be maintained throughout the time a student is enrolled in the program. Admission and retention decisions are based not only on satisfactory academic standing but also on non-academic factors that serve to ensure that candidates can meet the technical standards of the clinical programs required for graduation. Due to changes in healthcare and/or professional scope of practice, these technical standards may be amended over time and are subject to change. Students will be notified of any changes to these standards.

The department of SLHS seeks to educate a qualified, diverse group of students recognizing that in diversity lies excellence. The department is committed to the education of all qualified individuals, including persons with disabilities who, with or without reasonable accommodation, are capable of performing the technical standards outlined below. In keeping with applicable federal and state law regarding disabilities, the department is committed to making reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities to enable them to perform successfully. A reasonable accommodation should not fundamentally alter the academic and clinical requirements of the programs, pose a direct threat to the health or safety of the student or others, or present an undue burden to the institution. Any student with a disability who is accepted to either of the graduate programs must contact the 504 coordinator in the TTUHSC Office of Student Services as soon as possible. The 504 coordinator will confirm that the stated condition qualifies as a disability under applicable laws and will work with the department to determine what accommodations are reasonable.

In order to acquire the knowledge and skills requisite to the practice of audiology and speech-language pathology to function in a variety of clinical situations and to successfully complete the programs at TTUHSC, candidates for degrees must have multiple abilities and skills divided into five areas: communication, motor, intellectual-cognitive, sensory-observational, and social-behavioral.

The following technical standards reflect the applicable sub-set of abilities that are required under each skill:

Communication

Prospective and current students must possess adequate communication skills to:

- Communicate effectively with individuals and groups in person, by phone, and in written form while considering the communication needs and cultural values of the listener at a level which will support competent professional practice.
- Communicate proficiently in oral and written English.

- Communicate professionally, effectively, and legibly to meet demands required as part of coursework and during clinical work to ensure patient safety (e.g., scholarly papers, medical records, clinical reports, standardized assessment).
- Perceive and demonstrate appropriate non-verbal communication for culture and context.
- Convey information accurately with relevance and cultural sensitivity.
- Possess sufficient speech/vocal productions for provision of clinical services.

Motor Skills

Prospective and current students must possess adequate motor skills to:

- Sustain necessary physical activity level in required classroom and clinical activities for the defined workday.
- Efficiently manipulate testing and treatment environments, materials, and equipment to complete screening and evaluation protocols and treatment and behavior plans.
- Access technology and equipment for clinical management (e.g., billing, charting, therapy programs), diagnostic testing, and treatment protocols.
- Negotiate patient/client care environments and move between settings such as the classroom, health care facility, educational setting, and community settings.
- Access transportation to attend academic courses and clinical placements.
- Use fine motor skills to perform procedure involving the outer ear and speech mechanisms (e.g., ear canal impressions, otoscopy, hearing aid fittings, oral mechanism exams, swallowing protocols).
- Safely manipulate patient-utilized equipment (e.g., durable medical equipment to include AAC devices, hearing aids).
- Provide a safe environment for others when responding to emergency situations (e.g., fire, choking, or other medical emergencies) and in the application of universal precautions.

Intellectual/Cognitive

Prospective and current students must possess adequate intellectual/cognitive skills to:

- Comprehend, retain, integrate, synthesize, infer, evaluate, and apply large amounts of written and verbal information in a short period of time sufficiently to meet curricular and clinical demands.
- Read, comprehend, record, and interpret information accurately from diagnostic tests, equipment, and patient records to formulate a diagnosis, develop a treatment plan, make independent clinical decisions, and ensure patient safety.
- Generate discipline-specific documents and clinical reports in English.
- Seek relevant case information, synthesize, and apply concepts and information from various sources and disciplines.
- Analyze and solve problems, reason, and make sound clinical judgments in patient assessment, diagnostic, and therapeutic planning and implementation.
- Accurately identify and communicate limits in one's own professional knowledge and skills and utilize resources to increase knowledge and skills.
- Use technology to meet requirements of courses and practicum (e.g., internet access, learning management systems, electronic health records).

Sensory/Observation

Prospective and current students must possess adequate sensory skills of vision, hearing, touch, and smell to:

- Visually and auditorily identify normal and disordered characteristics in the areas of semantics, pragmatics, syntax, morphology, phonology, swallowing, cognition, balance, hearing, and social interaction related to communication.
- Observe patients' activity and behavior accurately during assessment and treatment procedures.

- Visually monitor client/patient responses and materials.
- Identify and discriminate anatomic structures and imaging findings (e.g., otoscopy, oral mechanism exam, MBSS, FEES).
- Discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests.
- Accurately monitor, through both visual and auditory modalities, materials and equipment used for assessment and treatment of patients.
- Recognize and interpret when a client's family/caregiver does or does not understand the clinician's written and/or verbal communication.

Social/Behavioral Skills

Prospective and current students must possess adequate social/behavioral skills to:

- Comply with administrative, legal, and regulatory policies, including upholding the ASHA Code of Ethics.
- Demonstrate respect for individual, social, and cultural differences in fellow students, faculty, staff, patients, and patients' families during clinical and academic interactions.
- Maintain adequate physical and mental health and self-care such that the health and safety of self and others in the academic and clinical settings is not jeopardized.
- Maintain adequate physical and mental health and self-care to access and participate in a variety of educational and clinical settings/activities.
- Develop and maintain professional relationships with clients/patients, fellow students, and colleagues.
- Demonstrate flexibility and the ability to adapt to changing situations and uncertainty (which includes maintaining professional demeanor and emotional health) in academic, clinical, and community settings.
- Conduct oneself in a mature, empathetic, and effective professional manner by exhibiting compassion, honesty, integrity, professionalism, and concern for others in an ethical and legal manner in all interactions and situations.
- Maintain regular attendance and meet responsibilities within designated timelines.
- Manage time effectively to complete professional and technical tasks within constraints.
- Accept feedback (e.g., suggestions, constructive criticism) and modify behavior accordingly.
- Maintain appropriate and professional appearance for varied clinical and academic environments.

I understand and acknowledge that I must meet the technical standards required for this degree program in order to complete the program.