

3.1 MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

- I. Speech-Language Pathology (MA): Program Goals
 - a. Demonstrate the breadth and depth of foundational communication science, including biological, etiological, theoretical, acoustic, physiological, cognitive, and psychological bases of communication.
 - b. Understand and demonstrate the theoretical motivation for and practical applications of clinical reasoning for identification, assessment, and treatment of communication disorders.
 - c. Apply research analysis into evidence-based decision-making and clinical application.
 - d. Effectively communicate discipline-related knowledge in oral and written modalities, with families, clients, and other professionals.
 - e. Understand and accommodate cultural or linguistic differences related to communication development or to perceptions and attitudes toward communication disorders, differences, or intervention.
 - f. Exhibit attributes and abilities characteristic of competent speech-language pathologists, including accountability, integrity, adaptability, leadership, and professionalism.
- II. Non-CSD Course Requirements
 - a. Previous academic preparation in audiology/speech-language pathology is not a requirement for admission; however, it is assumed that all students will have completed basic science coursework in the following areas. ASHA requires transcript credit in the following areas:
 - i. Biological/Physical Science (3 credits)
 - ii. Statistics (3 credits)
 - iii. Behavioral/Social Science (6 credits of Psychology/Sociology/Anthropology)
 - iv. Physical Science (3 credits of Physics/Chemistry)
 - b. Students who have not met the above requirements in their undergraduate program must complete them during the graduate program. Depending on how many of these requirements have not been met, the student's graduate program may be extended.
 - c. To be counted toward the requirement, a grade of C (2.0) or better in the basic science coursework is expected.
- III. Program Requirements
 - a. Students must complete a minimum of 60 credit hours and meet the academic and practicum requirements for the Certificate of Clinical Competence of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Most students complete at least 60 credit hours in their graduate program. Additional coursework will be required for those students without undergraduate preparation in Communication Sciences and Disorders (Appendix 3.3).
 - b. Full time study requires enrollment in clinical practicum and students must obtain a 3.00 or above in at least 9 semester hours of clinical practicum, and a 3.00 or above in their last two semesters of clinical practicum. A

minimum of 14 credit hours of A USP 7200 and A USP 7208 must be taken, but more hours may be required in order to meet certification standards. Clinical competencies expected by graduation are in Appendix 3.

- c. Students must complete a minimum of three semester hours of research activity. A thesis or non-thesis option is available. Students choosing the non-thesis option may fulfill their research experience with A USP 7991 (Introduction to Research Activity) and A USP 7990 (Research Activity). NOTE: Students electing to write a thesis should familiarize themselves with the [Thesis/Dissertation Preparation Guide](#) before starting to write.
- d. All students must successfully complete Benchmark examinations (see Section VI of this document for details).
- e. All students must complete written comprehensive examinations (see Section VII of this document for details).

IV. Academic Advisor

- a. The academic advisor is responsible for developing, with the student, a plan of study. An advising checklist is maintained by the advisor. All coursework (both undergraduate and graduate) is logged on the checklist to ensure the student meets the academic requirements for the degree, ASHA certification, teacher certification and state licensure. Specific degree requirements may be found in the Graduate Catalog.
- b. Students meet with their advisor at least once a semester to determine their course assignments for the next term in accordance with their academic plan. It is the ultimate responsibility of the student to ensure that all requirements are met.

V. Research Experience

- a. Non-Thesis Option
 - i. Students who choose the non-thesis option complete 3 credits of research activity. These credits typically include:
 - ii. One credit of A USP 7991 (Intro to Research Activity), in which first-year students are introduced to research being conducted by the faculty and matched with labs and projects of interest before beginning their second year in the program; and
 - iii. Two credits of A USP 7990 (Research Activity) in which students complete supervised research activity in a faculty member's lab. The topic, procedure, and gradable product are jointly selected by the student and the faculty director. Ideally, there will be an interpretive component, although some projects may not lend themselves to that.
- b. Thesis Option
 - i. The thesis program gives the student experience in conducting research and scholarly writing. In addition, the thesis experience can help a student understand and better evaluate research literature in his/her field of study. Those students who intend to enter a doctoral program or whose major goal is to engage in research are encouraged to complete a thesis. The decision to select a thesis option should be made as early in the student's program as possible.

- ii. Students selecting the thesis option must enroll in AUSP 7996 for a minimum of 3 credits and a maximum of 6 credits to meet graduation requirements. Thesis students are responsible for organizing a thesis committee for purposes of approving a proposal. The thesis committee shall consist of the thesis advisor and at least two additional faculty members. All members of the thesis committee must be members of the University of Memphis Graduate Faculty. All students contemplating a thesis should read the [Graduate School publication](#) on policies for thesis and dissertations.
- iii. Once a student has enrolled for thesis credit, he or she must continue this enrollment and may not change this option to a non-thesis option. Thesis students must successfully complete an oral examination in defense of their thesis. The thesis committee is also responsible for determining that all written comprehensive examination competencies are also met. This is typically conducted by certifying at the oral examination that the student has mastered topics encompassed by the thesis experience and requiring that other topics are assessed.

