Communication Sciences and Disorders

Overview

The undergraduate program in speech pathology and audiology provides a thorough understanding of the basic processes involved in speech, swallowing, hearing, and language in addition to a broad overview of communication disorders in preparation for professional graduate study in speech-language pathology or audiology.

The department’s master of science (M.S.) and doctor of audiology (Au.D.) programs address the knowledge and skills that prepare graduates to excel in the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology, respectively. Both graduate programs meet the clinical and academic requirements for professional licensure and certification, and both are accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Graduates of the professional programs are well-prepared to diagnose and treat the full range of communicative disorders in all age groups and to practice competently as speech-language pathologists and audiologists in a wide range of clinical settings.

The doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) in communication sciences and disorders is a customized post-professional program that prepares audiologists and speech-language pathologists to become effective teachers and researchers with an area of expertise within hearing science and disorders or within speech and language sciences and disorders.

The department of speech pathology and audiology provides professional services to the public through our on-campus clinics. The West Virginia University Speech Center offers a wide variety of speech-language pathology services to children and adults, whereas the West Virginia University Hearing Center is well-equipped to provide complete diagnostic and rehabilitative audiology services. Fully staffed by professional supervisors, these state-of-the-art clinical facilities help meet the health care needs of the community, while supporting the professional education of the department’s graduate students.

Master of Science (M.S.) Program in Speech-Language Pathology

The purpose of the master of science degree program in speech pathology is to provide aspiring professionals with a firm understanding of the normal processes of speech, language, and hearing; the competence to diagnose and treat the full range of communicative disorders in all age groups; and the opportunity to practice in a wide variety of clinical settings, including schools, hospitals, clinics, special treatment centers, and private practice. The M.S. in speech-language pathology, therefore, is a professional program that emphasizes the knowledge and skills requisite for competent and ethical clinical practice. Graduation thus depends on completion of all academic requirements and the demonstration of sound clinical expertise. The M.S. in speech-language pathology program is accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

Students are expected to become familiar with the 2014 Standards for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology, as well as the Department’s Policy on Cell Phones and Other Personal Electronic Devices in the Classroom. Additional information regarding graduate student expectations is outlined in the current edition of the Graduate Student Handbook for Speech-Language Pathology.

Admission

All applicants for the M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology Program must have a baccalaureate degree or equivalent from a regionally accredited institution of higher learning, and present the following by the January 15 deadline:

1. An undergraduate major in speech pathology and audiology or communication sciences and disorders
2. One official transcript from each college attended
3. An overall undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.00 (A = 4.0)
4. An official copy of the applicant’s Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores
5. Proof of English language proficiency for any applicant whose first language is not English
6. Three letters of recommendation that reflect the applicant’s academic and clinical abilities, potential for success in graduate studies, and personal qualities predictive of professional success as a speech-language pathologist
7. A personal statement that addresses the applicant’s goals for professional graduate study in speech-language pathology

All applicants being considered for admission will be provided with a personal interview with members of the SPA faculty.

In some cases, applicants without preparatory coursework in speech pathology and audiology may be considered for graduate admission, but the program of study will require two additional semesters of added coursework.

Please submit transcripts directly to:
West Virginia University
Office of Admissions
P.O. Box 6009
The WVU Institution Code for the GRE is R5904. Applicants may have their official scores submitted from the newly revised GRE or from the older version, if taken within the past five years. Although no minimum is specified for either test version, GRE scores that meet or exceed the fiftieth percentile are recommended.

**Graduation Requirements**

The following are the minimum graduation requirements for the M.S. degree program:

1. Completion of all required courses in the graduate speech-language pathology curriculum
2. A minimum of 400 clock hours of supervised practicum, including at least twenty-five hours of clinical observation and 375 hours of direct patient/client contact
3. An overall graduate grade point average of at least 3.00 (A = 4.0)

**Residency Requirements**

All students in the M.S. program in speech-language pathology must be full-time in residence during the program of study. The minimum duration for graduate study is five consecutive semesters (including summer sessions). All M.S. students are expected to complete SPA 718 during their final semester of the program. Part-time students are not eligible for admission.

