



University of Puerto Rico  
Medical Sciences Campus  
School of Health Professions  
Department of Graduate Programs  
**Speech-Language Pathology Program**



*Essential Functions and Attributes of  
Candidates for Admission and Graduation from the  
Speech-Language Pathology Program*

The purpose of this document is to describe the essential functions skills and attributes required for success in completing graduate studies in Speech-Language Pathology Program from the School of Health Professions, Medical Sciences Campus at the University of Puerto Rico. In accordance with federal regulations established by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), the following standards are described to assist students or applicants in evaluating their prospect for academic and clinical success.

The Program's admission and retention decisions are based on prior and ongoing satisfactory academic achievement, meeting and maintaining the essential functions, and fulfilling clinical program requirements for graduation. Essential functions are defined as skills and attributes that individuals must possess in five primary areas: communication, motor, intellectual-cognitive, sensory-observational, and behavioral-social. These skills and attributes are essential to function in a broad variety of clinical situations, and to render a wide spectrum of patient care. The essential functions included are consistent with the Program's core values of integrity, critical thinking, mutual respect, collaboration, innovation and accountability.

The essential functions enable a student to meet graduate and professional requirements as measured by state licensure and national certification. Many of the skills can be learned and developed during the course of the program, as studies and clinical work progress, and others are inherent and should be present when the student begins studies at the Speech-Language Pathology Program. However, an offer of admission to the Program should not be interpreted as evidence that the Program has independently verified an applicant's essential functions skills and attributes in the five areas described in this document. These skills and attributes are essentials if students are to be successful in achieving the competency standards of the profession. When a student's ability to perform is compromised, the student must demonstrate alternative means and/or abilities to perform the essential functions described below.

The following description is not intended to disqualify applicants who may require reasonable accommodation. Applicants and 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 and students are encouraged to seek out and review the policies, regulations and procedures regarding accommodation of the University of Puerto Rico, Medical Sciences Campus. The Speech-Language Pathology Program will not discriminate against those individuals with verifiable disabilities, but will expect applicants and students to meet certain minimal attributes and essential function skills as set forth herein with reasonable accommodation. In adopting these standards, the University believes it must keep in mind the ultimate safety of the clients and patients served by its students and graduates.

## Essential Functions of Speech Language Pathologists

Many of the skills and attributes listed below can be learned and developed through coursework and clinical experiences and must be present by the time of graduation. The starred items (\*), however, are skills that should be extant when the student begins graduate studies in speech-language pathology.

### COMMUNICATION

A student should be able to:

- Communicate proficiently in both oral and written Spanish language in order to engage in clinical and academic activities. \*
- Possess reading and writing skills in Spanish and English language sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands. \*
- Perceive and demonstrate appropriate non-verbal communication for culture and context, sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands. \*
- Modify communication style to meet the communication needs of clients, caregivers, and other persons served. \*
- Model desired exemplars of voice, fluency, articulation, and oral/nasal resonance, as well as features of Spanish grammar, consistent with objectives for clients in treatment and for a reliable and valid administration of speech and language assessment instruments.
- Communicate professionally and intelligibly with clients, caregivers, and other health professionals, and community or professional groups.
- Communicate professionally, effectively, and legibly on client documentation, reports, and scholarly papers required as a part of coursework and clinical practice.
- Convey information accurately with relevance and cultural sensitivity.

### MOTOR

A student should be able to:

- Sustain necessary physical activity level in required classroom and clinical activities. \*
- Assist clients in emergency situations including fire, choking or other emergencies. \*
- Make travel arrangements to and from classroom and practicum/externship settings. \*
- Participate in classroom and clinical activities for the defined workday. \*
- Use fine motor skills to examine the outer ear and speech mechanism. Such activities include, but are not limited to ear canal impressions, otoscopy, hearing aid or headphone fittings, oral mechanism exams, swallowing protocols, and to engage in oral manipulation (e.g. musculature palpation, laryngeal massage) as needed.
- Efficiently manipulate testing equipment and treatment environment and materials without violation of testing protocol and with best therapeutic practice.
- Manipulate in safe manner patient-utilized equipment, such as AAC devices, hearing aids, wheelchairs, bed controls, prosthesis, etc.
- Access technology for laboratory and clinical management (i.e. documentation, billing, charting, therapy programs, etc.)

## **INTELLECTUAL / COGNITIVE**

A student should be able to:

- Comprehend, retain, integrate, synthesize, infer, evaluate and apply written and verbal information sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands. \*
- Identify significant findings from case history, evaluation, and data to formulate a diagnosis and develop a treatment plan.
- Solve problems, reason, and make sound clinical judgments in client assessment, diagnostic and therapeutic plan and implementation.
- Self-evaluate, identify, and communicate limits of one's own knowledge and skills according to the appropriate professional level.
- Identify and use resources, appropriate suggestions and constructive criticism in order to increase knowledge and modify behavior.
- Utilize academic and clinical instruction in order to make unique and independent decisions.
- Develop and exhibit a sense of ethics, and also recognize and apply pertinent legal and ethical standards.

## **SENSORY - OBSERVATIONAL**

A student should be able to:

- Visually and auditorily identify normal and disordered behaviors of swallowing and communication (i.e., fluency, articulation, voice, resonance, respiration characteristics, oral and written language in the areas of semantic, pragmatics, syntax, morphology and phonology, hearing disorders, cognition, and social interaction related to communication).
- Identify the need for alternative modalities of communication.
- Visually identify and palpate anatomic structures, such as head, neck and external ears.
- Visualize and discriminate findings on imaging studies.
- Discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests.
- Observe demonstrations and learn from experiences in the classroom, laboratory, and clinical situations.
- Observe and respond to subtle cues of patient's moods, temperament, and social behavior, and nonverbal communication.
- Recognize when a client's family does or does not understand the clinician's written and or verbal communication.

## **BEHAVIORAL / SOCIAL**

A student should be able to:

- Demonstrate emotional stability and display a mature, empathic, and effective interpersonal relationship with peers, faculty, clinical instructors, clients, and health care workers.
- Meet the challenges of any emergency situation that requires a readiness for immediate and appropriate response without interference of personal or medical problems.
- Recognize and show respect for individuals with disabilities and for individuals of different ages, genders, race, religions, sexual orientation, and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. \*
- Conduct oneself in an ethical and legal manner, upholding the profession's code of ethics and university and federal privacy policies. \*
- Maintain general good physical and mental health and self-care in order not to put at risk the health and safety of self and others in the academic and clinical setting. \*

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- Dress appropriately and professionally according to the clinical environment and the setting's rules.
- Effectively manage the use of time to complete professional and technical tasks within realistic time constraints. \*
- Accept appropriate suggestions and constructive criticism and respond by modification of behaviors.
- Demonstrate emotional resilience and balance to manage myriad of emotionally charged or ethical challenging scenarios that could arise in all work settings.
- Demonstrate respect, appreciate and engage in nonjudgmental interactions regardless of any personal characteristic or trait, including, but not limited to an individual's age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, social-economic status, religion, life-style and/or cultural or background.\*

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