VI. Benchmark Examination (Revised Fall 2021)

a. Purpose of the Examination

- i. The purpose of the benchmark examination is to provide an opportunity for students to review and integrate foundational information covered in the first year of the program.
- ii. The examination includes written questions covering four key areas: Anatomy and Physiology, Pediatric Language, Neurological Bases of Communication, and Speech Science. The examination will be scheduled after students' first Spring semester. Students who are unable to pass the qualifying exam in any of the four areas must complete remedial work during their next semester as outlined in a Clinical-Academic Support Plan (CIASP) form (Policy 503). They will have the opportunity to retake the examination following completion of their CIASP. Students completing CIASPs related to benchmark examinations may need to extend or adjust their program of study. Students must pass the benchmark examinations to be retained in the program.

VII. Comprehensive Examination (Under Revision Fall 2025)

a. Purpose of the Examination

- i. The comprehensive examination is a summative evaluation which provides an opportunity and a motivation for students to integrate information at a time when most of their program has been completed. The exam is taken by students in the spring and summer semesters. It is an opportunity to reflect on and discuss in a scholarly manner the current theoretical and applied literature in the profession.
- ii. The comprehensive examination also allows the faculty to evaluate the ability of students to grasp and apply a broad spectrum of

information. While adequate performance in academic coursework is a prerequisite to graduation, it is also essential that graduating students demonstrate the ability to retain, integrate, and apply the knowledge gained in this coursework.

b. Structure of the Examination

- i. Students write responses to two questions on each day of the examination and have one hour and 45 minutes per question on each day. A short break is provided between questions. After initial assessment of the essays, students will be informed of which questions they passed, which need to be revised and which need to be rewritten.
- ii. Students preparing revisions will be given a specific list of objectives in writing and will be allowed to review their original responses. They will not be allowed to review content with the faculty requesting revisions. This is partly because the identities of the students should remain blinded at this stage. It is also because the intent is for students to have completed their reviews of the information with faculty prior to completing the first round of exams. The expectation of a revision is that the original responses can be revised independently based on the faculty's written feedback.
- iii. After those revisions are assessed, students will be informed if any questions need to be rewritten. Once students have been informed of the necessity of rewrites their identities are revealed to the examiners requiring those rewrites, who may then make themselves available to provide further review preparatory to the rewrites.
- iv. Any questions not satisfactorily addressed in rewrites will then be assessed in an oral examination conducted by three SLP tenure-track faculty (to include the examiner and student's advisor).

c. Content of the Examinations

- i. Each of the following four topic areas represents 1.75 hours of written content.
 1. Speech Sciences: Physiology, Acoustics, Phonetics, and Hearing; Examiner: Buder
 2. Clinical Reasoning: The following three questions will require critical thinking and integration of basic and applied knowledge, including audiology, across the life span.
 3. Neurogenic Disorders of Language and Speech, and Hearing; Examiner: Feenaughty
 4. Child Language, Fluency, Evidence-Based Practice, and Hearing; Examiner: Eichorn
 5. Swallowing, Voice, Ethics, and Hearing; Examiner: van Mersbergen

d. Administration of the Examinations

- i. The examinations generally will be administered toward the beginning of the Spring and Summer semesters prior to graduation.
- ii. Notification of initial assessment (Pass/Revise/Rewrite) will be provided within 1 week of the first exam.
- iii. Students will have a 3-day period to prepare revisions.

- iv. Notification of revision outcomes (Pass/Rewrite) will be provided within 2 weeks of the first exam.
- v. Rewrites will be scheduled no later than 3 weeks after the first exam.
- vi. Outcomes of Rewrites (Pass/Fail) will be provided within 3 days of the second exam.
- vii. Oral exams will be conducted within 2 weeks of the second exam.

VIII. Retention Requirements

- a. All students enrolled in the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders are expected to attain high academic achievement and maintain professional and ethical conduct. In addition to Graduate School policy, the criteria listed below will be used to determine the retention status of students enrolled in the School.
- b. General Academic Performance
 - i. Grades below C (2.00) in required courses are considered unacceptable and must be repeated to meet graduation requirements.
 - ii. A student may count two grades of C (2.00) toward their degree. Students have the option of repeating two courses in which a grade of C (2.00) or less was earned. The student will be dismissed at the end of the semester in which a third grade of C (2.00) or less has been earned.
 - iii. Students are expected to maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.00 at the end of each semester of enrollment at the University of Memphis. A GPA below 3.00 across two consecutive semesters may be grounds for dismissal. After one semester of suspension, continuation in the program may be granted only with recommendation from the academic unit, the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Dean of the Graduate School.
- c. Professional Performance
 - i. Because the MA in Speech-Language Pathology is a professional practice degree, satisfactory acquisition of knowledge and skills for certification as prescribed by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association is required ([Appendix 3.3](#), [3.5](#), and [3.6](#)). Failure to achieve any of these standards for clinical performance may result in dismissal from the program.
 - ii. The cumulative grade of the first two semesters of clinical practicum (7200/7208) must be a B- (2.67) or greater. A cumulative clinical grade for the last five semesters must be at least a 3.00. Students must obtain a B (3.00) or better in each of their last 2 semesters.
 - iii. Students may be dismissed for any of the following:
 1. Failure to maintain appropriate standards of academic integrity or CSD Policies.
 2. Failure to follow the ASHA Code of Ethics.
 3. Failure to follow HIPAA guidelines.
 4. Failure to achieve competency as specified in CSD Policy 503.

5. A grade of 2.00 or less in clinic practicum will mandate a review within the School and may be grounds for dismissal.
6. Failure to pass the benchmark examination.
7. Failure to pass the comprehensive examination.