Students anticipating a May graduation must complete an Application for Graduation and Diploma form by February 1 of the year of intended graduation. This form and additional information, including deadlines for August and December graduation, are available on the CEHS Center for Student Advising & Records website.

**Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.) Program**

The Doctor of audiology (Au.D.) program at West Virginia University was inaugurated in 2004 when the clinical doctorate became the entry-level degree for the profession of audiology. The program consists of 116 credit hours of academic coursework and clinical practicum experiences, including a fourth year residency. Graduates must demonstrate acquisition of all knowledge and skills delineated in the Standards for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Audiology (CCC-A). The Au.D. program is accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

Students are expected to become familiar with the 2012 Standards for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Audiology, as well as the Department’s Policy on Cell Phones and Other Personal Electronic Devices in the Classroom. Additional information regarding graduate student expectations is outlined in the current edition of the Graduate Student Handbook for Audiology.

**Program Objectives**

The Au.D. program has been designed to provide a firm understanding of the normal processes of hearing and communication with the academic and clinical preparation to diagnose and treat the full range of hearing disorders in all age groups. Our goal is to prepare audiologists who are competent to work in a wide variety of clinical settings, including hospitals, clinics, special treatment centers, schools, industry, and private practice. The program’s intent is to provide the knowledge and skills necessary to practice audiology autonomously in an effective, ethical manner. To this end, the following goals have been established by the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology at West Virginia University:

1. Graduates will demonstrate mastery of knowledge and skills necessary to practice audiology in diverse settings encompassing all of the many facets of our profession.
2. Graduates will demonstrate an ability to work autonomously, using sound judgment in a competent and ethical manner.
3. Graduates will contribute to the profession and their community via active membership in professional organizations, scholarly activity, and taking the initiative in public education concerning hearing and balance disorders.
4. Graduates will be employed as audiologists serving the hearing impaired populaces, industry, and the medical community with special emphasis in underserved areas of our state.

**Admission**

All applicants for the Au.D. program must have a baccalaureate degree or equivalent from a regionally accredited institution of higher learning and present the following by the January 15 deadline:

1. An undergraduate major in speech pathology and audiology or communication sciences and disorders
2. One official transcript from each college attended
3. An overall undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.00 (A = 4.0)
4. An official copy of the applicant’s Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores
5. Proof of English language proficiency for any applicant whose first language is not English
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Program

The Ph.D. degree program provides a rigorous course of study along with mentored research and teaching experiences to enable students to become high-quality researchers and serve effectively as leaders in the discipline of communication sciences and disorders. Graduates of the program are prepared to assume careers as researchers and scholars at colleges, universities, hospitals, industrial settings, and research facilities. The program is not designed to provide an advanced clinical degree. Rather, the Ph.D. degree will be conferred in recognition of the attainment of the highest academic excellence and productive scholarship. As doctoral programs are an integral step on a life-long journey of learning and scholarship, the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology has established the Ph.D. program in Communication Sciences and Disorders to support students in developing knowledge, judgment, skills, and attitudes to facilitate their growth and learning throughout their careers as researchers, scholars, and teachers.

Program Objectives

The primary objective of the Ph.D. degree program is to assist students to develop in-depth mastery of subject matter in a narrow and specific area within the broad discipline of communication sciences and disorders and, simultaneously, to broaden one’s knowledge base in other fields related to the special area of interest, such as health, linguistics, education, and the physical, biological, and socio-behavioral sciences. With the intent to prepare high-quality researchers to serve as leaders in the discipline of communication sciences and disorders, graduates of the program will be prepared to assume independent careers as researchers and scholars at colleges, universities, and hospitals, as well to become key personnel at leading private and public research institutes. Specifically, the objectives of the Ph.D. program include:

1. The development of independent research skills through sequential experiences that involve the planning and conduct (or implementation) of research projects, the writing of grants, and the dissemination of research findings through the presentation of papers at scientific and other professional conferences and publication in peer-reviewed journals in the discipline;
2. The preparation of academicians equipped to teach the university students of tomorrow through guided coursework in educational methods and evaluation, instructional technologies including online course delivery, international and intercultural experiences, and classroom practice; and
3. The acquisition of advanced knowledge and understanding of a specialized area with the ability to apply this understanding to research, teaching, and scholarship.

