

Essential skills and attributes required for the study of Speech-Language Pathology

Ontario Council of University Programs in Rehabilitation Sciences (OCUPRS) Policy Document, July 2009

Introduction

The Ontario university programs in Speech-Language Pathology are responsible to society for providing their enrolled students with opportunities to develop the qualifications (academic knowledge, professional behaviours, attitudes and clinical skills) to enter the profession of Speech-Language Pathology in Ontario. The purpose of this document is to describe the attributes required for success in completing a university program in Speech-Language Pathology. Students interested in pursuing a graduate degree in these disciplines are encouraged to review the following document that outlines the requisite attributes to undertake such graduate studies.

An offer of admission to a Speech-Language Pathology program should not be interpreted as evidence that the program has independently verified an applicant's attributes in the domains described below. These skills and abilities are essential if students are to be successful in achieving the competency standards of the profession.

In addition to obtaining a degree in Speech-Language Pathology, an individual must also be registered with the provincial regulatory organization, College of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology of Ontario (CASLPO) in order to practice as a Speech-Language Pathologist in Ontario.

It is anticipated that reasonable accommodation may be provided to individuals who demonstrate such requirement on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination. The following description of essential attributes is not intended to preclude individuals who may require reasonable accommodation. Students who anticipate that reasonable accommodation will enable them to meet the required standards for these skills and abilities are responsible for articulating their requirements. Requests for accommodation are considered on a case-by-case basis according to the applicable policies, regulations and procedures. Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek out and review the policies, regulations and procedures regarding accommodation at the university (ies) and program(s) to which they are applying. If admitted to a program, students will be required to follow the policies and procedures of the university and faculty/school within which the program is located.

University graduate programs in speech-language pathology (SLP) in Ontario provide enrolled students with the academic knowledge and entry level clinical skills training, while fostering an environment that nurtures the development of

professional behaviours and attitudes necessary for practice within the profession of speech-language pathology.

Students must be able to work collaboratively with colleagues, other professionals, clients and families while demonstrating sound clinical and professional judgment and responsible decision within the context of rules and regulations, professional codes of ethics and standards of practice.

As future health care professionals, students are expected to gain entry level competency in assessment and management of communication and swallowing disorders with a variety of client populations in a variety of work and community settings within a two year time frame. Given the intensity, breadth and depth of the information and clinical training, students in the SLP programs must possess very strong cognitive, communication, sensory, and interpersonal skills necessary for the provision of safe, ethical and effective assessment, treatment, counseling and educational services. Students interested in pursuing a degree in speech-language pathology are encouraged to review the following document that further outlines the requisite skills and attributes for the profession.

Upon completion of the program, students obtain a Master's degree within approximately two years of full-time study (some programs may provide options for part-time studies). Time extensions may be granted under certain conditions. Requests are considered on a case by case basis in accordance with each university's regulations.

Description of the Skills and Attributes for Students in a Master's-level program in Speech-Language Pathology

Aptitude and Attitude

Students entering into a Speech-Language Pathology program must have an interest in the process of human communication and/or swallowing and a desire to assist individuals to maximize their functioning and life participation as it relates to communication and/or swallowing. Students must have the cognitive abilities to understand and develop the theoretical knowledge and technical expertise to work collaboratively with their peers, clients, and colleagues. They must have sensitivity, compassion, integrity, and concern for others. They must be respectful of individuality and diversity, build trusting relationships, demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills to engage and motivate clients and families, demonstrate creative problem solving skills and be able to manage multiple demands and polarities.

Information gathering skills

Students must be able to gather information for the provision of both direct and indirect speech-language pathology services. Information is typically gathered through observation, interview, information search, and document review. Adequate integration of sensory, verbal and intellectual skills is required.

Communication skills

Students must have excellent observational, listening, oral and written communication skills. This includes an ability to perceive and convey non-verbal information effectively. Example of activities that require such skills include: eliciting and conveying client information effectively and efficiently for the purposes of assessment and treatment; developing collegial relationships for succinct and accurate client and professional information exchange; and maintaining clear, accurate and appropriate records of client encounters and clinical documentation which will comply with regulatory and organizational documentation and recording keeping standards.

It is important to note that some programs may have specific language requirements to meet the needs of the population in a geographical area.

Critical thinking skills

Creative problem solving and judgment are necessary to address the individual needs of each client in a safe, effective and efficient manner. Students must demonstrate the skills necessary to observe, analyze, integrate, synthesize and apply information using appropriate clinical models and theoretical frameworks of the assessment and management of human communication and swallowing disorders. Students must demonstrate these critical thinking skills in all learning environments, including the classroom and in clinical and community settings. Students must demonstrate a capacity to participate in research.

Psychomotor/Physical skills

Students must consistently demonstrate the psychomotor skills and physical health required to provide safe, effective and efficient services to their clients subject to any reasonable accommodation that may be required. Students must be able to use common assessment and intervention tools/instruments either directly or in an adaptive form. In addition, students are expected to be physically able to participate in all learning experiences of the educational program.

Emotional health

Students must consistently demonstrate the emotional resilience and balance to manage a myriad of emotionally charged or ethically challenging scenarios that frequently arise in all work settings. Students must also be able to endure the intellectual, physical, emotional and psychological demands of the program and function effectively under stress. Adaptability to changing environments and the ability to work in the face of uncertainties that are inherent in the care of clients are necessary.