A Highly Individualized Experience

The Ph.D. program in Communication Sciences and Disorders is a highly individualized experience that includes prescribed and selected coursework designed to meet the objectives of the program, ongoing participation in research and other scholarly activities, and the independent completion of a dissertation under the mentorship of a research advisor. As such, the time needed to complete the program will vary to ensure sufficient time for
the building of adequate teaching and research skills and a creditable curriculum vitae. Some diligent and highly motivated students may be able to complete their work in less time, whereas others may require more time to achieve independence as a scholar and researcher.

Because the discipline of communication sciences and disorders supports two professions, audiology and speech-language pathology, students in the Ph.D. degree program may pursue one of the following areas of emphasis:

1. Speech and language sciences and disorders
   or
2. Hearing science and disorders

It is expected that—through study, scholarship, and mentorship—Ph.D. candidates will develop deep expertise in a specific topic within an area of emphasis.

Admission and Performance Standards

A Ph.D. Advisory Committee composed of one member from each of the major areas of study will screen the applications and make admissions decisions based on the following criteria, in consultation with the faculty in their area of emphasis. In particular, applicants must have the following:

1. An entry-level clinical degree for the profession of speech-language pathology (i.e., M.A. or M.S.) or audiology (i.e., M.A., M.S., or Au.D.)
2. A cumulative grade point average of 3.25 or higher (A=4.0) upon completion of a graduate degree
3. A score at or above the fiftieth percentile on the Verbal and Quantitative sections and a score of at least 4.0 on the Analytical Writing section on an official copy of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE)
4. A TOEFL score of at least 79 (internet version), 213 (computer-based), 550 (paper-based) or an IELTS score of at least 6.5, if English is not the applicant’s native language
5. An interview with the Ph.D. advisory committee that will include the writing of an essay on an assigned topic to be evaluated by program faculty
6. Three letters of recommendation, two of which must come from previous instructors or professors who can comment meaningfully on the applicant’s potential for Ph.D. study
7. A personal statement that addresses the applicant’s professional goals within speech and language sciences and disorders or within hearing science and disorders

Program Requirements

Residency Commitment

The Ph.D. degree program in communication sciences and disorders requires a full-time commitment. Each student who is accepted into the program works on a daily basis with faculty who will help to hone skills and to sharpen the research focus. Furthermore, each student will be expected to conduct research and pursue scholarship activities that will inform classroom teaching and lead to meaningful presentations and publications. Consequently, applicants are required to sign a statement confirming their commitment to full-time status before they may be admitted to the program.

Curriculum

Upon admission to the Ph.D. program, students enroll in a series of required courses in the doctoral core, in the research core, and in the area of specialization. Ph.D. students are expected to maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.25 each semester. Upon completion of coursework, students must successfully complete written and oral comprehensive examinations to be eligible for candidacy.

Ph.D. students enroll in a minimum of six credits of independent study, extending over at least three semesters, under the supervision of their mentor. Typically, the focus of the independent study will be on the development of independent research skills through involvement with ongoing or forthcoming projects in the mentor’s research program. Each student will be expected to present at one or more scientific meetings and submit at least two manuscripts for publication in relevant peer-reviewed journals before graduating.

Students anticipating a May graduation must complete an Application for Graduation and Diploma form by February 1 of the year of intended graduation. This form and additional information, including deadlines for August and December graduation, are available on the CEHS Center for Student Advising & Records website.